

293 The Person, the Name and the Blood

We have been considering in recent weeks some issues involved with the great themes of sinfulness, repentance and forgiveness before God, at both a national level and at a local level between individuals.

Wrongdoing, sinfulness and sins – different terms for the overall problem of sin itself – all have bad consequences and all need to be paid for sooner or later. Until they are paid for, things are not as they should be: wrongs remain “on the table” waiting to be addressed, and relationships are damaged or severed. Thus after the Fall Adam and Eve immediately realised they were in trouble and needed forgiveness; the Lord God duly explained the consequences of their actions and banished them from the garden (Genesis Chapter 3). Yet within these dire consequences of their sin, from which creation itself still suffers (eg., 3.17b-19 / Romans 8.19-22) along with the rest of us, was the gracious promise of “the seed of the woman” (3.15). This Seed was to be the God-given means by which all sin could be completely paid for, thus bringing about forgiveness and reconciliation for those who availed themselves of this mercy.

The principle at the heart of forgiveness, or to put it another way, how sin is actually paid for, involves the shedding of blood. We first see this principle when the Lord God made “coats of skins” of animals and clothed Adam and Eve (3.21), thus covering them literally and, as a “type” at that stage, spiritually, by means of the shedding of animals’ blood. After the Flood in Genesis 9.1-7 we learn that “every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you” (9.3a, compared with 1.29-30): every time that flesh is eaten, the principle is expressed that life and forgiveness depend on the shedding of innocent blood on our behalf. (In passing we can note that vegetarianism, no doubt well-intended, omits this blood-shedding principle (eg., I Timothy 2.3-5), while capital punishment, where life has been deliberately taken, upholds this principle (9.6 / Exodus 21.12 & 14 / Leviticus 24.17)).

Before the Exodus the sprinkling of the blood of the innocent Passover lamb on the lintels and doorposts of the Israelites’ homes gave them protection from “the destroyer” (Exodus 12.23), another type which served as a vivid visual aid as to the need for innocent blood to be shed. This was followed by the elaborate system of sacrifices to be practised in the tabernacle and temple, with just this same principle of the shedding of innocent blood on the people’s behalf at the heart of proceedings.

Of course all these types found their fulfilment, the ultimate Antitype, in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1.29 and 36, KJV). He duly did this by the shedding of His own innocent blood, thereby paying the price for all sin, enabling all wrongs to be removed and all damaged or severed relationships to be restored (eg., Romans Chapter 5 / II Corinthians 5.17-21 / Luke 22.19-20 / I Corinthians 11.23-26). As we were explaining last week, in and by Christ God’s full forgiveness is now in place, ready to flow in love and mercy; and that flowing occurs whenever it is sought by faith in Jesus Christ with the appeal to His innocent blood shed on our behalf. This appeal, and this appeal alone (I Timothy 2.3-6), enables God the Father in His holiness and righteousness to grant His forgiveness, in recognition by both parties - the sinner and God the Father - that the sin-debt has been paid on our behalf by His own Son, the sinless Lamb.

Thus Peter proclaims to the Jewish council about Jesus, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand [to be] a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5.31). Paul proclaims to the Jews, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13.38). Paul writes to the Gentile believers in Corinth - a pretty "rough lot" by the sound of it! – "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" (I Cor 6.11).

In I John we read, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1.7); and, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake" (2.12).

The Person of Jesus, the Name of Jesus, and the Blood of Jesus: we believe, we confess, we ask – and we receive.

Alleluia!

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