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Christ Our Sacrifice

BY HOMER HAILEY



It is said in Scripture, "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and again, "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." So, walking by faith, we accept the statement of Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." I believe therefore that in the wisdom of God, it was not possible to save men in any way other than by the death of His Son.

The terrible condition of the world when Christianity began its conquest is graphically set forth in Romans 1. The writer impresses us with the corruptness of pagan idol worship, the immorality of their lives, and the baseness of their heathen character. This chapter shows the absolute failure of human systems of religion and the helplessness of human philosophy to lift mankind. But why go to Romans 1 for such a picture?

One could almost find its counterpart in the world of our day: hatred, war, lust, greed, immorality. Instead of rejecting Jesus Christ for philosophy, psuedo-science, and atheism, why can not the world learn its lesson from the past and see that it is the religion of the Son of God that has lifted civilization to its highest point, and not worldly wisdom? The hope of the world today is not science, nor higher education, nor modern religious philosophy, but Christ crucified, raised, and glorified.

Passing from the moral and spiritual condition of the Gentiles in Romans 1, the apostle pictures the condition of the Jews in the next two chapters, showing they had utterly failed to keep the Law given them by the Lord, then concludes, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). There was no peace, no love, no hope; a picture terribly dark!

We see the first ray of light beginning to break through the dark cloud when the angel, speaking of Mary, said to Joseph, "And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). That ray of light becomes a brighter gleam with the joyous song of the angels, as they say, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). A Saviour, that was the world's need. Today it needs to recognize and turn to Him who came as such.

JOHN BORE WITNESS THAT JESUS WAS OUR SACRIFICE

John bore witness of Him saying, "This is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). And Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). I wish we had time to trace the course of His life, making a careful note of the tenderness of His touch as He contacts the leper, lifts the fallen, cheers the suffering, noticing the impartiality of His appeal as He calls all men unto Himself. He makes no special bid for the rich, the great, nor the wise; yet He never excludes them. All are included in His appeal. In His life we see Him laying the foundation for a great brotherhood of man in the family of His Father; He seeks to reconcile and save the lost.

It would be good for us if we had the time to follow Him minutely through the Garden, then go with Him to the house of Annas, and stand with Him before Caiphas, then to the Sanhedrin where He was tried by the Jews and condemned to die. From there He was taken to Pilate, who, upon hearing that Herod was in town, sent Jesus to him. Herod mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate, before whom He was condemned to death by the civil government; after which he was scourged, mocked, and sent away bearing His cross to Golgatha. Betrayed by His associate, condemned by the religious and civil authorities, and forsaken by His friends, He stood alone in that awful moment.

But death could not hold its prey. Triumphantly He arose on the morning of the third day, the victor over sin and death, ready and able to save to the uttermost all who would come unto God by Him. Let us consider some of the things

accomplished by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

CHRIST'S LIFE AND DEATH ACCEPTED FOR US

1. In His triumphant life over sin, in the offering up of Himself in death, He became the sacrifice, which for the sinner, God accepts. The apostle declared, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). While John wrote, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation of our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2: 1, 2). The righteousness of Christ becomes the sinner's possession when he puts on Christ, when he becomes conformed unto His likeness.

This the Holy Spirit helps us to understand as He says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus. Where then is the glorifying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith" (Romans 3:24-28). It was this righteousness by faith through the sacrifice of Christ, that Paul wished to possess. "And be found in him," he said, "not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil 3: 10).

2. The sacrifice of Jesus broke down the middle wall of partition, i. e., it removed the law which separated the Jew from the Gentile, by taking it out of the way. This gave to both Jew and Gentile equal standing before God; and, also, it gave to each equal opportunity to be saved. Hear the Scriptures: "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making

peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:13-18). The law had now served its purpose, it was taken out of the way, having been "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE BRINGS RECONCILIATION

3. Another thing learned from the reading of Ephesians 2:13-18, is that reconciliation to God for both Jew and Gentile is effected in the sacrifice of Christ. "That he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross," says the Holy Spirit. Through the death of the one body of Christ upon the cross, the one spiritual body of Christ, the Church, was brought into existence. It is in this one body, the church, that both find their fellowship with God, and peace one with the other.

To the individual at enmity with God there awaits him, when he turns to God in Christ, a peace and joy that passes understanding. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of the cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in heaven," said the apostle (Col. 1:19-20). The communion and fellowship with God, enjoyed by man in Eden, but severed by sin, is restored and perfected in the sacrifice of Jesus.

4. Another thing, and by no means a little one, the sacrifice of Christ is a sacrifice that does not encourage further sin, but condemns and forbids it. The apostle asks, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:1-4).

In the reconciliation to God, through the

death of Christ, the sinner dies with Christ. In dying with Christ, he dies to sin. In baptism, the apostle has just said, "we were buried with him." He continues in verse 6, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin." In dying with Christ, the individual is justified from sin, in which death he dies to sin, says the apostle, therefore no longer to walk in it. The apostle was able to say of himself, "For I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that liveth, but Christ that liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). And again, "if I must needs glory, I shall glory in the cross of Christ, through which I have been crucified unto the world, and the world unto me" (Gal. 6:14).

5. And now the last observation we make concerning the sacrifice and cross of Christ is that it is God's drawing power, by which he draws men unto Himself. Jesus said, "No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise up in the last day" (John 6:44, 45). And again, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said signifying what manner of death he should die" (John 12:32, 33). The crucified Christ becomes the power through which God draws men; but the gospel is the medium through which God presents the Christ, through whom He draws men unto Himself. Said the apostle, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, but the righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16-17).

In consideration of this, Jesus said, "Go ye in to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16). Christ had offered Himself up as the sacrifice for sin, the sacrifice by which men should be justified; but His sacrifice as God's drawing power revealed in the gospel, therefore the gospel must be preached. Men appropriated the blessings of the sacrifice when, in baptism they put on Christ; in putting on Christ they became new creatures in Him,

dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness. This discouraged further sin.

CONCLUSION

In summarizing the sacrifice of Christ and its benefits, we find: 1. It is the sacrifice acceptable to God and perfectly adapted to the needs of man. 2. In it all differences between Jews and Gentiles are removed, so far as relation to God is concerned. 3. In the sacrifice of Christ Jew and Gentile should be reconciled unto God, in one body, the church. 4. It is a sacrifice that discourages further sin, the individual being a new creature in Christ. 5. It touches the hearts of men, changing them and bringing them to God. Will you be one to accept the sacrifice of Christ and the salvation God offers in Him. To all who will, the Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

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