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He Swapped With Me

BY THE LATE: C. D. COLE

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says, "For our sakes He (God) made Him to be sin who Himself knew nothing of sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." In a word, Paul is saying that God the Father treated Jesus Christ, the Son, as a sinner or unrighteous person, so that we sinners might be treated as righteous persons.

A missionary was once preaching from this text to a group of natives in a foreign land. When he had finished his message, he was desirous to know whether they had understood it or not. So, he asked them to tell him in their own words just what it all meant to them. The chief of the tribe spoke up and said, "It means that the Lord Jesus swapped with me." And I might say that this puts the way of salvation just about as plain as human language can put it. He Who was without sin took the place of sinners under God's Holy Law, so that sinners might have the place of sons before God the Father. Christ, the righteous Son of God, took the place of the guilty and bore their sins in His own body on the tree of the cross. He Who was rich became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty, we might become rich. Christ died as the Just One for the unjust ones, that He might bring us into God's favor.

A man was once asked if he would like to be saved. He replied, "Yes, if God can save me without doing wrong." This man was a thinker. He saw a problem in a just God saving unjust people. He realized that a just God must punish sin. He confessed that he was a sinner, and that if God was just in dealing with him, He would have to punish him for his sins. This was Job's problem in the long ago when he cried out, "How then can man be justified with God?" Their reasoning is after this fashion: "If God is holy and righteous, and all men are sinners and deserve punishment, how can they justly go unpunished?" The answer is in the blessed and glorious gospel truth that the Son of God swapped places with sinful men and redeemed them from the curse of the law by being made a curse for them.

In swapping with us, He took our place under the law of God and obeyed the law for us. The sinner is saved by obedience, but not by his own obedience. Romans 5:19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." If we had obeyed the Holy Law of God, we would have been righteous in our own name and on our own record. God will never punish a good man. If a man can be found who has never sinned, that man will live before God as a matter of justice. He will need no grace or mercy, but only justice. But the truth is that no such person has ever lived except the sinless Son of God. The Bible is very clear on the fact that all have sinned—that none is good—that

there is none righteous, not even one.

The Chief of Police in a Western town received a letter from a woman, asking him to put her in touch with a perfect man with a view to matrimony. The Chief did a very sensible thing: he sent the letter to the Bureau of Missing Persons. The perfect man is missing, and there is no kind of bureau that can locate him on this earth. The spirits of the just made perfect are even now in heaven. There once lived a perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He kept the law for sinners, and all who trust Him have His righteousness—the righteousness He provided—and stand justified before God. “There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

The Lord Jesus obeyed until death; that is, He obeyed all the days of His life here on earth. He never had a sinful thought; He never did a selfish or sinful thing; He never spoke a sinful or even idle word. He did the will of God in all things, at all times, and in all places. When He came to die, He could truly say, “I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). And let us remember that all that work was for us, to make us right with God. I reject with abhorrence any religion that adds anything to the precious blood of Christ as the ground of salvation. The Bible says that it is the blood of Christ that cleanseth us from all sin. I John 1:7. The Bible says that when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hebrews 1:3. And the redeemed sinner delights to confess, “Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

The Lord Jesus Christ obeyed unto death; that is, He obeyed at the cost of His life. The word “unto” denotes both time and degree. The time of His obedience was until He died; the degree of His obedience was at the cost of His life. In swapping with sinners, Christ had to settle with the holy law of God for all our sins. As sinners, we were responsible to settle with the law we have broken. But this would have meant our eternal ruin, for the wages of sin is death. As Saviour, Jesus Christ paid our sin-bill, and as believers in Him, we delight to sing, “Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe.”

Let us look a little deeper into the meaning of the death of Christ. He died the death that denoted a curse. In His death, He was being cursed by God. In Galatians 3:13, Paul says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” He adds a quotation from Deut. 21:23 which says, “he that is hanged is accursed of God.” In saving sinners, God had planned that His Son would die the kind of death that denoted a curse. And so Christ died while the Romans were in power. If Christ had died under Jewish law, He would have been

stoned to death. But God had decreed that His Son would die on a cross, and the Scriptures had foretold this kind of death; and so in divine providence, Christ died on a Roman cross as a sign that He was being cursed by God. It was more than physical suffering Christ endured for us; He suffered separation from God. On the cross, the Father turned His back upon His Son because He was being made sin for us. The Father was forsaking His Son for a while that He might not, in justice, forsake us forever. If God had been with Christ on the cross to help Him bear our sins, He could not have redeemed us. To save us, He had to be forsaken and punished by God, and this is what constituted His terrible suffering. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

Jesus was an exile from heaven while here on this earth. Heaven was His proper and rightful place, where He enjoyed all the glory of God the Father. While here, He spoke of the glory He had with the Father before the creation of the world. It is to be observed that after Jesus went to Calvary, no word came to Him from heaven and the Father. The heavens were as brass above His head. No help came in response to His cry. It was easy enough for our Lord to hear from home (from heaven) before He went to the cross. At His birth, myriads of angels came from heaven to celebrate the great event. They may have sung the songs He had heard them sing in heaven around the throne. At His baptism, the Holy Spirit came from heaven in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” On the mount of transfiguration, the Father’s voice was again heard, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him.” And all through His earthly sojourn, He was in constant touch with the Father. When He would pray in the silent hours of the night, He could hear the Father speaking to Him. When His enemies came to arrest Him, He told them that even then He could ask the Father and get twelve legions of angels for His defense. But on the cross, He had no word from God. Heaven was silent. The three hours of darkness symbolized this separation from God. God was making His Son to be sin for us, and, therefore, He could not smile or even look upon sin with any mercy. God spared not His own Son when He found Him in the sinner’s place. All that a Just and Holy God can do with sin is to punish it and pour out His wrath upon it. If God were to give us sinners what we deserve, we would not deserve salvation, but His wrath. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, came and exposed Himself to the wrath due us that we believers might receive the blessings due His Son. Yes, blessed be His name,

He took our place as sinners that we might have the place of sons in the Father's house. He took our guilt that we might have right standing with God. Yes, He swapped places with us: He was made to be sin for us that we might be righteous before God. It becomes us to sing with Charlotte Elliot those verses which so beautifully and strikingly set forth the experiences and hopes of the redeemed:

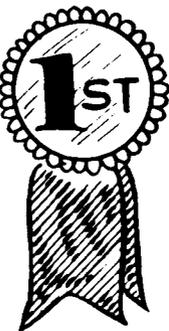
"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

"Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

"Just as I am, tho' tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ swapped places with us. He took our place in guilt of sin that we might have the place under grace in Him. Hallelujah, What a Saviour!



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