

*Christ
once Suffered for
Sins*

The Just for the Unjust

BY WILLIAM REID.



EDINBURGH

R. M. CAMERON, 22 ST. GILES' ST.

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R. M. CAMERON, 22 ST GILES STREET

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah; while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.”—1 PETER iii. 18-22.

CHRIST
ONCE SUFFERED FOR SINS

I HAVE read of a ship on her way across the Atlantic Ocean, in the winter season, having been enveloped in dense mist for many days; but, all at once, an aperture opened in the thick fog, through which were poured the rays of the noontide sun, when, to their horror, the passengers and crew discovered that they were only a few lengths of the ship from a floating mountain of ice, upon which, in a few minutes, they must have struck and gone down, but for the timely providential intimation of their danger by the sudden downpouring of the solar light.

In a few seconds the mist again closed in upon them, and they were just as before. But what did they *now* do? Did they despise Heaven's kind warning, and run on in the same direction? Did they say, If we are sincere in wishing to steer rightly, there is no fear of us? Did they say, If we are to be saved, we will be saved, and so we need give ourselves no trouble about the matter? No! But they turned the helm right round, and ran for days in the opposite direction, that they might make sure of escaping the danger—and they did so.

My unsaved brother! I long, by God's grace, to bring the light of Divine Truth to shine upon your present path, that you may see your fearful circumstances, and escape the destruction that is ahead of you.

As concerns your sin, guilt, and danger, you have, all your days, been sailing in the mist, across the sea of life. You may not be a designing hypocrite; you are not intending to perish; but as long as you sail in the mist, you are in equal peril with the

scoffer and the profane. It is very likely you may have had no conviction of your danger, for your life may be such as to lull your soul to sleep, and prevent you from being alarmed. You attend church or chapel, and go to the communion; you pray, read your Bible, try to lead a good life, and expect to go to heaven when you die; but you have not been so enlightened by the Sun of Righteousness, that you have discovered your lost condition, and through faith in Jesus turned from sin to holiness. You are in *the mist* up to the present hour, for you are not sure whether you are on "the broad way that leadeth to destruction," or on "the narrow way that leadeth unto life!" Is it to be *heaven* or *hell* at the last? *You cannot tell!* Ah, how true it is that you are *sailing in the mist*; and, if you sail on, everlasting destruction will be the end of your pleasant but bemisted course!

Look at this "*good news*" in 1 Peter iii. and 18, and let it be as light from

heaven to thy soul! Christ has once suffered for sins and died; Christ has been quickened by the Spirit, and raised from the dead; Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." The whole matter of your soul's salvation lies in that one passage about Christ Jesus, as I shall now try to show you. Let us look at it word by word.

1. "SINS" — *The procuring cause of Christ's sufferings was our sins*—Christ hath suffered *for sins*. He, the "Lamb without blemish and without spot," once suffered "*for sins*." We have become so accustomed to "*sins*," in this world of "*sinners*," that we do not think of the nature of *sin*, and what it deserves at the hands of a holy God; but it must be viewed very differently in heaven, for it was because of *sins* here on earth that the God of heaven sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that He might condemn *sin* by making Him to be "*sin for us*," thus expressing his abhorrence and opposition to sin by visiting it

with its due award of punishment in the person of the sinless Christ, who, in His great love to us, took the sinner's nature, and stood in the sinner's place.

It was our *sins* that brought Jesus down from heaven, nailed Him to the shameful tree, and laid Him in the grave. What love ! that He should come to be treated as we deserve for our "*sins* ;" but, oh ! what a hateful thing must *sinning* be, that could deserve such punishment as He bore when He "*suffered for sins* !"

What numbers of pious people have never been awakened to see themselves to be sinners ; even many who are engaged in Christian work, and are members of " churches," are sailing in the mist regarding their *sins*. A young lady has just died ; a servant of Christ visits the family, and finds her sister much softened and ready to converse about the solemn event ; but he longed to do her spiritual good, and, after trying in vain again and again to give the conversation a *personal* bearing, he resolved, in love to her

soul, to make a more decided home-thrust rather than fail to win her soul. It might be rude, but he must speak plainly.

“ I speak not of these things generally,” said he, “ *it is your conversion, Miss W., I seek.*”

She could scarce reply, with a choking feeling of wounded pride. My friend soon left, leaving the word to work. And under God it did work powerfully. Her whole nature was in arms. She was mortified at his impertinence. To think that he should dare to speak of her conversion, as if she needed anything of the sort ! The thought was humbling above measure ! Ah ! the word had found its way home. She cannot draw out the arrow. It rankles in her bosom. “ *My conversion !*” The unwelcome words would come back. Much as she dislikes them, she cannot banish them from her mind. “ *My conversion !* said he.” “ Yes, your conversion,” a voice seemed to reply. “ *Your conversion.* You have never been truly turned to God. You must be,

or perish eternally among those who are at enmity with Him."

She is silenced. The voice within seals the preacher's words. She is convicted as a sinner before God. She feels that it is a great truth that she is yet unreconciled to Him. She has never loved Him. All her religion, which she so proudly trusted in, has been mere formality—a heartless, unloving service. "Ah! he might well say, indeed, that he sought *my* conversion. All is yet to begin with me."

Thus she reasoned with herself. The Holy Spirit led her onward. She saw her ruined, helpless state. She found Christ, the blessed Saviour, and God her Father in Him. She gladly accepted forgiveness through His blood, and gave herself unto the Lord; and, tasting His preciousness, and the happiness of His service, she gave God thanks that His servant had said to her, "*It is YOUR conversion I seek.*"

2. "CHRIST SUFFERED for Sins."—This sets before us *the reality of the sufferings of*

Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ was holy when He came into our world, holy when conceived and born. He lived by faith and prayer, exercising perfect trust in God, a life of holiness and righteousness, doing always the things that pleased the Father. He manifested, and was in His own person, the living expression of the Father's holiness, love, and grace. Nevertheless, He "*suffered*" as if He had been chargeable with innumerable "*sins.*" And His were real sufferings; for, from being infinitely pure and perfect, He was all the more capacitated to endure unutterable sufferings in body and in soul.

He was, indeed, the perfect Sufferer; for He alone, being the God-man, could bear the infinite stroke of God's sin-revenging sword. He *suffered* for righteousness at the "wicked hands" of men; but He also *suffered* "for *sins,*" as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." God drew the curtain of "darkness" around Jesus, and shut out the world when, on the

Cross of Calvary, He Himself alone laid our sins on Him, the willing, perfect Substitute—the sinless One.

The death of Jesus on the cross was attended with all the shame and ignominy of a public execution. He died in the same terrible way, and in the midst of the same circumstances, as the murderer died, when, as one “accursed,” He “hanged on a tree” on Calvary. How *real* were His sufferings! And, oh, what love was this, that Jesus should take the place of the sinner, and die his death, that we “*might not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

A spiritual sight of the *reality* of the sufferings of Christ is sometimes used to produce real conviction of sin. “Tell me, Jenny,” said a minister of Christ, in attending an anxious soul in a time of great awakening—“Tell me what led you to such a deep sense of sin?” The poor woman was in the greatest distress of mind, earnestly seeking salvation. “Oh, sir,” said she, “it was you that Mr M'D. told us the other

night, about his visiting the garden of Gethsemane when he was at Jerusalem, and standing in the very place where Jesus was in an agony, and sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

The preacher did not know what to make of this, and feared that it was a mere burst of feeling, arising from her emotional nature, having been touched by the notice of Gethsemane. "But, Jenny," said he, to prove her, "what had that to do with you? How did that make you feel your sins?" "Ah, sir!" said she, "I then saw that Jesus was a *real Saviour*. I thought before that He was only a story in a book. But when I saw that He was a real Saviour, I saw that I was a *real sinner*."

It is one of the most interesting studies in these days to consider the Lord's doings—how He works, what means He uses, what word, to send home the sense of sin to the heart. This woman had often heard of Gethsemane and of the Lord Jesus before, but it was all to her a mere "story in

a book." It did not come home to her heart as real. But hearing one tell that he had been at the very place where Jesus suffered the agony and bloody sweat, all its reality flashes before her mind by the power of the Spirit. These sufferings of Jesus were no mere *story*, Jesus was a real Saviour. But, ah! if Jesus was a real Saviour, then she is a real sinner. The whole is a reality, not a story. The real Saviour opens the eyes of the real sinner, and she awakes to feel her great need, cries for mercy, and finds forgiveness.

3. "CHRIST suffered FOR SINS."—This declares *the substitutionary character of Christ's sufferings*. As Jesus died a death of awful anguish and public shame—"even the death of the cross"—so did He die *as our substitute to make atonement for our sins*, and to put away sin "by the sacrifice of Himself."

The Epistle to the Hebrews shows us Christ offering Himself without spot unto God, "to put away sin," by bearing it "in

His own body on the tree ;” just as the Epistle to the Romans shows us Christ after He had died, and risen, and gone into heaven, offering Himself to sinners for their salvation in “ *the gospel of God.*”

He, “ the JUST ONE,” took the place of the “ unjust,” the place of “ sinners,” of “ the ungodly,” of the “ enemies ” of God. “ Christ hath also once suffered FOR sins, the JUST FOR the unjust.” This word “ FOR ” shows that He did not merely suffer in some vague way for our general good, but that His sufferings were as really substitutionary as are those of the soldier who goes into the sufferings of actual warfare for the man for whom he acts as a substitute.

Believing in Christ Jesus, I can speak of Him, looking back to His propitiatory sacrifice on Calvary, as “ the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave Himself *for me.*” “ Christ died for the *ungodly.*” “ While we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us.” “ He that believeth not shall be damned,”

said Jesus. But whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, because believing in Christ is believing that, as my Substitute, He gave Himself for me—He suffered FOR sins—"the Just for the unjust."

The gracious substitution of the righteous for the guilty is to me the very essence of the gospel of the grace of God. Looking unto Jesus on the cross, we can say, in the confidence of faith, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us.*" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

As Noah went through the waters of wrath—that drowied a world of sinners—and emerged from them to begin life in a new world, so Jesus passed through the billows of the flood of wrath, and is to be found beyond it all in resurrection life—in life taken up after death, life "for evermore." So all who now become children of God by believing in His name, may be as certain that they cannot be overwhelmed

by the waves of wrath which passed over Him, as we may rest assured that the flood which destroyed "the old world" cannot harm us. To us who believe in Christ Jesus, wrath, curse, and hell are certainly things *behind* us, and not before us, as is the flood which took place in the days of Noah! Is not this good news to you, a sinner? Believing in Christ, who died for us and rose again, you have already borne the punishment of your sins in Him, and will not have to bear it again. "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*"

How blessed to look up to the throne of God, where Jesus now sits, and, while we exult in His finished work—for He said, "IT IS FINISHED"—be able to say—

"Can He, the righteous Judge of men,
 Condemn me for the debt of sin,
 Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?
 If Thou hast my discharge procured,
 And freely in my place endured
 The whole of wrath divine,
 Payment He will not twice demand—
 First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
 And then again at mine."

4. "CHRIST also hath ONCE suffered for sins."—This indicates *the completeness of Christ's sufferings* for sins. He once suffered, but He will never suffer any more, because His work was perfectly done. He became "obedient unto death." He was "put to death in the flesh," the nature in which sin, deserving of death, had been committed; but He was "quickened by the Spirit," raised from the dead, and received up into heaven to sit on the right hand of God. He "dieth no more;" for He, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God." The *onceness* (if I may coin a word) of the sacrifice of Christ indicates its completeness, perfection, and perpetuity, "Now *once* in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

A man was brought before the magistrate, charged with some breach of the law. Once the magistrate had been an associate of the criminal before him, but

now he was a true Christian. Grace had delivered him from his former sins and companionship. But it was not so with the other.

Many present in court, knowing the old intimacy between the culprit and the judge, expected a lenient sentence, or perhaps his being dismissed with a reprimand. But many a hard judgment was hastily passed on the worthy judge, as he severely condemned the crime, and passed the severest sentence the law would permit. It was a heavy fine, with alternative of imprisonment. The man was poor; sin had kept him so. To pay the fine was for him impossible, and his only prospect was *the jail*.

Upon this the judge, whose one object now was to show how God had pardoned him, and to preach the gospel to all assembled, came down from the bench, took out his purse, and paid the fine at once and in full. The man was astonished, but he was free. The officers of justice, who before

were *against* him—who were to deliver him to his doom—were in an instant *for* him—to protect and free him.

It would have been blasphemy in me to have said, “I have sinned, and Thou, O God, in the person of Thy Son Jesus Christ, must suffer the penalty due for my sins.” But this is the very thing that God, in grace, has done. Oh, the “*riches of His grace!*”

The Judge, who could only in justice condemn, has descended from the judgment seat, and *once* paid the awful penalty due to me for my sins; and that *once* paying answers for my sins for ever; and now, believing what He has done for me, I am set at liberty!

5. CHRIST was “QUICKENED by the Spirit.”—*This was God's deliverance of the sin-bearer after He had suffered for sins.* If Christ, who came to suffer for sins, has been quickened by the Spirit, and raised from the dead by God, He (that is God) must be satisfied in every particular with

His redemption-work ; for it was as “ the God of peace,” or a God *fully propitiated*, that He raised Him from the dead ; and to every one who is anxious to be saved God presents Jesus in His risen life as “ *His Christ*,” who has borne sin, or fully atoned for it—has been in the grave as One who has been killed by it ; but God raised Him, and He is now the living One at the Father’s right hand—possessed of all the blessings which a hell-deserving sinner needs. How important, then, it is to have the *resurrection of Christ*, who “ once suffered for sins,” seeing that it is the fundamental *fact* on which our acquittal before God rests : for “ if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins.” “ But now is Christ risen from the dead,” and believing in Him we are not in our sins. The gospel as preached by Paul contains four capital elements. 1. *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* 2. *He was buried.* 3. *He rose again the third day.* 4. *He was seen.*

(1 Cor. xv. 3-5). And now by faith *we see* Jesus crowned with glory and honour in the highest heavens.

“Jesus, I know, has died and lives ;
On this firm rock I build.”

GOD—whose righteous judgment against sin was borne by Christ in death—hath raised CHRIST from the dead ; and the importance of showing you that it is a Christ who has been *raised* from the dead on whom we ask you to believe, can be made very obvious. Look at this point for a little, and think over it in view of this supposed case.

Were you about to be cast into prison for a heavy debt, and if a dear friend of yours came and said—I will go out to Australia and try to amass a fortune, and if I succeed, I will come back and pay every farthing of your debt ; that would be acting kindly towards you, but it would not answer your present necessity. But if a friend with whom you were wont to be at school heard

him speaking in that strain and said—I have just returned from that distant land, having made a fortune: here is a cheque for the full amount, take it to my banker, and you will get the money; that friend in need would be the truly valuable friend.

6. Such a friend is A RISEN CHRIST, WHO HAS GONE INTO HEAVEN, for He has in Himself relief for your every necessity.—“*The exceeding riches of His grace*” are for you, so that believing on Him at God’s right hand gives you the benefit of all He acquired by His God-glorifying death, and the same standing in righteousness in the presence of God in heaven, and the same “newness of life” which He now has after having gone through the doom of sin at the hand of God: which is *death!* For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is *eternal life in Jesus Christ*, who is risen from the dead, having paid the uttermost farthing that the sinner owed who cleaves to Him.

He is the life-boat at the edge of the wreck ; He is bread brought into the house of the starving family ; He is the reprieve brought into the cell of the criminal ; He is life brought into the very place of death ; salvation come to supplant damnation ; heaven brought into the very vestibule of hell.

7. " Christ also hath once suffered for sins," died, risen, and ascended—" TO BRING US TO GOD."—Not within a short distance of God, but TO GOD, where He is in the light of His perfect *love* and perfect *holiness*.

As the Red Sea was opened miraculously from the side furthest from the land of bondage, and the waters stood as walls on either side all the way through the sea, before the Israelites were called on to march through it ; just so was the veil of the temple " rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (as by a hand from heaven) when Jesus died, in token of the opening up, by His death, of a passage for lost

sinner from the throne of God in heaven to the very place of condemnation where they stand, so that they may pass from their present position under condemnation, "on dry ground," into heaven itself, where Jesus is, in virtue of His own blood, and in "the power of an endless life."

Christianity is not, then, a preparation for death and judgment, as is commonly thought, but a life ("eternal life in Christ Jesus") beyond death and judgment. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life*" (John v. 24).

This, then, dear friend, which I have now told you about a dying, rising, living, accepted, glorified Christ, contains the very essence of the gospel—the *good news of God*; and, by knowing it and believing it, you have *salvation*, and can say—I have been already condemned for my sins, and have died; and now I live for ever, for I

believe in that Christ who was dead under the wrath of God for me, and God assures me I am now as free from my sins as is the risen Christ at God's right hand; and on that account I can sing from the heart :—

“ I bless the Christ of God ;
I rest on love Divine ;
And with unfaltering lip and heart,
I call this Saviour mine !

“ His cross dispels each doubt ;
I bury in His tomb
Each thought of unbelief and fear,
Each lingering shade of gloom.

“ 'Tis He who saveth me,
And freely pardon gives ;
I love because He loveth me,
I live because He lives.

“ My life with Him is hid,
My death has passed away,
My clouds have melted into light,
My midnight into day !”

I now, therefore, bring you tidings of a risen Christ, whom the Gospel places before you as having accomplished redemption,

and assures you, in God's name, that He is *given* you personally by the Gospel, that you may believe on Him as your sin-bearer, and be saved *this very moment*.

He that believes is looked upon by God as He looks on Christ ; and when an anxious one sees that it is so, what a flood of light enters the soul ! “ Suddenly,” says one such, “ the light flashed upon my mind that God is pleased only with Jesus, and with sinners in Jesus. That moment taught me more of the plan of salvation than I had learned in thirty years. I then began to sing, but I sang notes that no man ever composed, and words no man ever wrote, and the burden of it all was—

“ Glory to Jesus my Saviour !
 Glory to Jesus my Saviour !”

In the gospel message God puts His Christ within every man's reach who hears it, and men have now to thrust Him away from them before they can succeed in being damned ! You cannot *really* hear the gospel and not be saved : for God says,

“*Hear, and your soul shall live.*” Christ is yours already in the gift of God (John iii. 16), whether you receive Him or not, for God in His compassionate love so GAVE Him to “the world” as a Saviour, that any one in all the world may receive Him and be saved; for surely the *unlimited* nature of the gift is indicated by the words of Jesus Himself—who only knows the Father—when He assures us that He has been so generally given to all, that “WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Your believing in Him will give you the blessed realisation of Him as yours in your personal experience; but if He were not yours in God’s gift before believing, He could not be made yours in possession by believing. God does not give you a dry offer of salvation—He presents you in all your sinfulness with the precious *gift* of His Son. “We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD” (1 John iv. 14).

A DRUNKARD had somewhere heard this fine sentiment, "God's love is like the sun." He was sitting in his own miserable dwelling, when a ray of the sun's light entered through his window and fell upon his person; he repeated the thought, "*God's love is like the sun; a ray of the sun falls on me, why not a ray of God's love?*" He retired to rest full of the same thoughts; in the morning, the sun was up before him, filling his room with its splendour. He arose, started to his feet, and basked in its morning beams; and then repeated the thought, "*God's love is like the sun, the sun is all over me; if God's love is like the sun, His love is all over a poor drunkard.*"

It is this kind of love that melts our hearts, and wins them back to God. We who believe unto salvation, can account for it only in the way mentioned by the Apostle:—"God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened

us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. ii. 4).

The most harrowing representations of "wrath to the uttermost" will never reclaim us; the most pungent convictions of our sinfulness will never lead us to the enjoyment and service of God; but when the eyes of our hearts are divinely opened to see Christ once suffering for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, to be forgiven, purified, and glorified, we cannot resist the drawing influence of celestial love, and we consecrate ourselves to the service of our Father in heaven.

One of Brainerd's Indians furnishes a beautiful illustration of this. He came to him one day in great joy, and gave the following account of his conversion:—"I often heard you say that in order to come to Christ we must feel ourselves utterly helpless and undone. I long strove after this, thinking it would be a good frame of mind, and that, in return for it, God would bestow on me salvation. But the longer I

strove, the more wretched I became. At length I heard you setting forth the glory of Christ, and inviting sinners to come to Him naked and empty. That night *I saw with my heart the glorious Saviour ; and it stole my heart away.*" Dear friend, have you seen the glorious Saviour with *your* heart, so that the sight has stolen *your* heart away ? "This is the record, that God hath *given* to us eternal life ; and this life is in His Son. He that *hath* the Son *hath* life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v. 11, 12).

I charge you, then, in the presence of that holy God who gave His Son to take your nature, and suffer for sins, *the Just for the unjust*, and who presses Him upon your immediate acceptance, not to put away from you the precious gift, but receive Him now and live ; for be sure of this, that if you perish, it will not be because no Saviour was provided for you, or because you were not made aware of the fact, but because you refuse to accept of Christ as yours, that

you might be saved: and, oh! what a damnation must be yours, were you stumbling over a GOD-GIVEN Christ into a lost eternity! But believing in Christ who hath once suffered for sins, you can say with the certainty of faith—"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, *I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me*" (Gal. ii. 20).

AMAZING words!—He "gave Himself for me,"
For me—rebellious, sinful, guilty me.
For me the Saviour bore the cross and shame,
Rejoice, my soul, and bless His sacred name!

For me He left His glorious throne above,
For me reveal'd His Father's wondrous love,
For me He tabernacled here below,
For me He drank the bitter cup of woe!

For me the stroke of justice He endured,
For me a pardon full He has procured,
For me the Saviour meekly bowed His head,
For me His precious blood He freely shed.

For me He was reviled, despised, betray'd,
For me was scourged, condemn'd, and crucified,
For me He suffer'd on the accursed tree,
For me—lost, wretched, vile, unworthy me !

For me in agony He groan'd and died,
For me God's righteous law He satisfied,
For me complete atonement He has made,
For me He rose triumphant from the dead !

For me He hath ascended up on high,
For me He intercedes above the sky,
For me He conquer'd death, and hell o'erthrew,
For me a crown of life He holds to view !

For me a mansion fair He has prepared,
Where I shall be for ever with my Lord,
In that bright world my ceaseless song shall be,
Hosanna to the Lamb who died for me !

WILLIAM REID