

## Chapter 66

### Justice Satisfied and Mercy Promised

“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: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, *It is* my people: and they shall say, The LORD *is* my God.” (Zechariah 13:7-9)

Zechariah has been describing God’s mighty operations of grace in his people by his Spirit, opening to us the Fountain of cleansing in Christ’s blood by the revelation of grace, causing us to look on him whom we have pierced in repentance and faith, causing us to know him, whom to know is life eternal (12:10-13:6). In Zechariah 13:7-9 the prophet declares God’s great work of redemption for us in the sacrifice of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God’s great promise to save all for whom his Son was slain at Calvary. You might ask, “Why would Zechariah describe the experience of grace and God’s work in us before telling us about the accomplishments of Christ at Calvary as our Redeemer?” That is a good question; and the answer is obvious. — No sinner can ever know anything about the accomplishments of Christ for us, until he experiences the work of God the Holy Spirit, until he is washed from sin and uncleanness in the “Fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”

*“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). — The natural man may know all the facts relating to these things. He may have a thoroughly orthodox understanding of them; but he knows nothing about them. He cannot receive them and discern them. It is only after we are born of God, it is only by God the Holy Spirit giving the sinner a new nature in the new birth that he is able to see, receive and discern the sweet wonders of grace, as he looks upon his crucified Redeemer with the God-given eye of faith.

No sinner will ever be made to know and mourn for his sin by the thunders and lightning of Sinai’s fiery mountain, but only by looking on him whom we have pierced, by seeing the agony and bloody sweat of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane and hearing the groans and cries of the suffering Son of God when he was made sin for us upon the cross. Looking upon him whom we have pierced fills our hearts and eyes with godly sorrow for sin and mourning for the crucified Savior. To see by the eye of faith, as revealed to the soul by the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit, the darling Son of God bound, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, mocked, and then, as the climax of cruel scorn and infernal cruelty, crucified between two thieves — this believing sight of the crucified Christ, melts the hardest heart into contrition.

When we see, by that same eye of faith, that the physical agonies of our crucified Redeemer were the smallest part of his sufferings, that there were depths of soul trouble and of intolerable distress and agony from the hand of God as a consuming fire, turned against his own dear Son in all

the fury of his inflexible justice and righteous indignation, and that our blessed Lord had to endure the wrath of God, until he was poured out like water, and his soft, tender heart in the flames of indignation was melted like wax within him (Psalm 22:14), — then, we can in some measure conceive what he endured as our Substitute, when he was made sin for us.

When all the sins of his people were made his, when he who knew no sin was made sin for us, the wrath of God that we deserved fell upon him. He was separated from his Father, under a sense of his terrible displeasure. Because our sins were made his own, that abominable thing which his holy soul hates, he was forsaken of God in utter darkness! Is not this hell? This, then, was the hell experienced by our suffering Redeemer, when the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all (Isaiah 53:6). It is upon the basis of this great sacrifice that God promises mercy to his people in Zechariah 13:7-9. He who is a just God can be our Savior only upon the basis of justice satisfied. That this blessed scripture points to Christ, and to him alone, the Lord Jesus himself fully confirmed in his discourse with his disciples at the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27).

### **The Sword Awakened**

*“Awake, O sword.”* — What is this *“sword”* but the sword of God’s holy justice and furious anger and wrath? The word *“sword”* appears more than 400 times in the Old Testament. It speaks of an offensive weapon of war, used in close-range combat to thrust into and slash to pieces an adversary. The sword was sharp as a barber’s razor (Ezekiel 5:1). So it was kept in a sheath except when it was to be used (Ezekiel 21:3-5).

This is the *“sword of the LORD”* (Judges 7:18, 20). It is the sword that belongs to Jehovah. It is the sword he uses against his enemies. It is the sword of divine justice, not his rod of correction. This is not the instrument with which he chastises his people in driving foolishness from them (Proverbs 22:15). This is the instrument with which he slays the ungodly and executes his justice upon them (Deuteronomy 32:41-42).

The Lord God said, *“My sword shall be bathed in heaven”* (Isaiah 34:5); and now he cries, *“Awake, O sword!”* Why? Why does the Lord God command his sword to *“awake”*? Because it has been asleep! It is as though Jehovah in his longsuffering held his sword in its scabbard and commanded it sleep until such time as he would awaken it, called the *“due time”* and *“the fulness of time”* in the New Testament (Romans 5:6; Galatians 4:4).

Note well, it is God himself who awakens his sword and sets it to work. He commands it and orders it. It is he who opens his armory and brings forth *“the weapons of his indignation.”* He says, *“I command the sword”* (Amos 9:4; Jeremiah 50:25). It had been a long, long time since our father Adam had sinned and we sinned in him; and justice demands satisfaction. It had been a much longer time since Christ became Surety for us and engaged to swallow the sword in his soul. But now the time had come, and Jehovah cries, *“Awake, O sword!”*

### **The Victim Identified**

Against whom does the thrice holy Jehovah awaken his glittering sword? He cries, *“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts!”* —

“*Be astonished, O ye heavens at this!*” — “*O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD!*” — The Lord God calls for his sword to awake against his Shepherd! His Shepherd is our Shepherd, the One to whom he has trusted his flock, the flock of his sheep, his elect. It is not against the sheep that justice is awakened, but against the Shepherd, and not simply one of the many shepherds of God’s sheep, but against one particular Shepherd, even Jehovah’s Shepherd. Do not miss this sweet thought. — Jehovah’s Shepherd is also our Shepherd! “*The Lord is my Shepherd!*” He is the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep (John 10), the Great Shepherd who is raised from the dead (Hebrews 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd who is coming again to gather his sheep into his heavenly fold (1 Peter 5:4). Rejoice, O my soul! Because “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1-6).

This Shepherd is also said to be “*the Man,*” not a man, or any man, but one specific Man, — “*the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.*” There is one Man spoken of throughout the Book of God as “*the Man,*” and that Man is the God-man our Savior. — “*Behold the Man!*” — He is “*the Man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly*” who prospers in all he does, “*the Man of God’s right hand,*” “*the Man who hath his quiver full.*” He says, “*I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.*” Christ is “*the Man*” who stands in the valley, among the myrtle trees with his church, “*the man whose name is The BRANCH.*” “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (Psalm 1:1; 80:17; 127:5; Isaiah 46:11; Lamentations 3:1; Ezekiel 40:4-5; Zechariah 1:10; 6:12; John 19:5; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Clearly, those two words, “*the Man,*” call our attention to the singularity and perfection of this one Man who is Jehovah’s Shepherd. In fact, the word used for Man in verse 7 suggests that this one Man is “*the mighty, noble valiant man.*” He who is our Savior, Jehovah’s Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the perfect Man (Hebrews 2:5-18), the perfect “*Son of Man.*” When we look at Christ we “*Behold the Man!*”

But he who is our Savior must be and is more than a mere man, more even than a perfect, mighty, noble, valiant man. This Man is God! He is the God-man our Savior. — “*Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.*” The Lord of Hosts calls Jesus of Nazareth — “*The Man, my Fellow!*” God calls us his children (John 1:12; Galatians 6:4-5; 1 John 3:1-2); and he calls some men his friends (James 2:23; John 15:14). But nowhere else does the God of Glory refer to a man as his “*fellow.*”

The words “*my fellow*” imply more than one like me, or one associated with me. They suggest one united to me by the possession of common nature, rights, privileges, interests, and aims. The triune God here declares the Man Christ his equal, him being “*in the form of God*” and “*equal with God*” (Philippians 2:6; John 1:1-3, 14; 5; 1 John 5:7; Colossians 2:9-10). This Man who is Jehovah’s Fellow is God manifest in the flesh, God in our nature. This Man himself said, “*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*” He is truly God and truly man; fully God and fully man, all God and all man.

The very first promise found in Holy Scripture expressly declared that fallen man must be redeemed and saved by another Man. The woman’s Seed must crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21). Satan had triumphed over the nature of man in the fall; and the same nature of man was promised to conquer death, hell, and the grave. He who is our Savior must be a

man, a perfect man; but he must be more. He must be God. None but man could be a suitable Redeemer; and none but God could be a competent Redeemer!

### **The Shepherd Smitten**

Read on — *“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd!”* Look yonder, O my soul! See the Lamb of God nailed to Calvary’s cursed tree! The sword of God’s holy, offended justice, having been asleep from the dawn of creation, is now awakened, removed from its scabbard and commanded to sheathe itself in the heart of heaven’s Darling and bathe itself in his precious blood.

Wait justice! Wait Divine Sword! He who is smitten by justice must be justly smitten. Justice cannot, under any circumstance, slay the righteous! The righteous cannot be punished any more than the guilty can be justified. Justice will never allow such a thing. Without question, every son and daughter of Adam deserves that justice bathe its furious, glittering sword in their blood, because all have sinned and the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). But the Man who is Jehovah’s Fellow is *“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”* He knew no sin. Guile was never found in his mouth. Iniquity is not in him. Justice cannot slay him. Justice cannot slay the righteous. God himself forbids it (Proverbs 17:15).

How, then, can the triune God, the thrice holy Jehovah, call for his glittering sword of justice to awake and smite the Man who is his Fellow? Find the answer to that question, and you have learned the sweetest, most blessed, most wondrous thing ever revealed from heaven. The only way he could ever be slain by the sword of divine justice is by him being made sin as the Substitute and Surety of his people. And that is what the Word of God declares to be the good news of the gospel. — *“He hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”* (Isaiah 53:4-12; Romans 3:19-26; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

God the Holy Spirit tells us that our all-glorious Redeemer was *“made sin for us.”* — *“He hath made him sin.”* I am fully aware that natural reason opposes it; and many have endeavored to make the Word of God say something else. We are told that Christ had sin imputed to him, that he bore the guilt of sin, that he was charged with the debt of our sins, that he became accountable for our sins, that he bore all the effects of our sins, and that he was treated as if he were sin. But this plain, straightforward, blessed statement of Holy Scripture is almost universally denied by men. — *“He hath made him sin.”* Yet, there it stands. — *“He hath made him sin.”* How can this be? What can it mean?

*“This is the Lord’s doing; and it is marvelous in our eyes”* (Psalm 118:23). In human law and reason, among men, I fully acknowledge that guilt cannot be transferred, but only its effects. Among the sons of men, a third person may cancel my debts, but not my crimes. But the Spirit of God is not revealing things men can, or may do. He is telling us what our God has done. And in this great affair of redemption our great God stands infinitely alone. In this, his most glorious work, there is such a display of justice, mercy, wisdom, and power as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Consequently, it can have no parallel in the actions of mortals. — *“Who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God*

*else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me*” (Isaiah 45:21). — *“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth (BEARETH) iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy”* (Micah 7:18).

Were our sins transferred to Christ and made to be his, or was our Savior only treated as if that were the case? What do the Scriptures say? I am not even slightly concerned about what men say concerning this matter. I only want to know this: — What does God say in his Word? This is what God says. — *“He hath made him sin.”* The word *“made”* is very significant. It is not a legal term, but a word that carries the idea of *“create.”* It means, *“by one act to gather together and cause to be.”* God the Father, by one great, mysterious act, gathered together all the sins of all his elect throughout all the ages of time, and caused his darling Son to be sin for us!

Justice could never have executed the Lord Jesus had he not been made sin; and, blessed be his name forever, Christ our Surety was made sin for us! He bare our sins in his own body on the tree. The Lord God laid upon him our iniquities. — *“He hath made him sin for us!”* Justice, finding sin upon him, slew him that we might live forever!

If there is anything in the Book of God with which we should desire to be acquainted it is this, upon which our salvation and everlasting consolation depend. — *“He hath made him sin for us!”* If we would know Christ, and the fellowship of his sufferings; if we would look on him whom we have pierced and mourn; if we would die unto sin, and bring forth fruit unto God, we must have the gift of God the Holy Spirit to reveal to us this great mystery, that God the Father has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all, that *“he hath made him sin for us!”*

Why did our holy Redeemer go mourning to the grave? Why did divine justice pursue him? Only because he bare the sin of many. From this Fountain, the streams of free salvation flow. We die unto sin and live unto righteousness only because he, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree. O wondrous grace! O magnificent justice! O mysterious transfer! O amazing mystery!

### **The Sheep Scattered**

*“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!”* This prophecy was particularly fulfilled in our Lord’s disciples. On the eve of his death he told them, — *“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me”* (John 16:32). And when the Lord’s enemies came to take him to the place where he would be stricken, *“Then all the disciples forsook him and fled”* (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50).

### **Mercy Promised**

But blessed be the name of our God, the God of all grace, the sentence does not end there! The Lord God promises mercy to those poor, sinful, scattered sheep for whom Christ shed his precious blood at Calvary. — *“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: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”*

These “*little ones*” are the Shepherd’s lambs, including those little lambs (his apostles) who deserted him. They are “*little ones*” in God’s sight, his dear “*little ones*.” The Father is so fond of his “*little ones*” that he will not permit even one of them to perish (Matthew 18:14). The Shepherd is so fond of his “*little ones*” that he will tolerate none who would harm or despise them (Matthew 18:6, 10). They are “*little ones*” in their own sight, especially as they view themselves before God their Savior, crying, “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30). The Lord God promises, “*I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*” He turns his omnipotent hand of mercy and grace, forgiveness and restoration, love and tender care, protection and defense, comfort and peace and salvation upon his little ones. Verses 8 and 9 show us that it is particularly his hand of grace and salvation that is spoken of here.

“And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, *It is my people*: and they shall say, *The LORD is my God.*”

There is in this world a remnant according to the election of grace who must be saved. They are here referred to here as “*the third part*” of the earth. They are the 144,000 redeemed from among men, the whole Israel of God who must be sealed by the Spirit of grace before time shall be no more. At the appointed time of love, they shall call upon the name of the Lord. When they do, he will hear them and own them as his people, saying, “*It is my people,*” and they shall lift their hearts to heaven, crying, “*Abba, Father,*” “*The LORD is my God!*”