

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

“God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice...” —ROMANS 3:25

If one of our children did something very wrong, would we come to them and say, “You should not have done this. Now one of us is going to have to die because of it.” Would we think that to be good parenting? In all likelihood, we’d think it was ludicrous, but that is exactly what God did. Why? Because it is actually impossible for God to simply forgive sin.

Sin is certainly a problem to us, but if that’s all it is, it would merely complicate our lives, making things difficult and even painful. We have counsellors and self-help books to aid us, but that does not resolve the issue of sin. The crucial issue about sin is what it does to God. It grieves Him. We were created in His image, which is His moral character, and sin violates His character, hurts those He loves and provokes His anger and judgment.

What is important to understand is what lies behind the cross. It is not in the first instance the love of God, but the justice of God, and the brutality of the cross is an expression of God’s anger and judgment upon sin. We cannot sentimentalize the cross of Christ. Jesus did not die first and foremost for us, but for God, because He is first a God of justice. But in His love and mercy, He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin, which satisfied the just wrath of a just God.

1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.” It is not on the basis of God’s mercy we confess our

sins, but on the basis of God's justice. As Christ paid the penalty for our sin, justice has been met, and on that basis, God is able to forgive. Not only are we forgiven, but we are also justified; a legal term, meaning justice has been satisfied. That is all our sins were nailed to the cross with Christ. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Paul asks, "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!" (Romans 6:15) The reason is because the whole purpose of salvation is not just to clean up our lives and get us to heaven by the skin of our teeth, but to restore us to the moral character of God. It isn't about forgiveness alone, but about the indwelling, the working and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, bringing us into a new life; one in which we are being restored into the likeness of Christ.

PRAYER: I pray for forgiveness, Lord, and ask for a deeper work of your Holy Spirit in conforming me into your likeness. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I think about how sin grieves God?