

May 11, 2024

The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect

As Jesus was being interrogated and railed upon by the chief priests, elders, and high council of the Jews, Peter was denying that he even knew him. On the first occasion Peter simply denied that he knew Jesus. On the second occasion Peter swore an oath that he did not know Jesus. Finally, on the third occasion, Peter began *"...to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man."* Matthew 26:74. It seems that Peter not only took an oath that he did not know Jesus, but pronounced a curse on either those who accused him of knowing Jesus, or, more likely, upon Jesus Christ himself.

Only hours before, Jesus had told Peter that he would deny him three times. Luke 22:34. Peter could not believe that he would do such a thing, but Jesus said, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: **and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.**"* Luke 22:31-32. With these words, Jesus was looking past Peter's denial to the hour of Peter's conversion. **For over three years Peter had been a disciple, but it was only after Jesus' resurrection that Peter became a born-again child of God.**

All my life I have heard ministers use Peter's denial, David's adultery, or Abraham's deception of Pharaoh as proof of the sinfulness every child of God still possesses. It is though they are completely ignorant of the great change and redemption that was brought in at Calvary. While it is true there is much we can learn from those who walked with God before Christ appeared, they (including Peter before he was converted) are not examples of what it is to be the redeemed of the Lord.

While the book of Hebrews reminds us of the exploits the great men and women of old did through believing God, it says, "***These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...***" Hebrews 11:13. As great as these men and women of faith were, they spent their lives persuaded of and looking for the promise of redemption which they could never receive in their lifetime.

As the writer of Hebrews concludes his record of the great men and women of faith, he says, "***And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.***" Hebrews 11:39-40. Each of these obtained a witness of righteousness by faith, but they could not receive in their lifetime the completion of salvation that we receive through Jesus Christ.

The words "***made perfect***" as used in Hebrews means "***to complete.***" This "***completion***" is

described as having our inner man purged from sin by the blood of Christ. The Bible says, *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience from dead works** to serve the living God?”* Hebrews 8:14. The *“conscience”* is speaking of your *“innermost thoughts and feelings.”* The sacrifices and ritual of the Law could sanctify the outside of a person but could never wash sin from the heart. The Bible says, *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* Hebrews 10:4. The sacrificial system of the Law left the person very *“incomplete”* before God because sin still remained in their heart and nature.

Jesus Christ came to *“take away the sin”* John 1:29 that dwells in the human heart. This is what it means to be made complete. Yet, no one could receive this *“completion”* until Christ died and rose again from the dead.

Those believers who lived before Christ came, died in faith without receiving the promises, but they were not lost. The Bible verifies this in the following chapter of Hebrews, telling us that when we come to Jesus we are also coming *“to God the Judge of all, and to **the spirits of just men made perfect.**”* Hebrews 12:22-23. They were not made complete before they died, but they received that completion when Christ rose from the dead. They were righteous men while they lived, but now they are *“the spirits of just men made perfect.”*

For those who are alive today, it is a dangerous fallacy to believe that they also will receive the promised cleansing from sin after death. This was true for Abraham, David, and others because they believed God even though Christ had not yet come. Today, Christ has come! Jesus was very clear. It is only those who do not believe him who die in their sins. He said, *"...for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."* John 8:24. Your deliverance from sin and Satan is not after you die. Today is the day of salvation! After you die, it will be too late!