

The Greatest Theme in the World

by

F. D. Marsh

Copyright, 1908, by F. E. MARSH

Copyright © 1908

by F. D. Marsh

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

CHAPTER TWO

THE SCRIPTURES AND CHRIST'S ATONEMENT

Francis Turretin speaks of the atonement as the chief part of our salvation, the anchor of faith, the refuge of hope, the rule of charity, the true foundation of the Christian religion, and the richest treasure of the Christian Church. He further remarks, "So long as this doctrine is maintained in its integrity, Christianity itself and the peace and blessedness of all who believe in CHRIST are beyond the reach of danger; but if it is reflected, or any way impaired, the whole structure of the Christian faith must sink into decay and ruin."

He practically says the atonement of CHRIST is the Christian faith, and so it is.

Remove the atonement from the Bible and we have:

- a casket without the treasure,
- a body without the spirit,
- a tree without a root,
- a house without the foundation,
- a sky without the sun,
- a check-book without the balance at the bank, and
- a gospel without the message

In short, a bloodless religion!

Dr. R. Wardlaw has said, "To the mind that can contrive to its own satisfaction to strip the Bible of the doctrine of the atonement by vicarious suffering, it might, in my apprehension, be safely pronounced impossible to convey a Divine discovery at all; there being no terms conceivable which might not, by such a mind, be explained away. Salvation is the lesson of the Bible; and it is salvation by atonement, or substitutionary suffering."

When CHRIST appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and to the eleven in the upper room, He showed to them from the Books of Moses, the Psalms, and [38] the Prophets, that His death was essential.

On the heights and in the adjacent vicinity of Nyack-on-Hudson there are a number of springs which may be continually tapped. The springs are there, but they need to be tapped before their refreshingness can be enjoyed. The same is true of the Bible - the springs of the truth of the Word are there, but they have to be found to be known.

CHRIST has indicated where we may find some of the springs of the atonement, as He intimated to the disciples, when He appeared to them in the upper room, and expounded to them all the things concerning His death, which were written in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets. I purpose to turn to one of these books, in each of the sections mentioned.

I. The Book of Genesis

We shall turn to the Book of Genesis for illustrations on the first section. Genesis has been called the seed-plot of the Bible, and it is so, for every truth in the Bible is found therein, either directly or indirectly. The truth of CHRIST's atoning work is typified and illustrated again and again.

THE SLEEPING MAN AND THE BUILDED WOMAN

While Adam slept his side was opened, and from what was taken out of him GOD builded the woman. When Adam saw Eve he said, "**This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman** [Ishah, margin], **because she was taken out of Man** [Ish, margin]" (Genesis 2:21-24) .

CHRIST slept a deeper and a more significant sleep than Adam - the sleep of His atoning death. From His riven side the atoning Blood flowed, by means of which the Church, His ransomed body, will be formed and united in a closer [39] bond than ever existed between our first parents. It is to this mystic oneness the HOLY SPIRIT refers in Ephesians 5:21-23, when He calls attention to the union that existed between Adam and Eve as typical of it.

The sleeping man and the riven side were the essential means for the production of the builded woman and the presented bride.

The sleeping man was necessary that the woman should be made, and the living woman was necessary for his complement and helpmeet. She would never have been had it not been for him, and he would not have been satisfied had it not been for her (Genesis 2, 18, 23; I Corinthians 11:11, 12).

So with CHRIST and the Church.

His sleep of death and riven side of atonement make the redeemed all they are in Him, and yet we are His fullness and completion, which make Him complete. We are not complete without Him, and He is not complete without us, any more than the body is perfect without the head, or the head complete without the body.

These spiritual facts are brought out in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians.

In the former we are said to be "**complete in Him**" (Colossians 2:10), and in the latter the Church is the "**fullness of Him, that filleth all in all**" (Ephesians 1:23).

THE SLAIN ANIMAL AND THE CLOTHED SINNERS

Before Adam and Eve left the garden of Eden, GOD clothed them in coats of skin (Genesis 3:21). Their shame was hidden at the expense of another's life. The spoils of death saved them from being the spoils of an eternal death. The words "**skins**," "**coat**," and "**clothed**" are full of typical meaning.

- The word "**skins**" comes from a root which means to flay, to make naked. CHRIST was stripped that we might be clothed. He was put to shame that we [40] might never be put to shame (Hebrews 12:2; I Peter 2:24).
- The word "**coats**" is from a root word which means to hide, to cover; and
- The word "**clothed**" means to wrap around.

CHRIST hides those who cry, "Let me hide myself in Thee," with the perfection of Himself in His perfect work of atonement. He Who was wrapped in glory in the past eternity, became unwrapped in time of His beauty and dignity, that He might wrap up in His righteousness, acceptableness, and worth.

THE OFFERING BROUGHT AND THE SIN-OFFERING REJECTED (Genesis 4:3-7)

Cain evidently came in his own way to GOD (Jude 11) - The earth had been cursed because of man's sin (Genesis 3:17). Cain brought of earth's fruit to the Lord, and by so doing brought a cursed offering.

Abel came in GOD's way, and therefore met with His approbation (Hebrews 11:4). He confessed, by bringing to GOD a slain animal, that he deserved to be slain because of his sin. He who condemned himself was acquitted and accepted by GOD; while the other, who thought he acquitted himself so well was condemned to his confusion.

The one thing which aggravated Cain's offence. was, that when he found he was not right he would not accept GOD's way to be made right. GOD said to him, "**If thou doest not well sin lieth at the door.**" At first sight it looks as if sin, like a wild beast, was crouching before him ready to spring upon him, but the better understanding, as Rotherham explains it, is "But if thou do not right, at the entrance a sin-bearer is lying." The very lamb, the sacrifice he needed, was lying just outside his tent-door.

The sin-bearer, the animal for sacrifice, is rejected by Cain, and he is rejected by GOD in consequence. Anything that evolves from the earth-curse of our humanity cannot be admissible for salvation [41] in any way, but CHRIST in His atoning death is admissible for salvation alway.

The spotless Sin-Offering brought by the sinner not only avails for his pardon and acceptance, but makes him like the spotless victim, as assured by GOD's voice of love - "**Thou art all fair,**

My love, there is no spot in thee."

THE CONSTRUCTED ARK AND THE SHELTERED FAMILY

(Genesis 6:14)

Before the ark could be constructed, the wood from which it was made had to be cut down. The sheltering ark was made by the taking away of the life of the living tree.

There are two passages where it was predicted that CHRIST would be "**cut off**."

The first is in Isaiah 53:8 - "**He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of My people was He stricken.**"

The word "**cut off**" denotes exclusion or division. It is rendered "**divide**" when Solomon directed that the living child should be divided between the disputing mothers (I Kings 3:25, 26).

The second Scripture is Daniel 9:26, where we are told Messiah should be "**cut off**."

The word means *to be consumed, to be in want*, and is rendered "**feller**" and "**cutteth**" in Jeremiah 10:3, in calling attention to the cutting down of trees, and the one who cut them down. The word is frequently employed in the Book of Leviticus in expressing GOD's judicial act in cutting off those who broke His law (Leviticus 7:20, 25, 27, &c.).

CHRIST was cut off out of the land of the living, that we who had cut ourselves off from GOD by our sin, might be brought into the land of the living. He is the shelter for us from GOD's judgment, because there was no shelter for Him from it. He was excluded and separated from life, that we might [42] be included and sanctified in the life which is the "**life indeed**."

The exclusion and banishment of the Cross were for Him, and the inclusion and the blessing of GOD's throne are for us.

THE OFFERED SON AND THE PROVIDED SUBSTITUTE

(Genesis 22:1-14)

In Isaac being bound and in figure being surrendered to death, we have a type of CHRIST given over to our death (Hebrews 11:19).

GOD did not spare Himself, as He spared Abraham, from killing His Son. Isaac is seen going with Abraham to be offered up, bearing the wood on his shoulder, and with him and it are also associated the knife, the fire, and the binding upon the altar. On the Cross of Calvary we behold CHRIST offering Himself on the altar of His Deity, bearing the wood of our iniquity, the knife of justice entering the soul of His humanity, consumed by the fire of GOD's holy requirement, and the cords of love binding Him, through it all, to the altar of His voluntary sacrifice.

*In the ram offered up in the stead of Isaac we have a type of GOD's provision for us. The word rendered "**stead of**" (verse 13) signifies, *on behalf of*. Dr. James Strong says, "*Tachath* means '*in lieu of*,' which is derived from *Towach* - to humble, depress." The usage of "*tachath*" suggests*

the thought of substitution, thus:

- Seth is given "**instead**" of Abel (Genesis 4:25);
- the man who injured the eye of his slave, so that he lost the use of it, had to let him go free "**for his eye's sake**" (Exodus 21:26);
- the stones taken out of the leprous house were changed for others which were put "**in the Place**" of them (Leviticus 14:42); and
- David promised Amasa that he should be [43] captain "**in the room**" of Joab (II. Samuel 19:13).

As we apply these illustrations of the use of the word, in thinking of CHRIST as our Substitute, we exclaim in the language of Diognetus, who lived in the First Century, "GOD Himself gave up His Son as a Ransom for us; the Holy for the unholy; the Sinless for the sinful; the Immortal for the mortal; for what but His righteousness could cover our sins? O sweet change! O unsearchable work! O unexampled benefit, that the wickedness of many should be covered by the One righteous, the righteousness of One should justify many sinners!"

THE ERECTED ALTARS AND THEIR TEACHING

The altar is symbolical of communion with the Lord on the ground of sacrifice. Dr James Strong, in his Hebrew lexicon, in explaining the word rendered **altar**, says, "*Mizbeach*, from *Zabach*, a primary root, to slaughter an animal, usually in sacrifice." *Zabach* is rendered in the margin of Genesis 31:54, "**killed**" and "**offered**" in Genesis 46:1.

"**Altar**" is mentioned thirteen times in the Book of Genesis, and in connection with the following thoughts-

- Satisfaction to GOD (8:20).
- Promise from Him (12:7).
- Remembrance of Him (12:8).
- Restoration in Him (13:4).
- Fellowship with Him (13:18).
- Obedience to Him (22:9).
- Prayer to Him (26:25).
- Claiming for Him (33:20).
- Consecration to Him (35:1,3,7).

All this emphasises and typifies that CHRIST in His atonement brings GOD to us in blessing, and brings us to Him [44] in fellowship.

A bloodless altar brings a curse upon the offerer, while a blood-atoning altar is the mystic power, which, like the magic wand and the cave of legend, silvers everything with blessing.

THE SUFFERINGS AND THE GLORY OF JOSEPH

The history of Joseph is briefly summarized in Psalm 105:18-22. There is no man who stands out in such moral beauty as Joseph in the whole of the sacred writings, and who is such a perfect

type of CHRIST. His career flashes out with typical references to CHRIST.

I only note two in connection with the words, "**Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron**" (verse 18); and "**He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance**" (verse 21). The iron of suffering entered into the soul of CHRIST before He entered into the sphere of supremacy. The visit of His humiliation and the prison of His crucifixion were the preludes to the position of honour. He suffered outside the camp as our Sin-Bearer, and now we stand inside the vail with Him. He endured our prison-death, that we might enjoy with Him His palace-life. Being in the exalted place, because He passed through the expiating one, He now says, "**I was dead and am alive for evermore**"; and we can say, too, "I was dead, and in CHRIST, I am alive for evermore."

II. *The Atoning Saviour in the Psalms.*

There are three Psalms which are specially Calvary's ones, namely, Psalms 22, 38, and 49.

Let us look at a few sentences in the first of these.

The title of Psalm 22:is striking - "the hind of the morning or dawn." [45]

Delitzsch remarks, according to the traditional definition, it refers "to the early light preceding the dawn of the morning, whose first rays are likened to the horns of the hind." It is not without meaning, too, that the lamb of the morning sacrifice was offered up as the watchman cried out, "The first rays of the morning burst forth." The light of grace flashes forth from the darkness of the cross. The hind that was stricken in death is the one who brings life to us.

THE FORSAKEN SURETY

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (verse 1)

He that standeth Surety for another shall smart for it. Man had forsaken God, the Fountain of Living Waters (Jeremiah 2:13), and he must answer for his sin, or another must answer for him.

CHRIST came to us where we were, and answered for us in standing as our Surety. He was forsaken by the Righteous GOD as He bore the penalty of our sin. The word "**forsaken**" is rendered "**left destitute**" in Genesis 24:27; and "**faileth**" in Psalm 38:10. These words might be read into the text, and as they are, they give added emphasis to the fact that CHRIST was left alone, He was destitute of help, Heaven failed Him, and GOD forsook Him.

When Martin Luther was confronted with this fact, he sat benumbed for a time, and exclaimed at last, "GOD forsaken by GOD."

- He was destitute of help that we might have salvation.
- He was failed in the hour of His extremity that GOD might never fail us in any extremity.
- He was forsaken that the blood-bought promise might be ours - "**I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.**"
- He was orphaned that we might be Fathered. [46]

"THE LOWLY WORM"

(verse 6)

The **worm** means *a maggot*. The word "*tolaath*" applies especially to the *coccus*, from which the *scarlet dye* was obtained to dye the *scarlet things of the tabernacle*. The death of the worm was necessary to get the dye.

There are two very significant occurrences of the word "**scarlet**."

One is in Isaiah 1:18, where man's sins are said to be "**as scarlet**," and the other is, when reference is made to the "**scarlet**" used in the different curtains and vail of the tabernacle (Exodus 22:1).

CHRIST, in calling Himself "**a Worm**," identifies Himself with the uncleanness of man's sin, and the heinousness of his iniquity; and the scarlet being associated with the dwelling-place of the Lord, which was typical of CHRIST tabernacling among us, suggests the thought that He became our sin that we might become GOD's sanctuary.

The worm Jacob is no longer a worm but a son of GOD, because the Son of GOD became as a worm. The scarlet dye of His blood makes us fit to become the dwelling-place of GOD. CHRIST said, "**I am . . . no Ish**" ("*Ish*" is the word for *man of high degree*, as "*enosh*" refers to *man as a poor, frail, incurable creature*).

He became so low that He repudiates the title to manhood in its highest form, to which He alone was entitled.

Why? The reason is, He became lower than the lowest, that He might save the vilest, and lift up to the highest dignity and blessedness.

THE REPROACHED REDEEMER

"**A reproach of men**" (verse 6)

The word "**reproach**" comes from a root which means *to pull off, to strip, to expose to shame*. The word is used in this sense when GOD says to Israel, "**Thy shame shall be seen**" (Isaiah 47:3), [47] and when the wicked shall awake "**to shame and everlasting contempt**" (Daniel 12:2).

Why did CHRIST submit to the shame of the cross?

The answer is given by CHRIST Himself in another Psalm, where He says, "**The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee have fallen upon Me**" (Psalm 69:9). The result is, as the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from Israel at Gilgal (Joshua 5:9), so the reproach of sin has fallen upon Him on our account, and there is now no reproach for us. It is rolled away from us, because it was rolled over upon Him. He was shamed that we might not be put to shame.

"Bearing shame and scoffing rude,

In my place condemned He stood."

THE WEAKENED SAVIOUR

"I am poured out," &c. (verse 14)

The wise woman of Tekoah said that man in the frailty of his humanity was like "**water spilt on the ground**" (II Samuel 14:14); and when Belshazzar came face to face with the hand of judgment writing his doom upon the wall, it is said, "**the joints of his loins were loosed**" (Daniel 5:6).

"**Without strength**" (Romans 5:6) are the Spirit-inspired words which declare the inability of man; and surely it is with Divine intent that the HOLY SPIRIT uses the very same expression in describing the sufferings of CHRIST, when He says He was "**crucified through weakness**" (II Corinthians 13:4).

He has accomplished more in His weakness than others have done in the greatness of their strength. His impotency in death has brought to us the omnipotence of His life. [48]

THE WITHERED SUFFERER

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd" (verse 15)

The intensity of His suffering is more pronounced as He suffers on. One of the things which impresses the student is, the very words which describe the sinfulness and helplessness of the sinner are applied to the suffering Saviour.

The word rendered "**dried up**" ("*Jabesh*") means *to be confused, to be dried up like water in a brook, or to be withered up like herbage.*

It is rendered:

- "**withereth**" in Psalm 90:6, in speaking of the frailty of man;
- "**dried up,**" in comparing Ephraim to a smitten tree (Hosea 9:16);
- "**dried up,**" in describing the effect of the judgment of GOD upon Jeroboam when his hand was paralysed (I. Kings 13:4); and
- when the Psalmist was made conscious of his sin, he said, "**My heart is smitten and withered like grass**" (Psalm 102:4).

All this, when read in the light of Calvary, proclaims CHRIST's utter exhaustion, and reminds us of His cry, "**I thirst.**"

- He came into our frailty that we might have His vitality.
- He was like a smitten tree, that He might make us living trees, full of the sap of His life.
- Death held Him in its paralyzing grip, that CHRIST might hold us in His powerful grace;
- He was like a dried-up brook, that He might be to us the Water of Life; and
- He cried, "**I thirst,**" that we might never cry for a drop of water in hell to cool our parched tongue.

I have only indicated the trend of this substitutionary Psalm, but as the whole of it is pondered we are made conscious that CHRIST is declaring the inmost heart of His experience. This Psalm reveals CHRIST as the Sin-Offering, as the Fortieth Psalm unfolds Him as the Burnt-Offering. He suffers alone. None can help.

- In His forsaking we have our welcome.
- In His death He gives us His life.
- In His emptying we receive His fullness. [49]

III. *The Atoning Saviour in the Prophets.*

There are many passages in the Prophets which are indicative and typical of CHRIST's death.

- Jeremiah in his sorrow (Lamentations 1:12),
- Ezekiel's sacrificial waters (Ezekiel 47:1),
- Jonah in the place of death (Jonah 2:6),
- Hosea's door of hope (Hosea 2:15),
- Joel's Zion of deliverance (Joel 2:32),
- Micah's kinsman Redeemer (Micah 4:10),
- Nahum's publisher of peace (Nahum 1:15),
- Habakkuk's "**bright beams out of his side**" (Habbakuk 3:4, margin),
- Zephaniah's just Lord (Zephaniah 3:5),
- Haggai's "**Desire of all nations**" (Haggai 2:7),
- Zechariah's pierced Friend, and smitten Shepherd (Zechariah 13:6, 7), and
- Malachi's Messenger of the Covenant (Malachi 3:1).

I call attention to only one, namely, the Smitten Shepherd.

THE SMITTEN SHEPHERD

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts, smite the Shepherd"
(Zechariah 13:7)

Let us look at CHRIST as the Smitten Shepherd. The word, *to smite*, occurs more than once in connection with CHRIST.

CHRIST uses it in prophecy when He says, "**I gave My back to the smiters**" (Isaiah 1:6), and "**I was wounded in the house of My friends**" (Zechariah 13:6), and when He was esteemed to be "**smitten of God and afflicted**" (Isaiah 53:4).

Frequently the word is used to designate GOD's act of judgment. For instance, when the Lord "**smote the firstborn of Egypt**" (Exodus 12:29), and when the angel of the Lord smote the Syrians (Isaiah 37:36).

One has said, "Not to realize hell is not to prize the cross." Those who realize the hell of their sin's deserving are quick to recognise the sufficiency and suitability of the Saviour's substitution. The sin-burdened soul knows [50] he has placed himself, by his sin, under the smiting of

GOD's wrath, but he is ready also to appreciate the fact that CHRIST has been stricken on his behalf.

His smiting is our salvation.

While passing the World's Fair at St. Louis, on the night train, in 1904, the whole scene was one mass of magnificent electric light. As I was admiring the flashing display of the lights on the Festal Hall, the lights upon it suddenly changed to a deep crimson, which made everything seem warm with their hue. Amid all the wonders of GOD's creation, the works of His historic and providential hand, and the certainty of the Festal Hall of His Word, there is one crimson fact which illuminates the whole, and that is the atoning sacrifice of CHRIST's death.

Vinet has tersely put the whole issue so far as Christianity is concerned.

He says, "Deprived of the great fact of expiation, what, I ask, is Christianity? For ordinary minds, an ordinary morality; for others, an abyss of inconsistencies."

With the "great fact of expiation," what does Christianity proclaim?

- It proclaims the bow of GOD's love in the dark cloud of sin, telling us that judgment is past (Genesis 9:13; Revelation 4:3; 5:9);
- it proclaims the token of assurance in the dark night of wrath, which assures us that the plague of indignation shall not come near us (Exodus 12:13; Romans 8:1-3);
- it proclaims that the ransom price of redemption has been paid for us, thus counting us in GOD's elect (Exodus 30:12-14; I Peter 1:18, 19);
- it proclaims the solid foundation of atonement on which we rest, and with which we are identified (Exodus 38:25-28; I Corinthians 3:11);
- it proclaims the uplifted serpent of life-bestowment, bringing life and health and the sun-rising of expectant outlook (Numbers 21:8, 9; John 3:14, 15);
- it proclaims the ashes of the red-heifer of [51] cleansing from defilement and restoration to fellowship (Numbers 19:1-14; I John 1:7); and
- it proclaims the consecrating ram of holiness bringing us untold blessing, and qualifying us for GOD's priestly service (Leviticus 8:22-29; Hebrews 13:12).

The supreme attraction, yea, the attraction of GOD's Word, is the One of Whom the late Charles Fox wrote:

"Marred more than any man's, yet there is no place
In this wide universe but gains new grace,
Richer and fuller, from that marred face." [52]

~ end of chapter 2 ~
