

The Visible Price of Our Sin

Luke 23:32-49, Good Friday

April 2, 2010

Beloved of the Lord....Christ our Lord says in Isaiah 43, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities, I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." According to these words, we made Christ serve us by our sins. We didn't ask Him to die for us, we didn't ask Him to suffer, nevertheless by our sins we caused Him to suffer so that He was wearied in His suffering and death on the cross. God then is much like a father whose son has fallen into great mischief and evil. Yet out of mercy and compassion the father is compelled to suffer the punishment that belongs to the son so the son will not be condemned. Thus Jesus was our Lord, yet He came to serve us by suffering for our sins. "He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." By way of His holy blood, Jesus blotted out the record of our sins against Him, so that God remembers our sins no more. On this sacred evening, let us gaze upon the visible price of our sin, for by "His STRIPES we are healed."

I. The visible price of our sin on the cross.

Tonight let us imagine we are right there at the foot of the cross beholding our suffering Savior up close. John was there, and "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (Jn. 19:25). Only John and three or four women had the boldness of faith to be there near the cross. Luke tells us "All His acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." Luke watched as a witness from a distance with the ten disciples and many women.

As for those who were very near the cross, the sight of the suffering Christ must have been unbearable. On the top of His head was a crown of thorns piercing His brow. There would be dry blood by this time, and fresh blood trickling down His face. "A superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Note these words were "written over him", hence this cross would not be like a "T" as we see in some pictures, but the plus sign, a portion of the tree extending above His sacred head now wounded. As for His back, it too had to be bloody. "The scourging was a terrible punishment. The unfortunate victim was secured to a pillar or post, after the back and the breast had been bared. The scouring was then inflicted with whipcords to which were attached an iron filament or lumps of lead. Frequently the victims fell dead under the force of the blows" (Ylvisaker). When the Bible says, "by His stripes we are healed" such is a reference to His whipping. In Psalm 129 Christ says, "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows."

As for the piercing of Jesus' hands and feet, this was how condemned criminals were secured to the cross and also tormented. After the resurrection we recall the words of Jesus to doubting Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." The physical pain and torment of the cross was excruciating. The weight of the body pulled constantly upon the pierced hands, and the slumped position kept the lungs in the empty and exhaled position. In order to get air into the lungs, one must push up upon the pierced feet. This constant struggle for air causing great pain. Those crucified on the cross likewise experienced a burning thirst. In Psalm 22 Jesus says, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." The vinegar mixed with gall made a bitter sedative which somewhat dulled the senses. Jesus did not drink this the first time because He would for our sake drink and experience with His full senses the full cup of God's wrath against our sins. Only after He made full payment and said "It is finished", did Jesus say "I thirst", and thus drink a little vinegar extended upon a reed. In Psalm 69 Christ says, "I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

The body of Christ on the cross was also bruised. "He was bruised for our iniquities", namely beaten by the fists of men. Certainly under these conditions the black and blue bruises would be visible everywhere upon His body. All this added up to a most wretched sight for those who gazed upon Him, indeed how could they look? Yet when we are tempted to take our sins lightly, or when we think it is ok just to sin a little.....we ought to imagine the wretched sight of Jesus, hanging, suffering, and dying: the visible price of our sin. It should have been us who hung there. It should have been me, but it was Him. Will we add to His burdens today, tomorrow? Would we heap sin upon sin when "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all".

From noon to 3 PM, darkness covered the earth. The sun itself was ashamed to shine upon the blackest stain of all humanity, the crucifixion of its own Creator. But what was such external darkness compared to the internal darkness Jesus experienced knowing God had rejected Him because He was the bearer of our sins? Here Jesus was paying for our hell hence, "My God My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Hell is to be so forsaken by God, that it is described as a place with everlasting chains of darkness, a mist of darkness, "outer darkness". For those who say "What kind of God would send someone to an everlasting place of torment such as that?" we answer, "The same God who out of love paid your price of hell on the cross so you would be forgiven. Will you deny His love and continue in your sins of darkness when Christ is the Light?"

II. The upheaval and reconciliation in God's heart. While we can only hang our heads in shame when we consider Christ on the cross, the visible price of our sin, there is endless comfort in the WHY Jesus came and suffered so. He did this dear sinner FOR YOU. His love for you was so great, so strong, that He zealously desired to reconcile you and all sinners to God through this cross of suffering. The Bible says Jesus did this "having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." Colossians two says, "Having forgiven you all trespasses" He blotted "out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

That is why after Jesus died, the great veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. God in this way signified that through Christ the High Priest, sinners now have direct access into the Holy of Holies, namely heaven. Thus when Jesus spoke to the penitent thief on the cross, there is not one word of condemnation for his sinful life and dark deeds. Rather Jesus with a true and perfect love absolves the dying THIEF, speaking the most precious words a THIEF could ever hear, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." If you are sorry in your heart for your sins against God dear thief, these words of Jesus apply also to you. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Finally after the death of Jesus at 3PM, there was a great earthquake which broke the rocks and opened many graves. "Certainly this was a righteous man." In this great upheaval of nature we see the great upheaval in God's own heart in the sacrifice and death of His own Son. Gone was His wrath, gone was His anger. He was totally empty. How could God be angry anymore? His Son with love had just offered up His own righteous life, for the sake of all unrighteous men. God's heart then truly was turned, changed from wrath to love, giving pardon and peace to all. Hence at 3PM, the sun came out again and shined in its glory. This too is a picture of God's reconciled heart, for through Christ God's own face is shines "upon us and is gracious unto us." Jesus is our Sun of Righteousness. Tonight then dear Christian when you receive Holy Communion, ye do show the Lord's death till He come, "This do in remembrance of Me." Through His body and blood "I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Amen.