

Forgiveness? or Freedom?

There are many different thoughts today in the Christian world as to why Christ died on the cross. Some teach He died to “take the penalty” for our sin. Others say he took the “punishment” of our sins. John the Baptist, however, declared Jesus to be “*the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world*” John 1:29. The Apostle John, the last living apostle, confirmed John the Baptist, when he said over sixty years later, “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*” 1 John 3:5-6. To those who begin every Sunday morning worship with a sinners prayer, because “We are all sinners; we sin every day,” the words of the apostle are very offensive. I also realize my message will offend many, though that is not my intention.

Most Christians in America today believe Christ died to “forgive our sins.” If that is the case, He died in vain, because God has always forgiven the sins of those who repent and turn from their sins. When God called Moses to come up on Mount Sinai to reveal His great name, He said, “*The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...*” Exodus 34:6-7. The prophet Isaiah understood this in his day when he wrote...

“*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”

Isaiah 55:6-7

What is sin?

I received a letter from a very angry lady some time back. She accused me of lying about “freedom from sin.” She said, “To eat too much ice cream is a sin.” If she is correct, I must confess, I am a sinner. She was seeking to prove everyone is a sinner by making everything a sin. Those who do so are often trying to cover more atrocious sins in their own life. They are like those who Jesus spoke of who “*strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*” Matthew 23:24.

The Ten Commandment Law of God is still the basis for understanding sin. Exodus 20:13-17. The Apostles build on this as they remind us about the kinds of people who will never inherit the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous*

shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Several years ago, my son shared the above passage with a man who objected, saying, “That can’t be true, because it contradicts the doctrine of grace.” My son replied, “Of course it’s true! The Apostle who told us everything we know about grace is the one who wrote this. The grace of God is what changes us so that we are no longer such things.” The Apostle Paul verifies this, saying, “*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” 1 Corinthians 6:11.

The word “*sanctified*” means “*to make holy.*” Jesus Christ died on the cross to deliver us from sin and make us holy. The people of our nation once knew this was the reason Christ came. In the Civil war, they sang, “*As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free!*”

The modern church tells us sanctification is a lifetime process which will never be complete. If that is true, then it is a salvation by works, and not by grace. A program such as Alcoholics Anonymous is a lifetime process, but sanctification by the shed blood of Christ is not. Paul tells us, “*...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” Hebrews 10:10. Notice he said “*we are,*” which is present indicative. “*We are sanctified* (made holy),” not by a process of our works, but by the work which Jesus Christ finished on the cross when He died to “take away the sin of the world.” John 1:29, 1 John 3:5-6.

Religious teachers tell us that justification means we are merely declared by God to be righteous. They say nothing changes about the sinner, except in the way God sees him. He declares the “guilty” to be “not guilty, innocent, and perfect.” Yet, God told Moses he would never do such a thing. He said he was merciful, “*...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty*”

Exodus 34:7. If you forsake your wickedness, God will forgive you, but he will never deny your past guilt. However, if you will confess it, he will wash it out of your heart and make you free!



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