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# THE MEANING AND VALUE OF CHRIST'S DEATH, OF HIS INTERCESSION, & OF HIS LIFE ON EARTH.

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THERE is much confusion in the minds of many Christians with regard to the distinction, and, at the same time, the connexion, between Christ's death, His life on earth, and His present priesthood at the right hand of the Father. The reason of this, as it seems to me, is, that the full and great results of the death of the Son of God are not apprehended or believed. It is quite astonishing to see how few real Christians there are who are quite clear as to the momentous effects and consequences resulting to them, as sinners, by the "one offering" of the Lamb of God; and therefore it is that there is such confusion of thought with respect to the Saviour's life down here and present intercession. Did we but see the *meaning* and *value* of His death clearly, we should easily perceive the reason and importance of both His life and advocacy. Now what has His death done for us as sinners? We might say, What has it *not* done for us? It has obtained a full pardon for us—not a pardon in part, while something else must make up the deficiency. It has justified us freely from all things. Mark, not from some things, or many things, or lesser things, or greater things, but from "all things." Observe the word "justified" used here. This is beyond and more than a pardon, for a pardon supposes guilt; but the man who is justified is RIGHTEOUS, (for the Greek word for just is sometimes translated "just" and sometimes "righteous,") and comes out, not only as if he had been entirely guiltless, but altogether righteous THROUGH THE ATONEMENT. He has, then, not only pardoned us, but justified us and made us righteous by His blood. He *has* saved us *everlastingly*. I say *everlastingly*, because God's salvation, when once received by faith,



is not given, or received, on a *contingency* or **CONDITIONALLY**, but given in those plain and sure words, "he that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." There is neither *if* nor *but* in this. No man, whether yourself or any other, can pluck a child of God out of the hand of Him who holds him. And therefore his safety and eternal salvation are well and firmly secured. But through the precious death of Christ, and He being alive from the dead, we have much more than all this—we are **ONE** with the one who saved us; we are **IN** the one who saved us; we are "quickened *together*" with the one who saved us; we are raised up *together* with the one who saved us; and we are made *now* in spirit to "sit *together*" in heavenly places in the one who has saved us. In Heb. x. we are told, that by the will of God, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," we are sanctified—that those who are thus sanctified are **PERFECTED FOR EVER** by the same *one* offering, and that their sins and iniquities are **NOT EVEN REMEMBERED** any more. And, moreover, the apostle John declares in chap. iv. of his first epistle, that, "as he is, so are we in this world." Now these scriptures, and hundreds of others to the same effect which I might quote, show very plainly, very fully, and very triumphantly, the blessed extraordinary, and glorious results and consequences, to us Christians, of "the **ONE OFFERING**" of Christ; He having been raised, for we have **NOT** a word in those passages about His life or His intercession.

Having seen the wonderful position of a saved sinner in the sight of God, being put and placed in that position by God Himself, through his own Son's sacrifice, we are prepared to discern the meaning and value of the unceasing intercession of Christ for **SUCH SAVED ONES**.

Christ's intercession, then, cannot be for our acceptance as sinners before God, neither for our pardon or justification as sinners, nor yet for our quickening, raising, or union with Him; for, as we have seen and proved, all this and much more has, **THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION**, been entirely accomplished for us. What, then, is His intercession for? It is

for us as saved sinners, as soldiers, as sons, as servants, as lights, as witnesses of God in a dark, benighted, Christless, Godless world. As saved sinners we fail in working out the salvation that God by His grace has worked in us, and need therefore an intercessor. But notice this, that no man can work out, if God has not first worked in him, "both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

As soldiers, we should be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" but how often are we disobedient to the Captain of our salvation, and turn our back upon the enemy, and need therefore an intercessor! As sons, how do we fail and lose sight of our sonship and separateness to God; and therefore the words, "Come out from among them," "and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." We therefore, in this case too, need an intercessor. As servants, we should be unceasing in our "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." But here again, we may say, there is nothing but failure amongst those whose daily delight it should be to serve such a Master. Do we not, then, in this instance also, need Him as our Intercessor? And as witnesses, we have witnessed more to our great weakness and discord than to the power and unity of the Spirit of God; and thus again we need the Son of God as our Intercessor. It is, then, as children, but, alas! as *failing* children, and *not as the world*, that we are to know and value Christ as our "great high priest, who by his own blood" has entered into the holy place, or, as we may say, into heaven itself, "there to appear in the presence of God FOR US." Has He Himself not said, "I pray *not* for the world, but for *them* which thou hast given me; for *they are thine*." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Nothing can be plainer than that the priesthood of Christ has nothing to do with the unconverted, or the world, as such, but with the people of God alone. In every instance where, in the New Testament, the subject of intercession is spoken of, this is clearly proved; nor, I would repeat again, is it spoken of

with regard to our salvation; for, as has been before proved, the death of Christ alone secures for ever our salvation.

Intercession has reference to the failures and "*falls,*" as they are called, of the children of God; and also to the restoration, strengthening, encouraging, and safe-keeping of the Christian. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, where apostacy—going back to forms, Judaism, and the world—was feared, we see how touchingly and beautifully the priesthood of Christ was made to bear on this state of things, even as it is written, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, *let us hold fast* our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. *Let US therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and *find grace to help in time of need.*" The eternal safety and security of the *already* saved, but tried and tempted one, is also established through the priesthood of Christ. Thus it is written, "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession FOR THEM." Full assurance, firmness, power, courage, care, and love are communicated by the "high priest over the house of God." (See Heb. x. 21—24.) But in John's First Epistle, we have sin brought before us to be dealt with by the advocacy of Christ; and mark here, is it said, as many now say, that if any man sin he is then lost, or has ceased to be a Christian? No, but quite the opposite; "If any man sin, *we* have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Let it not for a moment be thought that "*any* man" here means the unconverted as well as the Christian; it means any of the three orders of Christians to whom the apostle writes in this epistle, namely, "little children, young men, and fathers." This is further proved by the language of the apostle in chap. i. 8: "If we

say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if WE confess *our* sins, he is faithful and just to forgive *us our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There is no licence for sin here, for He will not allow evil to show itself in His children; or if it does, they must confess it, and be humbled and broken on account of it; and if they refuse and are stubborn, He is God, and can and will bring them down. When Peter sinned, and before he sinned grossly, does Christ say, As soon as you curse and swear that you do not know me, you are lost, and no longer my child? No; but He said, "I have prayed," or interceded, "for thee." And what is the effect of this when the Saviour looks upon him afterwards? Is it to make him careless as to what he had done or might do? Nay, but to cause him to go out and weep bitterly. Here, then, we see the meaning and value of intercession, even to melt and break, to recover, restore, and comfort. But I again say, it has nothing to do with the unconverted, neither with what we commonly call the pardon or salvation of the sinner who believes in Jesus Christ, because it must never be forgotten that the question of pardon or salvation was finished on the cross the moment Christ said, "It is finished." Christians, by muddling and mixing truth, get doubt and sorrow into their souls; but if they would only see, as the Scriptures so plainly teach, that being in a twofold condition—first, as sinners; and secondly, as Christians, Christ has taken a twofold position for them: first, by His death to cleanse them *perfectly*; and secondly, by His intercession to guard and to preserve them as saints, they would be much happier. (Rom. v. 10.)

Let us now look for a moment at the life of Christ on earth. What was the great meaning and value of Christ's life on this earth? Three things, amongst many, will serve to mark the real meaning of the Lord's invaluable life here below.

First, as an example. "I have left you an example that ye should follow my steps." "If any man will serve me, let him follow me." "If I then, your Lord

and master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Numberless examples of a similar kind might be here given, but the above are sufficient to prove that at least one great object of the life of the Saviour here, was to show Christians how they ought to walk and to please God: and what more important? But as to His life on earth being of a vicarious character, it is utter folly, for nothing but death, "the wages of sin," could be of any use to the sinner; but the death, or the "one offering once offered," has *of* and *by itself* made the believer whiter than snow; and therefore His life, in a vicarious sense, had no part in the righteousness or beauty of the saint; and to mix the two *in the way* many are doing, is only to produce confusion, error, and evil, by lowering and lessening the meaning and value of the Saviour's precious blood, which by itself, without anything else, BEFORE OR AFTER, perfects FOR EVER every child of God.

But the second feature of His life down here which I would notice, is that of proving before all, in a life of perfect obedience, His fitness and suitableness *to be, or become*, an efficacious sacrifice. And therefore does He keep the whole law, and does, and says, and thinks nothing but what pleases His Father. He did *always*, in thought, word, and deed, that which was well pleasing to God, though exposed in every way to trials and temptations; and this was openly proved both by God, Satan, and man. Look at Him led by God the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, amongst wild beasts, and fasting "forty days." Here He is proved, plainly and openly, to be the triumphant, and therefore suited, Saviour for the sinner. But salvation could only be by His death, for "without shedding of blood" there could be "no remission." Look at man: did he leave anything undone, even to spitting in His face, in order to provoke, tempt, and try the Son of God? But though thus proved in such a variety of ways by God, Satan, and man, nothing is produced but the greatest purity and loveliness. Was not all this, therefore, to show, we may say, before God and man, that He who in such

“divers manners” was *declared* the “holy, harmless, and undefiled” ONE, was the fit, the suited, and the only Saviour for the sinner? But again I say, that all this that He went through, and did, and suffered, in His life here, was not in any way vicarious, but as so many open, undeniable proofs that He was God’s holy Lamb FOR the slaughter, and the sinner’s holy and suitable substitute. But until He *died*, or while living, how could He justify or make us righteous? It was an utter impossibility; for a *living*, holy Saviour could not, *in that state*, unite a wretched, defiled sinner to Himself—his sins *must* be put away first; and until that was done, he could, of course, have no righteousness. Sin, we all know, was not put away but by the blood of Christ; and therefore no righteousness or anything else, *vicariously*, could possibly be given before this. How evil and wrong the doctrine of our being made righteous by Christ keeping the law for us, is made palpable by 2 Cor. v. 21. Christ was made sin for us on the cross, and under the wrath of God: why? “*That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*” But if we were already made righteous by His keeping the law for us, He need not have been made sin at all. This evil doctrine thus denies the need of atonement! Christ’s life, then, was to show and to prove how blessed and altogether lovely God’s chosen and elect one was, because HE WAS TO BE the sin-bearer, on the cross, for the sinner.

There is also a third blessed feature in His life here that I would now, before closing, briefly notice. He suffered indescribable pangs in His life upon earth, *that He might sympathize* with those who also suffer: but He suffered on account of His goodness, righteousness, and holiness, and because of the evil and opposition of man. “Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made LIKE unto his brethren.” Why? “That he might be a *merciful and faithful high priest* in things pertaining to God.” “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in ALL POINTS *tempted like as we are*, yet without sin.” He

knew what strong crying and tears meant, in order to wipe the tear and soothe the sigh of many a broken-hearted child of God. What a meaning and value, then, attaches to this threefold view of the life of the eternal Son of God amongst cruel men and devils here below; but not, I once more add, in any way vicariously, in the sense of giving us righteousness, or anything of the kind; for this, as we have again and again proved, was completely accomplished by His death and resurrection.

I now only add, that Christians ought to examine the Scriptures more, and see for themselves the significance and purpose of the life, death, and intercession of the Son of God.

By God the Spirit, then, these three great things are not mixed up together and confused; but man loves complication, mixing, and jumbling, and then gets into a labyrinth and knows not where he is. May you, then, dear reader, perceive, if you have not already, that our blessed Lord's life down here, amongst many other precious reasons, was for an example to us; for the exhibition and proof in every possible way of His perfectness, in order to be a suitable sacrifice, and that He might, through all kinds of suffering, sympathize with and soothe the anguish of the sorrowing heart. His death, on the other hand, was for an entirely different purpose, and distinct in every way in itself from His life. In a word, His death took away all our sins, (and He who died, and BY DYING, AND IN NO OTHER WAY, is become of God to "us wisdom, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, and sanctification, and redemption;" (while His intercession in the highest heavens, melts, keeps, restores, strengthens, sanctifies, and encourages us until He shall come again into the air to take us up to Himself. Let us, then, be watchful, prayerful, and holy, that the Father's rod or chastening hand come not upon us.

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