

Why Christ died for us

Address at Bangor, N. Wales, Sunday afternoon, July 30th.

1 Peter 3: 18. Galatians 1: 3-4. 2 Corinthians 5: 15. Titus 2: 13-14.

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There is only one thing that I am going to take for granted, and that is that all of us here present have looked in faith to our Lord Jesus Christ as the great Saviour who has died for us. We can take up the language which we have in each of these four verses. Christ, we read in the first of the four, "hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust." We should each say, "Though I was amongst the unjust, I know that Christ, the Just One, has suffered for me and for my sins"; or in the language of the little verse of four lines, so much blessed in days past, we might say,

"In peace let me resign my breath
And Thy salvation see.
My sins deserved eternal death
But Jesus died for me."

I do not know what you had in your mind when you trusted the Saviour. As far as I can remember I was filled with a mixture of fears and apprehension. I feared going to hell. That is old fashioned I know, but hell is terribly real. I feared it. I feared the power of my sins, and that drove me to Him. I have discovered since, that when I came to Him, He had thoughts in His heart about me. He had certain objects, and for many a long day now it has become to me a very great thought that my Saviour when He died and suffered for my sins upon the Cross, had purposes in His heart for me, since I am one of His own. Now what my heart says is this, "If the Lord Jesus Christ had certain objects in view when He died for me, and He has let me into the secret of what He desired and purposed, then by His grace I will make those objects my objects.

Now, each of my scriptures shows us an end which was in view, when the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, and I have read them in the order in which I wish to speak of them. We begin with Christ, who gave Himself for our sins; and that I might call the base of our operations. We shall have to come back to our base. We take an excursion in that direction, or in this, but back you will find, we come to our base.

The first excursion we make in this direction, He did it *that* (we shall have the little word "that" in each of our texts) *He might bring us to God*. Now that raises at once a question I would like to ask every young believer here. In your heart, in your own inward consciousness are you happily brought to God? Do you know and love God? Is He the One in whom you trust and confide so that, brought into nearness to Him, the distance that once was between you and God is gone for ever? There are to be found people, who do very sincerely trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet if they spoke very honestly what is in their hearts they would reply something like this: "Well, that is rather a question. If you had asked me if I have been brought to Jesus, yes, a thousand times, yes. Jesus is my blessed Saviour; He died for me. But God! God represents to me, awe, greatness, majesty, holiness and I am very glad that Jesus stands between me and God." Jesus is to many the embodiment of all that is meek and gracious and kindly and compassionate, but God of what is great, awesome, holy, infinite and, to tell you the

truth, rather alarming.

Now if you have thoughts like that there is something wrong somewhere because, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Somebody may say, "Yes, but of course, He is going to do it. We are all going to heaven." And when you enter heaven do you expect to have that awesome feeling? Will you say, "Don't bring me too near. I have a feeling of fear. Bring me to Jesus, don't bring me to God." I am sure you would say at once, "I shall not feel like that." Then why feel like it now? What difference is there going to be as to what Christ has done between then and now? None whatever. No difference in the work He did when He gave Himself the Just for the unjust.

The fact of the matter is, the Lord Jesus Christ came that He might make God known to us. That is what we speak of as revelation. And then that He might work this great redeeming work on our behalf, He gave Himself for our sins. And the wonderful thing is He carried the revelation to its climax at just the point where He accomplished the redemption. The supreme manifestation of the love of God was when He died, and then it was the great redemption work was accomplished, and all that stood between us and God was removed in the power of His death and He came forth in risen life and in triumph, that He might bring us to God. Now, it does not state it here, but we know from other scriptures that He has brought us to God in a new relationship. He has introduced us to God in a new way. We were all God's creatures but now we are brought into relationship and nearness and favour of sons. And as Christians we find this lies at the very basis of our spiritual affections and happiness. While remembering His infinite holiness, we do not fear it but glory in it. God is righteous. Yes, that does not fill me with fear but with assurance.

The gospel is not that Justice stands with a great flaming sword anxious to smite me, and Mercy intervenes in kindly grace and succeeds in mollifying the anger of Justice so that he turns the other way and ignores me, like Nelson at the battle of Copenhagen, with his blind eye. That is not the gospel. The gospel is not Mercy at the expense of Justice, you know that I feel sure. Then is the gospel this? That the great flaming sword of Justice is plunged into the heart of our Saviour, so that He can turn to Mercy and say, "My every claim is met. I want no more. Mercy, you have a free hand, do what you like. Smother those worthless sinners with kindness cover them with kisses, if you like. I have nothing more to say." Is not that better? Yes, but it is not the full gospel. Then what is the gospel? Truly it tells us the sword of Justice has been sheathed in the death of our blessed Saviour, but also that His death and resurrection has turned, so to speak, the flaming sword of Justice into a bright and shining shield of protection for the believer. Justice is not dismissed from the whole question as though he had nothing more to say. Justice has a very big thing to say. Justice defies all comers. Justice says, "Anybody who touches this sinner has to smite through the shield of my righteousness." Justice stands on our side just as much as Mercy. Thus in righteousness we are brought to God. We know God. We glory in God. His very glory and righteousness are our boast as much as His goodness and His mercy.

But then, God and the world are at opposite poles — absolutely apart. If we are brought to God, if our relations are established on this righteous footing, you may depend on it our links with the world are broken. The apostle Paul in writing to the Galatians emphasizes that point. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins. There we are, you see, back again at the base of our operations. Back we came to this simple fact, and He gave Himself *that* — in order that — with this object in view — "*He might deliver us from this present evil world*, according to the will of God and our Father — according to the will of the One to whom we have been brought. Those who study their Bibles may know the word used for "world" is the word which means "age" — "this present evil age." The age means the whole organized course of the world and the organized course of the age at the present moment is evil.

Now don't forget that. Rejoice, and glory in the fact that you have been brought to God, but don't forget the fact that the very Saviour who died for your sins did it with the object of breaking your links with the course of this age, just as He did it to establish your links with God.

It is just here that a great deal of spiritual weakness exists; in fact perhaps one of the very greatest causes of spiritual weakness in the Church of God today lies just at this point. I am not an electrician but I know a thing or two about electricity. I know you have to *generate* electricity, and also that you might have the finest power station in the land and generate and generate and generate, and use up a whole mine of coal but you would not have electricity sufficient to effect anything except you had something else. You must generate and perhaps *accumulate*. They have accumulators, have they not? But those could not meet the problem. You not only generate and accumulate but *insulate*. Break down the insulation and you generate electricity for nothing. As fast as you generate it disappears, it runs away to mother earth. Generate, accumulate, but insulate. Cut off from the earth. That is not only a little parable, but a parable worth remembering. Why doesn't the thing work? There is an earth line somewhere, and so you have not got the power, and you cannot expect to have it. Thus it is in the things of God. Many a Christian says, I want to be real and sincere, and the Lord to be glorified in me. I will pray and read the Bible and go to meetings. That's right — generate! Then what are you doing? Trying to accumulate? I have not a word to say against that. Go in for generation and accumulation but don't forget *insulation*. That was the desire and will of our Lord when He died on the Cross. We are redeemed by His blood and brought to God, really to know Him and find our glory in Him, but at the same time we are delivered from this present evil world.

You may say, "I shall be very peculiar if I don't go with the stream and do just as other people." You will. Instead of being a dead fish, you will be a live fish that has the energy to go against the stream. And the Saviour has called you that you may be for Him and that instead of being influenced by those who are slavishly copying what others do, and taking as your motto, "Everybody is doing it" you aim to please your Lord in all things, to be set now for His holy will, and to be delivered from the course of the world through which you pass. Through Vanity Fair you have to go, as Bunyan pictured in his Allegory, but remember you don't belong to Vanity Fair through which you go. Christian and Faithful, if I remember rightly, were rather curious looking folk, not dressed exactly as the inhabitants of Vanity Fair, a year behindhand and not quite in the fashion. That is what you have to expect when you have people delivered from this present evil world. Our Saviour died that this might be achieved.

Now the third picture. I think perhaps this comes more closely home even than that of which I have been speaking. It is not now my relations as a believer either with God or the world. I read Christ died for all so that we all are dead — dead to God. He died for all, and as a result of His dying there are those that live. Who are these? Those that believe in His Name. The youngest believer has a new life, and that new life of yours is like a little stream that is going to flow in an altogether new direction. They which live should not henceforth — from the hour when they began to live — live unto themselves but *unto Him that died for them and rose again*.

Of course, you recognise that we have again come back to the base of operations, the death of Christ. But we take another excursion now in a fresh direction; as it effects us in the secret of our individual lives. We now should not live unto ourselves. What is the significance of this little preposition "unto"? We have been brought unto God. In our unconverted days we did live unto ourselves, and in the nature of things we could not do anything else. Dominated by sin as we were, we had "self" as the great end and object of our existence. Think of it. Of course it was so! How did we judge everything in our unconverted days? Thus: Does it please me? Does it suit my taste? Do I like that? Will it a little bit advance my interests? Will it make a big man of me? But in our unconverted

days did we not think of a community? Yes, if *we belonged to it*. There was our fraternity, society, or something or other, that was of interest to us. Self, self, self, was the great object of our existence. It was the little puddle into which our trickling streams ran, and unlike the Dead Sea (which we understand has all sorts of valuable things in it) there was nothing in it, — this dirty little puddle called "self."

Oh, my young friends! we have something here very glorious. Our Saviour has died for us that we may be diverted altogether from life of the old order and find a life with another Object and End altogether, living not unto ourselves but unto Him that died and rose again. There dawns upon us the vision of OUT living Saviour, the One who gave Himself for our sins; He lives to be the dominating factor, the new Object of the believer's life. Our lives, instead of all centring in some way upon ourselves, are to be centred on this new Object, the One who died for us and rose again. There is no deliverance greater, I believe, for the Christian than this of which I am speaking, the deliverance of being lifted clean out of yourself, and self-seeking with its likes and dislikes, so that instead of being centred upon yourself you are centred upon another, and that Other a worthy Object, a divine Object, an eternal Object. If I might offer a prayer for you it would be that you may very early discover in the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely a Saviour, to deliver from the penalty of sin (He is all that) but an Object of infinite love, excellence, glory, worthiness, to command your life and fill your heart. Oh! how excellent to be delivered from oneself and to be centred upon Him.

You can see a parable of these things even in the ordinary affairs of life. You know what an exceedingly trying person is that man or woman occupied with themselves physically. There are numbers who have their physical troubles, and their lives seem to be spent going from one spa to another spa, drinking waters that taste like ink and those that taste like sulphur, and they are always discussing illness and symptoms and temperatures, and it is carried to such a pitch that they become almost intolerable to everybody else. It is miserable to be occupied with yourself physically. It is easy to see that. It is not perhaps so easy to see it is equally miserable to be occupied with oneself in a spiritual way, to make self the centre and sun, round which everything has to revolve. Oh the blessedness of getting away from oneself and finding one's centre in Christ.

Long ago, in the Middle Ages the old astronomers studied the heavens and even before telescopes were introduced they discovered much, but they never could quite understand the movements of the planets. They believed that this earth was the centre of everything, that sun, moon and stars were careering round this earth of ours. But the thing did not work. There was a screw loose somewhere. One day a man of original mind rose up and dared to suggest that this earth was *not* the centre of everything. He even went so far as to say the sun was the centre and that we and other planets were revolving round the sun. And immediately that idea took root the apparent disorder disappeared and order was seen to prevail. It is like that very much with ourselves. It is wonderful how everything falls into place when we have found the Divine Centre, and discovered what we are here for.

When we get to heaven, Christ will be the Object that fills our hearts. His servants will serve Him in that day. We are being educated here for the great day that is coming when we shall serve Him perfectly and gladly and joyously. The trouble today, my trouble, is this — how that hateful thing self comes creeping in, into this address of mine as I am speaking, creeping in at all hours and everywhere except we refuse it. The old tendencies of the flesh are in us, but we are learning this lesson. The One who died purposed to captivate our hearts and divert us from the old self-centred life, that we might find our Centre in our Lord Himself. What a deliverance it is when the beginnings of this dawn upon us!

Now there is just that practical verse in Titus, and here I have to close. Our Saviour Jesus Christ has given Himself for us. Mark, that is the basis of operations. Here we are back again at the great fact of His death on our behalf. But He gave Himself for us "that", — in order that, with this purpose in view. What purpose? *That He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to Himself.* You see, we need very much purification — our hearts, our thoughts, our motives. The flesh is flesh and still within us, and we who have flesh in us and are redeemed and indwelt by the Spirit of God, are to be purified unto Himself a peculiar people, a people for His own special possession, and the hallmark of our being such a people is that we are "zealous of good works."

I think I need hardly say that if you can find for me a few earnest Christian people really zealous of good works they will be a very peculiar people. You do not pick such up like blackberries, in autumn. Zealous? Oh yes, you can find people zealous. But, zealous of *good works*; that is not so common. A peculiar people! That word, in our ordinary use of it today, means "odd", but it does not here signify that. The primary meaning is, a people for His own special possession. But then in a secondary sense we shall certainly be out of the ordinary. There are a lot of people very zealous for pleasure. Nothing peculiar there! Zealous for money, we find a lot of folk like that. There are a number of things we could mention easily and find people zealous of these things — nothing special, nothing out of the ordinary

But for us, we have been redeemed, been brought to God, delivered from this present evil age, and diverted from the old self-centred life to find our new life centred in Him, to be for His special possession marked by zeal for good works. A very searching word "Zeal", you know, has in it the idea of heat. The complaint of our Lord to that last church in Revelation 3 is, "Thou art neither cold nor hot." Neither for nor against. No warmth We are to have zeal of good works May that kind of zeal be greatly promoted. Our Saviour died that it might be so.

Shall we pray somewhat after this fashion, "Lord Jesus, if these were the objects Thou hadst in view, the desires of Thy heart for those who should be redeemed by Thy blood, then Lord I would like to make them my object. Before I get to heaven I would like to fulfil what Thou didst desire for me." You may depend upon it, when heaven is reached you will find people brought to God, delivered from the world, people who have found their centre in Christ for ever, and are zealous in His holy service. But now, in this adverse world, while we are in training, while we are waiting for our Lord, I exhort you my dear young friends, to take these things to your heart and to your knees. Meditate and pray over them. Make these things your object and in your life, whether long or short, God will be glorified, and you will be a blessing to others.