

## The Oil Spill

August 1, 2010

For over 100 days now, our country has been caught up in an environmental nightmare. On April 20, an explosion on an oil rig out in the Gulf of Mexico killed 11 workers and started an oil leak that has poured 10's of thousands of gallons of oil into the Gulf every day. Our nation has watched helplessly as sludge and oil balls have washed up onto sandy beaches that were once crowded with tourists but now lie barren and empty. Predictably, there has been a great deal of anger expressed. Most people are angry with BP and the federal government for the way that they have responded to the crisis. Environmentalists are angry with the oil companies for not having the proper safety precautions to prevent such a disaster. Others are angry with the environmentalists for the regulations that they pushed to force oil rigs way out into the deep waters where the risks are so much greater. Millions of Gulf residents are angry because their livelihoods and lifestyles have been drastically altered by this unforeseen disaster. Most of this anger is understandable. But there is an anger that has developed that is rather regrettable and even irrational.

There has been an anger expressed by many towards those who are trying to help clean up the beaches. I read an article recently that said, "on 2 separate occasions, police had to be called out because protesters were attacking the responders who were cleaning the beaches. . . All of these responders have been threatened and denied services in some communities along the Gulf." Now this shows the irrationality that human emotion can take, doesn't it? Here are paid and unpaid volunteers who are trying to clean up the beaches and they not only have to risk the pollution of the oil, but they also have to protect themselves from the hostile attacks of angry people. Here they are trying to do good and help clean up the mess and they are hindered in their progress by this hostile opposition.

As I read about this remarkable turn of events, I could not help but think of how this pictures and overall history of the human race. God created a perfect and sinless world. But then 1 act of those first humans brought unbelievable pollution to it. It is as if the black sludge of oil permeated every aspect of God's creation. The earth was polluted as weeds began to choke out the fruitful plants that grew. The animal kingdom was polluted as bigger, stronger animals began to prey on the weaker, smaller ones for food. And the human race was polluted as human nature became distorted and deadened by sin. Just as the oil rig explosion in the Gulf happened in an instant bringing so much ecological damage, so that willful act of sin our first parents committed just took a moment, but it has brought about an environmental disaster of unparalleled proportions. Virtually every single part of God's beautiful creation has been affected with the

pollution of sin. And just as angry people have pointed their fingers blaming one another for the oil spill, so the first humans pointed their fingers in blame for their own disobedience. It was the serpent's fault, not mine.

The creator who is rich in grace and mercy instead of being thrown into a state of depression and retaliation over the willful pollution of his perfect environment immediately began to work on a means of cleaning up the mess. Of course, there would always be remnants of the effects of the pollution for it has consequences. No matter how thoroughly the Gulf oil is cleaned up, there are still animals that have already died and people's lives that have already been affected. And so it is that the sin that entered the world has brought about serious consequences for the wages of sin is death. But the creator began the cleanup work anyway. Amazingly, the human inhabitants of planet earth have resisted his clean up in every way possible. When the creator sent prophets to them with a divine message, they resisted these prophets even to the point of putting many of them to death. When the creator gave his divine message to them in written form, they didn't believe it even to the point of trying to destroy it. And when the creator finally sent his own son to make the sacrifice so that the mess could be cleaned up, they took his son and executed him as a common criminal. But the creator is committed to restoring his environment. He has provided the means to clean up the mess in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he has committed himself to carrying out his restoration in the making of a new heavens and new earth in the future.

I saw the before and after pictures of a pelican that has been restored the other day. The first picture showed the pelican completely covered with oil. The oil had so blackened and weighed down its body that it couldn't escape its fate. The pelican couldn't fly. It could barely move. It was helpless to even defend itself against the worker who came and picked it from its miry grave. But then the worker had slowly but surely cleaned the oil off the pelican's body. With delicate precision, the worker had wiped the mire off each feather. Now completely cleansed and bright white again, the pelican was being released in a part of Florida where there was no danger of the oil reaching it. What an exhilarating sight to see the pelican restored to its beautiful habitat again.

This is a picture of what the creator wants to do in each of our lives. Each of us was born mired in our sin, totally unable to rescue ourselves. But God sent his one and only son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to provide the cleansing that we so desperately needed. Jesus Christ came to this earth revealing the love and truth of God. And even though he was rejected and opposed, he still provided the cleansing for our sins. As we allow him to wash up thoroughly, all of the defilement can be taken away. His shed blood cleanses us from all sin. As the Apostle Peter wrote:

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18,19)*

When we accept God's free gift of forgiveness, we are immediately accepted into God's family. We are given eternal life and are assured a place in heaven forever. And God begins a good work in us, a good work that he is committed to complete according to Phil. 1:6. He begins to wash us inch by inch, feather by feather. One day, we have the assurance that we will assume that glorified state where we will be like him in glory.

This table represents that cleansing that the creator has provided through the Lord Jesus Christ. The bread represents his body sacrificed for us. The blood represents his cleansing power. As we partake of these elements in gratitude, let's remember the overcoming grace and love of a creator who was not willing to let his handiwork be overwhelmed by the pollution of sin.