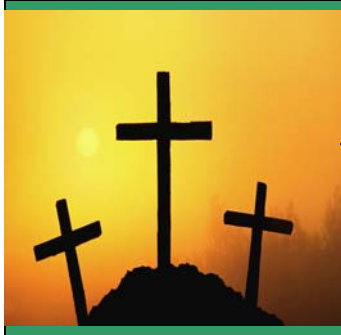


RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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Ps. 103:12 – “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”



FORGIVEN AND FORGOTTEN

When Jesus died on the cross, He took the sins of the whole world upon Himself. All sin was forgiven. The sins of everyone who lived before Him were forgiven; the sins of all those who were alive at that time were forgiven; and the sins of all those who were to live afterward were forgiven. The sins of those who put Jesus to death were also forgiven. They needed only to go to the cross with Him – just as we do.

The thing that makes the Christian different from the secular man is not the fact that his sins are forgiven, for the secular man's sins are forgiven, too. It is that the Christian believes it.

The problem that we possess in Christianity is not that we do not believe what Jesus did, but rather that we do not fully understand it. If our sins are truly forgiven, why then do we continue to wallow in self-condemnation, shame and guilt? It is because we have chosen to believe the devil instead of believing fully that which Jesus did. Why do we believe the devil so easily? It is because we have not fully yielded ourselves to the Lord. We have

not chosen to serve God on His terms. In contrast, we have chosen to hold onto things that are contrary to God's perfect will. And we are duped by the devil into believing that it is okay to do those things. It is not okay to do those things.

Anything that is not of faith is sin. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And it is not faith when we follow our own agenda instead of yielding to God. It does not take faith to sit lethargically in front of a TV set, entertaining yourself with things that do not draw you closer to God.

You believe that Jesus forgave your sins but you do not then turn wholeheartedly to God and allow Him to change you into the Christian that He wants you to be. Instead, you accept your forgiveness and continue to serve God half-heartedly and, in doing so, open yourself up to the devil's wiles. Is it any wonder you constantly fight condemnation, shame and guilt?

God did not forgive us so that we could go back again into the sin that so easily besets us. He forgave us so that we could stand before Him cleansed and purified,

clothed in the righteousness of Jesus; and so that we could begin to serve Him in the manner in which we should, in the manner in which He intended from the beginning of creation.

Rom. 6:1-2-*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*

We are told clearly in the Scripture that sin no longer has mastery over us. **We are told that we need not ever sin again. That does not mean that we will never sin again. It does mean that we do not ever have to sin again.** Paul is saying to us: “Why do we keep on sinning? Do we think that grace gives us the right to continue sinning? By no means! We died to sin.”

Do we understand what he is saying to us? Do we understand what Jesus really did at the cross? Jesus broke the power of sin. Jesus destroyed the works of the devil. Jesus took back the authority that the devil had over us. Jesus defeated, judged and sentenced the devil to everlasting fire in hell.

The Bible teaches us clearly that when Jesus died, we died with Him. And when He was resurrected, we were resurrected with Him. We died to sin. We do not have to sin again. **The power of sin was broken; and the power of sin, then, was broken in us, as well. The works of the devil were destroyed; and the works of the devil, therefore, were destroyed in us, as well.** Sin no longer has mastery over us. *For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace* (Rom. 6:14).

What, then, must we do? We must understand the word of God; we must believe the word of God; and we must start acting like we believe the word of God. Jesus forgave our sins. When we received Jesus as Savior, we stood before God, the Father, cleansed and pure, robed in the righteousness of Jesus. It was not because of anything we did. It was because of what Jesus did in obedience to the Father. In other words, God the Father wanted us to be cleansed. He wanted to forgive us our sins. He wanted to give us a fresh, new start on life.

So we receive His forgiveness and we vow never to sin again. If we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ. And if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Hey, isn't that what

happened at the cross? Exactly. That is the point, friend. **Jesus already did the work. He is not required to redo it later just because we sinned. The work of the cross was final.** If we sin again, it is not a matter of whether Jesus will forgive us. We have already been forgiven. We simply need to confess our sins contritely, receive our forgiveness, and continue on, serving Him with all our heart.

The Christian who receives Jesus as Savior but does not serve Him as Lord is not really a Christian after all. The Bible does not give us the option of receiving half of Jesus. The Christian who runs back to the world to get his entertainment has chosen his way of life. And there will be no victory until he has another collision with the cross and until he begins to serve Jesus as Lord.

But what of those of us who are serving Him as Lord? What are we to do? We do fall into sin and we hate it when we do? Of course. Look at what Paul said in Romans, Chapter 7. He doesn't do what he wants to do. Instead he does the stupid things that he does not want to do. Paul didn't say "stupid", but he wanted to.

And we are no different. But there is a world of difference between sinning because we are not serving Jesus and sinning while we are serving Jesus. The Lord knows that our growth is a

process. It can happen overnight but it usually does not.

The word of God gives us the option of believing, absolutely, the complete word of God immediately. We do not have to go through a long process to become the Christian that God desires us to become. But, unfortunately, most of us take the long road. God doesn't condemn us for that. He is patient. But, ultimately, we must yield completely. There is no other way.

So, where do we go wrong? We allow the devil to have his way with us. We do not understand fully what Jesus did at the cross. Sin no longer has mastery over us. Oh, dear friend, get hold of that truth. It will change your life. The power of sin has been broken in your life. The works of the devil have been destroyed in your life. **The devil has no authority to do anything to you at all.** Does that mean that he will stop? No. It means that you don't have to allow him access. And he must obey you. Why? Because He that is within you is greater than he that is within the world (1 John 4:4). In the verse directly before that, John says: "You are from God and you have overcome the spirit of the world." How? Because He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world.

When we get hold of the full understanding of what Jesus did at the cross, we will no longer allow the devil to have access to us. We will no longer yield to the spirit of the world. We will no longer run to the world to get our entertainment. God will provide all the entertainment we will need.

And in that process, condemnation, guilt and shame will cease being a danger to us. **Those things come from the devil, and if the devil no longer has control of us, he can no longer bombard us with those ungodly things.**

It is vital that we know who we are. We have been bought with a steep price, the blood of God's own Son. It is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20). We are hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). **The Christ who lives in us is greater than the devil who has temporary governance over the world.**

REMEMBERING OUR SINS

Why do we remember our sins? The Scripture says that God has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. That is infinity, friends. That means that when God forgave us, when we received Jesus as Savior, and when we accepted the fact that all our sins, past, present and future were forgiven by that which

Jesus accomplished at the cross, those sins were removed from the earth; they were removed from the solar system; they were removed from everything, everywhere, for all time. Yet, we remember them. Why? It is because the devil wants us to remember them. The self wants us to remember them. The self, remember, is aligned with the devil. The self stands for exactly the opposite of all the things for which God stands.

So, how do we get out of this overwhelming conundrum? We believe all that Jesus did at the cross! We believe and we start acting like we believe that: (a) the power of sin is broken in us; (b) the works of the devil have been destroyed in us; and (c) that sin has no mastery over us. We start serving the Lord on His terms, and we stop listening to the devil, period!

Does this mean that we will never be harassed again? No! The devil will never stop being the devil. But we need to understand that he has already been defeated. He has no authority to do the things to us that he does. We do not have to allow him access to our lives. So, once in a while, in a weak moment, he'll get through and beat on us for a bit. But, if we are serving God on His terms, the Holy Spirit will show us the truth, we will recognize what is happening, we will take authority over the devil, and

it will end. If we have fallen, we will confess our sins; there is no condemnation because sin has no mastery over us; and we will look the devil right in the eye and say: "Devil, you haven't gained an inch." And that will be the end of it.

We must remember, God has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west.

Why has God done this? Why has He removed our sins as far as the east is from the west? It is because His forgiveness is perfect and final. He desires us to live with Him in paradise, in perfection, in purity – here on the earth. The kingdom of heaven is within us, friends. God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit live within us.

The full power of creation, the full power, the full mightiness of almighty God lives within us. Don't ever forget that. Everything that you need to live the Christian life according to God's perfect will is already in you. You are hidden with Christ in God. It is no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you. You are clothed with Christ Jesus.

Don't ever again allow the devil to bring to mind your sins. Don't ever again allow your self to do it. When it happens, rid your mind of that thought. It is an anti-godly thought. If God has

forgotten your sin, He does not want you to remember it, either. That, friends, is a Biblical truth that few Christians know and understand; but it is a key to ultimate victory.

CONFESSING AGAIN

And finally, put yourself in a Father's place. Your young son does something wrong, comes to you and confesses. You forgive him. The next day, he comes to you and confesses the same sin again. You patiently explain to him that you already forgave him and he needs to put it out of his mind. The next day he does it again. How do you feel?

How do you think God feels when we constantly bombard him with our breast-beating confession of sin that He has already forgiven? It is bad enough that we choose not to forget. Now, we don't want God to forget, either. I can assure you, God does not listen to that kind of confession. He has forgiven and He has removed the sin from existence. He will not be reminded of that sin. You are speaking to the air.

Let us understand things from God's perspective. After all, we are serving Him on His terms. Let us put to death sin, as it has already been done. Let us leave it alone. It is dead. There is absolutely no value in reviving it. Let the devil say

what he may; pay no attention to him. Listen to He who is in you. Listen to the one who has removed your sin from existence, as far as the east is from the west.

Radical disciple, you are walking the narrow road to holiness. The narrow road is a walk of victory. The devil knows you're there; and he will never give up attempting to destroy and to kill you. But he cannot do so unless you allow him to.

He has no authority. You have all authority. You are a new creature, clothed with Christ Jesus. It is not you who live, but Christ Jesus who lives in you. Let Him.

Please join us at the Radical Disciple meetings every other Monday at New Life Foursquare Church, 5913 Jefferson Pike, Frederick. We meet next on Monday, July 28, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.

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