

## CHAPTER SIX

### **THE WORK OF CHRIST—REDEMPTION**

By the grace of God, we have seen in the past few evenings what God's salvation is. Tonight is the sixth evening. I hope to give a quick review of what we have covered in the previous five meetings. Then we will continue. We have seen sin, the law, God's love, His grace, and His righteousness. We have seen how man became a sinner and how the law came in to expose man's sins. We have also seen that though man is proved to be a sinner, God still loves him. Not only has God loved us, but He has also shown us mercy and grace. We have also seen how God's grace has been manifested, what the nature of this grace is, how it came about, and that it can never be mixed with human effort. Last night we saw that, in spite of God's love and His desire to give us grace, there was one hindrance to grace's coming to us. If one thing had been left unsettled, God's grace could not have come to us. Though grace is now here to reign, it reigns only through righteousness (Rom. 5:21). Grace cannot reign by itself. Hence, the Lord showed us how righteousness was manifested. His righteousness has dealt with our sins. At the same time, it enables us to receive grace from God. We have covered these during the last five evenings. Now, we will go on with the gospel of God and His salvation.

The salvation accomplished by God through the Lord Jesus has manifested God's grace. At the same time, it satisfies God's righteous requirements. At this time we will cover the work of the Lord Jesus. This is an excellent and sweet subject. It deals with the way the Lord Jesus accomplished God's salvation. We have to see how the Lord Jesus satisfied God's demand and how He has manifested God's grace. At the same time, we have to see how the Lord Jesus satisfies the heart of the Christian so that we would be satisfied with His work also. A song which we sing says, "God's heart is satisfied with the work of the Lord Jesus, and our hearts are also at rest with His work." God is satisfied, and we are satisfied. If time permits, I hope that we can cover both of these aspects.

### **THE LORD JESUS BEING BOTH GOD AND MAN FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF REDEMPTION**

The first thing we have to see is that the Lord Jesus is God. We may say that only God can bear man's sin. Never consider the Lord Jesus as a third person coming to die a substitutionary death. Do not think that God is one party, we are another party, and the Lord Jesus is a third party. The Bible never considers the Lord Jesus as a third party. On the contrary, it considers Him as the first party. You may have been told that the gospel is like a debtor, a lender, and the lender's son. The debtor has no money to pay back his debt. The lender, being very severe, insists on the payment. But the lender's son steps forth to pay the debt on behalf of the debtor, and the debtor becomes free.

This is the gospel that man preaches today. But this is not the real gospel. If this were the case, at least two points would not be fair and would be contrary to the Bible. First, this kind of understanding makes God the mean One and the Lord Jesus the gracious One. In such an illustration, we do not see God loving the world. Rather, we see only His righteous demand and the demand of the law. We see a severe God, One who is without grace and One whose words to man are always harsh. We see that the Lord Jesus loves

us and gives grace to us. This is a wrong gospel. However, although this is a wrong gospel, God still uses it. Actually, I was saved through this kind of illustration. But although I was saved, during the first three years I could never praise God. I always felt that the Lord Jesus was good, that I should thank and praise Him, that without Him everything was hopeless, and that it was fortunate that He came. But I felt that God was very harsh, severe, and mean. He was not at all lovable. It seemed that everything good was with the Lord Jesus and everything bad was with God, that God is terrible and the Lord Jesus is lovable.

But this is not the Bible. The Bible says that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to us (John 3:16). God sent His Son to us because He loved us. This is why we were brought back to God after the Lord Jesus accomplished His work on the cross. If God had not loved us and had not sent us the Lord Jesus, the most that the Lord Jesus could have done would have been to bring people back to Himself; He could not have brought people back to God. Thank the Lord that the One who loved us is God. Thank Him that He Himself sent His Son to us. It was the Father who was moved with compassion. It was the Father who loved us. It was the Father who planned out salvation. It was the Father who had a will in eternity past. First, the Father purposed everything, and then the Son came. Hence, it is wrong for man to think that there are three parties. There are only two parties, God and man. The Lord Jesus is God's gift to man. However, this gift is something living and with a will, rather than lifeless and without a will. Thank God that salvation is something between God and man. The Lord Jesus is a gift. Today the One we have to face is God. We come to God through the Lord Jesus. This is the first thing we have to realize.

Second, if there were three parties, the Lord Jesus would not have been qualified to die for us. It is true that when the Lord Jesus died for us, God's righteousness was met and man's sins were forgiven. But is this righteous to the Lord Jesus? Suppose there are two brothers. One brother has committed a capital crime and has been sentenced to death. The other brother is very willing to die for him and is therefore executed on his behalf. He is innocent, and also a third party. He dies instead of the other. The Bible does not show us that the Lord Jesus died for us this way. It does not show us that God had a demand, that His law had to be satisfied, and that in order for man to meet the law's demand, the Lord Jesus came to fulfill God's law. There is no such thing. What position did the Lord Jesus take when He came to accomplish redemption? We have to consider this matter carefully and accurately from the Bible.

I would like you to be aware of one thing. The world thinks that there is only one way to deal with the problem of sin. Preachers who preach wrong teachings say that there are three ways to deal with sin. But for God, there are only two ways to deal with sin. Some explanation is needed here. Before one reads the Word of God, he may think that any of three ways can solve the problem: man can solve it, God can solve it, or a third party can also solve it by substitution. The unsaved ones who do not know God consider that there is only one solution, which is for man to solve it by himself. But God's righteousness shows us that there are only two ways to solve the problem. One is by God Himself and the other is by man himself. What do I mean by this? Let us first consider what man thinks. He thinks that he is a sinner and should therefore bear the judgment of sin and

the wrath of God. He thinks that he should perish and go into perdition. The only way is for him to solve the problem by going to hell. He will take responsibility for what he has done. If one sins, he goes to hell and bears his own judgment of sin. This is one way to solve the problem. When one owes money, he sells all that he has. He may even have to sell his wife, children, house, and land, if that is what it takes to solve the problem. This is righteous. Then there is the other wrong concept. For those who have heard the gospel, they consider that the Lord Jesus is a third party coming to take our place and solve the problem of our sin. Man has sinned and has incurred the judgment of sin. Now all the judgment is laid on the Lord Jesus; He bears all the judgment. Such a teaching seems right. But you will see shortly that this is not accurate.

For the sake of those with unclear concepts, I will say a word first. In the Bible, there are two important doctrines, which are the bearing of sins and the ransom for sins. Please do not think that I do not believe in substitution. But the substitution that some talk about is not the substitution in the Bible, because their kind of substitution involves unrighteousness. If the sinless Jesus is to be a substitute for sinful men, it is, of course, a bargain for us. But is it righteous to treat the Lord Jesus this way? He did not sin. Why should He be killed? This is not the kind of substitution that the Bible speaks of. If the Lord Jesus is to die on behalf of all the sinners in the world, then those who believe in Jesus as well as those who do not believe in Him will likewise be saved. The Lord has died for them both, whether or not they have believed. One cannot turn the wheel backward and reverse the Lord's death just because some do not believe. One can turn back the wheel on other things. But this is not something reversible. Why does the Bible say that those who do not believe have been judged and shall perish? (John 3:16, 18). The reason is that the Son of God only died a substitutional death for us who believe. He is not a substitute for those who do not believe.

What then is the way to solve the problem of sin according to the Bible? There are only two righteous ways to solve the problem. One is to deal with the one who has sinned, and the other is to deal with the one who has been sinned against. There are only two parties in the world that are qualified to deal with this problem. There are only two persons in the world who have the right to deal with the problem of sin. One is the one who has sinned against another. The other is the one who has been sinned against. When a person sues another in court, no third party has the right to speak anything. In a court proceeding, only the one who has sinned against someone and the one who has been sinned against have the right to speak. Concerning the sinner's salvation, if the sinner does not take care of it himself, then God has to take care of it for him. The sinner is the sinning party, and God is the party being sinned against. Either party can deal with the problem of sin in a most righteous way. On the sinner's side, it is righteous for him to suffer judgment and punishment, perish, and go into perdition. But there is another way which is equally righteous. The party that has been sinned against can assume the punishment. This may be quite inconceivable to us, but it is a fact. It is the party being sinned against that bears the sins. It is not a third party that bears our sins. A third party has no authority or right to step in. If a third party comes in, it is unrighteousness. Only when the party that is being sinned against is willing to suffer the loss can the problem be solved. Since God has love and also has righteousness, He would not allow a sinner to bear his sins, for that would mean that God was righteous without love. The only alternative is for the party being sinned against to step in. Only by God bearing our sins will righteousness be maintained.

Do you know what forgiveness means? In the world, we have forgiveness. Between individuals, there is forgiveness. Between a government and its people, there is also forgiveness. Even between nations, there is forgiveness. With God and man, there is also forgiveness. Forgiveness is something universally recognized as a fact. No one can say that forgiveness is something unrighteous. It is something one does cheerfully to another. But the question is: who has the right to forgive? If a brother has stolen ten dollars from me, and I forgive him, it means that I have taken up the consequence of his sin. I have taken up the loss of these ten dollars. As another example, let us say that you have hit me in the face. The blow was so severe that I bled. If I say that I forgive you, it means that you have committed the sin of hitting, and I have suffered the consequence of hitting. The sin was committed by you, but I suffered the consequence of it. This is forgiveness. To forgive means that one party sins, and another suffers the consequence of that sin. Forgiveness is the taking up of the responsibility of the sinning party by the party sinned against. A third party has no right to come in to forgive. He cannot come in to recompense. If a third party comes in to forgive and recompense, it is unrighteousness. If the Lord Jesus comes in as a third party to substitute for the sinner, it may be fine for the sinner, and God may also have no problem with it, but there is a problem with the Lord Jesus. He has no sin. Why did He have to suffer judgment? Only the sinning one can bear the consequence of sin; he has the right to bear his own responsibility and suffer judgment for his own sin. And there is only one who can take up his sins—the one whom he has sinned against. Only the one sinned against can take up the sin of the sinning one. This is righteousness. This is the principle of forgiveness. Both God's law and man's law recognize that this is righteous. Man has the right to suffer loss. Inasmuch as man has a free will, God also has a free will. A person with a free will does have the right to choose to suffer loss.

What then is Christ's redemption? The redemptive work of Christ is God Himself coming to bear man's sin against Him. This word is more lovely to the ear than all the music in the world. What is the redemptive work of Christ? It is God bearing that with which man has sinned against Him. In other words, if Jesus of Nazareth was not God, He would not be qualified to bear our sins righteously. Jesus of Nazareth was God. He is the very God whom we sinned against. Our God has come down to earth personally and borne our sins. Today, it is God rather than man who has borne our sins. This is why it was a righteous bearing. We cannot bear it ourselves. If we were to bear it, we would be finished. Thank God that He Himself has come to the world to bear our sins. This is the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

Why then did God have to become a man? It is good enough for God to love the world. Why did He have to give His only begotten Son? One has to realize that man has sinned against God. If God requires man to bear his sin, how can he do it? The wages of sin is death. When sin motivates and acts within, it ends in death. Death is the rightful penalty of sin (Rom. 5:12). When man sins against God, he has to bear the consequence of sin, which is death. Hence, God is the other party. If He is to come and take up our responsibility and bear the consequence of our sin, He has to die. But 1 Timothy 6:16 tells us that God is immortal; He cannot die. Although God is willing to come into the world and bear our sins, and although He is willing to die and go into perdition, it is impossible for Him to do this. Death has simply no effect on God. There is no possibility for God to die. Hence, for God to bear the judgment of man's sin against Him, He has to take on the body of a man. This is why Hebrews 10:5 tells us that when Christ came into

the world, He said, "A body You have prepared for Me." God has prepared a body for Christ so that Christ could offer Himself up as a burnt offering and sin offering. The Lord says, "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not delight" (v. 6). Now He is offering up His own body to deal with man's sin. Hence, the Lord Jesus became a man and came into the world to be crucified on the cross.

The Lord Jesus is not a third party; He is the first party. Because He is God, He is qualified to be crucified on the cross. Because He is man, He can die on the cross on our behalf. We must distinguish between these two statements clearly. He is qualified to be crucified because He is God, and He is able to be crucified because He is man. He is the opposite party; He has stepped over to man's side to suffer punishment. God has become a man. He has come among man, joined Himself to man, taken up man's burden, and borne all his sins. If redemption is to be righteous, Jesus of Nazareth must be God. If Jesus of Nazareth is not God, redemption is not righteous. Every time I look at the cross, I say within myself, "This is God." If He is not God, His death becomes unrighteous and it cannot save us, for He is but a third party. But thank and praise the Lord, He is the party opposite us. That is why I made the statement that only two parties are able to deal with our sins. One is we ourselves, in which case we have to die ourselves. The other party is the God whom we have sinned against, in which case He dies for us. Other than these two parties, no third party has the right or authority to deal with our sins.

### **THE MAN JESUS HAVING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS ACCORDING TO THE LAW AND BEING QUALIFIED TO REDEEM MAN**

Jesus of Nazareth has come into the world. While He was on the earth, His works demonstrated that God loves us. But at the same time, He fulfilled the law. He was truly submissive to God. He was a holy man and a submissive man. In Him we see a perfect man. Jesus of Nazareth was full of righteousness. He was a righteous man. Throughout history there was only one man who could be saved by the law. This was Jesus of Nazareth. He did not need to keep the law, yet He kept the law. The Bible says that only those who keep the law can inherit the righteousness that is of the law. With righteousness, there is life. The law says that he who keeps it will live. To keep it is to abide by the law. All who have the righteousness of the law have life. The only purpose for God to say this to the whole world is to condemn man and prove to him that he is a sinner. God gave us the law to prove to us that we are sinners. Thank and praise the Lord. There is only One who has life by the law. This One is Jesus of Nazareth.

Let us for the moment set aside the fact that He is God and consider Him as a man, a very ordinary man. He kept the law and lived. He lived on earth for over thirty-three years. Not only did He not sin, He did not even know sin. He was tempted in all things. But He was not tempted by sin. Note this: the Lord Jesus was not tempted by sin. When many read the book of Hebrews, they receive a wrong understanding based on a wrong translation. The Greek text shows us clearly that although the Lord Jesus was tempted in all things, He was never tempted by sin. He was in the flesh and therefore had weaknesses. But He knew no sin. He was never tempted by sin. If you consult an accurate translation, you will see this clearly.

Are the Lord Jesus' righteous acts of any benefit to us? Indeed they are. The righteous acts of the Lord Jesus prove that He is God. Because of these righteous acts, the Lord Jesus did not have to die for Himself. The righteous acts of the Lord qualify Him to die on the cross on behalf of our sins. If the Lord Jesus had any sin, His death would have been for Himself; He would not have been able to die for us. Since the Lord did not have any sin at all, He was qualified to be offered up as a sacrifice for our sins. Christian theology says that God has made the righteousness of the Lord Jesus ours. God has transferred the Lord's righteousness to us in the same way that banks transfer money from one account to another. The Lord kept the law for us. We have disobeyed the law. But the obedience of the Lord Jesus has earned us God's satisfaction. But let me ask emphatically: Has the Bible ever mentioned the "righteousness of the Lord Jesus"? Who can find a place in the New Testament that speaks of "the righteousness of the Lord Jesus"? If you read the entire New Testament, including the Greek text, you will discover that the New Testament never mentions the words the righteousness of Christ. One place seems to say this, but it does not refer to Christ's own personal righteousness. Men do not like to read God's Word today. They like to study theology. Theology, however, is created by man. It does not come from God's Word. Theology tells us that God has imputed Christ's righteousness to us. The Bible does not have this concept. On the contrary, the Bible is opposed to this concept. The righteousness of Jesus of Nazareth is His own righteousness. It is indeed righteousness, but it is the righteousness of Jesus of Nazareth. This righteousness qualifies Him to die for us and be our Savior, but God has no intention to transfer the righteousness of Jesus to us.

John 12:24 is a precious verse in the Bible. It says that unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone. A man like the Lord Jesus was just one grain before God. Only after He has died is there many grains. Salvation begins with the cross. Although we must have Bethlehem before we can have Golgotha, we are saved through Golgotha, not Bethlehem. The Son of God is absolutely righteous. He was the one righteous grain. But His righteousness cannot save us. It cannot be imputed to us. God does mention the righteousness of Christ in the Bible. But He never says that Christ's righteousness is to be ours. The Bible says that Christ is our righteousness. It never says that Christ's righteousness is our righteousness. I would like to bring this out, for this will exalt the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that Christ is our righteousness. Christ Himself is our righteousness. We go to God in Christ. Christ is our righteousness.

Once I asked a Western sister what she wears when she goes before God. She said that she puts on the righteousness of Christ to go to God. She took the righteousness of Christ as her garment to go to God. I asked her where this is found in the Bible. It is not the righteousness of Christ that has become our righteousness. Christ has never transferred His righteousness to us. Rather, it is Christ Himself who has become our righteousness. We are saved by the righteousness of God, not by the righteousness of Christ.

We have seen what God's righteousness is. God's righteousness brings us forgiveness and saves us from judgment. It is not the righteousness of Christ that does this. The righteousness of Christ is only the qualification for Him to be our Savior. Christ has never transferred His righteousness to us. If the righteousness of the Lord Jesus were transferable to us, He could have done this while He was living on earth. He did not have to go to the cross, and we could have been saved then. If that is the case, His life would have become a ransoming life. But there is no such

doctrine as a ransoming life. There is only the doctrine of a ransoming death. Only the death of the Lord Jesus will save us. His life is our example. We cannot be saved by His life. His righteousness condemns us. The more righteous He is, the more we are in trouble. There is absolutely no way for His righteousness to be imputed to us. If God were to put us side by side with the righteousness of the Lord, we could only go to hell. But thank God that He has died and become our righteousness. This is why we are saved. Salvation comes from the cross. It does not come from the manger. Salvation comes from Golgotha; it does not come from Bethlehem. If the righteousness of the Lord Jesus could save us, He would not have had to die. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we should not be affected by theology. We will be much clearer if we are taught by the Bible rather than by theology. Man's word can help, but it can also damage. We would rather put man's word aside.

Let us go on step by step. We first saw that it must be God who comes to bear our sins. Then we saw that Jesus of Nazareth came to bear our sins. But His righteousness on earth was more of a condemnation to us. When were we saved through the Lord Jesus? Let us consider a type in the Bible. Between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, there was a veil. God was within the veil in the Holy of Holies. Outside the veil was the world. The Bible tells us that this veil signifies the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20). In other words, the Holy of Holies can only be seen by the Lord Jesus as a man on earth and those who live a life like the life of the Lord Jesus. Not all can see God. Only the Lord Jesus can see God. No one in the entire world can see the Holy of Holies. It has been veiled. Man was able to see the Holy of Holies when God removed the veil from heaven and combined the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the outer court into one. This was accomplished at the time the Son of God was crucified on the cross. At that time, the way to the Holy of Holies was opened. This is why Hebrews 10:19-20 says that we have boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus through the veil. This torn veil is the flesh of the Lord Jesus. Now we have boldness and the full assurance of faith to come to God. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus on earth has no direct relationship with us. Thank the Lord that He did not stay on earth forever. If He were to remain on earth forever, He would still be the one grain. Thank God that He has died and produced us, the many grains. Thank the Lord for the cross.

## **THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S CROSS**

Here is a question. The Lord died on the cross, but what is the significance of His death? Who sent Him to the cross? Everyone who reads the Gospels knows that the Jews sent Him to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles crucified Him on the cross. If I remember correctly, Pilate was a Spaniard. How can we say that the Lord Jesus died to bear our sins? He was clearly crucified by man. In Acts 2:23 Peter told the Jews that they had nailed Jesus to the cross through the hand of lawless men. Here it says that it was the Jews who nailed the Lord Jesus to the cross. But what did the Lord Jesus do on the cross? Before He went to the cross, He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane. Was His prayer, accompanied with sweat like drops of blood, caused by man's persecution and opposition? Was it because Judas was bringing men to arrest Him? Or was it because He had to go to the cross to redeem us from sin? Was it not because God made the sinless One to become sin for us and laid the sins of the whole world upon Him, so that He would bear our sins upon the tree? There He prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42).

If the cross was something out of man's hand, if it was just the tool for some evil men to kill Him, and if there was only the human aspect to the Lord Jesus, then I would not like to listen to this prayer of the Lord. I would not like to hear Jesus of Nazareth kneeling there praying to the Father to remove the cup from Him if possible. For the past two thousand years, many martyrs and disciples of the Lord had a much stronger voice than He did when they were about to die. Many martyrs, when locked inside cells and dungeons, prayed that the Father would glorify them, that they would rather die for the Son, and that they would rather testify to the Lord's Word with their blood. If it had not been God who had commenced to place the burden of sins on the Lord at Gethsemane, and if it had not been God who had laid the burden of bearing our sins on the Lord Jesus, we would have to say that the Lord Jesus did not even have as much courage as those who believed in Him. Hence, the problem is that the cross has the aspect of man and the aspect of God. Man crucified the Lord Jesus on the cross. But the Lord said that no man takes His life away; He gave it up by Himself (John 10:17-18). Man could crucify the Lord a thousand times or ten thousand times, but unless He Himself gave His life away, nothing could have been done to Him. Man considers that He was crucified by man. We consider Him to be crucified by God to redeem sins on our behalf.

We have to find out from the Bible what God did on the cross. First, let us read Isaiah 53:5-10: "But He was pierced because of our transgressions; / He was crushed because of our iniquities; / The chastening for our peace was upon Him, / And by His stripes we have been healed. / We all like sheep have gone astray; / Each of us has turned to his own way, / And Jehovah has caused the iniquity of us all / To fall on Him. / He was oppressed, and it was He who was afflicted, / Yet He did not open His mouth; / Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter / And like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, / So He did not open His mouth. / By oppression and by judgment He was taken away; / And as for His generation, who among them had the thought / That He was cut off out of the land of the living / For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? / And they assigned His grave with the wicked, / But with a rich man in His death, / Although He had done no violence, / Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. / But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief. / If You make His soul a trespass offering, / He will see a seed, He will extend His days, / And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand." The apostles quote Isaiah 53 many times in the New Testament. The One spoken of in this passage of the Scriptures is the Lord Jesus. What did the prophet say when he wrote this portion of the Scripture? The last sentence in verse 4 says, "We ourselves esteemed Him stricken, / Smitten of God and afflicted." At the beginning, the prophet thought that He was smitten and stricken by God, that He was punished for His own sins and smitten by God for His transgressions. But in verse 5, there is a turn. God showed him a revelation by means of the word but. We think that He was merely suffering from punishment and smiting. But He was not suffering from punishment and smiting. "But He was pierced because of our transgressions; / He was crushed because of our iniquities; / The chastening for our peace was upon Him, / And by His stripes we have been healed. / We all like sheep have gone astray; / Each of us has turned to his own way" (vv. 5-6). The next sentence is very precious, "And Jehovah has caused the iniquity of us all / To fall on Him" (v. 6). This is what the Lord has done. We can see that there is the aspect of man to the cross and there is the aspect of God. Although it was the hands of man that nailed the Lord Jesus up, manifesting man's hatred for God, it was also God who had laid all of our sins upon Him and crucified Him. The cross was God's doing; it was something that Jehovah accomplished.



What happened at the cross? "He was oppressed, and it was He who was afflicted, / Yet He did not open His mouth; / Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter / And like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, / So He did not open His mouth. / By oppression and by judgment He was taken away; / And as for His generation, who among them had the thought / That He was cut off out of the land of the living/For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?" (vv. 7-8). To be cut off out of the land of the living is to die. Those who stood by the cross at the time the Lord was crucified marveled and wondered why this man was being crucified. They did not know the reason why such a thing happened. The prophet said that "He did not open His mouth," and that He is brought "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter /And like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers." Who knew that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the sin of the people? Who knew that it was God working on Him to accomplish the work of redemption? The cross was the way that the Lord accomplished redemption through His death. Verse 9 says, "And they assigned His grave with the wicked,/But with a rich man in His death,/ Although He had done no violence,/Nor was there any deceit in His mouth." Verse 10 is very precious: "But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief./If You make His soul a trespass offering." The cross is a work that God did. It was God Himself who bore our sins on the cross. He solved our problem of sin. Never give any credit to Judas for delivering the Lord Jesus to the Jews. Never think that without Judas the Lord would not have been able to be the Savior. Even if there had been a thousand or ten thousand Judases, it would still be useless. It was the Lord Jesus Himself who bore our sins.

When the Lord Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, He may have seemed like the weakest of all men, without any courage. He prayed for the Father to take the cup away from Him (Luke 22:42). But when He came out from the garden and met many evil men, He said, "I am," and "they drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:6). Please remember that He did not fall while being confronted with man's evil. On the contrary, He caused them to fall. While He was at Gethsemane, considering the suffering involved in bearing man's sins, how the sinless One would be made sin, and how He was to take upon Himself the judgment of sin, He prayed for the cup to be removed from Him if possible. Had it not been for the question of redemption, the Lord Jesus would not have even matched a martyr. How brave were the many Christian martyrs when they marched to the lions' den. But the Lord Jesus pleaded to have the cup removed from Him if possible. Physically speaking, the Lord Jesus was vastly different from all the martyrs. But for redemption, for solving the problem of sin, for God to come to man and bear man's sin, even He had to ask for the removing of the cup if possible. The Bible says that it was Jehovah that made Him an offering for sin. It was Jehovah who laid on Him the iniquity of us all. It was something Jehovah did. The cross was the work of God; it was not the work of man. The cross is God Himself coming to earth to bear man's sins. The cross is not the crucifixion of the Son of God by man.

Do you remember what the Bible says about the sixth to ninth hours? The sun's light failed (Luke 23:44-45). The Jews could mock Him, and the Gentiles could chastise and shame Him, but the sun was beyond the Jews' control. The Gentiles did not have the authority to manipulate the sun. Man could clamor and trumpet, but the earthquake was not something that Pilate could summon. Why was the sky darkened? These

phenomena happened because God Himself had come to bear our sins. This was not something done by man. If it had been done by man, would God have added to His Son's pain when He was hanging on the cross? Would God not have sent twelve companies of angels to come and rescue Him? Such would indeed have happened had it not been for the redemption for sins. We thank and praise God that His Son came to redeem us from sins. This was why He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). No believer throughout the past two thousand years has ever said these terrible words when they died. For two thousand years, whether the believers died in peace or in woe, they were more bold than He was. Why was the Son of God rejected there by God? If it had merely been man's hand and man's crucifixion, that would have been the time He needed God's presence even more. When man plotted to persecute and kill Him, God should have manifested His presence more. That was the most crucial moment. God should have been with Him. Why did God leave Him instead? It was solely because the Son of God had become sin and had borne the judgment. That was the reason He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" God had forsaken Him. We who have believed in the work of redemption know that the work of the cross was for Him to be judged by sin. The cross of the Lord shows us how evil sin is and how much of a price God has paid for the work of redemption.

Besides Isaiah 53, another clear testimony of the Scripture can be found. In Romans 3:25, God set forth Christ "as a propitiation place." This also shows clearly that the work was done by God. Deuteronomy 21:23 tells us that he who is hanged on a tree is accursed of God. When the Lord was hanging on the cross, He was not accursed of man. Rather, He was accursed of God. That is why He can deliver us from the curse. First John 4:10 says that God loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation concerning our sins. It was God who sent His Son to be a propitiation. It was not man who crucified Him. Second Corinthians 5:21 also says, "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf." This was something that God did. The cross is the work of God. It was God who sent the Lord Jesus to pass through the cross. Acts 2:23 mentions both the aspect of God and the aspect of man. "This man, delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, through the hand of lawless men, nailed to a cross and killed." The Lord Jesus was killed by the Jews through the hand of lawless men. However, such a death was according to the determined counsel of God. This shows us that everything was done by God. We have sin, and sin can only be taken care of by God Himself. For this reason, God came to the world to be a man. While He was a man, He was indeed righteous. But this righteousness was not imputed to us. It was the death of the Lord Jesus that delivered us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). He did not deliver us from sin while He was living, but when He died. On the cross, it was God who crucified Him, rather than man. Man's hand is useless. It was God who took the opportunity to make manifest man's sin.

## **REDEMPTION AND SUBSTITUTION**

Now we have to ask one question. Since the Lord Jesus died on the cross and since God made Him the propitiation place, how can we be saved? What is the difference between redemption and substitution? Are they similar in any way? We have to realize that the work of the Lord Jesus is a work of redemption. But the result of this redemptive work is

substitution. Redemption is the cause, and substitution is the result. The scope of redemption is very large. But the scope of substitution is not quite as large. It is quite interesting that the Bible never says that the Lord Jesus died on behalf of the sins of all. It only says that the Lord Jesus died on behalf of all (2 Cor. 5:14). His redemptive work was to satisfy the righteous requirements of God. When the Lord accomplished redemption on the cross, this work of redemption had absolutely nothing to do with man. I want to impress you strongly with this word. Redemption is absolutely not related to us. The work of redemption is between God and sin. What is the work of redemption? It is God Himself coming to the world to solve the problem of sin. Once the problem of sin is solved, the work of redemption is done.

The blood of the Passover lamb was sprinkled on the side posts and upper posts of the doors (Exo. 12:7). God said that when He saw the blood, He would pass over the house (v. 13). The blood was for God to see. It was not for the firstborn to see. The firstborn did not need to see the blood; they stayed in the houses. The blood was to meet God's righteous requirements; it was not to meet the requirements of the firstborn. With the firstborn, there was no such thing as redemption. If we read the Old Testament, we will discover that the blood for the atonement (i.e., redemption) of sin was brought into the Holy of Holies. It was sprinkled on the veil seven times (Lev. 16:14-15). On the day of Atonement, the high priest had to take the blood and sprinkle it on the mercy seat of the ark. The blood was offered to God. It is true that the blood had to be smeared on the thumb, the ear, and the toe of a leper. But that was done with respect to consecration. It was a matter of consecration to God. Man had no such requirement. Redemption has to do with God; it is God coming in to solve what man cannot solve by himself. This is why the Bible says, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Redemption includes the whole world. In such a redemption, everyone, even those that have not been saved, are included.

God has come and dealt with our sins. The Lord Jesus has satisfied God's righteous requirements so that we can receive the substitution of the Lord Jesus. His redemption is an abstract preparation. By believing in Him, this redemption becomes a substitution to us. Before God, it was not a substitution, but a redemption. It is important to know this. If we are not clear about this matter, we will be confused about many other doctrines. Redemption is before God, and substitution is for us. Redemption is to satisfy God's requirements, and substitution is for us to receive the benefit. What He accomplished was redemption; what we have received is substitution. I do not mean that there is no such teaching as substitution in the Bible. There is indeed such a teaching. But all the teachings in the Bible concerning substitution are written for Christians. They are not written for unbelievers. To the Gentiles we say that Jesus has died for them and accomplished redemption. To the Christians we say that the Lord Jesus has substituted them in bearing their sins.

In the passage that we have read from Isaiah 53, notice that it says, "But He was pierced because of our transgressions; / He was crushed because of our iniquities; / The chastening for our peace was upon Him, / And by His stripes we have been healed" (v. 5). Please observe that it says "our" instead of "your." He bore the suffering for our sins. Hence, our sins are forgiven. It is for us and not for the whole world. When Peter quoted Isaiah 53, he said, "Who Himself bore up our

sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). It was always "our" and not "your." Hence, we have to be careful when we preach the gospel. It is better that we adhere more to the Bible. The Bible never says to sinners that Jesus died for their sins. The Bible says that Jesus died for them (Rom. 5:8). There is such a thing as Jesus dying for them. But there is no such thing as Jesus dying for their sins. For Jesus to die for them is a fact. But the problem of sin is not solved yet. It is true that all the problems of sin are solved before God already. But if one has not participated in this work, his sins are not yet solved, and he has no part in the substitution of Jesus. When one receives the Lord Jesus, his problem of sin is taken care of. This is substitution. Without this, there is no substitution. In other words, redemption has been accomplished, but salvation has not yet been accomplished. If I were to ask you when you were redeemed, you should reply that it transpired two thousand years ago. But if I were to ask you when you were saved, you should say that it happened in a certain year on a certain day and month. Redemption is something that happened long ago. Salvation is something present. Redemption was accomplished by Christ. Salvation is realized in us. We were redeemed two thousand years ago. But we may have been saved for only a few years. I do not know how to say it more clearly. This is very clear to me. God's work of redemption is a matter regarding Himself; it is to satisfy Himself and has nothing to do with us. It is something absolutely before God. God Himself was the One who did the work. When we come and see what God has accomplished, and believe and accept it, we will receive this substitution.

Let us use another illustration. There is a crossing that joins the east and west bank of the Whampoa river. It is free of charge. The name of the place is called The Free Crossing. Suppose I were a robber who had robbed and stolen many times there. However, now I am different. What should I do if I want to have a thorough dealing concerning my past theft and robbery? Even if I want to repay, where should I go? Those from whom I stole are now nowhere to be found. What should I do? For the sake of righteousness and in order to repay, I may start a free service to ferry people across the river. Anyone can come for the ride, and no money is charged. I may do this to repay the money that I stole from people in this area. I offer this kind of free service as a solution to the problem of my unrighteousness. This free service is to me a solution to unrighteousness. But to others, it is a substitution; I am paying the fare on others' behalf. This is the way that the Lord Jesus deals with the problem of punishment. God sent the Lord Jesus to accomplish redemption in order that the problem of sin, as well as His own holiness and righteousness, might be taken care of. When one believes, he will enter into this work, and the Lord Jesus will take away his sins.

Hence, the New Testament says, "Christ also has suffered once for sins, the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous" (1 Pet. 3:18). He "Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). All of these were done for us. On the night the Lord was betrayed, He took the cup and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins," (Matt. 26:28). It was for many, not for all. In the future, we will see innumerable ones, with palm branches in their hands, who are washed by the blood (Rev. 7:9, 14). Thank the Lord. He accomplished redemption for His own sake, so that we can be substituted. We can say nothing but to thank and praise Him.