

IS THERE MORE TO CHRIST'S GIFT THAN JUST A SACRIFICE?**July 5, 2015**

For two-thousand years, there have been a multitude of theories put forth concerning the cross and its intricacies. For example, there are various thoughts concerning how the cross provided victory over Satan and sin and how the world is able to enjoy the atoning result. Is there more to the cross than the fact that Christ willingly gave Himself and paid our debt for sin? The answer is absolutely! There is more to Christ's death than just His selflessness in suffering for others. If God did not require mankind to share in the responsibility that brought salvation, then there would have been no need for Christ to have accomplished all He did.

One might ask, "How do I know if I am one for whom Christ died?" Another might question the promise that Christ would not lose any of those whom the Father had placed in His care (cf. Jn. 6:35-39; 10:28; 17:1-12). Considering those questions, it is fair to ask who can benefit from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. All the various theories explaining Christ's actions on the cross are the result of people trying to understand the selfless act of the Godhead in allowing the Second Person to become human and to suffer and die so that sinful man would have the opportunity to stand justified before Him. The difficulty with understanding such a loving act is that no person living today would die for those that despise him and his family.

The Bible has a lot to say about who can benefit from Christ's sacrifice. It is obvious that a large portion of the religious world holds the Calvinist view that once one gains salvation it is impossible to lose it, evidenced by the misuse of passages such as the ones mentioned above. Any person that desires to access the shed blood of Jesus, for the remission of sins (Mt. 26:28), may do so; however, initial obedience to His plan of salvation is not the ending point of a life lived for Christ. Those that desire heaven must abide in Christ until the end if they are going to be granted access into the heavenly realm (Mt. 10:22; cf. Jn. 6:35-39). Paul's understanding of that can be seen in his statement, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8)

The Scriptures have never taught that salvation is universal nature, in the sense that all people will be saved. In fact, Jesus said very few would be saved while a vast majority would be lost (Mt. 7:13-14). Salvation is universal in the sense that it has been offered to all people. Paul acknowledged that God desired "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4); and when he declared, "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11), that was a warning for the world to accept Christ before His return to punish the disobedient and the ignorant at the end of time (2 Thess. 1:6-9). The New Testament is replete with examples of people standing in Judgment the last Day and being cast into Hell (outer darkness), proving that not all people will gain the glories of heaven.

The Bible also does not teach that Christ's sacrifice will be enjoyed only by elect individuals that were chosen before the foundations of the world. God did choose a **group** of people, the church, of which Peter spoke (2 Pet. 1:10); but he warned that those people should make their "calling and election sure." If one chooses to answer the Gospel call (2 Thess. 2:14), then he can make his election sure by remaining faithful until the end of time (Rev. 3:21-22). God elected, or chose the church to be saved, because only the obedient would be added to it (Acts 2:47).

The Bible teaches if one will accept the commandments of God and do what He has asked, he or she can have salvation and benefit from the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. That very fact proves that there is more to the atonement of Christ than just His willingness to die for all of us! It has just as much to do with our willingness to accept His commandments in order to be saved. Any time a gift is given, there are two aspects of that process: one must give, and one must accept. When that takes place, God's part in man's salvation and man's part in his own salvation come together to complete the Gospel plan of salvation, for which Christ died to make a reality!