

We Need The Death Penalty

We *need* the death penalty.

...No, I'm not arguing for capital punishment.

So what do I mean when I say, *We need the death penalty?*

Many people today, and arguably throughout history, have had the idea that if they can just do *enough good* then they can justify themselves before God, as if they can somehow cancel the record of debt which is against them, or tip the scales of justice to weigh in their favor. But to do right cannot nullify the wrong already committed. If you go before a judge for a speeding ticket, whether or not you helped an elder across the street is irrelevant. You broke the law. You're guilty. Good deeds cannot change this fact.

Many attempt to train or restrain behavior, with the idea that if they can somehow do that, then this is sufficient to please God.

This however is contrary to what the Word of God teaches.

The first man, Adam, was told by God,

...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen. 2:17)

We know of course that Adam *did* eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, dying first a spiritual death some might suggest, and though he did not immediately die in the physical sense, but rather was shown grace by the shedding of blood (Gen. 3:21), he did in fact die (Gen. 5:5).

This is because *the wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23). For even *a single sin* against God, the penalty is *death*. This alone should cause one to wonder at the depths of God's long suffering towards His creation.

Romans 5 tells us that because of Adam's sin, all are born into sin, and thus all men die.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Romans 5:12-14)

All of us are born into life into life *in Adam*, that is, are sinful by virtue of our nature, even those whose transgressions are not comparable to that of Adam, who transgressed a direct commandment of God.

Paul writes,

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:23)

When we consider this seemingly hopeless state of affairs—that we, by virtue of our natural state, are worthy of condemnation, we may ask ourselves, *what did we personally do to deserve this?* We didn't *earn* this position in Adam by anything that we have done—we were born into it. How then could a God who is righteous, and perfectly just, allow innumerable souls to suffer death and eternal damnation simply by virtue of being born?

But the apostle Paul gives us the answer, and assures us of God's righteous character:

...But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Christ Jesus, who was God in the flesh, lived a life without sin, and took upon Himself God's judicial wrath, was buried, and rose from the dead the third day for our justification (Romans 4:25).

In this God maintained His perfect holiness and righteousness, was able to execute perfect justice, and still grant His grace and forgiveness to humanity—all without compromising His perfect and Holy nature.

This is the heart of the gospel, that Christ did everything necessary to satisfy the wrath of God in regards to mankind's sin. We cannot please God in our flesh, for the carnal mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). Even the most disciplined religious person, if they have not faith, is an abomination to God in their flesh.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:18)

What God desires is *faith*.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (Romans 1:16-17)

In case you think that these truths are alone Pauline in nature, let's consider a few other scriptures which bear witness to this fact. Paul here in Romans 1 is actually quoting from Habakkuk 2, verse 4:

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Hebrews, an epistle for the remnant of Israel, and which was not written by the apostle Paul, also attests to the necessity of faith:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Abraham, the so-called “father of faith,” simply believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness (Gen.15:6). This is prior to the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17), which required the work of circumcision for every male child on the eighth day. God was pleased with Abraham's *faith*.

Christ Himself, in His ministry to Israel, stresses to the religious men of His day the necessity of faith:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Mercy, judgment, and faith, He says, are the *weightier matters* of the Law.

Without faith, the rest is empty.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God... (Romans 3:21-23)

All have sinned, and the penalty for sin is death.

And yet God is pleased with faith.

Contextually, Romans is written after God's nation, Israel, whom He created—whom He *birthed* (Ex. 4:22)—fell spiritually, by continuously rejecting Christ and His servants, and the gospel of the circumcision in general, which culminated in Acts 7 with the stoning of Stephen. The nation

who was given every advantage, who was given the Law and the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2), proved that regardless of any and all advantage, mankind as a whole is sinful and incapable of reaching the standard of God's righteousness.

With the fall of Israel, and by the witness of the scriptures, all mankind was and *is* concluded under sin (Gal. 3:22). This is why God at present has no respect to whether one is a natural descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the recipients of the covenants) and why He has no respect to a person's works as a standard of righteousness for salvation. The gavel has already come down, and the sentence pronounced: *guilty*.

All of the world has been found guilty before God.

Even the remnant of Israel, immediately after the tribulation, when they receive their salvation at the return of Christ, receive it only by grace (Jer. 31:2; 1 Peter 1:10), because no man *ever has* nor *ever will* merit salvation by their own works. The only thing man merits is judgment for his sin.

Even though they must endure until the end, according to their faith in the Name of Jesus (not the finished work of the cross), according to the Law, they do not earn forgiveness of their sins by these things. This is simply how Christ will distinguish between unbelieving Israel and the believing, faithful remnant (i.e. the *true* Israel). Christ's death according to prophecy for Israel was for the redemption of the sins *committed under the first testament*, that they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance through the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15). Those who are made partakers of the powers of the world to come (Hebrews 6:5) will experience a regeneration of their actual nature, just as all of creation will, and will not battle sin within their members as we currently do in this present evil age. Jesus Himself even refers to this time as *the regeneration* (Matt. 19:28). This is why John states in no uncertain terms that he who is born of God does not sin (1 John 3:9). He also states that transgression of *the Law* is that which constitutes sin.

This is a dispensational truth, and far different from what is occurring in this age, where we are—by faith in Christ's death—positionally dead to the Law, dead to sin, and yet still exist in unregenerate bodies.

It is most appropriate that the dispensation of grace was revealed at the apex of Israel's pride, after they crucified their Messiah and rejected His apostles, and will better help that future remnant of God's elect understand the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pay for the sins of mankind, and the necessity of God's grace.

And so, if men cannot *earn* forgiveness, how can God execute judgment against his sin, and simultaneously give him grace?

If man's works in the flesh cannot *annul* sin, and if even *one sin* warrants death, how can mankind be saved?

All men have sinned, thus man cannot pay for the sins of other men. Death in the flesh alone isn't sufficient to satisfy God's wrath against sinful man, since he is an eternal, spiritual being; that is why death and hell are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14), which is called the *second death*. Man owes an *eternal* debt; he cannot even pay his own, thus no man can pay for the debt of another.

If we die for our own sins then God has only executed justice; in our morally bankrupt state there is no amount of time in the second death that can pay for or atone for our sin. Only one who is without the debt of sin can offer Himself as a propitiation.

If God Himself were to take on the form of a man and die the death that man could not—the death of the innocent—perhaps He could pay the debt that man is incapable of paying.

And so we have God taking on the form of a man, of the Seed of Abraham, of the Seed of David, born of a virgin, of God the Father. He lived a life without sin, died a sinner's death on a cross, was placed in a tomb, and rose from the dead the third day as the first fruits of the resurrection, the surety of eternal life.

Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is the antitype and answer to Adam.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive...

(1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

All of mankind has reaped that which we have not personally sown—we have inherited a corrupted nature. We have reaped what Adam has sown. Even so, by the same principle of grace, by faith in the gospel of Christ, we are able to reap what Christ has sown. Adam's sin became ours; even so by faith, Christ's righteousness becomes ours.

... And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:44-47)

Just as all mankind is born into Adam a sinner, those who by faith receive the gospel of Christ plus nothing are given the free gift of salvation, and are made part of a new creature the Body of Christ.

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (Romans 5:15)

Christ took our sin on the cross, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This is what theologians call the *substitutionary atonement* of Christ, which is just a fancy way of saying that He died in our place. He was our substitute. He died the death that we couldn't—the death of an innocent man, in the place of the guilty.

The answer to the problem of sin isn't reform. It isn't turning over a new leaf. It isn't good behavior or good works.

The answer is *death*.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead... (2 Corinthians 5:14)

*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* (Colossians 3:2-3)

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
(Romans 6:3-4)

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:10)

Before God, our old man (our body of sin, our flesh) is dead, through the death of the body of Christ. His body is our body, his death is our death. In this way our spirit and soul are separated from the body of sin. This is what Colossians 2 says:

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
(Colossians 2:11-12)

Our "baptism" is a baptism into Christ's death. This is the only baptism that occurs in the dispensation of grace, and it is by faith in the gospel.

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*
(Ephesians 4:4-6)

We are baptized by Christ's death into one body, by one Spirit, and share in a singular calling, the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

And since we share in Christ's death, we are dead to our old man, thus we are dead to sin:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)

And since we are dead, we are no longer obligated to perform according to a fleshly standard of righteousness—we are dead to the Law:

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:19-20)

Through Christ's perfect obedience to the only righteous standard given to mankind (the Law given through Moses), Christ's death became the perfect substitute for the death that we deserve. Through the Law, and Christ's obedience to it, we are dead to the Law.

Therefore,

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:16)

The apostle of the Gentiles goes on to question the Colossians,

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? (Colossians 2:20-22)

Dead men are not concerned with man-made ordinances, or "spiritual" and religious practices; neither are they concerned with days, weeks, or years. Consider Galatians 4:

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. (Galatians 4:9-11)

As members of the body of Christ, redeemed by Christ's blood, that is, His death, and buried with Him in baptism, and made partakers of eternal life through His resurrection, we are not concerned with holy days or sabbaths; we are not concerned with foods which perish with their consumption; we are not concerned with signs of the tribulation—*of the times and the seasons*,

brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you— because we do not live in the times of prophetic fulfillment. We are children of the day, not of the night, that *that Day* should overtake us as a thief (1 Thess. 5).

We should be concerned solely with *redeeming the time* (Ephesians 5:16), with the preaching of the cross for the salvation of all men, and for the edification of the saints.

We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

We are risen *with* Christ, and positionally we are seated in the heavens with Him.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus... (Ephesians 2:4-6)

To reign with Christ—the Head of all principality and power—in the heavens is the eternal inheritance and reward of members of the Body of Christ. In this God will forever be able to demonstrate and make known the depths of His mercy and love for mankind:

...And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
(Ephesians 2:6-7)

We were dead in our trespasses and sins, and were *by nature* the children of wrath, deserving of death and eternal judgment. But God who is rich in mercy died in the place of mankind, that by faith in His death in place of ours, and His burial and His resurrection, we could be eternally reconciled to God.

And so, when I say “we need the death penalty,” I am not exaggerating. In the eyes of God, death is the necessary judgment for sin. We either suffer the penalty of eternal death for our own sin, or we receive by faith the penalty of death upon the only innocent Man who ever lived, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sole means of our forgiveness.

No amount of good deeds can pay for sin. Only the blood of Christ—the blood of the innocent—can pay the penalty.