

Once And For All

1 Peter 3:18

Lyle Wahl

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*For Christ also died for sins once for all,
the just for the unjust,
so that He might bring us to God,
having been put to death in the flesh,
but made alive in the spirit.*

1 Peter 3:18

Introduction

We are used to fast paced action—fast foods, transportation, communication and solutions for our problems. When it comes to solving problems or meeting needs the term *quick fix* is usually in the vicinity. Quick fix workouts, golf and tennis lessons, now that it is spring. Quick fix home repairs. Quick fixes for relationships and personal happiness.

At the same time, we are told there are no quick fixes for some problems—hunger, poverty, cancer, recovery after major natural disasters, the world-wide economic meltdown. So, what is a quick fix? What value does it have? One description is that a quick fix is “anything we have around us we think is going to make our lives better and easier but doesn’t.”¹ Another description, from a business perspective, is that a quick fix is “a type of problem-solving technique which involves utilizing the fastest solution to keep the problem from recurring in the near future. A quick fix will not necessarily eliminate the problem in the long run...”²

When it comes to the things that are important to us we don’t need temporary quick fixes. We need fixes that last. We need something that will take care of it *once and for all*. On this Easter Sunday I want you to think with me about the most important need we have, whether we realize it as such or not. The need of being related to God as He intends us to be and to experience this not just for a moment or brief periods, but *once and for all*, forever.

We are going to look a number of statements from the Bible that relate to this. The one that is our anchor is 1 Peter 3:18.

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust,
so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in
the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

A fair question is, “Why do I need a solution? I don’t see a problem, or at least a big one?” Let’s start with that.

Our Need For This Once And For All Solution.

The root of our need can be traced to a very fundamental problem: a broken relationship. We know about broken relationships. Many of us know far more about them than we want to. Some people in Croatia have created a Museum of Broken Relationships. The museum creates a space to preserve things of broken relationships. There is an actual, physical exhibition museum and a virtual web museum. One of the objects pictured on line is a wood box a man made for his wife after their wedding. Her comments with the picture state he left her for someone else after 18 years, and they were divorced right after their 25th anniversary. She ordered a cake for that anniversary, had the pastry shop cut it in half, ate half of it with her sons and sent the other half to him and his girlfriend.³

Broken relationships.

All of our broken relationships go back to our first parents and their relationship with God. God created them without flaw or defect. So they enjoyed a personal relationship with Him.⁴ When they disobeyed God their relationship with Him was broken and their nature was marred. God is holy and righteous. Only those who are holy can enter His presence. Psalm 24 presents this in a question and answer format:

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.” (3-4)

Our first parents’ sin and sinfulness separated them from God. It broke that intimate relationship. The prophet Isaiah reminded the people of Israel, “your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God” (59:2). This is what sin does.

Adam and Eve’s children inherited that nature and broken relationship. As the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5, “just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (12). The apostle Peter wrote that we have inherited a futile, or empty, meaningless way of life from our forefathers.⁵ We focus on ourselves rather than on God. In that independence we reject God’s sovereignty over us which, the Bible tells us, is hostility toward Him.⁶ Colossians 1:21 tells us that on our own we are “alienated and hostile in mind” toward God.

No, we don’t go around shaking our fist at the heavens and launching anti-God campaigns. But we refuse to take our place as His creations looking to Him for life, direction and strength. We refuse to pursue His purposes and plans in favor of our own.

Our relationship with God is broken. What do you do when a relationship breaks? Despite the growing trend of *disposable relationships*, we know that doesn’t help anyone. We know we should try to repair the relationship. Down through history people have been trying to fix their broken relationship with God. The evidence is all around us in *religion*. By *religion* I mean systems of belief and practice people have developed. Beliefs and systems

which have not come from God, but from ourselves. There is a countless number of manmade religions in our world. There are even those who believe you can be a *Christian* without believing in God.⁷

The problem is that we cannot fix our relationship with God. We cannot bridge the gap between ourselves and God. Think about bridges. The Confederation Bridge, linking Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, is the longest bridge in Canada at 12.9 km. or 8 miles long.⁸ But it is dwarfed by the longest bridge in the world, a rail bridge in China that is just under 80 km. or 49.5 mi. long. In a few years it will be eclipsed by another rail bridge in China that will be 164 km. or almost 102 mi. long.⁹

But even these long bridges do not begin to picture the distance between sinful people and holy God. On our own, the Bible tells us, we are “helpless” to fix the relationship.¹⁰ In fact, the apostle Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 2:14, that on our own we do not accept the things of God, that is, His truth about Himself, His creation and ourselves. So then, the Bible says, on our own we have no hope.¹¹ In fact, on our own we are dead to God, “dead in [our] trespasses and sins.”¹² Physical death is a consequence of sin, but it is not the most serious consequence, nor is it the most serious kind of death. The most serious is spiritual death—~~not~~ having everlasting life from and with God.

We cannot bridge the gap between ourselves and God.

- We cannot change the essential nature we have inherited.
- We cannot pay the cost, the price of atoning for our sin.
- We cannot be accepted by God because of the good things we do, the terrible things we don't do, or because we are as good as or better than many others.¹³
- We cannot be accepted by God on the basis of deep sincerity and commitment.
- We cannot breathe spiritual life into ourselves.

God's Provision Of This Once And For All Solution.

What we cannot do, God can. What we cannot earn, God has provided. God has provided the solution we need. God's once and for all solution has not made it possible for us to fix the relationship or to save our selves. Rather, it repairs the relationship, it save us. God's solution is not a system or formula. It is a person: Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, God the Son. God the Son who humbled Himself to enter our world as one of us—truly God and truly man. On Good Friday we remembered Jesus taking all of our sin to Himself and giving His life to pay our penalty in full. As our anchor verse for today tells us,

“... Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

He, the just One, the perfect, spotless One, died for us. His death was not primarily an example of self-sacrifice or love, but a sacrificial, loving offering of Himself so that He might bring us to God. The apostle Paul reminded Titus that Christ “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (2:14). This was God’s one and only, His perfect plan and provision. As Colossians 1:20 tells us, it was “to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His [Christ’s] cross.” This was sealed by Christ’s resurrection.

You see, this is not a system of us doing enough right things and not too many of the wrong things so that, perhaps, we please or satisfy God’s holy demands. Jesus Christ is the Sacrifice and the Savior for us. “The wages of sin,” the Bible tells us, “is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Our broken relationship is fixed, salvation is received through the gift of God of Jesus Christ, not our works.¹⁴

This good news gets even better. God’s provision is a *once and for all* provision. This truth means that Christ died once. His sacrifice of Himself was sufficient. It never has to be, is or will be repeated. 1 Peter 3:18 tells us Christ “died for sins *once for all*.” Romans 6:10, “He died to sin *once for all*.” Hebrews 7 tells us Jesus did not, like the Old Testament priests, have to offer sacrifices continually, but that “this He did *once for all* when He offered up Himself” (27). Later in that same letter the writer tells us we are sanctified, or made holy and set apart for God, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*” (10:10). Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient for all sin. Sufficient for all of our sin—not just some of it. All of our sin—past, present and future. The Bible tells us “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

This truth also means that God’s provision in Christ for us is neither temporary nor probationary. It is permanent, forever. This has been the desire of people in every generation and the experience of all who have had true faith in God. King David wrote, “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD *forever*” (Psalm 23:6).

This life and relationship with God made possible by Christ is eternal, without end.

- We read in John’s gospel, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have *eternal life*” (John 3:16).
- Again Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has *eternal life*, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (5:24).
- John the Baptist declared “He who believes in the Son has *eternal life*” (John 3:36a).
- The apostle Paul summarized it this way, “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Our Experience Of This Once And For All Solution.

Just as each person is responsible for his own sin and broken relationship with God, so each one is responsible for how he or she responds to God's great and gracious provision in Christ. No one can decide for us or respond for us. Our *experience of God's once and for all solution* is made personally and consciously.

Experiencing what God provides requires that we know the truth, that we know the basics of what the Bible calls the gospel, which means *the good news*. When the apostle Paul and Silas were jailed because of their work for God in Philippi, an earthquake opened the doors of the jail and all the prisoners' chains fell off. The jailer, thinking they all had escaped, was about to kill himself to avoid be executed by his superiors. But Paul told him they all were still there in the prison.

So the flabbergasted jailer met with Paul and Silas, asking them, "What must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." He and each one with him would be saved if they believed in the Lord Jesus. The account goes on to say that Paul and Silas "spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house" (Acts 16:30-32). They needed to know the truth, "the word of the Lord," the good news of Jesus Christ.

Knowing God's truth is the first step. The book of Romans tells us that people need to hear God's truth, which is the power of God for salvation (10:13-15; 1:16-17). This does not mean that one has to know everything in the Bible, but the essentials of the gospel. The truths that

- God exists, and that He is the holy and righteous as well as gracious and merciful Creator and Ruler of all.
- That Jesus Christ is God the Son, truly God and truly man.
- That we are sinners and separated from God by our sin.
- That Jesus Christ took our punishment and place when He died on the cross for our sins. He paid the penalty in full.
- That Christ was raised from the dead in victory over death and sin.
- That God graciously forgives and gives eternal life to all who come to Him through Jesus Christ recognizing, confessing and turning from their sin to follow Him by trusting or placing their faith in Christ.
- That Jesus Christ is the one and only way to forgiveness, life and an everlasting relationship with God.

Jesus said, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

But being aware of and agreeing with this truth is not enough. We must act on it. Each person needs to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Listen to these statements from the Bible.

- “But as many as *received Him*, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who *believe* in His name” (John 1:12).
- Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me will *come to Me*, and the one who comes to Me I will *certainly not cast out*” (John 6:37)
- “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

To be forgiven of your sins and have an everlasting relationship with God you have to both know and accept the truth of the gospel and then, as you place your faith in it, experience the truth of Christ and Christ Himself as your Savior. Yes, “Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God...” (1 Peter 3:18)

Conclusion.

Each one of us who knows, who is experiencing God’s *once and for all* solution of a restored, everlasting relationship with Him, should be celebrating on this Resurrection Day, and every day. We should be giving Christ the Glory as the conquering Son of God. We should be filled with faith and confidence that Christ is with us and enables us to overwhelmingly conquer here in this life. We should be filled with hope, knowing that nothing can separate us from Him and that we will be with Him forever in heaven. Do that as we spend a few moments in reflection on these truths and respond to the Holy Spirit speaking to you this morning.

If you are not experiencing God’s *once and for all* solution of a restored, everlasting relationship with Him, you can. I know that God’s solution, in the words of one writer, “has hard edges to it.” He continues, “It says, ‘This is true, and this is false. This will get you saved. This will get you damned. This actually happened.’”¹⁵ But with these hard edges comes a rock solid certainty for today, for your worst as well as best days, and for eternity, all because Jesus died and was raised from the dead for you. If you have not accepted God’s *once and for all* provision for you, think about it in these next few quiet moments. Then talk with me, Pastor Tyler, or someone else you know is in this relationship with God before you leave here today.

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- ¹ “The Quick Fix - Interpersonal Skills Training.” *impactfactory.com*.
<http://www.impactfactory.com/gate/interpersonal_skills_training_development/freerate_1612-5101-72146.html>. Accessed 31 March 2010.
- ² “quick fix.” *BusinessDirectory.com*. <<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/quick-fix.html>>. Accessed 31 March 2010.
- ³ <<http://www.brokenships.com>>. Accessed 30 March 2010.
- ⁴ cf. Genesis 1:26 - 3:24.
- ⁵ 1 Peter 1:18.
- ⁶ cf. Romans 8:5-8.
- ⁷ e.g., <<http://christianhumanist.net>>. Accessed 30 April 2010.
- ⁸ <<http://www.confederationbridge.com>>. Accessed 31 March 2010.
- ⁹ “List of longest bridges in the world.” *Wikipedia.org*. Last modified 31 March 2010. Accessed 31 March 2010.
- ¹⁰ cf. Romans 5:6.
- ¹¹ cf. Ephesians 2:12.
- ¹² cf. Ephesians 2:1.
- ¹³ cf. Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.
- ¹⁴ cf. Ephesians 2:8-9.
- ¹⁵ Tim Keller. “Knowing The Power Of His Resurrection.” *Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross*. Ed. Nancy Guthrie. Wheaton: Crossway Books, pages 132-133.

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