

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 226

## CHRIST UPON THE CROSS

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*“Who his own self bare our  
sins in his own body  
on the tree.”*

1 Peter 2:24

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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## CHRIST UPON THE CROSS

#226

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Published by Chapel Library • 2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

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# THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S CROSS

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

**T**HE cross is an expression that is used in more than one meaning in the Bible. What did St. Paul mean when he said, "I glory in the cross of Christ," in the Epistle to the Galatians? This is the point I now wish to examine closely and make clear.

The cross sometimes means that wooden cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed and put to death on Calvary. This is what St. Paul had in his mind's eye when he told the Philippians that Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phi 2:8). This is not the cross in which St. Paul gloried. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of glorying in a mere piece of wood. I have no doubt he would have denounced the Roman Catholic adoration of the crucifix as profane, blasphemous, and idolatrous.

The cross sometimes means the afflictions and trials that believers in Christ have to go through, if they follow Christ faithfully, for their religion's sake. This is the sense in which our Lord uses the word when He says, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Mat 10:38). This also is not the sense in which Paul uses the word when he writes to the Galatians. He knew that cross well; he carried it patiently. But he is not speaking of it here.

The cross also means, in some places, the doctrine that Christ died for sinners upon the cross; the atonement that He made for sinners by His suffering for them on the cross: the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin that He offered up when He gave His own body to be crucified. In short, this one [phrase], "the cross," stands for Christ crucified—the only Savior. This is the meaning in which Paul uses the expression when he tells the Corinthians, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1Co 1:18). This is the meaning in which he wrote to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross" (Gal 6:14). He simply meant, "I glory in nothing but Christ crucified as the salvation of my soul."

Jesus Christ crucified was the joy and delight, the comfort and the peace, the hope and the confidence, the foundation and the resting-place, the ark and the refuge, the food and the medicine of Paul's soul. He did not think of what he had done himself and suffered himself. He did not meditate on his own goodness and his own righteousness. He loved to think of what Christ had done and [what] Christ had suffered—of the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the blood of Christ, the finished work of Christ. In *this* he did glory. This was the sun of his soul.

This is the subject he *loved to preach about*. He was a man who went to and fro on the earth, proclaiming to sinners that the Son of God had shed His own heart's blood to save their souls. He walked up and down the world telling people that Jesus Christ had loved them, and died for their sins upon the cross. Mark how he says to the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3). "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1Co 2:2). He, a blaspheming, persecuting Pharisee, had been washed in Christ's blood. He could not hold his peace about it. He was never weary of telling the story of the cross.

This is the subject he *loved to dwell upon when he wrote* to believers. It is wonderful to observe how full his epistles generally are of the sufferings and death of Christ—how they run over with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," about Christ's dying love and power. His heart seems full of the subject. He enlarges on it constantly; he returns to it continually. The golden thread runs through all his doctrinal teaching and practical exhortations. He seems to think that the most advanced Christian can never hear too much about the cross.

This is what he *lived upon* all his life from the time of his conversion. He tells the Galatians, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). What made him so strong to labor? What made him so willing to work? What made him so unwearied in endeavoring to save some? What made him so persevering and patient? I will tell you the secret of it all. He was always feeding by faith on Christ's body and Christ's blood. Jesus crucified was the meat and drink of his soul.

And we may rest assured that Paul was right. Depend upon it: the cross of Christ—the death of Christ on the cross to make atonement for sinners—is the center truth in the whole Bible. This is the truth we begin with when we open Genesis. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head is nothing else but a prophecy of Christ crucified. This is the truth that shines out, though veiled, all through the Law of Moses and the history of the Jews. The daily sacrifice, the Passover lamb, the continual shedding of blood in the tabernacle and temple—all these were emblems of Christ crucified. This is the truth that we see honored in the vision of heaven before we close the book of Revelation. "In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts," we are told, "in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). Even in the midst of heavenly glory, we get a view of Christ crucified. Take away the cross of Christ, and the Bible is a dark book. It is like the Egyptian hieroglyphics without the key that interprets their meaning—curious and wonderful, but of no real use.

Let every reader of this [booklet] mark what I say. You may know a good deal about the Bible. You may know the outlines of the histories it contains and the dates of the events described, just as a man knows the history of England. You

may know the names of the men and women mentioned in it, just as a man knows Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. You may know the several precepts of the Bible and admire them, just as a man admires Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca. But if you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hitherto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a keystone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring or weights, a lamp without oil. It will not comfort you. It will not deliver your soul from hell.

Mark what I say again. You may know a good deal about Christ, by a kind of head knowledge. You may know who He was, where He was born, and what He did. You may know His miracles, His sayings, His prophecies, and His ordinances. You may know how He lived, how He suffered, and how He died. But unless you know the power of Christ's cross by experience, unless you know and feel within that the blood shed on that cross has washed away your own particular sins, unless you are willing to confess that your salvation depends entirely on the work that Christ did upon the cross—unless this be the case, Christ will profit you nothing. The mere knowing Christ's name will never save you. You must know His cross and His blood, or else you will die in your sins.

As long as you live, *beware of a religion in which there is not much of the cross*. You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross.

There are hundreds of places of worship in this day in which there is everything almost except the cross. There is carved oak and sculptured stone; there is stained glass and brilliant painting; there are solemn services and a constant round of ordinances; but the real cross of Christ is not there. Jesus crucified is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence, all is wrong. Beware of such places of worship. They are *not apostolical*. They would not have satisfied St. Paul.

There are thousands of religious books published in our times in which there is everything except the cross. They are full of directions about sacraments and praises of the church. They abound in exhortations about holy living and rules for the attainment of perfection. They have plenty of fonts and crosses, both inside and outside. But the *real* cross of Christ is left out. The Savior and His work of atonement and complete salvation are either not mentioned or mentioned in an unscriptural way. Hence, they are worse than useless. Beware of such books. They are *not apostolical*. They would never have satisfied St. Paul.

St. Paul gloried in nothing but the cross. Strive to be like him. Set Jesus crucified fully before the eyes of your soul! Listen not to any teaching that would interpose anything between you and Him. Do not fall into the old Galatian error: think not that anyone in this day is a better guide than the apostles were. Do not

be ashamed of the “old paths” in which men walked who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Let not the vague talk of modern teachers, who speak great swelling words about “catholicity”<sup>1</sup> and “the church” disturb your peace and make you loose your hands from the cross. Churches, ministers, and sacraments are all useful in their way; but they are not Christ crucified. Do not give Christ’s honor to another. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1Co 1:1).

From “The Cross of Christ” in *Old Paths*, The Banner of Truth Trust,  
banneroftruth.org.

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**J. C. Ryle (1816-1900):** Anglican bishop and author; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.



“God is love” (1Jo 4:8, 16) are words emblazoned upon the cross in letters of living light. It is true there was an awful manifestation of justice, a solemn display of holiness, a stern vindication of truth, and an overwhelming demonstration of power in the cross of Jesus; but divine love outshone and eclipsed them all. The cross of Jesus is love’s portrait, love’s exponent, love’s sacrifice—the place where this divine plant of heaven in the believer’s soul takes its deepest root, unveils its richest beauty, and breathes its sweetest fragrance.—*Octavius Winslow*

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<sup>1</sup> **catholicity** – universality.

# THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

F. W. Krummacher (1796-1868)

*The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth  
keep silence before him.—Habakkuk 2:20*

**L**et these words of the prophet Habakkuk be the language of our hearts on entering into the Most Holy Place of gospel history.

The most solemn of all days in Israel was the great Day of Atonement<sup>1</sup> (Lev 23:27), the only day in the year on which the high priest entered into the Most Holy Place in the temple. Before he approached that mysterious sanctuary, the Law enjoined that he should divest himself of his costly garments, and clothe himself from head to foot in a plain white linen dress. He then took the vessel with the sacrificial blood in his hand, and, thrilling with sacred awe, drew back the veil in order, humbly and devoutly, to approach the throne of grace and sprinkle the atoning blood. He remained no longer in the sacred place than sufficed to perform his priestly office. He then came out again to the people and, in Jehovah's name, announced grace and forgiveness to every penitent<sup>2</sup> soul.

We shall now see this symbolical and highly significant act realized in its full and actual accomplishment. The immaculate Jesus—of Whom the whole Old Testament priesthood, according to the divine intention, was only a typical<sup>3</sup> shadow—conceals Himself behind the thick veil of an increasing humiliation and agony, bearing in His hands His own blood, that He may mediate<sup>4</sup> for us with God His Father. He realizes and accomplishes all that Moses included in the figurative service of the tabernacle. The precise manner in which this was accomplished we shall never entirely fathom with our intellectual powers; but it is certain that He then finally procured<sup>5</sup> our eternal redemption.

Once more, we return to the road to the cross and in spirit mingle with the crowd proceeding to the place of execution. They are just passing the rocky sepulchers of the kings of Israel. The ancient monarchs sleep in their cells, but a dawning resurrection gleams upon their withered remains when the Prince of Life passes by. The procession then enters the vale of Gehenna,<sup>6</sup> which once reeked

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<sup>1</sup> **atonement** – act of bringing reconciliation by paying the debt owed for an offense.

<sup>2</sup> **penitent** – feeling regret, with serious purpose to amend the sin or wrongdoing.

<sup>3</sup> **typical** – representing something else as a symbol with similar characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> **mediates** – to go-between; to intervene between two hostile parties in order to restore them to a relationship of harmony and unity.

<sup>5</sup> **procured** – obtained with special care or effort.

<sup>6</sup> **Gehenna** – valley near Jerusalem used to burn waste continually. Thus, a figure for hell.

with the blood of the sacrifices to Moloch. But there is another still more dreadful Gehenna; and who among us would have escaped it, had not the Lamb of God submitted to the sufferings that we now see Him enduring?

We are arrived at the foot of the awful hill. But before ascending it, let us cast a look on the crowd behind us and see if, amid all the hatred and rancor that rages there like an infernal flame, we can discover any traces of sympathy and heartfelt veneration for the divine Sufferer. And lo! an estimable little group meets our eye, like a benignant<sup>7</sup> constellation in the darkness of the night. We first perceive the pious Salome, the mother of the two “sons of thunder.” She desires to set her children an example of faithfulness unto death, and we know that both James and John afterward showed themselves perfectly worthy of such a mother. Near Salome walks Mary, the near relative of the blessed virgin. She had also the great privilege of seeing her two sons, James the Less and Joses, received into the immediate fellowship of the great Master. And lo! yonder walks Mary Magdalene sobbing aloud, who had experienced above others the delivering power of Him Who came to destroy the works of the devil.

But who is she with tottering step, leaning on the disciple whom Jesus loved, dejected more than all the rest, who covers her grief-worn face? It is the sorely tried mother of our Lord, in whom Simeon’s prophecy is now fulfilled: “A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also” (Luk 2:35). But she had scarcely the smallest presentiment<sup>8</sup> that it would be accomplished in such a manner. But look up, Mary! Cast thyself with all thy grief into the arms of the eternal Father. Dost thou see thy Son going to be crucified? He also sees! He Who is crowned with thorns is His Son as well as thine. Look at the dear disciple, who though inconsolable<sup>9</sup> himself tries to support the deeply grieved mother of his Lord. What a scene! But how gratifying is it to perceive that love for the Man of Sorrows has not wholly become extinct upon earth! Nor shall it ever expire—be not concerned on that account. In that mourning group, you see only the first divinely quickened germs of the future kingdom of the divine Sufferer. From a few, a multitude that no man can number will ere long proceed!

After this cursory retrospect<sup>10</sup> of the Savior’s attendants, let us again put ourselves in motion with the crowd. Only a few steps upward and we reach the end of the dreadful pilgrimage. Where are we now? We are standing on the summit of Mount Calvary, Golgotha<sup>11</sup>—horrific name, the appellation<sup>12</sup> of the most mo-

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<sup>7</sup> **benignant** – kind and gracious.

<sup>8</sup> **presentiment** – a feeling of evil to come.

<sup>9</sup> **inconsolable** – sad beyond comforting; not able to be comforted.

<sup>10</sup> **cursory retrospect** – hasty and not detailed looking back.

<sup>11</sup> **Golgotha** – the name of a hill outside Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified; so called, apparently, because its form resembled a skull.

<sup>12</sup> **appellation** – name.

mentous and awful spot upon the whole earth...This place, so full of horrors, becomes transformed into “the hill from whence cometh our help,” whose mysteries many kings and prophets have desired to see and did not see them. Yes, upon this awful hill, our roses shall blossom and our springs of peace and salvation burst forth. The pillar of our refuge towers upon this height. The Bethany of our repose and eternal refreshment here displays itself to our view. Truly the ancients were correct in their assertion that Mount Calvary formed the center of the whole earth; for it is the meeting place where the redeemed, though separated in body by land and sea, daily assemble in spirit and greet each other with the kiss of love...

On that awful mount ends the earthly career of the Lord of glory. Behold Him, then, the only green, sound, and fruitful tree upon earth, and at the root of this tree the ax is laid (Mat 3:10). What a testimony against the world, and what an annihilating contradiction to everything that bears the name of God and divine Providence, if the latter did not find its solution in the mystery of the representative atonement! Behold Him, then, covered with wounds and ignominy,<sup>13</sup> and scarcely distinguishable from the malefactors among whom He is reckoned. But have patience: in a few years, Jerusalem that rejected Him glorifies Him—the beloved Son of the Most High, Whom no one can assail with impunity—in the form of a smoking heap of ruins... But before [this takes] place, a horrible catastrophe must occur. The life of the world only springs forth from the death of the Just One. The hour of His baptism with blood has arrived.

Alas! alas! what is it that now takes place on that bloody hill? Four barbarous men, inured<sup>14</sup> to the most dreadful of all employments, approach the Holy One of Israel and offer Him, first of all, a stupefying<sup>15</sup> potion composed of wine and myrrh, as usual at executions. The Lord disdains the draught because He desires to submit to the will of His heavenly Father with full consciousness, and to drink the last drop of the accursed cup. The executioners, these, take the Lamb of God between them and begin their horrid occupation by tearing, with rude hands, the clothes from off His body. There He stands, Whose garment once was the light and the stars of heaven the fringe of His robe, covered only with the crimson of His blood and divested of all that adorned Him, not only before men, but also in His character as Surety<sup>16</sup> before God.

After having unclothed the Lord and left Him by divine direction only His crown of thorns, they lay Him down on the wood on which He is to bleed. Thus, without being aware of it, they bring about the moment predicted in Psalm 22, where we hear the Messiah saying, “Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for

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<sup>13</sup> **ignominy** – dishonor; shame.

<sup>14</sup> **inured** – hardened.

<sup>15</sup> **stupefying** – making numb; deadening.

<sup>16</sup> **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another.

there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me about; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round” (22:11). What a dying bed for the King of kings! My friends, as often as we repose on the downy cushions of divine peace, or blissfully assemble in social circles singing hymns of hope, let us not forget that the cause of the happiness we enjoy is solely to be found in the fact that the Lord of glory once extended Himself on the fatal tree for us.

See His holy arms forcibly stretched out upon the cross, His feet laid upon each other. Thus, Isaac once lay on the wood on Mount Moriah. But the voice that then called out of heaven, saying, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad” (Gen 22:12), is silent on Calvary. The executioners seize the hammer and nails. But who can bear to look upon what further occurs? The horrible nails from the forge of hell, yet foreseen in the sanctuary of eternity, are placed on the hands and feet of the righteous Jesus, and the heavy strokes of the hammer fall. Dost thou hear the sound? They thunder on thy heart, testifying in horrible language of thy sin, and, at the same time, of the wrath of Almighty God. Awake thou that art asleep in sin, and rouse thyself likewise who art lulling thyself in carnal<sup>17</sup> security! How many proud and haughty hearts have been broken into salutary<sup>18</sup> repentance by those strokes! Why does not thy heart also break? Know that thou didst aid in swinging those hammers; the most crying and impious<sup>19</sup> act that the world ever committed is charged to thy account!

See, the nails have penetrated through, and from both hands and feet gushes forth the blood of the Holy One. These nails have rent the Rock of salvation for us that it may pour forth the water of life (Exo 17:6); [they] have reft<sup>20</sup> the heavenly bush of balm that it may send forth its perfume. Yes, they have pierced the handwriting that was against us and have nailed it to the tree (Col 2:14); and by wounding the Just One, [they] have penetrated through the head of the old serpent (Gen 3:15).

Let no one be deceived with respect to Him Who was thus nailed to the cross. Those pierced hands bless more powerfully than while they moved freely and unfettered. They are the hands of a wonderful Architect Who is building the frame of an eternal Church—yea, they are the hands of a Hero, which take from the strong man all his spoil (Mat 12:29). There is no help or salvation [except] in these hands. And these bleeding feet tread more powerfully than when no fetters restrained their steps. Nothing springs or blooms in the world except beneath the prints of these feet. The most dreadful deed is done, and the prophetic words of the Psalm, “They pierced my hands and my feet” (Psa 22:16), have received their

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<sup>17</sup> **carnal** – fleshly; worldly, as opposed to spiritual.

<sup>18</sup> **salutary** – producing good effects; beneficial.

<sup>19</sup> **impious** – ungodly; not showing due reverence for God.

<sup>20</sup> **reft** – robbed.

fulfillment. The foot of the cross is then brought near to the hole dug for it. Powerful men seize the rope attached to the top of it and begin to draw; and the cross with its victim elevates itself and rises to its height. Thus, the earth rejects the Prince of life from its surface, and, as it seems, heaven refuses Him also.

But we will let the curtain drop over these horrors. Thank God! In that scene of suffering, the Sun of grace rises over a sinful world; and the Lion of Judah ascends into the region of the spirits that have the power of the air—in order, in a mysterious conflict, eternally to disarm them on our behalf.

Look what a spectacle now presents itself: the moment the cross is elevated to its height, a crimson stream falls from the wounds of the crucified Jesus. This is His legacy to His Church. We render Him thanks for such a bequest.<sup>21</sup> It falls upon spiritual deserts, and they blossom as the rose. We sprinkle it upon the doorposts of our hearts and are secure against destroyers and avenging angels (Exo 12:22-23). Where this rain falls, the gardens of God spring up, lilies bloom; what was black becomes white in the purifying stream, and what was polluted becomes pure as the light of the sun. There is no possibility of flourishing without it: no growth nor verdure,<sup>22</sup> but everywhere desolation, barrenness, and death.

There stands the mysterious cross—a rock against which the very waves of the curse break. He Who so mercifully engaged to direct this judgment against Himself hangs yonder in profound darkness. Still, He remains the Morning Star, announcing an eternal Sabbath to the world. Though rejected by heaven and earth, yet He forms the connecting link between them both as the Mediator of their eternal and renewed amity.<sup>23</sup> Ah, see! His bleeding arms are extended wide; He stretches them out to every sinner. His hands point to the east and west, for He shall gather His children from the ends of the earth. The top of the cross is directed toward the sky; far above the world will its effects extend. Its foot is fixed in the earth; the cross becomes a wondrous tree from which we reap the fruit of an eternal reconciliation.

Nothing more is requisite<sup>24</sup> than that God should grant us penitential tears, and then, by means of the Holy Spirit, show us the Savior suffering on the cross. We then escape from all earthly care and sorrow and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. For our justification<sup>25</sup> in His sight, nothing more is requisite than that, in the consciousness of our utter helplessness, we lay hold of the horns of the altar that is sprinkled with the blood that “speaketh better things than that of Abel”

<sup>21</sup> **bequest** – gift transferred or bestowed by will.

<sup>22</sup> **verdure** – vivid green of thriving vegetation.

<sup>23</sup> **amity** – friendship; good relations.

<sup>24</sup> **requisite** – required by the nature of things.

<sup>25</sup> **justification** – “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.” (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 32) See FGB 187, *Justification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

(Heb 12:24). And the Man of Sorrows displays to us the fullness of His treasures and bestows upon us, in a superabundant<sup>26</sup> degree, the blessing of the patriarch Jacob on his son Joseph: “The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors<sup>27</sup> unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills” (Gen 49:26).

There stands erected the standard of the new covenant, which, when it is understood, spreads terror around it no less than delight, and produces lamentation no less than joy and rejoicing. It stands to this day, and will stand forever. And wherever it is displayed, it is surrounded by powerful manifestations and miraculous effects. Look how the missionary fields become verdant, and a springtime of the Spirit extends itself over the heathen deserts! Hark how the harps of peace resound from the isles of the sea; and behold how, between the icebergs of the north, the hearts begin to glow with the fire of divine love! From whence these changes? these resurrection wonders? From whence this shaking in the valley of dry bones (Eze 37:4)? The cross is carried through the land; and beneath its shade the soil becomes verdant and the dead revive.

“I am crucified with Christ,” exclaims the apostle (Gal 2:20); and by these words points out the entire fruit that the cross bears for all believers. His meaning is, “They are not His sins for which the curse is there endured, but mine; for He Who thus expires on the cross, dies for me. Christ pays and suffers in my stead.” But that of which Paul boasts is the property of us all, if by the living bond of faith and love we are become one with the crucified Jesus. We are likewise exalted to fellowship with the cross of Christ in the sense also that our corrupt nature is condemned to death—our old man, with his affections and lusts. We see the cross of Calvary unfold its full and peace-bestowing radiance. It arches itself, like a rainbow, over our darkness, and precedes us on our path of sorrow like a pillar of fire. Oh, that its serene light might always shine upon our path through this vale of tears, and—as the tree of liberty and of life—strike deep its roots into our souls! Apprehended by faith, may it shed its heavenly fruit into our lap, and warm and expand our hearts and minds beneath its shade!

From *The Suffering Savior*, Gould and Lincoln, 1857.

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**Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher** (1796-1868): German Reformed minister; born in Mors, Germany.



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<sup>26</sup> **superabundant** – excessive in quantity; more than sufficient.

<sup>27</sup> **progenitors** – persons from whom another person, family, or race is descended; ancestors.

Christ crucified is the sum of the Gospel and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he hath the word *Jesus* five hundred times in his Epistles.—*Stephen Charnock*

# THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

Solomon Duytsch (1734-1794)

*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.—Galatians 6:14*

**I**N his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul had defended the gospel of grace as preached by him. He had emphasized that the elect sinner must be justified by faith in Jesus Christ without the works of the Law. He had decisively refuted the teachings of the hypocritical preachers that the Law was the basis of justification. He now proceeds to urge upon the Galatians steadfastness in Christian liberty. He tells them of his great love for them, which moved him to write so great a letter to them by his own hand. He exposes the real purpose of the hypocritical preachers of the Law, namely, that they were seeking their own glory. Now, in the words of our text, he tells them the basis of his glorying: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

O crucified and now glorified Christ, pour out upon us that Spirit of Life that Thou has merited by Thy death upon the accursed tree, that we [might] raise this song of praise to Thy honor: “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

In treating this portion of Scripture, let us I. explain the words and II. show how these words serve the purpose the apostle has in mind.

**I. EXPLANATION OF THE WORDS:** In explaining the words of the text, we invite your attention to A. Paul’s God-honoring glory in the cross of Christ, and B. Paul’s testimony concerning what [fruit had been born in his life through] the cross of Christ.

**A. The apostle states that the basis for his glorying is twofold:** 1. negatively, that in which he should not glory, and 2. positively, that in which he should glory.

1. *Negatively*, he forcefully expresses himself in these words: “God forbid that I should glory in anything other than the cross of Christ.” Glorying is the expression of our attitude toward something we possess that we value highly, and of which we gladly talk to others in the hope of gaining their esteem and favorable opinion. Paul suggests that he had wherein he could glory, but prefaces that statement with words that express a strong hope: that never would he find it in his heart to glory about those things, “God forbid that I should glory in those things.”

What, you may ask, did Paul have in which he could possibly glory? Was he not, since his conversion, an object of hatred, derision, slander, and persecution? He lived as one who was considered not worthy to live. The prospect of death as a martyr was continually present. What, then, did this despised apostle have in which he could glory? He could glory in a) his noble birth, his education, his advantages as a Jew; b) his marvelous conversion and his advantages as a Christian; c) his call to be an apostle and his advantages as such.

a. *How could he glory in being a Jew?* He was no ordinary Jew. *He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews*, a son of parents who were both Hebrews, thus of pure Hebrew stock. He was of the seed of Abraham to whom God had given such great promises. Those promises concerned not only things of temporal value in the land of Canaan, but included spiritual values, especially the promise of that blessed Seed Who, in the fullness of times, would come forth from his loins (Gen 22:18). *He was an Israelite*, of the seed of Jacob whom God, because as a prince he prevailed, named Israel (Gen 32:28). *He was a citizen of that people whom the Lord, out of His good pleasure, had chosen above all the peoples of the earth*; of that people in whose midst God chose to dwell in a specific way; to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, [the] service of God, and the promises (Rom 9:4). [He was of] that people concerning whom Moses said, “Happy art thou O Israel, who is like unto thee?” (Deu 33:29). *He was of the tribe of Benjamin*, which Moses, as it were, with his last words, blessed above all the other tribes as the favorite tribe of the Lord (Deu 33:12). *He was a student of the esteemed Gamaliel*, the head of the Sanhedrin and leader of the school of learning at Jerusalem. He had been taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers. He lived [as] a Pharisee after the straightest sect of his religion. He profited in the Jews’ religion above many in his nation. He possessed such zeal that, whenever the Jewish council had a special work to do, they would invariably call on Paul to do it.

In the light of all this, do you not agree that Paul had much in which he could glory as a Jew?

However, all these advantages he no longer considered a proper ground for glorying. Concerning them he said, “God forbid that I should glory in anything save the cross of Christ.” By grace, he had learned that in all these things there was no real value as a basis for glorying. He had learned that glorying can be based alone in the knowledge and fellowship with God and Christ. By grace he had learned “to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ [his] Lord” (Phi 3:8).

b. *He could boast about his marvelous conversion and his advantages as a Christian.* He, who had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an oppressor of those that believed in Christ, had obtained mercy from the Lord. He had been converted in an extraordinary way: on the way to Damascus, while breathing out threatenings

against the church, traveling hastily and full of fury to carry out his plan to bind more of God's disciples, suddenly, that Christ Whom he persecuted stopped him in his mad pursuit by making a glorious appearance to him (Act 9). We find no other example of such a conversion. He could tell of being caught up to the third heaven and having heard unspeakable words, not lawful for a man to utter (2Co 12:2-4).

Of these things, he could glory; but rather than minimize the state of grace of fellow Christians by talking about the exceptional experience, he said, "God forbid that I should glory in these things." To be sure, he occasionally tells of these things that happened to him in God's dealings with him; however, not with a view to exalting himself, but rather to glorify the irresistible grace of God and to encourage and comfort convinced sinners who were discouraged to the point of despair. To these souls, who were tossed to and fro and who experienced fierce fightings within, he said as it were, "Don't despair, for see what great mercy was given to me, the chief of sinners!" (1Ti 1:15).

*c. He could glory in his call to be an apostle and his advantages as such.* He was indeed a chosen vessel to proclaim Christ the Savior to the heathen, to kings of the earth, and to Israel. God had separated him to this work and by grace prepared him to proclaim the gospel of the Son of God to the Gentiles. Is not this the greatest honor that could be bestowed on man? Can any honor in the world be compared to it? [Could there be a] greater privilege than to be chosen of God unto salvation and then to be called, prepared, and qualified to present to Jew and Gentile the only and complete Savior?

However great these privileges were, the apostle did not because of them exalt himself above his fellow apostles, but ascribed it all to God's good pleasure. In this, too, he said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ." In deep humility, he holds himself to be the least of all the apostles; yea, he confesses his unworthiness to be an apostle...

**2. *Positively*,** the apostle states the basis on which he will glory: "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle does not here attach any value to that wooden cross upon which the Savior died. The wood of that cross has no value whatever to heal either physical or spiritual diseases. What does the apostle refer to here? What is this cross of Christ in which he wishes to glory?

Dr. Luther,<sup>1</sup> the great Reformer, said that Paul as a faithful disciple took upon him the cross of Christ and followed Him in the way of bearing shame, reproach, and persecution, and that in this his glory consisted. If anyone had reason to glory in tribulation, it certainly was the apostle Paul, who according to Galatians 6:17,

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<sup>1</sup> **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German church reformer whose ideas inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

“Bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” In Colossians 1:24, he could say, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” He catalogues his sufferings for the name of Christ in 2 Corinthians 11:24-27: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

Before mentioning all these things that befell him, he says in 2 Corinthians 11:16-17, “Yet as a fool receive me that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.” He felt it necessary to mention his many ordeals and his sufferings to stop the boastings of the false preachers who had accused him.

Other divines are of the opinion that “the cross of Christ” in the words of our text is, in reality, the *gospel* of Christ. This opinion they base on Paul’s own words in 1 Corinthians 1:17-18: “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” This opinion has much to commend it, especially Paul’s words in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse of the chapter from which our text is taken, where he says, “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” That is the gospel of Christ. Notice the contrast: these hypocritical preachers of the Law desired peace and rest; they did not relish the persecution that troubled those that preached the gospel of Christ. But Paul, on the other hand, names as the foundation, as the basis of his boasting, of his glorying, that very cross of Christ, that is to say, the gospel of Christ that he preached...

However, while all the above need not be excluded, I would rather agree with the great Calvin<sup>2</sup> that Paul, who had determined to know nothing save Christ and Him crucified, desired to glory in nothing save the suffering of Christ on the cross. I am disposed to believe this because Paul, in most of his letters, when speaking of the cross, refers especially to the suffering of Christ on the cross (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20; Heb 12:2). [I am inclined to believe this] also because in contrast he does not say in our text simply “the cross of Christ,” as he does in verse 12, but in our text he emphasizes that he wishes to *glory* in the cross of our Lord Jesus

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<sup>2</sup> **John Calvin** (1509-1564) – father of Reformed and Presbyterian theology; born in Noyon, Picardie, France.

Christ. By this emphasis, he declares that he and his fellow believers share in that suffering and in the blessed fruit of Christ's suffering on the cross—that by God's grace they were so privileged, and now desired to place all the hope of salvation and the basis of glorying in that cross alone.

He wants to say (so it appears to me), I desire to glory not as many professing Christians do, just in the cross of Christ, in a complete Savior, in God's Anointed, in the Great Prophet, in a merciful High-priest, in the King of kings;<sup>3</sup> but in the cross of Jesus Christ *our Lord* —our Lord, Who has delivered you and me, O believers of Galatia, from the curse of the Law, from the dominion of sin, from the power of Satan, from the wrath of God, and purchased us to be His own by His precious blood that He poured out in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. This He did for you and for me who were by nature hell-worthy sinners. Our Lord, Who reconciled both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. Yea, our Lord, to Whom by God's grace we have yielded and dedicated ourselves, both body and soul, for time and eternity, to serve Him and to honor Him as our only King.

It is, then, in the suffering of Christ on the cross that the apostle desires to glory. And no wonder, for when he thinks about Golgotha and there beholds the cross of Christ, then all things as ground for boasting flee away, and the cross alone fills his heart and mouth with praises. There, with an enlightened mind's eye, he sees on the one hand God's spotless holiness, His unimpeachable justice, His eternal truth; and on the other hand God's infinite love, His free grace, and His boundless mercy complementing each other. O, what a glorious sight to behold, more beautiful than ever Adam saw in his state of rectitude! There he sees that great mystery that the angels desire to look into, how God can and wills to be the God of a lost, poor, wretched, and hell-worthy sinner. There he sees with wonderment the fulfilling of the eternal council of God that was foretold by all the prophets: that Christ should suffer, that Jesus of Nazareth should die on the cross. There he sees the fleeing away of all the shadows of the Old Testament worship and promises in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. There he sees with glorious adoration the complete satisfaction of the divine justice, reconciliation for sin brought about, an eternal righteousness brought forth, the sin of the world carried away in one day, the serpent's head crushed, death swallowed up in victory, and the bringing forth of life and immortality for God's people.

As he ascends still higher and sees there, with the eye of faith, Christ on the cross suffering and dying as Surety, then with holy amazement he receives the revelation of the great mystery of the cross. There he sees the Holy One of Israel hanging between two malefactors, stripped of His clothing, crowned with thorns,

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<sup>3</sup> See FGB 225, *The Work of Christ*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

and nailed on the accursed tree. Why? That His people who lost their crown through their sin might receive a crown of glory and the garments of righteousness to cover their nakedness.

There he sees the Son of God, the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, surrounded by wicked men who mock and mistreat him. Why? To the end that His people, who through sin became wicked men [and] made themselves worthy of mockery and scorn, might, through His suffering and death, receive eternal glory and the right to become children of God. There he sees with utter amazement God and man, the blessed Immanuel as the Lamb of God bearing the heavy load of all the sin of the elect in His body on the tree. Why? To reconcile His people to God and to restore them to full communion with God.

There he sees the Rock of Israel, the Fountain of Life, offered a drink of vinegar mixed with gall. Why? So His people, who through sin made themselves worthy of that bitter drink, might drink of that new wine that shall be given them in the Kingdom of God. There he sees the Light of the world, the Sun of Righteousness in the midst of darkness. Why? That for His people, who by sin fell from light into darkness, He might cause the Light to shine in the darkness and that they be made meet<sup>4</sup> to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Yea, there he sees the unfathomable spectacle of the Prince of Peace experiencing the wrath of God, and the King of Life bowing His head and giving up the ghost!

But especially does [Paul] consider what that suffering of Christ means to him personally—for him, who formerly despised [Jesus] and persecuted His people, Christ was willing to suffer and die so shameful a death, and by His agony and death merit for him all the treasures of salvation. By faith, he sees that by free, eternal, sovereign, and merciful grace, those treasures were given to him. By faith, he considers the comfort and strength he derives from the suffering of Christ. There, in complete amazement, he sees for himself no room to boast save in the cross of Christ his Lord.

In that cross of Christ, he finds the greatest comfort for his soul. Neither his manifold sin nor the curse of the Law can bring accusation against him. Here he can say, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died...he was wounded for our transgressions...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...he hath made him to be sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him...Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Rom 8:34; Isa 53:5-6; 2Co 5:21; Gal 3:13)!

In that cross of Christ, he finds the greatest source of strength to fight in the power of Christ against the onslaughts of the prince of darkness. It was on that

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<sup>4</sup> meet – fit.

cross that Christ crushed the head of the serpent and emerged the victor in the battle with that old dragon.

In that cross of Christ, he finds confirmation that not only was the Law, which is the strength of sin, made powerless; but that he, too, by the body of Christ, became dead to the Law.

In the cross of Christ, he finds his only comfort, not only for life but also in death. Thus, in the hour of his death, he shall be able to face that king of terrors without fear and jubilantly cry out, “For me ...to die is gain! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (Phi 1:21; 1Co 15:55).

In the cross of Christ, he sees the greatest good and such blessedness that his heart, as it were, is set on fire by the love of Christ; he no longer desires to live to himself, but to Christ, Who died for him. It gives him desire to walk in love toward Christ, Who loved him and gave Himself for him as a well pleasing sacrifice to God. His one prayer is to be made more and more conformable to Christ’s death, and to be able joyfully to offer himself as a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

In the cross of Christ, he sees a glorious example of patience, meekness, and willingness in suffering. This urges him to pray for his enemies and to run with patience the race that is set before him, looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb 12:2).

In one word: in the cross of Christ, he finds his only *glory*, for in that cross and through the strength of Christ, Who suffered on it, the world was crucified unto him and he unto the world. That is his testimony.

**B. Paul counts it as a fruit of Christ’s death on the cross** when he says: “By whom *the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.*” Allow me now briefly to direct your attention to 1) what he testifies as to his place in the world, and 2) the cause of his being in that place.

1. *In the words of the text, he speaks of “the world.”* Not that world that we understand was framed by the Word of God (Heb 11:3); not the great world consisting of earth, sky, and planets. But here the apostle means the world of sinful desires, the world that lieth in wickedness, worldly-minded persons who are of the world and find all their pleasure, fortune, satisfaction, and happiness in the things of the world. That world, the apostle says, is crucified to him and he to it.

a. *First, he says, “The world is crucified to me.”* You will readily understand that this is a figure of speech not to be taken literally. He means to say that the world with its sinful desires and pleasures, which has such appeal for the worldly-minded, has, as it were, to him been crucified—has actually died, as far as holding any appeal for him is concerned. That all worldly wisdom is foolishness to him,

that everything under the sun is a vexation<sup>5</sup> of spirit and vanity (Ecc 1:14). That the honor and esteem he formerly enjoyed, and the pleasures and enjoyment he then delighted in, were now an aversion to him; that he loathed them as he would something dead.

b. *Secondly, the world that lies in wickedness has been crucified to him.* He found loathsome the worldly-minded persons who were of the world and delighted in the things of the world. He showed his aversion for them and their deeds by turning from them as he would from a body that had been crucified.

c. *Thirdly, the religious world* he formerly knew and in which he then had such a prominent place of honor—the world of legalistic religion in which he thought to have found his salvation—that world, too, *had been crucified to him*, died to him, and now he counted that all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified.

2. ***Further, Paul says he is crucified to the world.*** He says, not only is that world crucified to him, but he is also crucified to that world. By this he means to say that those worldly-minded persons who served the world and sought their pleasures in it, together with those who taught salvation by the works of the Law, all looked upon him as one with whom they could not associate; as one whom they, in their hearts, had condemned to death on the cross; as one who had died to them...

3. ***Finally, he finds in the cross of Christ his only glory.*** He presents that cross to guilty and hell-worthy sinners as the only way of salvation. No wonder that Paul, seeing such great value in the cross, says the world, all else, is dead to him. And no wonder the servants of the world and of the false religions considered him dead to them. He protested in his preaching against all that they valued highly, and he proclaimed as valuable all that they despised.

**II. HOW THESE WORDS SERVE PAUL'S PURPOSE:** Having explained the meaning of the words of the text, let us very briefly...show how these words serve the purpose the apostle has in mind. We can now, as it were, hear Paul say,

“You be the judge, O Galatian believers, between *my* glorying and that of the *hypocritical preachers* of the Law. They, who under a cloak of seeming godliness urge upon you the keeping of the Law unto righteousness, are not concerned about your weal<sup>6</sup> and eternal salvation. How can they be? They themselves, although circumcised according to the Law, cannot keep the Law, much less be justified by the works of the Law. Thus, they would burden you with that which they themselves cannot bear. What profit can this bring you? What does their teaching profit you? No one is justified by the works of the Law. Obviously, they are seeking ease and rest for themselves, seeking their own glory.

<sup>5</sup> **vexation** – being troubled or distressed by something causing annoyance or irritation.

<sup>6</sup> **weal** – welfare.

“They seek their own ease and rest in so doing by escaping persecution for the cross of Christ, that they be not disturbed in their life of ease and quiet contentment in the midst of the world.

“They seek their own glory in preaching the Law. They hope to convince you and to convert you to their doctrine and then point to you as the crown of glory upon their efforts. They would then have glory in converting you, who are Gentiles, to the Jewish religion. This proves them to be false teachers; for while they teach that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah, they nevertheless teach that by being circumcised and by keeping the Law, men can have part and portion in Him. This is a *denial* of the cross of Christ and of His complete satisfaction of the demands of God’s justice. Clearly, they sought not the honor of God, nor that of His Son, but they sought their *own* glory.

“But as for me, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In that cross all God’s virtues and perfections are restored to their full luster. In that cross, I can see how that just and holy God can show mercy to a vile and wretched sinner. In that cross, I see the fulfillment of all the prophecies and the reality to which all the Old Testament shadows pointed. In that cross, I see the handwriting that was against me blotted out, an eternal righteousness brought forth for me and for all the elect, and God’s chosen ones reconciled to Him. In that cross, I find my comfort, my strength, and my salvation. In this, I desire to glory with all that is in me that I together with you, O Galatian believers, have received the blessed fruits of the cross of Christ that are so valuable to unworthy and hell-worthy sinners.

“From this position neither slander nor persecution shall move me. Let the enemies of the cross of Christ slander as they will; let them treat me as dirt under their feet, as one unworthy to live—let them do what they will; they shall not, by those means, close my mouth or stop me from glorying in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ. And this is my prayer to God, that in the moment of my death I may receive grace and have the physical ability to cry out even with dying lips: ‘God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ”

### III. APPLICATION

**A. For those to whom the cross is not their glory.** How fortunate would all who call themselves Christians be if each could truthfully say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, alas, how few they are whose only glory is in the cross of Christ.

That certainly is not your glory, you to whom the cross is yet a stumbling block and foolishness. It certainly is not yours who mock, despise, and mistreat those that glory in it. Certainly not yours who glory in your pedigree, your wisdom, your strength, your riches, your honor, your glory, and in other things of the world. Certainly not yours whose glory is in committing sin, in serving your lusts, and in

your conformity to the world. Certainly not yours who glory in your good and decent life and in a dutiful practice of external religion. Certainly not yours who somewhat understand the cross of Christ, you who can enthusiastically and with fitting words speak concerning the cross more and better than many others, but who have no knowledge of it as the only means to salvation [and] have never believably embraced it.

1) *Some questions.* O, I know full well that those words will cause your enmity to well up within you. But wait a moment, be honest, let your conscience answer the following questions:

Have you ever learned to know, by divine light, the wretchedness of your state and condition by nature? Have you ever realized that you fell in Adam, are a lost creature, and that with all the world you are guilty before God?

Have you ever actually felt how great your sins and misery are? Have you ever felt the awful load of your sin? Did you ever with the publican smite upon the breast and cry out, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luk 18:13)?

Have you ever truly despised your own righteousness and, as a sinner worthy of death, fled to Christ and sought refuge in His mediatorial death? Have you, as a sinner in your own estimation, sought to be justified by free grace? Have you ever embraced the cross of Christ with arms of faith?

Have you experienced reconciliation with God through the cross? Have you received the spirit of adoption by which you can say, "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15)?

If you have not experienced any of these things, what value has the cross of Christ for you? What can you see in it to cause you to glory in it?

2) *If you cannot glory in the cross of Christ*, then you are without Christ, Who alone is the glory of a miserable and poor sinner; then you have no share in any of the gifts of salvation He merited on the cross. Then you still lie under the wrath of God, under the power of Satan, and in the fear of death.

If you remain in this unconverted state, then to your sorrow you will find that, in the hour of death as that king of terror approaches, all your glory shall vanish like smoke. Then you shall die without comfort, outside of Christ, Whose cross you despised and Whose salvation you neglected.

O that you would take this warning to heart! There is yet time! The door of grace is yet open! The cross of Christ as the only means of salvation is yet being proclaimed in the gospel! Will you continue to despise it? Will you continue to glory and rest in those things in which your immortal soul cannot glory, in which it can never find rest? Therefore, let your prayer be that God make known to you your true condition. That prayer answered, you will see more reason to sorrow than to glory. But then, too, the cross of Christ will become precious and necessary to you.

**B. As for you, people of God,** although you are despised by the world, yet you have abundant reason to glory far more than they. Do they boast of an honorable pedigree? Yours is nobler—for you are born of God! Do they boast of honorable offices in the world? Yours are greater: yours is a royal priesthood and you shall forever reign as kings! Does the world boast great wealth? You are far more wealthy; your treasure is in heaven—all is yours; God is your portion eternally! Does the world boast great glory, peace, and prosperity? You can glory in the hope of eternal glory, eternal peace, and everlasting prosperity.

1) *Those who lament more than they glory.* Be not, therefore, ashamed when the world despises you; but rather, be ashamed that you so seldom let your glorying be heard, that you lament more than you glory. Perhaps you are thinking, “If I only knew that I had a real reason to glory in Christ and His cross, I would certainly speak up regardless of all the slander the world would heap upon me. But I am so loaded under the burden of my sin, I scarcely dare raise my eyes to heaven. Shall I glory in the cross of Christ, I who dares not believe that He suffered and died for me?”

True it is that you cannot glory outside of Christ and His righteousness. Outside of Christ, you can have no peace, no rest, and no reason to glory. Outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire. However, what excludes *you*? Only your unbelieving heart! You look more to the greatness of your sin than to the perfect righteousness of Christ! Your sins ought to drive you to Christ, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation<sup>7</sup> through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins” (Rom 3:25). Let not your sin, let not your unbelief, keep you away from Christ! He calls those that are weary and heavy laden to come to Him, and He promises peace and rest. Flee, then, with all your sin, to the cross of Christ. There you will see the handwriting against you blotted out and God satisfied, and there the love of Christ shall cause your heart to so burn with love that it will loosen your tongue to glory in the cross of Christ.

2) *And you, who by God’s grace have learned to glory in the cross, be not silent.* Do not glory only, but let it be seen in your walk and conversation that truly all that is in the world is crucified to you and you to the world. Pray that you be not enticed by anything in the world to become conformable to it, but let it be more and more crucified to you in your heart. Be not surprised that the world hates and despises you. This is a mark borne by all who battle under the banner of Christ, by all those who are on the pathway to heaven. It was told you, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (Joh 16:33). It is an honor and a privilege to be mistreated for the name of Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> **propitiation** – Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice. (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.).

Glory then, in spite of the world, in the cross of Christ! And this is the wish of my heart, that when you take your last breath, the Lord grant you faith and ability to cry out with dying lips, to the glory of free grace: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen.

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**Solomon Duytsch (1734-1794):** Hungarian pastor; born into a Jewish family, he was converted to Christ and later pastored a church in Mijdrecht, Holland; born in Temiswar, Hungary.



Love's place of nourishment and growth is *the foot of the Cross*. Where should our Christ-loving hearts repose but where Christ's loving heart bled? Our hearts should feel no magnet as powerful as the cross of Jesus, no attraction like the Crucified One.—*Octavius Winslow*

# THE PASSION OF CHRIST

Thomas Adams (1583-1653)

*He hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God  
for a sweet smelling savour.—Ephesians 5:2*

**T**HIS latter part of the verse is a fair and lively crucifix, cut by the hand of a most exquisite carver—not to amaze our corporal lights with a piece of wood, brass, or stone, curiously engraved to the increase of a carnal devotion; but to present to the eye of the conscience the grievous passion and gracious compassion of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who “hath given himself for us,” etc. This crucifix presents to our eye seven considerable circumstances. The points lie as ready for our discourse as the way did from Bethany to Jerusalem: who gives, what is given, gives whom, to whom, for whom, the manner of giving, [and] the effect of the gift.

**I. WHO:** The person that gives is *Christ*. The quality of His person doth highly commend His exceeding love to us.

**A. Ascent:** We will ascend to this consideration by four stairs or degrees and descend by four others. Both in going up and coming down, we shall perceive the admirable love of the giver.

**1. We will consider Him a *man*** “Behold the man” (Joh 19:5), saith Pilate. We may tarry and wonder at His lowest degree that a man should give himself for man. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die” (Rom 5:7). But this Man gave Himself for unrighteous men, to die not an ordinary, but a grievous death, exposing Himself to the wrath of God [and] to the tyranny of men and devils. It would pity our hearts to see a poor dumb beast so terrified; how much more the Man, the image of God!

**2. The second degree gives Him an *innocent man***. Pilate could say, “I...have found no fault in this man” (Luk 23:14); no, nor yet Herod. No, nor the devil, who would have been right glad of such an advantage. So Pilate’s wife sent her husband word, “Have thou nothing to do with that just man” (Mat 27:19). So the Person is not only a man, but also a just man that gave Himself to endure such horrors for us. If we pity the death of malefactors, how should our compassion be to one innocent!

**3. In the third degree, He is not only a man and a good man, but also a *great man***—royally descended from the ancient patriarchs and kings of Judah. Pilate had so written His title, and he would answer, “What I have written, I have written,” [and] not alter it. And what was that? “Jesus of Nazareth the *King of the*

*Jews*” (Joh 19:19). Now as is the person, so is the passion: the more noble the giver, the more excellent the gift. That so high a King would suffer such contempt and obloquy<sup>1</sup> to be cast upon Him, when the least part of His disgrace had been too much for a man of mean condition; that a man, a good man, a great man, bore such calumny,<sup>2</sup> such calamity, for our sakes—here was an unmatchable, an unspeakable love.

**4. This is enough, but this is not all.** There is yet a higher degree in this ascent. It is this: He was more than man—not only the greatest of men, yea, *greater than all men*. He was more than the Son of man; [He was] even the Son of God. As the centurion acknowledged, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mar 15:39).

Here are all the four stairs upwards: a man, a harmless man, a princely man, and yet more than man—even God Himself. Solomon was a great king, but here is [One] greater than Solomon. Solomon was *Christus Domini*, but here is *Christus Dominus*. He was the anointed of the Lord, but this is the Lord Himself anointed. And here all tongues grow dumb, and admiration sealet up every lip. This is a depth beyond sounding. You may perhaps drowsily hear this and coldly be affected with it; but, let me say, principalities and powers, angels and seraphims,<sup>3</sup> stood amazed at it.

**B. Descent:** We see the ascent. Shall we bring down again this consideration by as many stairs?

**1. Consider Him, *Almighty God, taking upon Him man’s nature*** This is the first step downward: “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (Joh 1:14). And “God sent forth his son, made of a woman” (Gal 4:4). This was done by putting on our nature, not by putting off His own. Humanity is united to the Godhead, but the Godhead is not disassociated from Itself. He is both God and man, yet but one Christ: one, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. Now, in that this eternal God became man, He suffered more than man can suffer, either living or dead. That man should be turned into a beast, into a worm, into dust, into nothing, is not so great a disparagement<sup>4</sup> as that the glorious God should become man. He that “thought it not robbery to be equal with God...was made in the likeness of men” (Phi 2:6-7). He that has “a more excellent name than” the angels, became lower than the angels (Heb 1:4). Even the brightness of God’s glory takes on Himself the baseness of our nature; and He that laid the foundations of the

<sup>1</sup> **obloquy** – abusively detractive language or utterance.

<sup>2</sup> **calumny** – a false statement, malicious and injurious.

<sup>3</sup> **seraphims** – the living creatures with six wings, hands and feet, and a (presumably) human voice, seen in Isaiah’s vision as hovering above the throne of God.

<sup>4</sup> **disparagement** – a reduction in esteem or rank.

earth and made the world is now in the world made Himself.<sup>5</sup> This is the first descending degree.

**2. The second stair brings Him yet lower.** He is made man; but what man? Let Him be universal monarch of the world and have fidelity and homage acknowledged to Him from all kings and emperors as His viceroys. Let Him walk upon crowns and scepters, and let princes attend on His court—here was some majesty that might a little become the Son of God. No such matter: “*He took upon him the form of a servant*” (Phi 2:7). He instructs us to humility by His own example. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Mat 20:28). “O Israel, thou hast made me to serve with thy sins” (Isa 43:24). He gave Himself for a minister, not for a master. He that is God’s Son is made man’s servant. Proudly blind and blindly poor man, that thou shouldest have such a servant as the Son of thy Maker. This is the second step downward.

**3. This is not low enough yet.** “*I am a worm, and no man*” (Psa 22:6), saith the Psalmist in His person—yea, the shame of men and contempt of the people. He is called the King of glory: “Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in” (Psa 24:7). But Isaiah says, “He is despised and rejected of men...he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa 53:3). O the pity of God that those two should come so near together: the King of glory and the shame of men—the loftier the majesty, the lovelier the humility. Thus saith the apostle, “He made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7). He that requires all honor as properly due to Him makes Himself not of little, but of *no* reputation.

Here was dejection; yea, here was rejection. Let Him be laid in His poor cradle, the Bethlehemites reject Him—the manger must serve, [there is] no room for Him in the inn. Yea, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11). All Israel is too hot for Him; He is glad to fly into Egypt for protection. Comes He to Jerusalem, which He had honored with His presence, instructed with His sermons, amazed with His miracles, wet and bedewed with His tears? They reject Him! “I would, and ye would not” (Mat 23:37). Comes He to His kindred? They deride and traduce<sup>6</sup> Him, as if they were ashamed of His alliance. Comes He to His disciples? They “went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66). Will yet His apostles tarry with Him? So they say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (Joh 6:68). Yet at last, one betrays Him, another forswears<sup>7</sup> Him, all forsake Him! And Jesus is left alone in the midst of His enemies. Can malice yet add some further aggravation to His contempt? Yes, they crucify Him with malefactors; the quality of His company is made to increase His dishonor. In the midst of thieves, as it were the prince of thieves, saith Lu-

<sup>5</sup> **made Himself** – that is, “made” by the power of the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb.

<sup>6</sup> **traduce** – to speak evil of, especially falsely or maliciously.

<sup>7</sup> **forswears** – swears falsely.

ther, He that “thought it not robbery to be equal to the most holy God,” is made equal to thieves and murderers; yea, as it were, a captain amongst them. This is the third step.

**4. But we must go yet lower.** Behold now the deepest stair and the greatest rejection. “*The Lord hath afflicted me* in the day of his fierce anger” (Lam 1:12). “It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief” (Isa 53:10). No burden seems heavy when the comforts of God help to bear it. When God will give solace, vexation makes but idle offers and assaults. But now, to the rejection of all the former, the [Father] turns His back upon Him as a stranger; the [Father] wounds Him as an enemy. [Jesus] cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psa 22:1). How could the sun and stars, heaven and earth, stand while their Maker thus complained! The former degree was deep; He was crucified with evil-doers, reckoned amongst the wicked. Yet thieves fared better in death than He. We find no irrision,<sup>8</sup> no insults, no taunts, no invectives<sup>9</sup> against them. They had nothing upon them but pain; He [had] both contempt *and* torment [as well]. If scorn and derision can vex His good soul, He shall have it in peals of ordnance shot against Him. Even the basest enemies shall give it; Jews, soldiers, persecutors, yea, suffering malefactors, spare not to flout<sup>10</sup> Him. His blood cannot appease them without His reproach. The disciples are but weak men, the Jews but cruel persecutors, the devils but malicious enemies; all these do but their kind. But the lowest degree is [that] God forgets Him; and in His feeling, He is forsaken of the Highest. Weigh all these circumstances, and you shall truly behold the Person that gave Himself for us.

**II. WHAT:** We come to the action. Giving is the argument of a free disposition: “*I lay down my life...*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Joh 10:17-18). He that gives life *to* us gave up His own life *for* us. He did not sell, set, let, or lend, but *give*. He was offered because He would be offered...He comes with willingness and celerity;<sup>11</sup> no human resistance could hinder Him. Not the hillocks of our lesser infirmities, not the mountains of our grosser iniquities, could stay His merciful pace towards us.

He gave His life; who could bereave Him of it? To all the high priest’s armed forces He gave but a verbal encounter: “I am he” (Joh 18:5-6), and they retired<sup>12</sup> and fell backward; His very breath dispersed them all. He could as easily have commanded fire from heaven to consume them or vapors from the earth to choke

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<sup>8</sup> **irrision** – the act of laughing at another.

<sup>9</sup> **invectives** – condemnations and abusive remarks.

<sup>10</sup> **flout** – to practice mocking, to sneer.

<sup>11</sup> **celerity** – speed.

<sup>12</sup> **retired** – drew back.

them; He that controls devils could easily have quailed<sup>13</sup> men. More than twelve legions of angels were at His back, and every angel able to conquer ...men. He gives [His enemies] leave to take Him, yea, power to kill Him; from Himself is that power that apprehends Him. Even while He stands before Pilate scorned, yet He tells him, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (Joh 19:11). His own strength leads Him, not His adversaries. He could have been freed, but He *would* not...The loss of His life was necessary, yet was it also voluntary; therefore He gave up the ghost. In spite of all the world, He might have kept His soul within His body, [but] He *would* not...Man could not take away His spirit; therefore, He gave it...He *willingly* suffered death; otherwise, He had not been so well affected as an ordinary martyr. But He prays thrice, “Let this cup pass”...But...He willingly submits Himself to drink that cup: “Not as I will, O Father, but as thou wilt”...So Christ, by the strength of His natural will, feared death; but by His reason, perceiving that the cutting, wounding, crucifying of the Head would bring health to the whole body of His Church, and either He must bleed on the cross or we must all burn in hell—behold now He willingly and cheerfully gives Himself an offering and sacrifice to God for us.

But was it a mere temporal death that our Savior feared? No. He saw the fierce wrath of His Father and therefore feared. Many resolute men have not shrunk at a little; divers martyrs have endured strange torments with magnanimity.<sup>14</sup> But now, when He that gave them strength quakes at death, shall we say He was a coward? Alas, that which would have overwhelmed man would not have made Him shrink; that which He feared, no mortal man but Himself ever felt; yet He feared. The despair of many thousand men was not so much as for Him to fear.

He saw that which none saw: *the anger of an infinite God!* He perfectly apprehended the cause of fear: our sin and torment. He saw the bottom of the cup: how bitter and dreggish<sup>15</sup> every drop of that vial was. He truly understood the burden that we make light of; men fear not hell because they know it not. If they could see through the opened gates the insufferable horrors of that pit, trembling and quaking would run like an ague<sup>16</sup> through their bones. This insupportable load He saw: that the sponge of vengeance must be wrung out to Him, and He must suck it up to the last and least drop. Every talent of our iniquities must be laid upon Him, until, as “a cart, he be laden with sheaves” (Amo 2:13). And with all this pressure, He must mount His chariot of death—the cross—and there bear it until the appeased God gave way to a completion: “It is finished” (Joh 19:30).

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<sup>13</sup> **quailed** – overpowered.

<sup>14</sup> **magnanimity** – lofty courage.

<sup>15</sup> **dreggish** – of the nature of sediment that has settled at the bottom of a liquid.

<sup>16</sup> **ague** – fever marked by regularly recurring chills.

The philosopher could say that a wise man miserable is more miserable than a fool [is] miserable because he understands his misery. [Likewise,] our Savior's pangs were aggravated by the fullness of His knowledge. No marvel then if He might justly take David's words out of his mouth: "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted" (Psa 88:15). This thought drew from Him those [drops] of blood (Luk 22:44). His eyes had formerly wept for our misdoings; His whole body now weeps—not a faint dew, but He sweats out solid drops of blood. The thorns, scourges, and nails fetched blood from Him, but not with such pain as this sweat. Outward violence drew on those; these, the extremity of His troubled thought. Here, then, was His cause of fear: He saw our everlasting destruction, if He suffered not. He saw the horrors that He must suffer to ransom us, hence those groans, tears, cries, and sweat—yet His love conquered all. By nature, He could willingly have avoided this cup. For love's sake to us, He took it in a willing hand. So He had purposed, so He hath performed. And now to testify His love, saith my text, He freely gave.

### III. OF WHOM

**A. Whom it is not.** This is the third circumstance, the gift: *Himself*. Not an *angel*, for an angel cannot sufficiently mediate between an immortal nature offended and a mortal nature corrupted. The glorious angels are blessed, but finite and limited, and therefore unable for this expiation.<sup>17</sup> They cannot be so sensibly "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb 4:15), as He that was in our own nature, in all points tempted like as we are, sin only excepted.

Not *saints*, for they have no more oil than will serve their own lamps: they have enough *for* themselves, not *of* themselves—[this is] all of Christ, but [there is] none to spare. Fools cry, "Give us of your oil." [The saints] answer, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves" (Mat 25:9). They could not propitiate for sin, [who] were themselves guilty of sin and by nature liable to condemnation. Wretched idolaters, that thrust this honor on them against their wills; how would they abhor such sacrilegious glory!

Not the *riches of the world*: "We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold" (1Pe 1:18). Were the riches of the old world brought together to the riches of the new world; were all the mineral veins of the earth emptied of their purest metals, this pay would not be current<sup>18</sup> with God—it will cost more to redeem souls. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multi-

<sup>17</sup> **expiation** – Expiation has reference to the *guilt* of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin. Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the Biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice." (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

<sup>18</sup> **current** – that which is accepted and used in monetary exchange; effective.

tude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psa 49:6-7)...

Not the *blood of bulls or goats* (Heb 9). Alas! those legal sacrifices were but dumb shows of this tragedy, the mere figures of this oblation, mystically presenting to their faith that “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). This Lamb was prefigured in the sacrifices of the Law and now presented in the [ordinances] of the gospel, slain indeed from the beginning of the world. Who had power to profit us before He had—Himself a human being? None of these would serve.

Whom gave He then? Himself, Who was both God and man; that so participating of both natures, our mortality and God’s immortality, He might be a perfect mediator. He came between mortal men and immortal God, mortal with men and just with God. As man He suffered, as God He satisfied; as God and man He saved. He gave Himself: Himself wholly and Himself only.

**B. Himself wholly:** *All Himself, His whole person*, soul and body, godhead and manhood. Though the Deity could not suffer, yet in regard of the personal union of these two natures in one Christ, His very passion is attributed in some sort to the Godhead. So it is called the “blood of God” (Act 20:28) and “the Lord of glory” is said to “be crucified” (1Co 2:8). The school’s distinction here makes all plain. He gave all Christ, though not all of Christ; as God alone He would not, as man alone he could not, make this satisfaction for us. The Deity is impassible;<sup>19</sup> yet it was impossible without this Deity for the great work of our salvation to be wrought. If any ask how the manhood could suffer without violence to the Godhead, being united in one person, let him understand it by a familiar comparison. The sunbeams shine on a tree, the axe cuts down this tree, yet can it not hurt the beams of the sun. So the Godhead still remains unharmed, though the axe of death did [chop] down the manhood. His body suffered both sorrow and the sword; His soul [suffered] sorrow, not the sword; His deity [suffered] neither sorrow nor the sword. The Godhead was in the person pained, yet not in the pain.

**C. Himself only.** He gave Himself only without partner or comforter.

1. *Without a partner* that might share either His glory or our thanks, both of which He is justly jealous. The sufferings of our Savior need no help...No, “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7)—His blood and His only. O blessed Savior, every drop of Thy blood is able to redeem a believing world.

What then? Need we the help of men? How is Christ a perfect Savior if any act of our redemption is left to the performance of saint or angel? No, our souls must die if the blood of Jesus cannot save them. And whatsoever witty error may dispute for the merits of saints, the distressed conscience cries, “Christ, and none but

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<sup>19</sup> **impassible** – not subject to suffering or pain.

Christ!...Christ, and Christ alone; Jesus, and only Jesus; mercy, mercy, pardon, comfort, for our Savior's sake!" "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12).

2. *Without a comforter*. He was so far from having a sharer in His passion that He had none in compassion that (at least) might anyways ease His sorrows. Pity is but a poor comfort of calamity, yet even that was wanting.<sup>20</sup> "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" (Lam 1:12). Is it so sore a sorrow to Christ, and is it nothing to you? [Is your pity] a matter not worth your regard? Man naturally desires and expects ease; if he cannot be delivered, yet [he desires] to be pitied. "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me" (Job 19:21). Christ might make that request of Job, but in vain: there was none to comfort Him, none to pity Him. It is yet a little mixture of refreshing, if others be touched with a sense of our misery; in their hearts, they wish us well and would give us ease if they could. But Christ hath in His sorest pangs not so much as a comforter.

The martyrs have fought valiantly under the banner of Christ because He was with them to comfort them. But when He suffers, no relief is permitted. The most grievous torments find some mitigation<sup>21</sup> in the supply of friends and comforters. Christ, after His single combat with the devil in the desert, had angels to attend Him. In His agony in the garden, an angel was sent to comfort Him. But when He came to the main act of our redemption, not an angel must be seen. None of those glorious spirits may look through the windows of heaven to give Him any ease. And if they [desired to relieve] Him, they could not—who can lift up where the Lord will cast down? What surgeon can heal the bones that the Lord hath broken? But His mother and other friends stood by, seeing, sighing, weeping. Alas! What do those tears but increase His sorrow?

Of whom then shall He expect comfort? Of His apostles? Alas! They [took] to their heels.<sup>22</sup> Fear of their own danger drowns their compassion of His misery. He might say with Job, "Miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2). Of whom, then? The Jews were His enemies, and vied<sup>23</sup> with devils in unmercifulness. There is no other refuge but His Father. No, even His Father is angry; and He Who once said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17), is now incensed.<sup>24</sup> He hides His face from [Christ], but lays His hand heavy upon Him and

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<sup>20</sup> **wanting** – lacking.

<sup>21</sup> **mitigation** – to lessen the severity of something.

<sup>22</sup> **[took] to their heels** – ran away.

<sup>23</sup> **vied** – competed.

<sup>24</sup> **incensed** – very angry.

buffets Him with anguish. Thus, [Christ] gave Himself, and only Himself, for our redemption.

**IV. TO WHOM:** *To God*, and that is the fourth circumstance. To whom should He offer this sacrifice of expiation but to Him that was offended?—and that is God: “Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psa 51:4). “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight” (Luk 15:21). All sins are committed against Him. His justice is displeased and must be satisfied. With what and [with] whom is God angry?—with sin and us, and [with] us for sin. In His just anger, He must smite—but whom? In Christ was no sin. Now shall God do like Annas or Ananias? “If I have spoken evil,” saith Christ, “bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?” (Joh 18:23). So Paul to Ananias, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” (Act 23:3). [In the same way,] Abraham pleads to God, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen 18:25)—especially right to His Son, and to that Son Who glorified Him on earth and Whom He hath now glorified in heaven. We must fetch the answer from Daniel’s prophecy: “The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself” (Dan 9:26). Not for Himself? For whom then? For solution hereof, we must step to the fifth point; and we shall find

**V. FOR WHOM:** *For us*. He took upon Himself our person. He became surety for us. And, lo! Now the course of justice may proceed against Him! He that will become a surety and take on himself the debt must be content to pay it. Hence, that innocent Lamb must be made a sacrifice. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). Seven times in three verses doth the prophet Isaiah inculcate<sup>25</sup> this: we, ours, us (Isa 53:4-6). We were all sick, grievously sick; every sin was a mortal disease. “He healeth our infirmities,” saith the prophet. He was our physician—a *great* physician. The whole world was sick to death and therefore needed a powerful physician. So He was, and [He] took a strange course for our cure, which was not by giving us physic,<sup>26</sup> but by taking our physic for us. Other patients drink the prescribed potion; but our Physician drank the potion Himself, and so recovered us.

He that had no cause to suffer for Himself suffered *for me*. O Lord Jesus, thou sufferest not thine own, but *my* wounds. So monstrous were our sins that the hand of the everlasting Justice was ready to strike us with a fatal and final blow. Christ in His own person stepped between the stroke and us and bore that a while, which would have sunk us forever. We abused the immortality we had to our death; Christ used the mortality He had to our life. He loved us, [yet we] were His utter

<sup>25</sup> **inculcate** – teach and impress by frequent repetition.

<sup>26</sup> **physic** – medicine.

enemies. Here then was love without limitation, beyond imitation. “Unspeakable mercy,” says Bernard,<sup>27</sup> “that the King of eternal glory should yield Himself to be crucified for so poor a wretch, yea, a worm; and that not a loving worm, not a living worm; for we both hated Him and His and were dead in sins and trespasses”...Christ’s sacrifice was so sweetly tempered: as much blood was shed for the peasant in the field as for the prince in the court. The [call] of salvation is general: “Whosoever among you feareth God, and worketh righteousness, to him is the word of this salvation sent” (*see* Act 13:26). As there is no exemption of the greatest from misery, so no exemption of the least from mercy. He that will not *believe and amend* shall be condemned, be he never so rich; he that doth, be he never so poor, shall be saved.

This one point of the crucifix, “for us,” requires more punctual<sup>28</sup> meditation. Whatsoever we leave unsaid, we must not huddle up<sup>29</sup> this. For indeed this brings the text home to us, even into our consciences, and speaks effectually to us all: to me that speaks and to you that hear, with that prophet’s application: “Thou art the man” (2Sa 12:7). We are they for whose cause our blessed Savior was crucified. For us, He endured those grievous pangs; for us, that we might never taste them. Therefore, say we with that [Church] Father,<sup>30</sup> “Let Him be fixed in your whole heart, Who for you was fixed on the Cross.”<sup>31</sup>

**A. The ends for which Christ died on the cross.** We shall consider the uses we are to make of this by the ends for which Christ performed this. It serves to save, to move, and to mortify us.

1. To *save us*: This was His purpose and performance: all He did, all He suffered, was to redeem us. “By his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). By His sweat, we are refreshed; by His sorrows, we are rejoiced; by His death, we are saved. For even that day, which was to Him the heaviest day that ever man bore, was to us “the accepted time, the day of salvation” (2Co 6:2). The day was evil in respect of our sins and His sufferings; but eventually, in regard of what He paid and what He purchased, [it was] a good day, the best day, a day of joy and jubilation.

But if this salvation is wrought for us, it must be *applied* to us, yea, to every one of us. For that some receive more profit by His passion than others, is not His fault that did undergo it, but theirs that do not undertake to apply it to their own

<sup>27</sup> **Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) – best-known theologian of his day; wrote mystical, theological, devotional works and hymns such as *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*.

<sup>28</sup> **punctual** – express; direct.

<sup>29</sup> **huddle up** – conceal; hide.

<sup>30</sup> **Church Father** – any of about 70 theologians in the period from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century whose writings influenced early church doctrine.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine of Hippo, “Of Holy Virginitly,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, First Series: St. Augustin: *On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 3, 437.

consciences. We must not only believe this text in gross;<sup>32</sup> but let everyone take a handful out of this sheaf and put it into his own bosom, so turning this *for us* into *for me*. As Paul, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*” (Gal 2:20). Blessed faith, that into the plural, *us*, puts in the singular soul, *me*. Everyone is a rebel, guilty and convicted by the supreme Law; death waits to arrest us and damnation to receive us. What should we do but pray, beseech, cry, weep, until we can get our pardon sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ and every one find a sure testimony in his own soul that Christ gave Himself for *me*.

2. This should *move us*. Was all this done for us, and shall we not be stirred? “Have ye no regard? Is it nothing to you, that I suffer such sorrow as was never suffered?” (Lam 1:12). All His agony, His cries, tears, groans, and pangs were for us. Shall He thus grieve for us, and shall we not grieve for ourselves? For ourselves, I say; not so much for Him. Let His passion move us to compassion, not of His sufferings (alas! our pity can do Him no good), but of our sins, which *caused* them. “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Luk 23:28). For ourselves: not for His pains that are past, but for our own that should have been, and (except our faith sets Him in our stead) shall be.

Shall He weep to us, for us, and shall we not mourn? Shall He drink so deeply to us in this cup of sorrow, and shall we not pledge Him? Doth the wrath of God make the Son shriek out, and shall not the servants for whom He suffered tremble? Every creature seems to suffer with Christ—sun, earth, rocks, sepulchers—only man, for whom Christ suffered all, suffers nothing. Doth His passion tear the veil, rend the stones, cleave the rocks, shake the earth, open the graves—and are our hearts harder than those insensible creatures that they cannot be penetrated? Doth heaven and earth, sun and elements, suffer with Him, and is it nothing to us? We, wretched men that we are, were the principals in this murder of Christ—whereas Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, soldiers, Jews, were all but accessories and instrumental causes. We may seek to shift it from ourselves and derive this heinous fact upon the Jews; but the executioner doth not properly kill the man. Sins, *our* sins, were the murderers! Of us, He suffered; and for us, He suffered. Unite these in your thoughts and tell me if His passion hath not cause to move us.

And yet our hearts are so obdurate<sup>33</sup> that we cannot endure one hour’s discourse<sup>34</sup> of this great business. Christ was many hours in dying for us; we cannot sit one hour to hear of it! O that we should find fault with heat or cold in harkening to these heavenly mysteries, when He endured for us such a heat, such a

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<sup>32</sup> **gross** – letters written large.

<sup>33</sup> **obdurate** – hard-hearted.

<sup>34</sup> **discourse** – sermon.

sweat, such agony, that through His flesh and skin He sweat drops of blood. Doth He weep tears of gore-blood for us, and cannot we weep tears of water for ourselves? Alas! How would we die for Him, as He died for us, when we are weary of hearing what He did for us?

3. This should *mortify us*. Christ delivered Himself to death for our sins that He might deliver us from death and our sins. He came not only to destroy the devil, but to “destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8). Neither doth He take only from sin the power to condemn us, but also the power to rule and reign in us (Rom 6:6, 12). So that Christ’s death, as it answers the justice of God for our misdeeds, so it must kill in us the will of misdoing. Christ in all parts suffered that we in all parts might be mortified. His sufferings were so abundant that men cannot know their number, nor angels their nature, neither men nor angels their measure. His passion found an end; our thoughts cannot.

**B. His suffering in all ways for us:** at all times, in all places, in all senses, in all members, in body and soul also. All for us.

1. At *all times*. In His childhood by poverty and Herod; in the strength of His days by the powers of earth, by the powers of hell—yea, even by the powers of heaven. In the day, He lacks meat, in the night, a pillow. Even that holy time of the great Passover is destined for His dying. When they should kill the Paschal lamb<sup>35</sup> in thankfulness, they slay the Lamb of God in wickedness. They admire the shadow, yet condemn the substance. All for us, that all times might yield us comfort. So the apostle sweetly [says], “He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1Th 5:10).

2. In all *places*. In the cradle by that fox (Luk 13:32), in the streets by revilers, in the mountain by those that would have thrown Him down headlong, in the temple by them that “took up stones to cast at him” (Joh 8:59). In the high priest’s hall by buffeters,<sup>36</sup> in the garden by betrayers, by the way, laden with His cross. Lastly, in Calvary, a vile and stinking place, among the bones of malefactors crucified. Still, all for us that in all places the mercy of God might protect us.

3. In all *senses*. For His taste, lo! It is afflicted with gall and vinegar—a bitter draught<sup>37</sup> for a dying man! His touch felt more: the nails driven into His hands and feet, places most sensible of pain, being the most sinewy parts of the body. His ears are full of the blasphemous insults that the savage multitude belched out against Him. Not Him, but Barrabas, they cry to Pilate, preferring a murderer before a Savior. Will you read the speeches objectual to His hearing<sup>38</sup> (*see* Mat 27:29, 39, 42, 44, 49)? In all, consider their blasphemy [and] His patience. For His eyes,

<sup>35</sup> **Paschal lamb** – the lamb sacrificed at the Jewish celebration of Passover.

<sup>36</sup> **buffeters** – those who beat or strike.

<sup>37</sup> **draught** – the quantity of drink swallowed at one “pull.”

<sup>38</sup> **speeches...hearing** – the speeches that were the object of His trial.

where can He turn them without spectacles of sorrow? The despite<sup>39</sup> of His enemies on the one side, showing their most extreme malice; the weeping and lamenting of His mother on the other side, whose tears might wound His heart. If any sense were less afflicted, it was His smelling—and yet the putrefied bones of Calvary could be no pleasing savor.

Thus suffered all His senses. That taste that should be delighted with the wine of the vineyard that “goeth down sweetly,” is fed with vinegar. He looks for good grapes, behold “sour grapes” (Isa 5:4). He expects wine; He receives vinegar. That smell that should be refreshed with the odoriferous<sup>40</sup> scent of the “beds of spices”; the piety of His saints is filled with the stench of iniquities. Those hands that sway the scepter of the heavens are fain<sup>41</sup> to carry the reed of reproach and endure the nails of death. Those eyes that were as a “flame of fire” (Rev 1:14), in respect of which the very sun was darkness, must behold the afflicting objects of shame and tyranny. Those ears, which to delight the high choristers<sup>42</sup> of heaven sing their sweetest notes, must be wearied with the taunts and scoffs of blasphemy.

All this for us! Not only to satisfy those sins that our senses have committed, but to mortify those senses and preserve them from those sins; that our eyes may be no more full of adulteries nor throw covetous looks on the goods of our brethren; that our ears may no more give so wide admission and welcome entrance to lewd reports, the incantations of Satan.<sup>43</sup> That sin in all our senses might be done to death—the poison exhausted, the sense purified.

4. In all *members*. Look on that blessed body, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a pure virgin: it is all over scourged, martyred, tortured, mangled—what places can you find free? To begin at His head: that head, which the angels reverence, is crowned with thorns. That face, which is “fairer than the sons of men” (Psa 45:2), must be odiously spit on by the filthy Jews. His hands, which made the heavens, are extended and fastened to a cross. The feet, which tread upon the necks of His and our enemies, feel the like [pain]. And the mouth must be buffeted, which “spake as never man spake” (Joh 7:46).

Still, all this for us. His head bled for the wicked imaginations of our heads. His face was besmeared with spittle because we had spit impudent blasphemies against heaven. His lips were afflicted that our lips might henceforth yield savory speeches. His feet did bleed that our feet might not be swift to shed blood. All His members suffered for the sins of all our members—and that our members might

<sup>39</sup> **despite** – action that shows utter lack of respect.

<sup>40</sup> **odoriferous** – fragrant.

<sup>41</sup> **fain** – rather.

<sup>42</sup> **choristers** – members of a choir.

<sup>43</sup> **lewd reports...Satan** – obscene and sensual stories or jokes, which have a powerful, devilish effect on hearers; that is, fallen human nature is drawn to sensual talk, as if it had a magical power.

be no more servants to sin, but “servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). He would be polluted with their spittle that He might wash us. He would be blindfolded that He might take the veil of ignorance from our eyes. He suffered the head to be wounded that He might renew health to all the body.

Six times, we read that Christ shed His blood: 1. When He was circumcised at eight days old, His blood was spilt. 2. In His agony in the garden, where He sweat drops of blood. 3. In His scourging, when the merciless tormentors fetched blood from His holy sides. 4. When He was crowned with thorns, those sharp prickles raked and harrowed His blessed head and drew forth blood. 5. In His crucifying, when His hands and feet were pierced, blood gushed out. 6. Lastly, after His death, “one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (Joh 19:34). All His members<sup>44</sup> bled, to show that He bled for all His members.<sup>45</sup> Not one drop of this blood was shed for Himself, all [of it was] for us: for His enemies, persecutors, crucifiers—ourselves.

But what shall become of us, if all this cannot mortify us? How shall we live with Christ, if with Christ we be not dead (Rom 6:8)?—dead indeed unto sin, but living unto righteousness. As Elisha revived the Shunamite’s child: “He lay upon it; put his mouth upon the child’s mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm” (2Ki 4:34). So the Lord Jesus, to recover us that were dead in our sins and trespasses, spreads and applies His whole passion to us: lays His mouth of blessing upon our mouth of blasphemy; His eyes of holiness upon our eyes of lust; His hands of mercy upon our hands of cruelty; and stretcheth His gracious self upon our wretched selves, until we begin to wax warm, to get life, and the Holy Spirit [enters] into us.

5. In His *soul*. All this was but the *outside* of His passion. “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour” (Joh 12:27). The pain of the body is but the body of pain; the very soul of sorrow is the sorrow of the soul. All the outward afflictions were but gentle prickings in regard of what His soul suffered. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Pro 18:14). He had a heart within that suffered unseen, unknown anguish. This pain drew those strong cries, those bitter tears (Heb 5:7). He had often sent forth the cries of compassion, [but] of passion and complaint not until now. He had wept the tears of pity, the tears of love, but never before the tears of anguish. When the Son of God thus cries, thus weeps, here is more than the body distressed: the soul is agonized.

Still, all this [was] for us. His soul was in our souls’ stead! What would they have felt if they had been in the stead of His? All [was] for us: to satisfaction, to

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<sup>44</sup> **members** – that is, all Christ’s bodily members.

<sup>45</sup> **members** – that is all the members of His body, the Church.

emendation.<sup>46</sup> For thy drunkenness and pouring down strong drinks, He drank vinegar. For thy intemperate<sup>47</sup> gluttony, He fasted. For thy sloth, He did exercise Himself to continual pains. Thou sleepest secure; thy Savior is then waking, watching, praying. Thy arms are accustomed to lustful embracings; He for this embraceth the rough cross. Thou deckest thyself with proud attire; He is humble and lowly for it. Thou ridest in pomp; He journeys on foot. Thou wallowest on thy down beds; thy Savior hath not a pillow. Thou surfeitest,<sup>48</sup> and He sweats it out, a bloody sweat. Thou fillest and swellest thyself with a pleurisy<sup>49</sup> of wickedness. Behold incision is made in the Head for thee: thy Savior bleeds to death. Now judge whether this point (for us) hath not derived a near application of this text to our own consciences. Since Christ did all this for thee and me, pray then with Augustine: “Lord give me a heart to desire Thee, desiring to seek Thee, seeking to find Thee, finding to love Thee—loving, no more to offend Thee.”

There are two main parts of this crucifix yet to handle.

**VI. THE MANNER:** The next is the *manner*: an offering and sacrifice. His whole life was an offering, His death a sacrifice. He gave Himself often for us a eucharistical oblation,<sup>50</sup> [but only] once an expiatory sacrifice. In the former He did for us all that we should do; in the latter He suffered for us all that we should suffer. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24)...Thus, “once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26).

**VII. THE EFFECT:** The last point is the *effect* of a sweetsmelling savor. Here is the fruit and efficacy of all. Never was the Lord pleased with sinful man until now. Were He never so angry, here is pacification,<sup>51</sup> a sweet savor...We should die, and Thou payest it; we have offended, and Thou art punished. A mercy without example, a favor without merit, a love without measure. Therefore, I conclude my sermon, as we all shut up our prayers, with this one clause: *Through our Lord Jesus Christ*. O Father of mercy, accept our sacrifice of prayer and praise for His sacrifice of pain and merit; even for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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Thomas Adams (1583-1653): Anglican minister and preacher.




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<sup>46</sup> **emendation** – correction or improvement.

<sup>47</sup> **intemperate** – excessive; extreme.

<sup>48</sup> **surfeitest** – to feast to excess on sumptuous foods.

<sup>49</sup> **pleurisy** – painful inflammation of the membranes lining the thorax and lungs.

<sup>50</sup> **eucharistical oblation** – giving of worship to God; communing.

<sup>51</sup> **pacification** – an act of making peace with.

# OUR SUFFERING SUBSTITUTE

C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.—1 Peter 3:18*

**G**OD is just, and a just God must punish sin. The great question is, “How can God be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?” (*see* Rom 3:26). False religions endeavor to answer this question, but they completely fail. The poor heathen thinks he has found the answer in his own terrible sacrifices. He thinks he may give “his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul.” It is not thus that God’s justice is vindicated, neither is it thus that His mercy shines forth in its glory.

There is a cold, speculative theology that seeks to put this question far away. There are a few men who scoff at the atonement<sup>1</sup> and reject the thought of sacrifice...but the system that denies the doctrine of atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ, or which puts it in the background, never can succeed. Its adherents may profess to be intellectual because they are ignorant, but they will never convince the masses. It is stamped on nature by God that every man feels in his conscience a craving after a reply to the question, “How can the just God justly forgive me the sinner?” If that question is not answered in some way, so that it may be seen how God can save and yet maintain His justice, no system of theology can by any possibility succeed.

We must resist the tendency that seems to be in the minds of some, to keep back this vital truth—the fundamental truth of the Christian religion, namely, the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us not argue against this tendency, but let us rather destroy it by our own personal determination to preach more earnestly and more constantly, “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1Co 2:2). The quickest way to slay error is to proclaim the truth. The surest mode of extinguishing falsehood is to advocate boldly [scriptural] principles. Scolding and protesting will not be so effectual in resisting the progress of error as the clear proclamation of the truth in Jesus.

Let me now try to preach the doctrine of substitution, which is the [scriptural] answer to the questions, “How can God’s justice have its full dominion, and yet God’s mercy exercise its sway?”—“How can there be a full-orbed justice and a full-orbed mercy, and neither of them eclipse or cast a shadow over the other?”

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<sup>1</sup> **atonement** – act of bringing reconciliation by paying the debt owed for an offense.

**THE PERSON OF THE SUFFERING SUBSTITUTE:** Behold the person of the suffering Substitute: “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

**The Substitute was of *complex nature*.** He was truly *man*, and yet He was truly God. Christ Jesus, Who “suffered” in the room, place, and stead of God’s chosen people, was man—man of the substance of His mother, most surely man. He partook of all the weakness of humanity and was in all respects—sin only excepted—tempted as we are. Yea, He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh (Gen 2:23). He was the perfect man, the only man in whom there never dwelt sin. There was no sin in His nature. No taint of original depravity ran in His veins. In His human nature, He was “without spot” or “blemish” (1Pe 1:19). Conceived in a miraculous manner, He partook not in any degree of that transgression that is transmitted to us; for we are born in sin and “shapen in iniquity” (Psa 51:5).

Christ did not receive any of that imputed sin that has fallen upon the race from Adam. Christ never fell in Adam. He was “the seed of the woman,” but He never lay in the loins of Adam. As a private person, Christ never fell. By nature, He was not in any sense a participator or partaker in Adam’s sin. Though on the part of His people, Jesus took upon Himself Adam’s transgression and bore it right away. He Himself was, in His original, without the shadow of a spot—the immaculate, the perfect Lamb of God’s Passover (Joh 1:29; 1Co 5:7).

The life of the man Christ Jesus was in every respect *blameless*. From His eye no fire of unhallowed anger ever flashed. On His lips the word of deceit never rested. His pure mind never knew an imagination of sin. Satan’s sparks fell on Christ’s soul like fire dropping into the ocean, and were quenched forever. Hell’s quiver of temptations was emptied upon Him, but no single arrow ever stuck in His flesh and blood. He stood invincible and invulnerable. He could not be wounded by temptation. “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30) was His own triumphant declaration. Not only did Christ not sin, but He could not sin. He “knew no sin” (2Co 5:21). He had no acquaintance with sin; He was a stranger to sin. Sin had no commerce with Him; He had no dealings with sin personally. His head turned not dizzy when upon the pinnacle of the temple (Mat 4). When down in the depths of humiliation, no grief found expression void of completest resignation. He was ever pure, perfect, spotless, holy, acceptable unto God.

The sufferings of Jesus have power to bless others, seeing they were not necessary for Himself. He had no need to suffer as the result of sin, nor yet that, by the discipline of suffering, He might be purged from its evil. There was no reason in Himself why He should ever know pain or heave a sigh. His sufferings all had reference to His people. His object in suffering, bleeding, dying, was to secure the

salvation of His chosen. Our souls may now trust Jesus, the perfect Man, with the utmost confidence.

**Let us also ever bear in mind that, while Christ was truly man, yet was He also *very God*.** We believe and must ever teach that the perfect humanity of Christ did not lower His perfect deity. His divinity was undiluted and infinite. He was “Very God of very God,” possessing all the attributes of the eternal Jehovah. He Who did hang upon the cross was the same God Who made all worlds. The very Word Who did bear our sins in His own body on the tree was that Word by Whom all things were made and without Whom “was not anything made that was made” (Joh 1:3). We know nothing of a human atonement apart from the deity of Christ Jesus.

We dare not trust our souls upon a savior who is but a man. If all the men that have ever lived and all the angels that exist could have wrought together and striven throughout eternity to offer a sacrifice that should be a propitiation for the sins of a single man, they must have failed. None but the shoulders of the Incarnate God could bear the stupendous burden. No hand but that which set fast the spheres could shake the mountains of our guilt and bear them away. We must have a divine Sacrifice, and it is our joy to know that we have this in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As for those who do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, let them go their way and preach what they will...We deal with the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and on that a soul may rest for eternity; but they deal with another gospel, which is not another (Gal 1:6-7), with that which can never bring peace on earth or blessedness in the world to come...We can never give up our belief in the divinity and deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, nor can we have any fellowship with those who reject that blessed truth (Eph 5:11).

Let us stand beneath the cross of Calvary and behold our Lord Jesus hanging there, and remember that His bleeding body was in alliance with the unsuffering Deity. Those wounds of His, that streaming, spear-rent side, was taken into union with the nature of the living and eternal God. The infinite merit of the Godhead was imparted to the sufferings of the manhood. Neither your sins nor mine can ever exceed the merit of the precious blood of Christ. If our sins are high as mountains, the ocean of His atonement, like Noah's flood, covers the utmost summits of the mountains. It prevails twenty cubits upwards, until all the highest mountains are covered. Though our sins are never so crimson, the blood of Jesus Christ is more crimson; and the one washes out the other. Though our iniquities are never so dark and bitter, His death was more bitter and dark, and the black bitterness of His death hath taken away the blackness and bitterness of our sins. Therefore it is that “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25).

Sinner, look at Jesus Christ! There is power in His atoning blood to wash away all thy sins. None can limit the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. No sins can be too black or too numerous for that precious blood to cleanse. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to accomplish all that God has purposed to accomplish by its shedding. Christ shall never fail in any respect. His cross is a battering ram against which nothing shall stand. Before the cross of Christ, the stupendous ramparts of our condemnation must rock to and fro even to their fall; and not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down. We need a greater confidence in the cross of Jesus Christ, a surer rest evermore on that Rock of Ages cleft for us.

**THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SUBSTITUTE:** Contemplate the sufferings of the substitute: “Christ also hath once suffered for sins” (1Pe 3:18). These were endured on behalf of all them that believe. See Him in Gethsemane... There, for us, Jesus sweated until His soul became so full of agony that the blood flushed the rivers of His veins, and at last burst the banks and overflowed. “*His head, His hair, His garments bloody were.*” He was clad in a ruby robe of His own blood; and there He continued wrestling, with His soul burdened and “sorrowful even unto death” (Mat 26:38) that He might prevail on His people’s behalf, and that He might suffer the wrath of God for their sins.

He rose from the place where He had been pleading, renewed in strength, and went forth to meet His doom. He was betrayed by Judas, one of the twelve. His own familiar friend, whom He had trusted, who did eat of His bread, lifted up his heel against Him. You who have been forsaken by your firmest friend in the hour of your direst<sup>2</sup> need, you that have known a plighted troth<sup>3</sup> broken, pretended love turned into a deadly hatred, you may guess—but you can only faintly guess—the tremendous sorrow that came into the Redeemer’s soul when the traitor, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Him.

They hurry the Savior away to Annas, to Caiaphas, to Pilate, to Herod, then back again to Pilate, without any breathing time, without any respite. They accuse Him of sedition.<sup>4</sup> *The King of kings seditious!* They accuse Him of blasphemy—as if *God* could blaspheme! They could find no witnesses against Him except the basest scum of the people, who were prepared to swear to any falsehood—even these agreed not one with another. There stood the perfect man, the Son of God, accused and slandered by men who were not worthy to be spit upon.

They condemn the innocent; they mock Him; they laugh at Him; they jeer at His majesty and torment His sacred person. He is given up to the tender mercies of the Roman soldiery. They set Him in an old chair as though it were a throne.

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<sup>2</sup> **direst** – most dreadful; most terrible.

<sup>3</sup> **plighted troth** – commitment pledged; promise made.

<sup>4</sup> **sedition** – actions or words intended to provoke rebellion against government authority.

They had just before torn His back with scourges until His bones stood up like white cliffs in a sea of blood. They crown Him with thorns. They cast an old purple robe on His shoulders; they mock and deride Him, as though He were a sham king. For a scepter, they give Him a reed; for homage, they give Him spittle; for the kiss of salutation, they give Him the lips of mockery. Instead of bowing before Him as their King, they blindfold Him and smite Him in the face. Was ever grief like Thine, Thou King of sorrow, despised by Thine own subjects? Thou, Who didst give them breath, dost have that breath back again on Thee in violent and blasphemous oaths! *Thou didst give them life, and they spent that life in mocking Thee!*

Jesus is led forth to Calvary. He is nailed to the cross by cruel and wicked hands. The rude rabble jeer at His sufferings. Within His soul, there is an agony such as we cannot fathom. Above, there are the swelling waves of Almighty wrath against our sins, covering all His soul. Hark! That dreadful, soul-piercing cry: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46). It seems to be the gathering up of all His griefs, sorrows, and sufferings into one expression. Like some enormous lake, which receives the torrents of a thousand rivers, and holds all within its banks, so does that sentence seem to grasp all His woes and express them all, “My God, my God, *why* hast *thou* forsaken *me*?”

At last, He bows His head and yields up His spirit! At one tremendous draught of love, the Lord hath drained destruction dry for all His people. He has “suffered” all that they ought to have suffered. He hath given to the justice of God a full recompense for all their sins. He has on their behalf presented a complete atonement...

What joy it is, believer, to think that thou hast such a perfect atonement to rest upon! If there were one sin Christ did not suffer for on the cross or one evil thought of one of His people that He did not bear, we could not be saved. But He has “finished” the whole of His people’s transgression; He has made an end of all their sins. He has obeyed all the jots and the tittles,<sup>5</sup> as well as the great and weighty things, of the Law of God; He has magnified it, and made it honourable. He has gone to “the end of the law for righteousness” (Rom 10:4)—not half-way, but all the way; not near to its boundary, but even to its very end. He has not merely sipped from the cup of wrath, not merely tasted a portion of its bitter draught, but He has drained it to the very dregs. Ere He died, He turned the cup of wrath bottom upwards, for He had taken all it contained. And when He saw that there was not a single black drop trembling on its brim, He exclaimed with the loud voice of triumph, “It is finished!” (Joh 19:30). He had drunk the whole. Glory in this, ye living people of the living Christ! He hath offered for you a complete sacrifice, acceptable unto His Father. Glory in this, ye chosen people of the

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<sup>5</sup> **jots and tittles** – “jot,” the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; “tittle,” the smallest stroke used to make Hebrew letters (Mat 5:18); therefore, minute details.

living God, that “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

**THE RESULT OF THE SUBSTITUTION:** Rejoice in the result of the substitution: the sufferings are finished; the debt is paid. Justice is satisfied; the Law is magnified; righteousness is established. For all His people’s sins, Christ has made a complete atonement; and for their justification He has risen from the dead (Rom 4:25).

Now, poor trembling seeker, what sayest thou to this? Canst thou not now rest on Christ? God is satisfied with His Son’s atoning sacrifice; canst thou be dissatisfied with it? God thinks Jesus enough; canst thou think Him too little? Did the Lord, the King, against Whom thou hast offended, accept the reconciliation; and dost thou unbelievingly and distrustfully say, “I fear it is not sufficient”? Cast away thy guilty fears, I beseech thee...

Thou art to be saved by faith in Christ, Who “hath once suffered for sins” (1Pe 3:18), and in Christ alone. Do not seek to make a savior of thine own feelings. Do not think thou must experience this or that before thou comest unto Jesus. Christ wants no preparation from thee. Salvation consists in simply casting thyself down on Christ. Cast thyself down on thy very face in the dust before Him, and once for all have done with thine own wretched self. Rely not on anything thou canst do, think, say, or know; rest alone on Jesus only, and thou art saved! Be thou who thou mayest and what thou mayest—though thou wert the very worst sinner out of hell, be thy soul the blackest yet—if thou wilt trust in Christ Who “hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,” thou shalt be saved.

Trembling sinner, look to Jesus and thou art saved. Dost thou say, “My sins are many”? His atonement is wondrous. Dost thou cry, “My heart is hard”? Jesus can soften it. Dost thou exclaim, “Alas, I am so unworthy”? Jesus loves the unworthy. Dost thou feel, “I am so vile”? It is the vile Jesus came to save. Down with thee, sinner; down, down with thyself, and up with Christ, Who hath suffered for thy sins upon Calvary’s cross! Turn thine eye thither; see Jesus only. He suffers. He bleeds. He dies. He is buried. He rises again. He ascends on high. Trust Him and thou art safe. Give up all other trusts and rely on Jesus alone; alone on Jesus, and thou shalt pass from death unto life. This is the sure sign, the certain evidence of the Spirit’s indwelling, of the Father’s election, of the Son’s redemption: when the soul is brought simply and wholly to rest and trust in Jesus Christ, Who “hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

May the Holy Ghost bless these words and send them home with comfort to many hearts, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

*From C H Spurgeon’s Forgotten Early Sermons: Twenty-Eight Sermons Compiled from the Sword and the Trowel*, ed. Terence Peter Crosby  
(Leominster: Day One, 2010), 77-81.

**Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist minister; born at Kelvedon, Essex.



The cross of Calvary is the altar of divine love.—*Octavius Winslow*