

Seven Things Secured by Christ for His People

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For all of you gathered here tonight who have any acquaintance with the Biblical teaching concerning the Lord's supper, you know that the duty and the activity described as remembrance is central to this institution. In 1 Corinthians 11, a passage which almost every time we come to the table is read, and occasionally comments are made upon it. The truth of the centrality of remembrance is very clearly underscored by the words which the Apostle sets before us. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, he writes, "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, This is My body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of Me." The doing of that which the Lord commands is to have a specific accompaniment called remembrance of Him. Verse 25: "In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." So the doing and the remembering are inseparable duties and privileges for the people of God when they gather to the table instituted by our Lord Jesus.

But now that raises the question, "What are we to remember about His person, and what are we specifically to remember that comes out of His body given for us and His blood shed on our behalf? And recognizing that we have some who will come to the Lord's table for the first time tonight, and should the Lord spare them and us, they with us will come many times in days to come. Should the Lord delay His coming, it is essential that we come again and again to these very fundamental issues pertaining to the kind of remembrance that we are to engage in when we do what the Lord has commanded in the breaking and eating of bread and in the drinking of the cup. And because the Scripture tells us in Isaiah 53:11, that great Old Testament chapter that tells of the sufferings of Servant of Jehovah, that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, it is good for us in coming to the table of remembrance to remember that which the Lord Jesus has infallibly secured for all of His people by His once for all death upon the cross. And when we come to the table, and when we prepare to come to the table, it is these basic Biblical truths that we are to call to remembrance again and again, to pull them up from the file drawer of our minds and to place them there before the eyes of the soul and to think with fresh actings of faith and fresh wonder and thanksgiving and praise for those things the Lord Jesus has secured for us by His death. And I want us to take a very quick and an almost insulting, cursory overview of these seven things that our Lord has infallibly secured for all who by faith are united to Him. And I am not insisting or even suggesting that we must bring to remembrance all seven of these every time we come to the Lord's table. For these are only some of the things that He's secured for us. But surely it will be helpful to bring one or more of them even to our remembrance as we come to the Lord's table and to be familiar with these pivotal texts, the one or two texts that I will read and upon which I will briefly comment as we seek to survey this marvelous procurement of redemptive grace by the Lord Jesus on behalf of His people.

And fundamental to all the blessings secured, we are warranted to say, number one: He died to turn away the wrath of God from us. And Galatians 3:13 is a text that every Christian ought to memorize and often to reflect upon, for here we read: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Christ has redeemed us His people. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, not by persuading God to lessen the demands of His law, not by somehow persuading God to be less stringent in His dealing with human sin, but by becoming, in the language of the text, a curse on our behalf, taking into Himself the full, unreserved weight of all of God's fury against the sins of His people by becoming a curse on their behalf. Or in the language of 1 John 4:10. Here we read: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now propitiation is a Biblical word, and it means the turning away of wrath by a sacrifice. And what our Lord has done for us, He has become propitiation for us. The wrath of God was spent upon Him. It is exhausted with respect to its demands against us. And when the Lord Jesus says, "Come to this table, break the bread, drink the cup in remembrance of Me," surely, we ought to reflect afresh upon this basic truth that He died to turn away the wrath of God from us, the wrath that we would otherwise bear and bear for all eternity. "This do in remembrance of Me." Remember the Lord Jesus said, "I died to turn away the wrath of My Father from you."

Secondly, He died to procure a perfect righteousness for us. We sang of this in our last hymn. But in 2 Corinthians 5:21, the Apostle states this in very straightforward language: "Him [referring to our Lord Jesus] who knew no sin [that is, who in His person was never guilty of sin, was not defiled by sin] He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." And in what sense is the Apostle thinking of Christ being made sin for us? Well, He's already told us in the previous verse: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Our sins were reckoned upon Him that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The righteousness of God is that right standing before God without which we cannot appear before Him. We have none in ourselves. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." But Christ the sinless becomes sin for us in order that we might have a perfect righteousness in Him.

But then thirdly, as we think of coming to the table and remembering Him and the benefits of His death for us, the Scripture teaches us that He died to open the way back to God for us. Not only did He die to turn away the wrath of God from us, not only did He die to procure a perfect righteousness for us, but He died to open the way back to God for us. In Adam, as we sang, we were all banished, we were all disinherited sons cast out from the presence of a holy God. But 1 Peter 3:18 tells us what Christ has done to reverse that tragic state in which we are by nature: "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that [another clause of purpose] He might bring us to God...." Not only that He might turn away the wrath of God from us and procure a perfect righteousness for us, but that He might bring us unto God that fellowship might be restored between the offended God and the offending sinner. And it is on the basis of the death of Christ that we are bidden to draw near, in the language of the book of Hebrews, drawing near through Him who opened the way back to God for us.

But then in the fourth place, the Scripture is clear in teaching us that He died to secure the gift of the Spirit for us. Turn back to the Galatians 3 passage for a

moment. Verses 13 and 14: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: [now notice another statement of purpose] that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Christ's vicarious curse bearing secures for the people of God the gift of the Spirit. Chapter 4 in verse 4 and following: "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, [notice now a purpose clause] that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." God could not adopt us as His sons and daughters as long as the controversy between God and us was unresolved. Christ resolves it by His vicarious curse bearing, not only enabling God to declare us righteous in Christ, but the controversy being settled, the way back to God is opened. And as that way is opened, God gives us the status of sons. And having given us that status of sons (a legal transaction), it is right that He should send the Spirit of His Son into our hearts enabling us to cry, "Abba, Father." And if Christ had not died and borne the curse of the law, God could not have adopted us as His sons. And if He did not adopt us and give us the status of sons, He could not send the Spirit of His Son into our hearts enabling us to enjoy and to enter into the blessedness of sonship. Think of all the Spirit of God is to us: the Spirit of adoption enabling us to cry, "Abba, Father," the Spirit who enables us to mortify sin (Romans 8:13), the Spirit who helps us in our felt weakness of not knowing how to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26), the Spirit who conforms us to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). All of the manifold operations of the Spirit rest down upon the fact that Christ died to secure that gracious gift for. "This do in remembrance of Me. Remember Me. It is because I died that you have received the Spirit of adoption."

In the fifth place, He died to effect in us a radical break with self-centered existence in all of His people. Where are we taught that? 2 Corinthians 5:15. Paul has stated that as an apostle, he is motivated by the constraining power of the love of Christ. Verses 14 and 15:

"For the love of Christ constraineth us [holds us in its vice-like grip]; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that [here's a purpose clause again] they that live [that is, those that receive life from His death] should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."

Christ died not to have a people who would rejoice in sins forgiven, who would rejoice in the imputation of a perfect righteousness, who would rejoice that the way of access to God is open to them again, who would know all the benefits of the indwelling Spirit in terms of the fruit of His presence (joy and peace) while they still live in their lives centered in themselves. For Christ to have a people who do not experience a radical shift from self-centered existence to Christ-centered existence would be a mockery. That would be to encourage men to go on sinning with impunity. But this text says Christ died with this end in view: that everyone who receives life by His death has received and experienced a radical break with self-centered existence. Not a perfect break, but a radical and a real break. That's what Christ died for, that seeing what our sins have done in provoking a holy God, in causing this God to send His Son to die in our place, we would look upon sin and all that leads to sin (our turning to our own way) with such abhorrence that we would deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him who loved us and died for us. "This do in remembrance of Me. Remember, I died

not only to give you all of these gifts, but to turn you from the tyranny of a self-centered existence into the liberty of a Christ-obsessed existence." And it is liberty, for whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

In the sixth place, He died to set us apart unto a life of real holiness now and perfected holiness in the age to come. And where do we learn that? Ephesians and the book of Titus. Let's turn to Titus first. Here again, just these many verses that have purpose clauses or statements in conjunction with the death of Christ. Titus 2:14, speaking of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Paul writes, "Who gave Himself for us, that [you see, all of the verses are 'that' verses] He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." Christ died to have a people who are His own purchased possession, who delight in the reality that they are not their own. They've been bought with a price. And in the outworking of that reality, they become zealous to do good works, not because they think their works will earn them salvation, but because God has graciously conferred His saving mercy upon them. And as surely as Christ will not be frustrated in that purpose of His death to turn away the curse of God from His people, He will not be frustrated in that purpose to have a people who are set apart unto a life of real holiness now and perfected holiness at His return. Here the Ephesians 5 passage, again, another purpose passage in conjunction with the death of our Lord Jesus. Verses 25-27:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it; that [there we are, another 'that' verse] He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Christ died for no less a purpose than that He should have a people in whom His eye can find no spot and no blemish. And the prophet says, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and He shall be satisfied." Christ is going to have what He died for. And that's the ground of our hope, that in this present pursuit of real holiness, with all of our remaining corruption and a subtle and seductive world and a wily devil, we seem to make so little progress. And in the midst of the struggle, we rejoice that a moment is coming when the eye of the Savior will find no spot and no wrinkle, no imperfection in His bride when she is presented holy and without blemish.

Then in the seventh place, He died to ensure that we will be given everything we need to enjoy a complete salvation. And here the text from which I've preached several times over the years: Romans 8:32. Against the backdrop of that marvelous statement of verses 28 and 29, that all things are working together for the good of those who are called according to purpose. And back of that is His foreordination and foreknowledge that we would be conformed to the image of His Son, that when God's redemptive purposes are accomplished, Christ will be the Firstborn, the One of supreme preeminence. And we will all be His family. He will be the Firstborn (notice the words) "among many brethren." Think of it, Christ will not think it beneath His dignity to say,

"Father, here's my family. Father, I present them to You perfectly reflecting My life. I have given to them perfected spirits from which every last taint and spot of sin has been removed. I have given them perfected bodies like unto the body of My own resurrection power and glory. Father, here are My brethren."

And how do we know that that purpose will not be frustrated for the weakest, the meanest, the most insignificant? (I don't mean nasty. I mean mean in the old sense of small and insignificant.) How do we know that that purpose will be realized and accomplished? Look at verse 32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things [not Cadillacs and 15-room houses with 17 baths, but everything necessary to accomplish every facet of God's redemptive purpose]?" If He spared not His Son--what's the greatest obstacle in securing the redemption of fallen, lost, hell-deserving, sin-bound creatures? The greatest obstacle is, how can God be holy and just and do anything other than damn such? And God must send His own Son, His own dear Son, deliver Him up for us all, deliver Him up to the hands of wicked men, to the powers of darkness and to His own righteous fury. If God has overcome the greatest obstacle, how shall He not with Him overcome every other obstacle and bring us all safely home at last? "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." and therefore, He died to ensure that we shall be given everything essential to complete our salvation.

Well, brethren, just that brief survey, doesn't that make remembrance of our Lord Jesus a delight to us? To come to His table and remember we're taking into our hands the symbol of that body, that body which is for us. He assumed it in Mary's womb for us. In that body, He was brought forth to live among us, to suffer among us, to manifest His glory and power among us, and in that body to bear our sins to the tree. "This do in remembrance of Me." Lord Jesus, why did You take a body, why in that body did You live and pray and heal and suffer and die and be raised from the dead? He says,

"I did all of this that I might confer all of these blessings, that I might turn away the wrath of My Father, that I might procure for you a perfect righteousness, that I might open the way to God for you, that I might secure the gift of the Spirit for you, that I might provide the basis by which you can be delivered from the tyranny of a self-centered life. I did all of this to set you apart from a life of sin unto real holiness now and perfect holiness in the age to come. I died that I might give to you everything essential to bring you safely home at last to heaven. This do in remembrance of Me. Remember Me in all that My death has procured for you."

And as we will come to the table in a few moments, you who are not in Christ, think for a moment. What is your state? All of the things which are ours in Christ and because of Christ, as we remember Christ, not a one of them is yours out of Christ. It's a sobering thing to say to my fellow human beings, "You are still under the wrath of God." That's where we once were. You're still there. The Scripture says in John 3:36, "He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Think of it, the wrath of God, that which fell upon Christ and caused Him to cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!"--that hangs over your head. You have no acceptable righteousness before God. "There is none righteous, no not one." You are at distance from God. You are without God and without Christ as Ephesians 2 says. You do not possess the Spirit. And Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." You're still living for yourself and for this world. You have no real holiness now and no prospect of any perfected holiness in the age to come, nothing but your miserable sins to be your companion for all eternity in the presence of fellow miserable sinners and a miserable devil and his angels. And you have no assurance of anything good from the hand of God, though He continues to

give you life and breath. And His goodness is shown in a thousand ways. You have no assurance of anything good from the hand of God.

But all that we remember as we remember Christ, and all that we have is available in Christ crucified for sinners, we have obtained it in Christ. And we've obtained it in Christ when by grace we came--nothing in our hands did we bring; simply to His cross we found ourselves clinging. And the Scripture says, "This is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance, Christ Jesus came into the world sinners to save." My unconverted friend, everything we have in Christ right now can be yours right there--repenting, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. You say that's too simple. Ah, my friend, don't let the simplicity be a stumbling block. It was nothing complicated that God called upon the children of Israel to do when bitten by the fiery serpents and Moses raises up a serpent of brass and cries out, "Look and live." And the Scripture says the Son of man must be lifted up that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Looking is no act of a hero, I know, but looking to Christ, laying hold of Christ, fleeing to Christ, coming to Christ--go to Christ, and all that is ours in Him, all of the blessings we remember with fondness and gratitude and with renewed outpourings of love and faith directed to Christ, they are yours if you will have Him.

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