

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>Scripture Memory</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>125</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
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### A GREAT BENEDICTION (Part III)

“Christ’s saving work,” wrote Leon Morris, “is not a piece of emotional pageantry rescuing men from nothing in particular.”<sup>1</sup> B. B. Warfield, in an article entitled *Christless Christianity*,” made this observation: “Christianity as a world-movement is the body of those who have been redeemed from their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, dying for them on the cross. The cross is its symbol; and in its heart sounds the great jubilation of the Apocalypse: *Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* A Christianity without redemption – redemption in the blood of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin – is nothing less than a contradiction in terms. Precisely what Christianity means is redemption in the blood of Jesus. No one need wonder therefore that, when redemption is no longer sought and found in Jesus, men should begin to ask whether there remains any real necessity for Jesus. We may fairly contend that the germ of Christless Christianity is present wherever a proper doctrine of redemption has fallen away or even has only been permitted to pass out of sight.”<sup>2</sup> The expression *The God of peace* belongs to a broad group of genitival expressions for God.<sup>3</sup> Adjectival genitives are primarily descriptive. In this case, it describes the activity of God, i.e., He establishes peace. How? By the work of the great Shepherd of the Sheep *through* the blood of the eternal covenant.

I. **THE GROUNDS AND FORMULATIONS OF THIS PEACE.** As Manton points out, “Before this peace could be made and this woeful breach repaired, there were two things to be removed which stood in the way – God’s wrath, and our rebellious nature. The righteous wrath of God is appeased by the blood of Christ; our rebellion is cured and healed by his Spirit. The latter is but a consequent of the former. The first foundation for this peace was laid in the blood of Christ: Col. 1:20, *And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself*; Isa. 53:5, *The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* The enmity had been irreconcilable and impossible to be removed, unless God had taken this way, unless the Son of God had died for a sinful world, that by the merit of his obedience he might give satisfaction to a provoked God for the wrong we had done him.”<sup>4</sup>

II. **THE BLOOD OF THE ETERNAL COVENANT.** In Hebrews, in which the word “covenant” occurs more often than in any other book of the New Testament, the focus is especially on Christ who is the Mediator and Surety of the new covenant and on his sacrifice. His blood is the blood of an eternal covenant (Heb. 13:20).<sup>5</sup> In accordance with his eternal covenant, he gives his sheep eternal life, and neither man nor devil can snatch them out of his hand (Jn. 10:28f). The provision of “the blood of the eternal covenant” fulfills the prophecies of Zechariah 9:11, where God speaks of “the blood of my covenant,” and Ezekiel 37:26, where the God of peace promises: “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them” (cf. Isa. 55:3; Jer. 31:31ff.; 8:8ff. above). We have already seen that Christ is the mediator of this new covenant, the purpose of which is “that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (9:15), and that there is no hope for the person who has “profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified” (10:29). Thus the blood of the incarnate Son is eternally powerful; for, as Calvin writes, “God raised up his Son in such a way that his blood once shed in death has power to ratify the eternal covenant after his resurrection and brings forth its fruit as though it were always flowing.”<sup>6</sup>

### III. *THE EVIDENCES THAT GOD IS PACIFIED.* Here are three mentioned:

1. The bringing back of Christ from the dead. This showeth that God was propitiated, that he hath accepted the ransom that was given for souls. Christ's resurrection is called by the prophet a being "taken from prison and from judgment," Isa. 53:8. While Christ was in the state of the dead, he was in effect a prisoner, under the arrest of divine vengeance; but when he rose again, then was our surety let out of prison. The expression is notable in the text, "Brought again the Lord Jesus from the dead." The force of the word may be explained with allusion to that carriage of the apostles when they were cast into prison: Acts 16:35, 37, 39, "And the magistrates sent to let them go. Nay, verily," say they, "but let them come themselves and fetch us out, and they came and brought them out of prison." So was Christ brought again. Though Christ had power to rise, yet was he rather raised. The Lord sent an angel to remove the stone, not to supply any lack of power in Christ, but as a judge when he is satisfied sendeth an officer to open the prison doors. Though Christ had power to rise, yet not authority, till the angel rolled away the stone. He did not break prison, but was brought again from the dead. Neither did he perish in prison; then we could have no assurance of our discharge; but as "he died for our offences, so he rose again for our jurisdiction."<sup>7</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** Over a century ago J. Gresham Machen had to contend with a popular form of Christianity that at its core was in fact no Christianity at all. Why? Because it dispensed with the centrality of the cross of Christ in any redemptive sense. Oh, the cross was mentioned, but *only* as noble examples of self-sacrifice, "but if it be only a noble example of self-sacrifice, it has no comfort for burdened souls; it certainly shows how God hates sin; but if it does nothing but show how God hates sin, it only deepens our despair; it certainly exhibits the love of God, but if it does nothing but exhibit the love of God it is a mere meaningless exhibition which seems unworthy of God. Many things are taught us by the Cross; but the other things are taught us only if the really central meaning is preserved, the central meaning upon which all the rest depends. On the cross the penalty of our sins was paid; it is as though we ourselves had died in fulfillment of the just curse of the law; the handwriting of ordinances that was against us was wiped out; and henceforth we have an entirely new life in the full favor of God."<sup>8</sup> Machen went on to say, "How narrow a thing it is, the modern man exclaims, to hold that God is the Father of some and not at all! This objection ignores the central thing in the New Testament teaching, and the central thing in Christianity; it ignores the Cross of Christ. It is true that men are separated from God by the awful fact of sin; it is true that sonship worthy of the name is possessed only by those who are within the household of faith: but what men do not seem to understand is that the door of the household of faith is open wide for all men to come in. Christ died to open that door, and the pity is that we try to close it by our failure to spread the invitation throughout all the world. As Christians we ought certainly to love all our fellow-men, everywhere, including those who have not yet come to Christ; but if we really love them, we shall show our love not by trying to make them content with a cold natural religion, but by bringing them in, through the proclamation of the gospel, into the warmth and joy of the household of faith. In the Bible, then, it is not merely God as Creator who is the object of faith, but also, and primarily, God as Redeemer from sin. We fear God because of our guilt; but we trust Him because of His grace. We trust Him because He has brought us by the Cross of Christ, despite all our sin, into His holy presence. Faith in God depends altogether upon His redeeming work."<sup>9</sup>

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, *The Cross In The New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield III* (rpt. Baker Book House, 1981), p. 357.

<sup>3</sup> W. L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary: Hebrews 9-13* (Word Books, 1991), p. 560.

<sup>4</sup> *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton XVII* (rpt. Maranatha Publication, 1971), p. 378.

<sup>5</sup> J. Van Genderen & W. H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics* (P&R, 2008), p. 552.

<sup>6</sup> P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary On The Epistle To The Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1977), p. 590.

<sup>7</sup> Manton, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

<sup>8</sup> J. G. Machen, *What Is Faith?* (Eerdmans, 1947), p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.