

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WORK OF CHRIST—RESURRECTION BECAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION

We have already mentioned that the Lord Jesus died for us and for our sins (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3). We have also seen how the Lord accomplished God's righteousness and, at the same time, manifested God's grace. Now we have to ask a question. How do we know that the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ has been accomplished? How do we know that such a work was accepted by God? Although we say that the Lord Jesus has fulfilled God's righteous requirements, what does God have to say about this? How can God show us that His Son has indeed accomplished the work of redemption and indeed met His requirements? It is true that the Lord Jesus died for us and for our sins and that His work was accomplished. On the cross before He died He clearly said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). It is true that He finished the work of redemption He set out to do on earth. He was able to say that it was finished. Every one of us who has looked forward to His salvation can also say that it is finished. But how do we know that the Lord's work of redemption is acceptable to God when it is presented before Him? How do we know that the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus was approved by God? It is all right for us to say that the Lord's work has passed the test. But what does God have to say? We can say that Jesus died on the cross and accomplished the work of redemption. But how do we know that our God is fully satisfied with such a work? We know that the Lord's work of redemption is most reasonable to us. But how do we know that the same is true to God? We say that the work of redemption is fully righteous, but would God say that it is righteous also? When we look at the cross, we say that all things are settled. But when God looks at the cross, is everything settled in His eyes? We have to realize that there is no way to know whether or not God is satisfied based on the cross of the Lord Jesus alone; there is no way to find out whether or not God considers it final. If there were only the cross, if we only had the Lord's death, if the cross alone were to remain with us until today, and if the Lord's tomb had never been emptied, we would not know what the work of the Lord's death has accomplished for us. Regarding the redemptive work of the Lord, there is not only the aspect of the cross but the aspect of resurrection as well.

THE LORD'S RESURRECTION IS THE PROOF OF GOD'S ACCEPTANCE OF HIS REDEMPTION

Tonight we are not going to speak about everything related to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, just as we did not share about everything related to His death the last time. Earlier we spoke only about the objective aspect of His death. Tonight we will also consider only the objective aspect of the Lord's resurrection. Objectively, the Lord died a substitutionary death for us; He died on behalf of all (1 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:14). At the same time, He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). This is what the Lord's death accomplished. What then is the purpose of His resurrection? God raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead as a proof that the work of redemption has been accomplished. God has justified and approved it. Now He is satisfied.

Many of us have had experience working in business. Suppose you have a secretary who has proposed a plan to you. After you look at the plan you may write "OK" on it. This means that the work is approved; it is all right. Now it can be carried out. The Lord has died for us and the work has been accomplished. The resurrection of the Lord is God's signing of an "OK" on the work

and death of the Lord Jesus. This means that this death is now approved. Man's problem of sin is now solved. Since the Lord has resurrected, the problem of our sins is fully solved. If the Lord had not resurrected, though the redemption would have been accomplished, our hearts would be held in suspense. There would still be a certain uneasiness within us, for though we would know that redemption had been accomplished, we would not know whether it had been accepted. We realize that we are fully redeemed from our sins when we see that the Lord Jesus has resurrected. Resurrection is the proof. It shows us that the cross was right and the redemption was approved. Resurrection is the proof that the work of the cross has been accepted and received by God.

Let us consider an illustration. Suppose I owe a certain person a sum of money. I may owe him so much that there is no way for me to repay my debt. This, of course, is not a very good illustration. But we will use it here for the sake of clarifying one aspect of the truth. It should not be applied to all aspects of the truth. Let us say that I go to a brother and say to him, "You know that person to whom I owe the money very well. You two are good friends. Please plead for me a little. I have no way to pay back what I owe, even if I pawn everything at a pawn shop. I have a problem even in taking care of my own living today. Please do me this favor by all means." My creditor does not live here in Shanghai; he lives in Soochow. At my request, the brother makes a special trip to Soochow and tells the man, "Mr. Nee is really poor. He cannot even take care of his own living. This little sum of money is nothing to you. Why don't you let it go and write off his debt?" Suppose my creditor is very generous. He says, "Since you come to plead for Mr. Nee's debt, I will forget about it. He does not have to return it to me anymore. Take this promissory note back to him." Then he goes on and says to this brother, "We have not met each other for years. Since we are good friends and since you are here in Soochow, you should take a trip to Tiger Hill and the Winter Mountain Shrine. Why don't you stay here for a few days." He invites him to stay in Soochow and lavishly hosts him. Suppose this brother left on May 10 and settled the business on that day. However, by May 20 he is still not back in Shanghai. While he is feasting in Soochow, I am worrying in Shanghai. I do not know whether or not this brother has finished the business. Perhaps he has not come back because of some difficulty. He did not come back on the night train on May 10. Perhaps the business has not yet been settled. He did not come back on May 11. Neither did he come back on May 19 or 20. As long as he has not come back to Shanghai, my heart cannot have peace because I do not know if the business has been settled. The business was settled on May 10, but I have not yet received news on May 20. As long as he has not come back, my business is not finished. I still consider myself a debtor, and my heart is still ill at ease. When will the business be transacted? Only when he returns to Shanghai will I know that the matter is cleared up. Friends, this illustrates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. When He died for us, He solved the problem of sin. As soon as He died, the fact of sin was taken care of. But if He had not resurrected from the dead, and if He had not come back, then our hearts would have been held in suspense; we would not know what had happened. The Lord Jesus went through death for us. He went through the punishment of the law and the wrath of God for us (Gal. 3:13). But if the Lord Jesus had not come back, we would not know if the work was finished. We would not know if God had accepted the work of the Lord. For this reason, the Lord Jesus must come back. He must resurrect. Then we will know that the work is settled. Praise the Lord. The work is settled. If the work had not been settled, the Lord would not have come out and resurrected. His resurrection proves that our sins have fully been cleared up.

Romans 4:25 says, "Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification." Why was the Lord Jesus delivered? It was because of our offenses. If we had had no offenses, the Lord would never have had to be delivered. It was because of the offenses that the Lord was delivered to man. In the same way, His resurrection was because of our justification. In Greek the two clauses have the same structure. Jesus was delivered because of our offenses and was resurrected because of our justification. Some Bible translators have misinterpreted Paul's meaning. They thought that resurrection is for the purpose that man may be justified. They thought that it is first the resurrection of the Lord, then our justification. But Paul was saying and the Holy Spirit was saying that He was resurrected because we have been justified. To put it simply, it is because we have been justified that the Lord was resurrected. Some versions say that resurrection comes first, then justification. But the Holy Spirit says that justification comes first, then resurrection. First there is the matter of our offenses. Then there is the death of the Lord. In the same way, first there is our justification, then there is His resurrection. He was delivered because of our offenses, and He was resurrected because of our justification. This means that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is our proof of justification. Because we have been justified, God raised up the Lord Jesus. Since the Lord has satisfied God's righteous requirement, God resurrected Him.

My friends, tonight I have to announce to you some very good news. Although some have believed in the Lord, they are still in fear and trembling. They feel like they are walking on the edge of a precipitous cliff or on thin ice. They think that they have committed their souls, their lives, and their eternal future to the Lord's cross. They do not know whether this trust in the Lord will be safe or not. If they find out at a later date that this trust does not result in salvation, then they are in trouble. I may believe in the cross of Jesus for the redemption of my sins today. But if it fails me on that day, then I am in trouble. Today I may say that it is not a matter of doing good or of keeping the law and that all I have to do is rely on the cross of Jesus. But what happens if God says in that day that this is not all right? What shall I do? How do I know today that the cross of the Lord is sufficient? My friends, you should not look at the cross; you should not worry about whether the cross is sensible or not and whether it is right or wrong. All you need to look at is the Lord's resurrection. If the work of the Lord's cross was not proper or right, God would not have resurrected Him. Hence, He resurrected because we were justified. Because we are justified when we trust in the blood of Jesus, the Lord Jesus was resurrected.

RESURRECTION BECAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION

It is wonderful that Romans 3 tells us that we are justified freely through the blood of the Lord Jesus and that Romans 4 follows by telling us that because we are justified, the Lord Jesus was resurrected (v. 25). His death is the basis of our justification, while His resurrection is the proof of our justification. Since He died, we are justified; since we are justified, He resurrected. We are justified before God because of His death, and He was resurrected because of our justification. His resurrection is God's proof to us that His blood is able to justify us. Suppose someone were to ask if His blood is effective or not. There is no way to see the blood. We cannot see the blood at all because the blood was put on the side posts and the upper post of the door (Exo. 12:7). It was brought into the Holy of Holies and put in the place of atonement for sin (Lev. 16:14-15). It was only for

God to see. We only know about the redemption of the Lord Jesus. We do not know how the blood of the Lord Jesus has satisfied God's demand. No matter how much we know, we will never be clear about this matter. In the whole universe, only One knows the full value of the Lord's blood, and this One is God. God knows in full the value of the Lord Jesus' blood. We only know it in part. We will never know it by our mind, our prayer, or our wisdom. We do not know why the blood of the Lord Jesus washes away all our sins. We can only say that He has died for us and for our sins. We still do not know the value of the Lord's work on the cross. However, God knows this value. How does God show that the work of His Son is of great value? How does God show that the propitiation sacrifice of His Son has indeed propitiated us? He shows it by giving us the resurrection as a proof. Resurrection proves that He is satisfied with the cross. In resurrection, God is saying that He has approved the cross and that the cross has passed the test. Now God is presenting resurrection as an evidence. We are justified. Therefore, the Lord Jesus resurrected. Because God saw that the work of the Lord had fulfilled all the righteous requirements of God, everyone who comes to God is now justified. Since God is satisfied, the Lord Jesus resurrected.

The illustration that we have given may not be very good. Let me give you a more accurate illustration. Let us not say that I owe money. Let us say instead that I have sinned. In this case a brother is not going to plead for me. Instead he will bear my punishment, if there is such a thing in law as bearing others' punishment. I have sinned and should be put in jail for three months or confined to manual labor for two or three months. But I have brain disease, heart disease, a lung problem, a kidney disorder, and all kinds of other sicknesses. However, this brother is very healthy and is willing to be my substitute. When will I know that my case is over? I should be the one to go to jail. But he has gone in my place. Although I have not spent one day in jail and although I am staying peacefully at home and can conduct my business as usual, as long as he is in jail, my heart is still not at ease. I am worried that one day the judge may say that he cannot be my substitute and that I have to come myself. It is not until the day that he is released and walking on the street that I know that my case is over. If my case was not yet over, he would not have been released. The Lord Jesus has died for us. But we do not know what God has to say about this. I know that the Lord has come to redeem us from sin. But how do I know that God will acknowledge this way of redemption as proper? I do not know if the Lord's redemption is adequate or proper. I do not know if the redemptive work of the Lord has been fully settled. But since the Lord came out from death, I realize that everything has been taken care of.

Last year when we were buying a piece of land, a few times I took the money to the bank myself. Some of the money was in notes. The other money was in coins. I wrapped them up in a big bundle and wrote on a bank slip the amount of cash included. Then I handed in the package. I thought that if any of the notes or coins were counterfeit, I would have to rewrite the slip. While I was standing by the counter, I kept worrying. How do I know that the amount was correct? How do I know that all the notes were genuine? How do I know that all the coins were genuine coins? The teller would at times take a note and examine it under the light. After he had counted all the money, he put his signature on the slip and passed it to another senior officer, who also signed the slip. The slip was then passed to another man sitting opposite to him who signed the slip again. Finally, the slip was handed to me. By then I knew that the transaction was completed,

and I took the slip home. I did not have to worry anymore about whether the notes were genuine or whether the coins were real. As long as the three signatures were genuine, everything was all right. If after I returned home, I still worried that one of the notes might be counterfeit and could not eat or sleep because of this, there had to be something wrong with my mind. The question was no longer whether the notes had the right color, the right print, or the right paper texture. As long as the bank took the money and put its signature on the slip, the money was genuine, and all the problems were over. In the same way, as long as we see the Lord resurrected, everything is all right. The resurrection of the Lord tells us that we are justified. What does it mean for us to be justified? It means that God has acknowledged the redemption of Jesus His Son. After this, He justified us and then resurrected His Son. Resurrection testifies that His death is proper. Hence, if you still do not have peace and still do not know God's view concerning your salvation and whether you can be saved before God through the Lord Jesus, all you need to ask is whether the Lord has resurrected. His death takes care of redemption. His resurrection takes care of justification. Without justification, He could not have resurrected. This is why I have often said that resurrection is the receipt that God issued for the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus offered. Resurrection is God's receipt to us. It acknowledges the payment as adequate.

If you have faith in a certain person and you know that he has good credit, you would not necessarily need a note of receipt from him if you loan him a hundred, a thousand, or even ten thousand dollars. You know that he would not cheat you. But if it is a person that you do not know, one whom you have never been acquainted with and whose credit you know nothing about, you would definitely want a note of receipt from him. You do not know what he would do with your money. Thank the Lord. He knows that we are of little faith. He knows that we would doubt Him and that we would not believe in Him immediately. Although He has given us His Son and caused His Son to suffer judgment and accomplish redemption, and has even declared that whosoever receives His Son would be justified, He knew that man would still not believe in Him. Therefore, He has resurrected His Son from the dead to be a proof of our justification. His Son is the proof of our justification before Him.

My friends, you have a receipt in your pocket now. Suppose I am now saved, but after a few years God were to say, "Now you have to go to hell. You have to go into eternal perdition." Of course, this is something that will never happen. I would ask, "Why?" Suppose He says, "Because you have sinned. You are not good." I would say, "Has not the Lord Jesus accomplished redemption?" Suppose He would say, "The redemption of Jesus is not enough. You must go to hell." I would then say, "Why is the Lord's redemption not enough?" God might say, "Don't you think that I know everything. When I say that it is not enough, it means it is not enough." What should I say then? I say that I have indeed done wrong, but I am trusting in the Lord's redemption. But God says that though the Lord's redemption has been accomplished, it is not completed. I would then say to Him, "If the work of the redemption of the Lord Jesus was not thorough enough, You should not have resurrected Him. If You resurrected Him, You were telling us through this resurrection that everything was all right. How can You say that it is not enough now?" If I were to say this to God, even He would have to acknowledge that I am right. Hallelujah! The purpose of His resurrection is to show us that His works are proper.

If there is no resurrection among us, then how do we know what happened on the cross? How do we know what the Lord negotiated with God on the cross? We heard these words on the cross,

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). Another word that we heard was, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). One word tells us that God forsook Him. Another tells us that it was finished. If the Lord Jesus had died only, then the whole world could only have hope in Him; it could not have assurance in Him. Man could hope to receive eternal life in Him. He could hope to be justified and forgiven in Him. But he could never have the assurance to say that he is saved or has received eternal life, or that his sins have been forgiven, or that God has justified him. The reason I have the assurance that my sins are forgiven and that I am saved through faith is that I have seen the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. His resurrection shows us that the cross has satisfied God's heart.

THE BIBLE CAUSES US TO BELIEVE IN RESURRECTION

I am one who preaches the cross. Among us, many co-workers also preach the cross. Today we are all those who believe in the cross. We all believe that His death has saved us. He did not die for Himself. Rather, He died to redeem us. But let me ask you a question. Can you find one place in the entire Bible that says that we should believe that the Lord Jesus has died for us? Where in the entire New Testament does it say that we should believe in the Lord's death for us? There is no such place. This is most peculiar. There is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that tells us that we should believe in the Lord's death for us. Do not misunderstand and think that I despise the work of the cross. I am very much for the work of the cross. But one must pay attention to the word of the Bible. There is not a single place in the New Testament that says that we should believe in the Lord Jesus' dying for us. There are countless places in the Bible that tell us that Jesus died for us and for our sins. But there is not one place that tells us to take His death as the object of our faith. The Gospel of John tells us that we have to believe (3:15-16, 18, 36). But it does not speak about believing in the cross. It only speaks of believing in the Lord.

There is another thing that is equally peculiar. The New Testament tells us to believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead. The Bible does not say that the cross or the death of the Lord Jesus is the object of our faith. Rather, it says that resurrection is the object of our faith. I believe we all know the verse in Romans 10:9, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Why does the Bible not ask us to believe in the cross of the Lord, but asks us to believe in His resurrection? Why does the Bible never ask us to believe in the cross of the Lord Jesus, but ask us to believe that God has raised Him from the dead? Brothers, we must consider this a little. This is very crucial. If it were up to our reading of the Bible, we would think that the cross is the most important thing, and that there should be at least one word that says that we should believe in the Lord's death on the cross. But there is not a single word about this. Why is this the case? One brother may answer that if Christ has not resurrected, our faith is in vain. It is true that twice in 1 Corinthians 15 it says that if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is vain (vv. 14, 17). But this word does not help us to solve the problem. On the contrary, it makes our problem all the more difficult. If there is no resurrection, our faith is in vain. Hence, resurrection is something that we should believe in. We know that redemption is a matter between God and the Lord Jesus. It is not God's demand on man. Redemption is not something that the Lord has done to satisfy man's heart. It is the Lord Jesus' satisfaction of God's demand of holiness, righteousness, and glory. The Lord's death and the redemptive work that He accomplished are transactions that went on between God and the Lord Jesus. It is not something that is sounded out as the object of our faith. The basis of our faith is God's raising of Jesus from among the dead.

Hence, today our faith is not in the blood of the Lord Jesus' redeeming us from sin. We can never fully understand this matter. Even a man as spiritual as Andrew Murray, who knew God so well, said that he did not know how much value there is to the blood of the Lord Jesus. Even he said that when he went before God, he could only pray, "God, I do not know how much worth is the blood of Your Son before You. But I ask that all the worth of Your Son's blood be realized in me." The Lord's blood is of such worth that if I would only say so much, I will not be able to receive all that He has done, and His work would be limited by my speaking.

We do not know the worth of the blood. But we do know the worth of resurrection. The blood of the Lord satisfied God's demand, and we do not know how great that demand is. But we do know how great the satisfaction is. I do not know how much I owed. Perhaps it was ten talents or perhaps ten million talents. But I know that the death of the Lord is sufficient to save me. How do I know this? It is because He has resurrected. I am not trusting in the money I put into the bank to be enough or not enough. This is not what I am trusting in. I do not even have to trust that all the money that I have put in was genuine. What I am trusting in is that God would not give me a counterfeit receipt. Even if the redemption of the Lord were wrong, whatever mistakes there could be, God would never issue a wrong receipt. Hence, though I do not know how much the blood has met God's demand, I do know that it has satisfied God's demand. If the Lord had not satisfied God, God would not have resurrected Him. Therefore, you can believe in a most ignorant way. You do not have to ask whether the blood of the Lord is sufficient, or whether the Lord's work of redemption is approved. You only have to ask if God has resurrected the Lord. Since the Lord Jesus has resurrected, all you have to do is believe. We believe in resurrection. This is why the Bible only requires us to believe in resurrection; it does not require us to believe in the cross. The work of the cross is only conveyed to us to let us know what the Lord has done before God. What we preach and believe is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It includes His death and His life. Once I see the receipt, immediately I know that the amount is adequate and that every bank note is genuine.

Tonight I can sleep well because the Lord Jesus has resurrected. If the Lord had not resurrected, even though He has died and redeemed us, we still could not sleep in peace. How do I know that His blood is sufficient? How do I know that the problem of sin is solved? Hallelujah! There is the resurrection. Because we are justified, He has resurrected. Hence, we believe in His resurrection. I do not know how many are sitting here who are still worried about their salvation, who are still doubting and are not sure. When you ask yourself whether you have trusted in Jesus, you may say yes. When you ask yourself whether you believe that Jesus has died for you, you may also say yes. But in you there is still a question. You may think that to believe in Jesus is not sufficient to be forgiven of your sins, that you may still have to do some good works. You may still think this and that. But you only need to know one thing. Why did God resurrect the Lord Jesus? Why did God issue a receipt? The fact that God is willing to issue you the receipt proves that the amount that you have put in was right. When God raised His Son from the dead, it proved that the redemption that His Son accomplished was a righteous one. God cannot do anything unrighteous. Resurrection proves that the work of the Lord Jesus is effective before God. This is why the New Testament emphasizes so much our believing that God has raised His Son from the dead.

The two verses that we mentioned earlier in 1 Corinthians 15 are very precious. Verse 14 says, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is vain; your faith is vain also." Verse 17 then says, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile." If Christ has not resurrected, one will not know what has become of the things that he has believed in. Another wonderful thing is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:3 which says, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." But in verse 17 it says, "If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins." Do not these two verses contradict each other? Verse 3 says that He has died for our sins. That means He has solved the problem of our sins. Why does verse 17 say that if Christ has not been raised, we are still in our sins? This verse is quite peculiar. Perhaps you would have changed that to, "If Christ has not died for you, you are still in your sins." If we changed the words been raised to died, we would readily be able to understand it. Since Christ has died for us, we are no longer in sin. But verse 3 says that Christ has died for our sins already. Now verse 17 says that without Christ's resurrection, we are still in our sins. What does this mean?

My friends, the matter is actually very clear. On the one hand, Christ has died for our sins. But when do we know that we are no longer in sin, and when do we know that we have been freed from sin? It is when the Lord Jesus was resurrected. It is when the Lord was resurrected that we realized that we were redeemed from our sins. We have to distinguish between these two. The redemption and deliverance from sin before God is due to the Lord's death; it is not due to His resurrection. But for us, it is the Lord's resurrection, rather than His death, that we realize. For my creditor, the time a debt is settled is when he sees the money. But for me, it is settled when I see the receipt. My creditor only looks at the money, and I only look at the receipt. God's eyes only see the death of the Lord Jesus, and our eyes only see His resurrection. God does not need the resurrection of the Lord as His proof. He knows very well that the Lord's death is adequate for redemption. The problem is that we do not know. A receipt is not written for the one who receives money. It is written for one who pays the money. No receipt is prepared for the creditor. All receipts are made out for the debtors. They are written to give the debtors peace of mind. Hence, before God the Lord's death is sufficient for our sins. As long as He dies, God is satisfied. Resurrection tells us that He is satisfied, that the death of the Lord has redeemed us from sins. But if the Lord has not resurrected, even though we have been redeemed from our sins, we still would not know it. With the death of the Lord, the problem of sin is forever dealt with before God. Without resurrection, we would not have the confidence that our sins are indeed dealt with. The fact of forgiveness lies in His death. The assurance of forgiveness lies in His resurrection. The Lord's death redeems us from sins, and the Lord's resurrection allows us to know that we have been redeemed from our sins.

THE LORD'S DEATH BEING FOR GOD AND HIS RESURRECTION BEING FOR US

Hence, there are these two sides in the Bible. Without the death of the Lord Jesus for us, we would not have been redeemed from our sins. The Bible says that Jesus has died for our sins. But we see that we are still in sins. Although God has finished His side of the work, matters are still unsettled on our side. That is why the Lord Jesus must resurrect before we know that our sins have been forgiven. Death is for God, and resurrection is

for us. Death is God's demand, and resurrection is the sinners' demand. Death is the solution of sin before God, and resurrection is the removal of doubt in man's heart. With death, the record of sin is done away with. With resurrection, we realize the proof of forgiveness and a not guilty verdict. Thank the Lord that there is resurrection. What happens when one comes to God and wonders if he is saved or not? Such a one may indeed have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. But he may still wonder if he is really saved. Now before God, the receipt has been issued already. If such a one still wants to doubt, it is because he chooses to doubt. If the Lord Jesus has resurrected, then our problems are solved.

Please make a point to remember these three passages—Romans 4:25, 10:9, and 1 Corinthians 15:17. These three places show us what resurrection has accomplished for us objectively. Up until now, we have seen quite a few things. We have covered sin, the law, grace, God's righteousness, the work accomplished by the death of the Lord Jesus, and the work accomplished by His resurrection.

A brother has asked the question: What does 1 John 2:2 mean? I would answer in this way. The words "the sins of" in the phrase "the sins of the whole world" in some versions are not in the original text. The Chinese Union Version reads, "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." If such is indeed the case, then the whole world would have been saved already, for the Lord Jesus has become a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. But in Greek it should read, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

For a reader of the New Testament to understand the Lord's redemption and His substitution, he first has to know the distinction between ourselves and our sins, that is, between the sinner and the sins of the sinner. Second, he has to know the difference between all and many. Third, he must know the difference between sin and sins. There are differences between the three pairs of things: ourselves and our sins, the all and the many, and sin and sins.

The Bible says many times that the Lord Jesus died for all. But not once does it say that the Lord Jesus died for the sins of all. Second Corinthians 5:14 says that, "One died for all, therefore all died." Paul could not say that since One died for the sins of all, therefore all died. The Lord Jesus died for all. But He did not die for the sins of all. If the Lord Jesus had died for the sins of all, then whether or not one believes, he can be saved, for all the problems of sins are solved. But the Lord Jesus died for all. If we go to Him, we will receive Him as our substitute and receive His redemption.

The Bible does say that the Lord Jesus died for sins. But in such cases, it says that He died for the sins of many, and not for the sins of all. The night before last, a brother tested me with a verse. He asked why the book of Hebrews says that the Lord Jesus was offered up for our sins? Hebrews 9:28 says, "So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him, apart from sin, unto salvation." You can see that when it talks about Christ's bearing of sins, it says "to bear the sins of many," and not "to

bear the sins of all." Following this, it gives an explanation, "to those who eagerly await Him." This means all those who are purchased by the blood. It is the innumerable multitude in Revelation 7:9-17. It is the many. That is why it can say that He was offered up for their sins. But it cannot say that He was offered up for the sins of all. The wording of the Bible is never loose. If Christ bore the sins of all, if He bore all the sins of everyone in the world, then we would not have to preach the gospel anymore. But this is not the case. What we have is the many.

Hence, Matthew 26:28 records that when the Lord Jesus took the cup, He said, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Again we have "many," and not "all." If it were "all," then everyone's sins are forgiven. The Bible only says that the Lord Jesus died for all. This word merely shows us that the Lord's death is an open one and that everyone can receive the benefit of His death. If there is anyone here who is not saved tonight, I would say that Christ has died for you. But as for me, the Lord Jesus died for my sins. As long as you ask for it, the effectiveness of the Lord's death will be upon you, and you will have a share in it. But you must come to Him before the effectiveness of the Lord's death can be yours and can work on you. The Lord Jesus died for all, and He died for the sins of many. There is a distinction between the two. We have to take note of this.

Let us read two more passages. Romans 5:18-19 says, "So then as it was through one offense unto condemnation to all men, so also it was through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men. For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be constituted righteous." If we want to understand these two verses, we must give them some thought and pay attention to them. Readers of the Bible agree that these two verses are some of the most difficult verses in the New Testament. We have to pay attention to the wording of them. First, in verse 18, it says, "all men," but in verse 19, it says, "the many." Second, in verse 18 there is the Greek word *eis*, which is equivalent to the English word to or toward. One version translated this as "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." This is not a very accurate translation. The verse can be translated here as "through one offense unto condemnation to all men, so also it was through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men." Now we have to pay a little closer attention to this matter. Verse 18 speaks about one offense, and verse 19 speaks about one man. The one offense denotes the sin of Adam (Rom. 5:14). The one-time sin of Adam was unto the condemnation of all men. This means that the one offense was for the condemnation of all men. Have you seen that just once was enough? It is like saying that once a person makes a fortune, he is prepared to buy many things. The one offense was for the condemnation of all men. In the same way, the one righteous act of Christ was for the justification unto life to all men. It is not correct to translate the verse as the previously mentioned version does, for it would mean that through the one righteous act of Christ, all would have been justified and received life. What is the meaning of *eis*, translated "unto" in this verse? It means a preparation. It is like the government's printing of many bank notes in the central bank. It is a preparation to be used later for exchange. Even if everyone comes to exchange the notes, the government is prepared. Verse 18 says all men. This means that everyone can receive life. There is no problem here at all. But verse 19 is different. Here it says, "For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be constituted righteous." Here we have the many. Through the disobedience of one man, who is Adam, the

many were constituted sinners. Here it does not say that all men were constituted sinners. Why is this so? Let me give you an honest testimony. It may seem as if I am joking. But six years ago, when I first read about the difference between the many and the all, I was a little concerned for the apostle Paul. While I was looking up the original text, I thought if Paul were to use words the way our translators did, it would be a disaster. I was almost praying there, "Don't let such a word be all but be many." Eventually I found out that it is indeed many. What does it mean if we say that through the disobedience of one all men were condemned? This would mean that everyone who is in Adam is a sinner. There would not be one righteous one. This would not be too serious. But the next sentence would be more serious: Through one righteous act all men are justified. This would mean that the gospel need not be preached anymore, for everyone is saved and is justified. There is no mention here of the matter of believing or not and receiving or not. Through the obedience of the One all are saved. Even the unbelieving ones are saved. But this is, of course, not the case. What it says here is, "Through the obedience of the One the many will be constituted righteous." Therefore, what the work of the Lord Jesus has gained is for the many. One must differentiate between all and the many.

At the same time, we must also differentiate between ourselves and our sins. Romans 5:8 says, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But 1 Corinthians 15:3 says that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." To be "for us" is a preparation. But to be "for our sins" is a kind of realization. Even if a person is not yet saved, he can still preach the gospel. But he can only say that God sent His Son to die for us. This is absolutely right. But only those who have been saved can say that God sent His Son to die for our sins. This is because our relationship with the Lord Jesus is in the matter of sins. Hence, we can say that the Lord Jesus died for our sins. First Peter 2:24 says, "Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree." There is a distinction here. To a sinner, we can only say that the Lord Jesus died for him. We cannot say that the Lord Jesus died for his sins.

It will help you to understand if I illustrate this by a simple example. Suppose I have borrowed some money, but have no way to repay. A brother knows that my account number in the Shanghai Bank is No. 51. Suppose he deposits a sum of money into account No. 51. Then he writes a letter to me telling me that he has deposited a sum of money in the bank for me and that I can now repay my debt. He has paid the money and has sacrificed himself to prepare the money for me. But let me ask, Has my debt been cleared yet? I can pay back the debt. The money is in the bank. But the debt is not paid yet. It is only when I go personally to the bank and withdraw the money and pay back the debt that I can say that this brother has paid the debt for me. In the same way, the Lord Jesus has died for us. This death was prepared for us. But it is only when we receive the Lord Jesus that we can say that He died for our sins. Hence, brother, when you quote 1 John 2:2, you must be careful about the wording. Jesus Christ has become a propitiation for our sins, and not for us only, but also for the whole world. You can see how accurate the Holy Spirit is in choosing the words through His apostle. The Lord Jesus died for our sins. But the death of the Lord Jesus was not only for us, but for the whole world, so that the whole world may receive this death. One has to be careful here. Do not add the words the sins of to "the whole world." It is unfortunate that many have not seen this. We cannot add anything to the word of God, nor can we subtract anything from it (Rev. 22:18-19).

Finally, there is still one thing that we have to take note of. It is the difference between sin and sins. We cannot say that the Lord Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, for sins means all the wrongdoings and all the punishment that we need to bear. If the Lord Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, then all the wrongdoings of all the world were removed. Whether a man believes or not, he is saved. But the Bible is very careful in the use of words. It only says the sin of the world. It does not say the sins of the world. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The word "sin" is singular. The problem of sin is brought into the world through one man and brought out of the world through one man. What is mentioned here is the "abstract" dealing of the problem of sin by the Son of God. Objectively speaking, sin entered the world in an "abstract" way through Adam. Today the Lord Jesus is taking away and dealing with the problem of sin in an "abstract" way. This does not mean that He has borne the guilt of each individual sin. If He has borne the guilt of each individual wrongdoing, then the whole world would have been saved already. Thank and praise the Lord that the Word of God does not have any loophole. It never makes a mistake.