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No. 58

SIN PUT AWAY BY CHRIST.

"But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—HEB. ix. 26.

THIS verse states the end for which the Saviour of the world appeared. It was "to put away sin." This end he has accomplished. It is no longer a mere purpose, something future, but already finished. He has done that which he came into the world to do. He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. That sacrifice was offered and accepted eighteen hundred years ago. And by that sacrifice sin was put away. If sin was not put away then, it certainly has not been put away since, nor can ever be. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; there is no other putting away of it. The offering up of that sacrifice, and the putting away of sin, are things now past. And both of these were finished together upon the cross. We have therefore glad tidings to proclaim to every sinner; glad tidings for thee, whosoever thou art, who readest these lines. Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself!

But in what sense has He put away sin? Not in the sense of putting it out of existence. He has not put it away so that it has ceased to be. It still exists, as you know, and perhaps lament. It exists in your heart, and exists in your life. It mingles in every thought of the one, and in every act of the other. To such an extent does it exist, that in God's pure all-seeing eye, there seems to be nothing in either but sin. The whole is nothing but one vast mass of sin. In this sense sin is not put away from any in the world that now is;—so far from it, that it overspreads the whole race of man, as widely as the waters of Noah's deluge overspread the earth. To that eye which takes in the whole of it at one glance, and sees the guilt of each man minutely and fully, so hateful a sight does this guilty world present, that the wonder is, that God does not put sin away by the destruction of every being on whom it

appears. So awful a doom could only be stayed, even for a moment, by that sacrifice of himself, which Christ has offered up. This sacrifice is the only barrier between a guilty world and the wrath of an angry God. It is the only thing that prevents the vengeance of eternal fire being poured out for the instant destruction of this sinful earth.

Neither has Christ put away sin in such a sense that it cannot and will not be punished. Notwithstanding what he has done, it may be punished, and it is punished in the case of thousands and tens of thousands in the world of woe. Christ's death has not blotted hell out of being. It has not quenched the everlasting burnings, so as to make it an impossible thing that any sinner should ever feel them. He has done everything that is necessary to keep you, or any, even the guiltiest sinner upon earth, from going to hell. But hell still exists, and the work of Christ has not made it impossible that you should fall into it. And notwithstanding that work, the penalty of sin—*of all your sin*—may yet be inflicted on your soul there, even as at this very moment it is inflicted upon countless myriads of souls, once within the reach of mercy. Just read these two plain passages (and there are thousands of such) Eph. v. 3—6; Col. iii. 5, 6; and beware of flattering yourselves that because Christ hath put away sin, you shall not be punished. On the contrary, while that precious fact proclaims that forgiveness is free to all—free to *you* just now, and as you are; nothing in the universe proclaims so loudly that escape from punishment is impossible, and condemnation inevitable, if you refuse what has thus been so generously provided. Even Christ himself, who was God clothed with our nature, behoved to die, because standing in the room of the guilty. And while this fact proclaims to us that none need to die for their own sins, since this mighty One has died for sin already, it also declares that none can possibly escape from death on whom any sin shall at last be found. For if it was punished when found upon the Son of God, though not his own, is there any being, even the highest in creation, that can escape, if even so much as one sin be found in him?

Christ then hath not put away sin, so that it does not exist or cannot be punished. But he hath already put away sin, in such a sense that it no more stands as an obstacle in the way of your going to God. He has so put it away that you may go to God just now and as you are, with all your filth and sin, even as a child goes to the

bosom of its own father. He has so put it away, that you may go to him with every thing you fear, to spread it out before him,—with every thing you want, to obtain it from him. He has so put it away, that you may go to him now with all boldness, nothing doubting. That which gives you access at all, gives you access with boldness, and assures you of a welcome. That which gives you *any hope* at all, gives you *every hope*, nay, takes away all ground for unbelief or fear. Where is there room for doubt, or suspicion, or want of assured confidence, if Christ has really done all that this passage declares he has? Once your sin was such a barrier that there was no access to God, the fountain of life, for a guilty creature like you. It made a gulf between you and that blessed fountain, which, but for the work of Christ, none could ever have crossed. It barred his throne—it shut his presence against you. It made you, for anything you could do, an eternal exile from that presence, which is the paradise of the soul, and where there are rivers of pleasure for ever. And but for the work of Christ putting away your sin, this exclusion must have continued for ever. But blessed be his precious name, he hath now put away sin, so that there is no more exclusion of you, or any poor sinner upon earth. The sentence of banishment is repealed. The throne of God now stands open to you. There is not an obstacle, not a single stone or straw in your way to it. It is open and free to all. God is now calling his banished ones home. He is inviting you to himself just now—inviting you once more to share in all the fulness that is in himself. And on this invitation, and because the Lamb of God has put away sin, you may go to him at this moment as freely and confidently as if you had never sinned at all. You may go to him with as confident a heart as any of the unfallen angels round his throne. Nay, more so, for they approach on the ground of a creature's innocence—you are invited near on the righteousness of him, who is God over all. And coming on this ground you may freely ask for everything, in the full assurance that all shall be given till you happen to ask for something better and dearer to God, than what he has given you already unasked—*his own Son*. Poor wanderers! why not on such a ground return to such a home? Why stand afar off in poverty, rags, and wretchedness, when through the sacrifice of his own Son, the way to your Father's house, your Father's arms, the fulness of your Father's love, is entirely open? Luke xv. Christ hath also put away sin, in so far as it was an ob-

stacle in the way of God's love flowing forth most freely towards us, towards any sinner upon earth, towards the poor guilty sinner who may now be reading these lines. In consequence of the sacrifice of himself, none of our past or present sins are any reason why that love should not fix on you, and enrich you with all its boundless treasures. Notwithstanding them all, God can, honourably to himself, and safely in respect to his government, make you its blessed object, and pour out upon you its immeasurable, inexhaustible riches. And what he *can* do he is most willing to do. You have the assurance of this in the numberless invitations by which he is inviting you to come to himself for everything.¹ For each one of these is as much addressed to you personally and specially, as if it had been inscribed with your own name, or sent to you expressly down from heaven. And all of them not only imply that he is ready, but even longing to bless you with the free forgiveness, the overflowing love of a father's heart. These are just the calls of his love to you—now that all obstacles are taken out of the way of its freest and most unlimited exercise—they are the voice of love sounding upon earth in the ears of every poor wanderer, a welcome to all the treasures of a father's grace, a welcome to the place of a son in a father's heart. And of this blessed fact you have likewise the assurance in the past doings of that same love. What has it already done to take every obstacle away that once withstood your enjoying it? What has it already given? It has given his own Son. This is the measure, the manifestation of the Father's love! Think of it. Try and take its dimensions. That gift proves it infinite. And dare you not trust an *infinite* love—that love being also free? Dare you not cast yourself without reserve or fear upon a love that is perfectly *free* and perfectly *infinite*? And now that it is as free to flow out upon you, as the very light or air of heaven, can you not leave yourself at its disposal? can you not expect everything great and blessed at its hands? If there is nothing in the way of that free and infinite love, why may not *you* enjoy it, as much as any guilty sinner that has ever gone before you? And from that love which has already given the Son, and thus made a free course for every other, may you not hope to receive even "all things"? If it gave even the Son, when every obstacle stood in the way, what will it not give now that every obstacle has been taken out of the way by the propi-

¹ Isaiah lv. 1. Matt. xi. 28. Rev. xxii. 17.

tiation for sin which that Son has made? Before that sacrifice was offered, it might be said to be pent up and confined in the Father's bosom, waiting till the hindrance should be removed. Now it is no longer pent up. It has a righteous opening out of which it may issue forth, and a righteous channel along which to pour itself. Now it is streaming over on every side. It is flowing on in full tide towards sinners. It is seeking to flow into each of you. And it would enter if you would not close your hearts against it. It would come in and fill your soul with its blessed peace, just as the light pours in when the eye is opened upon the sun. As there is no more obstacle in the way of the poor prodigal's return to his Father, so is there no more any obstacle in the way of the Father's most gracious welcome to the poor prodigal. The one is free to return, the other to receive; the one may come without fear, the other may welcome without dishonour. Christ has made way for both at once, and by the same act—the sacrifice of himself. Now that the way is open, and a Father's arm stretched wide to welcome thee, poor prodigal, wilt thou not return?

In a word, Christ hath put away sin, so that now it is no more a necessary and unavoidable cause of punishment to those who have personally committed it. But for his sacrifice, it would and must have been so in every case whatever. The honour of God's character, and the safety of his holy moral government, would have made this indispensable. But the one is now so entirely vindicated, and the other so inviolably protected by the great sacrifice of the cross, that no necessity now compels the moral Governor of the universe to punish sin in the person of those who commit it. In consequence of that one great event, and on the ground of it, God can now most honourably dispense forgiveness and eternal life to every guilty rebel upon earth, and that most freely—without any restriction or term whatever—even without money and without price. That great sacrifice did more to vindicate his character and uphold the rectitude of his government, than the eternal death of all would have done. In so far as these are concerned, that one event, once for all, has therefore rendered this unnecessary; and God is accordingly, in consideration of *that* alone, with which he is entirely and for ever satisfied, now offering to pass from the sentence of death in the case of every sinner whatever, who is wishing it at his hands. And should any necessity henceforth arise for executing that

sentence of eternal death, it must be created by the sinner himself—by his obstinate refusal to accept deliverance, so generously procured, so freely offered—put thus freely and entirely at his own disposal.

Poor soul! just look to the sacrifice of the cross, and tell me after this why *you* should die? That was the sacrifice of *himself*, God in your flesh! Think of him who was the lawgiver, rising up from his throne, and in the nature of a creature rendering obedience to its utmost demands. Was not this doing higher homage to the majesty of God's holy law, than could have been done by the entire and eternal obedience of all mere creatures? After this, what can be needed to assert its dignity, and maintain its honour? Think of him who was God over all, the source of all life and being, and, therefore, by infinite degrees better than all,—think of him in our flesh, dying in the room of the guilty! It is in consequence of this, and this alone, that God is now proclaiming free forgiveness to all. He can give you pardon and eternal life, free as he gives you the light of his sun; and in consequence of the sacrifice of himself, no stain is thereby cast on his character, no danger accrues to his holy government. This is the righteous and honourable way in which the holy Governor of the universe is now offering life to all of our fallen race. Go, poor sinner, take it at his hand. Go to him and be pardoned. Go to him and be freely loved. Go to him and live for ever. All has been done that is necessary for this. All you need now waits your mere acceptance. Sin, the only obstacle, has, in the sense just stated, been taken away. All sacrifice has now ceased. Why? Because *that* has been offered which answers all. Look to that sacrifice, and to that alone—and if the Spirit sheds his light upon it, it will also satisfy you. It will satisfy your conscience, and take from it the conviction that sin must also be punished in you. That is your life, your light, your peace, your joy, your all. That and that alone will fill you with a sense of forgiveness—*will assure you of everything*, by assuring you that God is pacified—that God is your friend.

There is no room for any soul to deprive himself of all this comfort by saying—“but is it my sin? no doubt he hath put away some sin, but can I be sure it is mine?” There is no room for such a question, if the sense above stated be given to the words. *In that sense*, it is all sin that is put away. Mark the very language, “to put away sin”—sin in general—not some person's merely, but *sin*.

Think of the sense above given to the words, and ask yourselves if it be not the burden of the whole gospel, the sum and substance of the good news proclaimed therein to every sinner without exception; that in so far as it was a necessary cause of eternal death to the guilty, or as any barrier in the way of coming to God, and of God's full tide of love coming to him, sin hath been put away from every poor soul, still in this world and on this side of hell. Besides, if this were not true of all, how could it be true of any? Where could even the Apostle Paul, or any of the Apostles or primitive Christians, obtain the assurance of *their* sins being put away, if it was not in the simple declaration respecting Christ's infinitely precious offering? They had no revelation of this blessed fact, special and peculiar to themselves. If they found it at all, they found it just in such an universal declaration as that before us. If *they* found it there, why may not *you*—why may not any? Their names are no more there than *yours*. And if that sacrifice has done all that was needful for the putting away of your sins, how can you think of having them put away by something done in or by yourself? In that case, yours would be put away, not by the *sacrifice of Himself*, but by *something in you*? If by that sacrifice, the thing is done eighteen hundred years ago; if not then, should it ever be done, it must be owing, not to Christ's sacrifice, but to *something else*, which is future and yet to be done.

Oh! that men but knew the completeness, perfection, infinite efficacy of this one sacrifice, and the absolute freeness with which, on the ground of it, and of it alone, all the blessings of salvation are offered to every sinner without exception. The knowledge of this would ease their hearts at once, would assure them at once of everything—of safety, of free forgiveness, yea, even of life everlasting. This grand atonement is the ground of all assurance. Look to the subsequent context, and say if it be not so, (chap. x. 19—22.) What is the blessed doctrine of this context? Is it not that Christ hath done by the one offering of himself, once for all, what all the offerings under the law could not do, and which their very repetition proved they could not do? All offering has ceased, just because there is remission now free to all, (verse 18.) And what is the result of the whole in respect to us? Why just that we may come with consciences entirely disburdened, by this one offering, of all dread and apprehension, even in the full assurance of faith, that in his Son God is now well pleased. In this blessed and

child-like assurance we may now go to God as our Father for everything we need or wish for, in this world and in the world to come? Oh, yes, this sacrifice is the ground of all assurance. It is the mere sight of this sacrifice in all its glorious sufficiency, that heals our whole spiritual case—that sets us right at once with God, and makes us safe for eternity. It is not the sight of this sacrifice and *something else*—something of our own added thereto, our own faith in it for instance, that assures the soul before God, and forms the ground of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Our faith is just our seeing that this sacrifice is complete and perfect by itself alone, neither needing nor admitting the addition of anything else whatever, as a ground of confidence, a ground of child-like approach to God. For this, it is the sacrifice alone that needs to be seen, and not our faith along with it. It is because we think that *the latter* must be seen along with *the former*, and because we are always going in quest of the latter as the more important of the two, that our souls see no light, or the mere twilight, the mingling of light and darkness. In seeking the latter, we lose sight of the former, and therefore of all our light and comfort, for it is the former which is the source of all.

Oh that you would look to the sacrifice alone, and by itself. Nothing else but that sacrifice seen in all its solitary naked glory, is necessary to make a heaven within your hearts even now, and make you sure of heaven hereafter. I want nothing as my ground of confidence before God, as the means of assuring me of everything—nothing between me and hell,—but the simple sacrifice of Christ. Let me see just that sacrifice, and I see the everlasting proof that there is a love in the heart of God, which is absolutely infinite, and which is now free to me and to every human being whatever. Can more be needed? Can more be desired? Can more be obtained? This is *all*. “None but Christ—none but Christ.”

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.”