

Psalm 22

George Vicesimus Wigram

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This Psalm evidently contains two parts. One of humiliation (from ver. 1 to ver. 21); and one of rejoicing (from ver. 22 to the end). Both portions are of the very deepest interest to the believer. The former will be *felt* to be so by every sincere Christian, as it opens with the cry upon the cross of the Lord and Saviour, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27: 46).

I desire to present a few remarks on the sufferings of Christ at Calvary. Be it that they are simple; this, upon such a subject, will not take from any excellency of the matter which they may contain. First, I did not know peace with a holy, heart-searching, sin-hating God until the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ was known to me—its meaning, and God's gracious plan and counsel about it too. And more than this, seeing that all are sinners, it is, I believe, impossible for any to know peace with God until they know this Cross as connected with God's answer to and remedy for sin.

And yet there is one part of what passed on Calvary most important of all. It is a part which many overlook, though it is that part which secures forgiveness to the believer; a part Without a distinct knowledge of which no conscience can have calm and quiet and settled peace in the presence of God.

The Cross and the death of the Lord Jesus upon it took place centuries before I lived; that wondrous work altogether anticipated me; it was finished not only long before I existed, but, in itself, presents everything fearful and repulsive to sense, yet most precious to faith. In it men, in rebellion against God, expressed the crowning act of their godlessness and hatred, in putting the Prince of Life, the Son of God's love, to death, in a cruel, ignominious, wanton, and infamous way. The Jewish mind, in bondage to forms of divine appointment, may reject the thought that Jehovah of Hosts and the Nazarene were one, God manifest in the flesh; and the heathen mind, in its loose, care-for-nothing liberty, may stumble at the statement that perfect and divine wisdom, heavenly beauty and moral glory, are presented in that Cross; but God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, and every human being who knows not, in this life, the virtues of that Cross of Christ, will sink down by the very weight of their own sinfulness and sins, into the lake of fire and brimstone prepared for the devil and his angels.

How heartily will faith say with me, as it recalls what transpired on Calvary, Of a truth God has been before us in what He has done upon the question of sin; and how do His ways differ from our ways and His thoughts from our thoughts!

First.—He holds, by means of that Cross of Jesus Christ, the first place. He has done a work as to sin, before we were in existence. Secondly, He has taken up that question of sin in a way so peculiarly His own, that, indeed, His thoughts and ways about it have to be studied by us, and learnt by us, so contrasted are they with all our own.

True, we may have thought, when first we discovered sin, and sins and guilt, that we had something to do. And a creature who is in ruins, cannot be justified quietly to sit down at ease as to the ruin; much less can he possibly anticipate the consequences to himself, hereafter, of the ruin and be at peace. Yet the question of sin, when it is fairly weighed by a creature, must

leave him in hopelessness, so far as anything that can rise or flow from himself is concerned or be found in his circumstances. Sin was, in Eden, man's setting aside of God; 'twas an open insult against God Himself as Creator, that His creature should voluntarily ignore his supremacy, and its own subjection and state of dependence. And, when sin got connected by that first act with the state of man's being; when this produced in heart and mind and will and ways its fruits innumerable, and each and all of these was a defiance against God; what *could* man do to remedy the broken relationship and all its fruits, and the dark anticipations incidental to this? He could do nothing, though he might not have the right to say so, until God Himself had given him such words as: Every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God; who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; who can make that which is crooked straight? etc.

But the Cross of His Son takes up the whole question of sin, and that, too, in a way such as conscience, in the light of God's presence, can approve and find rest in. It is a provision of God's own providing; and demanding, in the announcement of it, implicit submission to it, and obedience to God by the sinner *as a sinner*. If, as a creature, I were trying to remedy the fall of man and my own ruin in it, I should surely be quietly assumingsome competency in myself; *some* intelligence, *some* desire to do what is right, *some* power. But the Cross, as God's provision, supposes the very contrary as to me. It assumes, and justly so, that I have no will to own God in the place which belongs to Him, or myself in the place into which sin has sunk me; it gives me no credit as to power to understand the extent of either my ruin or of God's claims; but it does present a work wrought by God, and His thoughts about it; and challenges me, a rebel, whether as a rebel I will submit to the salvation of God; and whether, when unable to obey as an upright creature, I will as a ruined creature become obedient to the faith. A ruined creature, as the *occasion* of God's display of His own right and pleasure as supreme to have mercy upon whom He *will* have mercy and compassion upon whom He will have compassion, is (surely, man may see it) more to the praise and glory of God than a ruined creature, self-confident, assuming that, though he cannot find God whom he has lost, or tell what to do that will not be counted a fresh insult to God, yet who will do *something* to save himself by. If salvation is of, and from myself, surely it will be to *my* honour. If it be of, and from the Lord, the praise of it is to Him alone. And this is all the more obvious when the salvation is such as that which is by the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, every part of which magnifies God and His character, and shows out the ruin and helplessness in himself of man who is saved; and establishes God in his place of supreme, and man in his place of subjection to the word of God.

Secondly.—Salvation is ours not by means of our intelligence. It is faith-wise not wisdom-wise.

One little word upon faith, as separate from, and in contrast with sense. Man was in Eden surrounded with every testimony addressed to his senses, of the blessedness of being in the favour of God. Yet he remained not there; and why, but because he did not treasure up and act upon God's word—a warning word, then—"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." After that, his conscience could not meet God with comfort. But God, unseen and outside, has now announced, down here, a word (multiform are the promises, but all so far as addressed to the sinner) calling attention to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that His Cross is the sinner's doorway to God. The power of the word of God was proved in

Adam's ruin, upon his disobedience; its power is all the more blessedly proved by the eternal life that belongs to those who receive the word of promise. But the truthfulness of the word is in both cases established; both when spoken by a God present, where all confirmed, to sense, His might and goodness; and also when spoken, as it were, out of another world, two men far off from God, in a world of rebellion: God that cannot lie, who has magnified His word above all His name, whose word is as mighty to bring a ruined creature out of a ruined world into God's new creation, as it was to form that creature at first.

Faith, through which we are saved, being our reception of the word of promise (not as the word of man but) as in deed and in truth the word of the living God, though connected with intelligence in the spirit and leading into knowledge, has its own distinctive peculiarities. Its primary action is always upon the conscience, so much so that, until conscience gets at rest for itself before God, it makes us often dull to learn and slow to apprehend. On the other hand, quickness of intelligence and great progress in knowledge, in a young convert, are not happy or encouraging signs. It will be found too by most of us, in our after retrospects, that the first apprehensions of faith were often the soundest and most truthful, though we saw through a glass darkly; indeed, often, that felt dimness, that seeing men as trees walking—which we knew at first—is turned into a clearness and a supposed accuracy of knowledge which we find does not stand: and why so, but because it is made up more by theory from within ourselves than by the calm and quiet, but deep, teaching of God's Holy Spirit. Perhaps many can recall their first thoughts of peace as connected with such a passage as that in John 3: 14, 15: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life;" or that in Rom 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Mercy in God towards ruined man was clearly seen; Christ as the only way too was seen; His humiliation and His promise pledged were seen, and that rest for us was in God, and not in ourselves; that too was seen. The reception of His word was eternal life; for though we knew not the worth or the value of Himself, or of what He had wrought, God (to whom we had thus turned—being thus turned by His gracious word) made sure to us the benefit of that which was in His presence, about which He testified to us, which testimony through grace we received.

A little further on in our course we may have been studying the wondrous cross itself. The step was one of progress; and yet we may not have seen, as we then supposed we did, *the* deep lesson of the cross, though we thought we knew it; or occupied with our having believed and confessed Jesus as Lord, we may have supposed that we had full peace because *we* had done so. And yet after and deeper lessons were needful upon both these truths ere we could justly say, "I see" and "I know," or could say, "Himself is my peace."

To some it may enlarge the subject to notice that, while the gospels give us the historic account of the cross, they do not give us either the doctrine of the meaning of the cross, or God's counsel in it. The counsel, so far as Israel was concerned, must be looked for in such passages as Isaiah liii., and in its broadest connections, that counsel and the doctrine of the meaning and import of the cross must be looked for in the Acts, Epistles, and Revelation, as containing the antitypes of the Old Testament Scriptures. The four gospels give us the historic accounts of what took place at the cross,— the Lord being looked at in the four several aspects—of Son of David and Abraham (Matthew), the servant of God (Mark), the Son of Man (Luke), and the Son of God (John). But what passed *inwardly* in the soul and mind of Him that

suffered is to be found in our Psalm 22, etc.

It will thus be seen that, while I attach pre-eminent importance to faith's apprehensions of the word of God about the cross, I do not mean to speak as though intelligence or knowledge were of little value. Far from being guilty of such a sin, I judge we all come short, in a way which we ought to be ashamed of, of diligence in studying the blessed subject as connected with the development of the counsels, and various exhibitions of truth as to the household of faith, God's channel of testimony, as to the service of the blessed Lord, as to man down here a fallen sinner, and as to God the God of glory, who has thus revealed Himself. For Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John has each of them his own aspect of truth in the gospel written by him.

I turn now to the Psalm itself, which gives us, as I have said, most of the inward experiences and feelings of the blessed Lord. I may compare its instruction with other portions of the word as I pass along.

Verses 1, 2: Cry to God of one utterly forsaken by him.

1. My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? far from helping me! the words of my roaring!
2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou nearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent.

Verse 3: Whom, thou forsaken, he yet vindicates.

3. But thou (art) holy—inhabiting the praises of Israel.

Vers. 4, 5, 6. For Israel trusting God, had ever been saved; but himself had taken .the place of a worm before God.

4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6. But I am a worm and no man.

Vers. 6, 7, 8. He was, therefore, mocked by man. A reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lipy they shake the head, saying: 8. He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he delight in him.

Vers. 9, 10.— Although he was one whose birth and experience, as a man, were a witness for God.

9. But thou (art) he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me to hope (when I was) upon my mother's breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou (art) my God from my mother's belly.

Vers. 11, 12, 13. Though now surrounded by terrors and cruelty.

11. Be not far from me, for trouble (is) near; for (there is) none to help. 12. Many bulls have compassed me: strong ones of Bashan have beset me round. 13. They gaped upon me (with) their mouths, (as) a. ravening and a roaring lion.

Vers. 14, 15. And with deep inward and personal experiences of weakness.

14. 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. 15. 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.

Ver. 16. Surrounded by the wicked and crucified.

16. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Ver 17. His person put to open shame.

17. I may tell all my bones: they look, they stare upon me.

Verse 18.— Clothes wrongfully appropriated.

18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Vers. 19, 20, 21. — Still the Lord was his own stay, and hope, and portion.

19. But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling [only one] from the power of the dog. 21. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

The head of the first section of this Psalm might then, I think, in outline, be given and stand thus: "Utterly forsaken by God,—I cry to Him; whom, though forsaken, *I vindicate*; He was faithful to Israel, who in faith drew near to Him—but I am forsaken as having degraded myself to a point lower down than man. Mocked by man and scorned, though by birth and experience a true witness for God, surrounded by terrors and cruelty, full within of weakness, surrounded by the wicked, crucified, my person and circumstance put to shame—*thou, Lord, alone art my strength, and hope, and portion.*"

Satan in the mount had tried Him as Son of God and as Son of Man, but could find no dross of lust in Him. All was in perfect obedience to God and to His servant position. Man had tried Him, good and bad man, but all was perfect. Now, come to the end of His course here below,—Satan, man, and God, all try Him: He is perfectly subject unto God, even unto death, the death of the cross. But more than perfect subjection comes out; forsaken by God He does not forsake God: this is more than any mere creature, however high that creature be, could do. No *mere* creature has springs thus within itself so that cut off from supplies from on high, it can still serve in subjection; forsaken of God, a mere creature must collapse in ruin. If thus

perfectly subject, if thus divinely glorious in power, for whose sins was He thus smitten? Not for His own, that is clear. He was perfect as a man, and was Son of God too; He had no sins of His own, He was by nature apart from sin. For whose sin and sins was He then afflicted and bruised? Faith knows the answer. But I must not anticipate.

I pray that the various kinds of sufferings of the Lord as here presented, may be noticed. They all meet together in the Psalm, as they did in the Lord's experience on the cross. But they are, some of them, essentially distinct from the others.

- Take for instance *first* ver. 1. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? far from helping me! the words of my roaring. This forsaking by God—my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? What was there like it for sorrow; what the same as it in the rest of the Psalm, or I may say of the Lord's whole life? It presents Him in quite a peculiar place and position. He had, of His own accord, taken the cup of wrath due to others. As a substitute, the just one in place of the many unjust, He was bearing all the billows and waves of God's wrath against sin. Man had in the garden of Eden refused to be subject to God, had, so far as in him lay, set God aside, and, so far as Himself was concerned, had set Satan in the place of director instead of God. The Lord, the seed of the woman, who alone knew no sin, was made sin for us, took up upon Himself the consequences of this first root-sin of Adam, and of all its ramifications. He was treated as though He had been *the* person that had alone done any or all the evil, and He experienced the consequences of being forsaken. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

Sin in man is always godlessness, the denial of God in His place of supreme. Who could take the place and the consequences of man who had done this? Let a mere creature be treated according to its deserts, and withering in the darkness and blackness of despair would be the prelude to the lake prepared for the devil and his angels—lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, where their worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched. And yet all the consequences upon the wicked give no adequate measure, save as being eternal, of what the result of such an insult to God is. But the beloved Son, He in whom God was always well pleased, He who was competent to take up the question of insulted Deity; He, God manifest in the flesh; He the blessed Son of Man, took up the question in His own person, of His own voluntary accord—took it up too, not in independent will of His own, but as the servant of God and His Father. Never, really, was His conduct more perfect, more according to His Father's good pleasure, than when He took thus the cup of wrath due alone to others, when he yielded Himself, who knew no sin, *to be made* sin for us; but yet the veil dropped, so to speak, between the countenance of God and His servant, the sin He had taken up made Him taste what it was to be forsaken.

We must remember, too, that with Him there was no exaggeration of language/as there is with mere man. To man, the use of language is difficult, if he would be truthful. *His feelings* lead him to use words and terms often, which, in the calmer, cooler moments of reflection, he thinks are too glowing, too strong; feelings of another kind often, too, lead him to use words and terms which are not strong enough. This was never the case with the Lord. He presents facts, and no human language could ever express what He felt when He said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," My sin and sins, so to

speaking, borne by the Lord in God's presence, and the light of approbation and complacency was curtailed in from Him. If sin is, indeed, the denial of God's rights and personal place relatively to me, how can He and it meet together in any wise? Be the sins but an appendage to Him who, because He was God manifest in flesh, could have no sin, could see no corruption, be they but as a garland round about Him, a spotless perfect victim—there could be no enjoyment by Him of expressed complacency and approbation from on high. My sins shut it out. The bullock for the sin offering (Lev. xvi. 27, 28), was thrust out of the camp, and seemed to mark everything unclean; though the blood afterwards might go inside and be before and upon the mercy seat, where God dwelt between the Cherubim. Sin is an abruption from God. Its judgment, God's abruption from it. What it is and what its real character and tendencies are, I only learn from the Lord forsaken by God, upon the Cross.

And until I can measure the calibre of Him that was there, and measure His relationship to Him whose servant He then and there was—made sin for us,—I can know no measure of what His forsaking was. To me, it is just immeasurable—my sin as against God and God only—not as an inconvenient thing to man, to my fellows, to myself, down here; but as against God and what it is in its awful consequences for eternity; what fellowship with a world that clings to God's adversary, Satan, what is it but sin as against God. And I confess I can in no wise measure it. He is from everlasting. He is the first and the last. Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. The head and centre of the universe; His glory the end of all that is. And can I measure what my insult to His person, to His government, what my setting Him aside, so far as I am concerned, is? Impossible. And still more impossible for me to measure the depth that knows no sounding, of what the Lord endured when He bore the wrath due to my sins in His own body on the tree; when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

If I wanted like a Jeremy Taylor to paint a scene hereupon, I think I could do it. I would recall the height whence He had come, His personal and recognised glory there; the only begotten Son of the Father, object of worship with Him; who could say, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also; in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; Creator and upholder of all things; the titles of Prophet, Priest, and King down here (which even this Psalm shows to have been His, when it is carefully read and analysed); the contrasts between the approvals He had had from on high (Mt 3: 16, 17; Luke 9: 35; John 1: 32, 33) and the present experience, God's own servant forsaken thus, etc., etc. But no; His own simple, unvarnished utterance is best description after all—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"¹

This sort of sorrow is altogether *sui generis*, of its own kind. So completely is it *distinctively* peculiar and not to be confounded with other kinds of sorrows that they might be shared and partaken of by others; but, as to this one, it is true that no one as yet ever tasted it, even in the measure in which a human being can taste it, save the Lord. And He took the full, whole potion as at the hand of God and His Father.

It is re-stated again, in ver. 11 and ver. 19, Be not thou far from me, Lord; and what its cause was, in his holding our sin and bearing it, in Psalm 40: 12, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine-iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not

able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.”

Well might the sun hide, in a way contrary to nature, its face; well, too, might an unnatural darkness cover the whole scene. Was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow!

- But, *secondly*, there were other sorrows then and there the Lord's. For instance, ver. 3, the sorrow of the contrast between the shelter which the believing line of witnesses had ever had from God (in whom they in their measure trusted), and the way that all God's billows and waves necessarily rolled over Himself, as the one who, for God's sake (that He might be free to justify, and that without compromise, the sinner), and who for man's sake, too, had thus gone down into the depths, below man's level, that through death He might nullify him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage; might rifle the grave and bring away with Him the key of Hades and of death; as He said to John (Rev 1: 17), "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and became dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death." That He might break the power of Satan, set aside the power of the world, draw the souls of poor sinners to God, He became a worm and no man. What thorough humbling of Himself—obedient unto death, the death of the Cross!
- But, *thirdly*, more than this, and quite separable from the second, and in some respects contrasted with the first sorrow (ver. 6, 7, 8). Wicked men round about Him were against Him, though He was bearing their judgment before God. And His perfect self as a man could take notice of all the little things from man, as much as the great things from God! Reproach of man; contempt of the people; the laugh; the scorn; the pouted lip; the wagging head; the taunting repartee—He saw, He felt it all. It was not God's wrath against sin; but it was rather part of the sin against which God's wrath came; the swollen tide of it, the grand expression of it—to which the wrath was obviously due. In the wrath, He was all alone, and none with Him: in the taste of the sins, then swelling like a flood against Him, a Mary, a John, and holy women, a Joseph, a centurion, a Nicodemus might have their portions and drink it with Him. The wrath was His and His alone to bear.
- *Fourthly*, the past nearness of God to Him (ver. 9 and 10) in contrast with (ver. 11) the consciousness of the present distance, was another sorrow. This, so far as experience goes in the walk of a man of God, a Job, a Prophet, a John might share in their measures—but who *shined* under it in the way that He did? It discovered but too often their love of ease, their self-will. A Job was irritated and cursed the day and the night connected with his birth; a Jeremiah sunk through faintheartedness into the like sin. Timothy was fainthearted, etc., but the Lord's light only shined out the more brightly.
- So, *fifthly*, might others share the surroundings of adversaries (ver. 12).
- And, *sixthly* (ver. 14, 15), the sense of weakness and helplessness in position. Not that a weak one feels weakness, or one naturally helpless feels it as one who is the perfection of strength and power would do, such an one as He who bears up the pillars of the earth. And there were, also, here, points marked which none but one ever *fully* knew. "I am poured out like water. . . . My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. . . ."

Thou hast brought me into the dust of death," seems to me certainly language which, as to its pregnant fulness, suited only Him, the Power and the Mighty One of God when on the cross. Still, like that word "crucified through weakness," it might be true of many a sufferer in a measure; but the forsaking was His all alone.

- So also ver. 16, which is my *seventh* sorrow. And here I must digress a little, so as to take in some other Scriptures, as the subject is the crucifixion itself.

Till you can find another like unto Himself who could be His own and very peer (and that can never be), you will not find one whose Nazarite gaze at, and tenure of everything as in God's presence, and in its connexions with man, could give to His unselfish heart the same capacity of feeling as to God's glory and dishonour, and man's sin and misery, or His own anguish, as the one upon whom all sorrow fell as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that the guilty might go out free.

To Him, too, as an Israelite, the Messiah and King of Israel, the perfect Israelite, the cross (a Gentile death, and a cruel one) must have been far more sorrowful than to the two thieves. They, of course, felt the pain of the kind of death and the death itself—in a bodily way; but besides feeling much more acutely than they did, His mind, His heart, His zeal for God, His love for Israel, His pity for the sinners and for Gentiles, all gave their tribute to His weight of sufferings. His mother, His disciples, etc., all enlarged its dimensions too. There was, too, to Him, in addition to the pain of the death, the *legal curse* appended, by God's righteous judgment as King of Israel, to the form of death; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree." But this curse of the law was not the same thing as the wrath, when he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The thieves bore it as He did; that thief, too, who went with Him to Paradise the same day, and who could go there to be with his Lord, because *He*, the Prince of Life, had borne the wrath due to sin in His own body on the tree. But the cross had been endured by many an unrepentent rebel against man and God; and the cross, in itself, would not take away sin. Yea, more, while the time in which He endured the cross was the period in part of which the wrath came on Him (when He endured the wrath of God's judgment against sin), He only, of the three that were crucified together, could or did bear that wrath, and the agony of that wrath, if His alone of the three, then and there crucified, was distinct from, though present, to Him at the same time as, the agonies (infinitely lesser) of the cross of wood.

Any one that takes in by faith (John 3: 14, 15) is doubtless saved; if he have studied the accounts in the Evangelists of the crucifixion, his mind will have been brought into a field as to the central object of which heaven and earth contrasted stood, in which His own soul, as cleaving to and loving the Lord, will learn lessons of what man, good and bad, is; what the religious world, even that which was of God's setting up in Israel with all its worldly sanctuary and ordinances, is; what high-priests and elders are, when they are mere men; what civil government (in Herod and Pontius Pilate and such like) really is; and who the Prince of this world is. He may have learnt, too, what bad flesh is, to his heart's surfeit; and what the Lord judged was the use to which *He* could put that which was alone holy, harmless, undefiled flesh in human nature, untainted by sin or lust, or any such thing: it was fit to be made an offering for sin. While the conscience, heart, and mind may thus be enlarged, formed and fashioned as to

things down here, he will yet *not* find, save in the cry, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” that which touches even upon the settlement of the question of sin before God; nor, even so, does the lesson go far enough, without light from the Acts and Epistles, to give settlement to his own soul. For the forsaking is but the one side, that side of the subject, too, which shows the certain rejection and judgment of the sin by God, under any and all circumstances; God can know no mitigating circumstances in sins; and not that which shows how He can curse the sin and bless the sinner. The counsel and plan of God come not out in the scene as enacted and passed through on earth (though the effects do, in measure, in one of the thieves), but in the results seen in heaven, and announced thence with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. For man to know the divine certainty and eternal necessity of sin, his own sin, being cursed by God, is a lesson, and a great one, to learn; and it is taught on Calvary, there where Satan was allowed to have his own way, and to lead man to show out his hatred against God, in the one consentaneous act of man, as such, against the Christ, and where God gave the penal consequence to His Son to bear. Hopelessness as to sin, and as to self that has sin in its heart’s core *is* taught then and there. But it was from heaven, after the resurrection and the ascension too, that such truth came as—For He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. God’s counsel and plan and grace by the cross come out in such passages (in the Acts and Epistles, and Revelation) as these—Acts ii., It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it (21, 22, 23). . . . This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said unto them, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received His word were baptised, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls (32-41.)

Without such additional light, whencesoever gained conscience could not get peace. It would plead as it has pleaded when absorbed with the cross of the Lord, whose beauty and moral, excellent and divine perfectness had drawn it, “There, there, is the end, now, of all hope for me. The Son of God has been down here in all the beauty of divine and human perfectness, and we have murdered Him and sent Him back to God.” It was a deep but a good lesson and accompanied with an honestly pleaded “Guilty of the murder of the Christ, and therefore mine is hopeless despair.” The just and divinely taught appreciation of the curse of God, not in government merely, but in His own eternal divine nature of sin is quite another truth in itself

from the gathering, of the poor sinner to God. I could wish there were a little more of it nowadays; a little more appreciation of God's estimate of sin; it would deepen the soul and tend to set it more decidedly in its Nazarite position as against Satan, the world, and the flesh; and for God and God alone—that is, it would do so when the heavenly and divine estimate of Christ, whom man rejected, was known; an earth-rejected, but heaven-owned, a man-despised, but God-honoured Christ.

I might pass through Romans and all the epistles, and the Revelation too, and gather up passages showing the same truth of God's counsels and plans in various connections and ways, through His use and estimate of the truth. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we may become the righteousness of God in Him. But it seems needless to do so; yet I note that crucified together with Him, dead together with Him, buried together with Him, quickened together with Him, raised up together with Him. and made sit together in heavenly places in Him, clearly is not merely the cross of Calvary and the curse borne by Him in His forsaking; but is the doctrine of God and heaven about faith in an ascended Lord, and is through the gift of the Spirit, seal and earnest of the inheritance.

Until the soul can say, He who knew no sin was made sin for me, and forsaken for my sins' sake, that I might become the righteousness of God in Him,—the soul cannot have conscious intelligent peace with God. It does not see how the sin was cursed though the sinner was saved; God's character was thus revealed and brought out to light; and the soul to be at peace in itself (and that amid such a world as this and in spite of such an one as Satan), must know God aright; if it is to share His peace with Him, His who rests in the Son of His love. The rest of the soul for its own sake, and for the sake of its service in the hour of trial and the glory of God (that He may be known as He has revealed Himself), make this subject to be one of pre-eminent importance. When known, then, the truth and holiness, the justice and the equity of God are seen to be as much for the believing sinner as are His compassion, and mercy, and grace.

For one who, as only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,—to lose down here the enjoyed consciousness of the complacency of God, and that, too, at the very time when He was doing the most arduous and difficult part of the work which was given to Him (as God manifest in flesh) to do down here; so that, instead of God's nearness to Himself, His distance and being afar off in forsaking was that which He tasted (viz., when He bare our sins), is a subject of the very deepest and most solemn kind.

No one like unto Him! Nothing like unto this in all that through which He passed, of the unsearchableness of whose person it is said, No one knows the Son save the Father.

His position; His experience; what He was suffering; what would be found involved in it,—what the varied issues and results!

And what *did* it cost Him to take up sin (fruit of Satan's wickedness and of man's breaking his relationship with God and setting himself up as God); and to have God's estimate of that sin expressed as to Himself?

However deeply one's soul may have been exercised herein, faith says, "The best answers to

this are, if made by man, then left in the form of a question, 'And what did it cost Him?' Or if otherwise answered, then only His own words will suffice: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His solace however, here, was "forsaken, I do not forsake," and "treated as made sin, I vindicate him that does so." But,

- 2. For Him who was the object of all faith—the one from whom the testimony shined down,—to be the only one connected with the faith whose position was too low down² for Him to find any shelter or support, was another character and another experience altogether. It had had, however, its picturings in some of old, though all came short of *the measure* which He now presented. It is found even in the imagery of Deuteronomy: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, (so) the Lord alone did lead him." It might and would be true, in measure, of every one standing in office, where that position involved the blessing of a subordinate party. Moses as mediator, Aaron as high priest, Joshua as captain of the Lord's host, and Samuel, and David, and Jeremiah, etc., might all in measure illustrate it, and so might the more homely truth of a mother with her offspring. Then,
3. Having in grace gone down to the lowest place of all, there found Himself to be the obloquy of those for whose sake He had humbled Himself.
 4. But His position as a man was all, all of it well defined to Him. Mt 1: 18-25, Luke i. 26-33, etc., both show it, and give what the power of the sorrow to such an one would be. Still this could be shared in measure by a Jeremiah, ch. 1.; by a Paul, Gal 1, etc. So,
 5. The sense of weakness. Though the causes of weakness differed in Him and in a Paul. 2Cor 1: 18-20, and 2Cor 12, and compare Isa 40: 10-31, etc.
 6. He tasted, too, the floods of the ungodly and the agonies of crucifixion. And
 7. The dishonour put on man by men—man made in the likeness and image of God: in how peculiar a sense was this true of Him, and He knew it. Yet faithful to God when forsaken, and amid the dust of death cleaving to God.

from *The Present Testimony*, Vol. 15, P. 154

Footnotes

[1] As a translator I may, however, notice that if "Eli" (in contrast with Elohai) points to "nearness of conscious association," there is an element of sorrow marked there, which should be noted. So too should be noted the Lord's changing the word Hazavtani (a Hebrew word) to Sabachtani (a Syriac word) forsaken me.

[2] Of course, if "I am a worm and no man" is not said by Him of Himself as to the immeasurably low place He had taken in order that He might become the object and end of faith, the interpretation of the section would be altogether different.