

“What happened?!” Hebrew 10:16-25

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

“Can you tell me about your God? Why are you so excited and passionate about that Jesus?” “Sure! Our God, **He emptied Himself, He left His divine glory and took a form or a servant, being born in the likeness of man.**”

“Hm, that sounds strange... Are you saying that the Almighty and eternal God became just like us?!” “Yes, pretty much, and then there is more – **“He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**”

“So, you are saying that your God became like us, and then He died shamefully naked hanging on the cross, together with other criminals, mocked and ridiculed?”

“Yes, pretty much, that is what He did, that is our God, the Suffering Servant, our crucified Lord Jesus Christ. That’s how He saved us!”

Can you see how strange the story of our God is? From worldly perspective, it just doesn’t make sense. There is no culture, no philosophy, no wisdom that would be able to make sense of such an unbelievably strange story.

This is why Paul, the loudest voice of the Gospel, wrote to our brothers and sisters in Corinth: **“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”**

What happened today two millennia ago? How could Jesus say: **“It is finished!”** Can we make sense of it? The death of our God on the cross is such a mystery. Our words fall short to describe it, our minds wrestle with its meaning, we want to understand it, we want to grasp it... but it is so hard.

This is how the author of the letter to Hebrews describes what Jesus did for us: **“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the**

Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” then he adds, **“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”**

We read this incredible promise delivered through Jeremiah the prophet a couple of weeks ago. Now we are reminded of it again. How does this help us to understand what happened on the cross, and what is finished?

An insight from Paul’s letter to Colossians is helpful: **“And you, who were dead in your trespasses ... God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame...”** (Col 2:13-15)

May the Lord bless us that we can understand and rejoice with heavenly joy in what happened on Good Friday! That was the day when this New Covenant was made and signed with Jesus’ blood. Because of what happened on that day, our relationships with the Triune God were changed forever. Let’s see how!

He is our Creator. **“He made me and all creatures...”** He has created us to live according to His eternal and holy will. The Bible often calls this will of God – His Law. We all know how the law works. If there is this law, it has power over us.

It demands our obedience. It determines whether we are guilty or innocent. It can be used to accuse us, to show where we have fallen short, how we have failed, what wrong we have done.

So, if the Law is given by God, then it would determine our standing before our God, our relationships with our Creator. If we have kept His Law fully and without failure, then we are innocent, and could stand before Him with heads high lifted up. But if we have broken it, then we are guilty before the Holy God.

What it means is this, if our relationships with the Triune God are defined by His Law, then those relationships are our performance based. They depend on how well, how fully we have lived according to the will of our God.

As we know it too well, the Bible is clear, and even from our experience, no one has done it. Ever! What it means is that the Law can and will be used to accuse us. Satan can use it to smear us and to make us feel miserable. Our fellow humans can use it to convict us and put us down. And on the Last Day our Creator will use it to show how shockingly we have broken it.

As long as our relationships with our God are based on His Law, we are doomed, we are done, there is nothing good that we can expect but punishment. But now, what did Jesus do? Everything! He did everything!

We will only briefly survey and rejoice in four things that happened. **For one, Jesus “cancelled the record of our debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”** What does this mean?

As Jesus took our place, your place! as He claimed our sins as His own, as He received the punishment that is due to us, to each one of us! He cancelled our debt. No more accusations for those who stand with Jesus.

No more accusations to those whom the Holy Spirit has united with Jesus. Our relationships with the Triune God are no longer our performance based. What our Father's attitude is to Jesus, that is His attitude to all who are in Jesus.

If you are embraced in the divine fellowship with Jesus, if you belong to the body of Christ, the Law has no power to accuse you. This is why it is written: **"I will remember their sins [our sins] and their lawless deeds no more."** For Jesus has taken care of them.

But then, He also "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame." When you were under the Law, everyone could accuse you of not being good enough, of falling short.

"You Christians are no better than others!" Satan would be first to accuse us. But now... the train has left! We are not under the Law anymore. No one can use God's law to accuse God's beloved children before Him.

If Satan or whoever else wants to accuse you when you fail to live up to God's Law, you can respond with confidence: "Yes, I know that I fail daily. But... God the Father loves me not because I am perfect, but because Jesus is."

Third, as we know the Law of God is not our real problem. Our sin that makes us rebel against God's Law is. Now, with this New Covenant, as we are washed with pure water of our Baptism, and as our hearts are sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus, we are changed, transformed and renewed.

"Create in me a new heart, O Lord!" Yes, He has done it. He has put a new spirit, His Holy Spirit in you, and now He has written His holy Law on your hearts. Now His Law doesn't hang over you as a deadly threat anymore.

Now this Law is on your hearts, **"reviving the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, and enlightening the eyes."** Now we delight in the law of the Lord, for it has become for us **"sweeter than honey to our mouth."** (Ps 19, 119)

Now our new persona in us desires and longs for the same that our Lord desires for us. Our hearts are in tune with the will of our God. As a new creation we live and breathe to please our gracious Father and to bring glory to His holy name.

Finally, one more thing that Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Now, because of Jesus, you have access to the Trinity. You have access to the divine fellowship of eternal love with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thanks to what Jesus did, you can safely come into the presence of Holy God, without fear, with good conscience. We can join the heavenly worship with all the saints and heavenly hosts, **"by the new and living way"** – through Jesus.

Where does that happen? Right here, in the midst of the congregation, where our God Himself gathers His chosen people to be among us and to bless us. This is where we stand in God's presence.

This is where the Holy Spirit as a surgeon works cutting off corrupt pieces of our old selfish self, and that sometimes hurts. This is where He creates the new and beautiful you in the likeness of our dear Master Jesus.

This is an incredible privilege to be counted among the saints of this crucified God. An incredible privilege... given to us as a free gift, but first purchased with the innocent sufferings and death of Jesus, now – our Brother.

Unfortunately, in our sinful ignorance we cannot even appreciate this divine gift. Oh, if only we could! **“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so would pant our souls for You, O God.”** (Ps 42)

This is why the Holy Spirit gently reminds us: **“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the [Last] Day drawing near.”**

Indeed, dear Brothers and Sisters, we won't be able to fully understand the mystery of Good Friday. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can at least begin to grasp the amazing and undeserved divine gifts that the cross brings us.

I pray today that we all are filled with joyful pride for our crucified Lord Jesus, and may His last words “it is finished” daily echo in our new hearts to remind us about what our God has done for us, and what He has prepared for us.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.