

Have We Put the Blood of Jesus on Trial?

One night in a church service, a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God's call and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past involving alcohol, drugs and prostitution. But the change in her was evident.

As time went on, she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. The relationship grew, and they began to make wedding plans.

This is when the problems began.

You see, about half of the church did not think a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As people made their arguments, tensions increased and the meeting began to get completely out of hand.

The young woman became very upset about all the things brought up about her past. As she began to cry, the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife-to-be.

He said, "My fiancée's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So does it wash away sin or not?"

The whole church began to weep as they realized they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past and use it

as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the gospel. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse another person completely, then it cannot cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus—end of case!

Here in the season of Easter, we think often of that blood. But do we really know what it means? Do we understand the height and length and depth and breadth of it? Let's pause and consider this.

We Are Washed

Jesus' blood did more than just cover our sins so we might be in good standing with God. It completely carried them away—and quite far, according to the psalmist: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

One of the most significant events in history is Jesus' death on the cross. Without it mankind would be hopelessly lost. The cross remains a symbol of where Christ shed His blood to redeem us. Every Christian should often remember its importance and power. Volumes have been written on the subject, yet we have but scratched the surface of the significance of Calvary's cross.

Here's one of the main reasons for its significance: Jesus was different from the Old Testament sacrifices, whose blood shielded mankind's sin from God's sight. As the writer of Hebrews said, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Only Christ's sinless blood could do that. Only Jesus "washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

The Greek word translated *washed* means "to bathe the whole person." It is, indeed, a powerful word. It suggests a

complete washing. When we are cleansed by Christ's blood, sins are reckoned as if they never happened. This may be why some Christians appear much more joyful than others—they no longer carry the guilt and condemnation of their sin, for they understand what the blood of Jesus has done to make them free.

This is why the young man in the story I told you was grieved. He knew the blood of Christ had completely cleansed—covered in full—the past of his beloved.

What's more, the blood of Jesus allows us to boldly enter God's presence. We read in the book of Hebrews, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). Imagine that! A person can come with confidence, assurance and even boldness into God's presence, knowing she will be received because her sins no longer separate her from God. No longer do we have to feel God disapproves of us. That fear is now out of the way so we can fellowship with our Creator.

We Now Love

Should we be tempted to believe we have done nothing worthy of death and therefore have no need of a Savior, we should look again at what God expects of us. He asks but two things: to love Him and others. Follow this carefully. The moment we offend or hurt someone, we have violated God's laws and become worthy of death.

James confirms this when he says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:8-10). Even those who willingly choose to avoid people are breaking the commandment to love others.

Our world is messed up not because God wants it that way and has willed it to be so but because of the breaking of these two commandments.

Think for a moment about how people treat one another. Better yet, think about how you relate to those around you. How many people have had a bad day because you were having a bad day? How many times have you said or done something you knew would hurt another person? This is what creates the havoc in our world.

You may think, *Sure, I could have been nicer and kinder here or there, but it really wasn't that big of a deal. I didn't kill anybody.*

The degree of our sin makes no difference. We are still not excused. It's the trillions of "not so bad" acts that have led to more offensive behavior and a world that's in terrible shape.

Sadly, we blame God instead of ourselves. Why, we ask, does He allow bad things to happen? But God is not the one who has broken covenant; we are. As Proverbs 19:3 says, "The foolishness of a man twists his way, and his heart frets against the Lord."

We Live Well

Some people serve God out of fear. They are not as concerned with going to heaven as they are with staying out of hell. Yet to them the responsibilities involved in a covenant relationship with God seem staggering, and they think it impossible to live a righteous life before God.

What they don't realize is that goodness requires a relationship with God. Christians are "supposed" to be good people to be a part of God's kingdom. But those who discover just how hard it is to be good should not cancel themselves

out of any hope of truly pleasing God.

Only God can empower us to live right before Him. Even salvation comes only by God's grace. It can't be earned, bought or inherited from our parents, as the Bible proclaims: "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

The issue of our goodness coming from God is further clarified in that God extends salvation only on the basis of Jesus' blood. Forgiveness of sin is not arbitrary. It's not God saying, "OK, since I'm God, I'll just forget what you've done because I know you are sorry." God's forgiveness is always based on Jesus having already paid the price for our sin with His blood, as Ephesians 2:13 says: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Once again, this atonement is made possible through the substitutionary blood of Christ shed in His substitutionary death on the cross. So then, we have access to God through Jesus, but that access is granted only on the basis of Christ's blood. If Christ had died in another manner, such as by hanging or drowning, salvation would have been incomplete because His death did not save us—His blood did!

Numerous verses in Scripture make it clear that only blood can atone for sin. Only by the blood of Jesus can we come to God.

Paul wrote, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:19-20).

It is easy to think works and good deeds will get us into God's good graces. But again, the Scriptures are

straightforward about this: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

This, of course, doesn’t mean there is nothing to do but sit back and wait for Jesus to come. On the contrary, there is much work to be done in this present world—work to do for God’s kingdom, but not work to do in order to be saved.

Am I saying we can live any way we please because salvation is granted apart from personal righteousness? Not at all. Paul addresses this question quite plainly in his letter to Titus. After affirming salvation is apart from works (Titus 3:5) and then further affirming we are justified by nothing other than grace (v. 7), Paul states that “those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (v. 8).

The free gift of salvation and God’s incredible grace must never be seen as an open door to sin. Should anyone ask why, the answer is simple: Sin diminishes joy, peace, happiness, security, authority and boldness before God’s throne. It further opens doors to the influence of demons and ruins a person’s testimony.

We Live Free

We were never meant to continue to live in sin after receiving God’s saving grace. But unfortunately, while we are in this life, we are susceptible to sin. John assures us that the blood of Jesus is not good for only one cleansing but has the power to keep us clean: “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). And, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9).

Again, John was not saying that a believer, now freed from sin, should continue practicing sin. There is a clear difference between living in sin and occasionally falling into it. There is a difference between practicing sin and being troubled by it.

Some believe a person can be freed from sin in such a way that he or she will never sin again. The Bible does not teach the attainment of sinless perfection. Rather, it teaches freedom from the power of sin, which means that a person is no longer forced to do it: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

After you have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, sin becomes a matter of choice. You can reject the power of the indwelling Christ and choose to sin, or you can call upon the righteousness that is in Jesus and experience His help in overcoming sin. You are no longer obligated to do wrong by the "law of sin." (See Romans 7:14-25.)

Jesus is the solution. We read in 1 John 2:1-2, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

I want to continue to emphasize that the righteousness required of us is not administered or controlled by the Law, and it is not accomplished without God's help. The good news of the gospel is not only that Christ died for sinners but also that He came to take up residence in the life of a believer. This and only this is what makes real righteousness possible.

The life of Christ in us gives the strength to do what we cannot do by ourselves. The measure of the work of Jesus on the cross is meant to become a measurable work in us. Of all

the truths of God's Word, this is one of the most misunderstood and neglected. For some reason, we gravitate to the Law or to works to make us righteous rather than to Christ, and in the process we miss God's grace and power.

My brothers and sisters, may it not be so. In this Easter season, may we understand and appropriate the full power of the blood of Christ shed at Calvary over us, in us and through us so that we walk in the freedom, love and strength God intends for us.

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