

The sorrow of God

Victor Hall

Notes prepared for the Brisbane Communion Service, 11 April 2021

An offering for sin

- In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon wrote, 'A *merry* heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by *sorrow* of the heart the spirit is broken'. Pro 15:13. This statement captures the two key dimensions of Christ's one offering for sin as the Lamb of God. Joh 1:29. These two aspects of Christ's offering were symbolised by the two goats that were offered on the Day of Atonement, under the Old Covenant - the Lord's goat and the scapegoat. Lev 16:7-10.
- Christ's blood was sprinkled seven times through the seven wounding events that He endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. This aspect of His offering was symbolised by 'the Lord's goat'. Through the shedding of His blood, Jesus was being brought back from the death of sin, and mankind was redeemed to God. Heb 13:20. 1Pe 1:18-21. His life was multiplied and given to be the life of those who would receive His word and accept their participation in the fellowship of His offering.
- As Christ offered Himself with a *merry* heart in obedience to the Father, the life in His blood was like a *medicine*. Pro 17:22. Concerning this dimension of Christ's offering journey, Isaiah prophesied, 'For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.' Isa 55:12-13.
- The second aspect of His offering as the Lamb of God, symbolised by the scapegoat, was the process through which sin was destroyed, and new creation was brought forth from the waters of God's judgement. This was the wonderful outcome of His travail, or sorrow. As Isaiah prophesied, 'He shall see of the *travail* of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall *bear* their iniquities.' Isa 53:11. This aspect of Christ's offering is our subject, today.
- It was for the *joy* of these two outcomes of His offering that Christ priested Himself as a living sacrifice on the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the Father. Heb 12:2. He offered Himself in this manner by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, which He received from the Holy Spirit. Heb 9:14.
- Importantly, we only have a share in the joy of Christ's salvation through *participation* in these two aspects of His offering as the Lamb of God. The Holy Spirit is our Helper in this regard. Joh 14:16. He leads us in the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for us, and enables us with Eternal Spirit to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Joh 16:13.

The Sin-Bearer

- The greatest sorrow that was ever expressed was Christ's cry to the Father from the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ' Mar 15:34. This sorrowful cry revealed that Christ's heart was *broken*. This sorrow was not the expression of one who had forsaken God through rebellion. It was the expression of Christ who had become our '*scapegoat*' and whose heart was broken by reproach. Psa 69:20.
- As our scapegoat, all of our sins, and all of the reproachful accusations that mankind has made against God the Father were laid upon Christ's head. Lev 16:21-22. This happened when the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. 2Co 5:21. Speaking of this offering, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'The Lord has *laid* on Him the iniquity of us all.' Isa 53:6. King David prophesied, 'The reproaches of those who reproach You have *fallen* on me.' Psa 69:9. Through this prophetic statement, Jesus revealed that it was our reproaches of the Father which fell upon Him as the scapegoat.
- As the scapegoat, the Son became the embodiment of all sin, bringing it under the judgement of God for both punishment and destruction as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross. During the three hours of darkness as Christ hung on the cross, the whole of the old creation passed away. With it, He took our sin and our reproaches against the Father, out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. Through this action, Christ also took the 'why' of our rebellion out with Him and silenced it forever as He proclaimed the end and destruction of all sin and iniquity. This was His declaration, 'It is finished!' Joh 19:30. Note that the 'why' associated with our rebellion was not the 'why' of His cry to the Father.

Our reproach of the Father

- What is our reproach of the Father? It is our rejection of His fatherhood. Mankind rejected the fatherhood of God when Adam disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Through disobedience, the other law was established in the hearts of Adam and Eve, and in every son and daughter of man who would be born after them. We were all brought into bondage to sin and death, making us enemies of God. Rom 7:23. Rom 5:10. Every thought, motivation and behaviour that is an expression of the other law in our heart is a self-righteous reproach against the Father. It is our rejection of God as our Father and the source of our life and works.
- When mankind rejected the fatherhood of God, the Father voiced *His* deep grief and yearning for them as He called to Adam, saying, '*Where are you?*' Gen 3:9. This was the grief of a Father whose children had rejected His fatherhood, and who had left His house. His sons and daughters were all now dead to Him in their trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1. His grief was because of this relational breach within the family of God. The Godhead itself was torn and rent when the Son was cut off from the Father, with us, as the bearer of our sin and reproach.

The broken heart of Christ

- Our reproach against the Father, which had been laid upon Christ as our Sin-Bearer, caused Him unimaginable grief. As Isaiah prophesied, 'Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.' Isa 53:4.

- The grief that Jesus experienced was not the grief that we experience because of our sin. Neither was it a benevolent grief, like the weeping of those who pitied Him as He journeyed to Calvary. In fact, He said to the women who mourned and lamented in this manner, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' Luk 23:28. Jesus was exhorting them to a different kind of mourning; a mourning that would be revealed through the fulfilment of His travail.
- The grief that Jesus bore was the grief that was caused by our reproaches against the Father. It was the grief of the Father as we rejected Him and claimed to be the victims of His fatherhood. This was the reproach that broke the Lord's heart.
- In the garden of Gethsemane, the stress of our reproaches of the Father falling on Christ caused Him to sweat blood that fell as clots to the ground. Luk 22:44. His prayer to the Father in the garden was, 'You know My reproach, My shame, and My dishonour; My adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.' Psa 69:19-20.
- This prayer of Christ continued throughout His offering journey, culminating in the cry, 'Why have You forsaken Me?' This was the acute travail of the Son, who had been fully joined to mankind's separation from the Father. This separation had caused the Father such grief, and had prompted the question, 'Where are you?' Gen 3:8-9. At this point, Christ was totally forsaken, forgotten and lost. However, it is important to note that it was the grief and loss that the Father had suffered because of our reproaches that broke Christ's heart; it was not His own grief because He had been forsaken by God. He was not a victim who believed that He was being denied justice, even though His justice had been taken from Him. Act 8:33.
- As we considered at the beginning of these notes, this expression of grief and sorrow was the cause of Christ's broken heart. His soul had been made an offering for sin. Isa 53:10. When His heart was broken, sin, and the other law which belonged to mankind, were broken and destroyed. Because of His broken heart and contrite Spirit, the Father was near to Him and drew Him out of the many waters of judgement. Psa 34:18. Psa 18:16. New Creation was brought forth as the fruit of this redemptive action as His heart broke. Significantly, blood and water began to flow from His heart. By the blood came redemption, and by the water came the new creation.
- As Christ's heart was broken, God drew near to Him, for our capacity for repentance was the fruit of His broken heart. Unless we are connected to the broken, or circumcised, heart of Christ, we are unable to find repentance and salvation. The prophet Ezekiel described the uncircumcised heart of a person as a 'heart of stone'. Eze 36:26. Not only is that person unable to repent, but they are also incapable of loving the Lord. Deu 30:6. However, God promised that through the offering of Christ, 'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them.' Eze 36:25-27.
- The broken heart of Christ was both the full revelation of obedience and righteousness, and the full revelation of sin and iniquity that is eternally separate

from God. It was the breakpoint where mercy and judgement met in the physical body of Christ, on the cross, and where mercy triumphed over judgement. Jas 2:13.

- After Christ declared, 'It is finished!', He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Luk 23:46. Later, when a soldier pierced His side, the blood and water, which was the fruit of His broken heart, began to flow as a fountain of life from His side. The apostle John declared that this was the fulfilment of the Scripture, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced'. Joh 19:37.
- When the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, grace and supplication enable us to look on Him whom we have pierced. We see that we are dead with Christ. 2Co 5:14. Our hearts are broken as we are joined to the broken heart of Christ. The power of the other law is broken within us. This is the blessing of becoming poor in spirit. Through repentance and faith, we are able to stand up in Christ as part of the new creation, and to walk in a new way.
- When we are joined, by grace and supplication, to the broken heart of Christ, we cease from the self-centred sorrow, or grief, associated with our unfulfilled expectations of life. This kind of sorrow only produces death. Instead, we are able to mourn with the sorrow of God. This sorrow leads to repentance, through which we are able to forsake our own way. It is left in the sea of God's forgetfulness. The fruit of Christ's life is produced in us as we journey with Christ on the pathway of salvation that He has pioneered for us.
- Paul summarised this process as seven steps of mourning, writing, 'For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.' 2Co 7:10-11.