

A Lamb Standing, As If Slain

Rev. 5:6, 9-10

Introduction:

1. Since the days of Cain and Abel death and destruction have characterized man's inhumanity to man.
2. Hatred, hostility, malice and envy have been perpetuated against individuals, races and sexual groups.
3. People have been humiliated, abused, raped, mutilated, crucified, beheaded, lynched and burned at the stake.
4. Atrocities like this have pockmarked human history throughout time, but not just in ancient history, Babylon or Rome, or even as distant as the holocaust. In recent times people have been killed with what is know as the "necklace," a tire placed around a person's neck and filled with gasoline and then set fire.
5. There have been indiscriminate bombings, gunmen attacking worshipers, and not just in other countries, but here too.
6. And even if we have not experienced it personally still we are filled with revulsion at the gross violations of human dignity that we have heard about.
7. Whether we are black or white, male or female, mixed race or whatever, when such injustices are perpetuated against us we are tempted to retaliate with a similar hatred, malice and injustice as that that was perpetuated against us.
8. Expressed simply we want to hit back. After all it is only right to repay affliction with affliction.
9. Is it naïve to think that we can forgive such grotesque sins? Can they be overlooked? Are we to "forgive and forget?" Simply whitewash the severity of the crime? No we cannot! We must not! To do so would be to diminish our humanness and make the price paid for our forgiveness cheap.
10. There is a Lamb that is standing, but was slain for forgiveness. What does this mean? What about justice? How can there be anything but hostility and revenge? Are we doomed to the darkness of destroying one another?

Discussion:

- I. A recognition of injustice is a mark of our being created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28).
 - A. Say what you want about the general theory of evolution and the survival of the fittest—but human value is determined by our relationship with God.
 1. Murder is not permitted because humans are made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6).
 2. And it is not just the act of homicide that is prohibited (Matt. 5:21-22).
 - a. Angry hostility that disrespects another's value is prohibited.
 - b. "You good-for-nothing" = "empty-head" is prohibited.
 - c. "Whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

- d. What this means is that **any** depreciation of value is condemnable.
- 3. And that's not all . . . (Matt. 5:23-26).
 - a. If you have done something that produces a breach in a relationship . . . you have taken advantage of someone, you have treated them unfairly, you have been unjust with them, then you need to stop your worship and correct that!
 - b. Reconciliation and friendship is the goal that shows mutual respect and value.
- 4. And that's not all . . . (Matt. 5:27ff).
 - a. Adultery takes advantage and it is disrespectful.
 - b. Sending away one's wife is disrespectful. Unchastity is disrespectful.
 - c. Lying is disrespectful.
 - d. Revenge is disrespectful = hitting back.
 - e. Loving one's neighbor while hating your enemy is disrespectful.
 - f. The standard is to love like your heavenly Father, and that even includes loving your enemies! This is the standard that shows respect to all because they are created in the image of God.
- B. The world may determine value by race, sex, appearance, intelligence, wealth, etc., but true value is determined by God.
- C. Creation in the image of God defines what it means to be human. And by implication it defines what it means to be **inhuman**. Creation in the image of God defines the necessity of respect, honor, justice and fairness.
- D. Abuses of it by so-called "Christians" does not invalidate it. "In the Crusades so-called Christians brutalized many." It does not matter who violates the respect due! They stand condemned before God!
- E. Justice and respect trace back to God and when we are treated unfairly the reason why we are incensed is because we are created in the image of God and are to be respected and valued accordingly. Any disrespect is an affront to us and to the God who has created us and bestowed upon us such high value. You cannot disrespect someone else who is created in the image of God without disrespecting yourself in the same stroke.

II. Retaliation and revenge is the world's way of responding to injustice and disrespect.

- A. The Lord established laws to provide equity and fair treatment and to mitigate against people taking revenge.
 - 1. We can read about those laws in Ex. 20-21-22-23.
 - 2. The law of *lex talionis* was designed to make the consequence fit the crime. Some in Jesus' day actually twisted it to justify taking revenge (Matt. 5:38). Jesus' point is to be gracious. Graciousness shows respect.
 - 3. Observe that it is the Lord that standardizes right conduct. Thus from a source outside of ourselves what is fair and shows equal respect is established.
- B. God said, "Never take your own revenge" (Rom. 12:17-21; Deut. 32:35).

- C. Governing authorities are to act as God's agents to both protect the rights of the innocent and to establish justice (Rom. 13:1-6; note that Rom. 13 follows upon 12:17-21). "But," someone objects, "Often governing authorities do not act as they are supposed to." And that is exactly right and that is where the people of God are to exercise their salt and light influence. We all need to understand that we are working with people marred by sin. It is a spiritual battle. It is not easy.
- D. But retaliation and revenge is not the way of God. Practically speaking what that means is that I am going to have to put up with some level of disrespect in order to maintain a relationship with you. You are going to have to put up with some level of disrespect in order to maintain a relationship with me. You do not like it and I do not like it but we are both negotiating a relationship with sinners. Our goal is to keep it to a minimum and devote ourselves to increasing our respect for one another!
- E. God's people ought to demonstrate this much better than the world. But at Corinth they were reprimanded (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

III. The Lamb slain is the way of God.

- A. The Lamb is slain.
 - 1. Justice is!
 - 2. The penalty for all the injustice, disrespect, and taking advantage is paid. For every tire burned around someone's neck, for all the brutality from Cain onward, for all the atrocities, mutilations, crucifixions, lynchings, beheadings, for all the rape, sexual abuse, humiliations, malice, hatred and envyings, for all the holocausts, indiscriminate bombings, all the indignities and violations of human dignity that have been perpetuated—**The Lamb is slain!!**
 - 3. The innocent is slain for the guilty.
 - a. "Unfair!" you say?
 - b. It is beyond fair! It is grace!
 - 4. Justice is served! The Lamb is slain!
- B. The Lamb is slain.
 - 1. Forgiveness is.
 - 2. This is the message of the gospel. "You can be forgiven because someone else has paid the price for you." But more than that, those who have sinned against you can be forgiven because God has paid the price for them too.
 - 3. Amnesty is available. Turn in your hate, your weapons, your barbed wire, your ropes and leave them at the cross.
 - 4. The Lamb is slain.
- C. The Lamb is slain.
 - 1. The future is.
 - 2. Without forgiveness there is no future, only revenge, death and destruction.
- D. As Christ is formed within us we learn to forgive.

1. The innocent carries the pain of the injustices.
 - a. No making pay.
 - b. No retaliation.
 - c. No revenge, but an entrusting of the soul to a faithful Creator who does what is right (1 Pet. 4:19).
2. The sinner/perpetrator acknowledges the violations. Confession is characteristic of repentance.
3. Sometimes we are the innocent and sometimes we are the sinner. But the Lamb is slain and has purchased for God with His blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and makes them to be one kingdom, having established peace He has reconciled them into one body by the cross (Eph. 2:16).

IV. The Lamb is alive. He is standing.

- A. He has experienced the grossest of injustices. Though innocent He has been slain.
- B. But He has the keys of death and of Hades (Rev. 1:18). He is resurrected.
- C. His resurrection is proof of His right to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).
- D. Rev. 5 and the chapters following are indication of His judgment on the unfaithful and His blessing upon the faithful (cf. 11:17-18).

Conclusion:

1. The Lamb is standing though slain.
2. It is a powerful image.
3. It encompasses the great plan of the sovereign God.
4. It provides the map of the way of God to satisfy justice and yet forgive sinners.
5. It is the blueprint for respect, forgiveness and reconciliation between men.