

How grateful we are for something depends a great deal on how well we understand what's been done on our behalf. When we were five, we didn't understand the sacrifices our parents made in making money. We didn't understand that they sometimes went without so that we could have new shoes or a bike for Christmas.

When we got to be teens, we might have seen and understood parental sacrifice better. Maybe. But when we became parents ourselves, then we gained a much clearer insight into the sacrifices of parenthood. Nights with minimal sleep followed by a full day of work. Dealing with sibling jealousy (especially when one of them had a birthday party, and the other got no presents!). We gained a new and profound respect for our parents and what they did for us. And the gratitude we felt was much deeper than anything we might have felt at an earlier time.

As we mature in our Christian lives, I think we see the same thing happening. Whatever gratitude we felt for Jesus at the beginning of our spiritual walk is meager compared to our gratitude as we gain a greater and deeper understanding of both what He did for us and what it means to us.

I want to talk about three aspects of Christ's work in our lives that we need to be grateful for. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, grow in your gratitude of these things.

I. Jesus is the Propitiation for our sins

Propitiation means an "atonement", a way to satisfy God's wrath in the violation of His holiness by our sinful actions. Jesus paid the price, he atoned for our sins, paying the price we owed with His blood and body. He "satisfied" the need for sins to be accounted for, to be paid for.

I John 2:2 says, "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

I John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

These two verses tell us that God loves us, that He sent Jesus to pay the price, to be the propitiation for our sins, and that Jesus' death accounted for the sins of the whole world. They are paid for.

II. Jesus is our Advocate

Advocate means an “intercessor” or a “defending attorney”. This is someone who will stand by your side and defend you.

In 1 John 2:1, we have the only NT use of this word applied to Jesus. The others, found in John’s gospel, refer to the Holy Spirit as our advocate, our “helper” or “counselor”. But here it says, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

But Jesus’ defense of us isn’t based on our not being guilty. We aren’t. We know it, Jesus knows it, God knows it. So how are we being defended? God is the Judge, and we know He loves the whole world and all the people that He created. Jesus is our defense attorney. It was God, the Judge, who sent His own Son to Earth to pay the price for our sins. Now when we sin and confess it, Jesus turns to His Father the Judge and says, “This person is guilty, but I took care of that sin on the cross.” The defense for us is that Jesus was righteous and sinless on our behalf. And on that basis, the Father turns to us and says, “Not guilty.”

III. Jesus is our Pattern

Many of you have used patterns in sewing, in building, in drawing or painting. It’s a guide for how to accomplish the task so it will have the best possible outcome.

This is the Christian life for us. Jesus asks His followers to live the same way He did—He calls to us, “Follow Me.”

1 Peter 2:21 says, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”

Romans 8:29 says, “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.”

We have been given a pattern, Jesus’ life, so that we can become like Him. He is the firstborn, but He’s not supposed to be the only born.

He paid for our sins, uses His wounds to defend us from punishment when we confess, and then asks us to follow His example, and become like Him. How can we not be grateful?

LET'S PRAY

PRAYER: Father God, we have so much to be grateful to You for today. But we want to acknowledge how grateful we are for Jesus. His death paid the price for our sins, He continually is our Advocate in Heaven because of that death, and now we get to be like Him. Keep our hearts soft toward Jesus in remembering that we have so many reasons to be thankful to Him for all He's done for us. Help us to have hearts full of gratitude for this sacrifice as we partake of these emblems today. In Jesus' name, Amen.