

### Substitution.

*"But He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed."* Isaiah liii. 5.

As men through ignorance often quarrel with their best friends, so they have quarrelled with the doctrine of substitution, and condemn it as being an unjust and bad principle. They admire in their fellows what they refuse to admire in God. They applaud the action of the mother, who, to shelter her babe from the storm, disrobes herself and sacrifices her own life. Their praise is given to the citizens of Calais, who, in the time of siege, offered their lives to the enemy that their countrymen might be spared. They are melted to tears and filled with admiration when one man substitutes himself for another doomed to certain destruction, feeling that the life of the condemned man—because perhaps, he is married—would be more missed than his own if he had no such ties. But when Christ becomes a substitute for sinners the tide of admiration is stayed, and makes way for the flood of criticism and complaint. Let all remember that this act of substitution was a willing act on the part of Christ, arranged from the foundation of the world: also that it shows forth the righteousness of God in a two-fold way. First, that as by one man's disobedience all were condemned, so by the obedience of one, followed by the sacrifice of His life, all might be saved. Thus one man put away what another man brought in. Secondly, that as we had no part in the fall of Adam, so we had no part in paying the price of redemption.

Others have quarrelled with substitution, esteeming it a slight on God's mercy, as though He were unwilling to pardon without the sufferings endured by Christ. These say they can see forgiveness apart from the shedding of Christ's blood. Do these consider that instead of honouring God's mercy, they are charging God with unnecessary cruelty in allowing Christ to go through agonies beyond description, where no need existed—if so be it were possible to forgive without substitution?

However, God's word declares, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission". Substitution commends God's love and righteousness in a way that nothing else could have done. Moreover, the real root of the complaint of these critics is—first, that they do not care to allow their own sinfulness, which made such a sacrifice necessary; and secondly, their own proud independent spirit shrinks from leaning on the merits of another.

Let us now consider.

I.—*The position of Substitute.* He is spoken of by God in Zechariah in the following manner, "Awake O sword against my Shepherd and smite the Man that is My Fellow." He was no insignificant being that undertook the redemption of mankind. The equal of the Father without Whom nothing was made that was made. He in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and who is the heir of all things—behold the One who stoops from His throne to save a rebel host, not hesitating to make His own life the price of our redemption.

" O loving heart of Calvary ; through thee  
 Incarnate Deity displays its love  
 To suffering man in sacrifice sublime  
 Past all conception — and through Him who came  
 Clad as an artisan from Heaven's throne.  
 Enough,—we know the tale, we speak it oft  
 Through many languages to many hearts—  
 But who shall know its sweet significance  
 Or estimate the power of that life ?  
 (All things are nothing as compared to this).  
 It is for us to kneel not fully understand ;  
 To live its standard and not criticise ;  
 It is enough for us to smile in tears  
 Upward to God, close holding that pierced hand :  
 With heart o'erflowing to that sacred love  
 Which saves us from eternal doom and gives  
 Freely, and undeservedly, a crown  
 That fadeth not away."

## II. - *The nature of His wounding.*

(1) *In taking upon Himself a body* subject to pain, weariness, and sickness ; and in which He would feel the force of temptation.

(2) *Wounded by the ill return of the ungodly* for all His acts of love and self-denial. Little of thanks did Jesus get while here for His unwearied zeal on the behalf of man. He did good and suffered for it. The enmity of those He benefited reached its height in the terrible words " away with Him ; away with Him ; crucify Him ". And this from a people He had healed, fed, taught and loved. Sorely was He wounded with the base ingratitude of a sinful world which had received nothing but good at His gracious hands.

(3) *Wounded by poverty.*—" Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in that while He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be made rich." " The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Jesus became a pauper on our account. No lodging had He save when some kindly friend offered Him a shelter for the night. When wearied with toil oft had he to resort to the mountain at the close of the day ; His only bed the ground ; His only pillow a stone ; and oft He knew the pangs of hunger. If we feel being dependent on others, how much more keenly must He have felt it, whose position and sensitiveness were so infinitely above our own. Learn, however, this lesson, that poverty is no disgrace unless brought about by one's own sin.

(4) *Wounded by the actions of those supposed to be His nearest and dearest friends.* His own relatives said, " He is beside Himself ". Peter denied Him—Judas betrayed Him for a paltry sum of money. In the hour of His greatest trial and need all forsook Him, leaving Him to tread the path of shame and cruelty alone. " Reproach hath broken My heart ; and I am full of heaviness ; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none " ; were words prophetic of our Saviour in this hour of His extremity.

(5) *Wounded in Gethsemane* : and what wounds were here inflicted by the united forces of darkness, what tongue can describe?—who can fathom the agony of the Son of man as, pictured by the powers of evil, the whole panorama of the trials He was about to pass through with all their force flashed vividly before His mind, with every minute and agonizing detail of His suffering when the sins of all mankind were to meet on the devoted head of this Lamb of God ; Who, although He knew no sin, was to be made sin for us. The understanding of this fearful conflict can only come to us in part through the light of the terrible effect upon His mortal frame as given in the words of Scripture : “ And being in agony He prayed more earnestly ; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

(6) *Wounded by scourging* ; by crown of thorns ; by being spat upon and treated with ignominy and being mocked by the vulgar throng ; by the nailing to the cross, a terrible death to which only the most degraded of criminals were subjected. Wounded by the sneers and mocking utterances and blasphemies of the priests, as He hung racked with physical and mental pain.

(7) *The consummation of His wounding* was reached in the realization of the withdrawal of His Father's presence in the hour of His greatest suffering, and which found vent in the agonizing “ My God ! My God ! Why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ”

III.—Further, consider how remarkable was *His conduct under this wounding*. “ When He was reviled He reviled not again ; when He suffered He threatened not ; ” His prayer was breathed out for His tormentors, “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

IV.—The wounding was *for our transgressions*. How our love should burn toward the One Who has “ borne our sins in His own body on the tree ! ” God can now be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

V.—Consider *how men have treated this suffering* of Christ. By the majority it is treated as a thing of nought, as worthy of no consideration. Truly might the appeal go forth to-day : “ Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow wherewith God hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger.” If we regard not the sufferings of Christ for us, is it then surprising that a day will come when all our cries for mercy will be disregarded, and no notice taken of our sufferings ? When once the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, it is vain that we knock. Let us pay heed, be impressed now and be drawn to Christ.

VI.—This substitution is our good and sure *ground of hope for forgiveness and salvation*. “ By His stripes we are healed,” for—

“ God will not payment twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand  
And then again at mine.”

If God forgave not, Christ would have died in vain. Although salvation is a great gift, yet remember the great price Jesus paid for it. God

the Father and Jesus could not have shown more clearly than by this act, how desirous They are for our salvation. Being so, will He turn us away when we seek? No! For "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

VII.—*A question for the ungodly.* "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" How shall we answer the question, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" Such a garment has been provided for all at a tremendous price. Let us hasten, with feelings of gratitude and love, to avail ourselves of this priceless gift. The invitation has gone forth. "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth, and be saved: for I am God, and beside Me there is no Saviour."

—(The late Rev. G. Cousins).