



JESUS, THE SUFFERING REDEEMER



Window on the Word

*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).*

Surely, Jesus saw himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. "He was despised and rejected . . . a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. . . . Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. . . . He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. . . . By his wounds we are healed. . . . The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (53:3-6). Surely Mother Eve speaks for each of us, male and female, in this old Celtic poem:

*I am Eve; great Adam's wife;
It is I that outraged Jesus of old;
It is I that stole heaven from my children;
By rights it is I that should have gone upon the Tree.¹²*

Jesus our Sacrifice comes into view when we notice that all through Bible history the covenants between God and humankind were marked with a sacrificial offering. Jesus saw himself as the Sacrifice of the new covenant. Jesus said, "I lay down my life. . . . No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:17-18). More to the point, Jesus said at the Last Supper, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for . . . the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28).

Let us pause in the presence of the One who suffered to redeem us. He who is infinite Love, holy Love bore our sins in His own bosom. He, the One offended by the incomprehensible weight of the sins of the world, bore the cost at the most profound level.¹³ Unfathomable Love incredibly gave!

In the Cross we see "God Himself . . . bearing the brunt and paying the price. . . . That is the atonement for our sins that takes place in the very heart and life of God, because He is infinite love; and it is out of that costly atonement that forgiveness and release come to us."¹⁴

"If there must be a bearing of sin, and the holiness of God requires that there be, there are only two possibilities: Either we bear our own sins, or God bears them himself. Paul . . . demonstrates indisputably the bankruptcy of the former course. Hence, if there is reconciliation between man and God at all, it must occur through the divine sin bearing."¹⁵

As our suffering Redeemer, Christ brings to us eternal life, something we could never do for ourselves.

Alas! no man can ever ransom himself nor pay God the price of that release; his ransom would cost too much, for ever beyond his power to pay, the ransom that would let him live on always and never see the pit of death. . . . But God will ransom my life, he will take me from the power of Sheol [the grave] (Ps. 49:7-9, 15, NEB).

How do we know that the Divine One bearing our sins effects reconciliation? "The resurrection of Christ . . . is God's validation of this claim. By rais-

ing Jesus from the dead, God sets His seal of approval upon the mission of the Suffering Servant that the Son embodied in His total life and death. This is why Paul can say in 1 Cor. 15:17: ‘And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins’ (KJV).”¹⁶

An old story tells of a boy who carefully built a toy boat. He sawed and sanded and painted until it looked just right. But the first day he put the boat in the water, the swift current of the stream carried it away. A week later he found it downstream lodged in a bank of driftwood just above the falls. Carefully he retrieved the toy boat. And, as he lifted it from the bank, he said, “Little boat, you are twice mine. Mine because I made you, and mine because I rescued you.”

That’s the way we have experienced God in Christ. He created us, and after we were lost to sin, He rescued us from the river that was too strong for us.

*O Love divine! What hast Thou done?
The incarnate God hath died for me!
The Father’s coeternal Son
Bore all my sins upon the tree;
The immortal God for me hath died!
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

*Behold Him, all ye that pass by,
The bleeding Prince of life and peace!
Come, sinners, see your Maker die,
And say, “Was ever grief like His?”
Come, feel with me His blood applied!
My Lord, my Love is crucified;*

*Is crucified for me and you,
To bring us rebels back to God.
Believe, believe the record true:
Ye all are bought with Jesus’ blood;
Pardon for all flows from His side.
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

*Then let us sit beneath His cross,
And gladly catch the healing stream,
All things for Him account but loss,
And give up all our hearts to Him;
Of nothing think or speak beside:
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

—Charles Wesley¹⁷

What’s so special about Jesus? He is both God and man; He identifies with us; He represents us; His sacrifice displays holy love; He reconciles us to God, forgiving our sins and giving us new life; He is both Lord and Redeemer. That makes Him pretty special. So special that “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given . . . by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).