

## THE SACRIFICE

by: Scott Stanley

## THE BIG WHY?

The truth of Christ's death at Calvary has raised the question of why. Why, in God's plan of salvation, must Christ have been sacrificed? The apostle Paul warns in 1Corinthians 1:17, that if the cross is not properly understood it will be made of none effect to us:

1 Corinthians 1:17

*17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (KJV)*

This means there must be a proper understanding of Calvary's cross. If we interpret Christ's death in the light of man's wisdom then the calculated effect of the cross will not be, but if accurately understood we will move into that place of thinking prepared of God from the foundation of the world. I believe it is fair to say our heavenly Father has planned from eternity to perfect a people with His truth. If one is not moving in the way of perfection in Christ then he is not honoring the stirrings of the Saviour.

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## THE FIX

Forgiveness is an interesting concept. Recently, in my studies, I began to see the meaning of difference between forgiveness and deliverance, understanding how one effects the other. The story of how our Father dealt with man's first transgression, found in Genesis 3, makes very evident the strategy as set forth by divinity. Our Father's wisdom and ultimate goal for us all is here defined. Without getting into the fall itself, I would like to key on the fix. Volumes could be written concerning this one verse of scripture:

Genesis 3:21

*21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

When we understand Adam's sin in turning from the Lord to follow another voice, that of his earthly wife, we know why he and Eve discerned that they were naked. The

awareness of the outward was manifesting there inward thought. Because of their inward nakedness the outward was made manifest to them. Inward nakedness could be defined as following your own ideas, thus making manifest your "self". When we listen to Christ, performing His perfect will, we manifest the Saviour, having clothed our thoughts with His. Until Adam sinned this is how he lived. God gave him the only thoughts he had. His every action was in accordance with his creator. One could say that Adam and Eve were covered in light, most precious, and perfect. Therefore, the awareness of their physical nakedness was symbolic of the real problem, self exaltation.

God solved the problem by covering them with coats of skin. We can be sure He covered them inwardly too, with His understanding of the death of the lamb, because in Genesis 4:4 we see Abel bringing an offering of "the firstborn of his flock and the fat thereof". This response of Abel's is a convincing argument that God had explained to Adam and Eve the giving of His firstborn, imparting to them the inward truth of the outward action. Without the explanation accompanying the animal's death the whole exercise would have been one of futility. Our Father "covered" them with the Truth (Christ) of His redemption, thus saving them from themselves.

The point is, the animal died in order to clothe them, not to appease an angry God. We know from Revelation 13:8 the lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. Before creating humanity our Father had conceived the plan to correct our disobedience. He did not need to destroy a life before His willingness to forgive. In slaying the lamb and making the coverings God delivered Adam and Eve from their nakedness.

Now for forgiveness. "Forgive" in the New Testament is numbered [G864] in Strong's and actually means, "to leave". It is the word used when describing the disciples "leaving" their nets, the destruction of the temple and not one stone being "left" upon another, and in 1 Corinthians 7:11 as "put away" concerning marriage. In order for me to "forgive" another the transgression must be "left", or "put away", out of my mind. If it isn't then I haven't forgiven.

In order for God to put out of His mind the nakedness of Adam and Eve He had to cover them up, or clothe them. Forgiveness, without the death of the animal, would be impossible because through its death the covering was created that their nakedness called for. If Adam had told God he didn't want to wear the coat of skin God would not have been able to keep from seeing his nakedness, hence, Adam would not have been forgiven, or out of mind, as the word goes. The animal's death was to allow God to correct their error.

Deliverance and forgiveness go hand in hand. One cannot have forgiveness without the covering our heavenly Father provides through the faith of Christ. It is Christ's thoughts (the animal skin) that must cover us or we will be found walking after the imagination of our own heart (naked). The Saviour became a man (Hebrews 2:14), perfected obedience to God (Hebrews 5:8-9), died slaying the "old man", or sin nature (Romans 6:6), and was raised again to deliver the finished product to humanity (Acts

3:26 ). By receiving His thoughts I am clothed with the lamb that was slain. When the Father sees my actions He sees the actions of His only begotten son because I am abiding and cleaving to my Saviour. If forgiveness is all we see in the cross we are missing the point of salvation. Jesus did not die in order for God to forgive us, but for Him to deliver us from our selves. In so doing we are "put out of sight" in the mind of God, and the Son is made manifest in us. Forgiveness is a product of accepting God's deliverance from self.

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## THE LAW

In looking at the law the question must be asked, "Did God allow the lamb to be slain because of the demands of the law, or does the law merely state what God was going to do through the lamb"? Which came first, God's plan or the law? So often, I have been left with the impression that it is the law that dictated to our heavenly Father what had to be done in order to save us. I'm sure you've heard it too, "Because the law states if you sin you must die, therefore God sent His Son to die to fulfill the demands of the law". I would like to suggest something else to you, the plan of salvation does not reflect the law, but the law reflects and teaches us the plan. Man does not die because of the demands of the law. The law simply states what is fact. If this is not understood we will continue on in our confusion, seeing our Father as the pagans see and worship their gods. God did not demand a human sacrifice to be appeased, but to deliver humanity from the fallen mind. The law came after the fact, as a teaching tool, to help us understand our way to salvation. Our salvation is not based on the law, but the law is based on the principles of God's plan for our salvation.

The idea of our Saviour standing between an angry God and us is conveyed in the way 1John 2:1 has been translated, and thus, interpreted:

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

The word "advocate", [G3875] in Strong's, is the very same word used in John 14:16 translated "Comforter". See the problem? "Advocate" paints a different mental picture than "Comforter". To say I need an advocate with the Father implies He is unwilling to forgive my transgression without the intervention of another. The idea of this conflict is the very thing that drove me to the Greek Interlinear where I discovered a very important mistranslation: The word translated "with" in 1 John 2:1 is [G4314] in Strong's and is the Greek word "pros". This preposition means "toward" or "unto".

In other words, John is telling us, when we sin we have a comforter who leads us back to the Father. Christ is not protecting us from our heavenly Father, but is the instrument used to bring us to Him. This was the Father's plan from the very beginning.

He is not waiting, expecting to punish if He doesn't see the blood of Christ. Christ's blood is for us. It is to be sprinkled in the sanctuary of our minds, by our high priest, on the day of atonement. It is the meaning of the blood that will bring us deeper understanding of Calvary allowing us to experience the death of the old man. Our Father, in heaven, doesn't need to see blood before He is willing to forgive us. That is a picture of a pagan god.

It is stated in John 16:13:

*13 Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (KJV)*

Christ, our Comforter, still abides in the mind of God. He only speaks what He hears to this very day. He will never speak of Himself, or of His own accord. He continues to abide bringing the mind of His Father to the Church. If this is true then how could He be an advocate protecting us from the very one He speaks for? He only speaks what He is told by the Father.

In the past different denominational groups gave me a picture of Him standing before His Father pleading His blood in order to protect the sinner. God would see the blood, understand the demands of the law were met, and then be willing to forgive. Nothing could be further from the Truth.

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## AN ACT OF MERCY

The English word "propitiation" is used three times in the New Testament, twice in 1John (2:2 and 4:10 ), and once in Romans 3:25 . In every instance it is referring to Christ, the Son of God. I would like to show the root meaning of the Greek word as it flows from its first use, in Matthew 16:22 (translated: Be it far) unto the three scriptures mentioned above. I am sure it is from the New Testament, and the use of this word, the KJV derived the word "mercy seat". Tracing the Greek Word Merciful.

We will begin with the Greek word *hileros*, Strong's number [G2436] . It is found twice in the New Testament and is highlighted for you below.

Matthew 16:22

*22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord:*

*this shall not be unto thee. (KJV)*

In the margin of your bible you should be able to read Pity thyself or have mercy on thyself. The same Greek word is used again in Hebrews 8:12 and is actually translated merciful this time.

Hebrews 8:12

*12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. (KJV)*

From Matthew 16:22 & Hebrews 8:12 I would like to show you different variations of how the word is used leading up to propitiation in 1John 2:2.

[G2431] – hilaros stems from [G2436] above and is found one time in scripture being translated as cheerful:

2 Corinthians 9:7

*7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. (KJV)*

Strong's number [G2433] – ilaskomai also stems from [G2436] and is found twice in the bible, Luke 18:13 and Hebrews 2:17. (KJV)

Luke 18:13

*13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (KJV)*

Hebrews 2:17

*17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. (KJV)*

Stemming from this word is [G2435] – ilasterion. It is found twice in scripture at Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5. In Romans 3:25 it is translated propitiation, but notice how the same word is translated in Hebrews:

Hebrews 9:5

*5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. (KJV)*

There is yet one more Greek word to see before we reach the last use in 1 John 2: 24 and it is [G2432] – hilarotes used once in Romans 12:8:

*8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:8 (KJV)*

From the text previously cited it should be fairly simple to conclude the meaning of propitiation. In my denominational background I was taught "propitiation" meant, God's reason of forgiveness. I now understand it to mean, God's act of mercy.

The mercy seat, of course, points back to the sanctuary in the Old Testament. It was the lid, or cover, for the Ark of the Covenant. The Greek word propitiation, [G2435], is equivalent to the Hebrew word [H3727], first used in Exodus 25:17, translated "mercy seat". It is from the root of this Hebrew word we get the word "atonement", numbered [H3722] in the Strong's. The root word, [H3722], is a verb which literally means, "to cover". That is what atonement actually means. The act of covering is to make atonement, and the covering itself is the mercy seat. (Using the different English words has made this a confusing subject to say the least.)

In my past denominational background I was taught "propitiation" meant, "God's reason of forgiveness". I now understand it to mean, "God's act of mercy".

The apostle Paul, in Romans 3:25 states that Christ was foreordained, by our Father, to be the mercy seat, or covering, for humanity. His thoughts are to cover our own, clothing us with robes of white, the garments of salvation. The mercy seat itself was made of pure gold, a symbol of faith (1Peter 1:7), with two messengers (angels) of beaten gold resting on the top. Because Christ is the mercy seat, we know the two messengers symbolize Him before and after His incarnation.

This helps us to understand the "why" of Christ's death. It was through His suffering His mind was brought to a completed perfection. Note the following verses:

Hebrews 2:10

*10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (KJV)*

Hebrews 5:8,9

*8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*

*9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (KJV)*

Here, it should be obvious, the Son of God reached a state of completed perfection after remaining obedient to His father, even unto death. This was done in order to create a perfected human mind, or Holy Spirit if you will, that could be given to man allowing him to be brought to perfection also. It also accomplished the death of the sin nature in Christ, as He was brought unto the dust of death (Psalm 22:15), that city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8), and being in that state of mind died, killing the old man in His death.

All of this is to show Christ's death was necessary for us to be perfected, not to appease an angry god. Again, the blood of Christ was spilled not because the law demanded it, but because our perfection necessitated it, and the Father's will is to bring His people to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

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### ONE MORE THOUGHT

The misguided understanding of Christ dying to meet the demands of the law has also led us into another error of belief concerning the atonement. Some have come to the conclusion of His sacrifice having to be a divine sacrifice. I have repeatedly been told only a divine sacrifice could meet the demands of the law, and as the law giver only Christ could have met that requirement. I am very much in agreement that only Christ, the Son of God, could have brought about what was accomplished at Calvary, but I agree for a very different reason.

As I have stated, Christ died to bring humanity back to the place from where they had fallen. His death is the element needed to render of none effect our sin nature, making us one with Him and our heavenly Father. It was necessary He become what we had fallen to, and that is sin. A divine sacrifice was not necessary to accomplish this, a sacrifice of the old man was. Only the Son of God, being in the closest possible relationship with His Father, could have brought the human mind to a state of completed perfection. He remained in God's perfect will even though He became sin itself. He remained faithful to God to the point of death, even the death of the cross. This is not to say Christ was not divine, He was, is, and will always be, but the necessary requirement He had to fulfill was that of receiving the sin nature in order to put it to death.

*Philippians 2:5-8 - 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

In heaven, as Michael, He gave up the likeness of God outwardly, on the cross He gave it up inwardly, all to the glory of our Father in heaven. It was the Father's plan from the very beginning.

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