

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with...” —ROMANS 6:6

Access to God begins with the shedding of blood, the laying down of life in payment for the penalty of sin. The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the indispensable starting point for everyone. There are three aspects of the cross we must recognize if we are to fully appropriate its benefits in our lives.

Firstly, the Cross of Christ is substitutionary. It was our death Christ died and our penalty He incurred. Though we stand responsible and guilty of sin, we owe God nothing for it. Jesus paid it in full! As a consequence of our repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, we become indwelt by His Holy Spirit and are brought into union with Him, which includes union in His death. Paul says, “We have been united with him like this in his death...” (Romans 6:5). In other words, in Christ, God saw me die with Him, and the penalty of my sin fully dealt with. We may be debtors to God’s mercy, for His love alone initiated salvation, but we are not debtors to His justice, because God’s just demand for punishment has been met and satisfied... for in Christ I died, and God sees me in Him.

Secondly, the Cross of Christ is satisfactory. God requires nothing more. That is why penance of any kind is unnecessary. Any need to take further punishment, to pay a fine or to run around the block ten times may ease our consciences, but does nothing to win favour

with God. To be given only a conditional discharge whereby God forgives me now, but will punish me later if I do the same thing again, immediately undermines the quality of Christ's death and the value of His blood.

Thirdly, the Cross of Christ is sufficient. There is no depth of depravity for which the blood of Jesus has not atoned. No one is in an unforgivable state, and no sin can be committed so many times that we become irredeemable. To believe so would be to blaspheme the cross, and to doubt the possibility of complete and total forgiveness is to deny the effectiveness of the cross.

Without the confidence that we stand justified before God on the sole basis of the death of Christ, we cannot know God or enjoy His presence. The Cross of Christ is the starting point, and is God's remarkable gift in giving us the only means possible by which we may have access to Him – through the cross.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for dying on the cross for me, and then giving me your life, the only means of having access to God and being reconciled to Him.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I realize that I cannot add anymore to the Cross of Christ to further my standing before God?