

“Freedom from the Penalty of Sin”

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Romans 8:3 “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, **He condemned sin in the flesh,**”

Let me begin with a sentence that I will break down into five short statements.

The work of Christ (1 Pet. 2:24)
as the outworking of the Trinitarian eternal purpose (Eph. 1:4)
in behalf of His people (Matt. 20:28)
against sin (Rom. 8:3)
is finished (John 19:30).

So what . . . what difference does this “doctrine” make in the daily grind and routines of life?

My attempt in this short meditation is to unpack this idea.

First, sin is what separates the created from its Creator. The idea of sin might not be politically correct, but it is biblically non-negotiable. Everyone everywhere at all times has sinned and will sin. There is not only the sin of Adam that has been “imputed” to everyone’s account, but there is also the personalized and individualized transgressions through acts of commission and ignorant omission of God’s unchanging laws that places everyone everywhere at all times in open rebellion against Him.

It is this sin that makes you and I “feel” lousy at our ineptness. It is this sin that “fills” us with feelings of guilt when we breach known law. It is the twinge of conscience at your our blatant hypocrisy and righteous self-deception. You might live in a world of your own making and deny sin, but you can never escape its penalty.

Second, the penalty is what sin incurs. It is the inherent or intrinsic demerit that all sin carries with it. There is a horizontal consequence that happens in time and is temporary and then there is a vertical consequence that awaits everyone everywhere at all times who faces God in the absence of the Lord’s wrath placating sacrifice.

This penalty creates debt and guilt. It causes a breach in a relationship that is humanly incapable of being mended. The penalty for sin makes us so repulsive and vile that nothing known to man can wash us clean. God’s response to sin is undiluted wrath. The enormity of God’s wrath against sin has yet to be measured and is perhaps incapable of being measured. The wrath of God against sin has been seen at Calvary and attempts have been made for finite minds to wrap around a biblical definition, but in the end we can still not fathom the sheer horror of God’s wrath against it.

Continued on the other side...

Every feeling you have that undermines your sense of self worth, every time you feel woefully inadequate and apathetically complacent and entirely empty, that feeling is part of the penalty of sin. Your inability to measure up as a spouse, parent, employee, friend, and all-around guy is the penalty against sin.

Third, freedom from the penalty of sin is what we have as His people. Let us go back to our initial sentence.

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The cross was the work of Christ. The Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). This is the work given to Him by His Father that He came to fulfill. It was His work. It was not a work that we could do for ourselves.

The work of Christ on the cross was the outworking of the Trinitarian eternal purpose. The entire Godhead was involved in the freeing of His people from the penalty of sin. It was not done in isolation. It was done in counsel within the eternal Godhead. The redemptive activity of Christ in behalf of His people was no accident. It was not a response prompted by man's fall.

When the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world this action on His part was intentional and certain. He would secure for Himself a people called by His name. The enormity of His actions in behalf of His people has huge ramifications for everyone everywhere at all times, but as it relates to His redemptive activity it is singularly focused on His people.

The redemptive activity of Christ negates the penalty of sin. There is an effectual element to the cross. It destroys the penalty of sin. Everything noted earlier has been negated by the cross. We are free from the penalty of sin.

Finally, the work of Christ as the outworking of the Trinitarian eternal purpose in behalf of His people against sin is finished. Nothing more can be done and nothing more will be added. When you and I accepted by faith the work of Christ we entered into a reality that no longer acknowledged the penalty that existed because of sin. We are free from that world. As slaves we have been emancipated from the tyranny of sin. The grasp of sin has been forever broken.

We do not have to live in a world of rejection, failure, guilt, unrest, coupled with feelings of inadequacy and breakdown. The penalty against sin has been fully met in the provision of Christ. This is what we have and this is what we are to enjoy.