

# The Portico Notes

August 17, 2023

## Session 4

**Portico Goals:** (1) To gain clarity about what we believe about aspects of redemption; (2) To corporately explore what the Bible teaches and emphasizes about aspects of redemption; (3) To deepen our sense of what the Spirit would say to the churches about redemption in this strategic time.

### **Q1.1: Why can't sinners save themselves?**

Beth: Eph 2.8-9; God is holy, righteous, we are not; salvation is a gift, we can't earn it.

Dan: It's difficult [to live out] two opposing ideas [at once]. We're designed to have eternal fellowship with God, we can't maintain that fellowship without ... a Savior. There is the matter of intended design for eternal fellowship [which is sidestepped if we save ourselves].

Jeff: A person with cancer needs intervention from outside. He does not have sufficient power within to cure himself.

Rod: Agreed. To ask why we can't save ourselves is to: (1) not realize how Holy God is; (2) not realize there was more to salvation than escaping hell; (3) not realize how bad the cancer [of sin] is and how absolutely we need outside intervention.

Kaj: Who is the lawgiver whose laws we have violated? People have not known who set the standards. (4) We don't know that we are fallen and **broken**. [We should] appeal to the conscience and tell people: You're setting your own laws. [Only by imagining for themselves what God's laws are, or inventing their own set of laws, can people believe in the possibility of saving themselves.]

Mark: [We may have to define “salvation”]. Then we can tell people: There is a God who desires to restore fellowship with man, and **God sets the terms.**

Rod: Think about what God holds us accountable for.

Dan: Loving neighbor, etc.

Kaj: Adultery, lying, etc., ten commandments (Ex 20).

Jeff: Integrity according to the level of our conscience, and moral understanding.

Dan: [People assume God won't hold us accountable] as long as no one gets hurt.

Mark: God sets standards and will hold you accountable for the life He gave you.

Rod: I agree. We tend to assume that our lives are our own.

Kaj: I had a fear of death; my conscience kept bringing me back, “You're off, you're going to be held accountable.” Come back to Jesus; why would he have to die? The person of Jesus, His ministry of reconciliation, puts things in new light. At some point you're going to die, and there is a judgment coming. Give people something from Scripture to nudge their thoughts in a new direction.

Rod: We concur that we don't have the power within ourselves (1) to heal ourselves, (2) to transfer ourselves from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God (3) to even understand our state of lostness (4) to be born again (5) to grow in faith. And when we think about balancing out our sins with good works, we forget that God holds us accountable for thoughts and words, not just for breaking the ten commandments.

## **Q1.2: Why can't our own death absolve us?**

Jeff: Our death might absolve us, but then we're dead! Death has multiple dimensions.

Dan: We're not the perfect sacrifice!

Rod: Remember what I'll call the two-goat principle of the Mosaic law: the thief who is caught must return double what he stole, two goats for one goat.

Will: Joh 3.16-18; we're starting from a negative point, already condemned. You're already dead. The only way to move to life is through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Also, as mentioned, the thief must return double.

Rod: What would be a parallel in current law, say when someone sues an auto manufacturer for injuries suffered due to a defect in their car?

Jeff: [In a successful litigation, the court would order,] in addition to paying expenses, [that the manufacturer ]add on the cost of the intangibles.

Beth: For the week the goat is gone he has lost the milk, work, etc. Will: Anxiety, stress!

Dan: [So, when he dies unrepentant,] the sinner is stealing his life and purpose from God, the blessings to others that God intended.

Rod: Right! A sinner's death is only the just penalty for his sins; it does not replace the righteous life that he owed his Creator.

## **Q2.1: Why can't God just overlook human sins?**

Dan: People bring this up, and say our God is "unloving." [But] when you steal the goat you have to reconcile the problem.

Beth: **God is holy and righteous.** If He were to overlook sin, why Jesus?

Will: He's a just God. God has to operate by some principle or truth; justice [perhaps]? [And we're already s]tarting from the position of being condemned.

Jeff: [The fact that] Jesus died for our sins, implies that God could not overlook sin. What if we understood God's justice as **written into the code of reality**. Judgment is already in place. The act of Jesus is an act of mercy and grace to save us from this predicament.

Rod: God's eternal character necessitates that He always act in certain ways, that are consistent with His character. If God violates His own character, could we trust Him?

Will: It would put everything He does into question.

Rod: The principles of the Mosaic law reflect the character, heart and wisdom of God. The *civil* law provides for ransoming one's own life in cases that call for capital punishment (Ex 21.29-31), and even permits victims to forgive crimes and *accept loss* in the spirit of Lev 19.18. However, with regard to offences toward God, there were no exemptions; the appropriate sacrifices had to be made for forgiveness to be extended and received. However, even in the Levitical system of prescribed sacrifices there were expressions of God's grace. A person who could not afford to sacrifice a goat, for example, was permitted to sacrifice a pair of pigeons instead. ... God cannot overlook sin, but He does address it with grace.