

**“Jesus Christ, the Intercessor of the New Covenant”**

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 9:14-15, 10:28-29  
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Today I want to explore some of the most important principles in Christian life.

First, the forgiveness of God.

I know someone who doesn't know about the forgiveness of God even though this person has been around the church for many years. She carries guilt and condemnation. How are we convinced that God forgave us? On what ground does our assurance of God's forgiveness stand? Knowing God requires not just the knowledge about Him but also our experience of Him. We get to know God through experiencing Him. In our scripture reading this morning, we see that the new covenant replaces the old, the new law put in our heart by the Holy Spirit replaces the law written on the stone. Instructions under the old covenant have been replaced by the promises under the new covenant. Now we are under this new relationship.

This new covenant has been established by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Owing to His new covenant, we can enter into His righteousness. This is a new redemption. Our righteousness is valid only through this new relationship. And we are invited to this new relationship only because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” What we need first in our heart is the assurance and relief of knowing that we are forgiven.

Now we will survey what happened to our sin, shame and guilt on the cross of Jesus Christ. The only ground for us to receive the forgiveness and new life of God is the cross. Jesus has appeared once and for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26). Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). This is the church of God which Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

For whom did Jesus die? You would say that he died for you and for the world. That's true. But we are not the first one on his mind. Jesus died first for his Father. If God can forgive us without the death of Jesus, Jesus didn't have to die. We can all be just a happy family. Why didn't God just forgive us? Why did God need Jesus to die on the cross? Why do we need the cross? It was God who required the cross. The righteous God cannot let our sin go unpunished. What is veiled behind the cross is the wrath of God, not the love of God. If we don't understand the wrath of God, we won't understand the cross properly.

Romans chapters 1 to 3 deal with the wrath of God. The cross of Jesus Christ is the answer to the wrath of God. “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Rom. 3:25). Sacrifice of atonement means satisfying the requirements for sin. This means redirecting God's wrath. In the first epistle of John, twice Jesus is referred to as the propitiation for our sins. Sin matters not just to us but first to God. If God does not care about our sin, it will put us in danger and destroy us eventually (Rom 9:29). Unless we see that sin matters first to God, we will not understand the main purpose of the cross. Jesus took the cross to take the wrath of God away from us. It is written ‘cursed is

everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law.’ God is righteous and merciful. These two natures of God cannot be compromised.

Once I went to see a prison and its execution room. I didn’t witness an actual execution but saw a record regarding the execution done three days before. It recorded who was executed and when, and by fulfilling the sentence, that justice had been met and therefore the case was over. This record has nothing to do with the forgiveness of the dead. It announced the fact that justice was fulfilled. “The wages of sin is death and there is no one righteous.” If the bible tells us the truth, we will receive the death sentence in God’s court. And we should face the wrath of God as a matter of course. Justice is giving a person what the person deserves. Mercy is giving a person what the person does not deserve. If God is just, and will have us pay for what we did, how can He be merciful at the same time releasing us free and not requiring the just payment? The only way not to compromise His integrity is to introduce a third party. Jesus entered into the court and spoke to God like this. “They sinned and invoked your wrath. They should be judged and pay the price through death and condemnation. But, Father! I will be sentenced and punished in their place.”

Jesus Christ took our place. He became you and me, and paid the just price for all our sins through his death. This is the truth, and this is how we became the recipient of God’s mercy. “But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1). Do you appeal to God’s mercy or God’s justice? “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). When God forgives us, His forgiveness stands on His righteousness. God fulfills His justice when He forgives us, not when He does not.

On the cross, all the troubles in our lives due to our sin together with our guilt and shame have been nailed. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Isn’t it amazing? The death of Jesus fulfills God’s justice. God no longer has anything against us. Not because we are worthy. But because Jesus washed us clean with his blood and offered us to God as righteous ones in Christ. By the righteousness of Jesus, God forgives us and we enter into this new relationship with God. This privilege is available only when we are in Christ who paid the price for our sins.

Second, we need to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Why is the Holy Spirit referred to as a gift or a promise? Because Jesus paid the price through his death on the cross, the Holy Spirit can come to us. The redemptive work of Jesus made it possible for the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Blood signifies redemption and oil signifies the Holy Spirit. Charles Hodge explained it this way. The blood Jesus Christ shed on the cross made it possible that we would be born again by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit could abide in us. The Bible tells us that our heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Then how can our heart be the holy temple of God? Without the redemption of God, the Holy Spirit cannot dwell in our hearts (Acts 2:38; Heb. 9:14). The new covenant was founded by and built on the cross. The essence of the new covenant is in this. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you... I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees” (Ezk. 36:26-27). This is the good news.

In order to live a holy life as a witness of Jesus we definitely need the power of God. Jesus’ disciples were told to wait until they were clothed with the power from above. They waited in Mark’s attic for the Holy Spirit. When the Pentecost day came, they were united with Jesus. The life of the living God entered into them and their lives. The Spirit and life of God started abiding in people. The very purpose of Jesus’ death and resurrection is his union with us (1 Thes. 5:10). “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus’ death is not just for forgiving our sins. It is also for our life as

children of God, restoring the intimate relationship we had with God and restoring the image of God in us through the new life by the indwelling Holy Spirit in us (John 10:10; Rom. 5:10).

The uniqueness of Christianity is that by having the life of God in us, we are sharing the life of Jesus (1 John 4:13). This is the most important reason to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus lived only in his body first. His personality could not be poured into his disciples. Separated physically, Jesus and his disciples could not become one. But Jesus has returned in the Holy Spirit in order to take a new body, the body of Christ, the church. Living as a follower of Jesus means being one with Jesus and walking with Jesus. And because of that, even the believers can be united to each other through One Spirit. Being one doesn't mean that the Deity is poured into us and mixed with us. It rather means that we are united to Jesus so that we can be in his presence and walk with him (John 17:21).

Let us honestly examine ourselves in the light of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit who would lead you to repent? Do you live by faith in Jesus who is your blessing? We cannot allow anything other than Jesus between God and us. Are you causing the Holy Spirit to be sad or grieve? Are you welcoming and desiring more of the Holy Spirit? Have you sensed His power at work? Haven't we tried and tried convincing ourselves that we will be changed if only we push a little bit more? After all, we already know no matter how much of our own work or effort we exercise, we don't have the power required to live as a sincere believer. We are living the same kind of life the Ephesians had before their Pentecostal day. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" The Ephesians had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. The essence of the gospel was not there yet. Many of us do not believe that we can receive the Holy Spirit in a real way, nor know who gives this gift for which Jesus died for. "And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us" (1 John 2:24). When the Holy Spirit comes and abides in us, we naturally desire to share Jesus. Prayer happens. We desire to know Jesus more and more. Love flows as the love of God being poured out into our hearts (John 7:39; Rom. 5:5).

We ought to use the authority God gave us. "God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ." Jesus said "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses." We will be different when the power of the Holy Spirit comes upon us. "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." When the resurrected Jesus abides in us, the Holy Spirit will lead you to share your life. "Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it" (Mark 16:20).

Third, we have the eternal hope in Christ

When I ask "are you a believer?" some people laugh and say "I hope so." Paul said "but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:17-25). Our body has not yet been redeemed. It is weak, painful, failing, and crumbling. The church is not perfect yet. However, the Lord will take away our pain, sorrow, and wipe every tear from our eyes on that day. Death has no more dominion over us (Rev. 21:1-6). We cannot hope for this kind of future if we do not know God and His son Jesus Christ and if we have no communion with the Holy Spirit. Let us see another amazing verse. "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement, because in this world we are like him" (1 John 4:17). Does this surprise you? We will be confident on the judgement day, not because of who we are but because of who Jesus Christ is. One day I will be like him because he became like me first.

He who had no sin became sin for me. He who was rich became poor and humbled himself so that his richness would transform me. Some of you may not have believed or experienced the forgiveness through the cross. Some of you may not have experienced the faith of being born again by the Holy Spirit. Some of you may not believe this good news that you can be forgiven. The Bible says that if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves. Today, the Holy Spirit led you here so that you would believe you can receive God's forgiveness.

This became possible not just by the mercy of God but by the justice of God. The blood of Jesus cleansed us from sins. The blood of Jesus expiated the wrath and sentence of God so that we can be released. This doesn't sound fair, but is true. Satan will condemn and accuse us saying that we are failures. Then we can turn to Jesus and say this. "Jesus, you are my righteousness. Satan cannot condemn me anymore." The new covenant is enacted by the new redemption, new righteousness, and forgiveness. It enables us to know God and experience God. The law and nature of God is now written in our hearts, which will result in the fruits of the Holy life. This is what God ordained for us.

God's dedication is shown in the death and resurrection of His Son. Would you receive this good news? Have you ever repented? Do you come to the presence of God and humbly confess your sin each day? Have you sincerely been thankful for the death of Jesus? Have you received God's forgiveness? Have you received the life of Jesus? Receiving Jesus means inviting God (Rev. 3:20) into your life. If you haven't done this, I ask you to do this today. I pray earnestly that this new covenant touches your heart (Psalm 103:12; Isa. 38:17).

Today I ask you to pray this prayer. "Thank you Jesus. Thank you that you are alive. Thank you that you love us. I know that there was a day when you died for me, the day you took all the wrath and punishment of God. That day you satisfied the justice of God completely. It was your blood that washed me from all sin. In the presence of God, I humbly confess that I committed sin. I admit that I went wrong so many times, in so many ways, in my life. I am guilty of that. However, I thank you that you died for my sin and took my sin away from me. Forgive me, and lead me to live in the joy of knowing that you have forgiven me. Help me know that there is no more condemnation in Christ. Thank you for listening to my prayer. I pray this in Jesus' name."

Remember that the one who baptizes you with fire and the Holy Spirit is our resurrected Lord. Receive this gift, the promise of God (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:38, 39).

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13). Amen.