

13. Christ in our place

July 6, 2008

When you tell other people about what God has done for you, you are sharing your testimony. A testimony is when you share your story of how you came to faith. Every Christian has a testimony. Some Christians have dramatic testimonies where they tell of being delivered from a life of drug addiction or crime or some sordid deeds. Other Christians don't have testimonies that are quite as dramatic – but just as significant.

I like to hear how people came to Christ, but I don't like it when people go into gory details about their past. Then there are testimonies where people tell how much they have given up for Jesus. They'll say things like, "I gave up this and that for Jesus. I have made such sacrifices for the Lord. I have done it all for Him!" I have a great advice for those who boast about how much they gave up for Christ, "Shut up."

Your testimony is not about what you gave up for Jesus. It's about what He gave up for you. Don't share what you have done for Jesus. Share what Jesus has done for you. Jesus is the One who has done the work. Jesus is the One who gave Himself for us, the sinners, His enemies. It is Jesus whom we are proclaiming.

A good, strong testimony will lift up what Christ has accomplished. The fact of the matter is all of us were sinners hopelessly separated from God, traveling in the same boat on our way to hell. And the same Gospel came and transformed us. That is the testimony that we all have. That is the testimony that we all need to share with unbelievers.

A. GOD DIED FOR THE UNGODLY

Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

The gift Christ gave us on the cross proves God's love beyond any shadow of a doubt. And not only did it confirm the reality of God's love, it also demonstrated the degree of that love.

When a gift is given, the degree of love behind the gift can be measured in two ways – partly by the costliness of the gift to the giver, and partly by the worthiness of the one receiving the gift. When Christ died on the cross, the cost to God could not have been any more expensive, and we could not have been any less worthy of His love. With that in mind, we can rejoice because we know God loves us – loves us even to the point of sacrificing His own Son on our behalf.

The greatest point of God's love for us is not worthiness of us, but His determination to love us, not what He can get out of us, rather what He can give to us.

Think with me, please. Do you know anyone close to you who rejects your love – maybe your child, even grown child, mom, dad, relatives, or close friend? You've done so much for that person with a genuine love, yet that person rejects you and your love or trying to take advantage of your love. Does your heart ache for them? Can you imagine how much more our God's heart aches when His own creatures blatantly says, "No," to His face and sticks his nose up and walks away?

While we were still sinners, He offered salvation through His grace. It is like while Osama Bin Laden, did I say, "Obama?" Excuse me, while Osama Bin Laden was rejoicing over the collapse of the World Tower in his Afghanistan cave after Sept. 11, 2001, an American citizen finds out that Osama has a bad kidney. He happens to be a match to give his own kidney to this terrorist so that he can be well. This far fetched story would not be even a comparison to the love of God for us.

I asked you to underline "in due time". "In due time" of what? Many theologians believe that by the time Jesus died Israel and the surrounding countries were prepared spiritually, economically, linguistically, politically, philosophically and geographically for Jesus' atoning sacrifice and the spread of the Gospel.

Again, I asked to underline the word 'for'. In Greek, it is "huper". It is not a mispronounced word of 'super' by a Korean. Huper means "for the sake of, in behalf of, instead of."

Other places where 'huper' is used in the New Testament help us to understand this.

John 11:50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

This brings a very important point that can not be ignored. If Jesus Christ who is God Himself died for the ungodly humans, this fact leaves ungodly no excuse if they do not come to Him and believe in Him and His salvation.

B. GOD'S DEMONSTRATION OF HIS LOVE ON THE CROSS

Romans 5:7-8 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Find me one religion that its god died for its followers. You will find none. You might find that the leader of the religion died for his own benefit or because it was the end for him, but not for the entire human race.

God's love is a love beyond even the best love among humans. Throughout the history of mankind, many people sacrificed their lives for their religions, ideologies and the ones whom they cared, loved and cherished. Some even sacrificed their lives for complete strangers while they try to rescue them. We call them heroes and they deserve it.

But no one, I mean "NO ONE" died for his enemies who were against him except Jesus our Lord. You may say, "Wait a minute. I am not Jesus' enemy. As a matter of fact, I am a very good person." I am sure you are in human terms. But in the eyes of God, your goodness is not good enough for His righteousness and holiness. If you don't have Jesus as the Savior and Lord in your heart, you are His enemy until you surrender to Him.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The work of Jesus on the cross for us is God's ultimate proof of His love for us. He may give additional proof, but He can give no greater proof. If the cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love, it is also the ultimate demonstration of man's hatred. It also proves that the height of man's hatred can't defeat the height of

God's love. The demonstration of God's love isn't so much in that Jesus died, but in whom Jesus died for – undeserving sinners and rebels against Him. My circumstances aren't the barometer of God's love and goodness – the Cross is.

Let's stop here and talk about our sacrifice.

As I mentioned at the beginning, giving up our old habits and addictions are not sacrifice. They are benefits of becoming Christians. What would you miss from giving up drinking alcohol? Missing puking your guts out and having nasty hangovers in the morning? I am sure that it is nice to miss out on those things. Not getting caught as a drug junkie by cops is good, too. How about no more addiction to pornography or gambling? Giving up all of those is good.

Now we as Christians need to sacrifice our own resources and time for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. To the majority of Christians, their Christianity is like a spectator's sport. Like watching a football game. There are 80,000 people in the stands who desperately need exercise yelling at 22 players in the field who desperately need a rest. Can you guess how many armchair quarterbacks are in this country? All of them think that they know more about that football game than the players and coaches. But if the opportunity is given, they would not even last one minute in that meat grinder that is called "Pit." Think about it, 99.99% of armchair quarterbacks will have a heart attack when they see two of three hundred pound all muscle defensive ends come after him in full speed with every intention to rip his head off.

Many Christians think that church work can be done by someone else's time and effort. Let me ask you this:

If everybody in the church serves like you, do you think the church would do well?

If everybody in the church help others like you, do you think the others would ever know the love of God?

If not, there is the answer for you. Instead of being a problem in the Christianity, become a part of the solution for the Kingdom of God.

While you're looking for distant opportunities, you might miss the ones that are right in front of us. Are you serving the Lord right now with what He has called you to do? Be faithful in that. Do it well. Do it as unto the Lord. It may seem like your efforts go unnoticed, but there is someone who sees. And He will one day reward you openly.

If you have not served in this church yet, right after the service, you will have an opportunity to serve by carrying out the equipment with the moving team. Start today.

God gave up Himself for you and me. What are you holding back in return? Love Him, serve Him, and give yourself to Him.

C. SALVATION FROM GOD'S WRATH

Romans 5:9-11 Much more than, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The wrath of God that was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men was placed on Jesus as a substitute in the place of the believer.

Let's go back to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ:

Matthew 27:45-46 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

This was the moment when the Father in heaven poured out every single sin of the entire human race upon Jesus Christ on the cross. Up to this moment, He has never sinned against the Lord and men. Up to this moment, He was a perfect man. Because somebody who is sinless had to take the place of human and there was no other except Jesus, He became our atoning sacrifice.

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

God the Father could not have fellowship with God the Son who became the worst sinner for mankind, so He had to turn His back on Jesus at that moment. Up to this moment, they had a perfect relationship within Godhead. Our sin separated the Father from the Son. That was the wrath of God unto His Son. We were supposed to take that wrath because of our own sins. Jesus was rejected by the Father because of us so that we don't have to be rejected.

Some of you who are so analytical would want to know how the Father could bring up all the sins from the past to the future and dump them on Jesus. I don't know. But the Bible says so and I believe it with my faith in God who speaks no lie.

Colossians 1:20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

If God showed such dramatic love to us when we were enemies, think of the blessings we will enjoy once we are reconciled to God! If God had a refrigerator, our pictures would be on it. If He had a wallet, our photos would be in it. He sends us flowers every spring. He sends us a sunrise every morning. Face it, folks, He is crazy about us! God's love cannot be explained, it can only be experienced through faith.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) If Jesus Christ who is God Himself died for ungodly humans, this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to Him and believe in Him and His salvation.

2) God gave up Himself for you and me. What are you holding back in return? Love Him, serve Him, and give yourself to Him.