

The Blood of Christ on the Believer's Conscience

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My conscience is in a state of continually *holding court, running trials, even inserting judicial matters* into my dreams and my sleep. There are *subpoenas, sometimes disputes, allegations, agitations, moral storms, retrials, and evidence for the prosecution*. You see, there is a reason why this is the state of affairs, for we are created in the image of God, and it is a moral image. Our likeness to the divine is a moral likeness, for indelibly written upon the conscience is the moral law of God (Rom 2:14-16). Thus, the conscience is an extension of the infallible, comprehensive, justice of God—an extension or annex of God's own courtroom.

Conscience and its functions are irrefutable evidence of a divine Judgment Day. Christ alludes to every man's moral-judicial crossroad in Matthew 21:44. "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." Jesus is that stone of either redemption or judgment. If you fall upon Him, you will be broken in repentance, but if He falls upon you, you will be ground to powder in eternal judgment.

You need to know why the blood of Christ who is Savior and Judge is so very important (Eph 1:7; Col 1:20; Heb 9:14). For it is possible you are hearing these truths regarding Christ's blood for the first time. *Number one*, if you do not know Christ, the charges and accusations and perturbations of your conscience are not the result of childhood conditioning as Freud would have us believe. Nor are they the fallout of psychological guilt from imperfections and deviations from social norms. No, your troubled conscience is actually metering and monitoring real tangible legal guilt before God (Rom 2:5-10). For Scripture states that the impenitent will give an account of every idle word (Mt 12:36). *And second*, your conscience is a moral-legal faculty made in the image of God's own conscience; His moral perfection. No wonder Lucifer's lie believed is suicidal; namely that you may independently determine a standard of right and wrong for yourself.

Therefore, because we are made in God's moral image, no form of justice will ultimately satisfy the just demands of your conscience, except that justice which alone satisfies God's absolute justice (Heb 10:19-22). And let's repeat that, it's so important. Your conscience cannot rest in any form of justice other than the justice which satisfies God himself. Yes, that sounds like something in the extreme. But this is inherent in the definition of our creational identity as God's moral image. Truly nothing can actually fully meet and satisfy God's own perfect

righteous justice, but the blood of His only begotten Son given for sinners. If you understood these things well enough to proclaim and preach them to your own soul, blessed are you! In addition, understanding the infinite value of Christ's blood upon the soul would change your approach to the Lord's table, to Sunday communion—and likely to your motives in sanctification and Christian service.

Propitiation through Christ's death is the quenching of God's wrath. Christ's atoning sacrifice upholds and satisfies God's righteous justice (Rom 3:24-26). Our Lord's work of propitiation is the capstone of redemption. And as J. I. Packer states, propitiation is the mountain peak from which we scan the entire landscape of Holy Scripture. The satisfaction of divine justice on Calvary yields a love relationship to the God of the universe (2 Cor 5:18-21). This is the theme and message which permeates the Lord's table. Thus, the believer's meditation as he partakes of the elements symbolizing Christ's flesh and blood ought to turn to the reality of the propitiation Christ has wrought. Here is how one may reflect.

In terms of our thoughts when partaking of the Lord's Table, it is healing health to the soul and conscience to have musings such as these. “Lord God, by the sacrifice of my Savior, real, objective, God-satisfying justice has been done in the case of my personal sins.” “My sins were judged in my Savior's body and soul—and so much so that God's Son has answered for my sins in the shedding of his Own blood as my High priest.” “Thus, I am now qualified, able, and invited to commune with the Triune God of the universe by virtue of His blood.” “I now consciously and deliberately show that blood to my conscience.” “For that blood testifies that the just demands of my Heavenly Father have been satisfied.” “Lord above, your demands of divine righteousness and absolute justice against my sins have been fully met in your sight.” “Your justice has been levied in the death of my Savior beyond what my sins have deserved.” “The peace and joy I now have in my justification and adoption are founded upon knowing you have put away my sin by your blood.” Have any of the above thoughts and meditations ever passed upon your soul?

The Son's blood on the conscience is the source of peace with God, and it is the *launch pad* of the believer's sanctification. For no man is free and empowered to war against the remnants of his indwelling sins unless he knows definitively that he has been pardoned and justified and possesses divine favor. But many of you within the sound of my voice today are fearing that you have forfeited any right to the blood of Christ. You dwell upon your countless defections, you think about your backslidings and about the ugliness and pollution of your sin.

You bring to mind your treasonous activities toward Christ the Lord and you're tempted to say, "surely, I have forfeited any right to that blood." "I must log a record of faithfulness however brief in order to hope for any possible appropriation of that blood." "For, surely the Lord is offended at the prospect of distributing and applying His blood to my conscience again and again."

But, dear friend, are you sensible of your need? That sense of your neediness is your qualification so to speak. Realize that as long as you have life and breath in this world, this blood is held out to you as the cure for your trespasses, wretched idols, and habitual sin. "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool" (Is 1:18). God does not reason as we do. In fact, He bids the sinner to cast off the immobilizing, paralyzing thoughts of hopeless disqualification. For the Lord delights in surprising us with His grace when we are sunk into sin's despondency. "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts (Is 55:6-9).

This Isaiah 55 text is God pleading with us to think His thoughts and not our natural thoughts. We are to leave off thinking that God is like us, that He forgives as we do—to a certain point and then says, "that's it, you disgust Me." "You've used up your allowance of Christ's blood." No, this blood is designed not only to cleanse your conscience, but is designed to bring you into God's presence. When you esteem the infinite value of Christ's blood given for you, you will venture in repentance onto His grace and mercy (Heb 13:12).

The result of that blood applied and the outcome of that blood shed is relationship. It is a love relationship; it is communing with the Godhead. And this is what the cross of Christ has revealed in such remarkable ways. For wonder of wonders, the Holy God of the universe who lives in unapproachable light, who is thrice holy, has moved heaven and earth to reveal His desire to commune with sinners. This is scandalous arresting love—it is not a love we have been able to attract; in fact, we have done our best to repel it! We, who morally and spiritually have no ability of helping ourselves, cannot say that we have met conditions which have won God's favor. No, that sentiment is the soulish errant instinct of all the

false religions in the world.

The cure for our condemnation and terminal state of sin is the blood of God's Son. Christ has made an incredibly effective *medicine* out of His suffering, out of the giving of his flesh and blood, out of his torment and wrath-bearing, out of His passion. He has mixed a wondrous medicine that cures the sinful heart. His blood sets slaves free and makes whole, what sin has fragmented and torn apart. Unregenerate sinners are only partially aware of their alienation from God—their fear of death, their exposure to wrath, their futility, vanity, legal guilt, and slavery. Their defiled consciences will not grant peace as long as the burdensome certificate of debt is pressing upon the scales of conscience (Col 2:14).

But this powerful medicine of Christ's blood nails that certificate of debt to the cross of Christ (Col 2:14). His blood makes us whole and washes us from that pollution. His blood makes us heroic in dealing with the sin we once covered and concealed (Prov 28:13). His blood makes the conscience a placid lake to reflect the peace and joy of the Lord (Rom 15:13). His blood tames the conscience so that it is no longer a ravaging beast tearing at our bosom, but instead lies at our feet like the family hound.

Out of the blood of Christ appropriated flows relationship, communing, abiding (Jn 6:56). So fundamental is this content to the true celebration of the Lord's Table, its explication ought to be frequently repeated. For our religious flesh and natural reasoning default toward religious narcissism—approaching God in a barter arrangement. Turning to religious activity as if we can print heavenly monies to buy divine favor. But our Lord founds relationship solely on His flesh and blood. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. “For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (Jn 6:54-56).

If we fellowshiped with the Lord in this way—through the sufficiency of His blood, would it not be a natural and joyous transition to move vertical fellowship into the horizontal? For out of supernatural communion with our God comes supernatural community with our brethren who are also enjoying the presence of Christ. Consider what Christ has paid. The God-man entered our existential situation becoming mortal, weak, under the curse, capable of suffering (2 Cor 13:4). He humbled Himself in accordance with the Father's plan—to the point of being pierced and put to death on a Roman cross (Phil 2:5-11). The human dimension of His God-man existence experienced death and wrath on behalf of His people. And then He was raised and glorified on our behalf, so that they might

possess complete solidarity with Him by His substitutionary work (Rom 6:1-13).

In terms of solidarity, or union with Him, this work was planned in an eternal covenant within the Godhead, so that all the benefits that Christ gained might accrue to His people, as if they themselves had fully atoned for their sin dying under the maximum penalty (Heb 13:20-21). Christ's rising and glorification is why they will be raised and glorified. My question for the reader is, *have you dwelled upon these spiritual realities recently?* Have you meditated upon the fact that the God-man, the *Logos*, the Creator, plunged Himself into depths of suffering that He might remove the sting of death, stripping off its terror and shameful horror (Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:50-58; Is 25:6-9).

We must know why the dignity of His Person as God and man gives incredible power, efficacy, and scope to His shed blood. It is wonderfully devastating, to ponder Christ's fitness, the fitness of His Person and His work to completely answer the sinner's ruin, dilemma, and predicament. Believers are called to a daily faith-driven appropriation of Christ and Him crucified. This practice of contemplating our Lord and His work ought to be habitual (Heb 12:1-2). So daily, repeatedly, it is not a small thing or minor paradigm to be faced with what we call *the scandal of the cross*.

There is a great scandal in connection with what took place at the cross—namely that the pure eternal Son of God was put to death for the avowed enemies of the Godhead. He was put to death to reconcile defiled rebels and traitors. This is why nothing humbles like the cross. For when we consider our pollution, our depravity, our defiled state, the piercing of the Son of man on our behalf sends a probing lance into our own hearts. We are smitten by the depths of our unworthiness when we by faith behold our suffering Substitute. Thus, we can identify with the experience of the lead apostle, Simon Peter. He felt a withering humiliation; he was chagrined and abashed at the thought of Christ serving him. He utters in John 13:8, "You'll never wash my feet!" And then after the miraculous drought of fish, he says to the Savior of the world, "depart from me for I am a sinful man!" (Lu 5:8). In other words, he is wracked by the incongruous—what possible fellowship could a cursing, vile fisherman have with the pure, divine Son of God?

It is the mystery of Christ (Col 2:2) that He both attracts and repels. As the Lamb of God, He draws all manner of men to Himself (Jn 12:32), but also as the transcendently holy One He repels the sin-conscious transgressor. This is but a tiny look at the scandal of the cross. There is a blessed work to be done in meditating on the work of Christ which involves a fresh appropriation and grasp of

this central plank of God's free grace. This renewal involves a 'reset', a revitalized consent to be stripped of all imagined merit, a clearing out of dependency upon all legal supports of the soul, a renewed reclining upon the pardoning and cleansing mercy found in the blood of Christ. This entails a fresh, humbling consent to be served by the eternal Son of God (Mk 10:45; Lu 22:27).

The appropriation of the blood of Christ grants amazement at the fitness of the blood and flesh of God's Son to answer my ruin definitively, reversing my hopeless case. Diving further into this appropriation—consider how exquisite an experience it is to be knocked off balance, to have the seismic waves of the atonement course through us. To be beautifully shocked at the propitiation; namely dwelling upon how perfectly appropriate the Person and work of Christ is for our ruin. That is why it says in Hebrews chapter 7:26-27, "For it was **fitting** for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

How perfect a medicine the suffering of Christ is. His blood, His flesh, His atoning death combined to make the perfect healing medicine for the sin-sick, 'terminal sinner'. Faith feeding upon Christ and His work is a very consolidating action. It keeps our reliance from being spread out over things that are not centered in the gospel. For we affirm that abundant life, cleansing, and right-standing are found in Christ alone (Jn 10:10). But this affirmation that all that is needed is found in Christ means we must also repudiate all false supports of the soul. And by false, we mean this, *are we looking to anything besides Christ's flesh and blood to reconcile us to God and to gain His favor?*

God's favor by which we have fellowship and communion with him, is not a function of my sanctification, nor a byproduct of my Christian service. Divine favor is found in Christ alone. Ministry does not mediate fellowship with the Lord. No, the basis of my communing with the Lord is supplied by the Lord. The source of my communion with Him is the giving of his flesh and blood for me. To appropriate this daily by faith so as to feed upon Christ, is spoken of very summarily by our Lord in John 6:56. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." As we partake of his flesh and blood by faith, we abide in Him; our soul feeds upon its true food. We experience the joy that He owns and possesses us down to the very core and depths of our being.

What our Lord has done with our sin in the guilt-exchange at Calvary is

the source of our communing with Him. And the overflow of communing with Him is expressed in the mutual edification of the members of His Body. This is the life of the Body (1 Cor 12:12-14). This begs the question, how does Christ energize and empower the life of the Body? How does the Son of God move our fellowship from mere socializing to life-giving, mutually edifying fellowship? Another way to ask is, how does our Lord assist us in moving our vertical of fellowship with Himself to the horizontal fellowship with our brethren? What would need to take place for this building-up of one another and laying our lives down for each other to be regarded as normative, desirable, and characteristic of life in His Body?

Thus, the celebration of our shared life in Christ means that the Lord's Table ought to communicate both the reality of our vertical fellowship with the Lord and the reality of our horizontal fellowship with our brethren. If this all-important truth were a more indispensable part of our sermonizing, would we not see our vertical communion with the Lord generate horizontal communion with our brethren? We would not be content for a moment to perfunctorily down a thimble of grape juice. And we would insist on framing this ordinance of the Lord's Table by preaching the concomitant identification truths of union with Christ, so that the spiritual nourishment our Lord intends of this ordinance is not missed.

But like an oyster coating an irritating grain of sand with insulating nacre, the ordinance of the Lord's Table has been sealed off from its sharp application. As the years go by, the Communion Table seems to have less of a living, teaching interface with the Lord and His Body. There is little effort made to unfold its practical implications for Body life. Should we not be asking, *what does this mean that the members of Christ's Body, are joined together as members of one another?* (Eph 4:25). Is it not that they together possess shared life in Christ? And so much so that the reality of being members of one another ought to completely shape the way we do church? For our solidarity with our Savior is meant to translate into solidarity with one another—our Lord binding us to one another as a new lump, a new loaf (1 Cor 5:7). This author fears that the little mass-produced shrunken thimble of grape juice has become a metaphor for the declining relevance of this ordinance.

How we need the gospel every day because we forget the gospel every day. Our Lord gave us this ordinance to remember Him and His gospel. “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14).