

What Christ's Death Accomplished?

Luke 23:46; Hebrews 9:16-17

May 27, 2018

Greg L. Price

It was not only necessary that Christ SUFFER in the place of undeserving sinners, but that He also DIE in the place of undeserving sinners. The GUILT of our sin is certainly paid by Christ in SUFFERING for His elect. But the PENALTY of our sin is paid by Christ in DYING for His elect.

The Scripture teaches that the wage we earn for the sin that we commit against God is DEATH: PHYSICAL DEATH (which is the separation of the spirit from the body), SPIRITUAL DEATH (which is the separation of man from God), and ETERNAL DEATH (which is eternal separation from God in hell). From the very first man, Adam, the human race has one and all (except for Christ) earned this wage of death: from the youngest to the oldest, from the poorest to the wealthiest, from the weakest to the strongest, from the least educated to the most educated. Had Jesus only suffered on the cross and miraculously come down from the cross, the work of redemption would not have been complete. It was also necessary that Jesus die for us as well as suffer for us. The death of God's people is no longer a curse to you any longer; it is rather a door to you into the very presence of your Savior. For Jesus Christ by His death has removed death as a curse to all of His people.

There are three aspects concerning the death of Christ that I would have us consider today: (1) Christ Committed His Spirit to His Father at His Death; (2) Christ Ransomed His People in His Death; (3) Christ Bequeathed an Inheritance to His Bride by His Death.

I. Christ Committed His Spirit to His Father at His Death.

A. The end of Christ's suffering is now soon to end. The Lord has just moistened His throat with vinegar, mustered all the strength that He had, and shouted forth that victorious cry, "It is finished." But there are yet two steps in His humiliation that must occur: (1) He must die; and (2) He must be buried and remain under the power of death for three days.

1. The shout of Jesus from the cross (John 19:30) was His shout of triumph, "It is finished" (or paid in full—the Lord Jesus had fully paid the entire debt for the sins of His people). However, before Christ died, there fell from His lips one last utterance from the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

2. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed to His Father as He saw the horror of that cup of suffering from which He must drink in order to redeem His people from their sin, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Now as our Savior has drunk of that bitter cup of suffering in full and as He faces death, another prayer falls from the lips of our blessed Savior: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

B. This final prayer of the Lord Jesus from the cross is significant for two reasons.

1. First, it is significant because Christ uses the familiar and intimate title of "FATHER". Jesus had earlier cried out with a loud voice in torment from the cross, "My GOD, my GOD, why has thou forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46)? When our Savior was under God's wrath and was forsaken by God for chosen sinners, He used the title, "GOD". However, when our Savior had passed from that agony of having been forsaken by God and when He had proclaimed with a loud voice to all who were at the cross, "It is finished", He then used the beloved title of "FATHER" again. Jesus had rendered a full satisfaction to God for the GUILT of your sin, and He indicated this not only by the words, "It is finished", but by the intimate title He now uses in His prayer, "FATHER, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

a. Dear ones, what a blessed privilege is yours that you too may use the intimate title of FATHER in your prayers. God is no longer an avenging Judge to you who have come to Jesus by faith alone. He no longer repays you as your sins deserve. For Christ has paid that debt in full. He no longer punishes you with a retributive justice wherein you await the all-consuming flames of hell fire; for He has been reconciled to you and you to Him by the suffering of Jesus Christ. By faith alone in Christ alone, you are now and for all eternity legally adopted as the children of God. God is your loving Father and you are His beloved children.

b. Because God is your Father, you need never run and hide when you have sinned against Him. First, it's foolish to think you can hide from Him who sees and knows all things. Nothing is hidden from God. Second, the fatherly discipline of God is always tempered by His everlasting love for you. God is not seeking to get even with you, but as your Father, He is training you to be holy children. This is the difference between punishment and discipline. Punishment is due to criminals. Discipline is due to children. We do not punish our children in vengeance, repaying them as their sins deserve. We discipline our children in love, training them to be holy. God's discipline is always administered in love to you, His beloved children. However, the fatherly discipline of God is not to be taken lightly. It may be severe if you become obstinate and rebellious in your sins or errors (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). Never forget that God's love for you, His dear children, is a holy love. The trials and afflictions that you endure in this life are not there because God hates you, but rather because He loves you, and He proves His love by His fatherly discipline (Hebrews 12:5-6).

2. Secondly, this final prayer of the Lord is significant because the Lord Jesus commits His human spirit unto His Father before He dies.

a. The spirit is that which gives life to the body (James 2:26). When God made Adam, He first made the body which was lifeless and then the Lord breathed into Adam the breath or spirit of life. From a biblical perspective, physical death is not the annihilation of anything. It is rather the separation of the spirit from the body. Neither the body nor the soul is annihilated. The body will decompose, but it will be resurrected on that last day. The soul will leave the body at death, but it lives either in the blessedness of heaven or in the agony of hell until the resurrection (Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31).

b. This prayer of the Lord Jesus is actually first cited in Psalm 31:5. The Lord Jesus takes this prayer which pointed to Him upon His lips and "commends" (or "deposits") His human spirit into the safe keeping of His Father's almighty and loving care. For this is the meaning of the Greek word used here for "commend". There are two senses in which Christ committed (or deposited) His soul unto His Father.

(1) Christ committed His soul into the hands of His Father as all men should do. Thus, this prayer is an example to you all to follow. Your soul and body are God's since He is your Creator and your Redeemer. Thus, this prayer of the Lord is appropriate upon your lips as well before you sleep and after you rise from sleep, while you work or play, as you suffer affliction and trial, and as you breathe your final breath. You should always be committing your spirit to the Lord. You should always recognize to whom you belong by creation and redemption. Particularly, as Christians, you are not your own, for you have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore, you are to glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, in your actions and in your thoughts, in your words and in your desires. Whatever you experience in life, whether prosperity or affliction, you must commit yourself unto the Lord, for you are God's (1 Peter 4:19). This is your recognition of His lordship and your submission to Him. Dear ones, the saints in Scripture did not have "last rites" or some sacrament called "extreme unction" (as is falsely practiced in the Church of Rome). The saints of Scripture prepared to meet their God at the time of their death by the appointed means of grace: the promises of God's unfailing Word and communion with the Lord in prayer. The saints, like Christ Himself, entrusted their soul to their Heavenly Father who created them and saved them (Acts 7:59).

(2) Christ committed His soul into the hands of His Father in a way that no mere man could ever do; for the life of Christ was not taken from Him, but was voluntarily laid down for His

sheep (John 10:17-18). When Christ died and breathed His last breath, He sent His spirit out of His body into the presence of the Father. Matthew 27:50 says, Christ “yielded” or released His human spirit. What is unique about Christ’s death is that He did not die due to His own sin. He was not suffering the penalty and curse of death for Himself. When we die, our spirit is taken from us, i.e. we are passive in the process. But the spirit of Christ was not taken from Him, but rather He actively gave up His spirit as a sacrifice for undeserving sinners. For His death was not deserved, but was a voluntary sacrifice. Thus, when the Lord prays, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”, there is a uniqueness to Christ’s death. None of the Gospel writers simply speak of Christ dying as if He died an ordinary death like all men where life is taken from a man. Matthew says that Christ “yielded” or “released” His spirit. John states that Christ “gave up” His spirit. Mark and Luke state that Christ “gave up the ghost” or literally sent His spirit out in a very active sense.

(3) Here the infinite love of Christ for unworthy sinners like you and me is again demonstrated. He was not forced to lay down His life for His elect. An everlasting and undying love compelled Him to die for His people. Our concept of love is henceforth forever changed by the sacrificial love of Christ. Love is not measured by what you give to others (for you may give out of your abundance to others). Love, dear ones, is measured by what you are willing to sacrifice for others (Ephesians 5:25). How much do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? How much are you willing to sacrifice of yourself for Him? How much do you love your wife or your husband or your parents or your children or your fellow Christians or your neighbor? How much are you willing to sacrifice of yourself for them? It is easy to give to others when it doesn’t hurt or really cost you anything. But the evidence of your love for Christ and others is when you are willing to give of your money, time, abilities, and life even when it hurts, even when it costs you much to do so.

II. Christ Ransomed His People in His Death.

A. The DEATH of Christ (and not the mere SUFFERING of Christ on the cross) was a necessary part of Christ’s work for His people. For if (hypothetically) Christ had only suffered the agony of God’s holy wrath upon the cross for the GUILT of elect sinners, but then delivered Himself from the cross to the amazement of all who witnessed His crucifixion so that He never died, what would have become of God’s elect as to the PENALTY they deserved for the sin they had committed? It is one thing to be set free from the GUILT of sin, but another thing to be set free from the PENALTY of sin. Dear ones, the Lord Jesus Christ died in order to ransom all of you, His people (without exception), from the GUILT and the PUNISHMENT which your sin justly deserves. You can sit in awe and wonder of Christ’s extreme torment in body and soul as He SUFFERED in your place to secure your forgiveness and pardon. But do not forget to sit in awe and wonder as you consider the DEATH of your Savior who ransomed you from death in all of its aspects (physical, spiritual, and eternal). Christ’s death was as necessary as His suffering in order to secure your salvation.

B. What is a ransom? A ransom is a price paid to secure the release of one from death. Since we all justly deserve God’s righteous condemnation for our sin against an infinitely holy God, we must either pay it our self or it must be paid by another. But you cannot pay the penalty for your own sin; for you cannot offer to God a sacrifice of a perfect life which God requires. That is why those who trust in their own righteousness spend all eternity in hell—they never finish paying the penalty which they owe to God for the sin they have committed against an infinitely holy God. But the good news (the best news ever heard by man) is that Jesus Christ came to offer His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He tasted death for all His people in order that the curse of death (in all of its forms) might be forever cancelled against all those who trust Him alone.

C. Moreover, a ransom is paid not for a nameless people in general, but for loved ones in particular. The “MANY” whom Christ ransomed from death were not all men without exception, but were **His sheep** (John 10:15,26), **His friends** (John 15:13-14), **His church** (Acts 20:28), and **His bride** (Ephesians 5:25).

D. Furthermore, once the ransom is paid, those who were doomed to die are set free from death as a penalty and curse. If the ransom payment was due to Satan (as some in history have heretically proposed), one might have reason to wonder whether Satan would keep his word and actually release those doomed to die from the penalty of death. But, dear ones, the penalty of death was not owed to Satan, but to God against whom you sinned. God was the offended party not Satan. Therefore, when Christ died and paid the ransom for His people to God, you are assured that God will keep His word (for He cannot lie). And the evidence that you have that God will keep His word and deliver you from death is the empty tomb of Christ. Christ's resurrection from the dead means you are set free from all punishment and condemnation for your sin. Death is a defeated enemy. Death now ushers you as a friend into the very presence of your Savior. That is why you too can pray at your death, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

III. Christ Bequeathed an Inheritance to His Bride by His Death.

A. Finally, the death of Christ is the means by which your inheritance is passed unto you, His beloved bride. The Lord Jesus has written His last will and testament for His beloved bride in that which is called the New Covenant. All of the blessings God has promised to you, His people (in body and in soul, temporal and eternal, physical and spiritual), are contained in the New Covenant. The letter to the Hebrews states that this inheritance cannot be enjoyed until the testator (i.e. the one who owns the inheritance and wills it to His heirs) actually dies (Hebrews 9:16-17). Thus, dear ones, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the guarantee to you that you are presently the heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. The death of Christ was not a defeat or a failure. The death of Christ and His resurrection from the grave is your victory over sin, death, Satan, and hell.

B. Dear Church of Jesus Christ, you are not paupers, but the enriched and wealthy bride of Christ. Everything that you need in this life and in the next has already been bequeathed to you. It is not potentially yours—it is yours (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). It has already been deposited into a heavenly bank account and is held in trust there for you. All of the promises in Christ are yours (2 Corinthians 1:20). You are wealthier by far than Bill Gates. Whatever you need to live a godly life is yours in Christ Jesus. How do you know this? The death of Christ secured that inheritance for all of you who will embrace Jesus Christ by faith alone and He confirmed it was true by His resurrection. Where are your worries or fears? They are swallowed up in Christ's unfathomable riches willed to you in his death and attested by His resurrection. Therein is your hope in all trials and afflictions, temptations and sins, in life and in death. Your inheritance cannot be taken away because Jesus died to give it to you and He arose and ever lives to see that it is yours now and for all eternity.

Copyright 2018 Greg L. Price.