

Date: 6th July
Speaker: Fraser Munro
Reading: Galatians 2:20
Subject: "The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me"

"Himself for Me" - three words that summarise the truth of substitution.

1. Solemn Observation: We all need a Substitute

The Bible makes no distinction. "All have sinned (Romans 3:23); "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12); "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (Rev 21:27).

The choice for each of us is Heaven, a place we can never enter in our own right, or a fate which we deserve that we cannot escape by ourselves. We are all sinful, lost and perishing. The wrath of God is hovering over us. He cannot ignore sin; it must be punished. The only way to escape His wrath is for the punishment to be taken by someone else. The only hope is to find a substitute. Reading the Bible will highlight three basic principles: we are wrong, we are lost and we can be saved. The grace of God has found a means for us to escape from His judgment righteously.

Romans 5:8 states "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us**"

2 Corinthians 5:21 states God "hath made him *to be sin for us*"

1 Peter 2:24 states "his own self **bare our sins**"

1 Peter 3:18 states: "Christ also hath once **suffered for sins**, the just for the unjust"

2. Typical Illustrations

a. Genesis 44 – Benjamin faced slavery accused of a crime he had not committed. Judah stood to plead for him and offered to take his place "If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever" (v 32). Joseph wept at Judah's plea. What is our response to the Lord Jesus, Who offers the same for us?

b. Genesis 22 – Isaac was to be offered on the altar. He journeyed to the mount and came to understand that he was to die. Only Divine intervention spared him as a ram was provided in his place. We, too, are on a journey that leads to death and judgment. Only Divine intervention can spare us from the judgment that our sins deserve. Abraham anticipated this as he said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen 22:8)

c. Exodus 32 – Israel had made a Golden calf, breaking the commandment of God. He threatened to consume them. Moses exposed their folly, "Ye have sinned a great sin" (v 30); he went to intercede, "I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (v 30); he offered himself as a substitute, "if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book" (v 32). Moses could not take that place. Those who sinned had to be punished. There is only One Who has ever been able to take another man's place.

d. 2 Samuel 18:33 – David weeps as he wished that he could be a substitute for his son Absalom. He would willingly have died in place of his son. Like Moses, this was not possible.

e. Jonah 1 – When the storm threatened the ship in which Jonah was travelling, he knew that the only hope was that he was thrown into the sea. He became a substitute so that the mariners could escape from the storm.

f. Day of Atonement – One goat had the sins of the people confessed over him and was taken way into a desolate place. It was made to bear the iniquity of the people into a "land of separation", a "desolate place where God was not". How accurately the picture illustrates what happened when the Lord cried, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)

3. Prophetic Declarations

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11). Again, He said, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20)

In Isaiah 53, we have prophecies regarding the suffering, submissiveness, silence, sinlessness and sinbearing character of Christ. Verse six begins and ends with "All", "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The first "all" speaks of condemnation, the second of conversion.

4. Implementation of Substitution.

Three places are associated with the cross: Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha. Each has a picture of substitution.

In Gethsemane, the Lord stands between the mob and His disciple "I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (John 18:8)

In Gabbatha, Pilate offers the people a choice, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:17). Barabbas means "son of a father" and so the people were given the choice between the son of Adam, a man representing mankind in its sin and the Son of the Father, the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven. The result was that the cross that was prepared for Barabbas was given to Christ, the path that Barabbas should have trodden was trodden by Christ and the death that Barabbas deserved was endured by Christ.

At Golgotha, the greatest substitution of all took place. The Lamb of God bore away the sin of the world. After the first world war, the then Prince of Wales visited men in hospital. When he was finally shown the last man, he turned to the doctor and said, "he was wounded for me". In a much greater way at Golgotha, we can say of the Lord Jesus Christ, "He was wounded for me". As Spurgeon said, "It was a work done in a day to be wondered at forever".

5. Theological Distinction.

1 Timothy 2:6 states: "Who gave himself a ransom for all"

Matthew 20:28 states: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"

Why is there a difference in terminology? In Timothy, we have an expression of the value of the work. It is more than sufficient for all. In Matthew, it is the practical effect of the work. It is only effective for those who confess their sin and accept the Substitute.

Sadly, many may understand the truth but never come into the good of it, perhaps never more so that in Burns' poem, the Cotter's Saturday night:-

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme:
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;

Such a clear declaration of the truth of substitution, yet the evidence of history suggests he never took it for himself. How we need to be sure we not only understand but lay hold on the Substitute that God has provided.