

The Wednesday Word, May 6, 2015: Counted Dead

“For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Here’s the good news: our salvation rests entirely upon the penal, substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, as our substitute, by Himself and on our behalf, exclusively satisfied the righteous demands of divine holiness and justice.

In the Old Testament, when the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the worshipper (Exodus 24:8; Hebrews 9:19), that person was counted or reckoned as being dead! Being dead, it was further reckoned that he had, therefore, paid the penalty of the broken law. The worshipper was counted as having died in the person of his substitute. As long as the worshipper had not paid the death penalty, he was counted as unfit for God. However, as soon as he had paid the death penalty, through the death of his substitute, he was reckoned as now being unsoiled and fit for the Lord’s service.

For peace of conscience, we really need to grasp the great gospel truth of Christ our Substitute.

During the American Civil War, Union Army recruiters arrived at a certain home demanding that the man of the house join the army immediately. The man replied that he could not do so because he had already been killed in action two years ago. As it turned out, a neighbour had signed a ‘Substitute Volunteer’ paper and had had gone to war in this man’s place. It was all done legally and since the substitute had died, the man the army had wanted to recruit was now reckoned as having already been killed in action. He, therefore, did not have to go to war as he had already been there and had died in the person of his substitute.

Because of the work of the Lord Jesus, our substitute, we are now reckoned as having already been punished for our sins (Isaiah 53:5). Yes, I know we weren’t physically punished at the cross, but legally we were (Romans 4:25). When Christ hung upon the cross, we legally hung there with him. His death was our death; His punishment was our punishment. We are now cleansed by His blood---- which is another way of saying that we have been made partakers of the death of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanses us by totally identifying us with the death of our Substitute.

We were once covered with guilt and under sentence of death, but our substitute, the Lord Jesus shed His blood (Matthew 26:28). In God’s eyes, that blood represents both his death and ours. He died as our substitute. The blood is shed for us, and in that way death, which is the law's penalty, is reckoned legally to us. Legally we have died. We have been crucified with Christ and have undergone the death sentence; as a result, our guilt has passed away. We are cleansed! The fires of Hell have been doused for us with the blood of Jesus. This is good news we can live in!

Furthermore, our sin is taken away and Christ’s own righteousness is reckoned to us in its place (Philippians 3:9). This is how the believer makes use of the blood of Christ. Faith simply embraces and enjoys what the blood has already accomplished.

At the cross, Jesus was treated as having our sin. He was reckoned as the greatest sinner and rebel who had ever existed. All our sins were put on Him.

We know this, but have we ever paused to think about what it means? It means that our blasphemies and adulteries were reckoned as His. He took responsibility for all our lying, thieving, fornications and murders. This was awful for Him but wonderful for us. Martin Luther grasped this truth and wrote to a friend saying, "Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him, and say, 'Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin.'"

Spurgeon said it like this; *"The man, Christ Jesus, is exalted at the right hand of the majesty on high; and we, His elect, are in Him, crucified with Him, risen with Him."* (Ephesians 2:6)

We were:

One, when He died;

One, when He rose;

One, when He triumphed over His foes;

One, when in heaven He took His seat

And angels sang of hell's defeat.

And that is the Gospel Truth!