

## HE BARE THE SIN

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In The Year of our Lord Nineteen-hundred Forty-two, the United States Army Transport Dorchester was carrying nine-hundred and two souls to Newfoundland when a German submarine torpedoed her. Many of the men were instantly killed, and many others injured. Men began abandoning ship, and four chaplains assisted. They were Lt. Alexander D. Goode, a Reform Jew, Lt. John P. Washington, a Roman Catholic, Lt. George L. Fox, a Methodist, and Lt. Clark V. Poling, a Dutch Reformed. The four chaplains passed out life-jackets to the men. The chaplains passed out life jackets to the men, but there were not enough for all. So, the chaplains removed their life-jackets, and gave them to four of the men. John Ladd, one of the two-hundred and thirty survivors, later said, "It was the finest thing I have seen or hope to see this side of heaven." There have been in the world many great acts of substitution, but Christ's substitution is the greatest of all of them.

When God revealed Himself to Moses, He said to Him:

The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6, 7)

God revealed Himself as both merciful and just. Noah Webster defined mercy as "disposed to pity offenders and to forgive their offenses," and justice as "The virtue which consists in giving to every one what is his due." God is good. His nature is the very standard of goodness. His moral laws are absolute because His nature is unchanging. He has through His creation made known to man His nature and character, and so His moral law. He has made man in his image, with moral ability, the ability to do good. Yet, men suppress the truth, and rebel against God. (Romans 1:18-32) God, being just, demands that men pay the penalty for their sins. He is bound by His own nature to give men what they deserve, and they, because of their sins, deserve death. (Romans 6:23)

Yet, God is also merciful. He is compassionate. He loves His creation, and He does not wish for the sinner to perish, but to repent. He is always ready to forgive. He cannot simply forgive sin, as that would be ignoring sin, and so it would be unjust. The Proverbs say, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD." (Proverbs 17:15) This makes for a dilemma: How can God both give a sinner the punishment he deserves, and forgive him? How can God uphold both justice and mercy? God, in His great wisdom, upholds both by substitution. Isaiah the prophet prophesied of Christ:

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt 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. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and

he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:9-12)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, was a perfect man, the only perfect man. Although tempted like every man, unlike every man He never sinned. He did not deserve to die. Yet, evil men put Him to death, because they would not serve Him as Lord. Although He never unjustly harmed any man, neither did He ever lie, He was executed as a criminal, crucified between two criminals. This was no historical accident; it was God's plan from the beginning. God loves the world He created, and He would not destroy it. So, He sent His Son into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it. (John 3:16, 17) He sent His Son into the world to die in the place of those He would save. He took no pleasure in the suffering of His Son, but it did please Him to give His Son a sacrifice for sin. Jesus, God's Son, was not a reluctant substitute. No, it was His great joy to suffer for the sins of His people, to substitute Himself for them, that they might be saved. (Hebrews 12:2)

From the first sin until the death of Jesus, God passed over the sins of men. He could not, however, leave them alone for ever. His justice demanded a reckoning. In the substitutionary death of Jesus, God was both just and merciful. Jesus's death satisfied God's demand for justice, and is also the ground of His showing mercy, because, on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice, God forgives the sins of them that repent and believe in Jesus. A man can be justified before God, he can stand before God as righteous, because Jesus has atoned for his sins, and that man forgiven. In Jesus, God is both "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:25)

Although Jesus was executed as a criminal, God would not allow that injustice to stand. God would raise Jesus from the dead and give Him eternal life. Moreover, He would exalt Jesus to the standing of king of kings, and Lord of Lords. He would make Jesus king, and give Him a kingdom of innumerable subjects. This is the nature of God: to humble them that exalt themselves, and to exalt them that humble themselves. The greatest act of humiliation was the Son of God's becoming man, and dying for man.

Let us praise God for giving His beloved Son a sacrifice for our sins. Let us put our trust in Jesus, God's Son, who substituted Himself for us. Let us confess Him as Lord, and subject ourselves to Him. Let everyone be ready to sacrifice them for others.

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto His God and Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.