

The Solitary Sin Bearer

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus Christ is the solitary sin-bearer who bore our sins in his own body to the tree, out of love for us, and offers us pardon and peace.

Duration: 30:18

Scripture: Leviticus 10:17, Numbers 18:21, 1 Peter 2:21

Topics: "Sin Bearer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of sin-bearing and its significance in the Christian faith. He refers to the biblical story of Aaron confessing the sins of Israel onto an innocent goat, symbolizing the transfer of sin onto an innocent party. The preacher then connects this symbolism to the introduction of Jesus by John the Baptist, who proclaimed him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus' role as the sin bearer is not just an example for believers to follow, but a completed work that calls for faith and trust. He concludes by highlighting the importance of worship and obedience in response to Jesus' sacrifice.

Transcript

Would you kindly turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2. We are going to look at the concluding words of this rather wonderful chapter. On Wednesday evening in our preparatory service we were meditating upon the passage that begins with verse 21. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.

We were then considering how our Lord Jesus Christ in his suffering, in his anguish is an example, the example, the only perfect example for his people. And we saw that Peter tells us here for example that he suffered sinlessly, he did no sin. He suffered guilelessly, there was no deceit in his mouth.

He suffered silently and above all he suffered believingly, handing over the whole of the affairs of his life and of his death to God the Father in the confidence that nothing could go wrong, but that his heavenly Father would straighten out all the tangled webs and in due course righteousness would prevail, the Father's will be done and God would be praised. He then in those verses is the supreme example of his people. Now that was our subject on Wednesday evening.

Now this morning we proceed. We're going to look at verses 24 and 25. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed, for you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls. Here we are going to look at the solitary sin bearer and therefore the solitary Savior, the Savior of God's appointment, the one and only, anointed of God, appointed of God, sustained by God to do the work necessary for the salvation of men and women, the one and only Savior, the solitary sin bearer. Now there is more in this passage than we can deal with this morning.

We're going to look at just two or three things only. We're going to concentrate particularly on the fact that he is the bearer of sin, but I want you to notice that because he bore our sins away, he has accomplished many things all at once. For example, Peter goes on to say, by his stripes you were healed.

He did not simply bear our sins away as if he were carrying a burden that was on our shoulders and taking it away from us. He did that, but he did more than that. In bearing away the sins of men, he accomplished for his people a means of healing, of spiritual healing, and those who receive that healing behave in a particular way.

Now he gives us an illustration. You, he says, you were like sheep going astray. You see, those are the symptoms of the malady of sin.

We were like foolish sheep wandering hither and thither from the fold and from the God under whose hand and guidance we ought to live. We were sick. Sin is not simply a matter of breaking an objective law and earning the righteous indignation of God, though it is that.

Sin is a sickness of the soul, and it reflects itself in a waywardness, a going in the wrong way. On the Lord's Day, you are not where you ought to be. In the hour of prayer, you are somewhere where you shouldn't be, and you are not where God meant you to be.

It is a moving out of the way of the commandments of God. It is a wandering like lost sheep. But these people whom Peter addressed, Peter could say to them, you've been healed.

You've been healed. By his wounds, you have been healed, because you were like sheep going astray, but now you've returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls. You're in your right place.

You're in the fold. You're in the care of the Good Shepherd. You are where you're meant to be.

You're in the right place at the right time. You're His, and you're sensitive to His leading and His guiding, and responsive to His ministry. So somehow or other, there flows from the sin-bearing work of Jesus Christ a healing virtue.

And brothers and sisters in Christ, let us remember that today. Down the years and the corridors of time, there are men and women gathered out of every kindred and tribe and people and nation, black and white, brown and yellow, whatever color you may choose to mention. They've been washed in the blood.

They've been healed through His stripes, and they've ceased their wanderings, and they've come back under the care of the Good Shepherd. And this means they've been inwardly healed. Are you healed? But now, I had to say that.

But what I want to concentrate upon for the rest of the time, the short time available this morning, is just this, the basis of it all. Because Peter traces the river to its source. And the source of all the saving and the

sanctifying benefits of the gospel are found where? They're found in one person.

They're found in one person in His death. They're found in the one person dying where? On the cross of Calvary. Who? His own self.

There was no one with Him. No one shared in the task. No one will have the honor of saying, I was associated with Him in His sin-bearing work.

His own self, in solitary splendor, but with sufficient grace, and glory, and power, and all else, to finish the work that the Father gave Him to be, and to bear away our sin. Here in these words, then, we have moved away from those features of our Lord's sufferings, in which He appeared as the accredited and only perfect example. Here, He is not the example.

We cannot copy Him here. We need not. Here, He performs a work, and finishes it, and completes it, and says, Tis done.

Believe. Trust. And rejoice.

Now, it will be fully appreciated that the language and concepts employed here are far from popular and familiar in our contemporary world. The very mention of sin-bearing is enough to earn the wrath of a very large section of the theological world at one stroke. Many will laugh at us that we advertise a subject such as this in the 20th century.

But the writers of the New Testament found that this was the heart of it all. And they did not blush. And they were not ashamed to speak in this term, in this language, because it took them to the very heart of the saving work of God in Christ.

Christ was our sin-bearer. He bore our sins in His own body to the tree. James Denny once put it like this.

Now he says, To bear sin is not an expression for which we have to invent or excogitate a meaning. There are terms like that. We're not quite sure what they mean, and so we've got to put our heads together, and pray, and bend our knees, and seek the light of God.

This is not a term. We don't need to look for this, says James Denny. It is a familiar expression of which the meaning is fixed.

And he quotes the Scriptures in order to explain exactly what he means. This term, its meaning, has been fixed in the Old Testament. And no one has been given authority to change its significance, so that we may know, if we care to read the Word of God, what it means to bear sin.

Now, let us examine some of the relevant passages, just to see what it all means, and may the thrill of it, and the wonder of it, grip us as a congregation this morning. Oh, may the Spirit of God wing this truth, despite my feeble words, and my feeble attempts to let you, to expound this passage. Please, God, let the Spirit bring it home to everyone this morning.

What does it mean to bear, and bear away sin? Let me quote, first of all, from Leviticus, chapter 5, and verse 17. And I'm quoting from the Revised Standard Version, rather than from the NIV. It's clearer.

If anyone sins, doing any of the things that the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. What does that mean? It means this, he will have to

take the consequences of his misdeeds. That's what it means to bear sins.

Come again, Numbers 14, 33, and 34. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and shall suffer for your faithlessness until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity.

Forty years, and you shall know my displeasure. What does it mean? This, they shall have to bear the consequences of their misdeeds. A year for a day.

Come again to the book of Numbers, chapter 18, verses 21 and 22. To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel foreign inheritance in return for their service which they served, their service in the tent of meeting. And henceforth, the people of Israel shall not come near to the tent of meeting lest they bear their sin and die.

What is the message? The message is this. God has appointed a priesthood to function in the tent of meeting. And the ordinary people of Israel were not allowed to have dealings in the sacrificial system and certainly no one but the high priest was allowed, and only once a year into the Holy of Holies.

In case, says the Lord through his servant, they shall bear sin and die and suffer the consequences of their misdeeds. Shall I give one another? The soul that sinneth, says Ezekiel in 18 and 20, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.

The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon them and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. What is the message? The message is the same. To bear sin means that you accept what is due to you for your own sin.

Not the sin of your father for the moment, but your own sin, my sin. In all these passages the meaning is clear. The crucial phrase has reference to one's reaping the harvest of one's own misdeeds.

I for my sin, you for your sins. Brother and sister, you are responsible to God for every transgression and iniquity and you are answerable yourself alone. And so am I. You will bear your sin and I will bear my sin unless we come to that.

Now sometimes the task of sin bearing was undertaken by a third party. This was a divine and a gracious provision. The inspired writers never raised the question of the propriety of such an act.

They simply state the fact and they were commissioned to do so. I can only quote two illustrations now. Leviticus 10 and 17.

Moses is asking a question of Aaron and two of his sons. Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation to make atonement for them before the Lord? Moses is chiding Aaron and these his sons because they have not partaken of the offering which they should have eaten and devoured in the presence of the Lord. Because that was part and parcel of their ministry in which they symbolically bore the sins of the people.

They were the priests who stood in between the people and their God and made atonement. Made amends and they hadn't done what God had expected them to do. A very more better known illustration

comes from Leviticus 17 and verse 22.

The ministry of the day of atonement. You remember the two goats were chosen. Concerning one of the goats, this is what we read.

The goat shall bear all the iniquities upon him to a solitary land and he shall let the goat go into the wilderness. Have you got the picture? First of all, Aaron would confess all the sins of Israel as if they were on to the head of an innocent little goat. And he would put his hands upon the head of the goat as if to say I'm transferring the whole thing onto the head of an innocent party who will carry it away.

Its partner will be slain. This one will affect another aspect of the symbolism and carry the sin away for which its partner will die. Now you see when John the Baptist introduced the Lord Jesus, he didn't need to give any great explanation.

You remember how he introduced him on the banks of Jordan. Behold he says. And the word behold is really a shaker.

It says look man. It says look. There's something to see and look.

Behold the Lamb of God who is taking away, carrying away, bearing away the sin of the world. Says John the Baptist, the sin bearer supreme has come. All the others were but pointers to him.

He has come who was promised and here he is. And it's no wonder of course that some of John's disciples hearing him speaking left John and followed Jesus. They knew they needed a sin bearer.

He who knows the sin of his heart is wise if he leaves anybody and everybody in order to follow Jesus in the way for there is no other sin bearer. Peter you remember in this context had only just previously referred to our Lord's sinlessness and guilelessness. And this adds of course tremendously to the meaning of the whole thing.

Jesus died as the sinless sin bearer. He died as the guileless. There was no twist in him.

The guileless sin bearer. But now you see here we come to the heart of it and this is the marvel of it. There was no sin in him because he loathed sin.

He hated sin. He loved righteousness. And yet for love of you men and women let me repeat it.

Let not a cough disturb this. For love of you and of me he who hated sin put his arms around it and his shoulders underneath it and he carried the wretched load to his cross for your salvation. He hated it but he embraced it.

Why? Out of love for you. Out of mercy for you. Out of his care for me.

Out of his compassion for the lost. He so loved the world. Now something of this paradoxical tension emerges I believe later on and with this I must draw to a close.

Something of this paradoxical nature emerges again later on particularly when our Lord you remember insisted on remaining silent during his period before the Sanhedrin and before Herod and before others. He was silent. You notice that? Has it ever puzzled you? Why was he silent? You see personally he could have pleaded not guilty and he could have summoned a whole array of witnesses to prove that he went

about doing good and he had not done the kind of things that he was accused of having done.

He could have done that. He could have lifted his head high as the totally guile less, guilt less son of God Jesus of Nazareth. But he didn't do that.

He was silent. He could have silenced his accusers. Instead he was silent himself.

Why? Shall I tell you? Because he wasn't going through those courts simply as a private individual. Had he stood before Annas the high priest or Caiaphas as a private individual, he could well have stood on his two feet and say I'm not guilty. Here is the evidence.

Here are the witnesses. Here are the reasons. He could have done the same before Herod and before Pilate and Pilate at any rate six times declares him not guilty even as it was without evidence.

But you see he wasn't proceeding as a private individual pure and simple. He was going through it all as your sin bearer. My sin bearer.

My substitute. My representative and yours. And as my substitute, he didn't feel comfortable to plead not guilty because even though there was no sin in him, there was sin upon him.

And so he was silent. Silent to the accusations and more. He accepted all that was due to sinners from the hands of men and more.

All that was due to our sins from the hand of a holy God. Behold the Lamb of God that carries away, bears away the sin of the world. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope that something of the thrill of this is bringing new peace and hope and joy to your soul this morning.

So what this? Trust Him. Trust Him. Thank Him.

Praise Him. Confess Him. Serve Him.

Live for Him. Die for Him. He is the All.

Maybe there is someone who has come into our service this morning who has yet to accept what Jesus did upon the cross. And you're trying to put yourself right with God on the basis of your own efforts and your self-righteousness and perhaps your church going and perhaps you're even coming to partake of the sacrament, though you shouldn't. If you're depending on your own self-righteousness and your tradition and your family affairs and merits, so-called, I ask you this morning, look at the sin-bearer.

He's taken your sin and he's carried it away. And he offers you pardon and he offers you peace. Will you receive it? And you who have received it, rejoice in your seats where you are.

As you sit on these hard benches, make them glad and sanctify them with the joy of the Lord and the gratitude of the redeemed. And as you come to the table, do not come with any coldness or lethargy or half-heartedness. It ill befits the table of our Lord where the broken bread speaks of his broken body and the outpoured wine speaks of his shed blood.

There needs be gratitude here. There needs be love at boiling point here. I know we rarely come up to it, but brothers and sisters, we should.

It is not the way we express it that is the important thing. But it's the fact that it's there, that we come as grateful, glad, rejoicing, believing, humble souls who have laid our own hand as it were on the sin-bearer and said, I confess my sin to be there. And who with such natural reaction and response to it all can say, all is well.

Payment God will not twice demand. Once at my blessed surety's hand and then again at mine. Tis done.

It is finished. By his grace I am free. Let us bow for a moment in prayer before we sing our hymn.

Let us bow together. Our heavenly father, write the message of your word upon our hearts and particularly the deep most and central truths of this passage and of all the truths, write this into our consciousness that you sent your son into the world to be the only savior of men and he died bearing our sins in his own body to the tree. Enable us to match that solitary and splendid fact with faith and hope and love and obedience and especially now with worship as we continue at your table.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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