

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Before God founded the present world and all that is in it, He had within His heart a marvelous plan. At the very center of this design, He had in mind the formation of a bride with whom He could join in Holy intimacy—with whom He could enter into a marriage covenant. However, in His great wisdom He knew that this work could only be accomplished with great difficulty. This heavenly woman of His desire could only arrive at the perfection which she must have to enter into this marriage union, through great trial and tribulation. She must have known and then also rejected sin.

We understand this fact because the Lamb of God was “slain before the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Thus, God knew and understood the necessity of the fall and redemption of man before He even began His marvelous works. You see, God could have simply created a bride for Himself, perfect and beautiful in every respect. But the results of such a creation were already evident. Our Lord had already made a being extremely powerful and beautiful—one that was flawless in every respect. It is the angel Lucifer of whom we speak here. However, this perfect one had never known sin. So, in the course of time, he began thinking, dreaming and imagining how he could be as great as God. He made a decision to rebel against his Maker and so his kingdom became one of darkness and iniquity.

Our God must have an eternal companion whom He can fully trust. There must never come a time when she could be tempted with sin and so turn against Him. So in His infinite wisdom, our Lord has allowed the men and women who will become His bride to pass through the experience of sin. He gave them a free choice from the beginning and so allowed them to know the darkness and depravity of sin. Also known to His people are the results of rebellion against Him. So the bride of Christ is coming into her position of glory and eminence from the opposite direction than Lucifer. He was created perfect and then fell. They, being born into sin, and then redeemed by their Maker, must daily choose to reject sin. Step by step, day after day, they understand more and more how disgusting sin is and how repugnant the results of it are. In this way, Christ’s bride has tasted rebellion and yet chosen full submission to Him. She has known sin, yet sought holiness with all her heart. When the profoundly wise work of God is finished within her, she will never again be attracted to sin.

God did all of His work knowing the high price He would have to pay. Allowing men and women access to sin would certainly result in their experiencing it. Therefore, this would cause not only their great suffering, but also necessitate the death of His own Son. To get the wife, the eternal companion whom He so desired, would require

Him paying the highest price. What was most precious to Him would have to be sacrificed, His blood poured out upon the ground, for God's ultimate purposes to be accomplished. The marriage contract came at the greatest possible cost. This is the blood of the covenant.

In the Garden of Eden, shortly after Adam and Eve sinned, God came to visit them. He fully saw and knew what they had done. They had disobeyed and rebelled against Him. Thus their nakedness was exposed. Here, the Creator began teaching them about the price of sin. He began revealing the great cost required to resolve the problem. To cover them, God killed an innocent creature, probably a lamb, and made clothing for them. The shed blood of an innocent one covered the result of their sin, their nakedness.

No doubt this action was grievous to God. He had no desire to kill anything, especially one of these new creatures which He had made. God has no pleasure in killing and death, even the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11). However, the situation demanded it. His lesson for Adam and Eve was clear, sin could only be covered by death.

Also, this action of God's must have been extremely startling to Adam and Eve. These animals were their friends. They knew them all and probably had been caring for them in the Garden. This little fuzzy animal had done nothing wrong, yet because of their rebellion, its death was required. This action must have profoundly impacted the world's first couple. They began to realize the price of their sin. Later, when God gave Moses the law, these same sentiments were expressed. Vegetables and fruits were not acceptable to atone for sin. Only by the offering of the blood of a pure and innocent creature, could sin be atoned. The Old Testament is full of ordinances and admonitions concerning the necessity of this offering.

As we all know, the fulfillment of this severe demand of the Most High was the offering of His own precious Son. Jesus Christ came to earth to die for us. He died in our place, shedding His blood so that the righteous requirement of God could be satisfied. No doubt, if the sacrifice of an animal was precious in God's sight, the blood of God's own Son is indescribably more precious. The value of such a sacrifice to God is beyond comprehension. To us who are sinners, this offering is also of supreme value. The price which was paid was high enough to purge and forgive the most heinous sin. There is no one on the earth who cannot be forgiven. There is no sinner whose deeds are so awful that the blood of Jesus cannot cleanse him. What a glorious thing! We, who rebelled against God and sinned against Him in the most evil ways, can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. There can be no doubt about this most glorious truth.

Most of the modern church today at least partially understands this fact. However, often it has taken it to an extreme where it has ceased to be true. Many Bible teachers have embellished facts about the precious blood of Jesus until they are no longer in harmony with the mind of God or His word. For example, many teach that when we receive Jesus, He forgives all our sins, past, present and future. Now they insist, there is nothing we can do or say which will change this fact. Another error which is commonly propagated today is that God cannot see our sin, He only sees the blood of Jesus. These assertions are not true. There are no verses in the Bible which state such things. On the contrary, we find many verses which say something entirely different. Therefore, let us take a little time to carefully examine the word of God together to discover what the truth of God really is.

CONVICTION OF SIN

Reading through the scriptures, we find God's wonderful, free forgiveness revealed. Yet, in order to receive this great forgiveness and to take part in this cleansing, we also find that there are some requirements. One of the more obvious of these is the fact that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us (Mt 6:15). Here in the Bible, it is clearly stated that there is at least one condition we must fulfill for receiving God's forgiveness. All of our sins, past, present and future certainly can be forgiven, but just as certainly will not be unless we meet God's requirements.

Another requirement which comes to mind is the necessity for the sinner to be convicted of sin. Jesus stated: "And when He (the Comforter) has come, He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" (Jn 16:8). This deep sense of conviction of sin is the first step which enables us to receive forgiveness. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. When Peter was preaching to the multitudes on the day of Pentecost, exposing their sin in crucifying Jesus, what was their response? They were "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). They were convicted. They suddenly realized the depth of their wickedness. Without this deep conviction, they could not have then been prepared to receive forgiveness.

Let us think about this together. If you have never been convicted of your sin—not only what you have done, but also what you yourself are—then you have no need of a Savior. If you have not realized deeply and thoroughly in the light of God that you are sinful to the core, then you cannot think that you are worthy to die. And if you are not worthy to die, then it is obviously not necessary for someone to die in your place. If you do not consider yourself worthy of the sentence of death, then you cannot need a Substitute to take your place in this execution. Therefore, you cannot be truly forgiven. The blood of Jesus is not paint. It speaks of the death of someone. This Someone died for those who realize the evil tendencies of their own life and nature. They have been convicted of their sin. They are deeply sorry and realize that who and what they are is completely unworthy to live. Therefore, they are ready to receive the blood of Someone else who died for them. From this position, they can receive complete forgiveness.

If you have never been convicted of sin, then you have not been forgiven and to this day you are still in your sins. It does not matter if you have "prayed the sinner's prayer." It makes no difference if you are a church member and attend regularly. In order to pray a prayer that will result in your forgiveness, you must first have had an encounter with God. And when God reveals Himself to man, with this comes conviction of sin. God is holy. He is pure and sinless. In fact, He hates sin. So, when He reveals Himself, this burning holiness of His character automatically reveals the sinfulness and impurity of the one to whom He is revealed. Job said: "I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye has seen You and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5,6). How many so-called "Christians" today are in Job's position before God revealed Himself? They have "heard about God," and perhaps agreed mentally with what they have heard, but they have never "seen" Him. They have never really met Jesus. They have never been convicted of sin. In spite of the fact that the church which they attend is trying to assure them that they are forgiven and saved, the truth is they are not.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Speaking of this "assurance of salvation" and forgiveness, the church has no

right to be trying to assure anyone of any such thing. This is the work of God. Nowhere in the Bible is the church given the job of assuring people that they are right with God. The church's job is to bring men and women to Christ. Her work is to reveal Jesus in a powerful way through preaching and testifying so that people can "see" Him and meet Him. It is Jesus' business to forgive the sinner and then give him a confidence that he has been forgiven. This assurance of forgiveness comes from the presence of God. When anyone has a face to face interaction with Him, they are deeply convicted of their sin, yet they come away knowing, being fully assured in their hearts, that they have met Love and Forgiveness Himself. They have had a life changing transaction with God.

Oh, how the churches today are full of those who have never been convicted of sin. They have no right to assurance of forgiveness. Yet they are convinced by man that they have it. Instead of laboring to bring people to God, far too many Christians are working to bring people into their "church." Their goal is different from the Lord's. Their objective is to fill their building and multiply their numbers. They are working to make people feel comfortable and welcome. In fact, they will fight against any preaching which might make someone feel troubled or uneasy. And so they take the place of God. They offer "easy" forgiveness to anyone who will agree with them and join them. This is an ungodly work.

God's thought, on the other hand, is completely different. It is to bring men and women to a conviction of sin. This is the clearly stated work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:8). Sinners need to be uncomfortable. The more uncomfortable the better. All the truly great revivals in church history were characterized by this one thing: a deep agonizing conviction of sin on the part of the unbelievers. It is right for the ungodly to be deeply convicted. It is good for them to agonize over their sinful condition. Profound sorrow is a wonderful sign of the work of the Spirit of God. When we find sinners in this state, let us not work to relieve them of this burden. Our work, our only work, is to point them continually to the Savior until they themselves "do business" with Him, until they know for themselves that they have been forgiven and accepted. This will result in true, long-lasting conversion.

Another necessary step for receiving forgiveness is repentance. A deep conviction of sin results in repentance on the part of the sinner. When the multitude was convicted or "pierced in their hearts" through Peter's preaching, they immediately cried "What shall we do?" Peter's response to this was: "Repent . . . and be baptized." You see, repentance is the necessary result of a deep conviction of sin. Repentance means literally in the Greek language "to have a change of mind." In other words you, being convicted of sin, resolve to never be involved in sin again. You change your attitude to hate what you have been and done and cry out to God to be completely free from such detestable behavior. This too is a necessary step to receive forgiveness, the turning of the heart to decide never again to be involved in sin. Unless there is such a determination on the part of the sinner, forgiveness cannot be found.

To further illustrate this truth, let us look into the Old Testament. There also, when a person made a sin offering there was this essential requirement. This person must be repentant. He must be admit his sin, be truly sorry for it and have the full intention of never doing it again. Without this attitude, the offering which they made was not acceptable to God. It was a stink in His nostrils. Why should He, who made all things, want to see a precious, innocent animal killed for no reason? And why should killing a lamb relieve the person offering it of sin when in their hearts they were fully intending to keep on with their activities? Instead of making them right with God, this

sacrifice was a farce and was actually making things worse. Read Isaiah 66:3. God did not forgive these hypocrites. Instead, His judgment upon them was elevated.

Possibly many in the church today think that while the blood of bulls and goats could not really “work” to hide the sins of those “not quite ready to change,” Jesus’ blood can because it is so much more effective. This too is a mistaken idea. Although truly the blood of Jesus is much more “effective,” it hides from God only those sins for which we have truly repented. While many Christians today say that “God doesn’t see our sin, but only the blood,” the Bible teaches that “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pr 15:3 KJV). And also, “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb 4:13). You see, God knows our motives. He sees our heart. We never can fool Him, even if we can deceive ourselves.

Yes, once we have truly and thoroughly repented, our sins are removed from us “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps 103:12) and He remembers them no more. But this is a result of a broken and contrite heart. It is something which can and does happen to those who come to God with an honest and “true heart” (Heb 10:22). When, in the light of God, we are convicted of what we have done and what we are and then truly repent, our sins are indeed forgiven and removed forever.

However, if God would not accept the blood of innocent animals to forgive unrepentant sinners, how much less will He accept the blood of His most precious Son to relieve unrepentant Christians from their just reward. If we are not ready and willing to fully and thoroughly repent and turn from our wicked ways, the blood of Jesus will do us absolutely no good. It makes no difference if we were once born again. In fact, to try to take advantage of the precious blood of God’s Son in this way will only make our situation worse. God is never mocked or deceived, even if we are.

We must be careful to distinguish between the accusations of the devil in our conscience and the true conviction of sin. It is true that the devil can and does condemn us. When we respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit this brings us liberty, but listening to the voice of the accuser only bring us into bondage. We must learn to discern the voice of God in our conscience and refuse that of the enemy. True repentance helps us here. When we have genuinely been convicted and repented before God, then we have the armor necessary to withstand such accusations. Authentic, complete repentance not only makes us right with God, but it also gives us the ground to resist further attacks from the devil. When we have the confidence from God Himself that we are forgiven, then the enemy has very little to say. However, too often, the conviction of the Holy Spirit is labeled by well-meaning Christians as “accusations” or “lies of the enemy.” We must be very careful not to refuse the conviction of the Spirit, labeling His work as “the devil.” Truthfully, the great problem in the church today is not too much false accusation, but far too little true conviction and repentance.

The truths which we have been investigating here in this writing apply to believers as well as to unbelievers. The steps which are necessary to receive forgiveness are also for Christians. There are many church members today who, although at one time were born again, are not thoroughly convicted of sin, not completely repentant and therefore not totally forgiven. Many of God’s children are walking in sin and therefore are not, I repeat, NOT being forgiven by God. Receiving eternal life, does indeed require an initial conviction and repentance. However, the necessity of forgiveness does not stop there. Assuming that someone has truly been born into God’s family, there still remains the necessity for a continuing repentance.

Repentance for a believer is not merely a one time occurrence but an ever deepening, daily experience. The more we grow spiritually, the closer we walk with the Light of the world, the more profoundly we sense our sinful state. When I was a new Christian, I thought something like this: "After 20 or 30 years of walking with the Lord, I am going to be really holy." But my experience after 20 or 30 years is: "I am truly wicked and worthy of death." Yet from this position, I know that I am constantly being forgiven and cleansed. Praise God, as we "confess" our sin, He does two things. Not only does He forgive us for what we have done, but also cleanses us from what we are (I Jn 1:9).

In I John 1:7 we see that there is yet another important requirement necessary for us to be forgiven. From this passage it is obvious that forgiveness is not just a "one time thing." It is an ongoing experience for every true believer. John teaches us that: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light . . . the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin." The word "if" here indicates that there is definitely a prerequisite for our cleansing. To "walk in the light" means that we are being constantly illuminated by the light of Jesus' countenance. We are living in His presence every day. Thus, every thought, attitude and action is being revealed to us for what it is by the expression of His face. If and when these are sinful, then we can repent afresh and experience the marvelous forgiveness and cleansing which is freely given to us in Christ. For a believer to live in forgiveness, He must also walk in God's presence, responding continually to any conviction of sin when and if it occurs.

GOD'S JUDGMENT

Everyone will be judged by God. Every man and woman who has ever lived on the earth will stand before Him one day. All unbelievers will appear before what is known as the "great white throne" (Rev 20:11). There all those who have hated and rejected Christ will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:15). Yet, 1,000 years before this event, God's own children will also be judged. They will stand before the "judgment seat of Christ" (II Cor 5:10). Here, those whose deeds are good will be blessed, but those whose deeds were evil will be punished. (Biblically, the word "reward" does not mean only good things, but indicates that we will get what we justly deserve [See II Tim 4:14]). However, let us be very, very clear about one thing. This punishment of God's disobedient sons and daughters is not the same as the judgment of unbelievers. No believer will ever be lost. None of them will be eternally tormented. They will not be "thrown into the lake of fire."

Please think with me through the following train of logic. If we are forgiven for our sins, then they will not and cannot be judged because our judgment has fallen on Another. But if we are still walking in sin, that is we are still unconvicted, unrepentant and therefore unforgiven, we must certainly be judged for these sins. God would be unjust not to judge unforgiven sin. If we have failed to meet Jesus' criteria for forgiveness, the only alternative is that we will be judged and therefore receive the punishment we deserve. This is true for believers as well as unbelievers, it is just that the punishment is different. If we as believers are not "walking in the light" and therefore not living daily in repentance and forgiveness, then we have something very terrible to look forward to. Hebrews 10:26,27 reads: "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation." You see, the sacrifice of Jesus is only for those who have repented of their sins and therefore received

forgiveness. The “we” here can only refer to believers, since unbelievers have clearly not “received” the truth.

The most severe punishment for believers is what we have already studied in the chapter entitled the “The Judgment Seat of Christ.” There we understood that the untransformed soul-life of believers will be consumed and therefore lost before the presence of God Almighty. This destruction of the soul is the direct result of not living in repentance and therefore not receiving the forgiveness and cleansing we so desperately need. What is not forgiven will be judged and punished. What has been forgiven will already have been cleansed and transformed. (There are actually several other consequences for disobedient believers, but there is not space here in this writing to detail them. For a better understanding of this, please refer to my previous book entitled, Thy Kingdom Come.)

THE MEANS TO AN END

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, Jesus came to earth and died for a purpose. This eternal purpose was to redeem and prepare a bride for Himself. It was not simply to rescue a bunch of sinners by forgiving them. Forgiveness was not the goal, it was only the means to an end. This end was to change these sinners into His own likeness, giving them access to His own life and nature, to prepare a bride for Himself. His wonderful forgiveness was just the first step. This cleansing by His blood opened the way for us to enter into intimate fellowship with the Father. And through this communion, we can be changed into all that He is. Consequently, when we stand before God, we will not be able to use the blood of Jesus to excuse ourselves from doing the very thing for which the blood was shed! We cannot expect to be forgiven for ignoring the very reason for which we were forgiven.

To help the reader understand this, let me use the following illustration. Let us suppose that someone bought for you a ticket to the next Olympic games. He paid for the airfare. He bought you tickets to see all the events. He arranged for your hotel and all your food for free. He even provided you with extra cash to use for your own pleasure and enjoyment. Naturally, you would thank him and tell him how much you appreciated this wonderful, free gift. You might even write them a thank-you note just to let him know how really grateful you were. But now let us suppose that when the time came for the Games, you did not go. You got busy with your garden or your hobby. You just did not make the effort to get on the plane and go. What would this show? It would indicate that you did not really appreciate the gift. Even though you acted as though it was important to you, it really was not. You treated the present as an ordinary, common object of no special value. You have insulted your friend and trampled underfoot his gift. So when he comes to see you to find out how you enjoyed the Olympics, what are you going to say? Will he accept the ticket back as an excuse for not going? Will the fact that he bought you the ticket at great personal expense and sacrifice generate in his heart forgiveness for your negligence? Never.

Now our God has provided us with an indescribable opportunity. With His own blood He has purchased for us the possibility to partake of all that He is. This is the most valuable gift anyone can give, paid for at the highest cost. The God of the universe has opened the way for us, small insignificant human beings, to grow up into His fullness.

But let us suppose we don't. Let us imagine that there are a few Christians who are neglecting to take advantage of this great gift. Instead they are living for

themselves and serving their natural appetites. Perhaps they go to church regularly. Perhaps they have no "gross" sins evident in their lives. But they are not pressing on into Christ and being transformed into His image. They are focused on earthly things and so are not progressing spiritually. When Jesus comes, will these people be able to "plead the blood" to excuse themselves for their fleshly lifestyle? Before the judgment seat will Jesus accept the precious blood which bought them the right to enter in to excuse them for not entering? I think not. We will not escape His judgment "if we neglect so great a salvation" (Heb 2:3).

Whoever abuses the grace of God to live only for themselves and then hopes that His blood will cover them for doing this will be surprised before His judgment seat. The "age of grace" will then be over. The opportunity for repentance and forgiveness is then past. There, the throne of grace will be replaced by the throne of judgment. There we will answer for what we did with the grace and forgiveness which was available to us. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay says the Lord.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:29-31). (See also Heb 6:4-8).

Let us also review again Hebrews 10:26, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries." This verse is not addressing the Christian who slips up once in a while and sins, even though he knows it is wrong. "Sinning willfully" here is referring to persistent, unrepentant sin. It is speaking about the very subject we are discussing. You see, if you try to deceive God and use the precious blood of His son to excuse yourself from entering into His eternal plan, the result is "fearful" "judgment" and "fiery" devouring. God indeed is not mocked, whatever we sow, that shall we also reap (Gal 6:7,8).

Dear friends, these are serious considerations with eternal consequences. May God grant us all abundant grace that we may gain all that He has for us—a complete salvation—so that we will not be ashamed before Him at His coming.