

The Greatest Theme in the World

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

SIN AND CHRIST'S ATONEMENT

Low thoughts about sin will lead to lower thoughts about CHRIST's sacrifice. He who only sees a man suffering in a good cause in the CHRIST of Calvary fails to understand the teaching of Scripture. The Spirit's utterance is dear and emphatic as to CHRIST's death in relation to sin and sinners.

Let us put the whole subject in the form of questions.

1. *For whom did CHRIST die?*

CHRIST is said to have died for "**sinners**" and for the "**ungodly**," and that GOD's "**enemies**" are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son (Romans 5:6, 8, 10).

2. *For what did He die?*

"Our sins" - "He died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3).

3. *Why did CHRIST come into the world?*

To "**put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself**" (Hebrews 9:26). "**He was manifested to take away our sins**" (I John 3:5).

4. *Did GOD have anything to do with that death for sin?*

He made "**His soul an offering for sin**" (Isaiah 53:10). "**He made Him to be sin for us**" (II Corinthians 5:21).

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

5. *Did CHRIST die willingly?*

"He gave Himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4).

6. *What did He do with our sins?*

"Bare the sins of many" (Isaiah 53:12). **"Offered to bear the sins of many"** (Hebrews 9:28). [63]

7. *Where did He bear our sins?*

"In His own body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24).

8. *Is it necessary for Him to repeat the act?*

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (I Peter 3:18).

"he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" Offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all (Hebrews 10:12).

9. *Why did He die?*

- To make an atonement for sin (Hebrews 1:3; 2:17; John 2:2).
- To put away the hindrance of sin (Hebrews 9:26).
- To take away the guilt of sin (Romans 4:25).
- To cleanse from the pollution of sin (Revelation 1:5).
- To make us dead to sins (I Peter 2:24).
- To constitute us righteous (Romans 5:19; II Corinthians 5:21).
- To deliver us from the world (Galatians 1:4).
- To separate us from self (II Corinthians 5:14, 15).
- To bring us to GOD (I Peter 3:18).

I have only called attention to a few of the Scriptures where CHRIST's death is directly associated with sin. The one thing I want to emphasize is this, that the very words which are used to describe man's sin are found connected directly or indirectly with CHRIST's sacrifice for sin: showing His identification with it, and His complete answer to GOD for it.

Let us look at some Old Testament words.

I - *SIN*

The principal word for sin is *to miss the mark*. Of the left-handed Benjaminites it is said, they **"could sling a stone at a hair-breadth and not miss"** (Judges 20:16). The word [64] to *"miss"* is rendered sin again and again.

Saul, for instance, confesses, **"I have sinned"** (I Samuel 15:24). He had deviated from the express command of GOD to slay all that pertained to Amalek. He missed his step and fell to his hurt.

Girdlestone calls attention to the fact that the same word is found in connection with the offerings for sin and the blessings which accrue. "The Piel form, or intensive voice, of this verb is rendered as follows:

- to make reconciliation (II Chronicles 29:24);
- to bear loss (Genesis 31:39);
- offered it for sin (Leviticus 9:15);
- to cleanse from sin (Exodus 29:36); and
- to purge or purify (Leviticus 8:15)."

The sin offering is a type of CHRIST as the One Who has borne the judgment of GOD against sin. All the offering that was burnt outside the camp was utterly consumed (Leviticus 4:11, 12). The sinner deserves to be consumed with the judgment of GOD because of his sin. As the offerer watched the burning of the victim, he would say, "There am I, and my sin being consumed in the offering offered in my stead."

CHRIST has so identified Himself with our sin that He speaks of it as His own, hence, in the prophetic word we hear Him saying, "**There is no rest in My bones, because of My sin**" (Psalm 38:3). The rest, the peace, the health (see margin), which come to us, are because there were no rest and peace for Him. "Because of my sin, He died," the believer says, and because He said "**my sin**," in taking our place, we shall not be called upon to answer for it again, for in Him it is answered for already.

The word for sin is rendered "**bare the loss**" in Genesis 31:39, when Jacob recounts to Laban what he had done in his service. "**That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it . . . in the day the [65] drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my Sleep departed from mine eyes.**" Sleepless, cold, and consumed Jacob said he was in Laban's service, and bore loss too. How much fuller and deeper these words describe what our Lord endured for us. He was chilled by the affronts of man, scorched by the judgment of GOD, and lost all the bliss of Heaven for the time being, to save us from the bitterness of hell and to bring us into the blessedness of Heaven.

II - INIQUITY

The Hebrew word "*avah*" means *a distortion*, as when a person's body is distorted because he is in pain, or a woman in travail. It is rendered "**bowed down**" in Isaiah 21:3. It means also to pervert, as when one goes astray from the right path, hence, it is rendered "**perverted**" in calling attention to Israel's forgetting the Lord (Jeremiah 3:21). Its full significance, as descriptive of sin, is *to do wrong or wickedly*, hence, it corresponds to our word "wrong," namely, *that which is wrung out of its course*. (See the word rendered "**done wickedly**" in II. Samuel 24:17; "**done perversely**" in 1 Kings 8:47; "**done amiss**" in II Chronicles 6:37; and "**committed iniquity**" in Psalm 106:6).

CHRIST in the prophetic Psalm of His suffering says, "**I am troubled**" (Psalm 38:6). The word "**troubled**" or "**bent**" is the same as rendered "**iniquity**." We had bent ourselves by sin, and perverted the powers which GOD had entrusted to us for His glory to our own use. CHRIST had

to be bent in suffering for us before we could be righted and brought back to the right path. Sin had overturned everything (the word is rendered "**overturn**" in Ezekiel 21:27), and CHRIST came into our ruin that He might turn us again, and make us to be as we were. Dr. Maclaren explains [66] the sentence, "*I am twisted with pain*," and comments, "Contorted in pain, bent down by weakness. burning with inward fever, diseased in every tortured atom of flesh, He is utterly worn out and broken."

The intensity of the Lord's sufferings can only be measured by the holiness of GOD, by the righteousness of the law, by the desert of sin, by the pangs of death, by the woes of the lost, and by the pains of hell.

III - *TRANSGRESSION*

Transgression is the passing over the boundary of GOD's law.

Man in his self-will daring to "*go beyond*" (word rendered "**go beyond**" in Numbers 22:18) the prohibition of the Lord, hence, Saul "**transgressed the commandment of the Lord**" (I Samuel 15:24), and Israel "**transgressed the covenant**" (Hosea 6:7; 8:1). The word, in a general way, means to pass over or to pass by, as a lamp passing between two objects (Genesis 15:17); as a person passing over a river (Deuteronomy 12:10); and as waves passing over an individual to his submergence (Psalm 124:4,5).

CHRIST uses the word in this latter sense when He realizes the waves of GOD's wrath against sin are submerging Him, and as identified with our sins, says, "**Mine iniquities are gone over Mine head**" (Psalm 38:4). Jonah passed over the command of the Lord and had to bear the punishment of his disobedience, as he says, "**Thy waves passed over me**" (Jonah 2:3); so we have transgressed GOD's law, and we deserve to be punished; but CHRIST, our Divine Jonah, has been plunged beneath the waters of judgment on our behalf, and now we can bear our testimony and say, "**He hath made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all.**" [67]

IV - *REBELLION*

To sin is bad, to distort the right and make it wrong is worse, to go beyond the Divine fiat is worst, but to add rebellion to these is worse than the worst. GOD said to Israel, "**I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me**" (Isaiah 1:2).

When one has failed to do right, done absolute wrong, broken the law, and then dares to stand with clenched fist and defy the One against Whom the previous acts had been committed, he deserves to be left for judgment. Did GOD thus leave the sinner? No. Here is the wonder of the Gospel. Four times the word rendered "**sin**" and "**rebelled**" is applied to CHRIST. It is translated in Isaiah 53:5, 8, 12 - "**Transgression**" and "**Transgressors**."

Here, again, we are impressed with CHRIST's close identification with our sin, for the literal meaning of the sentence, "**wounded for our transgressions**" is, "He was the wounded One unto death because of our transgressions." As Newton says, literally, "from our transgressions. Our transgressions are here spoken of as the source whence the sufferings spoken of flowed out to our Substitute."

This oneness with us and our oneness with Him is further emphasized in the words, "**Numbered with the transgressors.**"

I remember a brother in reading the words of Scripture descriptive of CHRIST being crucified with the two thieves mistakenly read it as follows: "Where they crucified Him, and two other malefactors with Him." By adding the word "other" the reader made 'CHRIST a malefactor. This could not be true personally, but it was true representatively, for being "**numbered with the transgressors**" (Mark 15:28), He was treated as a thief (Mark 15:28).

Mark it does not say He was numbered with sinners, but with "**transgressors**," [68] namely, rebels. The full force is further brought out when it is known that the word "**malefactor**" means a doer of some particular evil. The two thieves suffered the just penalty of the law (Luke 23:41), because of some particular crime. CHRIST identified Himself with the worst of characters that He might save the worst of them. The arms of the atoning Saviour are found beneath the lowest. His Blood is sufficient to cleanse the vilest, and it is efficient to all who will receive Him.

V - UNFAITHFULNESS, OR TRESPASS

The Hebrew word "ma'al" seems to indicate *faithlessness, treachery, and apostasy*. It is rendered "**trespass**" about thirty times. Parkhurst says of its meaning - "To straddle with the feet too much to one side, and so decline towards it" a declining or deflection from duty and truth." The word is rendered "**falsehood**" in Job 21:34.

This word makes sin yet blacker. It is employed to describe the sin of Achan (Joshua 7:1), for he was unfaithful to his trust in taking to his own use what the Lord had consecrated to Himself. Under the law, if an Israelite sinned, committed a trespass against the Lord, ignorantly, in the holy things (Leviticus 5:15, 16), or if he trespassed against the Lord in deceiving his neighbour (Leviticus 6:2-7), then he had to make amends according to the Lord's directions, but in each case there had to be a trespass-offering, by means of which the priest had to "**make an atonement**" for the offender, and then, when atonement was made, his trespass "**shall be forgiven him**" (Leviticus 5:16; 6:7). No atonement, no forgiveness.

While there is no direct statement about CHRIST dying for this sin, the typical significance of the trespass offering;; [69] and the priest making atonement by means of it, are sufficient to emphasize the New Testament statement, "**In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins** [trespasses], **according to the riches of His grace**" (Ephesians 1:7).

There is no more grievous sin than the five-fold apostasy mentioned in Hebrews 6:4, 5, which culminates in "**crucifying the Son of God afresh**," and "**putting Him to an open shame**"; and yet right in the midst of the solemn words there is the grace of GOD held out to the penitent. It is impossible to renew the unfaithful ones, "So long as they are again crucifying unto themselves the Son of GOD" (Rotherham's footnote), but as soon as they repent they find they are forgiven for the sake of Him Who made atonement for sin.

VI - OFFENCE, OR SINS OF OMISSION

The one sentence which sums up the meaning of the word "**trespassed**" (Leviticus 5:19), and which is rendered "**offend**" (Hosea 4:15), "**found faulty**" (Hosea 10:2), is, "**Though he wist it not, yet is he guilty**" (Leviticus 5:17).

Ignorance does not free the offender from guilt.

The word is rendered "**trespass offering**" twenty-one times in the Book of Leviticus, and is translated "**sin**" in speaking of CHRIST being made "**an offering for sin**" (Isaiah 53:10).

These words remind us of the New Testament sentence, "**He hath made Him to be sin for us**" (II Corinthians 5:21). We cannot understand the deep mystery of CHRIST being made sin for us, but we accept its reality. Dr. Denney finely says, "It is a counsel of despair to evade it. It is not the puzzle of the New Testament, but the ultimate solution of all puzzles; it is not an irrational quantity that has to be eliminated or explained away, but the keystone of the whole apostolic thought. It [70] is not a blank obscurity in revelation, a spot of impenetrable blackness. It is the focus in which the reconciling love of GOD burns with the purest and intensest flame; it is the foundation light of all day, the master light of all seeing, in the Christian revelation."

VII - *BURDEN*

The Hebrew word "*amal*" gives the consequence of sin, rather than its nature.

It is rendered "**toil**" in Genesis 41:51, "**perverseness**" in Numbers 23:21, "**sorrow**" in Job 3:10, "**wickedness**" in Job 4:8, "**trouble**" in Job 5:7, "**miserable**" in Job 16:2, "**mischief**" in Psalm 10:7, "**pain**" in Psalm 25:15, "**labor**" and "**travail**" in Ecclesiastes 1:3; 2:10, 11, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24; and "**iniquity**" in Habbakuk 1:13.

All this goes to show the toil and misery of sin; the pain it ministers to and the sorrow it causes.

The word is applied to CHRIST in speaking of "**the travail of His soul**" (Isaiah 53:11). Parkhurst says of the word, "Afflictive labour, toil, travail, weariness, irksomeness, which one endures oneself. Also what occasions toil or irksomeness to another, or, in our old English phrase, what irketh him."

When Joseph looked upon his firstborn, he called him **Manasseh** ("*forgetting*"); "**for God**," said he, "**hath made me forget all my toil**." He had been in the pit, and in the prison, and had been hurt (Psalm 105:18), and misrepresented, but he forgot it all in the comfort of his home life; so CHRIST shall see the fruit of the "**travail of His soul and be satisfied**."

Sin had caused us the travail and pain it always brings, and it brought CHRIST into pain and anguish, before He could bring us out of it. But since He has been into the place of sin's consequence and burden, He can bring out from sin's condemnation and curse. [71]

~ end of chapter 4 ~
