

Sermon

Grace Street Fellowship

Dr. Jim Burgin, pastor
March 18th, 2018

Series: "Come to the Cross" Part 4: The Mercy Tree"
1 Peter 2: 21-24

OPENING

Have you ever had a time in your life when someone did something for you that ultimately cost them? For example, for me to go to college, my dad worked a second job, teaching at a community college. He paid the cost, and I got the benefit.

On the other hand, have you ever paid a cost to benefit someone else? Do you love someone enough that you would lay down your life for theirs?

WHO IS CHRIST TO YOU?

1. A baby born in a manger at Christmas?
2. The young man from the Nazareth carpenter shop?
3. A clever teacher?
4. A good man?
5. A healer?
6. Yes, but you could affirm all of these and miss the point. One image of Christ supersedes all others, and that is where he is the suffering servant and the crucified savior who died for us.

CHRISTIAN SUFFERING WAS SEVERE

1. Christian Suffering was Severe
 - a. *Intense Persecution*: On July 19, in 64AD, a fire broke out in Rome. It was a city of narrow streets and high wooden structures, and it burned for three days and three nights. Popular opinion blamed Nero the governor for setting the fire, and Nero scapegoated Christians. The Christians were tortured and martyred at an intense rate. A huge multitude of Christians perished in a savage outbreak of persecution.¹
 - b. *Enslavement* - Christians became the slaves of the empire, subject to being treated like animals, and without any human rights.
2. Christians were to remain righteous in their suffering. But how? They should look to the example of Christ.

CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE

1. Peter says Christ suffered, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps (v. 21).
2. The word "example" comes from the Greek word "hupogrammon" which literally means "written under." It refers to the practice of children of the day who learned to write by tracing over their letters. Christ then is the pattern upon which believers will trace their lives.
 - a. *When persecuted, Jesus did not sin*. This is taken from Isaiah 53:9 where it says Jesus did not commit violence – violence against the law, which is sin. One version translates Isaiah's passage as lawlessness.

¹ William Barclay. The Letters of James and Peter. Revised edition. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 1976. Page 148.

- b. *When persecuted, Jesus did not sin with his mouth.* A most common way people sin – with their mouth. The word which is translated “deceit,” is *dolos* – literally “fishhook or bait.” It denotes guile, dishonesty, falsehood, and treachery.
 - c. *Jesus did not retaliate or make threats* – even when they kept hurling their insults at him. They were using abusive language against him over and over again, an extremely harsh kind of verbal abuse that could be more aggravating than physical abuse. That Jesus did not respond is remarkable considering one word to his heavenly Father would have called angels down from heaven.
3. Jesus entrusted himself to God – The word means “to commit” or “to hand over,” and it is the imperfect tense, so that with each new wave of abuse, Jesus would hand himself over to God. At the very end, on the cross, Jesus entrusted himself finally to God “Into your hands I commit my spirit.”²
 4. We find mercy here.
 - a. That we would be found worthy of suffering for the one who suffered for us. After being flogged, the apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 5:41-42)
 - b. Rev. 8:3 – An angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints went up from the angel’s hand to God.

PETER MAKES A TRANSITION – Why is the substitutionary atonement of Christ important? 1. We couldn’t follow his example well. We couldn’t measure up. 2. We can’t clean up our own mess. 3. We can’t pay our own penalty.

CHRIST IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

1. He Himself
 - a. This is an emphatic personalization. Peter reminds us that the Son of God voluntarily walked to the cross with no coercion.
 - b. Are we saved by dogma, doctrine, a system of theology? No, by a Person.
2. Bore – means to carry the massive, heavy weight of sin. This sin is so heavy that Romans 8:22 says “the whole creation groans and suffers under it. Only Jesus could remove such a massive weight from the elect.
3. Our – means ALL of those who believe.
4. Sins
 - a. *He became sin* – 2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
 - b. *He paid the punishment for our sins.*

Col. 2: 13-14 says He forgave us all of our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

² John MacArthur. New Testament Commentary on 1 Peter, pp. 166-69.

- c. **He set us free** – Romans 6:6 – For we know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.
5. **Tree** – tree is an idiom which Peter borrows from the Old Testament (Dt. 21:22-23; Galatians 3:13). "He who is hung on a tree is under God's curse."

OUR DEATH TO SIN

We are dead to the condemning power of sin.

You bring me a large file full of bills, and you say to me, "Are not these bills against you?" I answer, "No doubt they are all correct in every item, and they might take me many a month to examine." You ask me, "Can you pay them?" "No, and I do not need to try." "But do they not trouble you?" "No. I can make a pillow of them, if that is all, and sleep, notwithstanding their number and greatness." You are wonder-struck to think that I should have such a mass of bills, and take the matter so coolly. I ask you to take off these bills from the file one by one, and as you do so you see that they are all paid for. There is a red mark at the bottom of every one. Who troubles himself about a bill when it is paid? "But did you pay those debts?" "No, not I; I have not paid a penny." "Did you not pay part of them?" "Not I; I never contributed a rusty farthing towards them." "Yet you are perfectly easy?" "Yes, because He who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, took all my debts, and paid them for me and now I am dead to those debts. They have no power over me. I am dead to my sins. Christ suffered instead of me. I have nothing to do with them. They are gone as much as if they had never been committed."³

WE ARE ALIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. We go from death to life.
2. His life steps into ours.
3. We seek/desire the good.

CONCLUSION

Sacrificial Love, taken from *In the Grip of Grace* by Bryan Chapell, is an excellent example. On August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people. One survived: a four-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

News accounts say when rescuers found Cecelia they did not believe she had been on the plane. Investigators first assumed Cecelia had been a passenger in one of the cars on the highway onto which the airliner crashed. But when the passenger register for the flight was checked, there was Cecelia's name.

Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from her mother's love—neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.

INVITATION

³ Sermon by Charles Spurgeon, "Death for Sin and Death To Sin." #1143, preached November 16th, 1873.
<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols19-21/chs1143.pdf>. Accessed March 17th, 2018.