

For God's glory and our good – Good Friday - 25/03/2016

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Beloved in The Lord,

Jesus main aim during His earthly life was to glorify His Father's name. Jesus understood that glorifying God is at the heart of everything we do, the very purpose of life. Everything that God created, He created for His glory. Everything that God does, He does for His glory. To Him alone belongs all praise, all glory and all honour.

On Good Friday, Jesus died on that cross for God's glory and for our good. It is very important that we understand this truth. The previous night, whilst praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus fully surrendered Himself to God's will. Jesus had lived His life glorifying God, and now by His death He would do the same. In speaking about His upcoming death Jesus said to His disciples:

“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”(John 12:27-28)

Jesus understood that He had come into this world for Good Friday. He came to glorify His Father. Jesus knew that only His Blood could pay the penalty for our sin. Jesus willingly submitted to the Father's will because He loved His Father and He loved us. He knew that there was no other way for us to be saved from eternal death, and that is why He prayed *“Father, Your will be done.”*

We need to understand that Christ died for us. He didn't need to die for His sin, because He was sinless. He was totally pure and Holy. We sing in our liturgy that Jesus is the pure lamb of God, who carried the cross for us. He drowned and died in the sea of death in order for us to be saved, for our sin debt to be wiped out. We ask Him to have mercy on us.

Paul writes: ***But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)***

For whom did Christ die? For us! Good Friday exists for us. Easter is for us. Christ died for us.

The prophet Isaiah spells it out, in words that he wrote many hundreds of years before Christ:

***Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,***

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Smitten of God, and afflicted.

***⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.***

***⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him. (Is.53:4-6)***

Here in three verses we see the word (or concept of) **our** repeated six times. Christ died for us. He died for our sin. It is so important that we understand this.

Without Christ's sacrifice, without His shed blood on the cross we would not have any hope of a bright eternity.

Jesus died a substitutionary death. He died in our stead – in our place. He took our punishment and suffered that we might be free. His only reason for doing so was that He loved us. Jesus says it best:

¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:14-18)

For God so loved you and me that He gave us His Son to redeem us from death. When we believe on Jesus and accept His gift of salvation, then we are set free from the penalty of death, and our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Neither sin, nor death have any more power over us. By faith we are set free from the slavery of sin and set free from its eternal penalty.

However, if we do not believe in Jesus Christ, then we stay under the death penalty.

This is why Paul writes to the Corinthians and to all of us:

¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2.Cor.5:17-21)

Please take careful note of verse 21: ***“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”***

On whose behalf did Jesus become sin? On our behalf!

To the glory of God and for our good.

I also want you to note that Paul writes in verse 18 that ***“all these things are from God.”*** Precisely because all these things come from God and are done by Him, to Him belongs all the glory, honour and praise.

It is this truth that proves to be a stumbling block for many people. Many people think that they have to do something to earn God’s grace, to earn salvation. The truth is that there is nothing that we can do – we all fall far short of the standards of God’s absolute perfection and holiness. The truth is that there is nothing for us to do because God has already done it all. In love His provision is complete.

Jesus last words on the cross were ***“It is finished!”*** Nothing left to do. The sacrifice has been made, the blood has been poured out. It is all done, finished. There is nothing to add. It is finished. At that very moment when Jesus died, the heavy curtain in the Temple that covered the entrance to the Holy of Holies, tore apart from the top to the bottom.

The Holy of Holies contained the ark of the covenant, it was the symbolic dwelling place of God’s presence. It was into the Holy of Holies that the High Priest would enter once a year with the blood of an innocent animal to make atonement for the sins of the people. If anyone else were to go in there they would die instantly. God’s glory was there and nothing unclean can come into His presence.

Even the High Priest entered with a sense of dread and awe. The people waited with baited breath to see if he would come out again. If he came out it would mean that the sacrifice had been accepted.

This all changed on Good Friday with Jesus death. He entered the Heavenly Temple with His own blood and so made a total and complete and perfect sacrifice, once for all time. The curtain tearing was a sign that truly “It was finished”. God accepted the perfect sacrifice and now the way to God’s presence is wide open for all who would to come. Anyone who wants to draw near to God and be reconciled can come.

We read:

“¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Because Christ has died for us, we can come at any time and draw near to God. We can come without fear because we know that God does not want to punish us but to show us mercy and to give us His grace in our time of need.

God is honoured when we come to Him. He loves us so very very much. He awaits us with open arms. But we must come in this life, because after we die it will be too late. The one who comes, believing in Jesus in this life, receives grace and mercy, and help and everything needed at the right time.

The one who does not come, who rejects Jesus here, will meet Him after death as Judge, and then no more as Saviour.

That is why Paul, and also I, plead with you to come to Jesus today. ***“we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2.Cor.5:20)***

Come to Him today, do not delay. He is waiting for you.

He died for you, He shed His blood for you. He says to you:

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” (Jn.6:37-40)

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***