

## WE ARE HEALED

When God made the first man, Adam, He made Him righteous, and it was possible for him to sin, or not to sin. God would test Adam's faith and obedience. So, He placed him in the garden of Eden, in Paradise, and forbade him, on pain of death, to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam rebelled against God and ate from the tree. So, God, being righteous, was true to His word and expelled Adam from Paradise. Adam, estranged from God and barred from the tree of life in the garden of Eden, died. His nature changed from righteous to sinful, and it was not possible for him not to sin. What is more, every one of Adam's descendents comes into the world in the same state, "dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1) Everyone comes into the world both guilty and corrupt. Moreover, they cannot atone for their sins, nor free themselves from sin's bonds. They come into the world doomed, and God would be within His rights if He let everyone perish.

God is holy, and righteous, and good. Yet, He is merciful and gracious. When He revealed Himself to Moses, He said:

The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6, 7)

Because God is merciful and gracious, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (Ezekiel 33:11) God is love, and to love another is to do what is in that one's best interest. (1 John 4:16) To love is to sacrifice oneself for another. So, God in His great mercy and grace and love would redeem sinners. God the Father sent His only-begotten and beloved Son into the world to sacrifice Himself for sinners, and the Son was pleased to make the sacrifice. (John 3:16; Hebrews 12:2) The Son of God became incarnate, became man, so that He might redeem men.

Just as God tested Adam's faith and obedience, so He tested the faith and obedience of His Son, Jesus. "God cannot be with evil." (James 1:13) Yet, the Son of God, because he became man, was tempted. Nevertheless, because He is the Son of God, it is not in His nature to sin. So, although He was tempted in every respect as men are, He never sinned. (Hebrews 4:15) His greatest test came at the end of His earthly ministry in the garden of Gethsemane. The Son of God came into the world to die for sinners. (John 12:27) Yet, to do so, He would have to suffer, not merely the torture of crucifixion, not merely death; but He would have to suffer as though He Himself, the perfect Son of God, were a sinner. He would have to become sin, so that sinners might become righteous. He would have to be made a curse, so that sinners might be blessed. This prospect was to Him so abhorrent that He asked His Father to relieve Him of His duty. Yet, always pleased to be in subjection to His Father, He yielded to His will. (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:35; Luke 22:41, 42)

At the insistence of the Jews, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, sentenced Jesus to die by crucifixion. As Jesus hung on the cross, He had a sense of great loneliness and loss of the enjoyment of God's presence, and He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46 = Mark 15:34) The Father had delivered the Son into the hands of His enemies, and there came to the Son no reassuring voice from heaven, as there had come on other occasions. Most difficult of all, however, was the sense of alienation, of estrangement, because He had become sin and curse. Of course, the Father always loved the Son, and the Son never despaired of that love. Yet, He was, as Isaiah the prophet said, "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:4) The suffering of the Son secured for His people salvation. As Isaiah said, "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.” (Isaiah 53:5)

Because Jesus was tempted in every respect (yet without sin), He sympathizes with the weakness of His people. Because He sympathizes with their weaknesses, they can approach the throne of God, not fearfully nor apprehensively, but confidently and courageously, and there find grace and mercy whenever they should have need of it. They can appeal to God for forgiveness of their sins, because Christ has atoned for them. Moreover, as Jesus learned obedience by perfectly practicing it, so, too, does the one who believes in Jesus learn obedience to Him, albeit by imperfectly practicing it. So, they that believe in Jesus have both forgiveness of sin, and freedom from sin’s bonds, which is to say, they have salvation.

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto His God and Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.