

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

Isaiah 53:10

WHAT myriads of eyes are casting their glances at the sun. What multitudes of men lift up their eyes and behold the starry orbs of Heaven! They are continually watched by thousands—but there is one great transaction in the world’s history which every day commands far more spectators than that sun which goes forth like a bridegroom, strong to run his race. There is one great event, which every day attracts more admiration than do the sun and moon and stars, when they march in their courses. That event is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. To it the eyes of all the saints who lived before the Christian era were always directed. And backwards, through the thousand years of history, the eyes of all modern saints are looking.

Upon Christ the angels in Heaven perpetually gaze. “Which things the angels desire to look into,” said the Apostle. Upon Christ the myriad eyes of the redeemed are perpetually fixed. And thousands of pilgrims, through this world of tears, have no higher object for their faith and no better desire for their vision, than to see Christ as He is in Heaven and in communion to behold His Person. Beloved, we shall have many with us, while this morning we turn our face to the Mount of Calvary. We shall not be solitary spectators of the fearful tragedy of our Savior’s death. We shall but dart our eyes to that place which is the focus of Heaven’s joy and delight—the Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Taking our text, then, as a guide, we propose to visit Calvary, hoping to have the help of the Holy Spirit while we look upon Him who died upon the Cross. I would have you notice this morning, first of all, the cause of Christ’s death—“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” “It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him,” says the original. “He has put Him to grief.” Secondly, the reason of Christ’s death—“When You shall make His soul an offering for sin.” Christ died because He was an offering for sin. And then, thirdly, the effects and consequences of Christ’s death. “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” Come, Sacred Spirit, now, while we attempt to speak on these matchless themes.

1. FIRST, we have here THE ORIGINS OF CHRIST’S DEATH. “It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.” He who reads Christ’s life as a mere history traces the death of Christ to the enmity of the Jews and to the fickle character of the Roman governor. In this he acts justly, for the crime and sin of the Savior’s death must lay at the door of manhood. This race of ours became a deicide and slew the Lord and nailed its Savior to a tree. But he who reads the Bible with the eye of faith—desiring to discover its hidden secrets—sees something more in the Savior’s death than Roman cruelty or Jewish malice. He sees the solemn decree of God fulfilled by men, who were the ignorant, but guilty instruments of its accomplishment.

He looks beyond the Roman spear and nail, beyond the Jewish taunt and jeer, up to the Sacred Fount, from where all things flow and traces the crucifixion of Christ to the breast of Deity. He believes with Peter—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” We dare not impute to God the sin, but at the same time the fact, with all its marvelous effects in the world’s redemption, we must ever trace to the Sacred Fountain of Divine love. So does our Prophet. He says, “It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him.” He overlooks both Pilate and Herod and traces it to the heavenly Father,

the first Person in the Divine Trinity. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief."

Now, Beloved, there are many who think that God the Father is at best but an indifferent spectator of salvation. Others do belie Him still more. They look upon Him as an unloving, severe Being, who had no love to the human race and could only be made loving by the death and agonies of our Savior. Now this is foul libel upon the fair and glorious grace of God the Father, to whom forever be honor—for Jesus Christ did not die to make God loving—He died because God was loving—

*"It was not to make Jehovah's love
Towards His people flame,
That Jesus from the Throne above,
A suffering Man became.
It was not the death which He endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was Love before."*

Christ was sent into the world by His Father as the consequence of the Father's affection for His people. Yes, He "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The fact is that the Father as much decreed salvation, as much effected it and as much delighted in it, as did either God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. And when we speak of the Savior of the world, we must always include in that word, if we speak in a large sense, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—for all these three, as one God, do save us from our sins. The text puts away every hard thought concerning the Father by telling us that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Jesus Christ. The death of Christ is traceable to God the Father. Let us try if we can see it is so.

First it is traceable in decree. God, the one God of Heaven and earth, has the book of destiny entirely in His power. In that book there is nothing written by a stranger's hand. The penmanship of the solemn book of predestination is from beginning to end entirely Divine—

*"Chained to His throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men
With every angel's form and size
Drawn by the eternal pen."*

No inferior hand has sketched even so much as the most minute parts of Providence. It was all, from its Alpha to its Omega, from its Divine preface to its solemn finis, marked out, designed, sketched and planned by the mind of the allwise, all-knowing God. Hence, not even Christ's death was exempt from it. He that wings an angel and guides a sparrow, He that protects the hairs of our head from falling prematurely to the ground was not likely, when He took notice of such little things, to omit in His solemn decrees the greatest wonder of earth's miracles—the death of Christ. No. The blood-stained page of that book, the page which makes both past and future glorious with golden words—that bloodstained page, I say—was as much written of Jehovah as any other.

He determined that Christ should be born of the Virgin Mary, that He should suffer under Pontius Pilate, that He should descend into Hades, that from death He should rise again, leading captivity captive and then should reign forever at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No, I know not but that I shall have Scripture for my warrant when I say that this is the very eve of predestination and that the death of Christ is the very center and mainspring by which God did fashion all His other decrees—making this the bottom and foundation stone upon which the sacred architecture

should be built. Christ was put to death by the absolute foreknowledge and solemn decree of God the Father, and in this sense, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”

But a little further—Christ’s coming into the world to die was the effect of the Father’s will and pleasure. Christ came not into this world unsent. He had lain in Jehovah’s bosom from before all worlds, eternally delighting Himself in His Father and being Himself his Father’s eternal joy. “In the fullness of time” God did rend His Son from His bosom, His only-begotten Son and freely delivered Him up for us all. Herein was matchless, peerless love—that the offended Judge should permit His co-equal Son to suffer the pains of death for the redemption of a rebellious people.

I want your imaginations for one minute to picture a scene of olden times. There is a bearded Patriarch who rises early in the morning and awakes his son, a young man full of strength, and bids him arise and follow him. They hurry from the house silently and noiselessly, before the mother is awake. They go three days’ journey with their men until they come to the mountain, of which the Lord has spoken. You know the Patriarch. The name of Abraham is always fresh in our memories. On the way that Patriarch speaks not one solitary word to his son. His heart is too full for utterance. He is overwhelmed with grief. God has commanded him to take his son, his only son, and slay him upon the mountain as a sacrifice. They go together. And who shall paint the unutterable anguish of the father’s soul, while he walks side by side with that beloved son of whom he is to be the executioner?

The third day has arrived. The servants are bid to stay at the foot of the hill, while they go to worship God yonder. Now, can any mind imagine how the father’s grief must overflow all the banks of his soul, when, as he walked up that hillside his son said to him, “Father, behold the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” Can you conceive how he stifled his emotions and, with sobs, exclaimed, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb”? Look! The father has communicated to his son the fact that God has demanded his life. Isaac, who might have struggled and escaped from his father declares that he is willing to die if God has decreed it. The father takes his son, binds his hands behind his back, piles up the stones, makes an altar, lays the wood and has his fire ready. And now where is the artist that can depict the anguish of the father’s countenance when the knife is unsheathed and he holds it up—ready to slay his son?

But here the curtain falls. Now the black scene vanishes at the sound of a Voice from Heaven. The ram caught in the thicket supplies the substitute and faith’s obedience needs go no further. Ah, my Brethren. I want to take you from this scene to a far greater one. What faith and obedience made man do, that love constrained God Himself to do. He had but one Son, that Son His own heart’s delight. He covenanted to yield Him up for our redemption, nor did He violate His promise. For, when the fullness of time was come, He sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary that He might suffer for the sins of man.

Oh, can you tell the greatness of that love which made the everlasting God not only put His Son upon the altar but actually do the deed and thrust the sacrificial knife into His Son’s heart? Can you think how overwhelming must have been the love of God towards the human race when He completed in act what Abraham only did in intention? Look there and see the place where His only Son hung dead upon the Cross—the bleeding Victim of awakened Justice! Here is love indeed. And here we see how it was that it pleased the Father to bruise Him.

This allows me to push my text just one point further. Beloved, it is not only true that God did design and did permit with willingness the death of Christ. It is, moreover true, that the unutterable agonies that clothed the death of the Savior with superhuman terror, were the effect of the Father’s bruising of Christ in very act and deed. There is a martyr in prison: the chains are on his wrists and yet he sings. It has been announced to him that tomorrow is his burning day. He claps his hands right merrily and smiles while he says, “It will be sharp work tomorrow. I shall breakfast below on fiery tribulations, but afterwards I will sup with Christ! Tomorrow is my wedding day, the day for which I have long panted, when I shall sign the testimony of my life by a glorious death.”

The time is come. The men with the halberds precede him through the streets. Mark the serenity of the martyr's countenance. He turns to some who look upon him and exclaims, "I value these iron chains far more than if they had been of gold. It is a sweet thing to die for Christ." There are a few of the boldest of the saints gathered round the stake and as he unrobes himself, before he stands upon the fire wood to receive his doom, he tells them that it is a joyous thing to be a soldier of Christ—to be allowed to give his body to be burned. And he shakes hands with them and bids them "Good bye," with merry cheer.

One would think he were going to his wedding, rather than to be burned. He steps upon the fire wood. The chain is put about his middle. And after a brief word of prayer, as soon as the fire begins to ascend, he speaks to the people with manful boldness. But hark, he sings while the fire wood is cracking and the smoke is blowing upward. He sings and when his nether parts are burned he still goes on chanting sweetly some Psalm of old. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountain be carried into the midst of the sea."

Picture another scene. There is the Savior going to His Cross, all weak and wan with suffering. His soul is sick and sad within Him. There is no Divine composure there. So sad is His heart that He faints in the streets. The Son of God faints beneath a Cross that many a criminal might have carried. They nail him to the tree. There is no song of praise. He is lifted up in the air and there He hangs preparatory to His death. You hear no shout of exultation. There is a stern compression of His face, as if unutterable agony were tearing His heart—as if over again Gethsemane were being acted on the Cross—as if His soul were still saying, "If it is possible let this Cross pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Hark! He speaks. Will He not sing sweeter songs than ever came from martyr's lips? Ah, no—it is an awful wail of woe that can never be imitated. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The martyrs said not that—God was with them. Confessors of old cried not so when they came to die. They shouted in their fires and praised God on their racks. Why this? Why does the Savior suffer so? Why, Beloved, it was because the Father bruised Him. That sunshine of God's countenance that has cheered many a dying saint was withdrawn from Christ. The consciousness of acceptance with God which has made many a holy man espouse the Cross with joy—was not afforded to our Redeemer and therefore He suffered in thick darkness of mental agony.

Read the 22 nd and following verses. Underneath the Church are the everlasting arms. But underneath Christ there were no arms at all. His Father's hand pressed heavily against Him. The upper and the nether millstones of Divine wrath pressed and bruised Him. And not one drop of joy or consolation was afforded to Him. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." This, my Brethren, was the climax of the Savior's woe, that His Father turned away from Him and put Him to grief.

Thus have I expounded the first part of the subject—the origin of our Savior's worst suffering, the Father's pleasure.

II. Our second head must explain the first, or otherwise it is an insolvable mystery how God should bruise His Son—who was perfect Innocence—while poor fallible confessors and martyrs have had no such bruising from Him in the time of their trial. WHAT WAS THE REASON OF THE SAVIOR'S SUFFERING? We are told here, "You shall make His soul an offering for sin." Christ was thus troubled because his soul was an offering for sin. Now I am going to be as plain as I can while I preach over again the precious doctrine of the atonement of Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ was an offering for sin, in the sense of a Substitute. God longed to save. But, if such a word may be allowed, Justice tied His hands. "I must be Just," said God. "That is a necessity of My nature. Stern as fate and fast as immutability is the Truth that I must be Just. But then My heart desires to forgive—to pass by Man's transgressions and pardon them. How can it be done?"

Wisdom stepped in and said, "It shall be done thus." And Love agreed with Wisdom. "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, shall stand in man's place and He shall be offered upon Mount Calvary instead of man." Now, mark—when you see Christ hurled upon His back upon the wooden Cross,

you see the whole company of His elect there. And when you see the nails driven through His blessed hands and feet, it is the whole body of His Church who there, in their Substitute, are nailed to the tree. And now the soldiers lift the Cross and dash it down into the socket prepared for it. His bones are every one of them dislocated and His body is thus torn with agonies which cannot be described.

'Tis manhood suffering there. 'Tis the Church suffering there in the Substitute. And when Christ dies, you are to look upon His death not as His own dying, but as the dying of all those for whom He stood as the Scapegoat and the Substitute. It is true, Christ really died Himself. It is equally true that He did not die for Himself, but died as the Substitute, in the place of all Believers. When you die you will die for yourselves. When Christ died, He died for you, if you are a Believer in Him. When you pass through the gates of the grave, you go there solitary and alone. You are not the representative of a body of men—you pass through the gates of death as an individual—but, remember, when Christ went through the sufferings of death, He was the representative Head of all His people.

Understand, then, the sense in which Christ was made a sacrifice for sin. But here lies the glory of this matter. It was as a Substitute for sin that He did actually and literally suffer punishment for the sin of all His elect. When I say this, I am not to be understood as using any figure whatever, but as saying actually what I mean. Man for his sin was condemned to eternal fire. When God took Christ to be the Substitute, it is true, He did not send Christ into eternal fire, but He poured upon Him grief. Grief so desperate that it was a valid payment for even an eternity of fire.

Man was condemned to live forever in Hell. God did not send Christ forever into Hell. But He put on Christ punishment that was equivalent of that. Although He did not give Christ to drink the actual Hells of Believers, yet He gave him a quid pro quo—something that was equivalent thereunto. He took the cup of Christ's agony and He put in there—suffering, misery and anguish—such as only God can imagine or dream of, that was the exact equivalent for all the suffering, all the woe and all the eternal tortures of everyone that shall at last stand in Heaven, bought with the blood of Christ. And you say, “Did Christ drink it all to its dregs? Did He suffer it all?” Yes, my Brethren, He took the cup and—

*“At one triumphant draught of love,
He drank damnation dry.”*

He suffered all the horror of Hell—in one pelting shower of iron wrath it fell upon Him with hailstones bigger than a talent. And He stood until the black cloud had emptied itself completely. There was our debt, huge and immense. He paid the utmost farthing of whatever His people owed. And now there is not so much as a farthing due to the justice of God in the way of punishment from any Believer. And though we owe God gratitude, though we owe much to His love, we owe nothing to His justice. For Christ, in that hour, took all our sins—past, present and to come and was punished for them all then and there—that we might never be punished—because He suffered in our place. Do you see, then, how it was that God the Father bruised Him? Unless He had so done, the agonies of Christ could not have been an equivalent for our sufferings. For Hell consists in the hiding of God's face from sinners and if God had not hidden His face from Christ, Christ could not—I see not how He could—have endured any suffering that could have been accepted as an equivalent for the woes and agonies of His people.

Methinks I heard someone say, “Do you mean us to understand this atonement that you have now preached as being a literal fact?” I say, most solemnly I do. There are in the world many theories of atonement—but I cannot see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of Substitution. Many Divines say that Christ did something when He died that enabled God to be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. What that something is they do not tell us. They believe in an atonement made for everybody. But then, their atonement is just this—they believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter—they believe that the damned in Hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in Heaven. And though they do not say it in proper words, yet

they must mean it—for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain—for He died for them all, they say.

And yet so ineffectual was His dying for them, that though He died for them they are damned afterwards. Now, such an atonement I despise—I reject it. I may be called Antinomian or Calvinist for preaching a Limited Atonement. But I had rather believe a Limited Atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of man be joined with it. Why, my Brethren, if we were only so far atoned for by the death of Christ that anyone of us might afterwards save himself, Christ's atonement were not worth a farthing, for there is no man of us can save himself—no, not under the Gospel. For if I am to be saved by faith, if that faith is to be my own act, unassisted by the Holy Spirit, I am as unable to save myself by faith as to save myself by good works.

And after all, though men call this a Limited Atonement, it is as effectual as their own fallacious and rotten redemptions can pretend to be. But do you know the limit of it? Christ has bought a "multitude that no man can number." The limit of it is just this—He has died for sinners. Whoever in this congregation inwardly and sorrowfully knows himself to be a sinner, Christ died for him. Whoever seeks Christ shall know Christ died for him. For our sense of need of Christ and our seeking after Christ are infallible proofs that Christ died for us. And mark, here is something substantial—the Arminian says Christ died for him. And then, poor man, he has but small consolation, for he says, "Ah, Christ died for me—that does not prove much. It only proves I may be saved if I mind what I am after. I may, perhaps, forget myself. I may run into sin and I may perish. Christ has done a good deal for me—but not quite enough—unless I do something."

But the man who receives the Bible as it is, he says, "Christ died for me, then my eternal life is sure. I know," says he, "that Christ cannot be punished in a man's place and the man be punished afterwards. No," says he, "I believe in a just God and if God is just, He will not punish Christ first and then punish men afterwards. No—my Savior died and now I am free from every demand of God's vengeance and I can walk through this world secure. No thunderbolt can smite me and I can die absolutely certain that for me there is no flame of Hell and no pit. For Christ my Ransom suffered in my place, and therefore, am I delivered." Oh, Glorious doctrine! I would wish to die preaching it! What better testimony can we bear to the love and faithfulness of God than the testimony of a Substitution eminently satisfactory for all them that believe on Christ?

I will here quote the testimony of that pre-eminently profound Divine, Dr. John Owen—"Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man's deliverance from bondage to him that detains him—who has power to set him free and is contented with the price I give—were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men and those men not redeemed? That a price should be paid and the purchase not consummated? Yet all this must be made true and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted.

"A price is paid for all, yet few delivered. The redemption of all consummated, yet few of them redeemed. The judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners enthralled! Doubtless, 'universal,' and 'redemption,' where the greatest part of men perish, are as irreconcilable as 'Roman' and 'Catholic.' If there be a universal redemption of all, then all men are redeemed. If they are redeemed, then are they delivered from all misery, virtually or actually, whereunto they were enthralled and that by the intervention of a ransom. Why, then, are not all saved? In a word—the redemption wrought by Christ being the full deliverance of the persons redeemed from all misery, wherein they were enwrapped, by the price of His blood—it cannot possibly be conceived to be universal unless all are saved. So the opinion of the Universalists is unsuitable to redemption."

I pause once more. For I hear some timid soul say—"But, Sir, I am afraid I am not elect and if so, Christ did not die for me." Stop, Sir! Are you a sinner? Do you feel it? Has God the Holy Spirit

made you feel that you are a lost sinner? Do you want salvation? If you do not want it, it is no hardship that it is not provided for you. But if you really feel that you want it, you are God's elect. If you have a desire to be saved, a desire given you of the Holy Spirit, that desire is a token for good. If you have begun believingly to pray for salvation, you have therein a sure evidence that you are saved. Christ was punished for you. And if now you can say—

*"Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to the Cross I cling,"*

you may be as sure you are God's elect as you are sure of your own existence. For this is the infallible proof of election—a sense of need and a thirst after Christ.

III. And now I have just to conclude by noticing the BLESSED EFFECTS of the Savior's death. On this I shall be very brief. The first effect of the Savior's death is, "He shall see His seed." Men shall be saved by Christ. Men have offspring by life. Christ had an offspring by death. Men die and leave their children and they see not their seed. Christ lives and every day sees His seed brought into the unity of the faith. One effect of Christ's death is the salvation of multitudes. Mark—not a chance salvation. When Christ died the angel did not say, as some have represented him, "Now by His death many may be saved." The word of prophecy had quenched all "buts" and "perhaps." "By His righteousness He shall justify many." There was not so much as an atom of chance in the Savior's death. Christ knew what He bought when He died. And what He bought He will have—that and no more and no less.

There is no effect of Christ's death that is left to perhaps. "Shalls" and "wills" made the Covenant fast. Christ's bloody death shall effect its solemn purpose. Every heir of grace shall meet around the Throne—

*"Shall bless the wonders of His grace,
And make His glories known."*

The second effect of Christ's death is, "He shall prolong His days." Yes, bless His name, when He died He did not end His life. He could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. The third morning came and the Conqueror, rising from His sleep, burst the iron bonds of death and came forth from His prison, no more to die. He waited His forty days and then with shouts of sacred song, He "led captivity captive and ascended up on high." "In that He died He died unto sin once. But in that He lives He lives unto God," no more to die—

*"Now by His Father's side He sits,
And there triumphant reigns,"*

the conqueror over death and Hell.

And, last of all, by Christ's death the Father's good pleasure was effected and prospered. God's good pleasure is that this world shall one day be totally redeemed from sin. God's good pleasure is that this poor planet, so long swathed in darkness, shall soon shine out in brightness like a newborn sun. Christ's death has done it. The stream that flowed from His side on Calvary shall cleanse the world from all its blackness. That hour of midday darkness was the rising of a new sun of righteousness which shall never cease to shine upon the earth. Yes, the hour is coming when swords and spears shall be forgotten things—when the harness of war and the pageantry of pomp shall all be laid aside for the food of the

The hour approaches when old Rome shall shake upon her seven hills. When Mohammed's crescent shall wane to wax no more—when all the gods of the heathens shall lose their thrones and be cast out to the moles and to the bats. And then, from the equator to the poles Christ shall be honored. The Lord paramount of earth, from land to land, from the river even to the ends of the earth. One King shall reign, one shout shall be raised, Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God

Omnipotent reigns.“ Then, my Brethren, shall it be seen what Christ’s death has accomplished.
For "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” Amen. Amen. Amen. Adapted from The
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