

Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15: 1-3, Romans 4:25-5:9

We live in a world overwhelmed by relativity and propaganda. Real truth, real news, and real faith are either being buried underneath or over-shouted by fake news, political spin, and hate speech; as our culture tears itself apart - everyone shouting, no one listening. The Apostle Paul foresaw these days. That is why he urged the young pastor Timothy, to

proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. 2 Timothy 4:2-4

Jesus told his followers

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
John 8:31-32

To which, Pilate cynically replied, "*what is truth?*" just before he gave into political expediency by handing Jesus over to be crucified (John 18:38).

So in one sense, today's culture of rabid non-truth and intolerant personal opinion is nothing new, truth and faith have always been rare commodities in this fallen world. But, Christianity as a faith has always depended upon our loving commitment to share the truth of God's good news in response to the world's bad news. These are the reasons why this year, we as a church are "Majoring on the Majors," looking into the uncompromisable truths of Christianity: where does the Bible speak clearly? Where does the Bible allow for difference of opinion? And how can we lovingly live under both circumstances.

Last week we looked at the first Christian creed: **Jesus Christ is Lord**; which with its exclusive claim that "*there is salvation in no one else*" (acts 4:12), boldly challenges progressive Christianity's shift towards Inclusivism (the belief that all religions are an equal path back to God).

This week we will look at the first of three foundational truths of Christianity that has the Apostle Paul almost shouting at the theologically waffling Corinthian Church.

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me..

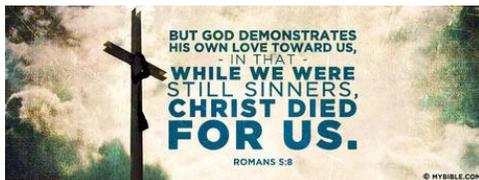
1 Corinthians 15. 1-8

This week's truth is uncomplicated yet profoundly deep: *Christ died for our sins – in accordance with the scriptures.* In one sense then this may seem like preaching to the choir, every Christian knows that "Christ died for our sins," and yet

- do you know Why someone had to die?
- And what legal mechanism allowed Christ to die in your place?
- OR what scriptures Paul was referring to as prophetic of his needed death?

This is what we will look into this week

Let's start with WHY Christ had to die. Our Romans text explains the reason very succinctly:



[Jesus] was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. (Romans 4:25)

God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. Romans 5:8-9

What this scripture is saying is that since all of us have sinned and the wages of sin is death, someone had to die in payment of that debt. For *without the shedding of blood*

there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). But since animal sacrifice could not atone for human sin, they only serve as a passing reminder that something more was needed for the forgiveness of our sin. *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin* (Hebrews 10:4).

But, if we died for our own sins, our death and separation from God would be permanent. However, if another human, not guilty of sin, could offer to die in our place; his death need not be permanent, he could remain in fellowship with God, and yet we also could be "*justified by his blood*" and "*saved through him from the wrath of God*" (vs. 9).

That is what Jesus Christ did for us, swapping his life for ours, in payment for our sin, so that all who accept his gift by faith can be reconciled back to God. That is God's "Good News" about as simply as it can be expressed. But what is the ancient law that allowed Jesus to substitute himself for us? ... That is where this truth takes on profound depth.

The author of Hebrews summarized the mechanism that allowed Christ's substitution this way.

But when Christ came as a high priest ... he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining [our] eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:11-12

Why is the shedding of blood, basically a death, necessary for forgiveness? For that answer we must begin back at the start of time with Adam and Eve. Having broken their covenant with God – a covenant that brought the curse of death down upon all humanity – they were expelled from the garden, yet with the promise that one day her offspring would strike the serpent's head a death blow (Genesis 3:15). Imbedded within this promise was the idea that by so doing Eve's offspring would break the curse and return humanity back to the garden. Which is exactly what Jesus began at the cross and will bring completion at the end of the ages. The book of Revelation closes with humanity once again living in a garden and walking with God.

So Adam and Eve were exiled but with the hope of eventual restoration. Yet they had been warned that SIN brings DEATH (not just exile). Thus in order for them to continue living so that one day they could be restored, a substitute for their lives was now needed. So the first physical deaths after the fall were of those animals that provided Adam and Eve with the animal skin clothing that they wore into exile.

Think about this for a moment: the physical symbolism and daily reminder of being covered by the skin of one who died so that you might live.

Now coming forward to the days of Moses, God made second national covenant with the people of Israel – another covenant sealed in blood. Exodus 24:3-8 tells of Moses coming from the mountain with God’s ten commands.

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, **“All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.”** And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, **“All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”** Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, “See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

But like Adam and Eve before them, the Hebrews were not obedient. They too were exiled

For thus says the Lord: Your hurt is incurable,
your wound is grievous. There is no one to uphold your cause,
no medicine for your wound, no healing for you.
Jeremiah 30:12-13

What could God do to restore his lost children? Humanity was incapable of keeping any covenant to save themselves. So God promised to make a new covenant with them; one that was only dependent upon His faithfulness; not their faithlessness.

I will put my law within them,
I will write it on their hearts;
I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ...
for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.
Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will

write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:31-34



But from whom would come the blood to seal this covenant that God intended to keep for the sake of his lost children?

That was of course what Jesus' blood accomplished. As a second and obedient Adam, with his death in our behalf Jesus also sealed the covenant that could save us from our sin. On the night of his betrayal, which in God's timing was also the night of the Passover celebration, sitting at table with his disciples, Jesus took bread and wine and declared to them,

*Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup ... "Drink from it, all of you; for **this is my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

Matthew 26:26-28

Thus by his death, Jesus Christ both fulfilled and sealed God's covenant with us, the one God made that He himself and He alone had to honor.

When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then ... once for all he entered into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. ... For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, **because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.**

Hebrews 9:11-15

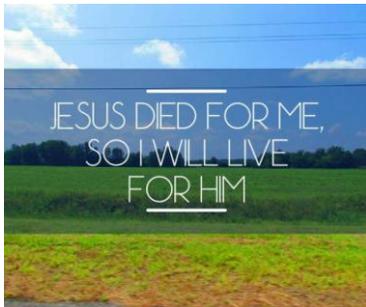
Thus God was able to keep a promise dating all the way back to mother Eve. God kept the covenant that He made with Himself; by thus doing he rescued humanity from the curse of death. He also at the same time "crushed the serpent's head. Because at the cross Satan was utterly defeated, his doom was sealed. Yes, Satan still fights on, as is evident by the social, political, and moral strife that is rending our nations these days, but his is a lost battle; because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us when he died on the cross, Satan's days are numbered.



“The cross. It rests on the time line of history like a compelling diamond. Its tragedy summons all sufferers. Its absurdity attracts all cynics. It’s hope lures all searchers... History has idolized it and despised it, gold-plated it and burned it, worn and trashed it. History has done everything to it but ignore it. That’s the one option that the cross does not offer. No one can ignore it! You can’t ignore a piece of lumber that suspends the greatest claim in history. It’s bottom line is sobering: ...if the account is true, it is history’s hinge. Period. ... If not, it is history’s hoax. That’s why the cross is what matters.”

(Max Lucado – “No Wonder They Call Him The Savior”)

And what about us, who accepted God’s forgiveness purchased so dearly for us by Christ on that cross? How should we then live? Take your Bibles please and turn to **1 Peter 1:13-21** so you can read the answer along with me (pew Bible page 232).



Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. 1 Peter 1.13-21