

## WHY DID CHRIST DIE?

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." I Peter 3:18.

There are very few, if any, more sublime statements than this. We shall find it exceedingly profitable to consider some of the great truths that are set forth therein.

### I. The Fact of Sin.

Sin is a state and refers to the depraved nature which we received from Adam. Adam plunged into sin. Because Adam was the federal head of the human race all mankind plunged into sin with him. "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). The consequence of Adam's sin to the world is sin everywhere. In the Garden of Eden sin burst upon the world at the foot of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Like a raging torrent, it swept through the world until every community from Adam until now has felt its pollution. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Sin is the most fearful of all realities. It is God's enemy and man's destroyer. The Bible does not leave us in the dark about the awful and universal fact of sin in human lives. Sin is the dark tragedy in every human life.

### II. The Fact of A Saviour.

God sent His Son to be the Saviour of sinners. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). This Saviour is Jesus of Nazareth, whose name blossoms on the pages of history like the flowers of a thousand springtimes in one bouquet, and whose name sounds down the corridors of the centuries like the music of all choirs poured forth in one anthem. Christ was irreproachable in His life. His life was a thrilling record of goodness - goodness suggesting every thought, causing every utterance and ennobling every deed. His entire life possessed the white stainlessness of sinlessness. To His enemies He said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46).

This Saviour was mighty as a miracle-worker. To blind men He gave sight, to deaf people He gave keen ears, to the dumb He gave new tongues, to the crippled He gave new limbs, to the sick He gave healing and to the dead He gave life. Christ was also a marvelous teacher. Of Him it was said, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Amid all teachers, Christ shines like the blazing sun in the presence of candles. Moreover, Christ was a perfect example for all men. But all of these -- His irreproachable life, His marvelous miracles, His matchless teaching and His perfect example -- would have availed nothing for our salvation had they not been consummated in the cross. He was, is and ever shall be the Saviour. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

### III. The Fact of A Sacrifice.

It is a self-evident truth that people must suffer for sin. Men recognize this truth who never saw the Bible. They know it in China, in darkest Africa and in every land in all the wide world. People know that sin is followed by retribution. It is well known that whatsoever men sow, that shall they also reap. Human statutes everywhere recognize the fact that people must suffer for sin. Civilization would be destroyed if sin were not called to account.

Is there a remedy for sin? Yes, thank God, there is. Christianity is the gospel of redemption, so we are to think of Christ as the substitutionary, sin-bearing and atoning Redeemer and Saviour. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10). "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24). Of His own free will Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Christ's death is unique. It stands alone in its unapproachable glory. It is surrounded with an atmosphere of blessed mystery. He did not die simply as a martyr for the truth. It was sin that drove Him to Calvary, shaped the cross, nailed Him to it and watched Him die. It was sin that crucified Christ. On the cross, where the history of human guilt culminated, "He was wounded for our transgressions." On the cross, where the purposes of divine love were made intelligible, "He was bruised for our iniquities." As our Substitute on the cross, where the majesty of the law was vindicated, He bore the penalty of our transgressions and iniquities. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (I John 4:14). His work as Saviour was accomplished on the cross when He said, "It is finished."

Christ on the cross made up before God for all that we failed to be and to do. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). He became a ransom for many. The sufferings of Christ were more than physical agony, since He was made sin for us.

"He saw me plunged in deep distress,  
He flew to my relief;  
For me he bore the shameful cross  
And carried all my grief."

The efficacy of Christ's death is revealed in the fact that it was substitutionary. He died for us. Just before Charles H. Spurgeon died, after he had told his loved ones goodbye, somebody said to him, "Mr. Spurgeon, what is your gospel, now that you are dying?" He smiled sweetly and replied in four little words: "Jesus died for me." That gospel is adequate for us and all others.

"Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin in our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." There is just one Saviour and He is the Lord Jesus Christ, but do not forget that in order to save our souls He suffered and died. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was His own free act; He laid down His life of Himself; none could take it from Him.

The Sufferer was the Righteous One, blameless in character, upright in conduct and beneficent in ministry. Yet He suffered, notwithstanding all this. That the unrighteous should suffer appears to be natural; they eat of the fruit of their own doings; they reap as they have sown. But in the agony and death of Christ Jesus we see the undeserved sufferings of "the Holy One and the Just." He died for the unrighteous, for those who had violated the laws of God and man. Christ was brought to the cross by the sins of men. It was on account of those sins that He deliberately and graciously consented to die. Christ suffered all that the justice of God and all that the law of God required. "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). By suffering the curse of the law, He redeemed us from it. The Scriptures are unanimous in attesting the substitutionary character of Christ's sufferings on the cross. He bore our guilt, shame, curse and penalty. He put away the penal consequences of our sins forever. In being nailed to the cross, our Lord was exhibited as an outcast from society, a man who had no rights and a person unworthy of being treated as an ordinary human criminal.

The primary purpose of Christ's sufferings was to manifest the displeasure of God against sin. Christ was treated just as if He had been a sinner, a very great sinner, the greatest of sinners. His sufferings were vicarious. By divine appointment He suffered what sinners deserved to suffer. He suffered in order to make atonement for the sins of sinners.

#### IV. The Fact of Salvation.

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). There is no such thing as salvation apart from Christ. He is the one and only Saviour. Christ suffered voluntarily, intensely and ignominiously "that He might bring us to God." This very purpose implies that men are away from God. This fact underlies all. Christ Jesus came into the world to bring men to God, because they had wandered off into alienation and distance from Him in both heart and life. Christ never lost sight of this fact. He never permitted His heart to escape the burden and pressure of it. Whether asserted directly or not on all occasions, man's lost condition was always and everywhere present in His thinking. He saw men away from God in the sense that they were morally and spiritually blind, and did not know how nor where to find Him. He saw men doing what they could to shut the knowledge and the will of God out of their minds. He saw men away from God in the deeper sense that they had broken the divine law and were under condemnation. He saw them with no power to escape punishment; save through the interposed grace of God; and with no time nor place for the momentous transaction except in the here and now.

Notwithstanding their unworthiness and ill-desert, God loves people and yearns for their salvation. Never has the love of God for men had such expression as in Jesus Christ. Even though men are away from God in alienation, rebellion and sin, God loves them compassionately and graciously with all of the wealth and warmth of His infinite heart. It is only through Jesus Christ that people who are alienated from God are brought back to Him. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He came to be an atoning or vicarious sacrifice in order that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish."

Christ died that we might be saved. He gave His life that He might bring us to God. He died to bring men to the true knowledge of the character and the will of God; to bring men from a state of enmity into one of reconciliation with God; to bring men into a state of likeness to God; and to bring men to fellowship with God. There is redemption, cleansing, sanctification and invigorating life when we are brought to God. You understand what it means when one pays a debt for another. That gives us some idea of the significant meaning of Christ's death for us.

"Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow."

Why is Christ the only One Who can bring us to God? He was divinely appointed for this all-important mission. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ was able to make atonement for sinners because He was sinless, He was the only One Who could make atonement for us because He was without sin. He is qualified for this work because He was both God and man. Your only spiritual hope is in dependence on Christ Who died on the cross for you.

"My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,  
Support me in the whelming flood;  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand."