

GLORY IN THE CROSS

By

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“He has borne our grief, and carried our sorrow; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted”(Isaiah 53:4).

Jesus bore all the consequences of sin, including all the grief and sorrow that has permeated the race of man since sin entered the world.

It is hard to imagine the way He must have felt in accepting the horrible sin and black guilt which had never been His, but was willingly assumed as He became our substitute in death. The idea here is strictly that of one person bearing something for another, so that we may rest assured that He was dying in our place, paying our just penalty for sin to satisfy the justice of God.

But in spite of this, the attitude of mankind is that His death was His own fault. He opposed the religious hierarchy and accused the political leaders. He condemned the hypocrisy of the business men and alienated the rich. The poor sought to make Him their champion for free bread, and He turned down that opportunity. In brief, the world considers that He muffed it. He pulled too many boo-boos, and failed to get His program over. They speak of his death as a tragedy, as if it were a defeat, talking about the black Sabbath of gloom in which Jesus lay in the grave, as a day of sorrow and gloom for the world. They esteem Him smitten of God as if He were a martyr dying for His untimely ideal. If He should appear in the world today, without a doubt He would be a terrible misfit in the world of organized religion.

Now, how do you esteem Him? Think of all the grief and sorrow you ever knew or ever can know. Pile it all on top of the mountain of sin you have to your credit. Add to this the curse of death, as the penalty to be meted to every sinner on Judgment Day. Then look — there’s Jesus under the whole load, bearing it all for you. There’s the death stroke for sin — it falls not on you, but on Him. Is there any price that could ever repay Him? No. Only that we can live for Him, honoring His name, giving Him glory, laying our hands on the task He has given and trying to walk as He walked.

“He was wounded for our transgressions...” (Isaiah 53:5).

Wounded! Bruised! Chastised!

O Christ, Creator and sustainer of life; the One in Whom no fault could be found; You Who resisted temptation to the point of blood; Whose heart is broken because of its solid purity; Holy and Righteous Son of God; How You did humble Yourself for me. I have wounded God with the sin in which I reveled, but You were wounded with a Roman lash and the agony of a cross. I have bruised the very heart of God with rebellious disobedience, but You were bruised in innocence for me. I am the one who transgressed the commandment, You are the one who suffered the chastisement. I am the one who sought the glory, and You are the one, despised for me. I esteemed myself, and You are rejected. I have been the shameful one; You have borne the shame. My head has harbored evil; Yours has felt the crown of thorns. I have turned away from God to follow the path of disobedience: You have turned in humble submission to Him, obedient even unto

death. I have been ashamed of You; You have suffered the bitterest shame for me. I deserve only punishment and death for my crimes; You who deserve only glory, punished by cruel death for me. I am nothing, sought and purchased by Your very own life! Such a humbling of Heaven is beyond comprehension. Such an honoring of undeserving man is utterly inconceivable! That I should be restored to the Heavenly standard, given the key to the eternal paradise, made whole, clean, given the hope of immortality, made fit for the presence of God: it is more than has been done for angels; it is more marvelous to me than the mystery of Creation itself. Take all the magnificence of the universe and all the miracles wrought on earth, and none of it matches this wonder of wonders, that You should die for me! Hasten the day when I may marvel at the sight of You in glory, and raise my voice in praise to Your eternal glory, and my eternal gratitude.

“...when He was afflicted he opened not his mouth;” (Isaiah 53:7).

During Jesus’ ministry he freely conversed with the lowliest, with his enemies, with all who would listen. But “when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.” Pilate urged him to defend himself, and he gave him no answer.” Then He was sent to Herod Antipas, who was glad to see Him, and began to ventilate his own theories and “questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing.” The more they accused, the more tightly were His lips sealed. He talked about his kingdom, about truth, but He opened not his mouth with regard to the charges brought against Him.

In the death of Jesus is summed up the story of a man as he stands in judgment before God, for all the sin of man is laid on Jesus and “him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf.” Accepting the role of substitute, Jesus assumed the guilt for all sin, therefore when he was accused, even though personally innocent, He consented to guilt by his silence. Paul writes “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God.” Peter says that “he committed himself to him that judges righteously,” and this he did because He stood in the place of sinners, in the sinner’s judgment, and therefore made no defense.

It is easy enough for us to make excuse for our sins before friends and associates. They, too, are sinners, and with them we may discuss our failings and find mutual ground for sympathy. It is said that Pilate and Herod became friends the day in which they had the mutual experience of silencing Jesus. But there is not such mutual link between the sinner and God. Before the Judge of the earth, no one will make excuse; every mouth will be stopped. No one will declare his innocence or his ignorance for having transgressed God’s law. There is only one way out of standing before that inexorable court in which there is no plea but “guilty” and that is to have Christ stand there for us. Is He YOUR Substitute? Do you confess him as your savior, so that He may confess your innocence on that day?

“Who among them considered that he was cut off...for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?”(Isaiah 53:8).

Here in precise terms is the theology of Christ’s death, the scriptural explanation of the atonement.

He was cut off out of the land of the living. Death, by the shedding of blood! “Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same;” (Hebrews 2:14). The power of the atonement is not in some

mysterious quality of the blood of Jesus, but in the plain fact of it being shed and His life being thus cut off! The wages of sin is death.

For the transgression of my people. Christ died for God's people; for all who by faith are the sons of Abraham and therefore the true Israel, the people of God.

To whom the stroke was due! Did Jesus deserve to die? Only the totally corrupt, the children of the devil, could view his life without being impressed by its purity. As a youth He was obedient to his parents; as a man he did "always the things that are pleasing to the Father." He was tempted in all points and yet without sin. Yet He was cut off by death, the cruel and shameful death of a criminal's cross. He suffered the stroke of death which was not His due, but which was ours. We are the ones who have transgressed God's law. We have followed after that which is pleasing to man rather than that which is pleasing to God, to obey the dictates of our own wills rather than the voice of God. We are the ones to whom the stroke was due. I am the one! Death is due me for sin; but Jesus dies for me; my sin, my death! Now I will not have to die for my own sin! This is the simple theology of the Gospel! Men have done their best to complicate it so that a person hardly knows what happened and what it means. But the prophet knew. And you can know, if you will believe that Jesus suffered the stroke of death for you to whom it is due. Either we accept Him as the substitute, who died our death, or we must die for our own sin in the Day of Judgment. Did He die for you?

"He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).

At the creation God pronounced the work of His hands as "good" and was therefore satisfied. But after Adam's sin there was nothing that could be pronounced "good" in the absolute sense until Jesus came into the world. From beginning to end, His earthly mission proved satisfactory to the Father. "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased," He said. But the complete satisfaction of God could not be realized until this final moment on the cross when the life of Jesus was poured out, "because he poured out his soul unto death." Not only was this the final proof of the obedience of the Son, by which He satisfied the demand for a man in perfect accord and harmony with the Creator's will, but it satisfied the perfect justice of God which demands that the penalty of death be paid for sin. TO this moment in history all acts of worship had pointed, from the clothing of Adam and Eve in skins which were given up by animals in their death, to the slaying of the Passover lamb. It continues to be the focal point of worship as men are baptized into Christ's death, and commemorate that death in the communion.

The death of Jesus is the pivotal point of history. Through it the justice of God is satisfied in regard to every soul that is saved so that in eternity every creature that inhabits the new creation will be found satisfactory to Him. Christ's death was not defeat. It was not surrender. It was the severest agony but it was the greatest triumph. It is gross error to speak of His death as defeat that is overcome by the resurrection. The death itself was victory! Through it God is just and the justifier of all that have faith in it now and for eternity. I used to sing a song that said, "I am satisfied with Jesus...is the Master satisfied with me?" Thank God, Jesus has wrought satisfaction **for** me. All our labors are inadequate, imperfect, but we labor in the knowledge that God is satisfied because of the death of Jesus. Rejoice in His death; Glory in the cross and be satisfied even as God Almighty is satisfied forever.

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