

Good Friday '01

This is the day we remember what Jesus did for us – when He faced the cup of God's wrath upon sin on that hideous cross. The suffering began the night before in the Garden. It is incredible to consider all that He endured in that last 18 hours. I'm not going to go over all the details. If you have never done that see the sermon 'Crucified' on the web site. Isaiah's expression says it all in 52:14 "Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man, and his form marred beyond human likeness. So will He sprinkle many nations..."

The physical suffering was horrific but the spiritual war within the three hours of darkness I think is something we cannot comprehend. In those three hours, when utter darkness engulfed the cross, Jesus faced the sins of the world placed upon Him. Hell was unleashed to vent its fury against the Son of God.

From noon until the time of the evening sacrifice Jesus endured an eternity of wrath against sin. No one else could have. That was **our** just sentence but He stood in for us. The love that is willing to do that is the greatest love the world has ever seen. John 15:13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus shared that time of darkness with no one. He was entirely alone. But looking at his life and his victory I can take a guess at a small part of what was happening there. In everyday life the Law said if you touched a leper you became unclean. If you touched a person with an oozing sore, a hemorrhage, or a dead body, you were unclean. The person under affliction defiled you.

And yet, over and over again when Jesus would reach out and touch the unclean person, Jesus' holiness was no match for the defilement in their life. Instead of the evil upon them overcoming the good in Christ, the opposite was true. The holiness of Christ made the unwholeness of the person, whole. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean, the person that was ill became clean, and whole and entirely well. The dead were raised to life instead of Jesus becoming unclean. The woman with the hemorrhage instantly healed instead of Jesus becoming unclean. The leper had skin like a baby, instead of Jesus becoming unclean.

In those three hours of darkness, hell and all its demons piled upon Jesus the ugliness of mankind. It would have polluted you or me to the extent we would have been raving mad. What does your flesh do when confronted with sin? An insult or a threat, a stab at your character? I hope you are much more spiritual than I am, because I want to lash back. I respond to evil with evil. But not Jesus. He met the evil of hell poured upon him – and instead of changing Him,

He conquered it. All the villainy of man and hell could not quench his holiness. Isaiah prophesied, "He will bear their iniquity" and again, "He bore their sin." It was placed upon his holy person but his holiness was not overcome by our sin. Once He had finished and the battle was won, the sun shone again.

3PM -The shofar announcing the evening sacrifice was blown. First, Jesus says, "I thirst" but that was so He could wet his mouth for these final statements. "It is finished" or another translation could be "paid in full". Then looking to the Father said, "Father into your hands I commit my Spirit" and He released his spirit from his body. Heb 10:19-22 (NIV)¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

In the Holy Place hung that 3" thick, fifteen foot wide curtain. At the moment Jesus spirit left his body that curtain was rent from top to bottom. The passage from Hebrews says we have a new way to go into the presence of God. Not like the High Priest once a year for the nation, through a material curtain. Instead we, any one who wills, can go to God through the curtain of Jesus body. His body bore the wrath of God- declaring your sins are paid in full- give you access to a holy God. We can confidently walk into the presence of God. Why doesn't our conscience strike us? Jesus paid for our sins. His blood that paid the price was sprinkled over our hearts making us whole. The holiness of God overcame our wicked hearts when they were placed upon Him.

Our bodies have been washed with the pure water of the Word. That water declares what God has done for us and speaks the truth about who we are in God – clean, whole, forgiven. Eph 5:25-27 (NIV)²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

That word cleansing is in the aorist tense. It happened at a point in time with the present still being affected by it. When He said "it is finished" you were washed. The blood was applied to your heart. The holiness of Jesus made you whole.

There is so much that could be said - about the spear – about his testimony converting the Centurion – but let us move to the men that now become bold witnesses. I'm not speaking of the disciples, for they are cowering behind locked doors. I'm speaking of the secret disciples, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Up until now they have not made their allegiance clear but when they went to Pilate they were giving up what they had spent their lives trying to earn.

By taking that body off that cross they were showing the world their allegiance was not to a corrupt religious system but to this man that had been rejected by their nation and killed like the worst of criminals. There was no going back and they knew it. Their words would no longer hold sway in the Sanhedrin. They had forsaken all to follow Jesus, just like the 12. Instead of a boat and nets, or a tax booth and wealth, they forsook a title and position.

And look at the time they did it! Not later when all knew the outcome but here when most thought the cause was lost, that it was in vain. That's faith! That's what pleases God. Gave up their own family tomb to a man who died under conditions the Jews considered cursed of God. They just separated themselves from most of their nation.

It's awesome how God works though. In Acts 6:7 a large number of priests believed and became obedient to the faith. So Joe and Nic were the firstfruits of those to come out of leadership of the old covenant. Now they are respected not because of their great learning and position and titles, but because they identified themselves with Jesus when no one else would. They had faith in the unseen and counted shame for Jesus to be greater than any honor or title man could give them.

Have you let the holy blood of Jesus be sprinkled upon your heart so that it is changed? Does that change identify you with Jesus Christ, more so than anything the world takes pride in? In Peter's intro to his first letter he writes, ...to God's elect...² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

God chose you to be his own – through the work of his sanctifying Spirit – that sprinkling of his holy blood that transforms your heart with the result that you are obedient to Him and filled with grace and peace. There is no higher calling in the world of the Spirit. Plenty of things in the world say they are more important but in reality there is no comparison. Belonging to the One who loved us much and took the wrath we deserved and then sprinkled his blood on our hearts making them holy, is as good as it gets. Consider that verse again that we started with, "Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man, and his form marred beyond human likeness. So will He sprinkle many nations..."