

EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

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Sunday Worship 10:45 AM

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The Way of Life and Hope

Two women were riding a city bus and one of them realized that she hadn't paid her fare. She told her friend, "I'm going to go up and pay it right now." Her friend said, "Why bother? You got away with it, so what?" In her most virtuous voice, the first woman said, "I've found that honesty always pays," and she proceeded to go up and pay the driver. When the woman returned she had a smug look on her face and in her best 'I told you so' tone said, "See, I told you honesty pays! I handed the driver a quarter and he gave me fifty cents change."

Why do we do that? The apostle Paul says, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." (Romans 8:7-8) As hard as it is to admit, as hard as it is to accept, the biblical witness is that we are fallen people, we are sinners. The standard is God's law and we all have violated God's law. Again, Paul writes, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

We don't like that pronouncement. We'd like to think that we're better than that; but we are not. We have a tendency to think that rules are meant for everyone but us. It's bred into the fabric of our society. Just look at the slogans some fast food chains have used: "Have it your way! or Sometimes you've gotta break the rules." We're rebellious; we hate restrictions. We like breaking the rules. We like thinking more of ourselves than we should; but ultimately we will be and in fact are being appraised by God and He measures our lives by His law. Every person learns eventually that when we break God's law we are finally broken upon it. Remember God's law is to guide us in our relationship with God and with others. We either obey God's law or we experience broken spirits, broken hearts, broken relationships and broken lives.

So, what do we do? How do we find wholeness? Where do we turn? We have violated God's law and our relationship with Him is very troubling. We have violated God's law and that is sin. God says: "The wages of sin is death," but then He adds, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The only solution, the only answer to our brokenness and our rebellion is the cross of Christ. In the face of all the self-help, self-determination and all the sophisticated knowledge and technology that we have in our 21st century world, the cross seems like a fools solution.

The truth is that, though it seems foolish, the cross is the wisdom and power of God to those who are being delivered by God. God is perfectly just and His justice must punish every violation of His law. Paul, in writing to the church of Ephesus says, "This you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God." (Ephesians 5:5)

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me." (John 14:6) When we come to Jesus Christ and receive Him as He is offered to us, we through Him are subjects not of God's wrath but of God's favor. Now God's will is our focus. Christ has borne our load of sin with its condemnation and we are at peace with God. Jesus said to His followers, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you, not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27)

If you would understand the terms of peace with God, I recommend II Corinthians 5:21. There learn that your sin has been punished in Christ and His righteousness has been credited to you. So, if you have trusted in Him, God is now your Father and no longer your judge. That's why Paul could write, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

God was satisfied with Jesus' payment for our sin and this He certified through raising Him from the grave. (Romans 4:25) This has magnificent implications for us. Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19b) This is why Paul could say with confidence, "To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord." (II Corinthians 5:8)

March 28th is Palm Sunday. That marks the beginning of what has been called Holy Week. That's why I'm writing this article. Remember our Lord entered Jerusalem declaring Himself King over all. Then He died upon the cross to pay the sin debt of all who will trust Him. The cross tells us that our enemies, the very cause of our brokenness, sin and death are beaten. They still act as if the game weren't already decided. They still act as if the battle hasn't been fought. They still act as if they have the upper hand; but the truth is that the followers of Jesus have nothing to fear and those who oppose Him have everything to fear. Because Christ has paid our sin-debt on the cross, "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Him." (Romans 8:1)