

# **The Greatest Theme in the World**

by

F. D. Marsh

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## **INTRODUCTORY**

### **COMPREHENSIVENESS OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT**

Dr. Hugh McMillan says: "The Atonement of our Lord is the grandest and most distinctive thing in the Bible for the sake of which, indeed, the Bible was produced. Very superficial must be the study of the natural and human worlds, that overlooks the vast concurrent testimony which they give to this vital truth. In certain of its aspects, the Atonement is no unique doctrine, no startling theme. The oldest fact of nature, the inmost fact of society, the greatest fact of Christianity meet and are one on Calvary."

I have no hesitation in saying, the Atonement is not only "the greatest fact of Christianity,"

### **IT IS CHRISTIANITY**

- It is the supplier of all human need,
- the answerer of all human questions,
- the minister to all human ills,
- the joy of all human sorrows,
- the remover of all human guilt, and
- the securer of all Divine glory.

Dryden has aptly and happily expressed it when he said:

"Look humbly upward, see His will disclose,  
The forfeit first, and then the fine impose;  
A mulet thy poverty could never pay,  
Had not eternal wisdom found the way,  
And with celestial wealth supplied thy store;  
His justice makes the fine, His mercy quits the score.  
See God descending in the human frame,

The offended suffering in the offender's name:  
All thy misdeeds to Him imputed see,  
And all His Righteousness devolved on thee." [ 1 ]

In these studies on this theme of themes in the pages of Holy Writ, and by the inner illumination of the HOLY SPIRIT, I trust we shall come to this conclusion -

**"CHRIST DID NOT DIE FOR NOTHING,  
NOR FOR SOMETHING MERELY,  
BUT FOR EVERYTHING."**

1. *CHRIST in His Atonement is the Sum of All Knowledge.*

The essence of Greek philosophy was, "O, man know thyself."

The sum of the gospel is, **"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God; and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."**

Why was He sent? CHRIST Himself answers the question - **"I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."**

Thus the sum of the gospel is, to know CHRIST in His accomplished work on the cross, and, by knowing Him, to know GOD in the provision of His love, and the saving of His grace. He who knows not the CHRIST of Calvary knows not GOD, and he who does not thus know, knows not anything that is worth knowing.

Adolph Saphir says: "To know JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified, is not the minimum of knowledge, but the maximum of knowledge . . . it is not to know little, but to know all; here is not a descent from a loftier region, but an elevation to the highest sanctuary. In JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified all doctrines, all GOD's teachings, and man's experiences culminate; and from JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified all duties, all works,

**ALL MINISTRIES ARE TO CULMINATE AND TO BE EVOLVED.**

Here is the hidden and perfect wisdom of GOD.

- No doctrine is seen clearly and truly unless it leads to the cross;
- no work is God-pleasing, and no experience or attainment [ 2 ] genuine and vital, unless it has its source, root, and strength in the Cross;
- no waiting for the Second Advent is healthy and purifying unless it is called forth by the contemplation of the Great GOD and Saviour, Who gave Himself for us, and redeemed us from all iniquity.

O blessed concentration! Blessed simplicity of the gospel! From this centre, from this Cross of JESUS CHRIST, as from the heart, are the issues of life."

II. *CHRIST in His Atonement is the Substantiation of all Prophecy.*

Take away the theme of CHRIST's substitutionary work from the Old Testament, and the whole of it falls to the ground. See it there, and then it becomes a living body, through which the Blood of Atonement is pulsating from the heart of GOD's love all the time.

Take one chapter, Isaiah 53, that Quarry where the gold of CHRIST's Atonement is predicted, proclaimed, and illustrated, and let us ponder seven words, and couple with them seven New Testament words, and, as we do so, we shall find that the Old Testament lies open in the New, as the New Testament is hidden in the Old.

**"HE HATH *borne* OUR GRIEFS"**

**"HE *bare* THE SIN OF MANY"** (Isaiah 53:4, 12).

**"WHO HIS OWN SELF *bare* OUR SINS"** (I Peter 2:24).

The thought in each of these verses is, CHRIST bearing our sins up to the tree in order to bear them away, as the sacrificial victim was led to the altar as a substitute, to be put to death. Luther strongly put it when he says: "God laid upon Him our sins .... saying, 'Be Thou Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; that sinner that ate the fruit in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and, briefly, be Thou the sinner who hath committed the sin of all.'"

**"*Carried* OUR SORROWS"** (Isaiah 53:4). [ 3 ]

**"LAMB OF GOD, WHICH *taketh away* THE SIN OF THE WORLD"** (John 1:29).

The word "**carried**" is the same as "**bear**" in Isaiah 53:11 - "**Bear their iniquities**," and means to bear a heavy burden. It is rendered "**to bear**" in Genesis 49:15 in speaking of Issachar, and comparing him to a couching ass - couching as, a strong ass between two burdens.

**"Issachar *is* a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest *was* good, and the land that *it was* pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute."**

What a striking illustration of CHRIST, with the burden of our sins upon Him, and the burden of GOD's wrath against them. The word which John uses means to lift up a burden upon oneself, and then to carry it away.

**"*Wounded* FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS"** (Isaiah 53:5).

**"HIM WHOM THEY *Pierced*"** (John 19:37).

The word "**Wounded**" means *to bore, to torment* (margin), and *to slay*. It might be paraphrased "He was *pierced* for our transgressions." The same word occurs in Psalm 109:22-"My heart is '**Wounded within me**.'"

It is interesting to know that the same thought meets us in connection with the meat offering. We read of "**unleavened cakes**" (Leviticus 2:4). Newberry renders it "pierced cakes," and in the margin of his Bible he has this note "Hebrew, *Chaloth*, from *Chahlal*, to be pierced or wounded." *Chahlal* is the word rendered "**Wounded**" in the above passages.

The Arab oven was a large, broad vessel, in the bottom of which sharp flints were set. The cake placed upon these flints became indented, and was thus baked. It is difficult to imagine a type of suffering more forcible than this. The Psalmist, in speaking of the wicked, says, "**Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thy wrath**" (Psalm 21:9). CHRIST, because of our transgressions, was placed in the oven of GOD's wrath, and felt the flints of His judgment. He now bears the marks, in His marked hands and feet and side, of that indenting work. [ 4 ]

**"Bruised FOR OUR INIQUITIES"**

**"IT PLEASED THE LORD TO bruise HIM"** (Isaiah 53:5, 10).

**"CHRIST HATH ONCE suffered FOR SINS"** (I Peter 3:18).

The word "**bruise**" does not convey all the intensity of the one used. "*Crushed*" is the more expressive word.

The following uses of the word illustrate this.

- The word is translated "**to crush**" in Lamentations 3:34, as when one is trampled under foot;
- "**to break in pieces**" in Psalm 72:4, and
- "**to beat in pieces**" in Isaiah 3:15, as when an image is completely smashed;
- and it also signifies to be "**smitten**" (Psalm 143:3),
- "**broken**" (Psalm 89:10),
- and "**to destroy**" (Job 6:9), as when one is smitten to the ground, then broken, and ground to powder.

CHRIST, to save us from the consequences of our iniquities, was ground in the mills of GOD's terrible wrath. No wonder it is said He suffered. He was sore "**vexed**." The word "**suffered**" is rendered "**vexed**" in Matthew 17:15, and. "**felt**" in Acts 28:5. His sufferings were not imaginary nothings, but terrible and awful realities. His were the pains, the brushings, that ours might be the blessings and the pleasures.

**"THE Chastisement OF OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM"** (Isaiah 53:5).

**"MADE PEACE BY THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS"** (Colossians 1:20).

Here again the word "**chastisement**" does not convey all that is signified. Alexander defines it as "*punishment*." The word is often translated "**correction**" in referring to a father punishing his children; hence, the "**rod of correction**" and the "**correction**" of the stocks are essential in their discipline (Proverbs 7:22; 22:15). The word is also rendered "**Bond**" in Job 12:18, "**check**" in Job 20:3, and "**Rebuker**" in Hosea 5:2.

What a *bond* He was in, what [ 5 ] a *check* of reproach He received, and what a *Rebuker* of sin He found the Righteous GOD to be when He suffered on our account. "**Punishment!**" **Peace!** What two opposites. **Punishment** for Him. **Peace** for us.

Peace mean *to bind together, to make one*. The word "**peace**" is translated "**one**" in Acts 7:26. We are made one with GOD's blessing because CHRIST was made one with our punishment.

**"By HIS stripes WE ARE HEALED"** (Isaiah 53:5).  
**"BY WHOSE stripes YE WERE HEALED"** (I. Peter 2:24).

The word "**stripes**" means *to scar*, and comes from a root which means *to join*, as Newberry says, "Scar, *Chaburah*, from *Chabar*, to join." The root word signifies to have fellowship with, to couple together. It is rendered "**coupled together**" in speaking of the curtains of the Tabernacle. (Exodus 22:3).

He was joined to our sin in having joined to Him the punishment that was due to it; and we who believe in Him are now joined in His benefit, for, in His death for us, we have died with Him. We receive the wealth of His Atonement, since He has received the weals of our desert.

**"Laid ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL"** (Isaiah 53:6).  
**"MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US"** (II Corinthians 5:21).

"He caused to meet upon Him" is Newberry's more expressive reading. Alexander says, "that conveyed by the Hebrew word is necessarily a violent word."

The use of the word illustrates its forcible significance.

- It is used of a bear meeting a man - "**a bear met him**" (Amos 5:19),
- of a person assailing another to kill him - "**he fell upon him that he died**" (I Kings 2:25),
- of something which separates as when a cloud hides from view - "**the cloud that cometh betwixt**" (Job 36:32). [ 6 ]

CHRIST was the One upon Whom the mass of human guilt came as a wild beast to tear Him to His hurt and death, and our iniquity was the great obscurer to cause Heaven's face to be hidden from Him. He was the personification of sin, and we who are His are now represented in all the perfection of His Divine Humanity.

We might dwell upon other words in this wonderful Old Testament quarry, where the gold of CHRIST's Atonement is to be found, but the above, with their practically corresponding New Testament statements, are sufficient to show how the one is concealed in the other, and the other lies open in the one.

III. *CHRIST's Atonement is the Basis of all His Offices.*

CHRIST's official positions are generally summed up under Prophet, Priest, and King. As we think of Him in this three-fold office, the Scripture-guided mind naturally turns to the Gospels in thinking of Him as Prophet; to the Epistle to the Hebrews in pondering His Priesthood; and to the Book of Revelation in relation to His future glory as King.

### **CHRIST, AS THE PROPHET,**

was ever seeking to impress upon His disciples that He had come into the world to die.

Instead of sweeping the starry heavens of CHRIST's whole teaching, let us concentrate our

thought upon the pleiades of His testimony as found in John 10. The sum of His teaching is, He had come to give life to His sheep. How was that life to be communicated? By His death: "**I lay down My life**," is His repeated statement (verses 15, 17, 18). He does it voluntarily, although He is acting under His Father's direction (verse 18), but He does it "**for the sheep**."

The emphasis is on the preposition "**for**." The preposition in verses 11 and 15 signifies "*on behalf of*."

He makes a provision in His death, which [ 7 ] meets the necessity of the sheep; hence, He acts on their behalf as a shepherd does, who loses his life in rescuing one of his flock. Thus we find from the teaching of CHRIST, His "*death is not an incident in His life, it is the aim of it. The laying down of His life is not an accident in His career, it is a vocation; it is that in which the Divine purpose of His life is revealed.*"

CHRIST made an earnest effort to instill into the minds of His disciples that He came into the world to die, but they failed to apprehend His teaching (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32) until after His resurrection (Luke 24:25, 44). There was only one who seemed to enter into the purpose of His life, and that one was Mary of Bethany., She anointed Him for His burial (John 12:7) ; but apart from her, CHRIST had to go to Heaven's inhabitants to talk about His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

### **CHRIST, AS THE PRIEST,**

did not enter upon His office as Priest until after His death.

Although His offering of Himself was a priestly act, He did not act as a Priest, but as an Offerer. He offered Himself without spot to GOD. He had no right to act as a priest on earth, not being of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron (Hebrews 7:14, 8:4).

It is most important to apprehend the difference between CHRIST's atonement and priesthood.

- Atonement is a thing of death. Priesthood is a ministry of life.
- Atonement is finished. Priesthood is continuous.
- Atonement was accomplished on earth. Priesthood is carried on in Heaven.
- Atonement is for the sinner. Priesthood is for the saint.[ 8 ]

The main thing to which attention is directed is, CHRIST did not enter into the Holy Place to exercise His ministry by the blood of animals, but "**by His own blood**" (Hebrews 9:12).

The force and significance of the sentence, "**by His own blood**," is on the preposition "*dia*," rendered "**by**." It means, "*by means of*"; that is, His right of entry into the presence of GOD, to appear there as our Representative and Priest, is found in His own Blood.

Saphir remarks:

"When He entered into the Holy of Holies, it was by virtue of the Blood which He had shed on the cross; it was not by virtue of His love and grace, His priestly spirit and life on earth that He

entered into the Heavenly Sanctuary . . . His whole priestly office is based on His death on the cross."

### **CHRIST, AS POTENTATE,**

will reign because of His death.

The Book of the Revelation is the Book of coming glory and judgment, and in that book we read more about the slain Lamb than in any other book. The Lamb is mentioned thirty-two times in the New Testament, and out of that number twenty-eight occur in Revelation. The Book opens by describing a Lamb on the throne bearing the marks of death. The Book describes a multitude washed in the Blood of the Lamb; it speaks of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; it represents a band of overcomers through the Blood of the Lamb; and ends by saying the Lamb is the Light of the New Jerusalem.

Dr. Denney says of CHRIST in Revelation:

"Here the Lamb is represented as Sovereign - the Object of all praise; as a Lamb which had been sacrificed - the sentence means, 'with the throat cut'; as living and victorious - standing. It has the character which sacrifice [ 9 ] confers, but it is alive; it is not dead, but it has the virtue of its death in it. It is on the ground of His death, and of the redemption effected by it, that all praise is ascribed to the Lamb, and the knowledge and control of all put into His hands."

What is the one thing these facts proclaim? It is this:

- All CHRIST had to say pointed to the cross, as the sign-post points to the city.
- All GOD has to give emanates from the cross, as all light and warmth come from the sun.
- All CHRIST is now doing is founded on the cross, as the building rests upon the foundation; and
- All that CHRIST will be as King is secured by the cross of His atoning sacrifice.

His cross secures His crown. His passion is the price of His glory.

#### *IV. CHRIST in His Atonement is the Sum of all Teaching.*

Turn where we will in the Book we find the Spirit of GOD, like Moses pointing to the brazen serpent, draws attention to the sacrifice of our Lord.

Let us take a bird's-eye view of the Gospel of John, where we find a picture gallery, in which this one fact is represented in many different ways.

- He is the Lamb of GOD, Who bears away the sin of the world because He bears it.
- He is the mighty Hercules, Who takes the load of our iniquity, and annihilates it in the sea of His atonement (1:29).
- He is the Way cast up from earth to Heaven, at the cost of His life, and now the angels of GOD's blessings descend to us; and by Him the angels of our prayers and praises ascend to GOD (1:51).

- He is the Destroyed Temple, razed to the ground by the hands of wicked men, but out of which GOD creates a spiritual and lasting temple that none can mar nor destroy (2:19).

CHRIST is the Uplifted One, of whom the uplifted serpent of brass in the wilderness was but a type.

- He gives life by His death, and lifting up to [ 10 ] those bowed down by sin (3:14).
- He gives His flesh for the life of the world (6:51-53). His flesh and Blood are not only the removers of guilt, but the satisfiers of the heart.
- He is the Door by means of Whom ("**By Me**" means, *by means of Me*) we enter into the pastures of His provision and peace (10:9).
- He, As the good Shepherd, gives Himself for us in death, that He may communicate His life to us.
- He became identified with us in our sin, by His death, in time, that we might be partakers of His life in its eternalness and energy (10:10, 28).
- He is the One about Whom the HOLY SPIRIT made Caiaphas speak, when he said: "**It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people**" (11:50). The necessity of His death for us is found in the lostness of our condition, for if He died not for us, we perish for ever.
- He is the Corn of Wheat which must fall into the ground of our death, if we are to live in the fruit of His life (12:24).

He comes to the hour of all hours in the world's history, and into the trouble and sorrow of all trouble and sorrow, when He exclaims: "**Now is My soul troubled,**" &c. (12:27).

He knew it was the night of His anguish when Judas betrayed Him. It was not only night in the physical universe, but in the moral and spiritual realm too, so He entered into the night, to bring us into the light (13:30).

Even when He is in the light of GOD's presence, praying His wonderful prayer, the shadow of the cross flits across His path; hence, we hear Him saying: "**For their sakes I sanctify Myself**" (17:19) ; and then we reach the climax when He is fixed by the nails to the tree, and still the Spirit emphasizes and explains that the pierced CHRIST is the One of Whom He had spoken at the first.

The Paschal Lamb which protected Israel in Egypt, and the Pierced One of the Prophetic Psalm are one and the same. He had no other to teach, [ 11 ]  
no other lesson to give. The CHRIST of Calvary, the passion of the cross, is the sum of all He has said. And we say:

"No subject so glorious as He;  
No theme so affecting to us."

V. *CHRIST in His Atonement is the Substance of all.*

Preaching. *The teaching of the Spirit in the Word about CHRIST's atonement is to be the substance of our preaching to the world.*

"The whole secret of Christianity is contained in CHRIST's death," as Dr. Denney says; or perhaps we might say: "The whole secret is in the CHRIST that died"; for, while we speak of the atonement of CHRIST, it is more expressive to speak of CHRIST in His atonement. The worker in the work, and not the work apart from the worker.

Dr. Saphir, in calling attention to Paul's words, "**I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified**" (I Corinthians 2:2), says: "He preaches CHRIST crucified; not the crucifixion. We do not preach the death of CHRIST as a past event, but the Lord Himself, Who, having offered Himself by the eternal Spirit, is now at the right hand of GOD, to dispense the blessings which He has purchased with His own Blood. We do not go to the cross, but to JESUS the Son of GOD, who, through death, entered the Heavenly Sanctuary. From Him we receive the gifts of His grace. He Himself bestows the pardon, which His atonement secured. All the blessings of the New Testament in His Blood are sent by the Lord Himself, and they are doubly precious to us, because they come from the exalted JESUS, the same Saviour Whose hands and feet were pierced on the cross." This is the sum and substance of all true preaching, and the right standpoint from which to preach.

When we look through the Acts of the Apostles, we find [ 12 ] the attitude of those who preach is, they point to the CHRIST on the throne in resurrection power, Who was on the cross in substitutionary death.

Let us take one of the several words rendered "**preach**," and trace it through the Acts and see how this is brought out.

"The word '**preach**' occurs some 112 times in the New Testament - and means *to proclaim*"; it is the accepted equivalent for six different Greek verbs.

Three of these are from a common root, which means *to bear a message or bring tidings*. This statement covers about sixty cases. As to the other three Greek words, one is used over fifty times, and means *to publish or proclaim*; another six times, and means *to say, speak or talk about*. The other, which means *to dispute or reason*, is the only one which suggests a formal discourse or argument and this is only used twice.

Let us look at one of these words: the one which signifies *to evangelize, to proclaim glad tidings*, and always the glad tidings about CHRIST.

"**They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ**", 5:42).

"**Went everywhere preaching the Word**" (8:4).

"**Preaching the things concerning the Kingdom**" (8:12).

"**Preached the gospel**" (8:25).

"**Preached unto him Jesus**" (8:35).

"**Preaching peace by Jesus Christ**" (10:36).

"**Preaching the Lord Jesus**" (11:20).

"**Declare unto you glad tidings**" (13:32).

"**Preached the gospel**" (14:7).

"**Preach unto you**" (14:15).

"**Preached the gospel**" (14:21).

**"Preaching the Word of the Lord" (15:35).**

**"Preach the gospel unto them" (16:10).**

**"Preached Jesus and the resurrection" (17:18). [ 13 ]**

If these passages are prayerfully studied they will more or less revolve round a Person, an event, and a purpose. The purpose is GOD's design to bless man through CHRIST, as indicated in the words and context of Acts 13:32, for, as the apostle says, the good tidings which he declared had to do with **"the promise which was made unto the fathers"**; hence, he proclaimed that **"through this Man"** forgiveness of sins was obtained. The event was the death of CHRIST in its vicariousness; hence, when the evangelist found the eunuch reading of CHRIST's life being taken away, he **"preached unto him Jesus,"** from the very Scripture he was reading (Acts 8:35); and the Person, Who was the soul, the sum, and the substance of apostolic testimony from first to last was CHRIST, for they **"They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ"** (Acts 5:42).

VI. *CHRIST in His Atonement is the Center of all the Graces.*

The HOLY SPIRIT has summarized the graces as faith, hope, and love.

- Faith *looks back* to the cross and sees CHRIST as the Sin-Bearer;
- Love *looks up* to the throne and sings, **"He loved me and gave Himself for me"**; and
- Hope *looks on* to the glory and sees the slain Lamb is the Light of it.
  
- Faith *rests on*, the foundation of CHRIST's finished work;
- Love is *inspired by* the fire of Calvary; and
- Hope is *expectant of* the pierced King.
  
- Faith's testimony is, "His atoning Blood frees me from sin and rests me about salvation";
- Love's witness is, "He Who was on the cross is my love"; and
- Hope's jubilant note is, "Through the cross to the light."

"Faith goes up the stairs which love has made, and looks out of the window which hope has opened."

There are many passages of Holy Writ which might be taken to illustrate how these three graces centralize and radiate from the cross as the light from the sun, but I [ 14 ] content myself with giving three - (Romans 3:25; I. John 4:19; and Titus 2:13, 14).

### FAITH'S FOUNDATION

**"Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25).**

GOD's thought of grace, as well as our act of faith, centralizes and rests in the atonement of CHRIST.

GOD sets Him forth as the **Propitiation** or **Mercy Seat**. The Mercy Seat was the place where atonement was made, so we might read for propitiation *"the price of expiation."*

The price is the Blood; expiation is the result, Godward; and redemption is the result of our faith in the Expiator.

**We must make much of Him, when we see the meaning of His death, as one has said: "Looking upon the Crucified . . . you understand the joy with which, from age to age, men have spoken of a death which is their life, of a cross which is their crown and glory. You are in no mood to disparage the doctrine of the atoning Blood; to place it in the background of your Christianity; to obscure the cross behind even the roofs of Bethlehem."**

Faith can find no rest but in the cross of CHRIST's atonement, even as Noah's dove could find no resting-place for her foot but in the ark, when Noah first sent her out.

- The object of faith is CHRIST in the foundation of His atonement;
- The ground of faith is CHRIST in the assurance of His Word;
- The growth of faith is dependent upon CHRIST as its Root;
- The atmosphere of faith is the love of CHRIST;
- The character of faith is moulded by Him Who is the Author and Finisher of faith;
- The food of faith is the CHRIST in His promises; and the expression of faith is obedience to Him Who loved even to death. [ 15 ]

### LOVE'S INSPIRATION

**"We love him, because he first loved us"** (I. John 4:19).

How did He love? The Son of GOD **"Who loved us, and gave Himself for us"**, even we who had given ourselves up to sin. The holding power which enabled Him to give Himself up to such a terrible death for us was His love. That love is the fire that kindled our affection.

George Eliot says: " 'Tis what I love determines how I love." The believer loves the "what" because of the "who." The cross is precious because of the CHRIST. That giving up makes our giving up easy. That sacrifice moves us to sacrifice. That passion kindles a like flame.

Love is our life,  
The blood that courses through the heart:  
And vibrates in all.

### HOPE'S CONCENTRATION

**"Looking for that blessed hope . . . Who gave Himself for us"** (Titus 2:13, 14).

The spring of hope flows from the Smitten Rock. The bright outlook of hope is possible because of the eminence of Calvary's Mount. Longfellow says:

"Thoughts of Him to-day have oft been borne inward upon me,  
Wherefore I do not know, but strong is the feeling within me  
That once more I shall see a face I have never forgotten."

We can never forget that face that was marred for us. The gory clots of Gethsemane are the glory spots of our blessing. The wound-prints are prophetic hints of glory tints.

Our faith can never be weak, our love small, nor our [ 16 ] hope dim, as we know the CHRIST of Calvary, as Saphir says:

"JESUS CHRIST crucified. See here the foundation of our faith, the source of our love, the spring of our hope."

VII. *CHRIST in His Atonement is the Medium of all Blessing.*

There is one expression which is frequently used in describing the Lord JESUS as the medium by Whom blessing comes to us, and that is,

**"THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,"**

or an equivalent term. The preposition "*dia*" means more than "*through*," as by a channel, like a pipe being the medium by which the water in the cistern flows to the tap; the word denotes, as found in connection with CHRIST, *an active agent*, therefore the expression, "*By means of*," better conveys the sense.

Dr. Bullinger, in his Greek Lexicon, says: "*Dia*, with genitive, through (as proceeding from), through (by means of), marking the agency, or instrument, of an action."

It is impossible to turn to a tithe of the Scriptures where blessings are said to come "**through our Lord**," or by means of His death. Let us turn to Romans 5:and note seven blessings:

**"PEACE"**

**"Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 1).**

CHRIST is the Peace-maker, and we are, by our faith, the peace-takers. The Shiloh waters of GOD's peace flow from the stricken rock of Calvary, and we come with the cup of our faith and slake our thirst as we partake of Him.

**"ACCESS"**

**"By [through] Whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2)**

CHRIST wept into the distance and darkness of our deserving [ 17 ] and we are brought into the faultlessness of His perfection and the fulness of His grace by means of His procuring death.

**SALVATION**

**"We shall be saved from wrath through Him" (verse 9).**

The wrath is prospective, looming in the distance like an approaching storm about to break upon the sinner to his confusion and condemnation, but by means of Him Who has been condemned for us, we stand where no judgment can ever reach us.

## RECONCILIATION

**"Reconciled to God by [through] the death of His Son"** (verse 10).

To be reconciled means *to have one's feelings changed towards another*. CHRIST did not come to reconcile GOD to us, but GOD was in CHRIST reconciling us to Himself. This change has been wrought by GOD in CHRIST. His love has conquered our enmity.

## JOY

**"We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by [through] Whom we have now received the atonement"** (verse 11).

Spurgeon says: "There. is a sweet joy which comes to us through sorrow;" especially is that true in the joy which is born of Calvary's sorrow. Our Easter is blithe with joy, because Calvary's night was black with sorrow.

## "LIFE"

**"Reign in life by [through] One, Jesus Christ"** (ver. 17).

As natural life is the union of spirit and body, so spiritual life is the union of the Lord and the believer. Life is consciousness of being, so the believer can say, **"I know Him Whom I have believed."** This life of union [ 18 ] comes through CHRIST's death. The corn of wheat having fallen into the ground and died, is no longer alone. The life to which reference is made is comprehensive; it not only refers to present blessing, but future glory.

## "RIGHTEOUSNESS"

**". . . by the righteousness of one"** (ver. 18).

Dr. Moule paraphrases verse 18: "Through one deed of righteousness." What deed? He comments: "It seems possible to explain the word here of the Lord's atoning act, satisfying the law for us, and of the accepting 'act and deed' of the Father, declaring Him accepted, and us in Him."

It will be seen that everyone of these blessings centralizes in the death of CHRIST, like the spokes of a wheel in the hub. All blessings, like the sun's beneficent rays, emanate from the sun of CHRIST's atoning death. Dr. Saphir aptly remarks: "CHRIST crucified by our sins brings to us GOD in the fullness of love; brings us to GOD in the fullness of righteousness. As our life begins at the cross, so, throughout our new life, CHRIST crucified is the centre of our love and faith."

"The only thing I want," said Bishop Hamilton in his dying moments, "is to place my whole confidence more and more perfectly in the precious Blood."

We may well say, "The Blood of CHRIST is the only thing we want, for everything is in Him Who shed it." As illustrating how CHRIST in His atonement is everything and does everything, ponder the following Bible Reading.

- It averts the judgment of GOD against sin, as the Blood of the paschal Lamb did on the night of the Passover (Exodus 12:13; 1 Corinthians 5:7).
- It converts the one who believes in the Substitute, even as the Blood of cleansing changed the position and condition of the [ 19 ] cleansed leper (Leviticus 14:14).
- It inverts the position we once occupied in relation to the world, for instead of being in it, we are now separated from it, even as GOD said to Pharaoh of Israel: "**I will put a division [redemption, margin] between thy people and My people**" (Exodus 8:23).
- The Blood inserts us into a New place, even as the Blood of the covenant enabled Moses and the elders to draw nigh and see the GOD of Israel (Exodus 24:5-10).
- The Blood asserts that the blessings of pardon (Ephesians 1:7), peace (Colossians 1:20), power (Revelation 12:11), purity ( I John 1:7), and paradise are secured in Him (Revelation 7:14).
- The Blood exerts a powerful influence in its practical bearing, for it kills sin (Romans 6:1-15), slays self (II. Corinthians 5:15), and overcomes pride (Philippians 2:5-8); and
- The Blood of CHRIST subverts the powers of hell, which have been conquered by His death, even as the Philistines were defeated when the sacrificial lamb was offered up (I Samuel 7:9, 10; Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 2:15).

We might say a good deal more in a general way, but this introductory lecture will suffice to show the importance and place of the atonement of CHRIST. If we are right about His finished work, we shall be right everywhere. If we are wrong here, we are wrong everywhere. [ 20 ]

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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