

## SOTERIOLOGY (62)

However, the moment the believer confesses his sin, forgiveness and cleansing are immediately secured because of the blood of Christ and fellowship is completely restored. Dr. Chafer writes: “Thus it is revealed that both forgiveness and cleansing for the Christian are based on the blood of Christ. That no punishment is inflicted, that no blow is struck, that no word of condemnation is uttered, and that only perfect forgiveness and cleansing are extended from God on no other terms than confession, is due to the truth that Christ is “the propitiation for our (Christians’) sins” (*Ibid.*, p. 102).

One of the great advantages that the believer has when he sins is that he personally has Jesus Christ as his advocate (I John 2:1). The word “advocate” is one that means a pleader or intercessor. G. Abbott-Smith says it refers to “a friend of the accused person, called to speak to his character, or otherwise enlist sympathy in his favor” (*Greek Lexicon*, pp. 340-341).

If Christ had not secured this privilege on Calvary, every sinning believer would be forced to experience full divine judgment against his sin. However, Christ’s work as a believer’s advocate “answers all divine judgment against sin...” (*Ibid.*, p. 102).

When a believer sins, Christ represents him before the Father. “As Advocate He appears in behalf of the sinning Christian and pleads, not the weakness of the Christian, but the sufficiency of His own sacrifice” (*Ibid.*, p.102).

Christ’s work on the cross not only resolves the sin issue for the unbeliever when he believes, but it also resolves the sin issue for the believer when he confesses. Christ’s work not only provides eternal life for the unbeliever, but it also provides eternal fellowship for the believer. It is so important that a believer face his sin and confess his sin, for this is the key to cleansing and fellowship with God.

It is a serious doctrinal mistake to think in terms of Christ’s work on the cross as being beneficial only for the lost. Christ’s work clearly is continually beneficial to the saved. To miss this truth is to walk in darkness; to grasp this truth is to walk in light.

One other point may be observed. If a believer is truly walking in light and is in true fellowship with God, he will be in continual fellowship with God’s people in God’s church .

Fellowship in the local family of God is not an option, it is a proof that one is in God’s family and is truly walking in the light. This very point is emphatically stressed in I John (i.e. 2:9-11). Not only does Christ’s work on Calvary have ramifications for the believer in his relationship to God, but it also has serious ramifications for the believer in his relationship to his fellow believers. As Dr. Ryrie says, “Thus another benefit of His death is that it provides for enjoyment of fellowship within the family of God” (*Basic Theology*, p. 301).

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It is possible, to a certain extent, to determine in our own lives and in the lives of others whether or not we are walking in light by the fellowship we have with our brothers and sisters in the church. The more one walks in light, the more he/she will desire to fellowship with his brothers and sisters in Christ, in the context of the local church. When a believer is walking in darkness, he tends to shy away from fellowshiping with his brothers and sisters in his church family. As Dr. Walvoord observed: "A sinning Christian who claims to be without sin may deceive himself, but he does not deceive others." The deception is, in part, uncovered by the fact that there is no continual fellowship with others in his church family. There may be some claim to fellowship, but a careful monitoring will show that there is an aloofness from fellowshiping with the church family.

One final note on this subject: since it is confession to God that restores fellowship with God, a question arises as to whether or not there should ever be a public confession to restore fellowship with other believers. There are instances in Scripture when public confession was made (i.e. Acts 19:18). We also know that if we sin against a brother or sister, we are to go and confess it to them and ask for forgiveness (i.e. James 5:16).

Dr. Charles Ryrie gives two important principles that need to be implemented in public confession of sin:

1) Be certain God is prompting the public confession. If the confession is of God, it will square with principles found in the Word. We must remember Satan is the accuser and he works through emotions. Sometimes a person may be prompted to publicly confess something and it is truly not a prompting of God, but is coming from Satan.

2) Be certain that the confession will edify the hearers and not destroy them. A public confession of one's own sin will not, if truly of God, destroy other brothers and sisters in Christ; it will open the doors for great harmony and fellowship, forgiveness and restoration.

The church must remember that when we truly confess our sin, God forgives and restores us and if our brother or sister in Christ truly confesses his or her sin, we must forgive and restore like God.

**Accomplishment#8** - Christ's sufferings and death provide a deferring of judgment .

God cannot and will not tolerate sin nor overlook it. God must, by His very nature, punish sin. This is clearly revealed in the first book of the Bible in the early chapters of the Bible when God told Adam that any sin or rebellion against Him or His Word would bring severe consequences (Gen. 2:15-17).

As we know full well, every human being rebelled against God. This quite obviously becomes the whole basis for the doctrine of soteriology. If men could save themselves, God would have no need of providing salvation in Jesus Christ.

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We have been learning that Jesus Christ took upon Himself the wrath of God, which we deserved (Rom. 5:9). His work saves every believer from having to face the condemnatory wrath of God. The reason that believers do not experience the wrath of God is because of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.

However, one question that may be asked is “what about the unbeliever?” Why doesn’t God immediately send His wrath swiftly against the godless believer? Why doesn’t God quickly execute His judgments against those in evil, godless rebellion? The answer is because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God’s wrath will come against those who reject Jesus Christ. But Christ’s work on Calvary makes it possible for God to postpone the pouring out of that wrath against the offender. Even the worst heathen presently benefits from the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. It is Christ’s work that enables God to patiently wait for all who will come to faith in Christ, to come to Christ. But the Scriptures are very clear that even though there has been a deferring of judgment, divine wrath will most assuredly and eventually come (Rom. 2:4-5).

Dr. Chafer writes: “...every human sin, from the first to the last, is seen in the light of the sacrifice of Christ; and in that sacrifice and upon a plane far more extended than that employed in the saving of individual souls, He is free to defer those holy judgments which otherwise must fall with terrible swiftness upon each sinner” (Vol. 3, pp. 102-103).

An excellent illustration of this very fact is found in I Pet. 3:18-20. It is very clear that God’s willingness to defer judgment in the O.T. was based on His anticipatory N.T. work of Jesus Christ. Even though it is temporary, even the wicked, lost world benefits from Calvary.

**Accomplishment #9** - Christ’s sufferings and death removes pre-cross sin.

We are certainly discovering that the work accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross was not simplistic. The theological implications of Christ’s work on Calvary are eternally profound. Never is that more apparent than right here.

From the time of Adam to the death of Christ, sin was covered by the blood of an animal. But this divinely judicial appropriation did not remove sin; it covered it. A very important passage of Scripture that deals with this very issue is Hebrews 10:1-18. We may point out that the O.T. believers never gained freedom from the consciousness of sin (Heb. 10:2). They had to make yearly sacrifices that could never remove their sin (Heb. 10:3-4). But all of that changed with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:9-10). Dr. Walvoord says, “The Old Testament saints were forgiven, as it were, by credit as they looked forward to the final payment by Christ on Calvary (*Edited Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 71).

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God, fully anticipating His Son's work on the cross, allowed O.T. believers to have their sins covered so they could have a relationship with Him through the symbolic act of presenting an approved animal sacrifice. But it was only God's anticipation of His Son's death that made such symbolic sacrifices possible.

**Accomplishment #10** - Christ's sufferings and death provide a basis for Israel's salvation .

In the O.T., God made several promises to Israel:

- 1) He promised her a perpetual land . Gen. 13:15
- 2) He promised her a perpetual lineage . Is. 66:22; Jer. 31:36
- 3) He promised her an eternal throne . II Sam. 7:16
- 4) He promised her a perfect king . Jer. 33:15, 17, 21
- 5) He promised her an eternal kingdom . Dan. 7:14
- 6) He promised her a great name . Gen. 12:2

Each one of these promises was given by God to Israel. Since God is perfect and true, not one of these promises can ever be forgotten or abandoned. It is clearly predicted that Israel's national salvation will occur with the coming of Christ, her Messiah—Isaiah 59:16-21; Matt. 23:37-39; Acts 15:16; Rom. 11:25-26. Christ came the first time as the humble Lamb and He will come the next time as a roaring lion.

Now the point critical to this study is that fulfilling all of these promises to Israel demands a national removal of her sin. In order for Israel to live in a perfectly righteous kingdom governed by a perfectly righteous King, she must be completely cleansed. This is exactly what is stated will happen when God has completed His program with the Gentiles, and Christ comes back to complete His program with Israel (Rom. 11:27). It is at this time when God will fulfill all of His promises to Israel. Now the obvious question is on what basis can God forgive and take away the sins of an entire nation? What makes national cleansing and forgiveness possible? The only answer is the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah clearly anticipated the national forgiveness that would come by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Is. 53:8).

Although it is a matter of theological speculation, since God knows all of His works from beginning to end (Acts 15:18), it is interesting to consider what would have happened had Israel recognized all of this the first time Christ came. Had she realized her Messiah had to suffer and die in order to give her national cleansing and had she accepted Christ and rallied around Him as He went to the cross, one cannot help but realize that God's kingdom could presently exist and Israel could presently be the esteemed nation of God. It is no wonder Christ wept over Jerusalem. He clearly and precisely knew what could have been (Luke 19:41-42).