

He Knew no Sin (Good Friday)

by Rev. Robert Griffith

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

God the Father made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf. There is enough in this one verse to propel a human heart for thousands of years of worship and devotion to God. There is enough here in this one sentence to drive you to serve Christ all the days of your life. What more do we need? We have thousands of sincere people today running here and there looking for ‘a word from God.’ Well here it is ... if only we allow its truth to burn into the depths of our soul. *“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf ..”*

If you were to ask me what was the most spectacular accomplishment of Jesus of Nazareth during His life and ministry, it would not be turning water in wine; it would not be healing the sick; it would not be making blind eyes see or deaf ears hear; it would not be raising Lazarus or Jairus’ daughter from the dead; it would not be walking on water, filling fish nets where there were no fish, feeding thousands from the lunch of a few, casting out demons or calming seas. It would not even be enduring the torture of the cross!

If you were to ask me about the greatest achievement of Jesus of Nazareth, I would say here it is: *He knew no sin!* He was born without the taint of sin. He was born without the vile, corrupt, depraved nature that was mine and yours because of man’s rebellion from the beginning. He was born without sin *and* He lived with no sin. Not only did He commit no sin, but He knew no sin! He didn’t experience sin, in the sense of willing participation. He never grabbed hold of sin and sin never grabbed hold of Him.

Now you might think, *‘That’s pretty amazing. He kept the law of God perfectly.’* Yes, He did, but it goes so much farther than that – so much deeper than that! You and I who know sin very well, will find this really hard to grasp, but I want us to try to get this as we gather on this very special Friday.

Let me explain it this way. Over my many years in ministry I have been asked more than once what I think the greatest sin is for us. Well, the fact that such a question is even asked demonstrates a lack of understanding of sin and of God. How can you say that one sin is greater than another? The first man bit into a piece of fruit one day and the entire universe was condemned. In the presence of the absolute purity, perfection, righteousness and holiness of God, any sin is fatal for us. However, if I was to run with this idea of there being a ‘greatest sin,’ just for the purposes of an illustration, I would probably use common logic and say the greatest sin would be to break the greatest commandment. That makes sense, yes?

So what *is* the greatest commandment? *‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.’* So, not doing that might be the greatest sin. Now think about this: there has never been one moment; there has never been one fraction of a moment in your life when you have loved the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. There has never been one millisecond in your life when you have loved God as God ought to be loved. I want you think about that. That one truth alone should be enough to destroy every legalistic, works-based religious thought and action for eternity!

The most pious, the most dedicated, the most humble, the most powerful, the most effective Christian servant on this planet has never for even one second, truly loved God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. What a glorious and wonderful revelation! This is good news! It sets us totally free from performing before God and trying to please Him by how we live! We just can't do it!

Jesus said *"The truth will set you free,"* and *this* truth will set us all free! Think about this. There has never been a time in your life when you did something fully and completely for the glory of God. Not one time! Not even one millisecond of time in the midst of all your good works and service for God, the Church, those in need or this wonderful planet He has given us. Never!

Now that truth is why this verse before us today is absolutely mind-blowing as we now turn away from that revealing look in the mirror and turn towards Jesus of Nazareth. There was not one moment, not one millisecond in *Jesus* life when He did *not* love God as God ought to be loved. There was never one moment when Jesus the man, did not love God with all His heart, all His soul, all His mind and all His strength. Not one moment. Think about that. What you and I and the billions of humans who have walked this earth could never, ever do, not even one of us, not even for a second, Jesus did His entire life! He knew no sin! That's enough for me to think high thoughts about this Man. That's enough for me to listen to everything He ever said and continues to say through His Holy Spirit.

Friends, when you choose to renew your mind in the Word of God; when you allow the Spirit of God to really connect you with the wonder and reality of just this one verse, you will live in a constant state of marvel before Christ! If Christ does not marvel you this morning; if Christ does not mesmerize you, then *you* need a revelation from God today! You need the Spirit of God to open your eyes and your heart to the One before Whom we gather in this place.

He knew no sin. He knew no sin! Which makes the next part of this amazing verse all the more shocking and confronting – and its the reason we are gathered here today. This champion of human beings, this one of a kind Man Who knew no sin, was made to be sin for you and for me! Jesus had persevered His entire life and resisted everything the world and Satan himself had thrown at Him and He was still standing pure and strong until finally this day we call Good Friday arrived.

This day when the spotless Jesus had the sin of the entire world placed upon Him by God the Father and He was crushed to death. Not because He weakened morally and knew sin personally – no, not at all. He was actually crushed to death under the weight all sin - past, present and future. It was not *His* sin - it was your sin and my sin and all sin. This was like a legal transaction between mankind, represented in Jesus of Nazareth, and the Holy God of all creation.

The wrath and holiness of God against all sin, was thrown down upon Jesus on that cross and the penalty, punishment and natural consequences of all sin was paid in full in that one amazing act. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf - and that prophecy spoken by Isaiah centuries before was fulfilled on earth as it was always fulfilled in heaven. *"... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."* (Is.53:4-5)

So why was He Who knew no sin, made to be sin on our behalf? The rest of the verse tells us clearly: *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Cor. 5:21)

That means that every sincere believer and follower of Christ who is walking in God's grace and growing in Christ as a Christian has legally been declared righteous by God the Father, in Christ.

I want you to stay with me here because this is the truth which will set you, and all those you love, free for eternity. On the cross of Jesus Christ, God the Father declared Jesus to be sin before all creation and God's holiness crushed Jesus to death in judgment, once and for all time, once and for all sin, even though Jesus knew no sin personally! Then, and only then, could God the Father declare you and me to be righteous in Christ even though we *do* know sin and continue to sin!

So here is the best news you will ever hear and if you fully embrace what I am about to tell you, your life will never be the same again – God will make sure of that! The moment a person believes in Jesus Christ and accepts, by faith, the salvation He freely offers them, at that moment, they accept God's declaration that they are right with Him forever **and God treats them as right with Him** in every possible way. That's what Paul is saying in Romans 5: *"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have (not will have, might have or should have but we already have) peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God is released in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."*

God justifies us in the death of Christ and declares us to be righteous before Him. That is why God can love you without destroying you! That is why His holiness can look upon you in your unholy state and not burn you to a crisp. That is why any of us are still here, because God made a way for us in Christ – before we were even born! That's why this day when we gather to remember the brutal murder of an innocent man is called GOOD Friday – not because the death of Jesus was good, but because what that death *accomplished* is more than good – it's awesome! We really should change the name to *Awesome Friday* - and maybe more people would come to find out why it's so awesome!

Now the only day that can beat *Awesome Friday* is *Mind-blowing Sunday*, which you can call *Easter* if you like and I really, really encourage you to come back in three days and hear the rest of this amazing Gospel story! On that day we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and His death *and* resurrection is what secured our salvation, our freedom and our reconciled relationship to God and it comes as a free gift.

That gift comes to us in love, with no strings attached, no requirements, no religious hoops we have to jump through. It is a wonderfully, outrageously and dangerously free gift. Your favour before God and your right standing with God is not in any way based on your personal performance – and just as well – because if it was, then your performance would have to be absolutely 100% perfect, because even the tiniest sin would destroy you in the presence of God.

Your eternal relationship with God has been secured by God Himself, He wouldn't trust you with something so important to Him. He did it Himself, because only He *could* do it. And He did it through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is the gospel! This is the Truth!

Believe it, receive it and watch it's power transform your entire life. *This* is why every man, woman and child on this planet pays homage to this Christ every time they write the date. This is why all our schools, our hospitals, our judicial system, our governments all have their roots in this one Man and the community of faith which He birthed when He allowed Himself to be nailed to a tree.

This is why all the armies that have ever marched; All the navies that have ever sailed; All the parliaments that have ever sat; All the kings that ever reigned put together, have not affected mankind on earth as powerfully as this one solitary life, and this is why: *"God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Cor. 5:21)

What is it that brought you here today? What is it that brings some of you here every Sunday? Is it Christ? Is it Christ? Or is it fear or guilt, obligation or habit, religious duty or a soothed conscience? Is it friends, fellowship, moral activities? Let it be Christ and Christ alone that draws you here! Let it be Christ – the same Christ Who said, “Seek *first* the Kingdom God and His righteousness and everything else will follow.” Let it be Him Who knew no sin but became sin for you. Let Christ be the only reason you are here and the only reason you return here or anywhere else where the Word of God is honoured and preached. Let it be Christ!

So the only question which remains is the question which should follow every time the gospel is preached, but it doesn't: How will you respond? In light of this Jesus Whom you have been presented with once again today, how will you respond? Will you think, feel, believe, pray or live differently in light of this gospel, which carries the power of God within itself? Or will you walk out of here with the same thoughts, the same attitude, the same priorities you came in with and not respond at all?

I don't believe it is possible for a human being to remain the same when they truly encounter Jesus Christ – and I am not talking about your first encounter with Christ, I am talking about every encounter with Christ.

If there is no change, no transformation, then you haven't heard what God wanted you to hear today and I would encourage you to re-visit this sermon and that amazing verse and keep reading it until the lights come on and the Word of God captures your heart and changes your life. That, my friends, is what God desires every single time we gather as His people. His greatest desire is that we would truly encounter Him – and never be same again.