



Title: Gratitude, God's Antidote for Guilt
Theme: Resting in the Price Christ Paid for You
Topic: Thanksgiving Communion Service
Series: Full Measure of Thanksgiving

Medical research tells us that gratitude is one of the healthiest emotions that a person can express. The more a person understands and responds to God's Antidote for the guilt that comes from living outside of God's will, the more he expresses a peace that comes from the Lord.

On that first Sunday after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, (Luke 24:1) Jesus stood among His disciples and spoke forth, "Peace be with you." (Luke 24:26)

2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." It is Satan who keeps unrepentant sinners from enjoying the peace that comes from responding to Jesus as both Savior and Lord. The Bible says Satan is an accuser of the children of God. (Revelation 12:10)

Satan often uses guilt to keep nonbelievers and even Christians from enjoying the abundant life that is promised in Christ. (Romans 5:17; John 10:10) Rick Warren wrote, "Guilt is man's oldest problem [outside of sin]. It does not matter what culture you live in, where you are from, who you are, what your background is. All of us experience guilt at different times.

You can see it all over society, people drive themselves because of guilt and they hide it through business, rushing through life and indulging in all this world has to offer."

In my early days of walking with the Lord, I constantly had the call from the Lord to prepare for preaching and teaching God's Word, but convinced myself I would do the Lord's work more harm than good because of the life I lived before coming to know Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. This is how destructive guilt can be when we do not set our hope on God's Word.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

I would propose to you that responding to God's antidote for the guilt that comes from living for the flesh, loving the world, and listening to the lies of the devil, will enable you to express true gratitude as you live for Him.

Just who should we focus on as we partake in the Biblical ordinance, "Communion?" During World War II there was a man who went around and amazingly obtained 300,000 little hand mirrors. On the back of them he wrote John 3:16 and when he personally handed the mirrors out, he said, "If you want to see who God loves turn to the back side of this mirror and read." (Rick Warren)

Our sins put Christ on the Cross of Calvary

The first step toward enjoying healthy gratitude in the "Communion" service is believe the truth. It is our sins that put Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Romans 3:23 says, "There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." To have sinned (*hamartane*) means to have missed a mark on the way. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary) As I study the whole counsel of the Word of God, sinning is missing the intended purpose for which God created you.

Sin is lawlessness, a willful act of breaking the law or choosing to be ignorant of the Word of God. (1 John 3:4) It is of the devil. (1 John 3:8; John 8:44) It is all unrighteousness. (1 John 5:17) It is omission of what we know to be good. (James 4:17) It is whatever is not of true faith. (Romans 14:23) It is the thought of foolishness. (Proverbs 24:9) Sin is all the imaginations of the unrenewed heart apart from the Lordship of Christ. (Genesis 6:5; 8:21)

The Word of God describes sin as coming from the heart. (Matthew 15:19) Sin is the fruit of lust, (James 1:15) the sting of death, (1 Corinthians 15:56) and rebellion against God. (Deuteronomy 9:7; Joshua 1:18) It is the works of darkness, (Ephesians 5:11) dead works toward the kingdom of God. (Hebrew 6:1; 9:14) It is the very heart and mind that God hates, (Proverbs 15:9; Jeremiah 44:4,11) which leads to mocking the Lord, (Psalm 74:18) defilement, (Proverbs 30:12; Isaiah 59:3) deceitfulness, (Hebrews 3:13) and disgraceful. (Proverbs 14:34) Sin is great, mighty, manifold, and presumptuous in God's sight. (Exodus 32:20; 1 Samuel 2:17; Amos 5:12; Psalm 19:13) Sometimes sin is open and manifest, (1 Timothy 5:24) sometimes secret, (Psalm 90:8. 1 Timothy 5:24) besetting, (Hebrews 12:1) like a stain that cannot be removed, (Isaiah 1:18) and reaching to heaven. (Revelation 18:5)

The Bible teaches that sin entered into the world by Adam, (Genesis 3:6-7; Romans 5:12) all of mankind are conceived and born in it, (Genesis 5:3; Job 15:14; 25:4; Psalm 51:5) no one is without sin, (1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20) except Jesus Christ, (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 John 3:5) and apart from the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit of Christ all of mankind is directed by it from birth unto death. (Psalm 51:5)

Before anyone can express true thanksgiving in the "Communion" service he must understand the nature of the sinful heart apart from Lordship of Christ. This truth is powerfully proclaimed in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right

unto man, but in the end it leads to death.”

There is a phrase that holds such a powerful truth, “You must make a man understand that he is lost before he can be saved.” Unless mankind sees themselves as sinners, they will not search for the only One who holds the remedy for the sinful state of the spiritual heart.

Professor Charles Williams writes, “One cannot hold a Scriptural view of God and the plan of salvation without having a Scriptural idea of sin. One cannot proclaim a true theory of society unless [he hates sin as much as God does and understands] its relation to all ills and disorders. No man can be a successful New Testament evangelist publishing the Gospel as, ‘the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes,’ unless he has an adequate conception of the enormity of sin. Nor can a man hold a consistent theory of ethics or live up to the highest standard of morality unless he is gripped with a keen sense of sin’s seductive nature.”

In the carnality of our thinking we say things like, “I can’t believe I did that,” or “I can’t believe anyone would do that!” When we have a Biblical perspective of our hearts we realize that except by God’s intervention, worse things can be happening.

Non-Christians have a misunderstanding when they think God would not send a person who does good things to hell. Holy Spirit illuminated Christians with a Biblical understanding of sin in humility say, “I am surprised that God would save anybody.”

There is a truth that must be grasped, “The sinful nature and its influence on mankind is unknown until we begin to try to live for the Lord.” (Changed Into His Image) Dr Jim Berg in writing about “Recognizing the Evil Within” wrote, “This truth of understanding the pull of sin is very much like the experience of one who is rowing a canoe. As long as he is going with the current, he has no idea how strong the current really is. Only when he turns his canoe around and start rowing against the current does he experience its true strength.

A believer who has been giving in to the pull of his sinful heart never learns the extent of its power over him. When he decides to row upstream, [against the common flow of life here] he meets the strength and realization of sin. It is then he sees how much he needs the Lord’s strength.”

For application’s sake: When it comes to obeying the Lord’s call to partake in “Communion,” do you understand that it was your sin that put Christ on the Cross? When you eat of the bread, which represents Jesus’ body given for us

and drink of cup of the new covenant through Jesus' blood, is there an uneasiness that comes over you as the realization hits you it is the sin you committed just this week that put Christ on the Cross? Great men of God, like the Apostle Paul (Romans 7:7-25) and Martin Luther grieved often over their failure to subdue the flesh. Do we?

1 Corinthians 11:26 teaches that when we partake in the bread and drink of the cup, we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Understand what Christ took for our sins

Once the child of God recognizes that his sins put Christ on the Cross, he should take time to understand what Christ took for those sins. The Lord's prophet wrote about Jesus' suffering in Isaiah 52:14, "Just as there were many who were appalled at Him – His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness..." Isaiah 53:6 says, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid upon Him [that is Christ] the iniquity of us all."

"Iniquity" (*awon*) here is a masculine noun meaning evil, guilt, punishment. This word indicates sin that is done deliberately and presents the idea of twisting truth and perverting what is pure and right. The consequences of sin is punishment. This word for sin can also indicate the guilt that results from the act of sin. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary)

However, God says this about the servant-hood and obedience of Christ to the Cross, "After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life, and be satisfied; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11) Jesus took upon Himself the consequences of sin. This figure of straying sheep is used to describe the spiritual apostasy of people. (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23) Jesus suffered willingly and silently, making Himself the sinners' substitute. (Matthew 26:63; 27:11-14; Luke 23:9) (Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary; A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory)

The atonement blood of Christ is an amazing ongoing work still touching spiritual hearts today. One Bible teacher wrote, "His continued taking of our trespasses upon Himself is merely the constant presence and presentation of His atonement, which has been offered once for all. ...because of His one self-sacrifice, as an eternal Priest, who now lives to distribute the blessings which He has acquired." Isaiah 53:12 says, "...Fore He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." This passage of Scripture enables the child of God to see Jesus as bearing our sins and interceding at the Throne of Grace for us daily. (Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:1-2)

This thanksgiving season is an opportunity for Christians to rest upon the truths of Isaiah 53:4-5, "Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we

considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”

Considering the Cross of Calvary and our Savior, Jesus Christ who gave Himself upon it, enables us to rest upon the fact that Christ has taken upon Himself every harsh word we have spoken, every wrong deed we have done and offers healing to all we may have injured in our sins.

Focusing on what Christ took upon Himself, the sins of the world, enables us to enjoy complete healing for every harsh word spoken to us, find rest in His intercession for every wrong deed done unto us and brings true healing to our spiritual hearts every time it becomes injured.

Walter B. Night wrote, “In a vision, Martin Luther seemed to see Satan approaching him with a large book under his arm. ‘This book’ said Satan, ‘contains the record of the sins of your life!’ As Satan begins to read, Luther said, ‘Stop! Here is another Book – the Word of God. It says, “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

For application’s sake: When you come to “Communion” do you approach it as just another religious observance or is there an assurance in your spiritual heart that Christ bore your iniquities and that His sacrifice satisfies God our Father?

1 John 2:1-2 says, “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2)

Enjoy the benefits of forgiveness of sins

Knowing that it is our sins that put Christ on the Cross, and understanding that Christ bears the entire burden of our sins before God, enable Christians to enjoy the benefits of forgiveness of sins. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Grasping three truths in this part of the message will enable you to have real gratitude as you partake in “Communion.” One truth is that confession of sins leads to peace before God. “Confess” (*homologeō*) can mean to agree with. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament; Vines Amplified Expository Dictionary of the New Testament) It also means to confess publicly the wrong we have committed. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament; Vines Amplified Expository Dictionary of the New Testament; Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains; The Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament; Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

If you have sinned against your children, spouse, church or anyone, then you must confess to the wrong and ask for forgiveness from them and God. If it is against the leadership of the church and you have taken it publicly to others in the Body of Christ, then a public confession is a necessity. This does not include unknowing sins or unintentional offensive. Before 1 John 1:9 is verse eight, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." We can be in bondage in some way and convince ourselves that we are innocent.

Walter B. Night wrote in "You Wicked Wretch" about a governor's visit to a large penitentiary:

"It was his secret plan to pardon a prisoner who met a certain condition, known only to himself. He mingled with a great number of prisoners, all claiming to be victims of injustice, all claiming to have been wrongly treated and were innocent of their crimes. Finally, one inmate said, 'I have no reason to complain. I am guilty of my crime, wicked and desperate.'

The governor took this man to the warden, identified himself and said, 'It is a pity that you should be here among so many innocent, honest men! According to your own confession, you are bad enough to corrupt them all! You shall not stay with them one day longer!' The governor pardoned him and ordered preparations to be made for his release."

The church that enjoys God miraculous pardon of sin has a Body of Christ that beats the cancer of traditionalism and religious observances and desires to see themselves in the light of God's Word. Repentant sinners call out to the Lord like the Psalmist who wrote, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

The second truth to grasp in 1 John 1:9 is God's faithfulness to forgive sins. Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

The Lord treats repentant sin placed under the blood of Christ as if He has completely forgotten the act. (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown) Christians have the assurance that God blots out the sin. This is a metaphor taken from the custom of keeping accounts, where, when a debt is paid, it is blotted out. It is like a drop of ink or in this case, a drop of blood from Christ gets on the recorded account and cannot be read. Notice, I said it is like. (Barnes Notes)

It is important to note that it not because of what you have done. It is because God longs to show His forgiveness as Christ showed His love for us in His obedience unto death. Christians do not rest upon a work of any kind, they may rest upon the ever-loving, never-ending grace of God found in faith in Christ and Christ alone. Lay every sin at the foot of the Cross and trust alone in God's Word,

that reveals Christ, the person of our sure hope.

Thirdly, Christians may enjoy the purifying blood of Christ. The promise is not only forgiveness, but the Lord will "...purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) To "purify" (*katharizo*) is to cleanse the spiritual heart from the filth, pollution and contamination of sin. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible; The Complete Word Study Dictionary;)

As the child of God is sanctified through the washing of the Word of God and the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, he is more and more becoming like Jesus Christ, thus he is being freed from the admixture (Vines Amplified Expository Dictionary) a life controlled by the flesh and the world, to enjoying a Holy Spirit led life.

Chemistry has performed many wonderful feats of transformation. What is more black and dirty and unpromising than coal tar, yet it has been changed into the most beautiful useful colors and lotions. (Handfuls on Purpose, III page 286; Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia)

What can be more filthy and unpromising than a God-hating, sin loving, blaspheming sinner, steeped in a cesspool of iniquity, and possessed by the spirit of the devil. Yet the purifying grace promised in 1 John 1:9 has changed many such a man and enabled them to become fellow workers of the Lord Jesus.

One such man was John Bunyan – He was born to hard working parents, yet John describes his life as, "low and contemptible." His hard heart led him to find, "company with a bad crowd enabling him to live a [life fully out of control.]" John said, "It was my delight to be taken captive by the devil at his will; being filled with all unrighteousness; that from a child I had few equals – in cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming to the Holy God." (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy)

Even when it seemed that his parents could not control him the Lord was faithful to prompt and warn John. He wrote, "The Lord, even in my childhood, did scare and affright me with fearful dreams and did terrify me with dreadful visions." Yet John continued in his evil ways, John writes, "I was the very ring leader of all the youth that kept company, into all manners of vice and ungodliness." (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy)

During those godless days John nearly lost his life several times. John "about drowned at sea, at another time fell out of a boat in the Bedford river and nearly perished." While serving in the army he was assigned to go on a mission, yet in the last minute was replaced with another soldier, who while on that mission was shot in the head and died. John writes, "Here was judgments and mercy from God, yet none them awakened my soul to righteousness, wherefore I sinned still and grew more and more

rebellious against God, and careless of my own salvation." (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy)

At the age of twenty, John married a virtuous woman raised by godly parents who instructed their daughter in the truths of Scripture. One of John's biographers wrote, "he must have been a persuasive lover to have gained so good a helpmate, and she a confiding young woman, to run the risk of being so unequally yoked." (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy) John's wife owned two books, "Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven" and "Practice of Piety" of which she convinced him to read. Those two books along with her loving influence moved John to consider his salvation. John often allowed his depravity and sinful life to convince him that he may have missed his day of grace.

One day a woman of very loose morals told John to his face, "Your ungodliness is the worst I have ever seen and you are able to spoil the youth of the town." This public rebuke struck like an arrow and John vowed to reform his life, of which he did. However, this reformation brought no spiritual renewal. (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy)

His renewal came after hearing Christian women talk about the mercy of God, their love for Christ and Jesus' enablement to overcome sin. John writes, "At this I felt my own heart shaken... my thoughts about religion and salvation challenged, the new birth did never enter my mind, neither did I know the comfort of the Word of God and its promise."

The Holy Spirit of God began to deal with John. After weeks of anguish, Bunyan sought out the woman and allowed himself to be influenced by a godly pastor, John Gifford. After a year of instruction Bunyan's battles came to rest. As he truly rested in Christ, peace and joy flooded his spiritual heart and he longed to tell others of Jesus. (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy)

John Bunyan knew the joy of having his sins under the blood of Christ and became the author of at least three large volumes that still have a powerful influence of the church of Christ, one being, "Pilgrim's Progress," a famous Christian allegory (Great Conversions, Fredricks S. Leahy Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia) Because of his preaching on trusting in Christ alone and his attacks on false teachings in the church of his day he was placed in confinement for 12 years. It was in this confinement he finished his Christian allegorical novel. (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia)

John Bunyan, expressed a life of gratitude. God's antidote for guilt enabled him to enjoy the life-changing power of the blood of Christ shed for his sins on the Cross of Calvary. This trust in God's forgiveness and his relationship with Christ kept him steadfast while being imprisoned for a total of twelve years. Out of gratitude for his Lord, Jesus Christ, the Lord enabled him to write at least three major volumes which God still uses today.

In Closing: Christians may come to “Communion” knowing that it was their sin that put Christ on the Cross, fully understanding just what Jesus took for them and resting upon the truth that God does not remember sins against them. Christians have every opportunity to be used of the Lord in great and mighty ways as they trust in Christ. Christians have every right to, and should, express a life of “Gratitude,” and enjoy God’s antidote for sin. Rest in God’s never-ending love and forgiveness.

Let us partake in “Communion.”