

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

May 14, 2020

What Forgiveness Could Not Do

God's forgiveness is a powerful thing. Without it none of us could have fellowship with God. In fact, we would all be eternally lost. Yet as wonderful as God's forgiveness is, there is something that it could not accomplish. That "something" is called redemption.

The Apostle Paul utilized a particular argument on multiple occasions to reveal the purpose and power of the sufferings of Christ. He presents that Christ died to accomplish a work that nothing else could achieve. In fact, if the purpose for which Christ died could have been accomplished any other way, then the death of Christ was unnecessary and without cause. Paul's words were "...***then Christ is dead in vain.***" Galatians 2:21.

What the blood of animals could not do: The common belief that the blood of Christ covers sin is based upon the word "*atonement*" as used in the writings of Moses. The Hebrew word from which the word "*atonement*" was translated means "*to cover*." Based upon that Old Covenant definition, it seems logical to many to assume that Christ's blood covers sin. Yet Paul is clear that Christ shed his blood to do what was impossible for the blood of animals to accomplish. He wrote, "***For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.***" Hebrews 10:4. If God had wanted to merely cover your sins He would have spared His Son and let you offer

another lamb. But because He wanted your sin “*taken away*” and “*washed*” from your heart, He sent His Son to do what the blood of goats and lambs could never do!

What the Law could not do: The Bible says, “*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*” Romans 8:3. The Law could pass judgment upon the sinner, and had the power to slay the sinner, but it could not pass judgment upon and destroy the sin that was in the sinner. So God sent His Son to do just that! Through Jesus Christ, God fulfilled His judgment upon the sin within us without damning us in the process. He destroyed the sin that was in us and made us free. Romans 6:6-7. There has never been a law given which could do anything like this!

What punishment and wrath could not do: The same God who “*is love*” 1 John 4:8 is also “*a consuming fire.*” Hebrews 12:29. Because of their great iniquity, God destroyed all of humanity in the flood except for those eight who were gathered in the Ark. You would think such wrath would change everything, but it changed nothing. Within a few generations humanity was as wicked as ever. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah? Once again God showed His great wrath, but again it was soon forgotten. It was the same with the children of Israel. The Bible says, “***When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not***

right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Psalms 78:34-37. They would repent and make promises to God, but it was all a lie. When the wrath faded, so did their repentance. If God was going to have a special people, it would require something that would do what "punishment" could never do.

What forgiveness could not do: Some present the gospel as though forgiveness of sins somehow began when Jesus died on the cross, or that the purpose of His death was to forgive sins. Do they not know that God has always forgiven sins? God proclaimed Himself to Moses, saying, "*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. On many occasions the children sinned and rebelled against God, but the Bible records, "*But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.*" Psalms 78:34-38. Still after every occasion in which they were forgiven, they turned back to their iniquity. Forgiveness deals with your past, but it cannot change what you are in in your heart. To change humanity, God would have to do what even forgiveness could never do.

The work of Christ: In the days of Ezekiel, God revealed something He would do that nothing else had been able to accomplish. He said, "*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of*

your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezekiel 36:25-27. To bring the change which God desired required that something be able to wash the people from all their iniquity, take away their hard heart, and give them a new heart and spirit. Only then would they walk in God's statutes and do God's judgments. But what could do such an amazing work after so many other things had failed?

The answer to the above question is simple. It is the reason Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed his precious blood. The word of God says, "*Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*" Hebrews 13:12. When Jesus Christ died on the cross to purge sin from our heart and nature, He did what nothing else could ever do. He made us free!