

What Does Jesus Do for My Sin Problem?

Sunday Morning Message delivered at Faith Bible Fellowship, Oak Ridge, Tennessee

March 13, 2005

Second in a Series of Four Messages

What's that television show that begins with a song, "*Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do? Watcha gonna do when they come for you*"? [Many reply: "COPS"]

Note to self: "Preach on watching trashy TV." Note to self: "First, stop watching trashy TV." At the beginning of the show, the narrator says, "*All suspects are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*" But of course, we all can see with our own eyes that they are guilty as sin.

Now I consider myself a good American – I believe in the legal protections we have in our system of justice. But we all know that the courts don't always get it right. We've all seen the guilty go free, and we have seen cases where the innocent have been wrongly convicted. When the court gets it wrong we don't call it justice, but a miscarriage of justice.

True justice occurs when the VERDICT matches the TRUTH. True guilt or true innocence is grounded in the facts of each case. Sometimes on that TV show, we can see that they are guilty! They're obviously drunk! Or driving drunk! Or resisting arrest. But just to make sure all the facts are in, we're going to put the conclusions that flow from our experience in abeyance – until the court has its say.

But everybody knows that the court cannot actually MAKE the guilty innocent, nor can it MAKE the innocent guilty.

Last week we considered the guilt of the human race, and every individual member of it. The sins of commission are the easiest to understand – we have all done things displeasing to God; we have all committed acts that have broken God's laws. Closely related are the sins of omission – the willful or even negligent turning away from good deeds that we ought to have done, but didn't.

The Bible says that our sin-problem runs deeper than deeds, however. It goes beyond the deeds of the body to our soulish life. We sin in mind; in attitude; in disposition; in imagination. We find that we can wallow in sin without moving a muscle – we covet; we lust; we are prideful or hateful; we withhold forgiveness. Our affections are corrupted – we love things that God hates, and we hate things God loves.

And the Bible tells us that our sin-problem runs still deeper than that! It goes to the deepest part of man - beyond his soulish aspects to the very spirit of the man. The spirit itself is corrupted by sin. It is bent toward sin, and that's the way it comes. Man comes with built-in, pre-installed software, "Sinner 9.0" He's hard-wired for it. He's a born rebel. Sin comes naturally, and it feels good. It fits who he is.

And so the Bible teaches that "natural man" (to take up Paul's language) stands condemned before God – *before* the first sin of commission, *before* the first sin of omission, *before* the first soulish sin of emotion, ambition, imagination, pride, selfishness, lust, or greed.

This is the hardest part of the biblical teaching about sin for some people to accept. Why? For one thing, it tends not to fit their self-image. They "feel like" reasonably good people, above average, in fact; at least in the things that really count. For another thing, they know NOT the word of God, which lays out their guilt in no uncertain terms. Both the Old Testament and the New declare that "*there is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, and together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.*" (RO 3:10-12).

Where did this "original sin" come from? That's even harder for some to accept – the Bible clearly teaches that it came from Adam. We inherited it from him.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—(Romans 5:12)

The Bible teaches that we were rendered guilty before God when Adam sinned. When he sinned, we all sinned! Romans 5:18 says, *“through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.”*

Someone might say, “Well, that’s not right! I shouldn’t be blamed for something somebody else did – even if I am a direct ancestor!” That misses the point: Adam’s effect on human race was so much more than merely judicial, or merely legal. It changed us to the core. Its effect was systemic, organic, constitutional, essential, real. Our spiritual DNA became corrupted. Romans 5:19 says, *“through the one man’s disobedience the many were **made** sinners”*

Yes, we are guilty in Adam, but none of us are getting a bad rap. Surely you’ve noticed that men, women, boys, girls have a talent for rebellion against God! That’s what it means to be “in Adam” We’re his sons, and his daughters.

Christians are good at relying on the word of God alone rather than “impressions” when it comes to sinfulness of man. They are not swayed by apparent displays of human goodness. Some Christian theologies argue that lost man is incapable of any single good deed - that every single action is tainted by sin.

I had a friend in Missouri that was of that opinion – went to the store together one time, and he said “thank-you” to the girl who gave him his change. I asked, “Why did you do that?” “Do what” “Say thank you.” “What do you mean?” I said, “You are giving that girl the impression that she has done something worthy, something good. You are feeding her false sense of human goodness. She would have stolen it if she could. You should have given her a look worthy of her depravity.” I hope nobody overheard that conversation. They would have thought, “What a couple of kooks!” Nobody could have a conversation like that but two aspiring theologians.

But the point is, when it comes to understanding what it means to be “in Adam,” Christians are willing to suspend judgment borne of experience and observation, if they feel like the Word of God takes them to a different conclusion. It may look like sometimes people “in Adam” are doing good things, but maybe they are not. Maybe we shouldn’t rely on our *impression* of things, but should instead rely on the Word of God alone.

The question is, what does it mean to be “in Christ”? When I accept Him by faith, does He do anything for my sin problem?

Praise the Lord that our judicial position before God is completely and forever changed!
“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;” (Romans 3:21-24)

And in Romans 8:1 we are told, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* And Romans 8:31-34 says,

*“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?
 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all,
 how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect?
 God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died,
 yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*

But is it all judicial? Is it all about heaven’s courtroom and nothing else? Is it all “positional” truth, or does Christ do anything for my sin problem in the here and now? Adam’s sin affected our spiritual DNA – did salvation in Christ do anything about that? Sin affected me on deepest level – in my spirit. Did salvation in Christ do anything about that? Or is it just about God’s paperwork. Is it just that my folder got moved from the filing cabinet of the damned to the filing cabinet of the redeemed, or does

Christ's sacrifice affect me positively on a personal, organic, systemic, real level, like the sin of Adam affected me negatively.

The language of the New Testament to describe salvation of Christ goes much further than the judicial. It says that the one who comes to Christ is "born again," for example. I remember a summer day in the early 80's when my wife Robin and I saw our legal status change. We became parents. Our legal situation was completely altered. We had more legal responsibilities, and there was another legal person in the house that had certain legal protections.

But let me tell you something – our legal situation was furthest thing from our minds. In fact, it was practically irrelevant to our day-to-day life. We were changed – we were really changed. Before our first daughter was born, we used to take our turn in the church nursery. One of those babies would spit up on me and it would seriously gross me out! Yuck! I would hold the baby at arms length in case he hurled again. But now my own dear baby would spit up on me, and I would calmly say something like, "O, would you look at that – dear, can you get me a paper towel or something, we've had a little spit up here." There was a birth, and the birth changed me deep down inside.

And there was another person living in the world – and she pretty much assumed the center of our home. She had certain rights and protections recognized by the federal government and the State of Texas. But the legal situation didn't begin to capture our new situation.

You all were born. This sanctuary is full of people who were born. What's the most significant thing about you? Is it that your name is recorded at a courthouse somewhere, or is it that you are a living person with hopes and dreams, who loves and is loved?

The New Testament says that salvation is more than an absolving of legal guilt – something is born! The New Testament says that "*if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The righteousness that was so foreign & unattainable to me as a son of Adam, is now mine as a GIFT by faith in Jesus Christ!

"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;" (Romans 3:21-24)

I was *in Adam*, now I am *in Christ*. The son of Adam is become a child of God. 2 Corinthians 4:6 compares salvation to the work of God in Creation:

"For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." (2 CO 4:6-7)

In salvation, something is created by God. God declared us righteous in Christ, and when God speaks something actually happens. I am his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that I should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). A saved person is the product of God's workshop, a work that is not finished, but one that has definitely been begun. We have been created in Christ. Over and over again, the New Testament calls me and every believer a "saint" or holy one.

And so we say, "But I don't *feel* like a saint. I don't *feel* like a holy one. I don't *seem* so righteous to me." Now isn't this ironic? The sinner *feels like* a pretty good person, and we confront him with the harsh truths of the Word of God, and the need to put faith over perceptions. The saint *feels like* a sinner, and he's not sure how to put the Word and his sense of self-perception together.

But make no mistake, Christian - Christ has done something about your sin problem on a spiritual level – in your spirit. The light is shining. You are a new creation. You are a child of God. You are His

workmanship. And that something that has been born in you is like God – it is holy, righteous, it is like Christ. The seed has been planted, and the fruit of that seed is godliness; is righteousness.

Jesus said if you don't see the fruit, maybe that good seed isn't there! He said, "You know the tree by its fruit." If you are in Christ, something has happened to you. The love of Christ has been poured out in your hearts, for Christ, and from Christ to others. You have a joy such that even in the loss of a loved one you do not grieve as do those who have no hope – your grief has a floor below which you cannot go. You have a thirst for the Word of God, and you approach it as an encounter with God. Do you know how weird that it is to those who have not been reborn? You hate the sin in your life, and you agree with the law of God in the inner man. You long for communion with God, and when you pour yourself OUT in worship you are somehow FULFILLED.

We have so much more than a clean slate. You have everything that pertains to godliness. You have springs of living water welling up within. You have what it takes to be holy, for your heavenly father is holy. Don't let the Enemy tell you that you are a zero without a rim. You are a chosen race, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

I know you are capable of sin (I am to), but sin is not the truth about who we are at the deepest level by the grace of God in Christ.

May our lives tell the truth about what Christ has done for us, and in us.

Father, thank you for the work of salvation you have done in us. Help us to understand it; to know the surpassing greatness of Your power toward us who believe. But more than that, Lord, help us to WALK in it, to LIVE it, to our joy and satisfaction of life, and to Your glory; for your great grace and power. In Jesus' name, amen.