

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE DEATH PENALTY

And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree.

Deuteronomy 21:22

One of the clearest doctrines, taught in the scriptures, is the absolute and utter sinlessness of JESUS CHRIST. *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."* (1Pet 2:22) HE is that ONE who *"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb 4:15) And yet there has never been a man more justly condemned and rightly sentenced to death, by the holy law of GOD than this MAN, JESUS of Nazareth. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2Cor 5:21)

And thus is stated one of the most sublime doctrines in all of the scriptures. This is the very basis upon which all of the hopes and expectations of the people of GOD squarely rest. Yea; this is no mere "doctrine" which is repeated by rote. Rather, imputation is the fabric from which the robe of righteousness which covers the elect is fashioned and form fitted for each one who was hidden in the bosom of CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. This is the imputed righteousness of CHRIST which is applied to the account of unworthy sinners. HIS righteousness preceded their sin and is made theirs. Their sin became HIS and HE bore the just penalty due to them, dying in their room and stead as a condemned criminal. HE who knew no sin became sin and bore its curse so that those who knew and loved nothing but sin should be perfectly righteous before the judgement seat of a sin hating and destroying GOD.

JESUS CHRIST came into this world with the sentence of death upon HIM. The angel was sent to tell Joseph, *"thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Mat 1:20-21) This was the manifestation of the prophecy of Abraham to Isaac, *"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:"* (Gen 22:8) This child JESUS did not grow up to become the LAMB of GOD which taketh away the sins of the world, rather HE was the *"Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* (Rev 13:8)

HE grew in favor with GOD and man, with the sentence of death upon HIM. When John the Baptizer saw HIM he said of HIM, *"Behold the Lamb of God!"* (John 1:36) Peter recounts having heard HIS FATHER speak from heaven, *"For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* (2Pe 1:17)

HE came from that same "excellent glory" to dwell among men with the sentence of death upon HIM. Though CHRIST healed the sick and raised the dead and thereby fulfilled righteousness, going about doing good, HIS chief mission in coming to the earth was to bear the sin of HIS people as their SUBSTITUTE. *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep ---- As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the*

sheep.---- *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.* (John 10: 11,15,17)

Sin produces the necessity of law and the law demands death for sinners. (see I Cor 15:56; I Tim. 1:9) The LORD told Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and then prophetically declared to Adam, *"For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Gen 2:17) Sin did not take GOD by surprise nor was Adam placed in a probationary period so that the LORD could find out whether or not he would sin.

GOD created the world to fulfill HIS exact purpose and that purpose included as its centerpiece the redemptive work of CHRIST in the behalf of a people whom the LORD chose in HIM before the foundation of the world. Sin, as heinous as it is, was a necessary part of that equation in order that the glory of GOD might be seen in the redemption of sinners. This is even a wonderment in the heavens as the angels desire to understand these things but cannot.(see I Pet.1:12) since they have never been the objects of such, nor has the GOD who is HOLINESS itself ever demonstrated, in their sight, such grace and mercy before or since. This display of mercy is beyond their comprehension since they had only seen displayed the swift judgment of GOD upon one third of those who occupied their own place and now before their very eyes is the manifestation of CHRIST as the REDEEMER of wicked sinners.

This same ONE, whom they have seen surrounded by the Seraphim declaring HIS holiness (even as Isaiah was given this same glimpse), *"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."* (Rev 4:8), is the ONE who took upon HIMSELF the likeness of sinful flesh. HIS purpose to redeem sinners from the condemnation of the law which HE subjected them too required that HE take upon HIMSELF not just their adjudication as guilty, but to actually take their guilt as HIS own and suffer their death.

It is HIS purpose to be both just and the JUSTIFIER of HIS people, who are described in the scripture as those *"that come unto God by him."* (Heb 7:25) HE has ordained a law which demands justice against all who break it. This law demands the death of the sinner. This was demonstrated in the Old Testament in the ordinances and sacrifices which were made. No man can literally atone for HIS own sin without dying for it. Then if he dies for it he is dead and could receive no benefits thereby.

This man JESUS being without sin, yet willing to die for those who were chosen in HIM before the world's foundation, is indeed the only one able to complete the transaction of redemption. Only a lamb without blemish was an acceptable sacrifice, JESUS CHRIST is that LAMB ordained of GOD as the perfect sacrifice. *"But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."* (Heb 9:11-12)

HE carried out HIS entire ministry under the sentence of death, with far greater weight of sorrow, than has ever been experienced by even the worst malefactors facing an instrument of execution. Though HE came into the world under this very sentence yet the scripture says, *"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Heb 12:2) Never has there been such a mixture of joy and sorrow as that which was experienced by HIM.

As the perfect SON of GOD HIS chief desire was to please HIS heavenly father. Yet HE understood that the only way that HE could fulfill the will of HIS FATHER was to become disgusting in HIS FATHER's sight. This is that which brought sweat drops as it were blood, upon HIS brow as HE wrestled with this very thought, and as the obedient SON that HE was, HE acquiesced to the will of HIS father knowing the rejection which was to be HIS as HE later hung upon the cross and cried out , *"My GOD, My GOD why hast THOU forsaken me?"* HE knew the answer and HE willingly paid that awful price for us. A death sentence indeed. mam