

## **That The Penalty Incurred By Adam Was Violent Death**

Before proceeding to the positive evidence for my contention, I must state briefly why I have given up the conviction I once held in regard to these matters, and why I have rejected the view that when Adam transgressed he incurred natural death. I will readily agree that such an impression can be gained, the more so as many of us have been reared on it from childhood, but for all that, it is wrong, as hopelessly wrong as the immortality of the soul. Until it is discarded, a sound and correct understanding of the Atonement and a proper appreciation of what salvation means cannot be obtained.

In the beginning we are told (Genesis 2:17) that Adam was placed under the simple law to which was attached the plain threat that “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Put aside for a moment, if you can, the ideas of your former teachers and think what these words mean. They mean that on the very day Adam sinned, he would suffer an immediate death. The plain and obvious import of those words is that a violent death was incurred.

The way to get a correct meaning is to compare passage with passage and see what there is in other parts of the Bible. There are more than ten other instances of the use of the term “*Muth temuth*” - “Dying thou shalt die,” and in every case, as is obvious from the context, it implies a violent death or execution.

In Genesis 20:7 these words were to Abimelech: “Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live; and if thou shalt restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou and all that are thine.”

Is there any suggestion of a slow process of dying there?

Then I turn to the 1<sup>st</sup>. Book of Kings 2:37. These words are addressed to Shemei. He was forbidden to leave Jerusalem - “For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die; thy blood shall be upon thine own head.”

Can anyone imagine this was a natural death, a slow process intended here?

You can consult the other instances and in every one a violent death is obviously intended.

So that on sound and accepted principles of scriptural exposition, we are justified in coming to the conclusion that Adam incurred a violent death, and subsequent Scriptures confirm that view. It is laid down that the wages of sin is death and lest we should imagine that natural corruptibility was there intended, it is laid down in the law that “without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.” What is the significance of bloodshed if not to point to violent death? There is no natural death that involves the shedding of blood. The Law of Moses implies the same truth. The penalty of presumptuous sins and for heinous crimes like murder for which there was to be no ransom accepted, was death without remedy by smiting with the sword or stoning.

And even with the lesser breaches of the law where provision was made for forgiveness following repentance, the same principle is emphasized in another way. The sinner’s life was spared, but only on condition that the appropriate sacrifice was brought to the door of the

tabernacle, and the sin was transferred to the head of the animal, which was slain in the sinners stead. This particular law emphasizes that the penalty for sin is death.

There were constant warnings to the Israelites. There are a number of specific instances where disobedience was visited by the actual penalty. Nadab and Abihu and Korah will occur to you. They actually prove what is the penalty. They were smitten by God. Those instances are written for our learning that the penalty was violent death.

But there is another piece of evidence. We learn from Eve's words that they were not even to touch the tree "lest they die." In Numbers 4 we are told that the Kohathites were to bear the Ark and Sanctuary, but were not to touch any of the holy things "lest they die." Now if God intended something less than violent death when He spoke to Adam, did He mean the same slow process when He uttered the warning to the Kohathites, the bearers of the Ark? You can discover what meaning was attached to it by reference to the case of Uzziah who merely put forth his hand to steady the Ark. God smote him for his error. Thus, at the cost of a man's life for a very trifling offence, God demonstrated what, apart from His saving mercy, is the penalty for sin. It shows what we are expected to learn in regard to Adam and sin, that it was a violent death that was incurred.

I affirm then that we are required to come to the conclusion that Adam incurred an immediate death. But though he merits it, he did not suffer it, for had he been put to death that would have been the end of him, for as a sinner justly convicted and punished, there was no hope.

But what is more important, if the sentence had been executed there would have been no human race. You and I would never have existed.

Thus, after the transgression, Adam was in a truly desperate situation, liable to instant death and helpless and hopeless apart from the mercy of God. What could God do? His word had gone forth and if law and justice were to be honoured, the sentence must be carried out. An arbitrary act of forgiveness would impugn God's own attributes. Indeed, righteousness was to be established as supreme; it was impossible simply to remit the penalty, but in His infinite wisdom, God revealed a way out of the dead-lock - something no other than God could have conceived, a wonderful scheme whereby the law would be honoured, justice upheld, and at the same time man and the whole race be delivered from his hopeless position.

Adam died, but he only died according to law, his life was forfeit and he was in bondage of Sin. The killing was carried out on the animals with the skins of which they were covered, as a type of redemption.

But unless it is recognized that what Adam incurred was a violent death; that what he incurred by sin was the kind of penalty carried out for sin under the law, and that by his action the whole of the human race was imperilled, it is impossible to appreciate from what we have been delivered, or to understand why the violent death of our Saviour upon the Cross was necessary for our salvation.

When we come to Jesus we find in His obedient life and awful death, the keystone of the arch which stretches from Eden to the Kingdom. The Apostle John saw the redeemed around the throne singing a new song "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." They will all now, as a few here know, that we owe our very existence to the fact that the Lamb of God suffered Himself to be slain instead of Adam.

If Adam had borne his own penalty he would have perished because he was a sinner. Jesus was able to bear the penalty and not perish because the grave cannot hold the righteous man.

The single fact of the crucifixion is proof that what Adam incurred was violent death. If a natural death was sufficient why should not our Lord live a faithful life and obedient life and die a natural death in old age? Dr. Thomas recognized redemption was paid by a price. If we had not passed into bondage of Sin, then we could not have had salvation and we should have perished because the law of God would have been carried out.

It has only been possible to touch on the main features of the argument, but I think you must see there is good reason for carefully thinking over your position. Obviously a good case can be made out for Christadelphianism or it could not have held out for so many years, but the serious flaws are gradually coming to light and today we can justly say it is tottering.

The main part of the structure is good and true and on many points we are agreed but those bad stones in the foundation - the misconception of the wages of sin - sin-in-the-flesh, another failure to understand the Atonement, will bring it to ruin unless there become manifest a change of heart in the leaders and a willingness to learn.

It is pride which prevents the admission that mistakes have been made and none can appreciate better than I, how hard it is to think we can have ever been wrong. There was no greater admirer of Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts than I. Never one studied and loved the works of these men more zealously. But against my will, also certainly against my inclination, I was driven to research by the discovery that there were direct contradictions in their writings.

I was no scholar-monger and wished and worked for union and fellowship, but I was awakened to the fact that the reason for all the discord and division was that no section of Christadelphians had the truth. I was shown that by brethren whom you of the Temperance Hall had cast out as heretics, men to whom I am indebted and eternally grateful for my understanding of God's purpose.

You have heard both sides of this part of the case and you have witnessed the inability of my opponent to meet the arguments I have addressed and his dilemma is obvious. If natural death is the penalty, then not only is God monstrously unjust in inflicting it upon innocent creatures who had nothing to do with Adam or his sin, but He also expects us to see mercy and justice in the fact that not only do we suffer it ourselves, but also Christ had to suffer it and die violently in order that we may be delivered. And even then we still suffer it ourselves; and sinners will suffer a further punishment still in the second death. So God, in effect, punishes the same offence three times. It is no wonder you cannot explain what the death of Christ accomplished. But once recognized that Adam incurred a violent death and the whole scheme is an open book.

We see the mercy of God in delivering him; we see a perfect explanation of why a violent death upon the Cross was necessary. We can see the real meaning of baptism - it is the symbolic suffering of the death to which we were subjected by the law of sin and death but which Jesus suffered in actual fact. We only suffer it in symbol and after we rise to the new life as a resurrection, we pass out of the condemnation into a state which Adam had lost by sin - communion with God (we are still corruptible as Adam was corruptible when he was created. God said, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." We do not know what would have happened if he had been obedient).

We are still corruptible and may still die in the absence of our Saviour, but not the death for sin. Natural death is not the death for sin. We passed that (death for sin) in symbol of the waters - Baptism, and when He returns we shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.

I ask what the Apostle means by, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit"? If natural death be the penalty, you have to dispose of that verse.

The idea that natural death is the penalty is incredible in the light of the true view of God's purpose. And when we think of the worthies of old it becomes almost ludicrous. Why did Balaam cry, "Let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his"? Why did God tell Daniel, "Go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days"?

Death terminates our period of probation. All the righteous will be rewarded together. What a marvellous purpose that is!

Christadelphians teach that God inflicts this death as the penalty of sin on the innocent. What about animals; why do they die? Are they under the law of sin? Did they become corrupt because of sin?

Think of the martyr Stephen. Was he put to death by God? Did Paul receive the wages of sin? Precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints, because He will let them sleep, like He did Moses until the time comes.

Only a hopeless, wrong conception could lead us to regard this blessed sleep which He giveth to His beloved, as a punishment, as the wages of sin. Think of the words of Simeon, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace... for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

We should not regard death as a penalty. Cultivate that view and we may begin to count all things but loss for the excellency of His name. These things are worth thinking about. They were not decided centuries ago. If we cannot make progress we cannot get anywhere.

Jesus was outside the necessity of His atonement. That this is a fact expressly stated in Scripture, not in veiled prophetic language, or even by an apostle in symbolism but by the angel Gabriel in precise and unmistakable terms: "After three score and two years shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."

If that statement is authentic there is an end of the argument. I am prepared to accept either the authorized or the marginal rendering, and I have assured myself as you can - of the substantial accuracy of that passage. But so we shall not spend time debating a technical matter I make you a present of it.

I base my case, not upon that or any other single text, but upon a wide foundation of scriptural testimony and evidential reasoning.

Now I must explain that I reject the theory which is common to Christadelphianism and many other sects:- that the result of the first sin was the fixation of an evil principle in the flesh. There is no scriptural evidence for such a change of nature and any theory which seeks to involve Christ in the need for redemption because of His sinful flesh is doomed before it is begun, because I deny the existence of such sinful flesh or sin in the flesh. Sin is transgression of

law. It cannot exist in flesh. A man is sinful if he does wrong; if he changes his ways and does good, he is righteous, but his flesh remains the same in both conditions.

There are literally scores of texts which tell us why the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was necessary, which state explicitly why and for whom the atonement was made; "Christ died for the ungodly," "to save sinners," "the Just for the unjust," "for the sins of the people," "He suffered for us in the flesh." There is not a single one which says that He suffered for Himself, that He died on His own account, for His own nature, for His own sins, that He needed redemption or reconciliation. If there were one such I would resign the fight. But there is none and since to argue that His death was in any sense on His own account is to rob Him of all glory and honour. I am an enemy to all such teaching. I have no personal ill-feeling because I have regard for all Christadelphians, people to whom I am indebted for the ground-work of the things I believe. All the same I think such teaching is wrong.

I want you first to consider one of the principle elements in the law of sacrifice. It is that every offering made for sin had to be the property of the offerer, a clean animal (as opposed to those which were specified as legally unclean), without fault and perfect of its kind. In 22nd Leviticus verse 20, "But whatsoever hath a blemish that shall ye not offer" and in Malachi 1:14, "Cursed be he which hath in his flock a male and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing."

A very important principle underlies that provision. The sacrifice had to be legally clean and physically perfect to begin with, because the sins were to be symbolically transferred to it before it was slain. If the offering were pledged to another, imperfect or legally unclean, it could not be acceptable. If Israel had made such an offering, not only would it have been ineffective and their sins remained, they would have been accursed for their neglect of a vital principle.

There is no one here who would question the fact. Nor is there one who would deny that Jesus is the antitype of all these Sacrifices.

How then is it possible to reverse all the facts and assent that Jesus needed redemption, was under condemnation, or legally unclean, or defiled in any sense of the term?

Let us consider what it is that involves the need for atonement and see how Jesus stands. Is it because we are human nature? I say; certainly not. God made us human nature and it is the simple medium through which life is manifested, the natural out of which the spiritual will be developed. Is it because we are corruptible? No, because the corruptibility is simply the natural law which controls our natural existence. It is no more a cause than it is a bar to eternal life. It is primarily alienation from God which puts us in need of redemption and this can result either from actual sins or transgression of a known law as in Adam's case, or from inclusion in a state of bondage under a federal head as for the purpose of Salvation, as are all Adam's descendants.

Now if Jesus stood in need of redemption He must have been alienated from His Father under one or other of these conditions - there is no other. But we are told expressly that He was under neither. He was personally without sin, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners and could not therefore need redemption on that account.

Was He then in Adam, in the federal bondage, the condemnation that passes upon all men who were in the loins of Adam when he sinned as explained by Paul in Romans 5? Never! It was for that purpose and for that purpose alone that He was begotten of God that He should be free from condemnation. He was no son of Adam; He was the Second Adam, the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, deriving His life from the same source as Adam, not through human channels. He was not born of the will of the flesh. He received His life from above. It was

because of that He was in a position to pay what Adam had forfeited. Christ had what Adam had lost - he forfeited everything.

It is a perfect parallel because Adam who sinned lost his life and Christ who did not sin had His life and gave it for Adam.

How perfect that arrangement is and how it fulfils the types and all the necessities of the case.

But there is another side to the picture. If in any sense His death was for Himself, He was a false witness and a deceiver. When He said "I am the Good Shepherd, I lay down my life for the sheep" was He subtly concealing the important fact that His death was necessary for Himself, that apart from obedience unto death He would have perished?

How could He be at the same time the Shepherd and one of the sheep for whom He gave His life?

He claims our love and honour because He says it was for us, His friends. Shall we reply by saying, "Yea Lord, but it was also for yourself"? That is to rob Him of all honour and to make God unjust, for we had then been redeemed by fraud. If His own eternal life and salvation depended on His death, would He not have been foolish to have refused? And if His very existence was contingent upon His obedience unto death, have we any means of knowing it was, in any sense for us?

Think of His agony in Gethsemane. "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." If Jesus was inevitably subject to the law of death by reason of His nature, that cry of anguish was foolishness. His death was His inescapable fate. What an awful thought - it is the outcome of the theory that His death was for Himself, or that Jesus stood in need of redemption.

Christ said of His life "No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself." If He was under condemnation His life was not His own. If He laid it down of Himself not even God took it from Him. He submitted voluntarily to the violent death which Adam incurred in Eden, to buy back the race from the bondage of sin, to rectify the action of God in passing over the sins done aforetime, and thus deliver the race from eternal destruction, and that there may be this opportunity for salvation.

This is the command He received from His Father; it was His Father's purpose centred in Him, but there was no penalty attached to it, and had He been unwilling or His courage unequal to the task, He would not have merited any punishment but would have entered into life alone.

I say then, it is certainly difficult to imagine Jesus refusing to take His destined place in the plan of God, but unless we can conceive the possibility of His having avoided the Cross without incurring any penalty, we can never appreciate the altruism of His sacrifice.

He gave Himself for us, the Just for the unjust. Why should we be afraid to recognize that marvellous fact? I will tell you why you are afraid - because the necessity of your beliefs involve Him in dying for Himself.

He gave Himself for us, the Just for the unjust. It is this inability to see in Christ One who is in no way liable or subject to death, yet who willingly took upon His own shoulders the burden of the race, that is the reason for the coldness and weaknesses of the religion of



Christadelphianism. They are unable to manifest that love which would bind them together as the most powerful force in the world.

So I deny the existence of any such thing as sinful flesh. We can be servants of sin by obeying sin, or servants of righteousness by obeying righteousness. We still have the same flesh as we received, Jesus received the same flesh, but He was never under the dominion of sin and He was in a position to pay what Adam had forfeited.

There is plenty of literature available on sin-in-the-flesh and the origin of it. Where did sin-in-the-flesh originate? It is unscriptural and never heard of till it originated with Augustine at the same time as the immortality of the soul. It became an accepted part of Christianity and the Church and it is the last remnant of the Apostasy which Dr. Thomas had not abandoned. You will find it in the 9th of the 38 Articles of the Church of England exactly as you believe it.

Instead of going back to the beginning and the loss of life, finding out what it was that Adam lost. In the Statement of Faith they confused themselves with the effect of the sin on the flesh and its relation to Jesus. Sin cannot alter flesh; it can only alter character and standing in the sight of God. All who are sinners are alienated from God. Jesus was not alienated. Did He ever forfeit His right to Sonship? He did always the things that pleased His Father and when the time came that God determined for the completion of the purpose He began in Adam, Christ fitted Himself obediently into that purpose and suffered the death which was to ratify all that had gone before.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the same flesh as Adam. Despite that, He lived a righteous life and then bore the penalty due to sinners.

What love that shows towards us!

This is the key - that it was life that was forfeit. If that is overlooked all other errors flow. If flesh is sinful, then God made it so. If Christ was sinful flesh, how then could He live a righteous life, and even if His flesh had been sinful, how could His death have improved matters?

If He had been sinful flesh then He would have been in the same boat as the rest of the human race, because He would have been under the same ruling which says "no man can by any means redeem his brother." He could not even redeem Himself, much less others. And is it just in any sense to put a man to death because he was born under condemnation? Christ was never in bondage to sin; He was born the Son of God and purchased life for us with His own life.

After a certain parable Jesus said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." You need no persuasion that He rose from the dead, you believe it, but dare you hear what Moses and the prophets have written concerning the death incurred by Adam and the penalty Jesus paid to deliver the race?

As plainly as words and laws and types can do, they tell us Adam incurred immediate inflicted death, that it was life that was lost in the Garden of Eden, that Adam incurred a death involving bloodshed and if God were merely just, that would be the penalty of all sinners.

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