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'THE CHRISTIAN FAITH'

I was asked the other day by a friend what I thought was the central theme of the Bible. It is an interesting question, the Bible is the most influential book that has ever been written. What is its central theme? It is summed up I think in a short sentence that God spoke to the children of Israel when they were all assembled in the great gathering or church, in the wilderness at the foot of Mt. Sinai where God's presence had descended and He spoke to them the ten commandments and gave them His law. But He prefaced it with the sentence "I have brought you to myself" Exodus 19:4. That is the theme of the Bible, God bringing us to Himself. The Israelites had just experienced the great wonder of all this. They had been slaves in Egypt with no hope of freedom. Pharoah and his government was the strongest in the world; yet God brought them up out of that slavery with His mighty arm, as the Bible puts it. He afflicted the Egyptians with the ten plagues till they drove out the Israelites in desperation. He opened up the path in the Red Sea so that the fleeing slaves might escape the armies of Pharoah who now had second thoughts, and after the Israelites had escaped, the returning waters drowned their pursuers. Then as they journeyed on to Sinai it was God who, through the prayer of Moses, had overcome the attack of the Amalekites and now the Israelites stood free from fear at the foot of Mt. Sinai, looking forward in glorious hope to the Promised Land that God was leading them to. "I have brought you to myself" the Lord said to them.

It was for fellowship with Him and all the joys that that means that God had brought salvation

to His people. It was all God's work. "I have borne you on eagles wings and brought you to myself" was the phrase the Lord used. The Israelites did not do anything and could not have done anything in their slave condition except follow God's guidance.

Echoing the words of Exodus Jesus said to His disciples "I will bring you to myself that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). He was referring to the friendship and fellowship with Jesus that comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit and which will be completed at his second coming. The Christian religion is a religion of salvation by the mighty act of God from slavery into God's presence and friendship: our real slavery is slavery to sin and satan, and Jesus has released us from that by the mighty act of Calvary and the resurrection and taken us to Heaven. He has brought us to Himself and we look forward to the promised land of full heavenly felicity. The last chapter in the Bible describes this in poetic language; God will dwell with us and we with Him in heaven. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, we will have a complete and open friendship with Him. We will see His face and serve Him, as the Bible puts it, gladly following every aspect of His will and so remaining completely in the area of truth and fellowship. This is the central theme of the Bible from its beginning to end, the theme of God restoring sinners to Himself by rescuing us from the slavery of sin through forgiveness in Christ, that mighty act of His at Calvary when He overcame sin, death and the devil and has brought us to Himself and will bring us to even greater friendship and fellowship with Him when Christ returns to establish His kingdom. Now is the

time for us to be reconciled to Him, to begin to enjoy the relationship of sons and daughters of God through our accepting Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and following His will. Now is the time. Now is the day of salvation.

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