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SACRIFICE OF JUDGMENT

By: C. D. Cole

Every man of us has to have dealings with a personal God who is holy and just and almighty. We may shun men and refuse to meet them, but we cannot shun God. We may ignore Him for a while but settlement with Him sooner or later is inevitable. We may put off meeting with Him, but when His time comes we must meet Him prepared or unprepared. The destiny of man does not rest with cold fate, or capricious chance or fixed laws of nature, but it rests with God who is the Creator, Ruler, and Judge of all the earth who has declared that He “...will by no means clear the guilty...,” Exodus 34:7.

Every man of us has sinned against God, and His justice cries for our punishment. The only way of escape is in the satisfaction of justice, and justice can only be satisfied by the punishment of sin. Any theory of the atonement plan of salvation that ignores or denies this is false. The only reason God punishes sin is the vindication of His law and the satisfaction of His justice. **It is the function of justice to act in the interest of the lawgiver and not the lawbreaker.** Justice upholds the rights of the lawgiver and gives the lawbreaker what he deserves. Where human society is the lawmaker justice acts in the interest of society whose welfare is threatened by the criminal or lawbreaker. For this purpose human society has prepared forms of punishment for the lawbreaker. The criminal is not punished for any good it may do him, but for the sake of justice. There are a lot of silly and sentimental people in this country who would like to turn our judges into fathers and our courts into benevolent societies and our prisons into nurseries and hospitals and places of ease and entertainment. They want the law administered in behalf of the law breaker rather than in behalf of society. Our pris-

ons ought to be escape-proof to protect society from the criminal and places of punishment for the satisfaction of justice. We believe that the breaker of human law should be given by human law what he deserves. We believe in justice in the administration of human law.

Every man of us has to do with a God who is just and whose law is enforced. He will give sins their just deserts. He has a place of punishment for sinners. Hell is not a school of reform where the wicked will repent and turn to God and be saved. Hell is an eternal monument to the justice of God, just as heaven is a place where His mercy and grace are exhibited in the salvation of sinners. Salvation in no wise affects the justice of God. **Salvation does not keep sin from being punished,** nor does it make the punishment of sin one trifle less. God’s justice is not destroyed by His love and mercy and grace. His love for sinners does not void the punishment of their sins. Sin is punished as much as it would be if God had not a particle of love. Love does not tie the hands of justice.

There is salvation for sinners but none for sin. God hates sin and He will not pardon the thing He hates. That which He hates must be punished. In salvation of sinners their sins are just as severely punished as they would be if they were not saved. In salvation sin is transferred from the sinner to the Saviour, and the Saviour suffers what the sinner deserves to suffer. The Saviour is made sin for the sinner so that the sinner may be righteous before God. The Saviour is made a curse that He may redeem the sinner from the curse.

Now, God, as the Father of believers in Christ, chastises His children for their good; but as the Judge of the wicked He punishes for the sake of mere justice. Chastisement of children is parental and

corrective; punishment of criminals is judicial and retributive. Punishment is for people under law; chastisement is for those under grace. Punishment precedes from justice and wrath; chastisement proceeds from love and mercy. Punishment is inflicted by a Judge; chastisement is administered by a father. Punishment is eternal; chastisement is for the period of disobedience.

The passage before us tells us that it is a sacrifice or judgment for those who have sinned against God. Sin brings judgment; sacrifice brings salvation. Where there is no sacrifice there is bound to be judgment of the sinner. Hebrews 9:22, “...without shedding of blood is no remission.” The word for sacrifice means a slaughtered animal. Under the law of Moses and the Levitical system of worship literal animals were slaughtered whose blood could not take away sin. They were types of a Lamb of nobler Name – the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. This is why the Son of God is called a Lamb in the Bible. He is the Lamb slain, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin.

It is both interesting and instructive to see how “the lamb” is referred to throughout the Scriptures. In Genesis 4:4 we have the Lamb typified. “*And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock...*” In Genesis 22:8 we have the Lamb prophesied, “*And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:...*” In Exodus 12:5, 6, 11, 23 we have the lamb slain and its blood applied for the protection of the firstborn from the death angel. “*Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of*

Israel shall kill it in the evening...it is the LORD'S passover...For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." In Isaiah 53:1-7 we have the Lamb personified, where for the first time we learn that the Lamb would be a Man. *"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."* In John 1:29 we have the Lamb identified. *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* In Revelation 5:9 we have the Lamb magnified by the saints in heaven. *"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"* In Revelation 22:1 we have the Lamb glorified; we see Him seated upon the eternal throne of God. *"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."* Jesus Christ the Son of God is the Lamb of God who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 10:12, *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"*

A sacrifice is that which appeases the wrath of God and satisfies the Divine honour. Let us illustrate: A man commits murder for which the state has fixed the penalty of death. The state is satisfied only when the murderer is put to death. His life

is the sacrifice that satisfies justice. But in the death of the murderer there is no salvation and no show of love and mercy. But if the law would allow the principle of substitution, the innocent dying for the guilty, and some one would volunteer to die for the murderer, there would be the sacrifice of the substitute, salvation of the criminal and the law would be satisfied.

The passage we are studying says that unless we have a substitutional sacrifice there awaits us a terrible judgment of fiery indignation. Does this refer to the chastisement of God's children or to the punishment of the wicked? We are quite positive that it refers to the punishment of the wicked. Here are some reasons for our position: Hebrews 10:26, *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,"* The willful sin in this verse is the same as the drawing back unto perdition verse 39, *"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."* No child of God draws back unto perdition. God's attitude towards His children is not one of "judgment and fiery indignation." The punishment of those referred to in the passage is much worse than punishment under the law of Moses, which was death without mercy, but God's children do not die without mercy.

But maybe we can get at the truth of the passage by considering three things: the sin of the passage, the sacrifice of the passage, and the judgment of the passage. These three words; sin, sacrifice and judgment give us the key to the understanding of the passage.

THE SIN OF THE PASSAGE

The sin of the passage is expressed in these words: *"...if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth,..."* The adverb "willfully" does not name the sin, but only tells us how it is committed. The sin described in this verse as trodding under foot the son of God, counting the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. This is a threefold description of the sin of unbelief. But let us amplify each point:

Unbelief is trodding under foot the Son of God. This means that Christ is of no value to the unbeliever. Peter says that Christ is precious to the believer. To throw something down and walk on it is a way of saying that it has no value. And to

hear the truth about Christ as Saviour and refuse to trust Him is to deny the value that God puts upon Him. God says there is eternal life in His Son, and to refuse to trust Christ is to deny this and make God a liar.

Unbelief is to count or regard the blood of Christ as common blood. His blood is the blood of the new covenant shed for the remission of sins, but the unbeliever refuses to trust it and thus regards it as of no more value than the blood of any other man.

Unbelief is to despise the Spirit of grace. The Holy Spirit is the author of the good news that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, and to reject Christ is to do despite to the Holy Spirit of grace. To reject Christ is to despise the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all classes of men. To reject Christ is to deny grace and to deny grace is to look for salvation on grounds of law-keeping. Romans 3:19-20, *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

IF WE SIN WILFULLY

This means that if one hears the truth about salvation through faith in Christ and deliberately and persistently rejects Him, that there is no sacrifice to be found anywhere else. There can be no salvation for the man who persists in the sin of unbelief. If the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin then there can be no salvation to the man who does not trust it. This passage was not written to disturb the believer in Christ who is daily conscious of his sinful infirmities, and who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. It is a warning against refusing to believe on Christ after one has received the knowledge of the truth about Him. It is for those who have been brought face to face with Christ in the gospel and who draw back and hope to find salvation elsewhere.

The passage before us has a Jewish coloring with a universal application. The Jews to whom the epistle of Hebrews is addressed had heard the Gospel and had been impressed sufficiently to leave Judaism with its animal sacrifices and to embrace Christianity and join the believers in Christ. But Paul saw evidences that they

were losing interest in the Christian faith. Some of them had ceased to attend the assembly of the saints. Their absence at church was noted and this makes Paul uneasy about them. He fears that they had made a false profession. When a man makes a profession of faith in Christ we can only judge of the reality of his faith by his future conduct. If he soon loses interest in Christ and shows by his conversation and conduct that he is not trusting in the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross, we get uneasy about his salvation. Many a man joins a church of Christ without trusting the sacrifice of Christ. Many church members take Christ as an example to follow and deny His blood atonement. And to all such we say that if you persistently reject the sacrifice that Christ made there is no sacrifice to be found elsewhere, and that without a sacrifice for sins there is nothing then but a terrible judgment.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE PASSAGE

It is not the sacrifice of bulls and goats. These sacrifices were still being offered on Jewish altars when Paul wrote the words of our text. But these sacrifices could not take away sin because they had no value in appeasing the wrath of God. Beasts cannot suffer for man's sins except in a typical and ceremonial sense. The only value the slaughtered animals had under the law of Moses was as types of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

It is not any sacrifice the sinner can make. If the sinner can be saved by any sacrifice he can make then he would be his own saviour and Christ died for naught. The believer in Christ ought to live a sacrificial life out of appreciation for the sacrifice that Christ made to save him. Salvation by self-sacrifice would be salvation by self-suffering and the sufferings of Christ on Calvary would be in vain.

The sacrifice that saves is the sacrifice the Son of God made when He died on the cross. It was then and there He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. I Peter 3:18, *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"* Dear sinner friend, this is what we tell you to trust. We preach Christ crucified and if you persist in rejecting Him then there remains no other sacrifice for sin and the lake of fire will be your eternal portion. It is Christ or hell for every one of us.

"In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood;
He fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near the cross I stood.

A second look He gave, which said,
I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I died that thou mayest live.

O never till my latest breath,
Shall I forget that look!
It seemed to charge me with his death
Though not a word He spoke."

A troubled physician once said to an old Christian lady, whom he was attending, "Tell me just what it is you believe and how you believe?" She answered, "I believe that God is satisfied with the work of His Son as the Saviour of sinners: that is what I believe; and I am satisfied with it; that is how I believe." This is a splendid explanation of saving faith and finds a sweet amen in my heart. I believe that God is satisfied with what His Son did for my salvation, and to know that God is satisfied with it makes me satisfied with it. If I thought that God was not satisfied with the work of Christ for my salvation then I could not be satisfied with it. And there is nothing else that satisfies me because I know there is nothing else that satisfies God. I know that God is not satisfied with what I have done or can do, therefore, I dare not trust in myself that I am righteous.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name."

"I'm only a sinner and nothing at all,
But Christ is my all and in all."

THE JUDGMENT OF THE PASSAGE

It is said to be certain. There is certain judgment where Christ is rejected. It is not a case of crying "Wolf, wolf," when there is no wolf coming.

It is going to be fearful. II Corinthians 5:11, *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;..."* Hebrews 10:31, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* But how shall I attempt to describe the pains of hell? There are no pains on earth to compare with the agonies of the damned. We turn sick as we think of the horrors of war with its terrible loss of human life and the groans and moans of the dying, but war as awful as it is, is not hell. They that despised Moses' law died without mercy, but the judgment of hell is worse than death. It is a fiery judgment. Jesus Christ, the most loving of all preachers, preached the most terribly of hell. Jesus teaching Mark 9:43-48, *"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life halt, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."* Oh, my sinner friend, unless you repent and turn to Jesus Christ who made the only sacrifice that can satisfy the justice of God, you will know more of hell by actual experience than the strongest imagination can paint or the most powerful orator can describe.

I had a letter from a man a few weeks ago who claims that punishment in the lake of fire will last only five minutes. The country is being flooded with propaganda to the effect that the punishment of the wicked will be of short duration, but when the Lord Jesus Christ bids men in Matthew 25:41, *"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"*

Sin is dangerous but there is a deliverance from the danger of sin. Thank God, there is. This deliverance is in the Lord Jesus Christ who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He who casts himself on Him shall never be cast into the lake of fire.



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