

MADE SIN FOR US

"Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" - II Corinthians 5:21 Revised Version.

This is a most vital Scripture verse. It holds in it the deepest meaning of Christ's death for man. Exactly what does it mean? It means just exactly what it says, though it sounds dreadful.

Jesus Christ was intrinsically pure and holy. He had no sin in Him. Hence, it was impossible for Him to transgress or commit sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (practice) sin; for His seed remaineth (abideth) in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God - I John 3:9. On the other hand, man is full of sin and cannot do right. The mind of the flesh "is enmity against God ... So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" - Romans 8:7, 8. Concerning man soon after the fall it is written that the imagination, purposes, and desires "of his heart" are "only evil continually" - Genesis 6:5.

Now the Holy God cannot look upon sin, nor justify the sinner. Note this citation - "If I sin, then Thou markest me, and Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity" - Job 10:14. Hence, out of obligation to His own holiness and to the government of the universe, God must punish the transgressor. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" - Ezekiel 18:4, 20.

Here is a profound problem. How can Jehovah justly deal with sin and the sinner and still save him, and yet maintain His own righteousness? Only infinite Wisdom and Love could find an answer. According to "the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11), God determined that the Word be made flesh and dwell among us (John 1:14). Then after this Word was proven holy and accepted of God by living in victory in this wicked world, He was made "sin for us" and "was numbered with the transgressors" - Isaiah 53:12. Exactly what we became by the fall of Adam. God made His Son to be. We are sinners. God counted His Son a sinner on Calvary. We are sinful, depraved. God counted His Son exactly that sinful, depraved object, when He hung on the cross between the two thieves. Because He became identified with us in our fallen condition, God saw Him there as a vile transgressor, and He could not look upon Him; even as it is written, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" - Habakkuk 1:13. That was why Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" - Matthew 27:46. That was how and when He tasted "death for every man" - Hebrews 2:9. It was not simply physical death, but actual separation from God. Not as a Father, but as a righteous Judge, God turned His face from Him who was made sin and a transgressor. The wrath that abideth upon the Christ-rejecter now and forever, fell on Christ then. He tasted eternal death or separation from God there for you and for me. He tasted death for all men.

That was the reason of those three hours of darkness. Nature was not sympathizing with Jesus in His sufferings, as some suppose. Nay! There was a convulsion in the spirit world, because God turned His face in holy abhorrence and dead silence from the face of His Anointed. All creation shared in that convulsion. All creation acknowledged the darkness that sin has brought into the world, and the wrath of the holy God that fell upon His Son to put away sin.

Most people have a vague, flippant notion of the death of Christ for man. It was not simply as if one man died in the place of another; but Christ died as actually that other. He died that very sinful sinner. Thus He paid the penalty due to our sins; for He had no sins of His own to die for. WE PAID THE DEBT DUE OUR SINS BY DYING IN HIM. Wondrous Grace! Wondrous Scheme! Wondrous Saviour! Will you believe "our report?" Oh! Believe and live.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN HIM

Now, when we believe on Jesus, God counts us as truly righteous as He counted His Son sin; yes, as righteous as His Son actually was and is in Himself; yes, and even more - even "the righteousness of God in Him."

"In Christ," we are a "new creation." "In Christ," we become "the righteousness of God."

This is truly wonderful! We cannot grasp it, but let us dare to believe the truth; for in believing we shall be free and shall have joy and peace. To believe what God says, whether we comprehend or not, delights and honors Him. We cannot always explain to our children why we do certain things, or why we refuse to do so; but we are extremely pleased when they believe us.

This, then, is the core of the Gospel. This is our message. This is our glad tidings of great joy to all people. What a leverage we have on the consciences of sinners. What wondrous words of comfort and establishment for believers!

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" - John 5:24 Revised Version.