

# Made Holy by Jesus' Death on the Cross

Lesson #3

## Believers are reconciled by the cross

<sup>14</sup> For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; <sup>15</sup> Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; <sup>16</sup> And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: <sup>17</sup> And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (Eph 2:14-18 KJG)

1. What did Jesus do that the Old Testament law could not do?

## How have Christians in the past understood that Jesus' death on the cross changes things for us?

Martin Luther began the Reformation by challenging some of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther was put on trial, which normally would have meant that he would be put to death if he didn't recant what he had said. He was accused of opposing the authority of the church. He didn't recant, but he was protected by some very powerful people. So, he didn't get executed either.

Many practices in the church of Luther's day were contrary to his understanding of the Bible. There was very little assurance of the forgiveness of sin. And, when there was assurance of forgiveness it came only after a series of payments or rituals had been performed. Luther rejected all of this by saying that it is only by faith in Christ that we are saved. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Only what Jesus Christ did when He died on the cross and rose from the grave can save us from our sins.<sup>1</sup>

## Operative and Cooperative Grace

Last time we took a look at Augustine's idea that the Bible tells us about two ways God gives us His grace, "cooperative grace" and "operative grace." If you think of the phrase, "Let go and let God," that is an expression of faith in "operative grace," but it leaves out any mention of "cooperative grace." So, by itself it is only part of the story of how God's grace works. It's a good statement, as far as it goes, but it isn't the full story of God's grace.

Martin Luther's ideas on God's grace focus on "operative grace." He sees our need to be condemned by the law as not involving grace at all. He thinks the only use for the law is to bring us to Christ, and to provide order for society. He sees our need to stay focused on Jesus Christ as a total dependence on Christ for "operative grace" that brought us salvation and "cooperative grace" so that we can show love to others as Christ has shown love to us.

If we look closely at the Bible we find references to both "operative grace" and "cooperative grace". Consider the following passage from Hebrews:

<sup>22</sup> Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) <sup>24</sup> And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: <sup>25</sup> Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*:: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Heb 10:22-25 KJG)

In these verses we see how the blood of Christ was "operative grace" that made us right with God. We did nothing to deserve it or earn it. Yet, as a result of this act of "operative grace" we are called now to "draw near" to God. That act of "drawing near" would be a form of "cooperative grace" where our will joins with God's will, and we are able to draw closer and closer to God. So, then "operative grace" changes our hearts so that "cooperative grace" becomes possible. When we are willing, God assists us in our efforts to draw closer to Him, but this is only possible because God changed our hearts so that we now have the desire to draw closer to Him now that we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph 2:8-9 NIV)

## On the cross Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law

<sup>23</sup> His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance. (Deu 21:23 KJG)

<sup>13</sup> Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: (Gal 3:13 KJG)

1. Normally the relationship between the Father and the Son is a loving relationship. Here, though, it is different. How is it different?

<sup>23</sup> For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup> Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: <sup>25</sup> **Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,** to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; <sup>26</sup> To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Rom 3:23-26 KJG)

1. How does the shedding of Jesus' blood satisfy God's sense of justice?

<sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: <sup>4</sup> That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom 8:3-4 KJG)

1. What requirement of the law did Jesus fulfill?

2. What one event in the history of the world can cause a person to become holy? (And **by that will**, we **have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ** once for all. (Hebrews 10:10 NIV)

The following verses are examples of operative grace, which Luther emphasized:

- <sup>13</sup> Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: (Gal 3:13 KJG)
- <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; <sup>15</sup> Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; <sup>16</sup> And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: <sup>17</sup> And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (Eph 2:14-18 KJG)
- <sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: <sup>4</sup> That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom 8:3-4 KJG)
- (And **by that will**, we **have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ** once for all. (Hebrews 10:10 NIV)

What about living out our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior by showing love to others? Is that all God, or is it at least partly us? Is it operative grace at work, or cooperative grace at work?

## Final Questions:

1. What can we do to earn our salvation?
2. How can we receive salvation from our sins?
3. What if we try to add some other rituals or practices to what Christ taught us to believe?