

The Wednesday Word, November 6, 2019: The Man Who Took our Place

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...” 1 Peter 3:18.

We have just read a verse crammed with gospel dynamite. Have you ever wondered how a holy God can righteously bring sinners to Himself? This verse helps us unpack the answer.

Suppose someone punches you in the face. Fortunately for your attacker, you are a magnanimous kind of a person, not much given to aggression and you say to your accoster “I forgive you.” But, to your astonishment, he says, “You don’t need to forgive me. I’ve already forgiven myself.”

Wait a minute! The one who did the punching cannot extend forgiveness to himself. If there is to be proper forgiveness, it is you, the attacked one, who should do the forgiving, not the attacker. You are the wronged party! The aggressor is not the forgiver.

Now here’s a thought! We are all sinners. We have, as it were, all punched the Lord in the face. That means, He is the one who gets to extend forgiveness. Remember, all sin is against God. But sin is much worse than punching God one time in the face. It is a continual railing against, battering of, and disobedience to the precious Saviour. It is an offence to His majesty and holiness ... and God hates it! As Isaac Watts said,

'Twere you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.

David said in Psalm 51, “Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned.” It is God who has been offended by our sin and if ever we are to be forgiven, God must forgive us.

But, how does an offended God righteously forgive sin? Our verse explains the matter. Let’s re-read our verse!

“...Christ has also once suffered for sins, the just for (gk HYPER) the unjust...” Here, the word ‘for’ means “in place of.” Christ took our place. He was the Just; we were the unjust. He was the righteous; we were the unrighteous. He was our substitutionary Saviour. We are sinners—by birth, by nature, by choice, by practice and God, because He is just and holy, must punish sin.

Yet at the same time as being just, God loves His people. Now, if God could have a problem, this would present Him with one, ...a divine dilemma, as it were. How can He love the elect sinners and at the same time punish their sins?

The answer is, with a substitutionary sacrifice. We needed someone who could take that punishment on our behalf. We needed a substitute who had known no sin. We needed a perfectly righteous, sinless, holy and good person. This means that the only person qualified to become our substitute was and is the Lord Jesus.

If a man has no sin, he does not need a Saviour to become his Substitute. But, as for me and my house, we needed a Substitute, someone who, in grace, could be punished in our place. And, the only one who could substitute for us was the Lord Jesus. As our Substitute, He died not merely for us, but instead of us and as us.

In Genesis 22, we see how the Lord provided a Substitute for Isaac. This pointed to Christ our Substitute who was sacrificed on Mount Calvary. By the way Calvary is the same mountain where God had told Abraham, centuries before, "God will provide Himself a lamb." What a prophesy! And God did provide Himself a lamb, the Lord Jesus, who finished the work of redemption!

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is the one who died the just for the unjust.

Trust Him and you shall yet live!

He was the only one who could die the just for the unjust. He was the qualified Substitute. God did not simply excuse sin, He who was God died in our place and was punished. He's a Just and loving God!

And that's the Gospel Truth!