

I.N.I.

Good Friday---LESSON ON DEATH

April 6, 2012

Galatians 3:13

In Christ Jesus, our Substitute, who bore the **CURSE** of the Cross for us, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

DEATH is the loudest preaching of **SIN** in this world. Why do people die, by the thousands, or one by one? Only one reason: **SIN!** The Apostle Paul in I Cor. 15 writes: **THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN**, and in Romans 6 **THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH**, and again in Romans 5 **THEREFORE, JUST AS THROUGH ONE MAN SIN ENTERED THE WORLD, AND DEATH THROUGH SIN, AND THUS DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN, BECAUSE ALL SINNED--** The LORD God Himself said to Adam and Eve when they had sinned in the Garden of Eden, **FOR DUST YOU ARE, AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN.** Man broke God's Law and sinned. Man brought the curse of sin, which is death, upon himself. Why do people die? Because of **SIN!**

So why did Jesus die? He had no sin. Scripture is very clear in its teaching that Jesus was sinless and holy. He is called **THE RIGHTEOUS ONE**. We are told that **HE KNEW NO SIN!** In Hebrews 4 we read, **FOR WE DO NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIEST WHO CANNOT SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT WAS IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN.** Jesus Himself asked His enemies, **WHICH OF YOU CONVICTS ME OF SIN?** So, if Jesus was sinless, a sinless human being, why did He die, why didn't He live forever, as Adam and Eve would have done if they had not sinned?

We learn the answer to that question in our text for this evening: Gal. 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 is a **LESSON ON DEATH!**

The Apostle Paul is clearly laying before his readers and us the central truth of Christianity: **JUSTIFICATION**; being declared righteous in God's sight. This can only come about by faith, not by works. Why not by works? Why can't we stand perfect, righteous, not guilty, innocent before God?

Because we are under the **CURSE!** The **CURSE of SIN**. Paul writes in verse 10 of chapter 3 **FOR AS MANY AS ARE OF THE WORKS OF THE LAW ARE UNDER THE CURSE, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT CONTINUE IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO DO THEM.**

Everyone, everyone who depends upon his own works or accomplishments to be justified, is under a **CURSE!** For the curse of sin is upon all who have disobeyed God's Law! That means you and me. We too were under the curse of sin, **DEATH!** And so is every human being whether they know it or not, and unfortunately most do not know it. The verdict of our just God upon sinful mankind can only be **GUILTY! GUILTY! GUILTY OF EVERY CRIME AGAINST MY LAW. GUILTY OF BREAKING EVERY COMMANDMENT OF MINE IN THOUGHT, WORD OR DEED.** The sentence is **DEATH: physical and eternal death.**

If that were the end to this lesson on **DEATH** it would indeed be disastrous. It would mean that after all of the sorrows, griefs, sicknesses and diseases of this life we would face death and after death we would have the misery and torment of everlasting death to look forward to. What a

miserable future to have!

But thank God that on this Good Friday that this is not the end of this **LESSON ON DEATH**. For again our text says, **CHRIST HAS REDEEMED US FROM...** Christ bought us back, He paid the price, the ransom to set us slaves free. The price of our redemption---His own precious blood.

But from what were we redeemed? **THE CURSE OF THE LAW: DEATH!** How? **BY (CHRIST'S) BECOMING A CURSE FOR US**. It was our curse that Jesus bore for us. The curse of the Law that rightfully rested upon us because of our sins was on Christ. We deserved it, Christ did not. He deserved--He was worthy of nothing but **GLORY, HONOR AND PRAISE!** Or was He?

As we study the Passion History of our Savior we see that everyone involved in Jesus' trials and His crucifixion came to this same conclusion: **JESUS WAS INNOCENT!** He was not guilty, not deserving of the curse of the Law. The Chief Priests tried to bring charges against Jesus. They had to make up charges, but even then nothing could stick. Pilate examined Him and found Jesus faultless. Three times in his investigation of Jesus, Pilate said, **I FIND THIS MAN INNOCENT**. Pilate's wife declared Jesus to be not guilty when she told Pilate; **HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT JUST MAN...** Herod also found Jesus to be innocent of any wrongdoing and sent Him back to Pilate. Not Annas, not Caiaphas, not Pilate, not Herod, no one found Jesus guilty, except **GOD, the Father!**

For God **MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US**. God took that curse that hung over our heads because of our sins, that curse that rightfully belonged upon us and instead placed it upon His Son. In the words from Isaiah 53 which we have heard several times during this Lenten season we read, vs.4-6 **SURELY HE HAS BORNE OUR GRIEFS AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS; YET WE ESTEEMED HIM STRICKEN, SMITTEN BY GOD, AND AFFLICTED. BUT HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTISEMENT FOR OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM, AND BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED. 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.**

Peter writes in his First Epistle, **HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BODY ON THE TREE, THAT WE, HAVING DIED TO SINS, MIGHT LIVE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS--BY WHOSE STRIPES YOU WERE HEALED.**

Christ bore a curse when He hung there on the cross. What curse was it? Paul makes it very clear. It was not merely the curse of some human law, but it was the curse of God's Law. Yes, Christ died at the hands of wicked men. Putting Jesus to death was a terrible crime, an awful miscarriage of justice. By human law He was not guilty. But Jesus died, as Peter says, **BY THE DETERMINED COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD**. The curse which rested upon Christ was the curse of the Law of God.

Here we see the very heart of the Christian faith. The curse which Christ bore on the cross was not a curse that wrongfully rested upon Him; it was not a curse pronounced on Him by some corrupt, human law and corrupt court. No, it was the curse of God's Law. It was a curse, which in God's Justice, rightfully rested on His Son. For God's Word teaches a substitutionary atonement. The only way in which a curse could rest upon the **SINLESS ONE** is that He become the Substitute, in bearing that curse, for **ALL** those upon whom it did rightfully rest and the only way that sinners could have the curse removed from them was by placing it upon the **SINLESS SUBSTITUTE**.

That's the **LESSON ON DEATH** that we learn from the **CROSS AND THE NAILS**. The Cross and the Nails signify crucifixion. The method of death chosen by the Romans was one of the most

cruel and inhumane ways for a criminal to bear the curse of his verdict: a slow, painful, agonizing death. When we think of the **CROSS and the NAILS** may we be led to meditate on the death we deserved because of that curse of God's Law. But may these **OBJECTS OF CHRIST'S PASSION** also and ultimately reveal to us that that curse of God's Law has been removed, paid for in full. Christ took the curse for us. He was nailed to the cross for us, as our Substitute. He endured death and damnation so that we would never have to.

How terribly, terribly sad that today and everyday throughout the history of the world, countless millions of people are dying without this comfort, without this confidence, without this assurance.

How eternally thankful we should be that of all the billions of people in the world who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior, God has chosen us to know Him by faith. That God has called us to learn this **LESSON ON DEATH**. The curse of the Law: **DEATH** which we deserved has been taken for us by Christ. So that now because of the cross and the nails, because of the events of Good Friday we can confidently face our death and say with Simeon, **LORD, NOW LETTEST THOU THY SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE. FOR MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THINE SALVATION, WHICH THOU HAST PREPARED BEFORE THE FACE OF ALL PEOPLE...FOR CHRIST HAS BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL.**

We can face each new day with confidence knowing that if we live we live in Christ, and if we die, we die in Christ and receive eternal life.

There was an article I read about Christians living during the Roman Empire. It stated, **ONCE DEATH LOST ITS POWER OVER LIFE, LIFE ITSELF TOOK ON NEW MEANING FOR BELIEVERS...WE SEE DRAMATIC EVIDENCE OF THIS IN THE HIGH CHRISTIAN SURVIVAL RATES DURING THE PLAGUES THAT REPEATEDLY HIT THE CITIZENS OF THE ANCIENT ROMAN EMPIRE. THE ROMANS THREW PEOPLE OUT INTO THE STREET AT THE FIRST SYMPTOMS OF DISEASE, BECAUSE THEY KNEW IT WAS CONTAGIOUS AND THEY WERE AFRAID OF DYING. BUT THE CHRISTIANS STAYED AND NURSED THE SICK. YOU COULD ONLY DO THAT IF YOU THOUGHT, "SO WHAT IF I DIE! I HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.**

We close where we began. Paul said in I Cor. **THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN.** But let's read the whole passage; **DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW. BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

The **LESSON ON DEATH**. If we learn it well, knowing Jesus Christ as our Substitute curse-bearer we will truly understand the words of Solomon in Eccl. 7:1 **BETTER IS THE DAY OF ONE'S DEATH THAN THE DAY OF ONE'S BIRTH!**

Amen.