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Main Idea: We are no longer separated from God because of our sin; Jesus Christ has paid the debt by His Blood that we can be in relationship with Our Father. Do you realize what the Blood has done for us? Do you know the freedom and liberty you have in Christ? Do you realize the hope He gives you because He delivered you? As a Christian saved by the grace of God and faith in Christ Jesus, you are in Christ! Know this: You are deeply loved, forgiven and you really do matter! You are His; thus, Jesus wants to bestow onto you every spiritual blessing. Perhaps these are not the riches we see in the world; the blessings of Christ are far more effectual and eternal--a personal relationship with God and His empowerment! This gives us a real purpose flowing in and through us, touching our innermost being and touching others around us, too. So, we must take hold of who we are in Christ, honor His Holiness by our holiness, to do our best for His highest. We are to partake in His kindness that He poured in and through us for His glory and Kingdom and personal impact.

Contexts and Background:

Paul writes this letter from prison because he was falsely charged by Jewish authorities for taking a non-Jew inside of the Temple. This did not slow him down. Paul reminds us all there is no barrier, as Christ shattered it (Micah 5:5; Acts 21:27-28). God's call is an open invitation, but the invitation must be accepted; our faith and trust are the requirements. We cannot enter on our own effort, but we still need to put in the effort of our response and determination. This is equivalent to Atonement and how we need to be clothed in Christ; His covering makes us secure in God's sight (Zach. 3:3-5; Matt. 22:13-15; 2 Thess. 2:14; Rev. 3:18; 19:8).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Gentiles.* Meaning those who are not the 'chosen' people, the Jews. God's redemptive plan was a mystery in the Old Testament, veiled from most who did not dig into the Scriptures; it was veiled from the Gentiles. Now, God's plan is in full view; Gentiles and Jews are now united under God. God reveals Himself to us by the Work of the Holy Spirit. The point is that the Gospel must be preached to the world, including the Gentiles, so they can believe in Christ as Lord and Savior (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 66:19; Ezek. 36:25-27; Zech. 9:9-10; John 3:5; Rom. 5:4-5; 8:14, 26-27; 11:11-36; Gal. 4:6; 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:3; Eph. 3:5-6).
- *Uncircumcised.* The privilege of the Jews was to know God and be His Light to the world; this was in contrast to the disadvantages of Gentiles. Jews believed that those males who have not had their foreskin on their private parts removed by the Law are disqualified from for the participation of God's fullness or covenant. Yet, God rules all races. By Christ, there is equality, not division or prejudice in the Kingdom of God; we are all united and equal in Him (Gen. 1:26-27; 12:1-3; Rom. 9:3-5; 1 Cor. 7:17-24; James 4:11-12; Gal. 3:26-28).
- *Which is done in the body by human hands/made by flesh.* This means the Spiritual circumcision of the heart; this is in contrast to man's traditions. This is about what God wants--real impacting faith, not empty rhetoric and ceremony (Duet. 10:16; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11-13). Moses and the prophets complained that the Jews were uncircumcised in their hearts by being hypocritical (Lev. 26:42; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Isa. 51:7).
- *Separate from Christ/Alienated.* This refers to our separation from God by our original sin and our willful, continual rebellion. Our thinking and actions are cause enough to separate us, in addition

to original sin. We conspired against God; Christ united us to Him. All of humanity has fallen into sin and total separation from God. Our further corruption compiled to seal our fate! We were enemies to God and eternally separated from Him! The incredible, fantastic, great news of the universe is Christ! His incarnation, Lordship, and grace atoned for our sins. He freed us. We now have peace with God and deliverance from our sins, which restores our hope, acceptance, and our salvation (Gen. 3; 12:1-3; Matt. 5:27-28; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2; 12; 8:20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 2:2, 12-13; 4:17-19; 6:12).

- *Excluded/alienated from citizenship.* All of us were His enemies and now, by Christ's work, He can call us His friends. All of humanity were strangers and separated by sin from God the Father, but now through Christ's sacrifice, this torn relationship is mended, and we have newness of life in God. Our evil thoughts and actions separated us, but now we are reconciled. Christ's death on the cross was the incredible act that made all this possible--our salvation, our place in eternity, and our contentment here and now--all and only because of what Christ did as a result of His shed blood (Col. 1:19-23).
- *Without God in the world.* God did reveal Himself to all of humanity through all time, by nature and our heart, of our conscience; however, humanity rebelled by sin and rejected God's Truth for man's foolishness (Acts 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-2:16).
- *Brought near.* Gentiles were segregated from the Temple. They were allowed to be in 'their' outer court, but not allowed to participate. Through Christ, all will be reconciled who by turning to Him (Col. 1:7, 14-16).
- *Blood of Christ.* The blood of Jesus was spilt as a sacrifice in our place so that we could have the necessary redemption to be saved! Jesus makes it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins and saved from God's wrath for our sins. Therefore, through the blood of Christ, we receive grace--salvation and eternal life. Thus, we are covered by His atonement that makes it possible for our redemption, only through Christ's blood and suffering, which was the sacrifice for our reconciliation, to bind us in good relationship back to our Creator and Lord (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 1:18; 53:6; Luke 22:20; Rom. 3:23-25; 8:1; 5:9; 1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 1:7; Col.1: 20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 7:27; 9:14, 22; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; Rev. 13:8; 22:14)!
- The Blood of Jesus rescues us from God's wrath and saves us, because His blood has paid the debt of God's wrath for our sin. The sacrificial death, and following resurrection, appeased God for us. Because He did this, we can receive salvation, "undead" because we have eternal life, as well as the joy and honor of receiving forgiveness for our sins. God was more merciful to us than we could ever be with anyone else, or could ever deserve. No matter what we go through, from persecution or loss, we could never even catch a glimpse of what Christ has given to us through grace (Matt. 5: 3-12; Rev. 1:5-6; Heb. 10:19-25).
- The cross is the place of sacrifice He takes on our behalf that pours His life into us. The totality of Christ's sacrifice and atoning work and its saving power is given to us who do not deserve it; we are given this unmerited gift, as Martin Luther stated, as a "sweet exchange" of our sin for His righteousness. Jesus' death became the ultimate, sufficient, atoning sacrifice worthy to appease God's wrath for our sin. His blood became the means for our reconciliation and our atonement; it covered our sin so we could become holy in God's sight and thus have a personal, effectual relationship with Him (Rom. 5:6-10; 7:4; 8:3; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Gal. 6:12-14; Eph. 1:7; 2:2-16; Heb. 9:14; 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:19).

- Jesus became "The Sacrificial Lamb," the only effective and ultimate sacrifice; He alone takes away the sins of the world. The sacrificial animal of the Passover in the Old Testament was the foreshadowing of what Christ would do and has done for us. The price was invaluable and could not have been paid by human measures. He was *Holy, blameless, pure*. Jesus Christ became the perfect substitute, sacrificing Himself once for all. Because He was sinless, He did not have to make any personal atonement or sacrifice for His sins, which a human priest had to do. Now, Christ is our atonement cover; He really is these things, whereas the human representative could only pretend--to a point (Ex. 12:3; Isa. 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 1:19-23; Heb. 7:11-28; 9:12-14,26; 10:2, 10).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Why was the Blood of Jesus shed for us? God demanded blood for the payment of sins in order for Him to grant atonement and resulting forgiveness; it was the shed blood of Jesus that paid the price that God demanded--one that we could not pay--and confirmed His new covenant with us in the age of grace. He purifies our dead works so we can become servants of the Living God. He wills Himself to us as His death makes us alive. Christ's blood was shed to appease God's price so we could be forgiven. His just anger for humanities willful sin, both original and continual.

The Hebrew Old Testament Law and the Tent and then the Temple were just copies and shadows of Him who was to come--He who now has come; Christ is here with us now and forevermore! His work was once and for all; there is no longer a need for the repeated priestly acts and animal and other rituals and sacrifices. His one-time offering was good enough (Lev. 16:6-16; Num. 19; Isa. 52:15; 53:4-12).

Church Leadership Tip: The administration of our church is not about personal wants, needs, and/or comforts; it is about Christ working in us in unity more powerfully and triumphantly. The key to turn on this engine of our collective spiritual formation is our willingness to effectively teach, disciple, pursue, endure, and grow in Him as Lord. Allow the holiness of our Lord, His grace, His patience, understanding, faith, loyalty, goodness, and love to be exhibited in the leadership--not just by imitation, but with gratitude and submission, saved by His blood, *kept by His power* (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; Gal. 5:21-23; 1 Pet. 1:5)!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What are some spiritual blessings that you have received?

2. Do you realize what the Blood of Jesus has done for you? Do you know the freedom and liberty you have in Christ? What have you done with this transformation?
3. Have you responded with passion and conviction to the Blood of Christ? Do you proclaim His name with impact and clarity no matter what you do or where you are at? What gets in the way?
4. Do you realize the hope He gives you, because He delivered you? As a Christian saved by grace, you are in Christ!
5. What does it mean to your daily life that you are deeply loved, forgiven and you really do matter? What happens when we do not take hold of these truths?
6. Why did humanity rebel by sin and rejected God's Truth and trade it for man's foolishness?
7. How can you take hold of who we are in Christ? How can you better honor His Holiness by our holiness, to do our best for His highest?
8. Why can't we enter into His grace on our own effort? Why should we still need to put in the effort of our response and determination?
9. Why must the Gospel must be preached to the world? How does the Blood of Christ make this so imperative?
10. Why are we called to glorify Christ in all that we do? How have you done so? What can you do to make this more so?
11. How must Christ be demonstrated in our relating to others? What would this look like in your church and work or school?
12. Do you hear the call of God? Has the reality of Christ impacted you? If so, how have you responded? What do you still need to do?