

## **“God’s Promise In the Blood and Water”**

*Christ “offered for all time one sacrifice for sins. ...By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”*

Hebrews 10, 12,14

Now that the weather is starting to get warmer, people are getting outside more and enjoying walking and bike riding. And many are getting excited about getting on the course to play golf again. It’s a sure sign of spring when the golfers return to the links in Ohio!

It always puzzles me how folks who love golf, complain about their game so much. They complain especially about their scores ... how they hit one off into the rough, or into the lake. All those mistakes add strokes to their score, and in golf it’s the low score that wins. So imagine the delight of playing in a Pro-Am tournament. A Pro-Am tournament is where pro golfers (who are GOOD) hook up with amateur golfers like us, who are NOT good.

The Pro-Am has a simple format. Each team has one golf pro, and 4 amateurs. The lowest score on your team is what gets recorded. In other words, even on the holes where you stunk, if one of your partners did well, you did well.

Imagine the joy of that kind of game?! Let’s take a typical hole where you score and 8, but the golf pro on your team scores a 3. Guess which score is recorded? The 3! Your 8 is forgotten and your teammate’s birdie is remembered. A person could get used to that! You get credit for the good work of someone else simply by virtue of being on the team.

Friends, hasn’t Christ Jesus done the same for you?

What a Pro-Am team could do for you on the golf course, Jesus does for you every day of the week. Because of His performance, you close your daily round with a perfect score. Doesn’t matter if you sprayed a few into the woods, or shanked one into the water. What matters is that you showed up to play and joined the right team. In this case, your team couldn’t be stronger!

It's you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A better team doesn't exist!

The \$20 theological term for this is "*Justification*." Simply defined it means, you are given a prize, not because of what you do, but because of who you know.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> word is illustrated in that golf game. Not only do you see a picture of justification, there is an equally clear picture of *Sanctification*.

It goes like this: As you play the first few holes, you stink. You play badly. Thank God your team mates' score is recorded on your card. But as you play more holes, you warm up. You improve with each hole. The pro on your team keeps giving you tips and changing your grip. You get better, until finally you make a contribution. On one hole – probably the last one – you make par.

In the end, the prize comes because of the pro golfer's score. The improvement comes because of the pro's *help*.

Justification – that is, forgiveness, heaven, hope, and purpose – these come because of Christ's work *for* us.

Sanctification – growing in joy and love and peace throughout life's ups and downs – these come because of Christ's work *in* us.

Both are gifts from God. Both Christ's work *for* us and Christ work *in* us are gifts of God's free grace!

In the Bible book of Hebrews, God guided the writer to pen these words for us: ***"[Christ] offered for all time one sacrifice for sins. ... By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."*** Let me repeat that last sentence. ***"By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."*** ***"He has made perfect forever"*** – that's justification. ***"Those who are being made holy"*** -- that's sanctification.

Justification and sanctification. God's work *for* us and God's work *in* us. Neglect the first, and you become fearful. Neglect the second, and you get lazy. Both are essential, and both are seen in the dampened dirt at the foot of Jesus' cross.

In the Bible, John tells us that he was there the day Jesus was hung on the cross. He stayed and saw it all. Late on that Good

Friday afternoon, the Roman soldiers were in a hurry to be sure that all 3 men crucified that day died before sunset. So the soldiers set out to speed up the process of death. By this time, however, Jesus had already died. So just to check and be sure that Jesus hadn't just passed out on the cross, a soldier thrust his spear up into Christ's chest, puncturing His heart. John wrote, ***"One of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side, and at once blood and water came out."*** John 19:34 If the crucifixion hadn't already killed Jesus, certainly having a spear pierce His heart would. John means to tell us that Jesus was certainly dead. He didn't faint – He really died for your sins and mine.

What the flow of blood and water meant to John on Good Friday may be clear proof that Jesus really, truly had died. We don't know what John was thinking, except that this really did happen. Yet, blood and water have reach meanings in the Bible.

When you hear of blood mentioned in the Bible, a light should go off in your mind. Even a casual student of Scripture knows the connection between blood and mercy or forgiveness.

Hebrews chapter 9 in the Bible tells us, ***"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** Hebrews 9:22 All the way back to the beginning of time, people knew this.

Adam's son, Abel, knew this truth. He knew to offer more than prayers and crops. He knew to offer a life -- as a substitute to save *his* life. A life for a life. He knew to pour out blood. He didn't have a fancy church or temple. He was in a field with the ground as his altar. Yet Abel became the first to do what millions would imitate – he offered a blood sacrifice for sins.

All through the Old Testament times, the shedding of blood was necessary for the forgiveness of sins. In the Old Testament MANY people stacked stones to make an altar and sacrificed a lamb or a bull to burn as an offering. Noah did this when he got off the arc. King Solomon built a Temple where the blood of animals was shed. Animals' lives were offered to take the punishment of death instead of dying themselves.

God decided that a priesthood should be started, and special people were selected and carefully trained to offer the blood sacrifices. But all that ended at the cross. What Abel, and Noah, and Solomon, and ALL the priests sought to accomplish, **GOD DID** with His Son. When Jesus died, all the bloodshed was completed. What all the animals couldn't do, Jesus did once for all time.

The Son of God became the Lamb – the “Lamb of God” – the sacrifice of God. The cross became the altar. And as a result, ***“We were ‘made holy through the sacrifice Christ made in His body once for all time.’”*** Hebrews 10:10

What needed to be paid, was paid. What had to be done, was done. Innocent blood was required. You and I aren't innocent, but Jesus is! He's the only one! So His innocent blood was offered, once for all time. Pay attention to those 4 words. Bury them deep in your heart. ***“ONCE FOR ALL TIME.”***

At the risk of sounding like an elementary school teacher, let me ask an elementary question. If the sacrifice has been offered once for all time, does it need to be offered again?

**OF COURSE NOT!** You are justified! You are forgiven! Heaven is given to you free and for certain!

Just as the achievements of a golf team could be credited to you in a Pro-Am tournament, so the achievement of Jesus' blood IS credited to you.

If **God's Work *FOR Us*** is seen in the blood. What might we see in the water? ... You got it ... **God's Word *in Us*.**

One day Jesus stopped by a well for a rest and a drink. He started a conversation with a woman. In their talk, Jesus used water as a word picture, as a symbol, to tell the woman that He **IS** God. And Jesus used water as a word-picture to tell us the truth that **Only He can satisfy all the thirsts** we have in our lives. Jesus said, ***“The water I give will become a spring of water gushing up inside that person, giving eternal life.”*** John 4:14

Jesus offers not just one drink of water, but a perpetual gushing well! And the well isn't a hole in your yard at home. It is the Holy Spirit – God Himself – living in your heart.

Later, Jesus put it this way: He said, *“Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive.*” John 7:38-39 Water is a picture of the Spirit of Jesus working IN us. He’s not working to save us. That work is already done! He’s working to CHANGE you.

How does the Spirit work *in* you to change you? Practically, you grow to love your neighbor, and refrain from gossip. You refuse to cheat on your spouse, and refuse to cheat on your taxes. You do our best to love people who are tough to love.

Here at St. Paul, we spent all last Fall learning What On Earth We are Here For. I hope you remember that study. It is all about God’s work For you, and His work IN you. You are planned for God’s pleasure – for Him to just love you. And you respond to God’s grace by fulfilling God’s plan for you to grow to become like Christ, to be in God’s family, to serve God in your ministry, and to share Jesus in your mission.

We’ve added detail to describe what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Here’s what we at St Paul are dedicated to: In response to God’s grace to me in Jesus Christ, I commit to on-going growth in all the disciplines of the Christian faith, which include:

- **Witness** to Christ in all I say and do,
- **Worship** Christ with my life daily and with my fellow Christians weekly,
- **Connect** with others in my congregation as well as in a small group,
- **Pray** regularly for others, especially the lost, as well as for myself,
- **Study** the Bible on my own as well as with my fellow Christians,
- **Serve** God and others inside as well as outside the church, and

- **Give** a percentage of my financial resources to extend the cause of Christ, making a tenth (tithe) as my minimum goal.

We are working on making beautiful banners that will hang on our walls to remind us of these 7 very important commitments. This is what we are about! This is vital!

Now, Do we do these *IN ORDER* to be saved? NO!! God says in Philippians 2, ***“Do the good things that result from being saved, obeying God with deep reverence, shrinking back from all that might displease Him. For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey Him, and then helping you do what He wants.”*** Philippians 2:12-13, (Living Bible, emphasis added) these are ***“the good things THAT RESULT FROM being saved.”***

Something similar happens in marriage. Are a bride and groom ever more married than they are the first day? The vows are made and the marriage certificate is signed – could they be any more married than that?

Well, perhaps they could. Imagine them 50 years and 4 kids later. They’ve been transferred and moved several times – together. They’ve gone through the valleys and victories of life – together. After 50 years of marriage, they finish each other’s sentences and could order each other’s food. They even start looking alike after a while (which is a thought which bothers most of you women). Wouldn’t a couple be more married on their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary than on their wedding day?

Yet, on the other hand, how could they be? The marriage certificate hasn’t changed. Ahh, but the relationship has. And there’s the difference. Technically, they are no more united than they were on their wedding day when they left the altar. But relationally, they are completely different.

Marriage is both a done deal, and a daily development. Something you did, and something you do.

The same is true of your life with God. Can you be more saved than when you first believed? Whether you first believed when you were baptized or when, as a student or an adult you

came to know Jesus as your Savior -- can you be more saved than the day God first moved into your heart? NO!!

But can a person grow in salvation? Absolutely. God's work in your life is like marriage, is both a done deal and a daily development.

The blood is God's sacrifice *FOR* us.

The water is God's Spirit *IN* us.

And we need both. In the Bible, John tells us that blood and water came from Christ's side. He doesn't emphasize one over the other. ... But too often we do!

Some accept the blood, but forget the water. They want to be saved, but don't want to be changed. They want to be confirmed, or have their name written on a list of church members thinking that points to being saved ... but they don't want to be transformed by God. They want to keep God's Spirit at a distance, rather than invite Him in where He could change their lives to become more and more like Christ.

Others, accept the water, but forget the blood. They are busy **for** Christ but never at peace **in** Christ. They serve and give ... but not happily. Not with joy or thanks or gratitude in their hearts. They serve grudgingly, or out of guilt. And their unhappy faces and their cranky lives make everyone around them say, "If that's what being a follower of Christ is supposed to be, then I don't want anything to do with it."

What about you? Do you tend to lean one way or the other?

Do you feel so saved that you never serve? Are you so happy with the score of your team that you aren't even getting out of the golf cart? If that is you, let me ask you a question: Why does God have you on the course? Why didn't He beam you up the moment He brought you to faith? The fact is, you and I are here for a reason, and that reason is to glorify God in our service, in our praise, in our relationships, in our giving, in our telling others about Him.

Or is your tendency the opposite? Perhaps you always serve for fear of not being saved. Perhaps you don't trust your team.

You're worried that a secret card exists on which your score IS being written. Is that you? If so, know this: The blood of Jesus IS enough to save you. The blood of Christ does not cover your sins, conceal your sins, postpone your sins, or diminish your sins. IT TAKES AWAY your sins, ... ONCE FOR ALL TIME.

Jesus allows your mistakes to be lost in His perfection. But He won't tell how you really did.

When you and I stand in heaven to receive our prize, only One will know all of our sins, but He won't embarrass you -- He has already forgiven them.

So, enjoy the game, my friends. Your prize is secure.

But you might ask the Pro -- Jesus the Teacher -- for some help with that swing of yours!

Amen.