

Lesson 13

"The Gospel and the Church"

The weight of your sin is a crushing load. The burden to conscience extinguishes life. Jesus Christ is the ultimate burden-bearer. The cross of Christ is the window in time revealing that Jesus is the sin-bearer for all time. Humanity is incorporate in Him. Therefore, there is life only in Him both temporal and eternal.

In His incarnation Jesus' work of the sacrificial atonement involved repentance for the sins of the whole world. He experienced the guilt and condemnation of the sin of the world. As the spotless Lamb of God, He could forgive the sin of the world. His repentance on behalf of the world's sin was necessarily a corporate repentance.

The sin problem must be dealt with head-on--no side-stepping it. God "made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Christ took the faulty equipment of humanity in His incarnation. He was "tempted in all points like as we are" (Heb. 4:15). He learned obedience through His sufferings. Through all His trials, and temptations from without as well as from within, He maintained His "will" sanctified. His power of choice was continually in harmony with His Father's will.

What Jesus accomplished was a revelation of the Father's will. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus' corporate repentance on behalf of sinners reconciled the world to God. The gift of atonement made it possible for the Father to treat the world as though it had not sinned. As the Reconciler in the holiest Christ continues to give the atonement to sinners. Our Burden-bearer sympathizes with the pain of sinners. "The law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) is a Saviour near to us and not afar off.

"The law of Christ" is His Infinite gift of *agape*-love which melts hardened hearts and brings them to God. "The law of Christ" is the self-propagating gospel. Jesus is the Soul-winner because He identifies with sinners. He is not ashamed to call them His brethren (Heb. 2:11). His repentance for sins continues to reach our alienated hearts and brings us to God.

As we enter into His sympathy for sinners we see that their sins are ours. "The flesh" we have is no different from the sinful flesh of the "man ... overtaken in a fault" (Gal. 6:1). It is your sinful flesh which murdered the Son of God. So you are bound up with the whole

world. Your sympathies for others enlarge as you experience corporate repentance with Christ.

The cancer victim, the depressed soul, the sin-addicted inebriate is you. The sensitivities are enlivened seeing opportunities everywhere to give the water of life to perishing souls (Gal. 6:10). The apostle teaches you to seek opportunities to help someone. Christ did. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

One opportunity to do good is sowing gospel seeds (Gal. 6:7, 8). In some primitive societies (and modern ones too!) people will lie down and die without any apparent illness or reason to die. It's called "the curse" of Fatalism. This belief in Fate is related to the belief in *karma*. These dear people are among those Paul speaks of who "through fear of death [are] all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

If the many Kennedys noted the media's repeated mention of the "family curse," they could do one of two things: repent and turn to God believing that Jesus died their ultimate curse; or live a "wild" and risk-filled life thinking that when their time is up nothing can stop it.

Sowing thought-seeds of fatalism produces the dare-devil "so-what?" people, recklessly-living, who decide to "enjoy" life while they can until the "curse" hits them (Gal. 6:7, 8). It's the popular philosophy Paul wrote of in his day, "Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32). According to Paul's context, this was the attitude of the gladiators who fought with wild beasts in the Coliseum. Their human life was cheap. So was the life of others.

The 1888 message teaches that Christ has conquered Satan, canceled all his curses, taken upon Himself your sin as well as the sins of your ancestors. Christ is the Saviour of the world. We need not suffer under any "curse" unless we choose to. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). How? Because He died on a tree. His cross was the lightning-rod that attracted the ultimate curse, the total that Satan could invent. Live, then, in the light of that cross!

Fatalism teaches that life is cheap, so live it up to the hilt. The gospel teaches that life is a precious gift purchased by the death of the Infinite Son of God. Sowing the good news-seeds of "the truth of the gospel" produces a harvest of "fruit unto life eternal" (John 4:36).

One result of this kind of faith is a very high regard for your personal health. As long as possible, you wish to be of service to the One who redeemed you. You are free of any

fear of a curse, for the name of Jesus banishes evil spirits. You can be delivered from the unhappy Fatalism that shadows your soul beneath the constant smile you put on.

What does it mean to sow "to the Spirit" (Gal. 6:8)? To say "No!" to the "flesh," and to say "Yes!" to the Holy Spirit. That simple!

Did Jesus have to contend with and condemn sin in His human nature? This is the struggle all of us have. Or was Jesus "exempt" from this struggle, so that He had no battle with sin to "overcome"?

What does He mean when He says to us, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21)?

Evidently Jesus had the same battle we all have. He has come very close to us; where we have failed in letting sin overcome us, He succeeded in overcoming sin--perfectly.

But that's not all the Good News: He will have a people who receive His faith and they will overcome also "even as [He] overcame." Paul writes "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the [Holy] Spirit" (8:4). They will be those translated without seeing death at Jesus' second coming (cf. Rev. 14:1-5; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

--Paul E. Penno