

The Person and Work of the Substitute

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the significance of Jesus' person and work as the Substitute, highlighting his death and resurrection as the means of salvation and the nearness of God's righteousness to humanity.

Scripture: Luke 19:10, John 1:1, John 14:6, Romans 1:16, Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Substitutionary Atonement"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the significance of Jesus Christ as the sinner's substitute, illustrating how His life, death, and resurrection fulfill God's provision for humanity's salvation. He explains that Christ, the eternal Son of God, came to seek and save the lost, offering grace and peace instead of judgment. Bonar highlights the importance of understanding the facts of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, which serve as the foundation of the gospel and the assurance of salvation. He reassures believers that God's righteousness is near and accessible, requiring only faith to receive it. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a response of trust in the completed work of Christ, affirming that salvation is a gift already accomplished.

Transcript

Life comes to us through death; and thus grace bounds towards us in righteousness. This we have seen in a general way. But we have something more to learn concerning him who lived and died as the sinner's substitute. The more that we know of his person and his works, the more shall we be satisfied, in heart and conscience, with the provision which God has made for our great need.

Our sin-bearer is the Son of God, the eternal Son of the Father. Of him it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He is "in the Father, and the Father in him;" "the Father dwelleth in him;" "he that hath seen him hath seen the Father;" and "he that heareth him, heareth him that sent him." He is the "Word made flesh;" "God manifest in flesh;" "Jesus the Christ, who has come in the flesh." His name is "Immanuel," God with us; Jesus, the "Saviour;" "Christ," the anointed One, filled with the Spirit without measure; "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, that is, the good news about the kingdom; teaching the multitudes that gathered round him; healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and raising the dead; "receiving sinners and eating with them." "He came to seek and to save that which was lost;" he went about speaking words of grace such as man never spake, saying, "I am the Way, and the truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He went out and in as The Saviour, and in his whole

life we see him as the Shepherd seeking his lost sheep, as the woman her lost piece of silver, and as the father looking out for his lost son. He is "mighty to save;" he is "able to save to the uttermost;" he came to be "the Saviour of the world."

In all these things thus written concerning Jesus, there is good news for the sinner; such as should draw him, in simple confidence to God; making him feel that his case has really been taken up in earnest by God; and that God's thoughts towards him are thoughts, not of anger, but of peace and grace. Heaven has come down to earth! There is goodwill toward man. He is not to be handed over to his great enemy. God has taken his side, and stepped in between him and Satan. This world is not to be burned up, nor its dwellers made eternal exiles from God! The darkness is passing away, and the true light is shining!

Yet it is not the person of Christ, nor his birth, nor his life, that can suffice. That the Son of God took a true but a sinless humanity of the very substance of the virgin; becoming bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; being in very deed the woman's seed; that he dwelt among us for a lifetime, is but the beginning of the good news; the Alpha, but not the Omega. This was shown to Israel, and to us also, in the temple veil. That veil was the type of the flesh; and, so long as that curtain remained whole, there was no entrance into the near presence of God. The worshipper was not indeed frowned upon; but he had to stand afar off. The veil said to the sinner, "Godhead is within;" but is also said, "You cannot enter till something more has been done." The Holy Ghost, by it, signified that the way into the Holiest was not yet open. The rending of the veil; that is, the crucifixion of "the Word made flesh," opened the way completely.

Hence it is that the Holy Spirit sums up the good news in one or two special points. They are these: Christ was crucified. Christ died. Christ was buried. Christ rose again from the dead. Christ went up on high. Christ sits at God's right hand, our "Advocate with the Father," "ever living to make intercession for us."

These are the great facts which contain the good news. They are few and they are plain; so that a child may remember and understand them. They are the caskets which contain the heavenly gems. They are the cups which hold the living water for the thirsty soul; the golden baskets in which God has placed the bread of life, the true bread which came down from heaven, of which if man eat he shall never die. They are the volumes in whose brief but blessed pages are written the records of God's mighty mercy; records so simple that even the "fool" may read and comprehend them; so true that all the wisdom of the world, and all the wiles of hell, cannot shake their certainty.

The knowledge of these is salvation. On them we rest our confidence; for they are the revelation of the name of God; and it is written, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

Let us listen to apostolic preaching, and see how these facts form the heads of primitive sermons; sermons such as Peter's at Jerusalem, or Paul's at Corinth and Antioch. Peter's sermon at Jerusalem was that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, had been raised from the dead and exalted to the throne of God, being made Lord and Christ. This the apostle declared to be "good news." Paul's sermon at Antioch was, in substance the same, - a statement of the facts regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus; and the application of that sermon was in these words, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified." His sermon at Corinth was very similar. He gives us the following sketch of it: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and

that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Then he adds: "So we preach, and so ye believed."

Such was apostolic preaching. Such was Paul's gospel. It narrated a few facts respecting Christ; adding the evidence of their truth and certainty, that all who heard might believe and be saved. In these facts the free love of God to sinners is announced; and the great salvation is revealed. It is this gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Its burden was not, "Do this or do that; labor and pray, and use the means;" - that is, law, not gospel: - but Christ has done all! He did it when he was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." He did it all when he "made peace by the blood of his cross." "It is finished." His doing is so complete that it has left nothing for us to do. We have but to enter into the joy of knowing that all is done! "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."

But let us gather together some of the "true sayings of God" concerning Christ and his work. In these we shall find the divine interpretation of the facts above referred to. We shall see the meaning which the Holy Spirit attaches to these, and so our faith shall not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." It is in this way that the Lord himself, ere he left the earth, removed the unbelief of the doubters around him. He reminded them of the written word, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations beginning at Jerusalem."

Hear, then, the word of the Lord! For heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words shall not pass away. "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "Who gave himself for our sins." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel." "Who gave himself for us." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." "Christ also suffered for us." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh." "He is the propitiation for our sins." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

These are all divine truths written in divine words. These sayings are faithful and true; they come from Him that cannot lie; and they are as true, in these last days, as they were eighteen hundred years ago; for "the word of our God shall stand forever." In them we find the authentic exposition of the facts which the apostles preached; and in that we learn the glad tidings concerning the way in which salvation from a righteous God has come to unrighteous man. Jesus died! That is the paying of the debt, the endurance of the penalty; the death for death! He was buried. That is the proof that his death was a true death, needing a tomb as we do. He rose again. This is God's declaration that he, the righteous Judge, is satisfied with the payment, no less than with him who made it.

Could there be a better, gladder news to the sinner than this? What more can he ask to satisfy him, than that which has so fully satisfied the holy Lord God of earth and heaven? If this will not avail, then he can expect no more. If this is not enough, then Christ has died in vain.

God has thus "brought near his righteousness." We do not need to go up to heaven for it; that would imply that Christ had never come down. Nor do we need to go down to the depths of the earth for it; that would say that Christ had never been buried and never risen. It is near. It is as near as is the word concerning it, which enters into our ears. We do not need to exert ourselves to bring it near; nor to do anything to attract it towards us. It is already so near, so very near, that we cannot bring it closer. If we try to get up warm feelings and good dispositions in order to remove some fancied remainder of distance, we shall fail; not simply because these actings of ours cannot do what we are trying to do, but because there is no need of any such effort. The thing is done already. God has brought his righteousness nigh to the sinner. The office of faith is not to work, but to cease working; not to do anything, but to own that all is done; not to bring near the righteousness, but to rejoice in it as already near. This is "the word of the truth of the gospel."

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