

The Gospel According to the Scriptures
Part 1: How that Christ Died
I Corinthians 15:3-4
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. **Introduction:**

- A. Today I'm beginning a series of messages that I've titled, "The Gospel According to the Scriptures," borrowing the language from I Corinthians 15, verses 3 and 4. This first message (or Part 1) will deal with "How that Christ Died."
- B. But by way of introduction to this series as a whole, let me remind you of the importance of this subject – the Gospel. I'm referring to the specific message found in God's word that sets forth the one way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now all who consider themselves of the Christian faith, will profess that they believe the gospel of Christ; however, the scripture is full of admonitions to not be deceived and of examples of how most who come in the name of Christ, actually (though perhaps unwittingly) deny the true doctrine of Christ – the very gospel according to the scriptures.

Many are aware of the importance of the gospel. There's a widespread awareness of the words in Christ's great commission to His disciples as recorded in Mark 16 where after instructing them to go "*...into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*" He continues in the next verse (vs. 16) saying, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" So men and women recognize the importance of it. But what most fail to recognize is that their gospel – how they presume sinners are saved – bears little resemblance to the vital truths of God's gospel – the gospel "...according to the scriptures."

The scripture warns us of the spirit of antichrist that has been prevalent since the early church – warning us to beware of those who come in the name of Christ but deny the doctrine of Christ. We're warned to beware of false prophets, of wolves in sheep's clothing who will deceive all but the very elect of God – the ones to whom God is pleased to enlighten to the truth concerning Christ and how sinners are saved.

Remember the parable of the preachers at the judgment as related to us in the words of Christ in His sermon on the mount. It speaks of those who face the final judgment presuming to believe the gospel of Christ.

There in Matthew 7, beginning in verse 21 Christ says, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”*²² *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*²³ *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* So, we see it is imperative that we be brought from darkness to the light of His gospel – that we embrace God’s way of salvation – the gospel according to the scriptures.

II. Primary Text: I Corinthians 15:1-4:

A. Well, before we go any further, let’s consider our primary text. Follow with me in I Corinthians 15 and we will begin our reading in verse 1. There Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians writes, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, <See how important this gospel is? It is the God’s means of calling His sheep unto Himself.> *if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.* <Paul is saying you are saved unless your faith is exposed as mere mental agreement and not the gift of God who preserves His people in the faith> ³*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* Now I want you to underline in your Bible or, if not, at least in your mind’s eye, 2 words or phrases in this passage. First, in verse 3 underline the word “how.” And then in both verses 3 and 4, underline the phrase, “according to the scriptures.”*

B. According to the Scriptures.:

1. The Old Testament: We know that in the day in which Paul wrote this epistle, that the only scriptures they had were the Old Testament scriptures. And let us make no mistake – therein we have set forth in picture and type, as well as in prophecy the truth of the gospel of how that Christ would die, be buried and rise again.

(a) Consider what Jesus told the Jews as recorded in John chapter 5 (remembering that at this time, they too only had the Old Testament scriptures available to them). These Jews desired to persecute and slay Him, considering Him a lawbreaker for having healed on the Sabbath. And in John 5:39 he tells them, *“Search the scriptures; <Literally – You do search the scriptures> **for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.**”* He’s telling them that the Old Testament scriptures testified of Him.

- (b) Just a few verses down in that same chapter, at verse 45 he continues saying to them, ***“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. ⁴⁶For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.”***
- (c) And then after His resurrection, when He made His appearance on the road to Emmaus, he said to them, as recorded in Luke 24:25 and following, ***“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ²⁶Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”*** The subject of the Bible is Christ. As a preacher who many of you have heard once put it in an excellent series of messages, it is a “Him” book (spelled H-I-M). He called the series the “History of Redemption” or His – Story. Christ is the subject of all the scriptures (Old and New).
- (d) And then later in that same chapter, Christ appeared again to His disciples and, as recorded in Luke 24:44 and following, ***“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. ⁴⁵Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:”*** So we see here that the Old Testament Scriptures concerned Christ and the necessity of His suffering and death and subsequent resurrection. And notice that it takes a miraculous enlightenment – an opening of the understanding for even these who had walked with Christ to understand the scriptures – to understand the gospel of how He died according to the scriptures. And so I pray will be the case for all who hear this gospel message.

2. The New Testament: Well, as I’ve already pointed out, the entire Bible (Old and New Testament alike) points sinners to Christ and to the Gospel that sets forth Christ’s Person and work as the sole ground of a sinner’s salvation. God is a God of truth and does not change. Therefore, there must be a harmony of truth between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They do not stand in contradiction. So today we have available more light on the subject by virtue of the New Testament, including its commentary on the Old Testament. So as we consider now the truth of the gospel according to the scriptures, we are wise to consider the entire counsel of God to insure it is His Gospel – according to the whole counsel of God. So we do not limit our consideration to the Old Testament but rather consider both the Old as well as the New Testament scriptures as we seek to understand and embrace how Christ died for sinners, according to the Scriptures.

C. “How” that Christ Died: Now again, notice that it is not merely the fact that Christ Died, was buried, and rose again but how. As I’ve already noted, most all who consider themselves to be Christians are in agreement on the reality of the facts of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, but sadly, most have not yet had their understandings opened to the “how” or the significance of what was accomplished.

1. Reality of History / The facts: Now the scriptures do set forth and prove the reality of redemptive history – that Christ did in fact die on the cross, according to the scriptures.

(a) The death that the Messiah would die was plainly foretold and pointed out in prophecy, particularly in the twenty second Psalm. Some refer to Psalm 22 as the “Psalm of the Cross.” We will be looking at that some more in a few moments, but if you study the entire chapter, you will see the description foretold by Christ Himself of His own humiliation. He comments on the dislocation of his bones; of the fever which would be upon Him, as so often was the case with those who died by crucifixion. In particular, it mentions the piercing of His hands and feet. And of course the New Testament historical account proves that it was this Jesus of Nazareth who perfectly fulfilled all of these very specific prophecies concerning the circumstances of His death.

(b) And likewise, we have such vivid pictures and types both in Old Testament historical accounts as well as that which was typified in the ceremonial law under the terms of the Old Covenant given unto the Jews. For example, we know from New Testament testimony concerning the Old Testament that Christ is called the mercy seat – as He is typified by the mercy seat which covered the broken tablets of the law contained in the Ark of the Covenant. We know that Christ is the ark – Noah’s refuge from God’s wrath typifying Christ as the refuge for sinners who are saved eternally from God’s just wrath. Christ was typified by the lifting up of the brazen serpent by Moses in the wilderness; and the phrase of lifting up from the earth, is used by Christ himself, to signify what death he should die in John chapter 3. And we could go on and on to prove from the circumstances that the Christ who died on the cross according to the New Testament scriptures is indeed the promised Messiah pictured and prophesied in the Old Testament scriptures.

2. The Significance:

- (a) But since the vital issue of the gospel is “how” that Christ died, was buried and rose again according to the scriptures, I will spend most of the rest of today and in the other messages of this series dealing with the significance of Christ’s Person and Work rather than the circumstances.
- (b) Now to cut to the chase regarding the significance of Christ’s death on the cross, we need to understand why it was the pleasure of God, and the will of Christ that Christ should become incarnate to suffer for these, the objects of their great and everlasting love. And let us be clear, the true cause and reason that He should suffer for them, were their sins and transgressions – to make satisfaction for them, and save them from them. It was not for any sin of his own, for he never committed any, but for the sins of others – His sheep. As we’re about to see, the scripture is clear that He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our sins. He was stricken for the transgressions of His people. As I Corinthians 15 teaches, He died for their sins, according to the scriptures.

III. How that Christ Died for our Sins, according to the scriptures: Be turning to Isaiah 53 as we will be referring to several verses found in this Old Testament prophecy which clearly sets forth the sole ground or basis for the salvation of sinners.

A. He died For Sins: Now first consider that His death was for sins.

- 1. From the same scripture that was available to the Corinthians in Paul’s day, in Isaiah 53: 5 we read, “***But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*** He died for sins and unless the almighty God-man can fail (which He cannot), then the just penalty due unto the sins He died for has been paid in full! He didn’t come up a few dollars short leaving you, the sinner to pick up the rest of the tab.
- 2. Then skip down to verse 10 where we read, “***Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*** <Their iniquity (their sin) as measured against the equity of the law and justice of God – that is their falling short of being in perfect compliance with His revealed will. He bore that away.>

B. Substitution – For OUR Sins.

1. Now back in I Corinthians 15, Paul is telling the brethren there in Corinth that the Gospel sets forth not just that He died for sins, but how that He died for “our” sins – the sins of a people who are brought to believe on Him. So, herein we see that how Christ died for sins was as a Substitute – dying for the sins of others. Look again in Isaiah 53 beginning this time in verse 4, and note the repeated use of the personal pronoun, “our.” There we read, “***Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***”
2. Similarly, in Daniel chapter 9, we have a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah and the accomplishment of His death. I’ll be referring to other aspects from that chapter as well, but for now, consider these words in the first part of verse 26 where we read, “***And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself:...***” He died as a Substitute.
3. 3 Aspects of His Substitutionary Work: Now I want you to consider 3 aspects of the kind of Substitute the Lord Jesus Christ is, according to the Scriptures:
 - (a) A Sinless Substitute – Under the terms of the Old Covenant, we see in the scriptures a beautiful picture of Christ as One who was without sin in the prescribed choice of the animal sacrifices. They were to bring an unblemished, innocent lamb to sacrifice – this shedding of blood picturing the Lamb of God who would come in time. And He would be the only man ever to walk on the face of this earth without sin. Consider these scriptures:
 - (1) I Peter 1:18: ***Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:***
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 5:21: ***For he <speaking of God the Father> hath made him <God the Son> to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*** He was a sinless Substitute and did not contract sin or become contaminated with sin, but rather He was made sin by God’s imputation of it to Him (charging the demerit of the sins of a people to His account that He might pay the penalty due unto them).

And all of this to produce the one perfect righteousness (satisfaction to God's justice by His perfect obedience unto death) that was absolutely necessary for God to justify hell deserving sinners. Now these saved sinners are still sinners but they have a righteousness they cannot and do not produce. Rather the very righteousness of God (the merits of Christ) is imputed or charged to their account. Now that truth glorifies God, exalts Christ, and excludes all grounds of boasting in those he saves. He was a sinless Substitute who died for the sins of others – for imputed sin.

(b) A Suffering Substitute:

- (1) Look with me again in Isaiah 53, verses 10-11. There we read, ***“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*”**
- (2) This “travail” speaks of His suffering. It says His soul was made an offering for sin. Now consider how this was equivalent to an eternal death or the sufferings in hell that all would deserve if He had not died for some. Now, the 2 parties I’m comparing are certainly different. On the one hand, we are considering the just desserts of fallen, finite humanity. Yet the One spoken of here as the suffering Substitute is the infinite God-man. And there are 2 aspects we might consider as we contemplate the horror of eternal death. One is the punishment of being eternally separated from and deprived of the presence of God. The other aspect of the punishment of eternal death is the everlasting sense or experience of the wrath of God – expressed in the scripture by the phrase “everlasting fire.”
- (3) Now consider that as the suffering Substitute for a people, Christ actually experienced the wrath of God being poured out upon Him, according to the descriptions found in the Old Testament concerning the suffering He would endure. God's wrath was poured out like fire upon him (as it is described in Psalm 89). And in that “Psalm of the cross” I mentioned earlier, Psalm 22, it says that Christ's heart melted like wax within Him under this wrath. And in Psalm 18 it tells us “the sorrows of hell” compassed Him about.

(4) Now I do not describe this suffering to invoke your humane sympathy toward Christ in His suffering, but rather to show that in His suffering the death of the cross as a Substitute for a people He actually endured for them not only the equivalent of hell and everlasting separation from God that, absent His intervention, they would justly experience. But He actually provided for them what all the suffering in hell could never have accomplished.

(5) You see the punishment of hell lies not in the fact that it is for eternity. It is everlasting because finite man can never pay the infinite debt that is owed to satisfy the infinite holiness and justice of God. Before our holy God, the demerit of sin demands the extraction of an infinite penalty. And since finite creatures (such as we all are) cannot deliver this satisfaction or bear the infinite punishment justly due unto our sin, banishment from God is eternal. But it never pays down the debt which the infinite holy justice of almighty God demands.

(6) But, Oh what this suffering Substitute did accomplish! For He bore the whole demerit due unto all those whose sins were charged to Him, all at once at the cross of Calvary! And being an infinite Person (Emmanuel – meaning God with us), He made full satisfaction and abundantly paid the debt that an eternity of our suffering in hell could never have paid for us. As Roman 5:20 tells us, “...***But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.***”

(c) A Successful Savior: Lastly, consider that this Substitute was a Successful Savior.

(1) Continue to consider with me Isaiah 53:11. ¹¹***He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge*** <that is, by what Christ came to know – what He experienced> ***shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*** Now who does this indicate He would justify – declare not guilty? It is the “many” whose iniquities He bore! All for whom Christ died shall be saved for He satisfied justice in their room and stead – as their Surety, Representative, and Substitute – satisfaction was made.

- (2) You see, salvation is a matter of God’s law and justice -- justice to which satisfaction must be rendered for any sinner to be reconciled to and accepted into the presence of a holy God. That is what righteousness is – perfect satisfaction to God’s law and justice and only the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death measures up to this perfect standard of righteousness. God graciously imputes the very righteousness of Christ to the account of every one for whom it was rendered – whose sins were likewise imputed to Christ that He might establish an everlasting righteousness of infinite value for them.
- (3) In that “Psalm of the Cross,” (Psalm 22 that I’ve already mentioned), Christ is speaking prophetically of the humiliation and the suffering He would endure. And He speaks the very words prophetically that He would later utter while hanging on the cross as the Psalm begins with these words, “***My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me...***” speaking of the judicial separation He experienced due to God’s wrath against sin. But the “why” in that sentence actually means “wherefore” or “because for this purpose.” And down in verse 3 He tells us the purpose of God’s wrath upon Him and why this must be so when He says, “***But thou art holy...***” He is crying out under the burden of God’s wrath in full knowledge that He is forsaken justly by the Father because He is holy and He must endure the punishment of death due unto sin for God to be just and still save those whose sins He bore. A real penalty had to be paid. And it was! He was and is the successful Substitute – a successful Savior!
- (4) I had also mentioned earlier the prophecy of Christ’s accomplished death in Daniel 9. There in verse 24 we read, “***Seventy weeks*** <Now these are not literal weeks but weeks of years – believed by most to signify the 400 years of darkness between Malachi and Matthew when John the Baptist appears to herald the coming of the Messiah which would perfect or end the Old Covenant.> ***are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy”*** This finishing of the transgression means it has been put away – He has made an end of sin. God’s holy justice has been satisfied – all according to the scriptures as He seals it all up – the prophecy concerning Him being fulfilled by His finished work on the cross. Now this language in no way can leave you with the notion that He simply made something possible if you’d do your part. No – He finished the work. His substitutionary work was indeed successful.

IV. Summary:

A. Well as we've seen, the Gospel we are commanded to believe sets forth:

1. How that Christ died for sins, but not all sins.
2. He died as a Substitute for a particular people. As He told the believers at Corinth, He died for "our" sins. Whose? Those who, in belief of God's gospel, as a consequence of that which their Substitute purchased for them, are given life by God's Spirit so as to trust in Christ alone for all of their salvation, based solely on the righteousness He established in His obedience unto death. He died as a Substitute for the sins of a people.
3. And according to the scriptures, we've seen that He was:
 - (a) A sinless Substitute
 - (b) A suffering Substitute and...
 - (c) A Successful Substitute and so, a Successful Savior.

B. What a glorious Gospel – that the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Substitute for a people, died for their sins – all according to the scriptures. So to quote a favorite passage of mine found in Proverbs chapter 3, "***Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*** <the way that seems right to us by nature, but rather seek to be saved according to the way of scripture – the way of the Gospel. ***In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.***" First and foremost acknowledge Him in the way of salvation – the way of God's Gospel that would have us look to Christ and the work He finished by dying for the sins of His sheep. Seek salvation God's way, in accordance with the scriptures, and you shall find. He will direct your paths.

As Christ said in John 6:37, "***All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.***" What a Savior! Flee to Him!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.