

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Substitution and Forgiveness of Sins

Substitution is a truly basic principle of Christianity, despite the fact that many erroneous theories have been spawned by this concept. The "imputation" of Adam's guilt to all mankind is one such error; and following close on its heels is the colorful but equally fallacious idea that Christ's personal righteousness (His "perfect obedience") is imputed to the saints. We need not adopt either of these concepts to appreciate substitution as taught in the Scriptures. If we allow misuse of the idea to blind us to its proper place in the scheme of redemption, we will deprive ourselves of rich and profitable material.

Isaiah 53 is a prophet's revelation of the principle. "He hath born our griefs . . . he was wounded for our transgressions . . . with his stripes we are healed." "Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Acts 8:32-35 tells us "He" is Jesus the Christ. Read the Isaiah chapter carefully, noting the many contrasts, and remember, you and I did the sinning, but He paid the price in our stead.

Justice demands, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock (Genesis 4) is our first inkling that God would accept the life of an animal as a (typical) substitute for the life of the sinner. (We are discounting as fanciful and unsubstantiated the idea that God taught animal sacrifice when He made Adam and Eve's clothing from skins of animals [Genesis 3:21].) Then Noah was told to take seven pairs of "clean" beasts into the ark, some of which were offered upon an altar when the flood was over (Genesis 8:20). Men were not to eat blood (Genesis 9:4), and the religious significance of this prohibition is established clearly in Leviticus, where we are told "the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls" (17:10-12).

Abraham's use of blood sacrifice upon an altar (Genesis 12-ff) is ample proof that this ceremonial significance existed long before the Law given through Moses. But in Judaism the concept is expanded. Greater attention is given to the necessary perfection of the offering, "without spot or blemish" (Leviticus 22:19-31). Moses once offered himself as an atonement for the people, but God rejected the offer, saying, "Whosoever hath sinned . .

him will I blot out of my book" (Exodus 32:30-35). Moses needed to make offerings for his own sins; he was not a fit offering for the sins of others.

In later Judaism the prophets' rebuke of the priests for offering polluted bread and blind sacrifices is occasion for an additional thought. Isaiah says it is not the offering itself that satisfied Jehovah. Multitudes of sacrifices may be "vain oblations" if there is no giving of the heart (1:11-17). Malachi says the corrupted offerings show contempt for Jehovah (1:6-10, 13-14), and are not acceptable because "ye will not lay it to heart" (2:1-9). Animal blood could not be "traded" for forgiveness. But the contrite heart and the perfect (costly) offering were but typical of a plan for redemption which God was unfolding in that moonlight age. There was soon to come "the Lamb of God" who knew no sin yet freely gave Himself for our sins (John 1:36; Romans 5:6-9). The real character of forgiveness by substitution begins to emerge. (1) There is no sin without cost, and, (2) the substitution principle demands payment on the part of Him who forgives.

Some have raised the question: To whom was the price for sin paid? To Satan? We think not! If man can indeed answer such a question, it seems far more likely the Heavenly Father met this obligation to Himself - to His moral nature which demanded justice even as it extended mercy. Whatever the theological answer, it is clear that forgiveness is not without cost to Him who forgives. And that raises some interesting thoughts about what is involved when we forgive one another. Can we forgive without paying the price?

When someone wrongs us, our inclination is to demand justice. "That is not right," we say. Of course it is not, and the transgressor should have to "make it right," for his own sake as well as ours. But sometimes, even when he makes an effort to correct the wrong, we feel "it is not enough." We want our pound of flesh. Then we remember our own sins, and the words of Jesus, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Can we forgive "till seven times" or even more (Matthew 18:21-35)? We cannot truly forgive even once unless we are willing to pay the price. It is not "forgiveness" to hold a grudge; to await the opportunity; to "tell it on him," or "even things up." True forgiveness, the only kind that enables us to be forgiven by God, means we accept the hurt without demanding our "rights"; we who are wronged become the substitute sufferer for him who should suffer.

But how can we be "partakers of the divine nature" and not forgive? In paying the price to forgive, we sense a tiny bit of the hurt God must feel at our sins. We enhance our "fellowship" with God, partake of His spirit, "dwell in Him, and He in us" (1 John 4:13). Substitution, as an essential element in Christianity, encourages us to believe the old adage, "to forgive is divine."

- Robert F. Turner, via *Guardian of Truth*, 08/15/1985

THE JOY OF WORSHIP

David said, "thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalms 16:11).

Somewhere some of us have gotten the idea that worship is not a thing to be enjoyed, but an act to be performed solely through the sense of duty and the fear of judgment; hence, a grievous burden. Some feel that if they worship on Sunday morning, they have done all the Lord expects of them and they can get to heaven on it. But, others are searching for a deeper spiritual life, a greater love for God, and they enjoy worshipping Him at every opportunity. What a joy it is for them to sing the hymns of Zion, to bow in humble prayer to God; and to feast upon the bread of life on Sunday night and Wednesday night, as well as Sunday morning.

If one does not develop the proper attitude toward spiritual and heavenly things, while living in the church, he will be unfit for those things in eternity. Yes, in the presence of God, there is joy! Worship is drawing near to God, hence it is a joyful thing. At His right hand there are pleasures. And, the Lord has promised to be with us when we are gathered together in His name. This is not to say that worship is amusing or entertaining, but there is pleasure and joy in it for him who has set his love on heavenly things. It is a matter of the things in which you find pleasure.

- Mack Lyon, via The Instructor, February, 1966

The Great Influence of a Faithful Christian Woman

Paul's close associate and trusted companion, his "partner and fellow worker" (2 Corinthians 8:23) was commanded to set things in order with divine instructions, such as this:

"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored." (Titus 2:3-5).

Today there are so many forces at work designed and determined to tear the woman away from Jehovah God's spiritual standards for serving Christ. Mature actions should characterize mature age; they are to be reverent in demeanor. Slander will not be found among the righteous and holy. They will teach the good things that come from the word

of God, and they don't just "lay it out there" in hope that someone will take it. They are active participants in practical training: they "encourage" and "train" (ASV).

The godly influence of faithful Christian women is desperately needed in American homes today! Young wives and mothers need encouragement. If the homes of the spiritually-minded are going to survive Satan's current barrage of worldly filth, godly wives and mothers will be a significant part of that success. They need the wisdom and experience that Christian women have gained through the years to maintain love in the home. Their humility, purity, industry and kindness will glorify their Savior and encourage the younger to do likewise.

Faithful Christian women make their greatest contribution to their homes, their churches and society in general by living in harmony with the design of the Lord God. Their influence for good is wonderfully powerful with their husbands and children. Their surpassing benefits preserve and inspire homes as they bring the Light of Life to communities with desperate needs.

Look for these faithful women of influence and encourage them at every opportunity. Oh how we need more faithful Christian women!

- Gary Smalley

* "It is easy to lose interest in the church in which we have nothing invested!"

* "The devil's cheap prices deceive millions, but he has no satisfied customers!"

* "The chief trouble with 'common sense' is that it is so uncommon!"

* "It matters not what you lose if you save your soul; it matters not what you save if you lose your soul!"

* "Sometimes friends are just two people who are 'mad' at the same person!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)