

CHRIST DIED FOR YOU

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." I Peter 2:24.

There are four things which prove that sin is a reality.

1. Experience.

Man knows that he is a sinner, that he has come short of perfection. There are sins of commission, when God's law is violated. There are sins of omission, when duties are neglected.

2. Observation.

As we look about us, we recognize that none of us are perfect; even the best of us have some faults. Sin is everywhere manifest to those who have eyes to see. Any eye must be blind that does not see the blighting, and blasting, and brutalizing power of sin in human life.

3. History.

If we look over the record of man's achievements, one permanent characteristic always meets us. The highest achievements, the noblest deeds, and the most glorious triumphs are stained with human sin.

4. Scripture.

The Bible plainly teaches that man is a sinner. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Ecclesiastes 7:20). "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10).

Experience teaches, observation discloses, and history and the Scriptures declare the fact of sin. We know too much about sin to deny it; we have watched its results too often to ignore it; and we are too human to evade it. The verdict of the Holy Spirit is that "There is no man that sinneth not." (I Kings 8:46).

Sin is universal. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12). All are not sinners in exactly the same way, nor to the same extent, yet all are sinners. While the word, "sin," is going out of style, yet as an act it is gaining in popularity. There are those who prefer to call sin by some less objectionable name and regard it as merely an error, a mistake, a failure, or an infirmity. Sin is something to be feared, and dreaded, and hated, and avoided at all costs. Sin is the most serious and dreadful thing in the world. It is a transgression of the law of God. It is blindness in the eye, hardness in the heart, perversity in the will, and selfishness in the life. All of the world's confusion, bitterness, suffering, and sadness are the results of sin. Man's greatest need is the forgiveness of sins.

There are three deadly facts about sin. One fact is the guilt of sin. When we say that the sinner is guilty, we mean that he is to blame for his sins. The responsibility for them abides on him. A second deadly fact about sin is the stain of it. The soul is defiled by sin. Your most respectable sin leaves a mark on your soul. The soul is tainted by sin as a glass of pure water is tainted by a drop of ink. And the stain of sin, like the spot of blood on Lady Macbeth's hand, is something that we cannot wash out. A third deadly fact about sin is the power of it. Sin has an enslaving power. Each sin weaves another thread of the rope that binds one until liberty is lost and sin's tyranny is complete.

In the archives of glory there was a judgment bill against us which had to be met. It was beyond our ability, our powers, and our means. The charge of it was so

great, the pressure of it so enormous, the debt of it so heavy, that not all of us together could have had enough, offered enough, or paid enough to redeem a single soul.

I. What Christ Did for You.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." This text brings you face to face with Christ. The issue is Christ, and only Christ. Have you met Him? Have you had any transaction with Him? Have you been born again? Has He come into your life? If not, your religion is a pitiable, false refuge. Your temporal and your eternal welfare depends upon your relation to Him.

It is to Christ as your sin-bearer that I am about to direct your attention. If any theme in the Scriptures has an importance above all the rest, it is the subject of the atoning blood of Christ. The New Testament makes more of His death than of anything else about Him. Again and again, I hope to repeat the old, old story of the substitution of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit help you to behold that wondrous sight of the Redeemer suffering for you. The word, "stripes," in the Greek presents a picture of our Lord's lacerated back after the scourging He endured. The Romans used a scourge of cords or thongs, to which were attached pieces of lead or brass or sharp-pointed bones. Criminals who were condemned to crucifixion were ordinarily scourged before being executed. The victim was stripped to the waist and bound in a stooping position to a post, with his hands behind his back. The suffering under the lash was intense. The body was frightfully lacerated. Peter remembered the body of our Lord after the scourging, when the flesh was so dreadfully mangled that the disfigured form appeared in his eyes as one single bruise.

Thus we have the portrait of the suffering Saviour, His blessed face so pummeled by the hard fists of the mob that it did not look like a human face any more, His back lacerated by the Roman scourge so that it was one mass of open, raw, quivering flesh trickling with blood, and His heart torn with anguish because of the bitter, caustic words that were hurled at Him. On that bleeding, lacerated back was laid the cross. And it was for you that He suffered all of this, as much so as if you had been the only sinner in all the universe.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The sins which would have crushed you were actually and literally borne by another. He bore your sin as well as your punishment. The infinitely glorious Son of God actually stooped to become your sin-bearer. "Christ died for our sins." The substitution was carried out by Christ personally, not by proxy. Everything He did for you, He did Himself. "Jesus paid our debt, all the debt we owe. Although sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow." "He bare our sins." The Greek word for "bare" suggests the idea of a great weight. He stooped under them, as it were; they were a load to Him. Our Lord carried our sins as a burden up to the cross.

If you are ever tempted to doubt the love of God, look at Christ dying in your place. He died for you. When he bore your sins up to the tree, He died to save you from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the presence of sin. The cross on which He died for you strips off the veneer, cuts away the finery, reveals the weakness, the degradation, the foulness, and the enmity of the thing we call sin. His cross also tells us of the power of sin. What sin did to Christ on the cross is an illustration of its power in the hearts and lives of its devotees. His blood

was sufficient to cancel the guilt of sin, to discharge that tremendous burden, and to settle that crushing debt.

"He breaks the power of canceled sin
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean
His blood availed for me."

Before you leave the cross, I want you, as a believer in Christ, to see on that cross your sins hanging up as dead. Christ carried them up to the cross and slew them.

Calvary's cross tells you that your sin is neither hopeless nor incurable. Into a hopeless and despairing world came the thrilling hopefulness of Calvary. When a surgeon is called to see a patient, his conduct is usually determined by his hope. If there is any hope that the patient can be cured, the surgeon operates immediately; but if the case is absolutely hopeless, no surgeon worthy of the name would attempt an operation. He acts because he hopes. He operates because he hopes. If there is not a single ray of hope, he does not operate on the patient. The very fact that God has intervened and given His Son, who died for us on Calvary, tells us that sin is not incurable. Christ grappled with sin on Calvary by bearing it, by sharing in its condemnation, by taking its agony into His own heart, and by letting Himself be pierced by all its arrows. Had He not died, we would have died an eternal death. He died that we might live.

II. What You Can Do for Christ.

"That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." That Christ died for us ought to be our first thought when we awake in the morning; it ought to give purity to our thoughts, quality to our words, and truth to our actions throughout the day; and it ought to be remembered gratefully as we fall asleep at night. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Because of what Christ has done for us, we ought to do our very best for Him. One day a missionary in India was hurrying along the banks of the Ganges River when he saw a native woman gazing at the water. In her arms was a sick infant, while at her side stood a handsome and healthy boy. On questioning her, the missionary found that she was in deep distress, trying to decide what offering to give her god. The missionary tried to tell her of the love and sacrifice of Jesus for her; but after some time, he had to leave. Some hours later, he again met the woman with the sick baby in her arms. The handsome boy was gone. The missionary knew what had happened. The woman had thrown the boy to the crocodiles. "I made an offering to my god," she said. "But why did you give your well boy? Why not the sick infant?" asked the missionary. Rising to her feet, the woman replied, "We give our gods our best."

Since Christ suffered and died for you, you ought to live as a righteous person accepted in the Beloved, living by His righteousness and rejoicing in it, blessing and magnifying His holy name. The ultimate efficacy of the death of Christ upon the cross depends on what it does to you.

You should and can live righteously. The world hates pious pretenders. Sanctimoniousness sickens people. When you receive Christ as your Saviour, you also receive His life. That life will seek to express itself. That is why Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16). He said, "Let it shine," because that is all you can do. You cannot make it shine, but you can let it shine. Oh, how

anxious the world is to see heaven's light shining out of human eyes.

A man was crossing to America by steamship. Being quite stingy, he wanted to save every cent possible; therefore, he bought a large quantity of crackers and cheese, which he ate daily to save the cost of meals. He could smell the savory food as it was enjoyed by others three times a day, but he denied himself and munched away on cheese and crackers. One day a fellow passenger asked him why he did not eat in the dining room. He replied that he was economizing by making lunches of cheese and crackers. His fellow traveler said, "Let me see your ticket." When he looked at it, he said, "Why, man, haven't you noticed that your ticket includes meals and berth all the way to America?"

God is likewise waiting and longing to feed us with all the bounty of heaven's table as we travel homeward. It is sad, indeed, that so many of us live a cheese-and-cracker existence.

A righteous life is a joyful life. This fact has been proved by many influential and useful Christians. Biographers of Fenelon say that he lived in such intimate fellowship with the Lord that his very face shone. Lord Peterborough, a sceptic, was obliged to spend the night with him at an inn. In the morning he rushed away, saying, "If I stay another night with that man, I shall be a Christian in spite of myself." Someone else said of him, "His manners were full of grace, his voice was full of love, and his face was full of glory."

God has a plan for your life. He provided for your redemption before the foundation of the world. If you are willing to accept Christ as your Saviour and give yourself to Him in full surrender, you can fulfill God's plan for you. On the cross, Christ had His hands stretched out toward a wandering, stumbling, blundering, disturbed, diseased, disappointed, discouraged, distressed, disheartened, disobedient, dissipated, degraded world, saying, "Sinner, I know your condition. I know all about you. I love you. I have provided a way of escape for you. Will you take it? Will you take it now? Will you accept me as your Saviour now?"