

How You Benefit From a Covenant With God

When I was a little boy and I first heard about Jesus' death on the cross, I thought, "I wish He would have escaped. I wish it wouldn't have had to happen." But I didn't understand. It had to happen!

Though Jesus died at the hands of Pontius Pilate, nobody really killed Jesus.

He freely laid His life down for you and me. Therefore, all thanks, praise and honor should go directly to Him!

Jesus said in John 15:13 that there is "no greater love that a man can have than this: that he lay his life down for his friends!"

The passion of Jesus Christ is the greatest love story ever told and it's all true. Jesus said in John 10:18, "No one takes My life, but I gladly lay it down on My own initiative" There were many times in the Bible where Pharisees and other religious and political leaders tried to take Jesus' life, but they could not. There was also a time in Luke 4:28-30 when the angry crowd tried to throw Jesus off a cliff, but it says "He passed through their midst."

Jesus willingly gave His life at the exact time that God intended Him to.

Though He died approximately 2000 years ago, God had already made up His mind that Jesus would go to the cross long before that. Revelation 13:8 says, "the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world." In other words, before God created the world and all it contains, He knew He would send His Son to save His creation from its sin.

We have all heard it said, "He paid a great price. He made the ultimate sacrifice." But most people, Christian and non-Christian, don't quite understand what this great price bought us. Sure, we say it bought us salvation, but it bought us much, much more.

You see, Jesus did not "Make the ultimate sacrifice." Jesus WAS the ultimate sacrifice!

In Exodus 12, God promised the children of Israel that Moses would lead them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. They were instructed to take an unblemished lamb, slaughter it, put its blood over the doorposts, and eat what was called the Passover lamb.

Here is another truth, that growing up as a Catholic boy, I thought had no relevance to my religion. I went to a school that had a lot of Jewish children and they got a lot of school days off for Jewish holidays such as Passover. I had to go to school those days! It was ingrained in me that Passover was just for the Jews.

But after I got saved and I studied the Word of God, I came to realize the foreshadowing that the Passover of Exodus 12 truly represented. Here they were in bondage to Pharaoh—enslaved, impoverished and without hope. And God instructs them to take a lamb! This lamb's blood caused the plague of death to PASS OVER them; to heal them and to feed them.

What a picture of our lives! We were in bondage to sin and the devil, spiritually poor and destitute, and without hope in this world. Yet when we receive the blood of THE LAMB OF GOD, who takes away the sin of the world, we are brought out of bondage, "out of Egypt, " into the "promised land" of salvation, joy and freedom! This is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He had to suffer as He did because sin had to be paid for with

innocent blood, an unblemished lamb!

He had to BE the sacrifice that was offered up for our deliverance and freedom.

But it gets better. In the Old Testament, whenever two people or two groups wanted to make peace with one another and share their wealth and blessings with each other, they would make a covenant. Often it was called a "blood covenant." This practice still exists in many parts of the world.

If you have ever heard of Stanley and Livingston, one a missionary, one a reporter, this is exactly what they encountered in their work in Africa. Whenever an African tribal chief would threaten Stanley, he would make a BLOOD COVENANT with a rival tribe by offering gifts and drinking each other's blood. As a result, the threatening tribe would do no harm to Stanley because by attacking him, they would be attacking the rival tribe that Stanley had made a covenant with.

They would cut each other's hand or wrist and rub dust in the wound. The ensuing scar would be proof of the covenant they had, and it would stave off any enemy or cannibal.

This is why Jesus said in John 6:53 , "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no part in Me." He was not encouraging cannibalism! He was saying, "When you receive My death and put your faith in My blood, then you have a blood covenant with Me. Your enemies will now be My enemies. Your battles will now be My battles. Your problems will now be My problems. I will fight them, win them and solve them! I am now your partner for life. I will defend you and protect you and cover you because you honor My covenant by honoring My blood."

In a Hebrew or African covenant between two people, agreements were made, gifts were exchanged, and blood was shed to ratify the covenant. Everything that belonged to one person, now belonged to the other as well, just as in a marriage. This

was, and is, the most powerful form of contract that exists in the world.

When Jesus went to the cross, He became the gift, the sacrifice and the blood that now brings us into covenant with God. And what a covenant this is! God says, "All that is Mine is now yours and all that is yours is now Mine." Think of how great this is! Everything we have belongs to God, and everything He has belongs to us!

But we really have nothing to offer, so God says, "Bring Me your sin, and I will bring you My righteousness. Bring Me your sickness, and I will bring you My health. Bring Me your lack, and I will bring you My provision. Bring Me your confusion, and I will bring you My peace. Bring Me your depression, and I will bring you My joy."

This is the power of a covenant. An exchange is made. Gifts are given. Agreements are made and sworn to be kept, by the shedding of blood.

This is why Jesus so willingly laid down His life. He knew that He had to be the animal sacrifice that would bring us into covenant with God!

No other sacrifice would do. No greater love could be possible. No clearer proof that God would back up His promises. Now, all the promises of God in the Bible are available to you—not because you are a good or bad person; but because God backs up His promises with His very own blood!

Blood is the guarantee. Blood is the proof. Blood is the very Life of God that was offered to you and me so that we could drink freely of this blood, drink freely of this covenant, and never be alone again. Never be defeated again. And never be without God's promises again.

What is your part of this covenant?

Drink the blood! Receive the sacrifice that was made for you. Put your trust in Jesus' shed blood and nothing else. Every time you take communion, you are not supposed to be worried and introspective about all that you have done wrong. Rather, you are to drink the blood as the only remedy, the only sacrifice for your forgiveness, deliverance and access to ALL THAT GOD HAS.

When the young prodigal returned to his father, the older brother was jealous, and he said, "Father, I have never treated you badly like this other son of yours. Yet, you have never killed the fatted calf for me. You have never had a celebration for me."

And the father's response is a picture of the covenant God has made with each of us who receive Jesus Christ as Lord: "My son," he said, "all that is mine is yours!" (Luke 15:31)

No truer words could ever express why Jesus had to die. No truer words could ever express what God intended when He allowed His Son to be nailed to that tree. No truer words could ever express the blessing, the wealth, and the victory that came when the precious blood of Jesus was shed on the cross that day.

Your heavenly Father says, "ALL THAT IS MINE, IS NOW YOURS!"

When this sinks in, you will never be lonely again. You will never be afraid again, and you will never lack any good thing another day in your life!

God has made a covenant with you!

All that's left for us to do is thank Him and drink it all in!

Gregory Dickow is the founder and pastor of Life Changers International Church, one of the largest churches in the Chicagoland area. He also is the host of *The Power to Change*

Today—an international television ministry that reaches a potential audience of more than 900 million households weekly.