

"Everything that God brings into our life is directed to one purpose: that we might be conformed to the image of Christ."

—Erwin W. Lutzer

27-Mar-09

## In Honor of Jesus Christ

During the [Passover](#) season, our minds are more forcibly focused on the importance of the sacrifice of [Jesus Christ](#) to our salvation. This time of the year, if properly used, purges some, and hopefully almost all, of the fog of forgetfulness that accumulates throughout the year. Ancient Israel had a major problem with forgetfulness despite the fact that, by giving them manna, [God](#) proved every day that He was with them and supplying their needs. As [Psalm 78:41-42](#) relates, "Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy."

Note the illustration that God uses in verse 42 to draw attention to what they forgot: the day He redeemed them from the enemy. That specific day was Passover, when God slew the firstborn of Egypt as the price of redemption that purchased Israel's freedom from slavery. They forgot the event as well as the purchase price of their liberty. Their liberty was only a physical /political one that also purchased the freedom to worship the God of Abraham, [Isaac](#), Jacob, [Moses](#), and Aaron. However, the real issue we must perceive is that the reality of the event and the price that was paid apparently meant little or nothing to them—or they would have remembered!

How about us? Are we any better than the Israelites? Do we hold the sacrifice of Jesus Christ freshly in mind throughout the entire year to remind ourselves to honor it each day? One way to do this is to grasp the seriousness of [sin](#) and not to fail to ask God's forgiveness every day—not only for what we do that is sinful, but also for what we are—and to seek His help in changing us so that we can be what He wants us to be.

Regardless of what [the world](#) may say, there is no such thing as a "little" sin! That is how serious sin is. A "little" sin kills just as dead as a "big" sin! God's Word does not say a little sin roughs up a person a bit, but a big sin kills deader than a doornail. Consider our Savior's example: Would God have permitted Jesus to be our Savior if He had committed only a little sin here and there as long as He committed no big ones? Jesus' example, the one we are to follow, is that He lived life perfectly. If it was that important to Him, should we not, as His brothers and followers, strive to do the same? To respect and honor Christ and what He achieved, should we not avoid carelessly assuming that any old behavior will just have to do?

This is exactly what Israel failed to do. It is our responsibility to glorify God. As obedient children, we bring Him honor; as disobedient children, we bring shame on Him and blaspheme His name. Israel was quite good at this latter behavior because they did not highly esteem or value God, despite all that He did for them daily. We witness His value to us by our conduct. We protect what we hold precious. It is Christ's sacrifice that forgives our sins, opens the way into God's presence, and pays the way for us to have a relationship with the Father and Son. How good are we at honoring and protecting the value of what that sacrifice purchased?

In reference to the value of Christ's sacrifice, Peter states that gold and silver are perishable ([I Peter 1:18](#)). In contrast, he calls Christ's blood "precious" (verse 19). Despite the value and durability of gold and silver to a human, they cannot even begin to pay the redemption price from sin's consequences. Only the sacrificed blood of the perfect Creator God's life can do so. [Faith](#) in that blood's value can have everlasting, imperishable consequences.

Our daily struggle to come out of sin will keep not only its value in mind—by reminding us of why we are doing as we do—but will also bring honor to

the name of God by giving a good witness to the world. In addition, Jesus states that by the bearing of much fruit, God is glorified ([John 15:8](#)). Now is as good a time as any to get started on a program of overcoming sin.

Does God have any good reason to respond to a prayer asking Him not to lead us into temptation, when we never do anything to avoid temptation? This provides us a good place to start. J.C. Ryle writes in his *Thoughts for Young Men*:

It is an excellent saying, "He that would be safe from the acts of evil, must widely avoid the occasions." There is an old fable, that the butterfly once asked the owl how she should deal with the fire, which had singed her wings; and the owl counseled her, in reply, not to even look at its smoke. It is not enough that we determine not to commit sin, we must carefully keep at a distance from all approaches to it.

[Proverbs 22:3](#) says, "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." As soon as Joseph clearly perceived Potiphar's wife's evil intentions, did he not flee so fast as to leave behind his cloak? He did not even want to be "with her."

This is good reason why so many worldly entertainments should be avoided, even though it may be difficult to prove scripturally that they are of themselves sin. They are like the smoke the owl warned of, eventually leading a person into a sensual frame of mind. They war against a life of faith in Jesus Christ because they promote unhealthy spiritual thinking by promoting sinful cravings. They feed the lust of the flesh and of the eyes by giving a false color to the value of certain carnal desires.

Avoiding sin is why idleness should be avoided. Another old saying is that, "An idle mind is the Devil's workshop." It is not that doing nothing is so wicked of itself; it is the opportunity it affords to evil and empty thoughts. It leaves the door wide open for [Satan](#) to throw in the seeds of bad behavior. Interestingly, David appears to have been just walking about on the roof of his home with nothing to do, and it led to his [adultery](#) with Bathsheba.

Solomon counsels us in [Proverbs 4:14-15](#), "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on." The person who took the Nazirite vow in Israel not only took no wine, but he even abstained from grapes in any form. We can derive a very helpful spiritual lesson from this: The grape leads to the wine. Sin must be avoided from its most insignificant beginnings.

When we strive to avoid sin, we keep in mind the perfect, sinless example of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we truly desire to be in His image, it cannot but help us to emulate His sinless behavior as closely as possible. He is always the example we hold before us. When doing this, as we make our pilgrimage to the [Kingdom of God](#), we will never be guilty of forgetting our redemption because we are walking right behind Him watching everything that He does.

- John W. Ritenbaugh

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Knowing Christ \(Part 1\)](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Philippians 3:10 speaks of "the fellowship of His sufferings" and "being conformed to His death." Christ's death had both a substitutionary and a representative aspect. The former pays for our sins, but the latter provides an example (He is the archeagos) that we must imitate. When we obligate ourselves (something God cannot do for us) to mortify the flesh, refusing to feed the hungry beast of our carnal nature and killing the old man, we suffer. Suffering for righteousness' sake accelerates our spiritual growth and enables us to know Christ.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Passover, Obligation, and Love](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh discusses how Christ's redemption of us obligates us to obey and serve Him. We show our gratitude for this priceless gift by doing good in acts of love and service to others.

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