

Nothing but the Blood

Prayer

Good Morning!

Normally, As you all have become aware I preach/teach exegetically... Today I plan to deliver God's message in a series of illustrations... Let's have fun and explore what God has to say to us today in story.

Today I take our text from Ephesians 2:8 NKJV

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

*** Show video – Good o meter

This morning I would like to tell you a story:

The Eskimo's are among the greatest hunter's of the world, but there is one animal that is the most difficult for them to catch. This animal has the greatest intellect, keenest smell, and the sharpest eyesight. And yet for the Eskimo's to survive they must trap and kill this animal before it destroys their way of life. The animal I speak of is the white wolf.

The white wolf has a sense of smell that can detect the presence of a human up to 2 miles away. It's suggested that his eyesight is so great that if man had the same eyesight he could read a newspaper from 150 yards away. It is their eyesight, sense of smell, and their cunning that make them the most difficult animal to bring down. And yet, the Eskimo's have devised a tactic that never fails. And it is similar to the tactic that the devil uses to attack Christians. The Eskimo's say there is no sense in going against all the ability that the white wolf possesses. The devil says there no sense in going against the power of God in you.

To bring down the white wolf, the Eskimo's take a knife and sharpen it to a razor's edge, put it outside and let it freeze, dip it in blood, freeze, again and again until there is a thick coat of blood on the knife. Then they go out into the wilderness and plant it in the ground blade up. The wolf scenting what is on the blade, and sensing that there is no danger, believes he has a free lunch. There is nothing to be alarmed about, so he makes his way to the knife. The blood has drawn him to it, and he licks it and nothing happens, he licks again and again. But with each lick he is working his way closer and closer to what's going to destroy him.

Now there are really two different interpretations of this illustration...

- 1) Giving in to the temptation of Sin
- 2) Giving in to the belief that we earn our salvation through works

In the first instance – Temptation of Sin we can ask ourselves. How many Christian's have been tempted to give into sin, tempted to mix God's standards with the world's?

How many have been tempted to take that lustful glance, that first drink, to tell that little white lie, to cheat on a test, to cheat on their taxes, or to cheat on their spouse and have taken that 1st, 2nd, 3rd lick not knowing that their getting closer to what's going to destroy them?

Now, the white wolf gets comfortable and licks faster and faster as he tastes the frozen blood. Then he gets to the blade and slices his tongue but doesn't even know it, because he is has become numbed by the bloody ice. Now he tastes his own blood, but he continues to lick until the blade is clean and his tongue is shredded. He never walks more than a mile before he bleeds to death and the hunter has won.

The devil has planted blades all around us. And all he wants you to do is to get comfortable with the first lick. No one will ever see, no one will ever know. Your safe, there is no harm. But with every lick you're getting closer to the blade, to destruction, to death. The blades that Satan offers appear to be beautiful, desirable, something to be longed for, something that will bring satisfaction & pleasure. But they will destroy your life. Countless Christians have been overcome by things that Satan has set in front of them and they lost everything that was truly dear to them, their home, marriage, family, and friends thinking I can handle it. (First example is Sermon Central Illustration)

In the first illustration, the Christian has failed to do be obedient to God and do his will. In this way there are no good works, but rather the opposite. The bible has said faith without works is dead, so... epic fail!

The second interpretation of this illustration is even more troubling. Consider that Christ provides for you in a healthy and natural way. As a white wolf you seek good things to sustain your life. Each victory brings you life, your skills sharpen and so on. There is effort as you still must do the work of the hunt, but the rewards bring life and food.

When we follow God's plan and do as he intended for us to do and so we receive life in the blood.

As Christians we know that the blood of Jesus washes us and sustains us, cleanses us and covers us in the glory of his righteousness. This is the nature that God has for us, the one he created for us. We are given life by the blood of Christ.

Now when God's plan is perverted we encounter a problem. The enemy sneaks in and deceives us into thinking we provide for ourselves. Our pride likes this state. We feel we are in control and so we become deceived.

Let's say we do good works...

Each and every time we do a good deed, we are tempted to add it to our own tally. We have overcome a problem or situation victoriously and so attribute it to ourselves. Instead of recognizing God's provision for us, as in the food animal provided for the wolf to hunt, we feel a sense of entitlement because we have attributed each success to ourselves.

This is dangerous because when we come to the rewards presented, we fail to question their source; it is our reward and we believe we have earned it through our efforts. We develop entitlement issues within ourselves. In short, we stop recognizing the source of our provision – and attribute it to ourselves.

When God provides for us in his infinite wisdom, he provides us with a healthy source of nourishment. People, it is the life-blood of his Son, which sustains us. It helps us to grow and develop. Through Christ and his sacrifice we become healthy and feel accomplished and are given life.

When we forget where our provision comes from, we deceive ourselves into believing that we are our own providers. We measure our worthiness based on what we have done.

In this illustration, the wolf forgets where his sustenance comes from, he allows his desires and pride to overcome his caution on questioning where the blood has come from and so indulges him or herself in what amounts to a Popsicle of death...

You see the bible tells us that faith without works is dead. It also tells us, we are not saved by our works.

...So to continue our illustration: We still have to hunt, we need to seek after those things, which sustain us and cause us to grow. We need to actively pursue and seek after that which brings life. But here is the rub... It is not the act of our hunt, which nourishes and sustains us, but rather the source of the nourishment. You see, it doesn't really matter what the Wolf does if God has not provided him a target.

Have we lost sight of where our salvation comes from?
Do we deceive ourselves into believing that it is our own efforts, which gives us life?
Or... Do we recognize that there can be no hunt without that which God has provided?

I remember an old song Randy Travis used to sing... It went something like:

"What can wash away my sins - Nothing but the Blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again, nothing but the Blood of Jesus! O' precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow, no other fountain I know, nothing but the Blood of Jesus!"

Folks, there is no contradiction here; the concept is actually quite simple. We are called on to do "good works", it is part of our mandate. We are even told Faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:17). The thing we must get straight is that no matter how much we do, or how good we are it is not good enough to earn our salvation. Only the precious blood of Jesus has done this. Jesus said in John 14:6: "...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

In a speech made in 1863, Abraham Lincoln said, "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand, which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us."

Abraham Lincoln recognized this in 1863, Do we today?

I think what happens is that God's grace is too easy so we don't believe it.

How many of you have ever used an instant cake mix... Where I am going with this...

Once I read about an instant cake mix that tanked on the market. When people read the instructions on the box it read all you have to do is add water mix and bake... Seems like it would sell well doesn't it? Anyway, the company did some market research and found that people thought it was too easy... The company altered the formula and changed the directions. Now the directions instructed that the mix required the addition of an egg. Well... The company did this and the sales of the instant mix jumped dramatically.

Have you ever noticed that people seem to react the exact same way to the message of salvation? They think it sounds too easy to be true or that there must be a greater cost to them personally. The whole concept of "...by grace you have been saved through faith; it is a gift of God, not of Works" is missed or disbelieved.

People tend to think that there must be something more that they have to do in order to be saved. If I do good works and lead a good life then I will be saved and I through my efforts, will earn God's favour.

God's recipe for salvation doesn't require your egg. Titus 3:5 CEV says:

He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning.

God's plan for your life does require your egg.

Hebrews 10:24 NKJV says:

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Or to put it another way: (CEV)

We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer

Because we know from Hebrews 11:6 NKJV

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him

And we know that as we read in James 2:15-17 CEV

If you know someone who doesn't have any clothes or food, you shouldn't just say, "I hope all goes well for you. I hope you will be warm and have plenty to eat." What good is it to say this, unless you do something to help? Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead

So... in summary

Doing good works will not save you. You are only saved by the faith in Jesus (cf. John 3:16) however, you are not off the hook, because God requires obedience from his children and he required us to do good works. Just don't get the issues of living as a Christian with Salvation confused.

* Here is my one sentence sermon for you to go away with today. If you forget everything else that has been said today remember this... "Faith without works is dead, but you are dead without faith as works alone can't save you."