

Understanding God's Love

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OVERVIEW

Because of God's love for us He made an amazing sacrifice so that we could have a relationship with Him.

separated from God by sin >> separation removed through Christ >> relationship with God

OUR NATURAL STATE: SINFUL IN GOD'S EYES

--Every person who ever lived (except Jesus Christ) is infected with the disease of sin.

--Romans 3:23 – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

--God gave us the moral law not so we would follow it perfectly but to help us understand that we can't follow it perfectly.

--Romans 3:19-20 – “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

CONSEQUENCE OF SIN

--Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

--physical death...

--Romans 5:12 – “Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

--Physical death is a constant reminder of the disease of sin.

--the “second death”...

--Revelation 21:7-8 – “...the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (see also *Revelation 20:14-15*)

--the second death is spending eternity in the lake of fire instead of Heaven.

--Physical death is a foreshadow of the more terrifying reality of the "second death".

CLEANSED FROM SIN THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

--Since there is no sin in Heaven (Revelation 20:14-15; 21:4; 21:27) we have to be cleansed from our sin in order to go to Heaven.

--To better understand how we are cleansed of our sin through Christ, it is helpful to first take a closer look at the nature of God and the nature of mankind.

--When God created mankind, He said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26). We have a body because God has a body! God isn't some impersonal, nebulous force that we can't see. Notice how He used the plural pronoun *Us* when He referred to Himself. Just like we have three parts to our being (body, soul, and spirit) God also has three parts to His being (the "Son of God" who could be thought of as the *body* of God, "God the Father" who could be thought of as the *soul* of God, and the "Holy Spirit" – the *spirit* of God). God is also profoundly different from us. One of the most important differences is that God is sinless.

--Hebrews 2:14-15: "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

--through dimensions of reality beyond our comprehension, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He bore the sin of everyone who trusts in Him. He was able to bear our sins because He had no sin of His own.

--2 Corinthians 5:21 – "He [*God the Father*] made Him [*the Son of God*] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

--In other words, "**For God so loved the world** that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life!" (John 3:16)

--1 Peter 2:24 – "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree..."

--Isaiah 53:5 – "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. "

--When you trust in Christ, all of your sin is instantaneously transferred to Him.

--If all of our sin is transferred to Christ then why do we still sin?

--Our spirit is instantaneously cleansed from all sin, but our body won't be free of sin until we get new bodies in Heaven.

--The Bible uses various terminology to describe the profound spiritual change in us that is part of the cleansing of sin:

--we become a "new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)

--we are "born again" (John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:23)

--the "circumcision of the heart" (Romans 2:29)

--God gives us a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezekiel 36:26)

--Old Testament picture of our sins being transferred to Christ...

--When the Israelites brought their animal sacrifices to the temple, they laid their hands on the head of the animal, signifying that their sins were symbolically being transferred to the animal and the animal was symbolically dying in their place. (Leviticus 1:3-5)

--The Old Testament Passover ceremony memorialized the meaning of Christ's death on the cross – while the Passover lambs symbolically died in people's place as payment for their sin, Christ literally died in our place.

--John 1:29 – "John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

--1 Corinthians 5:7: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

--Hebrews 9:11-14 – “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

--When you trust in Christ, He bears all of your sin (past, present, and future) and dies the "second death" in your place; and your name is written “in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

--Revelation 21:27: “But there shall by no means enter it [Heaven] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.”

--Revelation 20:14-15 – “The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

--Revelation 21:4: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

--We are saved from the second death, but we still have to experience physical death.

--Unlike the instantaneous process of our spirit being cleansed from sin, our body won't be free of sin until we pass through physical death and receive new bodies in Heaven

--saved from the second death...

--essence of the second death: eternal separation from God

--Jesus Christ literally died in your place so that you don't have to experience the “second death” (Revelation 20:14-15).

--Jesus Christ experienced the magnitude of the entire world's eternal separation from God by being separated from God the Father for a moment of time on the cross!

--The Godhead was literally torn apart for a moment!

--Matthew 27:45-46 – “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”

BEFORE PHYSICAL DEATH		AFTER PHYSICAL DEATH			
<i>before we trust in Jesus Christ...</i>		<i>after we trust in Jesus Christ...</i>		<i>if we trusted in Jesus Christ...</i>	
infected with disease of sin: body + spirit	free of sin: -----	infected with disease of sin: body	free of sin: spirit	infected with disease of sin: -----	free of sin: body + spirit

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

--Jesus Christ not only bore your sins and died in your place for you to spend eternity in relationship with God in Heaven but also for you to spend the rest of your life on earth in relationship with God through His Spirit!

--Right now we can't see God with our eyes, but the essence of heaven will be life in the visible presence of God. The Bible states that there will be no need for sunlight in heaven because “the glory of God illuminates [heaven]” (Revelation 21:23). While God the Father (the “soul” of God) and the Son of God (the “body” of God) are in heaven right now, the Spirit of God is on earth right now. Before Jesus returned to heaven He said that He would send His Spirit to take His place on earth (John 16:5-11).

--When Jesus lived on earth for 33 years, He could only have a close relationship with a select few; but now that He has returned to heaven, He can have a close relationship with anyone, anywhere in the world, through His Spirit! (John 4:21-24)

HOW TO ENTER A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

--Right before Jesus returned to heaven, He summarized how we can enter a relationship with Him.

--Luke 24:46-49 – Jesus said, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that **repentance** and **remission of sins** should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send **the Promise of My Father** upon you....”

1. “**remission of sins**” (faith in Christ to cleanse us of our sins and pay the penalty for our sins)
2. “**repentance**” (literally “a change of mind” – the word repentance is a more theological term for *deciding to live in relationship with God... deciding to follow God instead of sin.*)
3. “I send **the Promise of My Father** upon you” (relationship with God through His Spirit)

“repentance” + “remission of sins” = relationship with God (through “the Promise of My Father [*the Holy Spirit*]”)

-- Acts 2:38-39 records Peter teaching the same message that Jesus taught – “Then Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [*water baptism is an expression of faith*] for the **remission of sins**; and you shall receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit....**”

--Acts 3:19: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...”

FAITH WITHOUT REPENTANCE

--To say you have faith in Christ but don’t want to have a relationship with God is to defeat the whole purpose of having faith in Christ!

--Remission of sins through faith in Christ is analogous to being set free from death row. Saying you have faith but don’t have a relationship with God is like staying in the prison cell – as if you are still waiting for the day of execution – even though the prison door is open and you have been set free to live!

--We literally have been set free from a death sentence – the “second death...” (Revelation. 20:14-15)

--James 2:19-21 – “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”

--Paul thanked God for Timothy’s “genuine faith”...

--2 Timothy 1:3-4: “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you...”

--enjoy living water...

--One day, while talking to a person at a water well, Jesus compared the things of this world that can’t give us lasting satisfaction to water that only temporarily satisfies our thirst; then He spoke of the lasting satisfaction that we can find through God’s Spirit: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14)

COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

--As with any relationship, communication is at the center of our relationship with God.

Communication with God			
Listen to God communicate to you...		Communicate to God...	
<i>verbally</i>	<i>non-verbally</i>	<i>verbally</i>	<i>non-verbally</i>
His Word (the Bible)	intervening in our lives	prayer	by following His Word
His Spirit			

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US

--At the heart of our communication with God is love... “we love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

--Our relationship with God is not like that of an impersonal, employee – employer relationship. The Bible compares our relationship with God to that of a bride and bridegroom... the church is the bride of Christ and in Heaven we will experience “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Ephesians 5:25-27, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7-9)

--From the perspective of an abstract dimension, God's creation of the world and humanity could be seen as the romance of God the Father finding a bride for His Son.

--The apostle Paul spoke of marriage to Christ figuratively in his explanation about replacing religious routine with an intimate relationship with God - “you have become dead to the law through the body of Christ that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead.” (Romans 7:4)

If you have any questions about this Bible study or think anything in it does not line up with Scripture, please contact questions@lettersofchrist.com. God's Word is the ultimate authority, and we will correct any point that is proven to be contrary to His Word. Acts 17:11 – “These were more fair-minded... in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”