

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

From the beginning, the Creator God determined allowable behaviors for all who would be subjects of His Kingdom. This was ratified in the form of the Law of Agape Love¹. All behaviors contrary to it are sin—transgressions of the Law²—for which the penalty is death³. The problem is, of course, that all have sinned⁴ so all have the judgment of death upon them. That was a serious problem for God because He created mankind with the desire that they would become citizens of His Kingdom. If all have sinned and are under judgment of death, no human could ever enter into that Kingdom because all will be dead. Therefore, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is fundamental to God's plan for humankind because God's task is much more than CREATING children, it requires SAVING them from death. Since all have sinned, God is working a 'Plan of SALVATION'.

All of this is, hopefully, plainly obvious and nothing new. However, the critical question is, exactly how does the sacrifice of Jesus Christ change the judgment for sin and what is the role of the Father?

Before God and Jesus get involved, the sinner must admit to the sin. If the agape love of God is working in the sinner, the result of recognizing that sin occurred is deep and heartfelt sorrow. This leads the sinner to come before God the Father in all humility and contriteness⁵—a lowly attitude of heart and mind. This is when the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ is sprinkled⁶ on the sinner to atone for the sin. By this simple act, sin is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, which the Bible refers to as the remission of sin:

MATTHEW 26:28 For this is My [Jesus Christ's] blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission [pardon or release from guilt and judgment] of sins.

NOTE: Life is within the blood⁷ of physical beings and animals. Whether sacrificed animals or the death of our Lord, the English always describes the killing as '*shedding*' of blood. The underlying Hebrew (*shaphak*) and Greek (*ekcheo*) words for *shedding* both mean to pour or gush out, so shedding never implies anything less than a complete discharge of blood that always results in death.

But Jesus Christ's death also substitutes for the sinner's death because He submitted to that penalty in our stead. In simple terms, His death was the ransom⁸ for our lives:

MATTHEW 20:28 “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

TIMOTHY 2:5-6 For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all*, to be testified in due time,

¹ Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28.

² 1 John 3:4.

³ Rom. 5:12; 6:16, 23; 7:5; 8:2; 1 Cor. 15:56; Jas. 1:15; 1 John 5:17.

⁴ Rom. 5:12.

⁵ Isa. 57:15.

⁶ Heb. 10:22; 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2

⁷ Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:14, et al.

⁸ Also Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:15; Eph 1:7; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5.

The problem with sin, however, is the temptation that led to it does not always vanish with the remission of sin. This is especially true if deeply ingrained in the mind and heart. But another marvel of the blood shed by Jesus is it also washes away and cleanses of sin⁹:

REVELATION 1:5 ... To **Him [Jesus Christ] who** loved us and **washed us from our sins in His own blood**,

1 JOHN 1:7 ... **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin**.

Still, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was much more than just the shedding of blood to atone and cleanse sin. His death was a long agony—He was not quickly impaled with a spear. Not only did He have the agony of crucifixion on the cross, but He endured flesh-tearing stripes or lashings that were torments and tortures to His body and soul. Have you ever wondered why Jesus had to suffer? It is because sin not only demands death, but sin also requires restitution or compensation¹⁰:

DEUTERONOMY 32:35 Vengeance is Mine [*says the LORD*], **and recompense** ...

ISAIAH 34:8 For *it is* the day of the LORD's vengeance, **The year of recompense** for the cause of Zion.

For example, restitution for a victim is required rather than punishment in the case of theft (Exod. 22: 1, 4). The problem is that no one can repay or compensate God who owns everything¹¹. All sin is against God¹² so, if it is not possible to recompense God, then the Law demands *punishment*. Notice:

PSALMS 89:31-32 **If they break My [the LORD's] statutes And do not keep My commandments**, 32 Then **I will punish** their transgression with the rod, And **their iniquity with stripes**.

Therefore, sin not only has the penalty of death, but punishment is required as well. This is why Jesus Christ had to *suffer* before He died—to bear the punishment required for sin:

ISAIAH 53:5 But **He [Jesus Christ] was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities**; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And **by His stripes we are healed**.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ bears the punishments for sin, covers (or atones for) sin, ransoms or redeems the person from death penalty through His own death, and, finally, washes and cleanses sin.

But there are still two final acts of God the Father, the first of which is forgiveness. God always respects sincere and humble repentance. After remission of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God is utterly faithful to forgive:

1 JOHN 1:9 **If we confess our sins, He [God the Father] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

⁹ Also Rev. 7:14.

¹⁰ Also Isa. 35:4; 59:18; 65:6; 66:6; Jer. 16:18; 25:14; Ezek. 7; Rom. 12:17, 19; et multi alii.

¹¹ Deut. 10:14; Ps. 24:1.

¹² Ps. 51:4.

It might seem an unusual question but what is the purpose of God's forgiveness? If the sacrifice of Jesus Christ takes away the punishment, covers (or atones for) the sin, ransoms the sinner from death, and washes the person clean, then what remains to be done? Why does God the Father also *forgive* sin?

God is the High Judge¹³ so His forgiveness is the *verdict*. It is when He announces that the person is 'NOT GUILTY' following the remission of sin from punishment and death. But there is one last act of God that remains.

Life in the Kingdom will be an eternity WITHOUT sin ... EVER. Once physical life is converted to spirit, there is no more blood sacrifice for sin, so all those who are transformed from flesh to spirit must be *incapable* of ever sinning¹⁴:

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-53 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead **will be raised incorruptible [incapable of being imperfect]**, and we shall be changed. 53 For **this corruptible [imperfection] must put on incorruption [perfection]**, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

Therefore, all subjects of the Kingdom must be PERFECT, just as God is perfect¹⁵:

MATTHEW 5:48 “Therefore **you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**

But all have sinned, so can anyone be perfect? God's forgiveness (after the remission of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ) establishes the person as innocent. But the 'record' of the sin still exists. The person is now innocent but the record of the sin shows they were not PERFECTLY keeping the Law. How can anyone be perfect, especially in this life? The answer is JUSTIFICATION, which follows God's forgiveness. After the sin is remitted by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God then forgives the sinner. The final act of God is to then *justify* the sinner by imputing His own PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS to the person:

ROMANS 4:6-8, 11-12 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom **God imputes righteousness** apart from works: 7 “Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.” ... 11 And he [*Abraham*] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that **he might be the father of all those who believe**, though they are uncircumcised, **that righteousness might be imputed to them also**, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but **who also walk in the steps of the faith** which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

What does justification do to the record of sin? It completely erases it:

PSALM 103:12 **As far as the east is from the west, So far has He [the LORD] removed our transgressions from us.**

¹³ Dan. 7:22.

¹⁴ Also 1 Pet. 1:3-4.

¹⁵ Also 1 Pet. 1:15.

Justification imputes GOD'S righteousness—His perfect keeping of the Law—to the sinner. Since God has never sinned, a person who has been ascribed with the righteousness of God is now PERFECT in His eyes:

ACTS 13:38-39 “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through this Man [Jesus Christ] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 “and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

Those whom God forgives He also justifies—imputes or ascribes with His righteousness—and all those He justifies are then counted as PERFECT keepers of the Law. And that is how beings of flesh become PERFECT subjects of the Kingdom!

However, even though sin is completely erased by God the Father, some struggle with their sins even AFTER repentance and forgiveness. It is commonplace to feel guilt or shame even after God forgives them. Some say those feelings must be dealt with by *forgiving oneself*. But that, I believe, misses the mark.

How can a person forget a sin that produced deep grief and sorrow unto repentance? It is common that memories and feelings of serious sins last a lifetime. Nothing completely erases them, so true comfort only comes from FAITH that God TRULY **forgives and erases sin**. In other words, we must believe the sin no longer EXISTS and there is NO record of it according to God. This does not remove it from a person's memory, but God abounds in agape love, righteousness, mercy, and compassion and we can TRUST in HIS forgiveness and justification. Considering how deeply involved God and Jesus Christ are when we repent, it is vital not to continue judging oneself guilty and bearing the shame of sin—it is completely gone.

JAMES 5:15 And **the prayer of faith will save** the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And **if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.**

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess our sins, **He [God the Father] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

The idea that the guilt and shame associated with a sin is a signal that you need to forgive yourself is not biblical. What is important is BELIEVE that GOD forgives sin and erases it from heaven and earth. The memories and, especially the feelings, that linger after a sin are normal for those who have God's agape love working inside them. They are reminders of a failure and the pain it caused that help us never to repeat it. It can be tempting to want to condemn ourselves for sin, but what matters most is that God completely absolves us of sin upon repentance.

Be comforted through FAITH in the unconditional promises of God the Father who absolutely forgives sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who perfects us in His righteousness through justification, and completely expunges the sin for all who humbly and sincerely repent!

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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