

CHRIST'S  
DEATH  
and  
THE  
DIVINE  
WILL

*An Exposition of  
Galatians 1:4-5*

*"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

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“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Galatians 1:4-5).

Needless to say, Paul the apostle is speaking herein of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, it is not very characteristic of Paul to append a long description to the Name of our Lord. What was supposed to be a greeting evolves beautifully into a doxology. The doxology comprises a statement of faith, which is indeed almost a compendium of the gospel message.

It is apparent why Paul twice inserts doctrinal averments (earlier in verse 1, he spoke of the Father, “Who raised Him from the dead) while introducing himself and sending salutation to the Galatians. He is eager to assert the simplicity of the gospel message. There were those who had stealthily introduced a poisonous corpus of teaching and thereby attempted to complicate the process of subscription to the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Paul’s refutation is that saving faith is that which will merely rely and rest upon the historical basis of Christ’s atoning death. The justification of a sinner is totally independent of his own works and his own character.

Christ’s crucifixion is wont to be seen by some quarters as the effectual prosecution of the conspiracy by His envious enemies, who used their craft and authority with deliberate intent to have Him killed. It was a successful scheme to put an end to the prosperous campaign of the Messiah. Now, in a sense, this view is not wrong. But from another perspective, the death of Christ is to be seen as the fulfilment of Scriptural prophecies. When approaching the season of His passion, Jesus had endeavoured, on numerous occasions, to emphasize this point. An emphatic strand of the gospel message is that Christ had died according to the Scriptures (meaning Old Testament predictions). It is this strand more than any other element that enhances the credibility and the authenticity of the gospel message. The passion and the death of Christ have been predicted in many passages of the Old Testament (like Isaiah 53; Psalm 22; Psalm 69 and Zechariah 12:10). The fact is that Christ’s death was scheduled in

the divine programme even before the foundation of this world has been laid.

Hence the purpose for which Christ came to this world was to die for the sins of sinners. He came to save the elect. It was appointed in the divine will that, at a point in time in the course of earthly history, Christ Jesus would be incarnated by means of a virgin birth. This was so, that in due time He may be put to death for the sins of those that believe in the purpose and the efficacy of His death. Christ humbly condescended in His incarnation and voluntarily submitted to the captivity by His enemies so as to be put to death. Being sure that His passion and His death were all in the will of God (as He did so in the incomparable anguish in Gethsemane), the Lord Jesus did not resist the will of God but yielded to it volitionally.

Peter, in his famous Pentecostal message, puts it like this: "Him (Christ Jesus), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). We have here the divine perspective and the secular perspective concerning the event of Christ's death linked together, though difficult to be reconciled in finite human minds. Wherefore, to appreciate fully the death of Christ, it must be seen from the stand-point of the fulfilment of God's redemptive plan for the world lost in sin.

Christ's death was vicarious and substitutionary. He had died on behalf of the elect. He was paying for the penalty of the sins of the elect. Christ Jesus, hence, is the anti-type and the fulfilment of the unblemished sacrificial offerings. He is what was symbolised by the burnt offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering. These offerings, we learn from the Old Testament Scriptures, were rendered to God to atone for the sins of the Jews. The representative death of Christ enabled God to justly impute Christ's righteousness upon believers. Having the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers, God, the Father, can legitimately afford to the justified eternal life and all its concomitant blessings. Hence this is what it means to be delivered from "this present evil world". The finished work of Calvary, namely the death of Christ, established the legal basis for this deliverance.

"This present evil world" essentially refers to the power of sin that prevails over all men without Christ. Physical birth for all men is an entrance into an ambit where sin

has sway and reign. Adam's transgression brought about the fall of all mankind. Every man in every generation is vicariously affected by the fall of Adam. Incipient in a foetus from the time of conception is the leaven of guilt and stain.

Hence, it can be said that men sin because they are sinners. The power of sin over man is evidenced by the fact that every man outside Christ is a slave to sin. His intellect, his affections and his volition are all governed by sin. Men without Christ are controlled, driven and steered inexorably by the whim and fancy of sin. They cannot do what they want. Every man is a hapless victim of sin. He is bullied, harassed and mauled by sin. Sin distorts, disfigures and profanes him. As sin had banished our primeval parents from paradise, it will sentence sinners into the burning furnace of hell for all eternity.

Now some people are said to be "very nice"; what this actually means is that they are "very nice" sinners lost for all eternity. Others are "refined and cultured"; what this means is that they are "refined and cultured" sinners lost for all eternity. Others are "religious"; they are "religious" sinners lost for all eternity. Still others profess flippantly with their mouths to be "Christians"; they are "Christian" sinners and they, too, are lost for all eternity!

That is what this present evil world does to men. It makes them all captives of sin, doomed for all eternity. Thereby they remain in the shadow of death. Death mocks at them, death looms ahead of them and death will soon overtake them. Death will usher in eternal death. Eternal death is the real sting and curse of physical death. And it is spiritual death that brings them to both physical and eternal death. But spiritual death thrives in their lives as long as they remain in the throes of sin. As the inspired apostle puts it elsewhere they are "dead in trespasses and sins". It is sin that atrophies man's spiritual senses and faculties. Consequently man is morally and ethically desecrated. Sin inclines a man to transgress the law of God without compunction. Sin makes every man a rebel before God. Sin is the root cause of God's alienation from and enmity with man.

It is sin that makes men liars and murderers. It is sin that causes men to pine and murmur in their hearts; it is sin that puffs men up in pride and conceit; it is sin that makes men callous and indifferent; it is sin that intoxicates men's minds and hearts with lusts and evil passions; it is

sin that mesmerizes men into blindness so that they are oblivious to its effects and consequences. Sin deceives and deludes men into further deception and delusion. Sin is the real villain behind broken and estranged relationships. Sin estranges God from man; sin causes havoc in the family; sin ruins marriages; sin devastates nations; sin provokes wars and conflicts between nation and nation. Sin is the scoundrel that is solely responsible for the carnage and scum of this world.

It is because of sin that men totter, languish and wallow in misery and frustration all through their lives in this world. Sin orchestrates the massive tides of woes and raises up the floods of acrimony. Alas, sin makes it a curse for men to be born into this world. Men are born into this world so that they will die and thereafter, consigned to hell for all eternity. This is an evil and forlorn world. It deflates the substance of every hope, it destroys the best of man's efforts to help himself and it turns every good endeavour to vanity. There is neither hope nor help for the soul of man in this world. Notwithstanding all its visible beauty and material blessings, this world is a prison, a slave house and a chamber of death. All men are born into this world to traverse through the tunnel of sin wherein are laid all kinds of evil snares, pits and traps and thereafter to perpetual damnation.

It is from such a world that Christ did come to deliver sinners. It is to rescue men from the power and penalty of sin. All men, irrespective of their social, ethnic and economic backdrop, are under the spell of this present evil world. The death of Christ offers the only effectual and lawful basis to break the power of sin in men and exculpate them from eternal retribution. It is for this cause that Christ came to offer Himself a willing sacrifice for men's sins. It is to release the elect from the captivity of this present evil world. Hence the voluntary offering of Christ on the altar of death sealed the deliverance of believers from the predicament, which they could not obviate by themselves. It translates lost men from the kingdom of darkness into the power of the grace of God. It brings sinners from the wrath of God to the sphere where they become the objects of God's immutable love and favour.

And all these, as the Scriptures tell us, are because God had decreed these things according to His divine purpose and plan before time began. If we are emancipated from

the power of sin; if we are living in the realm where our consuming desire is only to please God; if we have had renounced all things in this world to embrace Christ; if we are no more engaging ourselves in deceit, lies, adultery, stealing and covetousness; if our insatiable craving is for the life and the purity of God; if our affections are constantly toward heavenly things; then, beloved, it is because we have experienced the deliverance from this present evil world. Have you?

The preaching of the Gospel is the divinely appointed means to bring to operation this deliverance in the lives of the elect. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). Have you ever been exposed to preaching that is attended by the unction of the Holy Spirit? Preaching evokes and transmits the power of the historical event of Christ's expiry on the cross to the heart of the penitent sinner. Such a sinner is set scot-free from the tribunal of God, being justified gratuitously by God Himself. He is, then, afforded the adoption of sonship and, hence, accorded with the privilege of being a child of God. Besides, in the world to come, he shall be made co-heir with Christ and above all, enjoy the presence of God forever. These blessings are given to him through the grace of God legitimately conferred upon him because of Christ's willingness to suffer the atoning death. And all these because God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, had willed them so in eternity past. It is altogether independent of one's merits, advantages and character. It is rather according to God's good pleasure and holy design.

Howbeit, the Holy Scriptures promise to all: "For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). All those who will genuinely receive the gospel message in their hearts must of necessity experience a conversion. This conversion is the proof of the deliverance from this present evil world and secures for the justified the power to live a transformed life.

What shall we then say to all these things if we are indeed partakers thereof? We gladly join Paul the apostle in the eulogy ascribed to God and our Father in the following verse, "To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."



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