

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION Chapter 12 Its Effectuation-Continued

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Transcript

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Chapter 12

Its Effectuation-Continued

In our last we showed, first, that in order to satisfy the requirements of Divine justice the incarnate Son was "made under the Law" and that the work He did and the sufferings He endured in order to heal the break between an offended God and His offending people was performed and undergone by Him while acting as their Substitute. Then, second, in the concluding paragraphs we briefly pointed out that in order to be the Substitute of His people Christ had taken upon Him the office of Suretyship. It is of great importance that we should be quite clear upon the latter, for much harm has been done by novices who have grievously misrepresented the Atonement by their crude and carnal conceptions, and the cause of Truth has been much injured by their unwarrantable attempts to illustrate the central fact of the Gospel from supposed analogies in human relations. It cannot be insisted upon too emphatically that the plan of redemption, the office sustained by Christ, and the satisfaction which He rendered to the claims of justice against us, have no parallel in the relations of men to one another. But how often has a popular preacher pictured a criminal, in whose character was no relieving feature, condemned to death for his aggravated crimes. While lying in the condemned cell, or perhaps as he stands upon the scaffold itself, the reigning monarch is supposed to send his or her own son and heir to die in the villain's stead, and then turn him loose on society. Such a monstrous supposition has frequently been offered as an illustration of the amazing fact that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Not only is that imaginary illustration a gross misrepresentation of the Truth, but it is utterly revolting to serious minds and those who love righteousness. It is, too, a horrible degrading of the Gospel and a denial of the uniqueness of the Atonement. The Atonement carries us far above the sphere of the highest relations of created beings into the august counsels of the eternal and incomprehensible God, and it is nothing but a species of impiety for us to bring our petty line to measure counsels in which the "manifold wisdom" of Omniscience is contained. Here as everywhere in connection with the things of God, spiritual things must be compared "with spiritual things" (1 Cor. 2:13) and not with carnal. One part of the Truth must be interpreted by—not drawing upon our imagination, but—by another part of the Truth. It is only in the light of the Word itself—our hearts being opened to receive the same—that we can see light. It is only as "we speak, not in

the words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches" that we can accurately express the grand mysteries of our Faith. Now the term "Surety" is one of the words the Holy Spirit has used of Christ Himself to enable us to understand the better the relation He sustained toward those on whose behalf He transacted and the special office He discharged for their sakes. Now a "surety" is one who is legally obligated to answer for another. A "surety" is one who undertakes for another or for others and who thereby makes himself responsible to render what is due from them or to suffer what is due to them. "I have done judgment and justice. Leave me not to my oppressors. Be Surety for your servant for good. Let not the proud oppress me." (Psa. 119:121, 122) In like manner we find the godly Hezekiah praying, "O Lord, I am oppressed. Be Surety for me." Isaiah 38:14—the Hebrew rendered "undertake for me" is the same as translated "be Surety for me" in Psalm 119:122. Thus, in each instance believers made a request that the Lord would not barely bestow some favor on or confer some privilege on them, but do so under the particular character of a "Surety." By addressing themselves unto their Deliverer under that character it is clear they had knowledge that He had agreed to act in this office for His people. Since the O. T. saints, equally with the N. T. ones, were to benefit from the mediatorial work of the incarnate Son, they were not left in ignorance of the grand truth that He was appointed by the Father, and by His own consent, to serve as the Surety of His people. On Psalm 119:122, John Gill pointed out, "What David prays to God to be for him, that Christ is for all His people. He drew near to God, struck hands with Him, gave His word and bond to pay the debts of His people. He put Himself in their law-place and stead and became responsible to Law and Justice for them. He engaged Himself to make satisfaction for their sins and bring in everlasting righteousness for their justification, and to preserve and keep them and bring them safe to eternal glory and happiness, and thus was being a 'Surety for good' for them." It is worthy of special notice that this particular verse wherein the Lord is besought to act as "Surety" is the only one in the 176 of this Psalm wherein the Word of God is not mentioned under the name of "Law" "Commandments," "statutes," "judgments" etc., thereby intimating that Christ as the Surety of His people met all their obligations and thereby fulfilled the Law in their stead. In the O.T. is found a most striking and blessed type of N. T. teaching on this subject, and, as we might expect, it is found in connection with its initial occurrence. It is an almost if not an entirely unvarying rule that the first mention of anything in Scripture more or less defines its meaning and scope—from the way in which it is employed and the connections in which it is found—and forecasts its subsequent significance. Such is the case here. When seeking to persuade Jacob to allow his beloved Benjamin to accompany his brethren on their journey into Egypt, Judah said, "Send the lad with me. . . I will be surety for him, of my hand shall you require him. If I bring him not unto you, then let me bear the blame forever." (Gen. 43:8,9). That was no idle boast on the part of Jacob's son, as the sequel shows, for he remained true to his promise, though God intervened and spared him from actually fulfilling his trust. The reader will remember how that Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack while they were returning home with the sorely-needed grain and how the whole company went back to Egypt and were brought before its governor. Joseph said, "The man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant, and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father." Whereupon Judah interposed and after explaining the situation in a most touching way, declared, "Thy servant became surety for the lad to my father saying, if I bring him not unto you, then I shall bear the blame of my father forever. Now therefore, I pray you, let your servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren." (Gen. 44:17, 18, 32, 33). Equally beautiful is the sequel and equally striking in completing the type: "Then Joseph could not refrain himself . . . he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him" (Gen. 45:1, 15). It seems strange that no writer—of the many we are acquainted with—has made any attempt to "develop" this blessed evangelical picture and bring out the wondrous details of the type. First, observe the occasion of this incident. It was a matter of

life and death, when Jacob and his household were faced with the prospect of starvation, that this proposal was made (Gen. 43:1-8). In like manner, unless Christ has interposed as the Surety of His people they had received the wages of sin. Second, it was not Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, but Judah who offered to act as "bondman" for Benjamin. Surely it is not without Divine design that in the only chapter in the N. T. where Christ is specifically designated "Surety" we are therein reminded that "our Lord sprang out of Judah" (Heb. 7:14,22). Third, it is to be particularly noted that this office was not compulsorily thrust upon Judah, but that he freely and voluntarily assumed it, as did the antitypical Surety. Fourth, let it also be duly observed that it was not for one unrelated to him but for his own brother that Judah proposed to serve—with which should be linked "he that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it" (Prov. 11:15). Fifth, it was in order to satisfy his father that Judah proposed to act. This at once refutes the error of the Socinians on Hebrews 7:22. Christ was not God's Surety unto us, rather did He serve as the Surety of His people to satisfy the justice of His Father. This is made very clear in the type: "your servant became surety for the lad unto my father." Sixth, the nature of suretyship is here clearly defined, namely, serving as a bondman in the room of another, discharging his obligations, "let your servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord" (Gen. 44:33). Seventh, the result of this typical suretyship was that reconciliation was effected between Joseph and his estranged brethren. So the antitypical Surety secured reconciliation between an estranged God and his alienated people. How very much better, then, is it to take our illustrations of any aspect of Divine Truth from the Word itself, rather than draw upon our imagination or stoop to human history for incidents which supply no analogy! They must indeed be devoid of spiritual vision who fail to see in what has been brought out above a truly remarkable foreshadowment of the Suretyship of Christ. If any regard as 'far fetched' the seven details to which we have called attention, they are to be pitied. It is true that at the last moment God intervened on Judah's behalf, as He did on Isaac's when his father had bound him to the altar and took a knife to slay him—God accepting the will for the deed. Yet just as surely as Abraham "received Isaac in a figure" from the dead (Heb. 11:19), so did Judah in a "figure" and literally so in intention, serve as surety for Benjamin. That God interposed both in Abraham's and Judah's case, exempting them from finalizing their intentions, only serves to emphasize the contrast that He "spared not His own Son" (Rom. 8:32). That which is most relevant to our present subject is the result obtained by Judah's suretyship, namely, healing the breach which had for so long obtained between Joseph and his brethren—the type turning from Judah's relation to his father and the bringing in of Joseph and its effect upon him, being parallel to the type in Genesis 22 turning from Isaac, the willing victim on the altar, to the "ram" caught in the thicket and being slain in his stead. For many years Joseph had been separated from his brethren and they alienated in spirit from him. When they came into his presence the first time, he "made himself strange" to them and "spake roughly to them" (Gen. 42:7)—as God did to us through His Law prior to our conversion. Though the heart of Joseph yearned toward them, he made not himself known to them. It was not until Judah stepped forward as the surety of Benjamin that everything was changed. "Then Joseph could not refrain himself" (45:1) and reconciliation was at once effected! Now it is in the light of all that has been before us above that we are to interpret that blessed declaration "By so much (as the Melchizedek priesthood excelled the Levitical) was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament or covenant" (Heb. 7:22)—the contrast being not between an inferior "surety" and Christ, but the more excellent covenant. Christ is the Surety provided by the Everlasting Covenant, which was administered under the O. T. era (the "old covenant") beneath shadows and figures, but now (in this N. T. era) under the "new covenant" His Suretyship is fully revealed in its actual and historical fulfillment. The typical case of Judah exhibits every essential feature of the Suretyship of Christ and the more clearly it is fixed in our minds the better shall we be able to understand the Antitype. As the Surety of His people Christ undertook to yield that obedience to the Law which they owed and to make reparation to Divine

justice for their sins—to discharge their whole debt both of obedience and suffering. "God did not mince the matter and say, Son, if you will take flesh and die by the hands of wicked men, I will pardon all you die for, for your sake, and you will have an easy task of it. It shall be only enduring the corporeal pains of death, which thousands have undergone in a more terrible manner. But God says this, 'If you will be their Saviour, you must be their Surety. You must pay all the debt of doing the Law and suffering for the breach of the Law. You must bear all their sins. You must suffer all their direful pains of body and soul, all the terrors and horrors due to them for sin from the wrath of God. I will make their sins fall on you with all the weight which would press all the elect into the vengeance of Hell-fire forever,' Those are the terms. Hard enough indeed, but if sinners be saved by My free grace in giving you for them, My righteousness and holiness must be satisfied and glorified. Do you have such a love to My glory and to their poor souls as to undergo all that for them? Yes, said our blessed Lord. I am content, Lo, I come to do your will, O God" (S. Crisp 1691). Third, we have seen that in order to be our Saviour Christ had to be our Substitute. We have shown that to legally act as our Substitute He had to take upon Him the office of Surety. We now push our inquiry still further back, and ask, What was it that justified the Holy One serving as our Surety and the government of a righteous God taking vengeance upon Him for our sins? Not until we obtain the Scriptural answer to this question do we arrive at bedrock and find a sure foundation for faith to rest upon—such a foundation as none of the sophistical reasonings of the carnal mind can shake, and against which the objections of skepticism are shattered into nothing, like the spray of the sea as its proud waves spend themselves upon the granite cliff. Nor do we have far to seek if we attend closely to Hebrews 7:22 federal relationship or covenant oneness is what makes manifest the righteousness of the Great Transaction. There is reciprocal identification between the covenant-Head and the Covenantees. Christ transacted for His people because He was one with them. That Christ acted as the covenant-Head or federal Representative of His people is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47, where He is designated "The last Adam" and "the second Man," the one expression explaining the other. Christ was not "the second man" in order of time and number, for such was Cain, but He was in the sense that He sustained the same relation to His people as the first man did to the whole of his posterity. As the margin of Hosea 6:7 shows, God made a "covenant" with the first Adam, in which he acted and transacted for all his natural seed as their legal head and representative, and therein was "the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. 5:14), for Christ acted and transacted for all His spiritual seed as their legal Head and Representative. Thus in that sense there have been but two men who have sustained this special relation to others before the Divine Law: that each served as a public person, and that thereby a foundation was laid for the judicial consequences of the acts of each to be righteously charged to the account of all for whom each stood. It has been well said that "The Atonement is founded upon the unity of Christ and His people, with whom He took part in flesh and blood" (Jas. Haldane). It is indeed true that all mankind are partakers of flesh and blood, but Christ "took part" only with the children whom God had given Him. This is brought out very clearly in the language of Heb. 2. "For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (v. 11). And again, "Behold I and the children which God has given Me. For as much as the children are partakers of flesh He also Himself likewise took part of the same. . . He took on Him the seed of Abraham"—not of Adam. "Therefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (vv. 13, 14, 15, 17). It was that unity between the Sanctifier and the sanctified which laid the foundation for Christ to "make reconciliation" (or rather) "propitiation for the sins of the people" (v. 17). Under human governments there may be expedients by which the innocent are penalized in order that the guilty may escape, but such a device and arrangement is impossible under the righteous government of God. "Such is the perfection of the Divine government that under it no innocent person every suffered and no guilty person ever escaped" (Jas. Haldane 1847). It

was not that a stranger, unrelated to the elect, had imposed upon Him their obligations, but that the Head of the body of which they are members—and the unity of the head and the members of our physical body (when any member suffers it is registered in the brain, and when the head is severed all the members at once die) is no closer than of Christ and His people (see Eph. 5:32). Just as every member of the human race has been made responsible for the original offence of the first Adam, so Christ is made responsible for the offences of His people and suffered accordingly. Furthermore, they themselves (legally considered) suffered in Him and with Him. "Were it not for the unity of Christ and His people, justice, instead of being magnified, would have been violated in His substitution. However great the dignity of the sufferer, however deep his voluntary humiliation, it would have been no atonement for us. In order to purge our sins, in order to ransom His Church, Christ must so entirely unite Himself with His people, that their sins should become His sins, that His sufferings should be their sufferings, and His death their death" ("The Atonement" by Jas. Haldane). And this is indeed what took place. Christ not only bore our sins in His own body on the tree, but each believer can say, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). Christ not only suffered for us, but we suffered in Him, for we were legally one with Him. He was substituted for us, because He was and is one with us and we are one with Him.

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