



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE GRACIOUS ATONEMENT OF CHRIST QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE GRACIOUS ATONEMENT

By Wayne Camp

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- C. Could Christ have made a more meritorious atonement?
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COULD CHRIST HAVE MADE A BETTER, MORE VALUABLE ATONEMENT?

“His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,” (Isa. 52:14).

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mk. 14:34).

“Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Pet. 1:18-20).

I have used three passages of Scripture as a basis for this message concerning the sufferings of Christ. The first tells of Christ's sufferings at the hand of men—they so marred his outward appearance with the scourging, beating, slapping, spitting, and plucking of his beard that he did not even appear as a man any longer.

Our second verse tells of the sufferings of Christ at the hand of God—he turned his back on him and left him to suffer and die alone. He forsook him and poured out his indignation upon his sin-bearing, sinless Son.

Our third passage speaks of the value of Christ's sufferings—we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, God's spotless, unblemished Son as foreordained before the foundation of the world.

I have used these verses to pose two questions:

1. Was the atonement of Christ limited to the elect because there was a limited merit and value to his blood and sufferings? or,
2. Was Christ's atonement limited according to a Divine plan and Sovereign purpose in his sufferings?

Charles Spurgeon wrote: “I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merits of the blood of Jesus: If my theological system needs such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not, allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it SEEMS SO NEAR AKIN TO BLASPHEMY. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all in the world, but all in ten thousand worlds, had they

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transgressed their maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question. Having a divine person for an offering, **IT IS NOT CONSISTENT TO CONCEIVE OF LIMITED VALUE;** bound and measure are terms **INAPPLICABLE** to the Divine sacrifice. The intent of the Divine purpose fixes the application on the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work" (*Autobiography*, Vol. I, p. 174).

Spurgeon strongly denounced any system of theology that required placing a limit on the

value of the atonement and changed it into a finite work. He even declared such a system "near akin to blasphemy".

There are those who would have us limit the value of the sacrifice, sufferings, and blood of Christ, or they question our soundness on the limited atonement. I agree with Spurgeon that "if my theological system needs such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds."

Of the infinite value of Christ's sufferings, Dr. J. P. Boyce wrote: "The death of Christ included the penalty in all its fulness. In it he offered up his body and was laid in the grave. In it the separation from God took place by which he was led to feel himself forsaken. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' was his cry of agony. That his death was not eternal, as would ours have been, arose from the fact that in the execution of the sentence of condemnation, God found in him not such a victim as mere man would have been, unable to atone, or render full satisfaction; but one whose glorious nature gave **INFINITE VALUE** to suffering, and who could feel most keenly, yet could bear without destruction, the wrath of God" (*Abstract of Systematic Theology*, p. 328). Again he wrote of the requirements of the one making the atonement? 'Anything he could do must be acceptable to God; for God delighteth in him, Any act of his must be **OF INFINITE VALUE** to accomplish any end for which he designed it.'" (Ibid. p. 330).

J. P. Boyce held to the doctrine of an atonement that was of "infinite value" but its "limitation is one of purpose" (Ibid., p. 337).

Dr. J. R. Graves wrote of the parable of the hidden treasure: "I understand the field to represent this world . . . That the people of God, the 'seed of Abraham' are the treasures hid in this field, is amply sustained by the teaching's of the Word . . . Christ was the purchaser of the field. He purchased the world and the treasure He discovered in it by the stipulations of the covenant of redemption. He purchased the earth and his people by His own blood. The Father, in that covenant made over to His Son this earth as

His purchased possession: 'Ask of me and I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thine inheritance' (Psa. 2:8). . . Paul refers to both the earth and the saints as the purchased possession of Christ (Eph. 1:14) . . . Christ will never regret the purchase of this field, nor will he be disappointed in the treasure it contains" (*The Parables and Prophecies of Christ Explained*, pp. 100-103).

In his explanation of the Pearl of Great Price parable Graves wrote: "We see in this the matchless love and compassion of Christ, so loving us as to be willing to pay such an **INFINITE PRICE** for us" (Ibid. p.105).

Again, Dr. Graves wrote: "All the punishment due our sins (and it was infinite) was laid on the sufferer of Calvary; and he bore it for us as our substitute: and though it bore him down for a season under the shades of death, yet he finished it, and rose again. The finite suffering of a finite person could never, in eternal ages, make an infinite sacrifice, which the violated law demanded; and therefore it would be of endless duration. The Person who suffered must have been infinite since he **SUFFERED INFINITELY**" (*Seven Dispensations*, pp. 92-93).

Surely, none who are familiar with J. R. Grave's writings will question his being a teacher of sovereign grace! Yet, he held to the doctrine that the atonement was of **INFINITE VALUE** because of the **INFINITE DIGNITY** and **WORTH** of the Sufferer of Calvary. He wrote again: "The law required infinite suffering: Christ poured out his own divine soul unto death, and paid the demand (of infinite suffering, RWC) by the travailing anguish of his own soul. Never before was such a redemption price paid" (Ibid. p. 112). Dr. Graves repeatedly uses the terms of "infinite penalty," "infinite sacrifice," and "infinite suffering" as he describes the atonement of Christ.

This same idea is advanced by the noted theologian, Charles Hodge: "On the great day of atonement the scape-goat bore the sins of the people, whether they were more or less numerous.

It had no reference at all to the number of persons for whom atonement was to be made. So Christ bore the sins of his people; whether they were to be a few hundreds, or countless millions, or the whole human family, makes no difference as to the nature of his work, or as to the value of his satisfaction. What was absolutely necessary for one, was **abundantly sufficient** for all" (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, P. 555). Again Hodge wrote: "The righteousness of Christ being of infinite value or merit, and being in its nature precisely what all we need, may be offered to all men" (Ibid.).

The late Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Seminary stated: "The question with which we are concerned at this point is not (a) whether the satisfaction rendered by Christ was in itself sufficient for all men, since this is admitted by all . . . the question does relate to the design of the atonement" (Systematic Theology, pp. 393-394). Berkhof proceeds to show that the design of the atonement was the salvation of the elect but he, as the others I have quoted, completely rejected the Anselmic theory of the atonement that is also called the Commercial Theory.

Space does not permit my quoting others but I would just give a few brief excerpts from the pen of A. W. Pink. He said of Christ: "He was required to present unto God a satisfaction possessing infinite merits, which procured infinite blessings for his people" (The Atonement, P. 54).

If any doubt the infinite worth and value of the blessings procured by Christ for his elect, consider what Paul says on the matter. **Ephesians 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.** It is will take the eternal ages for God to reveal the exceeding riches of the grace he has shown to us through Jesus Christ. Surely they are infinite. For them to be infinite, an atonement of infinite worth would have been required to purchase them for us.

Pink further declared that the Divine nature of Christ "rendered" his atonement "infinitely valuable" (Ibid. p. 55). Again he writes: "It is

because Christ was who He was which gave an infinite value to what he did" (Ibid.).

Pink also quotes with approval Dr. Symington who writes: "From the perfection of His atonement arising out of the circumstances specified above, does it proceed that he makes intercession for us within the veil of the upper sanctuary, that he dispenses with munificent hand the gifts of his purchase and causes the prey of a great spoil to be divided. And pardon and peace redemption and holiness, eternal glory and bliss are, among the rich fruits of the royal and triumphal conquest he achieved, when by His INFINITELY meritorious death, He spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly. With the most entire confidence, then may the needy sinner, smitten with the deepest sense of conscious unworthiness, rely for salvation on this ALL-SUFFICIENT ATONEMENT" (Ibid.).

While every one of the writers whom I have quoted believed in a limited atonement none of them denied the infinite value of that atonement; rather, all affirmed it. These men did not believe in a universal atonement; neither does this writer! In our efforts to defend the limited atonement, it is not necessary to limit the value of the atonement. The atonement is definitely limited according to divine purpose. That is Scriptural. **"He shall save HIS PEOPLE from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).** God gave his Son **"power over all flesh"** with a particular and limited purpose; i.e., **"that he should give eternal life to AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM" (Jn. 17:2).**

COULD CHRIST HAVE SUFFERED MORE AT MAN'S HANDS?

DESPISED AND REJECTED

From the manger to the grave our blessed Saviour endured the **"contradiction of sinners against himself" (Heb. 12:3).** He was **"despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:2-4).** He **"came unto his own and his own received him not" (Jn. 1:11).** When given a choice they chose Barabas over Jesus (Matt 27:20-26).

HATED

The hatred that the natural man has for God was revealed against God's Son. When he healed a man with a withered hand **"they were filled with madness"** and conspired to murder him (Lu. 6:11). The world hated him because of his unrelenting testimony **"that the works thereof are evil" (Jn. 7:7).** He said to his disciples: **"If the world hate you, ye know at it hated me before it hated you" (Jn. 15:18)** There was no legitimate reason for man's hatred of one who **"went about doing good"** but Jesus declared: **"They hated me without a cause" (Jn. 15:25).** The **"carnal mind is enmity against God"** and that enmity was certainly felt by our blessed Lord.

SLANDERED

Hating Christ led men to slander him if they could. Those who accused John the Baptist of being demon possessed accused Christ in these terms: **"Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. 11:19).** They declared that he cast out demons **"by Beelzebub the prince of devils" (Matt. 12:24).** Though they could find none who could name a sin that he had actually committed, they still accused him of being a sinner (Jn. 9:16). In fact, they said: **"We know that this man is a sinner" (Jn. 9:24).** One of the most painful things one can experience is a slanderous lie. It is no wonder that one who bore false witness against his neighbor was to be executed under the law of Moses. This, however, did not stop the slander against our sinless Saviour.

His discourse on the good shepherd caused many to slanderously declare: **"He hath a devil, and is mad" (Jn. 10:20).** When asked why they took up stones to stone Christ, they falsely charged him with being blasphemous (Jn. 10:33).

This slander amounted to much more than idle gossip. At times vituperative and scurrilous malignities spewed from their mouths like vomit from the mouth of a person with a concussion of the brain. **"And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him" (Lu. 23:10).**

MOCKED

While in his deepest sorrow and suffering Jesus was mocked, taunted, and ridiculed by men. They robed him, crowned him with thorns, put a reed in his hands for a sceptre, bowed their knees and **“mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:29)**. As he taught on faithfulness and pointed out that one cannot serve two masters, the covetous Pharisees **“derided him” (Lu. 16:14)**.

Herod and his men of war, after trying to get him to perform some miracle, **“mocked him and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe”** before sending him back to Pilate. While our Saviour was suspended on the cross and was enduring the suffering and shame due us, **“the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God, and the soldiers also mocked him” (Lu. 23:35-36)**.

PERSECUTED

When Jesus healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda he performed that miracle on the Sabbath. The Jews, seeing the healed man carrying his bed, warned him that what he did was unlawful since it was the Sabbath. When they found out that Jesus had healed him they began to **“persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him”** for healing this man on the Sabbath (Jn. 5:16). When Jesus told them that this was doing his Father's work **“they sought the more to kill him” (Jn. 5:18)**. These people hounded him like a criminal. They harassed him constantly as he carried on his ministry. They were like a plague hounding his heals.

CONSPIRACIES

Jesus was the victim of repeated conspiracies. A number of these plots are mentioned in Scripture. The Pharisees **“held a council against him, how they might destroy him” (Matt. 12:14)**. **“The priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death” (Matt. 27:1)**. The

elders, chief priests and the scribes sought to incriminate him in some way. **Luke 22:66-67** **And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, 67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe.**

These religious leaders of Israel were set in their desire for the death of Christ **“and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus” (Lu. 6:11)**.

How our Saviour must have suffered as these efforts were constantly being renewed against him. Paul once declared: **“I die daily.”** This was certainly true in a sense of our Saviour. Hardly a day passed that someone did not desire his death and conspire with others to bring it to pass.

BETRAYED BY A FRIEND

Well did David write in prophetic Psalm: **“It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have born it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company” (Psa. 55:12-14)**. This is Christ speaking through the prophetic pen of David. The Man, Christ Jesus, speaks of one of his close acquaintances and companions in life as the betrayer. Matthew writes: **“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him” (Matt. 26:14-16)**.

While Christ knew what Judas would do, it still caused him to lament the atrocious and outrageous crime. That a friend, and Jesus did call him a friend, could betray the sinless Son of God can only be understood by those who know the depths of the depravity that lurks in the heart of every son of Adam.

“And forthwith he came to Jesus, and

said, *Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?*" (Matt. 26:49-50). Luke records it: *"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"* (Lu. 22:48).

It is hard to imagine, it is impossible to imagine, the sorrow that Jesus knew as a human being at this moment. From feigned faith and pretended discipleship one who has been daily in his presence turns to a murderous betrayal. *"It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have born it"* (Psa. 55:12). One has commented: "It is remarkable that the Lord, who endured the other unspeakable sorrows and agonies of his passion in perfect and marvelous silence, allowed his grief at this one alone to escape him" (*Treasurey of David*, Vol. III, p. 29). Spurgeon wrote: "Reproaches from those who have been intimate with us, and trusted by us, cut us to the quick" (Ibid. p.19). Again, says Spurgeon: "Our Lord had to endure AT ITS WORST the deceit and faithlessness of a favoured disciple . . . It was fiendish treason for such a one to prove false-hearted. There was no excuse for such villainy" (Ibid.). An avowed enemy could have done this same thing to Christ and it would not have been nearly as grievous as when one so close did it.

FORSAKEN BY HIS DISCIPLES

"And they all forsook him and fled" (Mk. 14:50). Jesus had warned his disciples of this. *"All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad . . . Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said ALL the disciples"* (Matt. 26:31-35). Yet they ALL forsook him and fled. Left alone to face the ordeal ahead. Left alone to endure the contradiction of sinners. Left alone in the hands of the persecutors without even one disciple to receive some of the punishment that would be handed out by this bloodthirsty mob.

DENIED BY PETER

"Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Matt. 26:34). Yes, Peter boldly declared that he would die with the Saviour before he would deny him. But here comes a damsel to the fire outside the palace and she says to Peter: *"Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all saying, I know not what thou sayest"* (Matt. 26:69-70). On the porch another lady sees him and says to those around: *"This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man"* (Matt. 26:71-72). Bold Peter has lost his bravado. Finally another said to Peter: *"Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew"* (Matt. 26:73, 74).

He was yet another source of grief for the Son of man. What must have been in his eyes as he *"looked upon Peter"* after his third denial (Lu. 22:61). It was not enough that an avowed enemy deny knowing Christ: now one of his own elect denies even knowing him. Despised by the world, betrayed by a friend, and now denied by one of his elect. How our Saviour suffered even at the hands of his beloved!

BRUTALIZED BY BULLS

"Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round about. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion" (Psa. 22:12-13). Jesus was not merely slapped around a little bit. The scribes, Pharisees, priests, and elders bellow around him like a herd of angry bulls. The rulers of Israel and the soldiers of Rome, like Bulls fattened and ferocious from the pastures of Bashan, full of fury and strong with hate, lunged to and fro in their desire to mutilate the Messiah. With their cruel tortures they would seek to stamp out his life. Our Lord Jesus, naked, unarmed, and unresisting was as if he had been cast into a stampede to be trampled

upon by a raging herd of bulls.

They gaped upon him as if to literally devour him with their mouths. As ravaging beasts they would seize him and tear him to shreds. They lacerated his back and pulverized the flesh upon it with the Roman scourge (Matt. 27:26). They stripped him naked and then threw a scarlet robe on his shoulders. They platted a crown of thorns and crushed it down upon his head (Matt. 27:27-28) as they mocked him by bowing before him in feigned worship. They spit all over him, one of the deepest insults and highest humiliations you could put upon anyone (Matt. 27:30). Taking the reed that they had placed in his hand as a scepter they beat him upon the head with bullish force (p. 30). They slapped his face with open palms and brute force and repeatedly spit upon him (Matt. 26:67-68; 27:30). They pulled his beard off his beaten and bruised face by plucking it out by its roots (Isa. 50:6). Their beatings were so ruthless and brutal that he did not even look like a human being any more. ***“As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isa. 52:14).*** It is hard to imagine that this living, breathing hunk of bruised and pulverized, thorn-crowned and spit-coated flesh is really a human being. In fact, however, he is the sinless Son of God in the hands of God-hating sinners.

CRUCIFIED ON A CROSS

Will our blessed Lord suffer more at the hands of these bulls of Bashan? Yes! Now they lead him like a condemned animal to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7; Lu. 22:52). Arriving at Calvary they strip him naked again, divide up his garments and cast lots for his robe. Laying him upon that cross they spike him to it by driving large nails through his hands and his feet. What excruciating agony must have racked his body as that Roman soldier drove those nails into his hands and feet and then into the wood of the cross. Could a more exquisitely painful engine of torture have been found for our Saviour?

Now his torturers and tormenters lift that cross up and let it drop into its hole. It hits bottom with such force that every jointed bone

in his body is jerked from its socket. Listen to the Saviour's description of this part of his suffering: ***“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. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture? (Psa. 22:14-18).***

Come with me to Calvary, Dear Reader. Let us cast our mental tents upon that scene of suffering. Imagine, if you can, the brutalized, pulverized, spit-and-phlegm-coated, bloody and bleeding body of our Saviour suspended by cruel nails on a cross. His bones are out of joint: his tongue is swollen from thirst; his head is crowned with thorns, his body is racked by excruciating pain. Body and soul he has become a mass of misery, the full essence of agony. He doesn't even look like a human being, does he?

I ask you now, as that scene is upon your mental visions, “Could man have done more to our Saviour?” What else could have been done by man to increase the value of our Lord's blessed sacrifice? Let the disciples of Anselm tell us what more man could have done to Christ to increase the value, worth, merit, and dignity of the death of our blessed Saviour.

COULD CHRIST HAVE SUFFERED MORE AT THE HANDS OF GOD?

There possibly might be some who question the validity of this question that is now before us. I have the writing of one Missionary Baptist who does not believe, evidently, that God was involved in the sufferings of Christ. In fact, he declared: “His (God's) greatest disappointment came with the sending of His Son . . . They shattered God's expectations by crucifying His Son! (Dr. Lee R. Tillman, Adult BTC Quarterly, Baptist Sunday School Committee of the ABA, Spring Quarter, 1974, p. 16).

The Bible declares otherwise! When they crucified the Saviour they ***“were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done”*** (Acts 4:27-28).

GOD SET HIM FORTH AS A RANSOM AND PROPITIATION

“This is my blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). “The Son of Man came . . . to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). “Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood” (Rom. 3:24-25).

God's holy law must be satisfied. Sovereign justice must be propitiated. Holiness required that law and justice be satisfied. God would satisfy himself by making the soul of Christ an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10). Could a fuller, better satisfaction have been rendered than was rendered by Christ?

GOD DELIVERED HIM UP

When Christ was delivered to be crucified and slain it was God who delivered him. He came as ***“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”*** (Rev. 13:8). He was ***“delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge (foreordination) of God”*** (Acts 2:2). God ***“delivered him for our offences”*** (Rom. 4:25). God ***“spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all”*** (Rom. 8:32). Surely, God not sparing his Son indicates he held nothing back from his suffering. Therefore, if Christ was capable of rendering an atonement of infinite worth and value, he did so when God did not spare him.

GOD MADE HIM A CURSE

“Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). Only God could impute the curse that was due us to his Son. When Christ was made a curse for us it was God who made him so.

Since becoming that curse required that he be hung ***“on a tree”*** then God must have hung him on that tree. Yes, he used human instrumentality in doing so, but he did it.

GOD WOUNDED HIM

It was God who wounded Christ for our transgressions and bruised him for our iniquities. Every bruise that a soldier, out of the wickedness of his own heart, made upon the Saviour was according to Divine purpose and pleasure. ***“It pleased the Lord to bruise him”*** (Isa. 53:10). While man was applying those wounds and bruises the hand of God was also administering bruises.

GOD LAID OUR INIQUITIES ON HIM

Every sin of God's people was laid upon Christ when he went to the cross. Who laid these iniquities on Christ? Who caused him to become sin for us? None other than the Sovereign of heaven! ***“The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”*** (Isa. 53:6).

GOD FORSOOK HIM

When the disciples forsook Christ he did not open his mouth though it doubtless added to his suffering as a man. When man had reached almost the climax of the suffering he administered, God clothed that scene in darkness as he poured out his wrath upon his Son. For three hours there was darkness and Jesus was immersed in suffering at the hands of God. Finally, at the ninth hour Christ cried out: ***“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*** (Mk. 15:34).

The infinite, ultimate price had been paid. The work was finished and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Could Christ have suffered more at the hands of God than he did? Who knows what inner suffering immersed Christ during those three hours of darkness? It climaxed with an agonized cry of being forsaken by the Father. Suffering as he did at the hands of men ***“he openeth not his mouth.”*** Suffering at the hands of God he cries in tortured agony: ***“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken***

me?"

What more could God have done to make the sufferings of Christ have more value or merit? An infinite Person suffering at the hands of an infinite God must have paid a price of infinite value and merit!

COULD CHRIST HIMSELF HAVE DONE MORE TO INCREASE THE MERITS OF HIS DEATH?

Perhaps, if the sufferings of Christ were not of infinite value and merit the reason lay with him, not God or his persecutors. Perhaps he could have, done better.

Could he have offered blood that was more pure and precious than he did? ***"Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:18-19).***

The book of Hebrews is the book of BETTER THINGS. One of the things it does is to exalt the preciousness and merit of the blood of Christ that was infinitely superior to the blood of bulls and goats. ***"By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12). "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).*** Our "redemption" is ***"in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:24-25).***

We were sinners to an extent that is incomprehensible to man. ***"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it" (Jer. 17:9).*** To redeem us from our incomprehensible and infinite sinfulness our infinite God set forth a Person, His only begotten Son, of infinite worth and merit as our propitiation and Redeemer. Was the blood of this infinite Person of less than infinite value and merit? Could his blood have been better blood? Could his precious blood have been even more precious? Will the disciples of Anselm please tell us how the blood of Christ could have been improved in preciousness, power, and merit?

COULD CHRIST HAVE BEEN MORE PURE?

Another question comes to mind when we consider the worth and merit of the blood of Christ. "Could Christ have been of purer character when he made the atonement?" He was untouched with the stain of original sin. He was spotless as to active transgressions. ***"He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:9).*** He ***"knew no sin" (II Cor. 5:21).*** He ***"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).*** He is ***"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).*** He is ***"without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:19).*** He ***"did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:22).***

If his sacrifice, his suffering, his blood, and his atonement were of less than infinite merit and value, perhaps a person of more noble character of higher holiness could have been found. A search of heaven, of earth, and of the world under the earth could not turn up a person so worthy as our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:2-4). Perish the thought that a better, more worthy sacrifice could have been made than that which Christ made.

COULD CHRIST HAVE SUFFERED LONGER?

Had God purposed to save more sinners out of the world could Christ have suffered longer. He was ***"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).*** He suffered the equivalent of an eternal, everlasting hell. The wrath of God was poured out upon him.

Men so marred him that he did not even look like a human being. What more could he have suffered to elevate the value and merit of his sacrifice? Would a longer period on the cross have made his sacrifice more sufficient and more value? If his sacrifice was not of infinite value, what did this infinite Jesus hold back that rendered his sacrifice less than infinite?

COULD HE HAVE HAD A BETTER BODY IN WHICH TO BARE OUR SINS?

He ***“bare our sins in his OWN BODY on the tree” (I Pet. 2:24)***. This body of Jesus, his very own body, was prepared for him by none other than the infinite Father in heaven. ***“Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. . .by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:5, 10)***.

Dear Reader, consider this: The Infinite Father prepared a body for the Infinite Son and in that body indwelt by the Infinite Holy Spirit the Infinite Son bears our sins, suffering in body, mind, and spirit. The very contemplation of that suffering caused him to sweat in Gethsemane ***“and his sweat was as it were GREAT DROPS OF BLOOD falling down to the ground” (Lu. 22:44)***. Such agony could have been caused by nothing less than a contemplation of infinite, incomprehensible (to man) suffering.

Could a better body have been prepared for him?

COULD HE HAVE SOLD MORE TO PURCHASE HIS ELECT TREASURE

In two parables in Matthew 13:44-46 Jesus is portrayed as a man who found a treasure in a field and a pearl of great price. In the parable of the hidden treasure the man, for the joy of the treasure, went and sold ***ALL*** that he hath in order to secure the treasure. In the second parable the merchantman ***“went and sold ALL that he had”*** to purchase that one pearl. Jesus is the man who found the treasure; the treasure is the elect; the price that Jesus paid for his elect is ***“ALL THAT HE HAD”*** to sell. Jesus is the merchant man who finds the pearl of great price; the marvelous pearl is the elect; the price that Jesus paid for the elect is ***“ALL THAT HE HAD.”***

Could Christ have paid a price of infinite value if he did not? Those who deny the infinite value of the death of Christ must also deny his ability to make a sacrifice of infinite value. He sold ***“ALL THAT HE HAD”*** and if ***“all that he had”*** was less than infinite in value then there was no way he would have been able to pay a

price of infinite value.

Remember the words of Paul: ***“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Cor. 8:9)***. Again Paul wrote of Christ Jesus: ***“Who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8)***.

Space would not permit, even if we could do it, to tell of the riches of Christ. Being the fulness of the Godhead bodily” he is possessor of all the infinite perfections of the Eternal God. He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. He is infinitely rich being absolutely and- infinitely holy, immutable, omnipotent, eternal, etc. Every thing that was made in the heavens, the earth, the sea and under the earth were made by and for him. His empire is universal. The streets of his capitol city are paved with transparent gold and its gates are pearl. The invisible power and empires, the stars and planets are part of his portfolio of riches. The silver and gold, the cattle upon a thousand hills, and the heathen all belong to him.

Yet, My Dear Reader, this infinitely rich One voluntarily became poor. His poverty was to such an abject and extreme degree that our Saviour, on one occasion said: ***“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Lu. 9:58)***. Such a price can only be classified as infinite, infinite in value, infinite in merit. No angel was able to pay such a price! No man could pay the price. Only a person of the Godhead was capable of descending from such infinite riches to such abject poverty. Oh, the marvelous and infinite grace of Christ that caused him to pay such a price! From eternal glory he condescended to humble servitude! It is simply more that this editor's pen can put into words. I am overwhelmed with the immensity of this sacrifice made by the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

OTHER QUESTIONS

There are other questions that might be raised along this line.

Could Christ have been more just when dying for the unjust and thus his atonement would have been increased in value (I Pet. 3:18)?

Could Christ have become more of a curse and have improved the merit of his sacrifice (Gal. 3:13)?

Could Christ have been a more valuable ransom, or could a ransom of more value have been found if God had willed to save another million (Matt. 20:28)?

If Christ could not have been a better ransom than he was, was God limited in his election by a limited value to the ransom Christ would be able to make?

Could a person of higher rank have been found who would have been able to make a more valuable sacrifice (Phil. 2:5-9)?

Could the propitiatory work of Christ have been made more propitiating to God by something else Christ could have done, or man could have done to him, or the Father could have done to him? Most who hold the doctrines of grace hold the position that the limit in the atoning work of Christ is a limit in purpose and not a limit in value. Christ **"sold all that he had"** to purchase his hidden treasure and his priceless pearl, his elect Matt. 13:44-46). He went from infinite riches to abject poverty that we through his poverty might be rich (II Cor. 8:9). Though equal with God he became a servant obedient to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). That was an infinite condescension!

All the above facts suggest a sacrifice of infinite value, merit, and worth. To suggest any limit here is an insulting depreciation and derogation against the precious blood of Christ. God forbid that any finite creature should detract from the merit and value of our Saviour's blessed sacrifice. This editor agrees with Spurgeon when he says that such a detraction from the merits of the atonement is "near akin to blasphemy!"

UNLIMITED POWER WITH A LIMITED PURPOSE

When Christ came into this world he came with unlimited power. God had given him power over all flesh. That power had a purpose with a Divine limitation. **"Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM" (Jn. 17:2).**

Must we limit the power of Christ since the purpose of that power is limited? Certainly not! A limited purpose does not require a limitation in the power.

Does Christ have the power to quicken all men? He has power over all flesh and he quickens all whom he wills to quicken (Jn. 5:21). Must you limit his power if you limit his purpose? Absolutely not!

When Jesus came to the pool of Bethesda there was **"a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water" (Jn. 5:3).** May I be so bold as to declare that my Lord had the power to heal every person there of whatever disease or condition that afflicted them. His power over all flesh would have enabled him to heal every one of them.

Yet, as far as is revealed in Scripture the Lord healed only one solitary impotent man. In a display of absolute and sovereign purpose, he healed one, and only one, man. The limit was in purpose, not in power.

ATONEMENT LIMITED BY PURPOSE

When Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to assure him that Mary had not been unfaithful and that **"that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:20).** He then instructed Joseph concerning the naming of the Son of God. He said: **"Thou shalt call his name JESUS for he SHALL SAVE his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).** The purpose of Christ's atonement and saving work is here limited in purpose to HIS PEOPLE.

He laid down his life for his sheep (Jn. 10:15-18). God gave these sheep to Christ and he "must bring" them into the fold and they will never perish or be plucked out of his hand.

Christ did not lay hold of angels in the covenant of redemption. He did not lay hold of

the seed of Adam. Rather, **“he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16)**. These are the ones, who **“shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14)**. These are the children whom the Father had given to him (Heb. 2:13).

This limitation of purpose is seen in the mediatorial prayer of Jesus. He limits that prayer to **“them which thou hast given me” (Jn. 17:9)**. He gave eternal life to those whom the Father had given him (Jn. 17:2). He manifested the Father's name to those whom the Father had given him out of the world (Jn. 17:6). Jesus prayed for the Father to keep those whom the Father had given him (Jn. 17:12-15). Jesus prayed that those whom the Father had given him would be with him in glory (Jn. 17:24).

Surely none will say that the limitation of Christ's prayer was one of ability or worthiness as a mediator. The limitation was one of purpose, not power. The mediatorial work of Christ was limited to those whom the Father had given to him in the **“eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” before the

foundation of the world (Eph. 3:11; II Tim. 1:9).

“Every purpose of the Lord will be performed” (Jer. 51:29) and the death of Christ was according to the **“determinate counsel and foreordination of God” (Acts 2:22-23)**. He came to find his **“lost sheep”** but all are not sheep; lost or saved (Matt. 15:24; Jn. 10:26). He laid down his life **“for the sheep (Jn. 10:15)**. He came to **“save his people from their sins”** as God purposed before the world for our glory (Matt. 1:21; I Cor. 2:7). He accomplished his purposed work (Jn. 17:1-5).

CONCLUSION

Christ did not make a universal atonement. The infinite intrinsic value and merit of his precious blood cannot be extolled too highly.

Our Saviour **“sold all that he had”** to save his people from their sins (Matt. 13:44-46). From infinite riches he went to abject poverty that we might be rich heirs of God and joint-heirs with him (II Cor. 8:9). From a co-eternal co-equal position with the Father he condescended to a position of dying servitude (Phil. 2:5-8).

God limited the purpose of the sacrifice of Christ without depreciating or detracting from the infinite worth and value of that sacrifice. Those who limit the worth and value of the death of Christ reduce it to a finite work. They make its value finite. They circumscribe its merits.

But, what measure can be put on the precious blood of Christ? What scale has a balance that can weigh the sufferings of the Saviour? Who can bring it to the line and the plummet? If its value and worth is limited and finite there must be a way to measure it? Will Anselm and Simmons rise up from the grave and inform us as to how we are to measure the value and worth of the sufferings of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Let me close with the words of C. H. Spurgeon: “I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus. If my theology needs such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not, allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore? (*Autobiography*, Vol. 1, p. 174.

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