

Joke: I was walking home last night I decided to take a short cut through the local cemetery. 3 girls walked up to me and explained that they were scared to walk past the cemetery at night, so I agreed to let them walk along with me. I told them "I understand - I used to get freaked out too when I was alive."

I have never seen anyone run so fast...!!!

I will be breaking today's message into at least two weeks. You gave me some grace last week and I thank you for that. There is so much I could and need to say about today's message that I just don't think I would do it justice trying to speed through it. So I'm not going to we will just pick it up next week as well.

But let me start this week with some clarity from last week's message. After then I will talk about the issue I left you hanging with which was God remembers your sins no more.

First some clarity. I mentioned last week that your identity is of utmost importance and it is, but let me be clear about what I meant. I'm not talking about your physical appearance, or anything like that.

And there in lies the problem for so many of us we find our identity in what we do, what we look like, what we have, instead of who we are.

Romans 8:15–16 (NIV): The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

Your core identity is not husband, wife, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or your career. Your core identity is that your Abba's child.

All too often as I have talked with people they try and make their identity by what they do, or what they have accomplished.

But in the gospel of John we read:

John 1:12–13 (NIV): Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Your identity is not from what others said about you, thought about you, or even what you have said or thought about yourself. Your identity is found in God and what He thinks about you. And His thoughts about you are always good.

So often we try, maybe even think we need to earn our identity, but the truth is your identity was a gift to receive not a status to achieve.

Watch this. . .

Mark 1:9–11 (NIV): At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven

being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Before any miracles were performed, before His first message, before He had done anything. No healings, no disciples, no crowds following Him. Ok there was that one time as a teen in the temple that he shocked His listeners with His teaching, but other than that Jesus was 30 and still lived with mom.

So, what you need to understand is that before you do or did anything for God He loved you. If you never do another thing for God, He still loves you. God is love, it's not what He does, it's who He is.

And another really important thing you need to understand is that , and I mentioned something about this last week as well, but here it is again.

How we think directs how we behave.

Truth is we live in a performance-based society - get good grades you get into a better university. Work well you get a promotion.

But what you need to understand is that with God there is no performance treadmill. No point system.

God loves us not because of our behavior, but simply because He is love.

And as we learn more about who we already are as new creations in our spirit. Then and only then will we begin to allow our thoughts and actions reflect that spiritual reality more each day.

In other words we will bear fruit for God.

Galatians 6:15 (NIV): 15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.

When you come into relationship with God because you have received what Christ did, you are new. You have a new identity not found in anything you do, not in your economic status, your political affiliation, how much we read the Scripture's, pray, or your good looks. It is found in Christ and Christ alone.

And the truth is, when we attempt to live on the performance plan we tend to find our identity in external roles.

And one more thing, it's important you learn to distinguish between identity and behavior. And when your behavior doesn't line up with your new identity that's the reason you feel bad because your made for more than that. But you need to realize that isn't who you are? You just need a renewed mind, a renewed understanding that your a Kings kid.

Hear this your identity is of utmost importance. I hope that put some clarity to my statement.

Now let's talk about the other thing. Your sin.

Again let me say this about your identity that relates to what I want to share today. You're not a sinner saved by grace. You are a saint that sometimes happens to sin.

So, let's find out what the Scriptures tell us about our sin.

Hebrews 7:27 (NIV): Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

You do realize that Jesus only died once, right?

Then why do so many Christians struggle about just how forgiven they are. If blood is the only way to be forgiven, and Jesus won't shed his blood ever again, then we need to ask: How forgiven am I?

The word in Greek for what Jesus accomplished is hilasterion, it's meaning is "the gift that propitiates or

satisfies completely.”

Hebrews 10:1–10 (NIV): The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. 4 It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. 7 Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, my God.’ ” 8 First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. 9 Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And

by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

There's that phrase is again. Once for all. And then did you notice what else it said, we have been made holy through the sacrifice. It doesn't say becoming holy as we learn to walk closer to Him. As we attend church, as we read the Scriptures. Becoming holy as you work for Him. It said, we have been made holy.

Also notice The last half of verse 2. . .For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

The writer of Hebrews is saying that if the old system worked, sacrifices would have stopped and if they did they no longer would have felt guilty for their sins.

In other words, there's no more need for guilt when the sin issue is over. And church it is over. God dealt with it and nailed it to the cross.

Hebrews 9:25–28 (NIV): Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Let me just to mention one quick thing since the verse mentioned it. I will deal with that question in the next couple weeks question two that I asked when we first started this was Christian's will give an account for their sins on judgement day? More on that later but for now. . .

If God isn't planning any repeat sacrifices on earth or in heaven, it can only mean one thing: our past, present, and future sins have been completely removed and He meant what He said when he said, "I remember your sins no

more.”

Religion says get right with God—daily, weekly, yearly. Be it the Jewish religion where they’re marching their way to the temple once a year; or a Catholic religion where they march their way to the weekly Mass; or some other denomination where they march down the aisle, again and again, to ask for forgiveness and “get right”—it’s all the same.

They’re marching, over and over, to get right and stay right. That’s religion.

But God has a different solution, He has a blood-based economy.

Hebrews 9:22 (NIV): In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

And so, because Jesus Christ shed his blood only once, we Christians are forgiven people. This means we can

refuse to join in the religious parade. We can step out of the marching line. We can live free from shame and guilt.

There's no altar to run too, there was a cross to nail everything to where Jesus said, "it is finished."

1 John 2:2 (NIV): He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

God is completely satisfied with the sacrifice of his Son. If God himself is satisfied, then why do we try an argue with Him about how forgiven we are.

Thinking every time we sin we need to run to Him and ask for more forgiveness. You and I can't be any more forgiven. We can certainly be more thankful that we are but we can't be more forgiven. Jesus died once for all.

Colossians 2:13–14 (NIV): When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you

alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

But how can we be sure the sin issue is really over?

Hebrews 10:16–18 (NIV): 16 “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” 17 Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” 18 And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

I think that says about everything, but there is more

In Psalm 103 it says, “as far as the east is from the west he has removed our transgressions.”

This message that you're totally forgiven past, present, and future can make, I dare say has made, some angry or at the very least uncomfortable. Because so many take it as

a license to sin and so why not just sin anyway. And here's the answer you are a new creation. With a new heart after God. And by nature you want what God wants.

God's grace is not the license to sin, it gives us the power to say no to it.

And with a message like this. . .

Some people ask,- Does sin not matter?" And to that I say of course it matters.

Paul addressed the same question

Romans 6:1–2 (NLT): Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

Let me just back up a bit and touch on forgiveness from a different angle.

Under the Old Testament law, forgiveness was issued in installments much like paying off your mortgage or car.

Once each year at the Day of Atonement, the Jews would offer sacrifices for their sins.

That blood sacrifice would cover not take away their sins. Understand that church, they would cover, not take away, all their sins of the past year.

Under the Old Covenant, the sacrifices were never finished.

The Levitical priests were always standing, constantly offering more.

Hebrews 10:11 (NIV): Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

But then came Jesus. . .

Hebrews 10:12 (NIV): But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

I will come back to the sin topic but let me quickly talk about Jesus as our priest.

Every single Old Testament priest was from the tribe of Levi. But then Jesus came not as a priest from the tribe of Levi but from Judah.

So according to the Law, Jesus was unqualified to even serve as High Priest.

Hebrews 7:13–14 (NIV): He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

Why Does this even matter. It goes back to my message of the Old and New Covenants.

Because Jesus was born into a different tribe from the Old Testament priests, His priesthood signals a new way to relate to God:

Let me back up one verse. . .

Hebrews 7:12 (NIV): For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

Why didn't God make it so Jesus was born into the line of Levi? I mean He could have easily done that after all He is God. But God didn't want a continuation of the law He was bringing in something totally different. Something better.

Hebrews 8:6 (NIV): But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

And it's in the New we see how God deals with our sins.

Let's pick up with Hebrews 10. . .

Hebrews 10:11–12 (NIV): Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

He did what no other priest before Him could ever do. . .

He sat down:

The Old Testament priests could never sit down there was no provision in the temple for them to do so because their work was never done. They had to offer sacrifices every day and attend to service of God in the holy place.

But along comes Jesus our High Priest and He sat down at the right hand of the Father because He'll never do anything more to deal with your record. It is finished. Complete. Done. He's resting from the work and we need to learn to rest in it as well. We get so obsessed with our sin and we ought to be obsessed with our Savior.

Christ did not die to cover your sins as like the Day of Atonement. No, the cross took away your sins once - and - for - all.

One thing you need to be aware of is that the Jewish community were very aware of something we don't think about or ignore entirely and that is God's "blood economy" for forgiveness of sins:

Remember only blood brings forgiveness.

How many times did Jesus shed His blood? Only once. He's not up in Heaven shedding more blood over and over again when we sin again and again.

And truth is many believe we are forgiven of our past sins but not our future sins. And they believe we are only forgiven for the sins we confess to God.

What's even worse some think they lose their salvation every time they sin until they properly repent and ask for forgiveness.

And hear this church I'm all for repentance that means to run the opposite direction do a 180 degree turn and walk away. And for that I say Amen.

But think about this: When we believe that we lose our salvation every time we sin, it's like saying you're forgiven for all your sins, unless of course you sin. Jesus took all my sins away and remembers them no more, except for when I commit one. Then it's up to me to remember what sin I did and make sure I don't forget to ask for the forgiveness I need.

And when we do that we end up mixing our New Testament High Priest with an Old Testament concept of our sins just being covered instead of removed.

And that minimizes the finished work of Christ.

One thing you need to understand when you read that or hear that it sounds pretty radical. And it sounded pretty radical when a Hebrew read that 2000 years ago as well.

Think about how they perceived it: There's no sacrifice left for sins. What? I don't need to put another animal on the altar.

Hear this church God closed up shop on forgiveness. Jesus did it all on the cross.

Now to be honest I don't think any of us are sacrificing animals in our backyard, but when you think it's about your apologies it's like the Jews thinking it's about the dead works in the temple.

Here's the truth your either zero percent forgiven because your in Adam or your 100 percent forgiven because your in Christ. There is nothing in-between.

Think about this, how many of your sins were in the future when Christ died? All of them.

Because of Jesus and His sacrifice I am 100 percent forgiven no matter what. And it's that no matter what that makes people bothered about this message. But let

me say it again because of Jesus and His sacrifice I am 100 percent forgiven no matter what.

And if you can't say that or have a hard time saying that then you're saying something else needs to be done and what Jesus did wasn't enough.

So, let me ask you what more needs to be done and since forgiveness only comes from the shedding of blood who else needs to die?

Under the old covenant it was up to you. You had to go back once a year on the Day of Atonement to get more forgiveness.

And what bothers me even more is that in today's Christian circles it may even be worse.

At least in Judaism, the process of getting your sins covered, they were covered and you didn't have to return for an entire year. And they didn't feel guilty.

And today we say well as often as you sin you need to make sure you ask for forgiveness and that could be 4 times a day, 15 times a week, or if your at your best every church service.

And church, that makes the blood Jesus shed less powerful than that of bulls and goats.

It's interesting to me that those in the old covenant actually felt forgiven after the Day of Atonement. Yet we with better promises seem to think we need more.

Let me ask you if your hanging out with someone and you owe them money you would probably feel a little uncomfortable if you couldn't pay them. But now imagine you feel you owe God something.

So here's the thing with that, you become keenly aware that what ever you do will never be enough. So you try to give everything you've got, and if you don't you feel a constant sense of guilt from that unpaid debt.

On the other hand how good do you feel when your released of that debt?

Here's the good news you don't owe God.

Colossians 2:13–14 (NIV): When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

I'm by no means suggesting just do what you want, sin whenever you want.

How about this idea, instead of being so obsessed with your sins, failures, and faults, make it more about you bragging on Jesus. Let it be a reminder that God's love, forgiveness, and grace never gave up on you.

Look what John writes. . .

1 John 2:12 (NIV): 12 I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

See church, It's no longer about you it's about Him.

Think about this... your belief system will show up one way or the other. You're going to display it to others. So, if you think it's up to you to get forgiven and stay forgiven by God, then you're going to pass that kind of forgiveness on to others.

It will sound something like this - "I'll forgive them after they come over here and apologize."

Listen, we will always mirror what we believe is coming from God.

And if you feel your not worthy of God's love, you will share that same view with others.

Only when you allow God to love you, will you be able to

allow God's love to flow through you to others.

Let me address one more thing concerning asking and confessing because there are a few Scriptures that almost sound like they contradict what I've been sharing about once-for-all forgiveness so let me deal with one of them today and I will pick up next week on this.

James 5:16 (NIV): Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

The Greek word used here is *homologeō* and it means saying the same thing as someone else or agreeing with them.

Confession is simply agreeing with God.

- You confess that Jesus died for your sins
- You confess that by His sacrifice you are forgiven
- You confess that even though I sinned I'm still a saint.

So, here's the thing it is healthy to admit a wrongdoing and

share your struggles with trusted people in a safe community.

James is simply telling us to share with others so that we will know how to pray for them. It wasn't an unspoken request it was I have a problem and here it is pray with me please.

Because church rather or not you believe it the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. And because of what Jesus did you and I were made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. And His blood will never loose it's power.

More next week, you're not going to want to miss it.