

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE is a weekly teaching summary.

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The Doctrine of the Substitutional Spiritual Death of Christ on the Cross.

Tree of Life for 07-05-98

"...to the point of death...", Phi 2:8

Our Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself to the point of death on our behalf. He did not die physically for us but spiritually. The word death [thanton] speaks of His spiritual death. What paid the price for the sins of the entire human race was not His physical death nor His blood but His substitutionary spiritual death on the cross. After He died spiritually for us He was still physically alive on the cross and having completed His course He gave up His physical life.

In the Bible there are two categories of spiritual death : 1) Real spiritual death - separation from God in a state of sin, therefore applicable to all mankind.
2) Substitutionary spiritual death - separation from God in a state of perfection and impeccability, this of course applies to only the humanity of Jesus Christ.

It is important to note the difference between the two. Adam's original sin brought real spiritual death to the human race, Eph 2:1. Our Lord's sacrificial spiritual death as a substitute on our behalf brought eternal life to the entire human race, i.e., those who will believe, Rom 5:15. This brings illumination

to the principle of the necessity of condemnation preceding salvation. If we were not first condemned in spiritual death we would not need a Savior to work on our behalf. Therefore the only relationship real and substitutionary spiritual death have is cause and effect. One necessitated the other. The imputation of Adam's original sin (AOS) to the genetically formed sin nature in our physical body and birth was actually a grace blessing! Had each member of the human race been born trichotomous rather than dichotomous we would never had been able to retain our own impeccable state! That is proven by Adam and the woman in the garden. Therefore God condemned us and then offered us the greatest love gift; His Son for our eternal salvation. That is grace! There is absolutely nothing we do in this phenomenal plan.

There are two categories of our Lord's unique death on the cross, the first being the spiritual which is associated with salvation, Joh 19:30, and the second is physical which is associated with the finished work of the cross and resurrection, (reconciliation, redemption, justification, propitiation, sanctification). His physical death and resurrection paves the way for our physical death and resurrection but His spiritual death was offered in place of our spiritual death hence we are redeemed; bought back from the power of spiritual death.

The Greek word used in relation to our Lord's death is huper which can be translated four different ways:

- 1) Instead of**
- 2) In place of**
- 3) On behalf of**
- 4) As a substitute for**

All hold the principle of substitution. Some describe huper plus the genitive of advantage as being used with words that denote concern or care for someone or used after expressions having to do with sacrifice. The genitive of advantage indicates the person for whom, of whom, or on behalf of whom something else is done. This is found in Rom 5:8 "for us" which is huper plus the genitive of advantage/personal

pronoun hemon meaning in place of, instead of, or on behalf of us. Also see 1Pe 3:18 and Gal 3:13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming cursed Himself. His substitutionary spiritual death (SSD) removed the barrier between man and God and offered unlimited atonement to all. He, the last Adam, broke down all the walls that the first Adam constructed. The cross put to death the enmity man had with God. Eph 2:14-16. In the great power experiment of the hypostatic union there were two judicial imputations which occurred: (A judicial imputation = someone being held in account for something he did not do)

- 1) The sins of the world were imputed to the perfect, impeccable humanity of Jesus Christ on the cross.**
- 2) The perfect righteousness of God is imputed to every believer at the point of salvation.**

We could never relate to the suffering and pain of our Lord's substitutionary spiritual death since we are not perfect, holy, and impeccable. For perfect holiness to come in contact with sin is far worse than all the physical humiliation and torture He endured. Therefore the difference between real and substitutionary death of is like the difference between fire and ice. But again, our being born in sin qualified us to need a Savior and that's what the SSD is all about.

Next we come to the mechanics of the SSD of Jesus Christ. The omnipotence of God the Father judicially imputed all sins in human history to the impeccable humanity of Christ on the cross. Why you might ask did it take three hours to judge billions and billions of sins? Well, three hours is actually a long time for omnipotence to do something! His power is far superior than ours. The SSD of Jesus Christ on the cross was the climax of the great power experiment of the hypostatic union. The holiness of God the Father both judged our sins and simultaneously abandoned the humanity of Christ on the cross since God cannot look at sin, Hab 1:13. But the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit sustained the humanity of Jesus Christ on the cross enabling Him to remain impeccable. This was a far greater task than what is required on God the Holy Spirit's behalf in sustaining us! This is an A Fortiori

principle in that, if God the Holy Spirit could sustain the perfect humanity of Christ on the cross at the most intense stage of suffering ever known to man then He certainly can sustain us in executing God's plan for our lives with its sufferings and challenges! Never was there a greater demonstration of the power of God the Holy Spirit than during those three hours on the cross when our Lord Jesus Christ was being judged for the sins of the world. It is the spiritual death of Jesus Christ on the cross that the animal sacrifices of the O.T. depicted. The O.T. sacrifices under the ritual plan of God were designed to teach both Christology and soteriology regarding the great power experiment of the hypostatic union. But, the only true efficacious work was that of our Lord Jesus Christ! The O.T. ritual sacrifices were merely a shadow or teaching of what was to come.

Let's look into the phrase uttered by our Lord on the cross. It was not until He came in contact with sin in His SSD that He opened His mouth. And the original language tells us He repeatedly screamed in agony while bearing our sins. Through all His physical suffering and humiliation He did not open His mouth but while suffering spiritual death on our behalf He screamed out My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?, Psa 22:1; Mat 27:46. This question was asked rhetorically not for the purpose of receiving an answer since He already knew why. He screamed this out to offer us insight into what exactly was happening. So this question, just as everything else He did, was for our benefit. The doubling of the vocative (My God, My God) expresses great intensity. Then we have the first question "why" or for what reason? The answer is given in verse 3 of Psa 22, "Yet Thou art holy". The answer is because Thou art holy and holy God cannot look on sin, Hab 1:13. The perfect righteousness of God the Father rejected the sins of the entire human race and so had to turn from His Son who was bearing the imputations of those sins. Then the justice of the Father judged all the personal sins of the human race as they were being imputed to His Son on the cross.

Then the second half of our Lord's rhetorical question, "forsaken Me", is answered in verse 6 of Psa 22 when He tells us He is a worm designed for the purpose of being crushed. The Hebrew word for worm is *tolah* which refers to the coccus *ilicis* harvested and crushed for its color to make crimson dye used for the coloring of kings robes in the ancient world. One sacrificed and crushed for the benefit of others. Our Lord was crushed on our behalf that we might wear royal robes of righteousness. And lastly we must not overlook the word "forsaken" in Psa 22:1 which is the *qal perfect*, second masculine singular of *azab* meaning to abandon or forsake. Here the subject is found in the suffix; a second masculine SINGULAR pointing to the fact that only one person of the Trinity abandoned our Lord on the cross, that being God the Father. Had God the Holy Spirit also abandoned Him as some teach, our Lord's humanity, perfect though it was, would not have had the power to endure His SSD. But because the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit did sustain Him the existing results of the cross are as follows:

- 1) Provision of eternal salvation for the entire human race under the principle of substitutionary, efficacious, unlimited atonement.
- 2) The guarantee of our eternal security since the power of God is greater than any human power.
- 3) The strategic victory of Jesus Christ in the historical extension of the angelic conflict.
- 4) His resurrection, ascension, and session, at which point he received His third royal patent (King of kings and Lord of lords, the bright morning star) at which time He was still without His kings, the royal family.
- 5) The interruption of the dispensation of Israel and the insertion of the church age for the calling out of the election of the royal family to accompany our Lord's third royal title.
- 6) The perpetuation of the great power experiment of the hypostatic union into the dispensation of the church, causing the church age to become the unique dispensation of all human history!
- 7) The greatest distribution of divine power to every believer

in human history causing the church age to become the cross-roads of human history as an extension of the angelic conflict.

So, in the SSD of our Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father imputed our sins to Jesus Christ and judged them. God the Son bore their judgment and became our Savior. And God the Holy Spirit sustained the humanity of Christ on the cross as well as revealed and still reveals the gospel to witnesses and hearers of the cross. Each member of the Trinity played a role in our Lord's SSD. It follows A Fortiori that God can do the least difficult thing, sustain us in our lives, seeing that He accomplished the most difficult task, sustaining the Lord through His life. A fortiori in the Greek is *polus mallon* meaning much more therefore. The A fortiori rational compares the first conclusion with the second conclusion inferring that the first is more difficult than the second which is easier, therefore it is inescapable and even more certain that the second is viewed as a feasible accomplishment. It follows A fortiori that God can do the least difficult thing having already accomplished the most difficult, Rom 5:8-9. He gave us His Son therefore He will give us everything necessary to glorify His Son. It is much easier for God the Holy Spirit to sustain the church age believer inside God's plan than it was to sustain our Lord on the cross. God gave us the best heaven had to offer, why then would He withhold anything lesser? God has done more for the church age believer through the cross and predestination than He has done for any other dispensation!

Knowledge of the SSD of Jesus Christ offers us a certain type of attitude. We know that all our needs will be supplied, Phi 4:19. And that "with Him come the all things". The all things refers to the fact that we are higher positionally than angels! Everything needed to become a winner in God's plan is graciously supplied us. Therefore as Heb 12:1-3 states... let us set aside every encumbrance, i.e., human power and human asset. Let us lay aside the sin which so easily besets us through the employment of rebound. Let us keep concentrating on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our doctrine via His own perfect happiness. And consider Him who has endured such

extreme hostility at the hands of sinners. In considering Him and His life we will not grow weary and fatigued in our souls. Such endurance comes through the utilization of divine power. Concentrate on Him rather than your own problems. Use God the Holy Spirit's power rather than rely on your own feeble ideas. Run with endurance, making use of your divine assets. And remember, what you have to endure in your life is NOTHING compared to what our Lord endured on our behalf!!! Consider Him who has endured so much more in His substitutionary spiritual death on the cross for our sakes.

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