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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

"WHY DID CHRIST DIE?"

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"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God" (I Peter 3:18).

This is a suffering universe. Suffering is a most patent fact in all climes and among all classes. There is no class exempt from suffering. The rich suffer as well as the poor; the high as well as the low. Men suffer in body, in mind, and in soul. If all the breaking hearts could be collected and displayed, who would want to look upon such a scene? Saints and sinners suffer much alike. All this suffering is a mighty monument to the ravages sin has wrought.

But our text speaks of the suffering of one who was Just. And the question before us is: Why did He suffer? Why did Christ die?

NEGATIVELY:

1. Not because He was overcome by His enemies. Men have been overcoming and killing each other since the day Cain killed Abel. And to all appearances, Christ was hounded to death by His enemies. Every place He went, He was criticized, slandered, and abused. From His first to His last sermon, men were bent upon His destruction. But He did not die a helpless victim of circumstances. "Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath

the greater sin" (John 19:11). "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).

2. He did not die to get God to love us. Christ did not purchase the love of God for sinners. It was love that sent Christ to die for us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Christ was the channel through which the love of God reached us. His death was the way God showed His love to us. Love always does something for those who are its objects. The love of God gave Christ over into the hands of Justice with all our sins upon Him, and Justice put Him to death. Love brought Christ to the judgment seat of Justice and cried, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zech. 13:7).

The love of God is a sovereign love-- not a love based upon relationship--not a love of obligation. Try to give a reason for God's love to sinners.

POSITIVELY:

1. The death of Christ was voluntary. The unjust are the only ones who are punished against their wills. Justice will not punish the innocent

against their wills. The death of Christ was the voluntary doing of the will of God. His obedience unto death was not forced obedience, but voluntary and loving obedience. Christ was glad to die for sinners. It was love for both the Father and for us that caused Him to die. Speaking of His death, He said: "This commandment have I received from my Father. I delight to do thy will, O God".

2. The death of Christ was sacrificial and substitutionary. He died, the Just for the unjust. A sacrifice is something done in the interest of others. A sacrifice is taking something from self and giving to others. A sacrifice hurts the one who makes it and helps the ones who receive it. The death of Christ hurt Him and helps us. It led Him to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

3. The death of Christ was purposeful. There was a design in His death. He did not die haphazardly, that is, without any definite aim as to results. Men do many things in a haphazard manner. They either do not have any definite aim or cannot insure the results of what they do. But Jesus Christ had a definite object in His death, and He is able to insure the results. Our text gives us the purpose of His death. It was to bring us to God.

Men by nature are away from God--not a physical distance

TWO SINNERS AT CHURCH

between us and God. Our distance from God is a moral distance--a guilty distance. His Justice frowns upon us, and so to be brought near to God is to have the favor of His Justice. And there is nothing that can bring us into favor of Justice except the death of Christ. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

4. The death of Christ was powerful-- the greatest of all miracles. The power to die is the greatest of all power.

(1) Powerful in its nature. I could not trust Christ if He was helpless in His death. If He was a victim in death, then He cannot help me in death. Death was an accomplishment with Him.

(2) Powerful in its effects. His blood was not wasted. He did not die in vain. He will not be disappointed in the results of His death. On Calvary, He saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied. He died to bring men to God and many sons will be brought to glory. The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. Not perfect in His essential character, but perfect officially--perfect as the Saviour. He was sinless and perfect apart from His death, but He could not be a perfect Saviour without dying. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). God says of Him, "My righteous servant shall justify many for he shall bear their iniquities." If Christ on Calvary bore my iniquities, then my justification was certain. He would not bear my sins and then fail to justify me. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:28-30).

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

This is the Lord's story about two great sinners. One knew he was a sinner and confessed it before God. The other knew not he was a sinner and boasted of his righteousness. It is a story of a man who thought he was good and went to hell, and a man who knew he was bad and went to heaven.

Let us follow these two men and see them worship. One takes a prominent place, the other "stands afar off" barely getting inside the building. One is a great boaster, the other is a great mourner. One saw his great need, the other saw his great self. They both worshipped. One worshipped a great God, the other worshipped himself. They were both believers. One trusted the sacrifice on the altar, the other trusted in himself that he was righteous. They were both despisers. One despised the other, and the other despised himself. One put himself on a pedestal, the other put himself in the dust of humility. One pleaded for justice, the other for mercy.

We have the same two types of people today. We meet them on every side. No doubt both

are represented in this very house tonight. One says, "I am a good man. Look at all the fine things I have done. But look yonder at that person--what a shame! I am so glad I am better than he is." The other says, "Lord, I am a sinner. I need help. I am guilty and I need mercy. I read in the Bible that Thy Son, Jesus Christ, was set forth as a mercysheet, and so I am trusting in Him for the mercy I need." This man says nothing about anyone else. He is the one sinner he knows.

The time came when church was out, and these men went to their homes. One walked proudly on his way, wrapped up in his own importance and self-righteousness, congratulating himself on being such a great and good man. The other went home, thanking God for His mercy through the bleeding sacrifice. And Jesus, the master story-teller, said, "One man went home justified, but the other went home condemned."

THE PHARISEE AT CHURCH

1. He prayed with himself. His prayer was an address to God. He was letting God know about the good things he had done. We are told that the Pharisees loved to stand in the marketplace and pray to be heard of men. We have heard of preachers who would visit other churches and go away angry because they were not called on to pray.

A story is told of a man who dreamed he went into a church just as the janitor was closing up. It was almost dark in the building. The main lights had already been turned off. Up in the ceiling of the auditorium, he saw a lot of birds fluttering as if trying to get out. He asked the janitor what they were, and he replied, "They are some of the prayers which were offered here

today. Only a few prayers get up to God. These will never reach him, for they are mere words."

2. He boasted of his moral- . He talked about his clean life. He was no adulterer, and no extortioner. He was not like other men. He could not be compared with this publican. He was an exception. In morals, this Pharisee was probably much better than the publican and most other men, but that was nothing to brag about. That was nothing to depend upon for acceptance with God. It was good to be free from extortion and adultery, but not good for salvation.

3. He boasted of his business honesty. He said, I am not unjust. I do not cheat. I pay my bills. All this might have been true, but nothing to boast about. It is good to be honest, but no good for salvation.

Jesus is not speaking against being honest. He is not finding fault with a man for paying his debts and for being honest in his business transactions. What He is warning against is trust in these things salvation.

Men ought to be honest in business, but honesty will not save a soul. Men ought to take God into their businesses and run them for His glory. It is only rotten hypocrisy when a man's religion makes him prominent in his church on Sunday and fails to influence him in his dealings and transactions during the week. We are not saved by honest business methods. Where would Christ come in if what the Pharisee trusted in would save?

4. He boasted of his religious life. "I fast twice in the week and pay tithes of all I possess." Was Jesus condemning fasting and tithing? Why, of course not. He is warning that these things do not buy salvation. Jesus commended tithing, but told us there were other things important, and they should not be left undone. Jesus told this parable to drive home one single truth-the sin of trusting in self and despising others.

This man had the wrong attitude. His disposition was bad. He was not immoral but proud. His hands were better than his heart. He divided society into two groups-the bad and the good,

and he was the only person in the good group. "I thank God that I am not like other men." Brethren, we ought not compromise with sin, especially the sin that is in ourselves. We ought to be harder on ourselves than anybody else. We ought to be better acquainted with self than anyone else, and if we are, we will find more to criticize in self than those whom we do not know so well.

A certain man in a Scotch village wore a curious coat. On the front of it there were many large patches. He said these patches represented the sins of his neighbors. On the back of the coat there was a very small patch. When he was asked what that stood for, he said, "That is my own sin; I cannot see it." So it is with the Pharisee. He could see the sins in others, but he could see no flaw in himself. This Pharisee who worshipped so pompously, and to his eyes so beautifully, went home a condemned, lost sinner.

THE PUBLICAN AT CHURCH

1. He approached God humbly. He stood afar off. He avoided familiarity with the great and holy God. He stood in reverence before Him. He had come to pray not to preach to God.

2. He came penitently. He felt the weight of his sins. He smote upon his breast, indicating that he felt there was his trouble. He wanted a clean heart. He was grieved with his wicked heart. He did not think about that wicked hypocrite on the front seat. At the moment he did not know there was another sinner on earth. He said, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

3. He came to God confessing his sin. Sinner was the only title he took. He did not call himself anything but a sinner. He had no good deeds to parade before God. He had no self-righteousness to palaver about. He had no accomplishments to spread on the record. He was a sinner in need, and therefore, a sinner indeed. The only title we can take in being saved is "sinner".

4. He came believingly. He could not trust himself and demand justice. He needed mercy

and trusted the bleeding sacrifice behind the veil.

CONCLUSION

We will be leaving here for home directly. Will we walk with the Pharisee or with the publican? Will we go home justified, accepted of God, or will we go home still condemned?

C.D. COLE

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