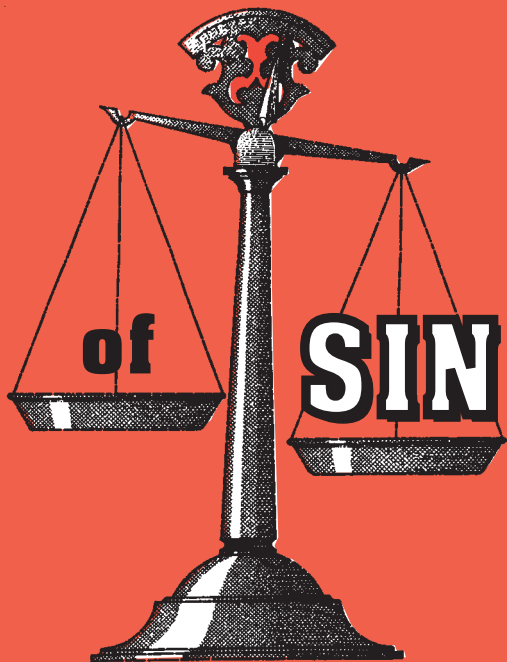


The Weight



I am from the Middle East, and I always enjoy discussions with friends from that part of the world. Once I said to them, “Do you know that most people believe that in the final judgment, God will put their good deeds on one side of the balance scale, and their evil deeds on the other side, and in this way decide their eternal fate—whether they go to heaven or to hell?”

They responded, “Yes, don’t you think so too?”

I was silent for a moment, then commented, “Since most people believe that, I gave it some serious thought. After all, what’s the use of gaining the whole world, if at the end I lose my soul? But the more I thought about it the more trouble I had with the idea.”

“What do you mean?” they asked.

“Well, if God is going to put my sins on the scale, I’d like to know how much each sin weighs, wouldn’t you? I’d like to know how much each lie and each evil thought weighs—and pride too. Moreover, how much do all my sins weigh in the sight of a holy God who hates sin. But that’s not all. I also wonder how much my good deeds weigh, seeing they are often inadequate, and often ruined by pride and the desire to have the praise of men.”

My friends were silent. Then one said, “Our only hope is in God’s mercy and grace.”

“That’s right,” I agreed, “and thank God, He is merciful and gracious; but His mercy cannot be at the expense of His holiness and justice.”

Another friend then asked, “I know God can do all things, but explain how He can execute justice and show mercy at the same time.”

I answered, “With men this is impossible. If the judge does not punish the criminal for his crime, he may seem merciful, but he is not just. However, if he executes perfect justice, he could not show perfect mercy. But God can show perfect mercy and yet be perfectly just!”

“How?” they questioned with amazement.

Then I gave them another illustration: “Suppose the just punishment for my sin was payment of a large sum of money or imprisonment, and the judge paid the sum himself. Would he not be merciful and just at the same time?”

“Yes, he certainly would be merciful, just and gracious all at the same time,” they all agreed.

My friends were anxious to know how God can do the same for man. My friends are very sincere people—as those from the East who discuss such matters often are—but this discussion made

them realize that trusting in one's good deeds is dangerous. They never denied being sinners; now they were anxious to know how they could be saved.

The Bible states, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). I explained to them that the punishment for sin is eternal death—not just physical death. So how could God bear this punishment for us? By becoming Man for us. That's exactly what Christ did.

The Bible also tells us that God loves mankind so much, He sent Christ to die for us. And Christ died for us willingly, so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Concerning Christ, the Bible says, “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission (forgiveness) of sins” (Acts 10:43). — *Rafique*

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