

Prepared & Preached by Jon Cardwell
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Anniston, Alabama
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I. INTRODUCTION. The primary focus of our message this morning is in **v21**, “*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*” A few Sunday evenings ago, in our expositional study through the gospel of John, I said that **John 1:9-13** is the essence of the gospel; & that is true: the basic & essential character of the gospel is God’s grace & truth; AND more specifically, God’s sovereign grace *according* to His truth, w/that truth being manifested & declared in the 2nd Person of the Triune Godhead, Jesus Christ. In 1886, Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon in London from **2 Cor 5:20-21**, & Mr. Spurgeon opened that sermon w/this statement: “The heart of the Gospel is redemption and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth of God preach the gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken— but they who preach not the Atonement, whatever else they declare— have missed the soul & substance of the Divine message.” As the essence of the gospel is grace & truth, the heart of the gospel is the redeeming work of Christ upon Calvary’s Tree, AND the essence, the basic & essential character of Christ’s redeeming work is the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Take away Christ’s sacrifice & you have nothing—no hope, no salvation, no good news.

II. CHRIST KNEW NO SIN. Before we can grasp the incredible truth that Jesus Christ was made sin for us, we must come to grips w/the truth that Christ did not know sin. Assuredly, the righteous Son of God knew the depravity of man & the wickedness of Adam’s fallen descendents around Him. **John 2:24-25** tells us that “*Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, & that He needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.*” The pre-incarnate Christ was there at the fall of Adam in **Gen 3**, & I believe that it was He, Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest, who sacrificed an innocent animal to provide Adam & Eve w/coats of skin to cover their nakedness (**Gen 3:21**). Jesus knew what sin was because it opposed the very nature & character of a holy God whose purity, goodness, & righteousness is the source, stay, & security of all that was, is, & ever more shall be pure, good, & righteous.

Jesus was not ignorant of sin or its devices, as we are told by the Holy Spirit in **Heb 4:15** that our Lord “*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*”

A. That Christ *knew no sin* was not a declaration of the Messiah’s ignorance of it, but His separation from an intimate relationship w/sin. Not only was Jesus Christ wholly & completely pure, good, & righteous beyond that of any man who had ever lived, or will ever live before the consummation of all things, but also, He never even had a sinful thought to entertain.

B. There are those who believe that it was technically possible for Christ, as a man, to sin. That is UNTRUE according to the Word of God: *HE KNEW NO SIN*. Jesus Christ not only led a sinless life while He was upon the planet, but He specifically came to earth to lead a sinless life. The terms of the Covenant of Grace, the Testament of Redemption, were agreed to by God the Father & God the Son, & witnessed by God the Holy Spirit, before ever angel spread its wings to soar in the heavenly realm around the throne of God.

C. Someone may object & say, “Wait a minute, didn’t Jesus pray in Gethsemane about not going to the Cross?” No. Jesus prayed, “*O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt*” (**Mt 26:39**). IOW He prayed as a man of sorrows, “Heavenly Father, if it is possible while still consistent w/Your holy & eternal Covenant of Redemption, let this cup, which contains your holy wrath upon all that is unholy & sinfully wicked, pass from Me: yet, not what I have asked if it is apart from obedience to your perfect & holy will.”

D. Jesus Christ was superlative in His innocence w/regard to sin; superlative in His purity w/regard to His intimate relationship w/God ...in His righteousness w/regard to His perfect obedience to God’s moral law ...in His goodness w/regard to reflecting all the benevolence of His heavenly Father ...& superlative in every attribute of God’s moral excellence. Jesus Christ spoke, acted, & thought w/out sin whatsoever.

E. If man is not totally depraved, then Christ died in vain. If there is any goodness in man to help himself apart from a supernatural work of God, then Christ suffered needlessly. For those that think, “Well, I’m not as bad as some people,” that kind of

thinking will get you into trouble because it will lead you far beyond any hope because our only hope is Christ. Just a few chapters away, in **2 Cor 10:12**, it says that people that rank or compare themselves w/other sinful descendents of Adam are foolish: “...*but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*” We must compare ourselves with HE, Jesus Christ, *who knew no sin...* & when we have, & it has been done by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, we will find that the Bible again rings true when it declares, “*All have sinned, & come short of the glory of God*” (**Rom 3:23**).

Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, did not sin & He *knew no sin*.

III. GOD HATH MADE CHRIST TO BE SIN FOR US. [**Jn 10**] Can we take this to mean that God caused Christ to sin so that He can be justly punished? NO, that would be absurd. He didn't sin; we had already examined that because *HE KNEW NO SIN*. GOD HATH MADE CHRIST TO BE SIN FOR US. Can we take this to mean that God created an angelic being that would be an atoning sacrifice, because God made, or created Him to be sin? NO! that would be absurd. Jesus said that He was God because, although Jesus was a flesh-&-blood man, He WAS God. Even the Jews knew what He was saying [**Jn 10:30-33**]. GOD HATH MADE CHRIST TO BE SIN FOR US. Can we take this to mean that God *forced* Christ to take upon Himself the sins of a wicked world so that God the Father could punish His Son in some cruel, abusive way? NO! that too would be utterly ridiculous because Christ laid down His life willingly... & obediently [**Jn 10:14-18a**]. So what does it mean when the Scripture says that HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US? [**Rom 3:24-26**]

A. [**Rom 3:26**] God the Father made, that is, He DECLARED, that His righteous Son, who was completely holy, perfect, & sinless... who *knew no sin*, to receive God's holy justice for sin as if Jesus Christ committed every sin that is against a holy God, so that the justice of God might be satisfied... THAT GOD MIGHT BE JUST, & THE JUSTIFIER OF HIM THAT BELIEVETH IN JESUS CHRIST. Yet, it is not everyone who is justified... only those who believe in Jesus Christ. He who does not believe in Christ, trust in Christ, hope in Christ & Christ alone for salvation, will, IN THAT DAY, be condemned by a just & holy God for every sin committed, every righteous deed

omitted & every idle word that failed to give God glory & honor. AND we'll get to that in a moment. [Is 53]

B. Yet, GOD HATH MADE CHRIST TO BE SIN FOR US, that is, He has DECLARED the innocent Christ to be that sin offering on our behalf. **Gal 3:13** says, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,*" (being declared a curse for us) "*for it is written, Cursed is every man that hangeth on a tree.*" When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified on a wooden Cross, pinned between heaven & earth w/ 6" nails in His wrists (hands), & a 9" nail in His feet, He became the substitutionary sacrifice for all who would believe on Him...

C. [Is 53:5] Jesus Christ was wounded, מחלל, for our transgressions... from the Hebrew root חלל, which means "to profane." This was done in 2 ways. (1) By God, in that Christ was the substitute, God considered Christ accursed because of the sinful rebellion of fallen man; (2) that rebellious, sinful, transgressing nature would be visibly apparent upon the body of the Messiah when He hung upon that tree of wood: [Is 52:14] כן משחת מאיש מראהו ותארו מבני אדם The vicious cruelty of sinful, fallen man would take the righteous Son of God & beat Him beyond human recognition, YET, CHRIST'S physical sufferings is not what paid for our sins; it only shows how wicked & sinful man is...

D. What paid for our sins, what justifies man before a holy God is, again, in [Is 53:5b]: Jesus Christ was bruised (מדכא) for our iniquities. Bruised, from the root דכא, which means, literally, "to crush" or "to pulverize [into powder]." How was this done? While Son of God hung upon that Roman cross, His heavenly Father poured out His holy wrath upon Him as a sin offering: [Is 53:10]. There is no way, in all of eternity, that the frail & finite mind of man can know or understand all Christ went through while He hung upon Calvary's Tree. He suffered the separation from God like no man can ever know, because He walked in intimate fellowship WITH God like no man ever has. He suffered the torments & punishment of hell. He was inflicted w/the holy fury & the righteous anger of the almighty justice of God... & for me to elaborate upon such things would never even scratch the surface of the depth of what actually took place. Only the

supernatural power of God's Holy Spirit can convince you & reveal to you of the sin, righteousness, & judgment that took place upon Mount Calvary 2000 years ago.

E. And as that sin offering, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, Jesus Christ was the Good Shepherd, whom we read about in **Jn 10**, "*and I lay down My life for the sheep.*" Why does He lay down His life for the sheep? [**Is 53:6**] Because we are sheep gone astray, sinful, wicked human beings, God has DECLARED Christ to be the substitutionary sacrifice, the substitute who takes God's justice & judgment upon sin, laying upon Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all; ALL OF WHOM? Every one that believeth on Jesus Christ (**Rom 3:26**).

F. [**2 Cor 5:17**] The problem is that man is so sinful & has fallen so completely short of the glory of God, that this amazing truth of God's grace can only be believed by God's declaration to make us new creations in Christ. By the same power of declaration that God framed the worlds & placed the planets in their orbits & hung the sun, moon, & stars in the heavens; by the same power of declaration that God spoke the universe into existence, "Light be!" and light became; by same power of declaration that brought forth the dead, "Lazarus, come forth;" YEA, & by the same power of declaration that raised Jesus Christ from the dead after His body lay in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea for 3 days & 3 nights, it is that same resurrection power that MUST resurrect a sinner who is dead in His trespasses & sins; the same regenerative power that makes a soul alive in new birth, born-again, literally, born from above; it is the same revival power that makes old things pass away & all things become new! (**2 Cor 5:17**). The declaration of these truths; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully God and fully man, 2 natures in one divine Person, who redeemed sinners by His substitutionary sacrifice MUST be supernaturally revealed to a heart that is stone, to a spirit that is dead, & to a soul that is lost, void of all spiritual understanding & discernment... & that is the miracle of the preaching of the gospel & proclamation of God's holy truth found in Scripture; that frail, fallen, sinful men, such as myself, can be saved by God's grace & then turn around & proclaim its truth... & through that word preached, sinful souls are saved; fallen men, women, & children are restored to a right relation w/the Creator; souls already saved are sanctified & grow in grace, maturing as believers.

C. AND remember, it MUST be by the power of God through His preached Word for the Bible says that “faith cometh by hearing, & hearing by the Word of God” (**Rom 10**). There’s too much monkey business going on in what seems to be called Christ’s church these days. A soul is NOT saved by being baptized, reading the Bible every day, praying every day, doing good deeds, or being counted for membership in a particular local church. YES, if you are saved, you are a new creature & therefore, transformed in such a way that you’ll want to be baptized according to the Lord’s commandment; you’ll want to read your Bible every day because of a new love for God’s Word; you’ll want to spend time in prayer communing w/God; you’ll want to live a righteous life that is pleasing to God; & you’ll want to be a part of a local church fellowship as a visible member of the body of Christ... & we’ll look at this new life of righteousness next week when we cover the second portion of this verse, *THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM*, along w/another passage of Scripture in **Jn 3**... BUT, let me repeat, salvation MUST come by the declaration of God alone, through Christ alone (**Eph 2:8**).

D. You can’t get saved, by coming up to some altar call, or saying some prayer, as if it were in those things you did in order to get saved. It’s NOT in what YOU do. It’s in what God has done in Christ & in what He declares by Christ. Yes, many people were saved by God’s grace when they walked up to the front of the church or said a sinner’s prayer... but it was NOT because of the walking or the talking! If you know you are saved, & you remember that there was a change of life in you at the time you went forward in a church or said some superstitious prayer, God saved in spite of doing those things. There’s too much monkey business going on among preachers that would use anything other than the pure Word of God... “to get results.”

F. Look, perhaps you’re thinking, “Yeah, I’ve heard what you said, but I’m just too sinful for God to want to save me.” Let me ask you this: Do you think God is a sinful, devious Creator that would go against His own Word? God is true & He is truth. He has declared that He has made Christ sin for you that you might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Do you think God has lied when the Bible tells us that God cannot lie (**Titus 1; Heb 6**)? Yes, I have preached in times past that we have sinned infinitely against an infinite God, not because we are infinite, but because our sin is infinitely wicked by virtue of whom we have sinned against— an infinite God. Yet, by the same token, although the infinite God became a finite man, Jesus Christ’s righteous offering

was infinitely pure, infinitely good, & infinitely holy because of the value of His worth to an infinitely pure, good, & holy God. You can believe & trust in that for your hope. You can believe & repent before a holy God because of His eternal declaration!