

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

January 21 - 25, 2008



“The law...can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship...For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.”¹

In the Old Testament, believers were told to offer sacrifices in payment for their sins. The punishment for sin was death, but the life of an animal was given in substitution for the sinner. The sacrifice ‘paid the debt’ owed to God. Sacrifices were also understood to ‘cleanse’ the person. Like a family member barred from the dinner table until s/he has had a shower, the sacrifice was the means of reconciliation with one’s heavenly Parent and kinfolk.

However, the problem with the sacrifices of the Law was that they were inadequate in both extent and efficacy. When we have to ‘work off our debt’, we are always behind – like someone with limited income who can’t stop adding to their credit card balance. The sacrifice ‘payments’ can’t keep up.

And those old dispensation sacrifices weren’t all that effective. They could ‘fade’ the stain, but not remove it. They ‘perfumed over’ the skunky smell, but couldn’t really take away the problem of a sin-disposed nature.

Jesus’ sacrifice for sin is perfect in both extent and efficacy. The payment of God the Son on the cross cancels our ‘debt’ completely – past, present and future. And, it digs deep into our hearts and souls. It ‘cleanses the conscience’ and makes us new creatures², equipped with a Holy-Spirit-new-nature so that genuine transformation is possible.

¹ Hebrews 10:1-2 (TNIV); see also 7:18-19

² Hebrews 9:14 (NIV)

January 22, 2008 **The Shadow of the Cross**

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.”¹

If the Old Testament sacrifices were not up to the task of atoning and cleansing from sin, how could ‘righteous’ people like Abraham, Ruth, David, etc. hope to possess eternal life? Are they barred from heaven because they were born too soon to take advantage of Christ’s sacrifice?

Looking at the Old Testament through the ‘lenses’ of the New, we understand that those sacrifices were ‘types’; they foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ that was to come in the future.

So the forgiveness that came in response to giving a sacrifice was not ‘earned’ by the sinner, it was a matter of grace – God’s gift on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice that was to come.

In the past, it was common for a firstborn son or legal heir to ‘borrow against’ his inheritance. His current income might have been inadequate for his debts, but lenders were often willing to extend credit against that day when, through the death of another, he would inherit the title, estate and riches.

Though they did not understand the ‘how’ of it, Old Testament saints were ‘borrowing against’ the coming powerful sacrifice of Christ. Jesus is the only ‘way’ to God.² The cross of Christ casts a long shadow, backward and forward from its moment in history.

¹ Hebrews 10:1 (TNIV)

² John 14:6; Acts 4:12

January 23, 2008 **Regressing from Grace**

"You foolish Galatians!...Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified....Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?...After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?"¹

When we look back at the early Christians and read about their struggles to give up the idea that they had to continue with Old Testament sacrifices and rules, we may be tempted to think those tendencies don't apply to us: that we've got 'salvation by grace through faith' pretty much figured out. Trying to win God's approval by our own efforts is so passé.

But that tendency to try and leverage God by our actions can sift into any stream of spirituality:

- ❖ 'Lord, I'm double-tithing and love-offering! Bless me so I can give more to others!'
- ❖ 'I've prayed the prayer of Jabez every day – increase my territory and heal my gout!'
- ❖ 'We've been crying out for revival 2 hours a day for 3 years! Lord, pour out your Spirit!'
- ❖ 'I've done everything James Dobson said – how could You let her get a tattoo!'
- ❖ 'We've walked around this city binding every territorial spirit from 'astrology' to Zoroastrianism – start bringing in the heathen!'
- ❖ "I take the sacrament every day, read the lectionary, observe the fasts...heal me!"
- ❖ 'I've studied the doctrines and done everything 'decently and in order', why am I not filled with joy, Lord?'
- ❖ "I've suffered for you! I've taught the Grade 5 boys class for 3 years! It's payback time!"

We can only receive from God if we come with empty hands, looking to Christ crucified. Period.

¹ Galatians 3:1-3 (TNIV)

January 24, 2008 **What about the 'heathen'?**

"Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them."¹

If righteous Israelites were saved by Christ sacrifice, through the means of those 'foreshadowing' offerings, what about righteous 'pagans'? What about those who live and die without any opportunity to reach out to God by Law or Gospel?

The Bible hints that in such circumstances, God judges according to the 'light' that the person had available to them. Every human has a conscience and some live righteous lives guided by that residual 'light' that flickers from Creation. Theologians like C.S. Lewis have gone further and suggest that, when a person of another religion attributes to their god the attributes of the true God (righteousness, justice, mercy, love, etc.) and seeks to live accordingly, they are seeking to know and worship the LORD, even though they call him by another name.²

Fortunately, we can leave the matter of judging the consciences and actions of others in the hands of God, which "will take place on the day when God judges everyone's secret's through Jesus Christ."³

Our calling is to share the good news of Christ with everyone we can so that they have the best opportunity to know him who is life eternal.

¹ Romans 2:14-15 (TNIV)

² C.S. Lewis, [The Last Battle](#)

³ Romans 2:16 (TNIV)

January 25, 2008¹ **The Only Real Priest**

“For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.”²

Hebrews chapters 7 and 9 make the point that not only were the sacrifices of the Old Testament types or foreshadows of the ‘real’ sacrifice of Christ, but the old dispensation’s priests also prefigured the risen Christ who is the true High Priest who now intercedes for us in the heavenly Holy of holies.

Therefore when we come to God in worship and prayer...

- ❖ We do not require saints, angels, Mary, pastors, priests, prayer ministers or a televangelist’s ministry to communicate with God. Jesus himself is ‘user friendly’³ and welcomes us to the throne of God.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit guides, empowers, helps us but presses us toward Christ. Worship and prayer is ‘spirit-filled’ not when talking about or focusing on the Spirit, but when Jesus is at the center, drawing us close to the Father.
- ❖ We dare not come alone! It is true that we are adopted children of God, possessing the ‘divine DNA’ of the Spirit and are children of the King, but we should never dare to ‘brush past’ Christ as if this position were ours by right. Instead, we can declare: “bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown through Christ, my own!”⁴

¹ We will return to the atoning work of Christ as ‘Priest’ as Good Friday approaches. In the meantime we will examine his ‘priestly’ work of intercession and Biblical teaching on prayer.

² Hebrews 9:24 (TNIV)

³ Hebrews 4:15-16.

⁴ Charles Wesley, “And Can it Be?” final stanza.