

JESUS, OUR SUBSTITUTE

by Ron Harvey

INTRODUCTION

Example: If I were to lay \$10.00 on the table in front of you and I were to tell you that it is free for the taking, I wonder how many of you would get up and come take it.

Example: And if I were to lay \$1,000.00 on the table in front of you and I were to tell you that it is free for the taking, there might be a stampede to the front.

Did you know that God makes a universal offer of salvation to sinners? He says here is forgiveness of sins. Though you have violated my law, I offer you a full pardon, an unconditional release. Though you are dead in trespasses and sins, I offer you life. Though you are one breath away from eternal hell and misery, "Here," he says, "Have eternal happiness and joy instead. And not just joy in the next life, but joy and peace in this life. Here, have it for free. It is yours to enjoy."

Doesn't the Bible say everywhere just come? Jesus said, "*Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*"

This was a universal promise. You see, the gospel goes to all. The gospel is preached to every man. And it always says, *Come unto me, and I will give you rest.*

Look at Isaiah 55:1.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Is that not a beautiful picture of the free offer of the gospel to all? Yes it is. But here is the rub. It says "come."

*Ho, every one that thirsteth, **come** . . .*

***Come** unto me all ye who labor.*

And sometimes it says, ***Believe** and thou shalt be saved.*

And there is the difficulty - If only you will believe.

We wholeheartedly preach that the sacrifice of Jesus is sufficient to save every human being who ever lived. He was of infinite value and his death was of infinite sufficiency to save all. And if he had intended to save all, then his death was sufficient. There is enough grace for every sinner.

Example: Now when I cut my grass, I put gas in the tank, and it will take me only so many times around the yard. And, when the gas runs out, I'm done.

Not so with the legal sufficiency of the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is like the jar of oil which would not run out until the drought was over. And the blood from the veins of Jesus will never run dry until the drought of sin has run its course.

Example: As the song says, there is a fountain, filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. And that fountain is always filled and it shall never run dry.

And so the offer of the gospel is universal. It is a legitimate offer. It is an open offer. It is a free offer to Jews and Gentiles, to Chinese and Japanese and Russians. It is an offer to Eskimos and Indians and Africans and Americans. "*Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" says Jesus.

If I were to put that offer on the table - free, eternal life, forgiveness of sins and joy and peace forever - you would think that people everywhere would race down here and pick up their certificate of eternal life.

Amazingly, they won't come.

How do you explain that men are condemned sinners, their penalty is eternal torment and God has provided a way of escape and yet they won't take it?

This is a great mystery that men prefer the darkness of hell to the light of heaven. But they do.

Listen to what Jesus said,

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:19

I tell you, the depravity of man runs deep. The Bible says,

The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:9

And that means every man and every woman and every child. The heart of man is a deep, dark hole. And here is what I want you to understand, a mere offer of the gospel is not sufficient to save sinners. The gospel is offered to all and none will come.

Example: What would you think of a man who was lost in the desert and he was dying of thirst and lo and behold, out of nowhere comes a caravan filled with supplies. And, they bring canteens and they offer the man life saving water and he refuses to drink.

That is how sinners are. They prefer to die in their sins rather than come to Jesus. They prefer hell rather than to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

Actually, if you give a man some very hard work in order to work his way to heaven, he will work himself to death trying to do it. But, don't ask him to repent of sins because he loves his sins too much.

Example: Tell him to dip out the ocean with a cup and he will give it a good go. But, don't ask him to repent of sins.

Example: You can give a man a shovel and tell him to level a mountain and he'll dig and haul dirt for the rest of his life trying to get to heaven. But ask him to give up his sins and come to Jesus, and he won't do it.

You see, men love their lies and their sinful lusts and their adulteries. And they won't give them up. Though you offer them free pardon from sins and everlasting life, they prefer to continue in their sins.

And when Jesus came into the world as a sacrifice for sins, the Bible says,

The world knew him not.

And the Bible says even his own people, did not receive him.

Why? It is because their hearts were wicked and they loved the cover of darkness rather than the light.

I want to look at a very great passage of Scripture this morning that will show two monumental truths: the hardness of men's hearts and the greatness of our Savior.

Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 53:1-3

And we see first,

- I. The contempt which men had of Jesus when he came into the world.
 - A. They did not believe.

Now Isaiah prophesied and said,

"Who hath believed our report?"

And this is a way of saying, “Look around, no one has believed.”

When you consider all the masses of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile, who have heard the report of the gospel, few there are that believe compared to the multitude who did not believe.

And so, Isaiah says, “*Who hath believed our report?*”

Now this statement of Isaiah is quoted twice in the New Testament.

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

John 12:37, 38

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Romans 10:16

And so you see the absolute stupidity and foolishness of sinful men and their refusal to believe the gospel. Not only did sinful men not believe the gospel report of Jesus, but

B. They despised Him.

The wicked hearts of men went beyond simply disbelieving, they actually hated him. They abhorred him. Not only did they see nothing in Him to be desired, they saw someone that they were inclined to hate.

What is it that they saw that generated such hate in their hearts for Jesus?

They saw a man who did not seem like the Messiah.

1. He was as a root out of dry ground.

Example: If you were walking in the desert and you saw a sprig coming up out of the sand, you would say, “How in the world did that little sprig of life come up from such dry ground. And furthermore, you would say, that sprig cannot possibly survive and can never flourish into a flower.

And so it was with Christ. Men saw Him and said, he cannot possibly be the Messiah.

2. He grew up as a tender plant. You would have thought the Messiah would grow up in pomp and ceremony and with public adulation. But Jesus was as a tender plant. He sprouted almost unnoticed when he was born in Bethlehem. He was like a tender plant that sprouts in the field and no one takes notice. And somehow it grows in obscurity. And this is the way Jesus was in the beginning.
3. He had no form, nor comeliness; and when we saw him, there was no beauty that we should desire him.

This is the only comment in the Bible about the physical appearance of Jesus. And it seems to suggest that his physical appearance was not beautiful.

But, physical beauty is what appeals to the world. The Jews expected a Messiah who would be ruddy and handsome (like King David) or perhaps stand head and shoulders above the people (like King Solomon).

But what they got was a poor ragamuffin for a Messiah. And this ragamuffin grew up in a despicable town called Nazareth and everyone knew that no good thing ever came out of Nazareth. And Jesus had no physical beauty about him that would attract mankind.

And they despised him.

4. And they also despised him because he was a man of suffering.

They would not have such a Messiah.

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And you say, how so? How was it that Jesus was a man of sorrows? He was God. He was omnipotent and omniscient. He was full of the joy of the Spirit. He was kind and gentle and full of grace. What sorrows did he have? How was he acquainted with grief?

Ah, but look at verse 4.

*Surely he hath borne **our** griefs, and carried **our** sorrows.*

What a Savior we have in Jesus. He came into the world and he took upon himself **our** sorrows and **our** griefs. He had no sorrows and griefs of his own. He had only eternal glory and gladness.

But, we had sorrows. Sin had ruined **us**. It had pierced us through with many sorrows. Our grief was unbearable. And condemnation was upon our heads. And we were pitiful in our helplessness.

And it says Jesus took our sorrows and griefs upon himself. And he bore them in his body and in his soul. And he became a man of sorrows for us.

And yet, for that very reason, men didn't believe in Him. They didn't want a man of sorrows and they despised Him.

C. They hid their faces from him. (v.3)

That is, they turned away in disgust. They would not have him.

Example: Have you ever seen a basketball game and when the opposing team is introduced, the fans hold up a newspaper in front of their faces as if to say, "We are totally disinterested in your team. We don't care what your names are and we hold you in total disregard.

That's the way sinners treat Jesus. Though Jesus came to be the bearer of their sorrows, they turned from him in disgust and would not look upon him to be saved.

And I'm sure at the foot of the cross, when his suffering was so great, and when his appearance was so marred by their beatings, they turned their eyes from him in disgust and they only looked at him to mock him and to ridicule him.

D. They esteemed Him not. (v.3)

1. They didn't give him the respect he deserved. He was God and yet they esteemed him not.
2. He bore their sorrows, and yet they esteemed him not.
3. He bore the sins of the world, and they esteemed him not.
4. They should have kissed him, yet they spat upon him.
5. They should have bowed the knee to him, yet they bowed their backs against him.
6. They should have believed him, yet they called him a liar.
7. They should have thrown their arms around him and received him, yet they raised their hands against him and rejected him.

Now you see the hardness of the hearts of men and why the Bible says,

The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
Jeremiah 17:9

That is the bad news in this passage, that the hearts of men are wicked. But now I want to turn to the very good news from our text, and that is,

II. The greatness of Jesus.

Now, the world has its opinion of greatness. But Jesus once told his disciples,

He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
Matthew 23:9

And our text this morning says,

A. He hath borne our griefs and our sorrows. (v.4)

Jesus was the greatest servant of all time. He bowed himself down and he said,

“Here, little lambs, lay your griefs on my shoulders.” And though the world rejected Him, one by one, the lambs unloaded their griefs and those griefs weighed heavily upon Jesus. And he staggered under the heavy load of the cross.

And he said, “*Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.*”

And then Jesus knelt again and said,

“Come here little lambs, and lay your sorrows on my back. And one by one, the lambs unloaded their eternal sorrows on the back of Jesus.

And that’s why Isaiah said,

Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows:

But, Jesus did more than that.

B. He was wounded for our transgressions.

Jesus gathered the little lambs around him once more and he said to them,

“You have sinned, and the penalty for sin is very grievous and you cannot bear it, but I will take your punishment for you.”

And while the lambs grazed at the foot of the hill, he walked up Calvary and was killed for their transgressions. He was bruised for their iniquities. And he was severely chastised so that the lambs could go free and live in peace.

And our passage says,

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (v.6)

And I want you to notice the attitude with which Jesus sacrificed himself for the sheep. It says,

C. *He opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (v.7)*

And look at verse 8.

He was cut off from the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

So, we see the ultimate greatness of Jesus who showed himself to be the greatest of all by becoming the servant of all.

THOUGHTS TO BE GLEANED FROM THIS PASSAGE

1. The sovereignty of God over salvation.

The general tenet of the passage is that sinful man will not believe. *Who hath believed our report?* Yet, some believe. Why do some believe? Is it because their heart is less black than others? No. We were all in the same woeful condition. Then why do the lambs believe? Look at verse 1. It is because the arm of the Lord has revealed it. Do you believe? It is because God has revealed Christ to you. Does your heart burn within you over these things? Then God has instructed you. Do you now see that Christ has born your griefs and your sorrows? Then God has opened your eyes and it has been revealed to you.

The Bible says, “no man will come except God draw him.” There is rebellion in the heart of man and unless God crush that rebellion with his love and grace, man will not come. But he does crush our rebellion and “we love him because he first loved us.”

2. The sufferings of Jesus for his people were ordained by the Father.

The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (v.6)

The sufferings of Jesus were not an unfortunate circumstance. The Bible says that Jesus was delivered into the hands of sinners by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And, the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And so it is true that the suffering of Jesus was ordained before the foundation of the world. It was ordained that we would unload our griefs on him. It was ordained that our sorrows should be placed on his shoulders.

3. Jesus voluntarily assumed the responsibility of bearing the penalty for sin.

This is why Jesus opened not his mouth. It was for this reason he came into the world – to be chastised for the transgressions of his people. He didn't bark against his ill treatment. He received his stripes voluntarily and with gladness in his heart for the sake of his sheep.

4. Jesus is your substitute. Jesus stood in your stead and received the penalty for sin. Though **he** was innocent, **you** were guilty and he took **your** place. And if you ever make application to heaven, and you certainly will seek an entry some day, I suggest you apply in the name of Jesus and on the basis of substitution. Please, when you come to the gates, come empty handed. Pull your pockets out and say, "I have nothing to offer save Christ." And I promise on the authority of the Word of God that will be enough.

Now, when it says that our sins were laid on him, this implies that God took them off of us. And now they are off our backs and they are laid on Christ.

And does that not thrill your soul this morning to know that your sins, every one of them, have been lifted off of you and laid on him? And his chastisement has purchased your peace!

You see, he stood as your substitute at the whipping post and it says, *by his stripes you are healed.*

And what a blessed healing it is!

We are free of the awful guilt of sin. It was laid on him.

We are being freed of the pollution of sin.

And we shall be finally freed of the very presence of sin.

And all of this is true because Jesus stood in our place.

And you can go to your homes today with a sense of peace and with joy in your hearts because you have believed the report.

Who hath believed our report, asks Isaiah?

We have. By the grace of God we have believed it. The strong arm of the Lord has revealed it and we have believed. And we rest in the great work that Jesus did as our substitute.