

Lecture on Hebrews 9:19-28

by John Nelson Darby

The sacrifice of Christ has two aspects: its value towards God and its value towards sinners, and the world is unfit for God because of corruption and sin.

Scripture: Leviticus 16:10, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 9:22

Topics: "The Sacrifice of Christ", "Redemption and Atonement"

Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Hebrews 9:19-28, emphasizing the dual aspects of Christ's sacrifice: its significance towards God and its redemptive power for sinners. He illustrates how the Old Testament sacrificial system foreshadowed Christ's ultimate sacrifice, which not only purged sin from God's sight but also bore the sins of humanity. Darby stresses the necessity of recognizing our sinful state before God and the transformative power of Christ's atonement, which allows believers to approach God with confidence. He concludes by affirming that through Christ's sacrifice, God's glory is upheld, and believers are assured of their salvation and future hope.

Transcript

There are two very distinct parts in this passage to the value of the sacrifice of Christ.

The one is its aspect towards God, and the other is its aspect towards us as sinners.

There is the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and then, He hath borne the sins of many. We find these two aspects running all through Scripture. Take the figure of the Old Testament. In Leviticus 16, on the day of atonement, the blood was carried in and put on the mercy-seat; this was the first goat, or, "the LORD'S lot"; sins were then confessed on the head of the scapegoat by the high priest as representing the people, and afterwards these sins were carried away into a land not inhabited. This second goat dealt with actual sins and transgressions; but the former goat, or the LORD'S lot, although in favour of sinners, surely had its direct aspect towards God.

Another element there is here, on which, however, I do not stay, viz., that Christ Himself has gone in, and is always there; that is, as is always the case in Hebrews, the truth is carried much further than the figure, for Christ is constantly in the presence of God for us. Not only has He done one work with regard to our standing before God, but He appears also in the presence of God for us.

There is a further element in the passage which has also its value and place, and that is, the "blood of the covenant" (v. 20). Not that there is any covenant made with us, but, as respects our relationship with God, it gives the fullest contrast between the first and second covenants. We get the blessings of the second covenant, though not exactly under it.

The great truth is, that we are in a state of sin before God. Everything is defiled where the creature has reached, everything even of heaven; I do not mean, of course, where God dwells in unapproachable light; but the created heavens regarded as part of the whole creation; and the angels also as well as the heavens.

Not that the heavens are guilty, but they are defiled; and therefore it is, that Christ has gone up "far above all heavens." All that to which the creature has had to say, is defiled. If we look at God as dwelling, in a certain sense, in His creation, He sees the whole of it defiled; not indeed where He is in His own being and nature in unapproachable light; but there where He is in connection with His creatures, there, is defilement, and that does not do for God, for "Holiness becometh thy house, O LORD, for ever."

263 It is in respect of this, that the great truth of the putting away of sin out of God's sight is made known to us; and then comes another thing: we are guilty, and our sins must also be put away. We have sinned. This is our place and condition, in the midst of the defiled creation. The whole evil must, therefore, be put out of God's sight, and this has taken place by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a purification for both, and Christianity teaches it in its own way: "Forthwith came there out blood and water." "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." Practical purifying is typified by water; and also, even under the law, "almost all things are . . . purged with blood." And not merely have we the renewing of our minds (which is another thing entirely), renewed in the knowledge of God, "in knowledge after the image of him that created him," but as there was sin in God's sight with which, of course, God has had to deal, so now all the dealings of God go upon that ground. No matter what the kind of dealing is? it is based upon the existence of sin. It must be so, because sin is here.

I am not speaking now of believers who stand in grace, nor of God's righteousness which has come in; but I am looking at the ways and dealings of God, in judgment or in mercy, in atonement or in condemnation; all is in view of sin, because sin is here. We have surely thousands of mercies in regard to temporal things, but we have to look at things as men in the presence of God. In God's moral dealings with men, He must deal with respect to sin, because sin is here, or the dealings would not be true. It is of all importance that our hearts should get into the consciousness of this. We must either say that the world is fit, or else that it is unfit, for God.

If it is fit for God, what kind of God have we got?

With corruption, murder, violence, oppression, horrible wickedness, wretchedness all around us, can we say that the world is fit for God? No person with a conscience, but will own it is not fit for God. Put it fairly before him, and he will own it. He might perhaps fly out against God, because of its state, or, that he should ever be punished for it, but he will never say that the world is fit for God as it is. And again, our hearts are not fit for God; that is a serious thing. No doubt a few leaves of a poisonous plant are not like a tree covered with fruit; and we may not grasp the whole value of this. As regards what was manifested, the Lord could look at it, but the whole condition of man is apart from God. At the first, we read that, "So he drove out the man"; and since then, every man has added his own sins, making up his own guilt.

264 We find, then, these two things: the state of the world before God, everything suffering from it and groaning together; and, in speaking of direct application to the conscience, our hearts also are away from God, and we never can be really in the truth with God until we own that. We may have many beautiful ideas in our heads, but to be with God, we must first take our place as sinners, just because we are such. There is not one of us, no matter who it is, but has done things his conscience condemns. And "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Of course, a holy God must condemn us. That is where we find ourselves (I am not now speaking of the believer's place in Christ), and the word of God fully unfolds all this, and presses it upon us. Nor shall we mend our position by deceiving ourselves, or by hiding ourselves from God, as Adam did in the garden, or by hiding God from ourselves. Not hiding absolutely, of course, for the sense of God will break in upon us sometimes, when anything unusual happens. A terrible disease rouses man to a consciousness of his position, and his conscience then sets to work at once. Bring cholera into the place, and at once you will have people religious. It expresses the sense that men have to do with God.

One there was who could say about a certain sin, that "the man that hath done this thing shall surely die"; and he gets answer from the prophet, "Thou art the man," though he had not the least conscience of it. There is no truth for us till we get before God in the consciousness of our state of sin, and also, that we have sinned, i.e., that the tree has borne its fruit. It is not merely a generality, but it is intensely individual; I have to do with God, and I must be before Him according to all I have said and done.

265 I may seek to excuse myself; but there I am, and that is the truth. As is often said in the proverb, 'He that excuses himself, accuses himself.' "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"; thus spake Adam. "Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief," so said Aaron; but that was no good reason for his giving way to them, and making a golden calf.

All this is instead of saying with Jeremiah, "I have sinned, and it is no profit to me." Now, God deals with man on that ground. But the question is: How?

God must deal with us as sinners, for the simplest of reasons, namely, that we are sinners. But how? That is another question.

Let us not deceive ourselves by fancying that the thought of right and wrong remained with man from the time when he was innocent. He did then know that he had to say to God, that is true; but he obtained the knowledge of good and evil by eating the forbidden fruit. In a certain sense, it is a mercy he did, if he ate at all. But a bad conscience is a terrible companion; and, if not purged, it is an everlasting bad companion. It says, "The man is become as one of us," not, that man has retained this from his former state after his fall. Conscience is there, then, but it is when man is under sin, and though it is a mercy now to have conscience, yet it is a terrible thing, too, because it is either hardened by depravity, or else it is present to distress. Better to have a bad conscience than a hard one, but one or the other we must have. Now having a conscience, there is a sense in man, when not reckless in sin, that he ought to be righteous; and so he sets about to get righteousness.

Quite right is he in thinking he ought to have it, though he will fail to get it. He may take the law for his guide; but what did in the law of Moses was, to give, not the image of heavenly things actually, but only the shadow of them. Looked at apart from its ceremonials, the law, as a moral law, was marked by two things; it came to man fallen from God, i.e., after the promise and when God was testing man in this way, to give a perfect rule of righteousness to man as he was, if he was to have human righteousness. He was not to

covet, not to lust, not to lie, etc. Besides containing a complete epitome of national rules for Israel, the law told man first, what he ought not to do, and second, how he ought to feel towards God and towards his neighbour. Now man takes the outside of the law, not the real kernel of it; and so he tries to make out righteousness which, says he, 'I must have, or else, in the day of judgment, I shall fail.' He is so far right in taking the law as a rule, though he will not succeed.

266 Along with that, there is in man the constant tendency to make out a righteousness for himself, for he knows he needs it. If you will try to make out righteousness for yourself, well, here is the rule: "This do, and thou shalt live."

Man - Israel - had thus the law; but with it, God gave that which was the pattern of things in the heavens; not the very image, but the shadow of them.

And then we have the whole system of the tabernacle, and of the ordinances which referred to sin, etc.

It is true that the giving of the law was followed by the immediate breaking of it; but, to begin with, we have a moral rule, and then, in the tabernacle, the development of God's ways and purposes towards the sinner.

Although it was but a figure, a shadow, it contained another element which comes out in Hebrews, and that is, that until the work of redemption was wrought by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, there must be a separation between God and man. Under the law, there were hopes seen afar off by men of faith, and, of course, such were saved, but as to their then present condition, they "searched." Peter tells of those who wrote, "What, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you." These things had not then come, but though they had believed on them as coming, there was no present access to God. When a man failed and sinned through ignorance, there was a provision made, figure of Christ's sacrifice, which restored him to present communion with God by providing a relative purifying before God. This kept up the notion that sin must be put away, and it maintained intercourse with God, so far as God had revealed Himself; but along with that, there was this testimony, that man cannot draw near to God. There was always the holding out the hope of the brighter and better things that were to come; but the vail was still there.

The more we read the Old and New Testaments, the more we shall see that of old there was on the part of God the gracious condescension of communication with man, but always with this, "The Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest," i.e., that man could not draw near to God. The more we take notice of the difference between then, and now, the more striking does it appear.

267 There are two passages often quoted, as applicable to us, which bring out this difference; both of them have just the opposite force to that for which they are quoted. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," and there the quotation is stopped, as if the things were so glorious and so great, that our hearts could not know about them; but the Apostle adds, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." This shews that we can know them now.

Then again, in the same chapter, we read, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" Nobody, of course. But the former part is used to shew that we cannot now know God's mind; whereas it continues, "But we have the mind of Christ." Both of these are quotations from Isaiah, but with distinct additions, shewing the exact contrast between the condition into which we are brought by grace and the condition in which those were under law. There were wonderful thoughts in the Psalms, and gleaming through the prophets, but with it all there was still the testimony that man could not draw near to God. It was to us, Christians, that they ministered these things. We are not yet in the glory, of course, and therefore he says, "to whom they have been reported," not brought. We are still in this poor world which is under the bondage of corruption, though the work has been accomplished by which the vail has been rent and the foundation of the glory laid. And whilst waiting for the redemption of the body, we have distinct entrance into the holiest, boldness by the blood of Jesus. The vail is rent from top to bottom, i.e., the introduction of an entirely different thing.

When we have to do with responsibility, whether without law as Gentiles, or under law as Jews (indeed we all have, practically, to do with law, unless we are lawless, because it is the measure of man's responsibility as man), and when, at the same time, we do not know grace, then we go to the law, which is very useful to convict us of sin; but then, that which answers to the law, in the heart that has failed to keep it, is the day of judgment to come.

268 The day of judgment takes up man on his responsibility and deals with him according to the light he has had. All have failed, and the day of judgment is, therefore, not a question of mercy nor a time of discrimination between those who are saved and those who are not (it shews that out publicly, of course); but it is now that discrimination takes place; it is now that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," and that "he that believeth not is condemned already." So, the very moment the conscience is reached, it cries out, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." And directly we have the testimony of the law, as in Romans 3 to the Jews, the conclusion is clear: "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Their very understanding is darkened, that is, morally (I am speaking, not of science, but as regards God), and their will is all wrong; "they are all gone out of the way." In a terrible way, all are thrown together into a lump, and none is profitable; that is what the apostle has to say of men in their responsibility. That is where he sets us all. And that is where conscience sets each of us when the light of God enters. That is also where God sees each of us to be.

The testimony takes up the thoughts and intents of each heart, whether as a heathen, or as having heard of Christ from my youth up, and so it puts me, in my conscience, where God sees me in the light.

In truth, there I am. I may not altogether understand it, but there I am; and then I find I am striving for a time to make out my own righteousness. That is how law acts as a principle.

I am under obligation to meet God's requirements. I do not say I shall succeed, but the position is true, and the day of judgment meets it; as long as there is a trace of that in men's minds they never can get peace, for they are thinking of that day, and the testimony is perfectly clear: "There is none righteous, no, not one."

Nor has God left us in the dark as to what is the result of the judgment. If He were sitting upon the great white throne, He could not say it plainer than He does now. If a person says, "I am not afraid to come before God," it would only be a proof that he has not seen God at all. It may be such an one has been

preserved, through providential mercy, from outward violence, open immorality, and all that kind of thing; but he has been always thinking of himself; Christ has had no place in his thoughts and heart. Paul could say, "touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless"; but the moment the law said, "thou shalt not lust," he was killed at once; "sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Is God to allow lusts? Suppose we had lusts in heaven; what kind of heaven would that be? Lusts take us after things contrary to God. And quite true it is, that if we have not God in-joy above us to delight in, we must go and satisfy ourselves by living on what is below us. Poor it is surely, but so it is. The fact is, that we have got away from God; and directly I am away from Him, I must find my pleasures and satisfactions on the earth. I may seek to keep up merriment and the like, but my pleasure will be in man. It was so from the outset. Cain built a city, and called it by his son's name, Enoch; this was the expression of his own personal importance, just as men do now with their properties; and then we find artificers in brass and iron, musical instruments, and so on, in order to make everything pleasant here for man without God.

269 Not that there is harm in sounds, but there is in the use made of them. And so with everything else.

When Adam hid himself behind the trees of the garden, that did not make the trees wrong. If I give a man a blow and kill him, there is no harm in the strength itself which God has given me; it is in the use I make of my strength. It is in the heart of every man that has not got God to make use of these things so as to do without God; that is the evil.

And in another way, when the conscience of a man is awakened, he may take up with outward things, and try to make a righteousness with them.

There are both Sadducees and Pharisees in the world wherever there is profession. On the one hand, Sadducees, going right on into open infidelity; and, on the other hand, people tithing mint, and anise, and cummin, but all the while they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The Lord tore open their sepulchres and laid them bare; that is what He must do. He will acknowledge, in its proper place, everything that is gracious and amiable in the natural character as such; just as in the case of the young man in Mark 10: "Jesus beholding him loved him."

270 Running to Christ, he said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" But Christ stops him, saying, "There is none good but One." You are altogether out of the way; but, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," Matt. 19. Well, he says, I have kept them. Jesus said unto him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." And then he went away sorrowful.

The Lord loved him, for he was a lovely character; but his heart was as much away from God, as anybody's else is. The Lord did not deny what his character was, but He probed his heart to the bottom, and out came just what the heart always is.

Well, this has to be met in both respects; that is to say, God's glory has been dishonoured, defiled, trampled upon, and His heart offended by having it before His eye; and then there is the positive guilt of the sinner.

Now the gospel meets both these things. It owns them most fully; and it establishes also the authority of the law, the curse of which Christ bore. At the same time the gospel takes up man on entirely new ground. It admits to be all quite true what we have just been saying, but then, in view of that, man is lost. Take the law and apply it to his conduct, and it condemns it. If we have to meet God on our own responsibility, then

we are lost. Does a man deny this? Does he say that sin is not sin before God? Or that it is no matter? Or that we are not guilty? No, he will not do so. Very well, then, you must come before God in the day of judgment and answer for it, and then you are completely lost. If we have to answer for ourselves, we must bear the consequences; and when the law gets into our souls, we find this out. Then we see we have sinned; and of what good is a judge, if he does not condemn one who has sinned?

But I am the man. I own it. I have done so-and-so. There I am; and the moment, therefore, I take up my responsibility, I see I am condemned already, or else I weaken the holiness of God.

It is no longer a question as to how a man may grow better, so as to be able to meet God at some future time. Are you going to get better to meet Him? Then it is clear that you have never met Him yet - you are without God.

Do you hope to be in a state to meet Him hereafter?

Ah! when the word of God meets the soul, it brings the soul into God's presence at that very moment; then what presses upon it is, not the question as to whether I am going to get better tomorrow, but what am I to-day? Nor can there be peace in my soul till I come to that point. I never find peace till I come in my rags to God, like the prodigal who came to his father, just as he came out of the far country; I mean, as to his condition, not as to his will. The prodigal was not fit for his father's home for a double reason: his state did not suit the master of the house (that is, God); and, what is more, he was really guilty, for he had been committing sin.

271 Now, in Hebrews 9, both these things are completely met. We are sinners, and if we answer for ourselves, we are condemned; but God has set about to work for Himself. For some thousands of years He left man under responsibility, without law and under law; and this had brought out distinctly - what He has to bring out in our hearts - that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Now when that is practically brought home to us, then God takes up, not what man has done, but what He Himself has done. The responsibility is there, but if God judge us according to our works, no flesh living should be justified. So God saves us, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His own work; and that makes all the difference. God has come in, in grace, not by our works, else grace is no more grace, or work is no more work. Either I am, as to my acceptance, going to God on the ground of what I have done, or, I am going on the ground of what God has done for me. Judgment answers to the one; glory and salvation answer to the other.

And that which is of great moral importance to note, and which comes before the question of our sins and guilt, is, that God's glory had been cast away. First, angels fell, then Satan triumphed and man casts off God. Violence, corruption, death came in. Satan is both the "prince" and the "god" of this world, so that when the Son of God came into it, Satan could bring the whole world against Him. God had been utterly dishonoured. Christ comes and puts Himself into this place. Sin is under God's eye, and Christ is "made sin." Not only has He been made sin for us, but there is first of all the LORD'S lot. Christ, the second Man, came, and while perfect in all His ways as a living Man, yet the condition of men as such was that of sin; if, therefore, He were to save man, He must put Himself in that place before God.

272 And this Christ did. He was "made sin." He stood there as a sin-offering for the glory of God in this respect; and that is the basis of all. The blood has been carried inside and presented to God. Of course, the testimony of the truth of Christ's mission is also presented to people, but that has nothing to do with presenting the blood to God's eye. It was testified to the people without, as is the case now in the gospel;

but this blessed truth is of the first importance, viz., that the whole value of the sacrifice has been presented to God Himself.

Man failed, and fell under Satan. Christ was also tempted by Satan; but He met the entire opposition, and everything else, and that, too, when accompanied by God's wrath; He has passed through all in divine perfectness, and He has ended it all for ever.

Now this was, morally, the "end of the world" (v. 26), as the Lord had said, "Now is the judgment of this world." Man had been tried in every possible way; first, he had been set up in innocence and had sinned, so that he could no longer be with God in an earthly paradise; afterwards came judgment, such as the flood; then came law and prophets, and repeated warnings; and lastly, Christ came, for nothing more could be done; it was the end of the world. And now, if a man try to make out all he can for himself, he will find himself at the end where he began, or worse; he has but proven to himself that he is a sinner.

Then must he not come into judgment, and be judged?

What, then, is to be done with him?

Now see. The end of the world was morally accomplished on Calvary at the cross. Death passed upon the blessed Son of God, when He, as man, and for us, put Himself under the judgment of God. Man had been already tried under every variety of condition in the ways of God, and it had resulted in total failure on his part; then Christ comes and puts Himself there where man was; and He did this on man's behalf and for the glory of God. The second Man, in circumstances far more trying than those in which we had been overcome, first of all with every inducement that Satan could offer to Him and by which He had deceived men, and afterwards with all the terribleness by which he would hinder Christ from carrying through the work of obedience, the second Man, I say, goes through all perfectly and successfully, and then, through the Eternal Spirit, He offers Himself without spot to God.

273 There was perfect obedience, and perfect love to His Father; He was made sin, and God dealt with Him in righteousness. We see in a Man, Christ, perfect devotedness to God, perfect devotedness to His Father; and then He goes and stands before God perfect in Himself. So that, whilst drinking the cup of wrath more deeply than we could ever drink it, He could ask, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

He was there, so that God might be glorified in righteousness, glorified in His majesty, glorified in truth, glorified in love, by Christ putting Himself in the place of sin, Himself sinless, and by His being tested and proved all His life through; He is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Not the sins, as it is too often wrongly quoted, but "the sin"; if He had taken away the sins, what would there be left to judge man for? But with respect to all, God says, I am glorified. Christ hath appeared "once in the end of the world . . . to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He annulled sin completely, in the sight of God, by perfect obedience in His own Person, taking the whole thing upon Him, and dying as "made sin" for us, so that God has not one word more to say; on the contrary, He can now accomplish the full result of active blessing in the immutable stability of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. All things will be reconciled (not the things cast out under the earth, I do not speak of them now), in heaven and on earth, and a new heaven and a new earth will be brought in, founded upon the death of Christ, the One who is the delight of God for ever. Christ's work must ever be God's delight, because through that work God has been perfectly glorified in all that He is. And the point is, that there where Christ was "made sin," there, has God been glorified.

Where was obedience proved? In the place where Christ was "made sin."

Where was love proved? In that place where Christ was "made sin."

Where was righteousness proved, and holiness, too? There where Christ was "made sin."

It must have been so, because sin was there before God's eye; and if Christ had not accomplished this, nothing would have been done at all.

If, then, all is done, and so done, I can say to any sinner in the world: The blood is on the mercy seat, "Come." God has been glorified in Christ, as He Himself said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Will you come?

274 Inasmuch as God has been perfectly glorified, the testimony of the blood of Christ goes out now to the sinner, and says, 'Grace is free, grace reigns through righteousness'; while as to the full result of it, this will include "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

As regards ourselves, we know the work is done, and that, consequently, Man sits at the right hand of God. We have also the testimony of the Holy Ghost that so completely and so perfectly has this work of God been done by Christ on the cross, that man in Him has been already glorified by God. Not, of course, that we are there yet, but our "Forerunner" is entered. For His own work's sake, Christ is now glorified in answer to His words in John 17, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me." Now He sits at the right hand of God in glory. But He will come again to judge His enemies, as it is written, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

In the application of all this, I see that not merely God has been glorified, but also that my case has been met as a sinner. At the close of this chapter, we read, "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Sin has brought in both death and judgment. Death has actually come in, and judgment is before man. So that, in this passage, I see that not merely the great general basis and foundation has been laid in God's work on the cross (not on man's responsibility, for the eternal glory rests upon the finished work of the "second Man," and it can therefore never fail), but also that conscience has been dealt with. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" - that is where we are as sinners - "so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Death came in by sin, and judgment also comes by sin. Judgment applies to my works. But I find here that God having come in, not only has Christ glorified God, but He has also confessed, as it were, my sins, my evil works, upon the head of the scapegoat, and thus they are gone for ever.

So the whole question of sin has been completely met.

On the day of atonement, the high priest of old, as one of the people, and for them, confessed their sins; this took place every year. Was that a sign of their sins being put away? Surely not. Why was it done? Because their sins were there. Instead of indicating the removal of their sins, the repeated confession was rather the memorial of them.

275 But now, my sins are all gone, for Christ has sat down, and in respect of the removal of sins, He has nothing more to do whatever. Having finished that work, He has sat down in the glory.

I see that He has confessed all my sins upon His own head. I am not excusing anything, therefore, not even a single sin; if I sin after I am converted that, of course, is a great deal worse, but as regards the work of Christ, there is no question in that about the moment in my life of my conversion, or of the sins I committed before or after conversion. To introduce that question would be to confound the time of the efficacy of the work in me with the actual value of the work itself. In that sense, there is no time with God. God knew all my sins from the beginning. And what is so blessed is, that if I look up to God in all His holiness, righteousness, majesty, glory, and love too, but specially righteousness, I see now that He has been perfectly glorified in every respect and detail that concerns me.

The work of Christ has met God's glory, and what is more, it has enhanced it. He could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Man is therefore now glorified in God's glory.

All is perfectly done, so that my soul can say, "As regards the sin of man, and the glory of God in reference to it, I see that by what a Man has done on the cross, God has been glorified."

I do not forget that there, God's own love has been most wonderfully displayed. But in respect of the very thing wherein such gross dishonour was done to God, Christ has met every claim of God, and has honoured Him perfectly.

And in that same scene, Satan was bringing every terror to bear upon Christ, and yet He only shewed out perfect love and obedience to God; all the perfectness was brought out in His being made sin, and in His drinking the cup. All is now finished, and Man is sitting at the right hand of God. Then what has become of my sins? He has borne them all.

If in my heart I have been brought to own myself a sinner, I see that Jesus "was once offered to bear the sins of many"; all is finished; settled, perfectly and for ever, there is no longer any possible question between my conscience and God. I do not now rest upon my works, for I own I was utterly lost by them; they brought me nothing but just condemnation as regards myself. This must ever be so in view of God's glory and of my guilt; but in sovereign grace Christ has stepped in, and He has glorified God in the place I had got into, and He has borne all my personal sins - every one of them. The whole thing was settled before ever I knew of it or had been told of it, indeed before ever I was born.

276 And who was engaged in doing this work?

No one but Christ with God; that is the reason the work is an absolutely perfect one. It was wrought out totally and absolutely between the Son of God, offering Himself spotless, and God dealing with Him as a Victim. When therefore the Lord gave expression to what He was going through (His perfectness in submitting to it came first), we hear Him saying, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" There was no wavering in the perfectness that owned God as His God, and yet He asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

He was the One who knew God infinitely and also what it was to be infinitely forsaken.

And in the perfectness of that work, there and thus accomplished, we had nothing to do.

This puts us in our true place. It makes the testimony to be that of sovereign grace in righteousness, so that the grace itself reigns through righteousness.

And what is the consequence? Why, that now it says, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Every Christian looks for this in some shape or other.

As regards those who are looking, what do they look for? Is it to be judged? It cannot be so, because the first time He came, He put away all their sins; when, therefore, He comes again, it must be "without sin," that is, apart from the question of sin. Always without sin as to His own Person, He will appear "without sin," because the first time He came, He put it all away. It was then that He stood in the place of sin before God, for God's glory and for our salvation. All is totally finished.

If men now reject Him, they will have, of course, that additional guilt, whilst their sins are not gone. But suppose I am brought to repentance, and that I am broken-hearted about my sins, then it is that I see Christ bearing them upon the cross, and I learn that all is settled; I can only then say, what a wretch I was to make the Saviour suffer so! But I look up to Christ, and I say, 'The first time He came, it was in love and to give His life a ransom for many.' He was the only One who could do it, and He has done it; all is now finished for God's glory, so that the new heavens can rest upon such a basis.

277 And as regards my sins, all has been done also.

God's glory rests upon this finished work. So much so, that when Christ comes again, it will be "without sin." He has nothing more to do about sin (I am speaking now as to believers, but not in respect of their needing correction in their pathway here), for "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"; and therefore it is, "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."

Am I, then, resting upon the absolute, complete, eternal efficacy of His sacrifice?

That sacrifice brings us to God in the light, as God is in the light; this is its effect. Nor does it leave us there as we are, for the gospel tells us that we have died, and the question is asked, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" I do not now enter into details, but I take up the broad ground of the gospel.

The vail has been rent, and we have not only boldness to enter in, but sin has been judged in the light of God, and so we judge it, too. God sees no longer any obstacle in the way. Balaam expressed it clearly enough. A wicked man he was, but God forced him to say to Balak just what God pleased, and Balaam could not help doing so, though, if he could, he would have done otherwise. And he said that which is true of God's people now. We find in this case, as always, that the accusations of Satan are put to silence before the testimony of Christ. If Joshua stand before the angel of the Lord, and Satan stand to resist him, then we find this: "The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan. . . is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And Balaam made his announcements as from God.

It was at the close of the wilderness journey, and not in a scene of fresh thanksgiving as at the Red Sea; it was just at the time when Moses' own witness about them was, 'Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you,' and, "I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck." But God testifies to the adversary, by Balaam, that "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." As to the question of our acceptance, the blood of Christ gives the one perfect answer; God cannot see one bit of sin upon the believer. He will most assuredly not allow us to walk wrongly, but that is not the question here. It is God's work in the day of grace, meeting me in my need, and giving me a standing in

Christ, because God has been so fully glorified as regards all that relates to me; therefore it is that I am now waiting for Christ to come and take me into the glory.

278 Let us see, then, that we are with Him whilst we are on the way to meet Him. There is no excuse for us in failing.

If we fail as Christians, we are always at fault; but as regards the great groundwork of our acceptance, this has been settled and established for ever. Since Christ has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, I do not need to modify my justification by my sanctification. And further, He ever appears before God for me. Having been brought to God, I have now a far deeper sense of sin than I ever could have in my natural conscience. I own how I have put His name in the dust, and how I do so still, though I call myself a Christian, though that is not what I am examining now. I am speaking more especially of this, that if I look at Christ's first and second comings, I see the most distinct difference. At His first coming, He bore my sins; I know it by the gospel, and by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven; and therefore I am now waiting for Him to come a second time without sin unto salvation.

If the Lord were to come today, would each one of us be able to say, 'Well, the time has come for Him to fetch me to be with Himself'? Many may say that they are waiting His good time, but is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ a thought of promise to our hearts? Is it a promise for the fulfilment of which we are looking? Or is it connected with an uncertain mixture of hope and fear as to judgment? If the latter, then I have not really laid hold of the value of His first coming. Are we able to look for Him according to His promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself"?

We lose so much of the value of His blessed work.

279 Have our hearts learned what it is to be before God, loved as Jesus is loved, righteous as Christ is righteous? He "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." How can I fear if I have that?

Is that where our hearts are? Are we resting upon this work so that, as regards ourselves, we know that when He comes the second time, He has nothing to do for us with respect to sin, because the first time He came, He finished with sin when He bore it and was "made sin"? - Jesus Christ the righteous is now our Advocate; and His advocacy is founded upon righteousness and propitiation; all believers can therefore still look up, and expect Him to come and change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto His own glorious body, and, further, to receive them unto Himself. On the other hand, if we die, our bodies, "sown in corruption," will be "raised in incorruption"; "sown in dishonour," they will be "raised in glory." If Christ should come to-day, would it be for us like taking a person that was waiting for Him, or like taking one that was uncertain whether or not Christ would have him? But I know that I shall be perfectly like Him when He comes, and, therefore, I am seeking to be as morally like Him now as ever I can be.

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