

REFORMATION TODAY

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- ▶ Gethsemane's King-Lamb
- ▶ A Brief Account of the Life of Jan Hus
- ▶ Forgiveness (part 2)

Jesus, our suffering Servant-King





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Jesus, our suffering Servant-King

KEES VAN KRALINGEN

Great is the gospel of our glorious God

This is the first line of easily his best known hymn of Vernon Higham who recently went to be with the Lord. In this hymn, which rightly has already become a classic, the author expresses the wonderful, good news of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in his suffering, death and resurrection.

When this issue of *RT* reaches you, it will be the time of Good Friday and Easter, the time when we especially commemorate these great redemptive acts of God's own Son for us. It is impossible to exhaust the meaning and significance of these events made known to us through Scripture. This is why we are grateful to Pastor Joel Beeke for his sermon on John 18:7-8, 12-13a. This text covers only a few verses, but has such a rich content! I had the privilege to listen when he preached this message at the Evangelical Movement of Wales Conference in Aberystwyth in 2014. We rarely print a complete sermon in the pages of *RT*, but this had to be an exception, not because we glory in the preacher but in the One whom he preached about: Gethsemane's King-Lamb.

The words that Jesus spoke whilst suffering so terribly on the cross are a great source of comfort and instruction for us. An example is his prayer to his Father for forgiveness of those who so cruelly nailed him to the cross. It is fitting therefore to continue the series of articles by Phil Roberts on the theme of forgiveness. This is often spoken

about as a great Christian virtue, but when it comes to applying this teaching ...we have to look at Jesus!

This year, we also remember God's mighty deeds in the 16th-century Reformation. The next issue will be especially devoted to this theme. In this issue we are already given a starter in the form of an article on a relatively little known and somewhat neglected servant of God who was one of several men used by the Lord to pave the way for the Reformation, Jan Hus. Steve Whitaker has supplied us with this sketch of his life and work. Hus followed in the footsteps of his Master even in being martyred for his convictions.

To help us to refresh our knowledge of the Reformation, many books are available nowadays. Some of these have already been available for some time, and several others are now rolling off the press. Please have a look at our book review and at a list of other important books.

The annual Carey Conference also focused on this topic with an address on Luther and three addresses by Dr Leonardo De Chirico. He offered illuminating insights into Roman Catholicism today and the reasons why we have to remain vigilant on the key doctrines of the biblical gospel of God's grace.

May our Lord keep us and bless us as we continue to proclaim this great gospel of our glorious God in 2017 in our different churches around the world. ■



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GETHSEMANE'S KING-LAMB



A SERMON ON
JOHN 18:7-8, 12-13a

John 18 introduces us to the greatest day in the history of the world: the final twenty-four hours of Jesus' life prior to his crucifixion and death. How packed with action these hours are! We're prone to consider them exclusively as a theological event called the atonement, forgetting that all the events recorded in this chapter happened in real time. We lose the action, the tension, the horror, the pain, the shame, and the bravery of our 33-year-old Saviour. Christ did not die a theoretical death. In John 18, Jesus enters the Holy Place as our High Priest where he will tread the winepress of God's wrath. The culmination of his sufferings consists of the events that took place in Gethsemane, the garden of agony; Gabbatha, the judgment hall of Pilate; and Golgotha, the hill of execution.

Our chapter begins with Jesus and the disciples leaving Jerusalem after celebrating the Passover. Christ is about to lay down his life for his disciples, including the ones who were just disputing who was the greatest among them, those who would forsake him in his darkest hour, and the one who would deny him that night. To all he said, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer' (Luke 22:15). Greater love has no man than this!

Jesus and his disciples leave Jerusalem through the gate north of the temple. 'He went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into

which he entered' (John 18:1). This garden was known as Gethsemane, on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives where large, massive olive trees grew, and where the Lord had often gone to pray. But this time he went forth not only to pray but also to suffer betrayal, arrest and captivity. That is emphasised in verse 4, which says, 'Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth'.

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Do the words 'he went forth' give you pause? If not, consider that Jesus went forth, knowing that his disciples would abandon him, knowing the bitter suffering that was required to make satisfaction for his people's sins, and knowing the betrayal that Judas, his hand-picked disciple – one of the twelve – had already negotiated with the Jewish authorities. Jesus went forth, knowing that he would be whipped and beaten and spat upon, knowing that the hairs of his beard would be plucked out, and knowing that great nails would be driven through his hands and feet.

Jesus went forth, knowing how full and how bitter the cup was that he must drink, down to the dregs. He must be delivered into the hands of wicked men, be crucified, and abide for three dark hours under the wrath of God in the torments of hell itself, until at last he will give himself up to the power of death itself. Knowing all this, he went forth undaunted and strong in his determination to finish the work he had been given to do in this world.

He knew all that, but he knew you too, and he knew me. He knew his church. He knew that company of people there, which God had told Abraham would be as numerous as the sand on the seashores. He knew us with a loving knowledge, with a sympathetic knowledge, with a forgiving knowledge. He knew that soon we would all be with him for ever as his ransomed people and loved ones. What a joy to be surrounded by everybody we love, without one missing! That was the joy and hope set before him that strengthened him and enabled him to endure the shame of the cross.

Jesus went forth not as a martyr or a helpless victim, but as the willing Suffering Servant of Jehovah, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as the Lamb of God. No one will ever comprehend the magnitude of the sufferings of the King-Lamb in this awesome hour at Gethsemane. In this article, I wish to expound the theme of Christ in Gethsemane as the King of Kings and the Lamb of God, emphasising verses 7-8 and 12-13a of John 18: 'Then asked he them again, "Whom seek ye?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth". Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" ... Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away.'

I set two major points before you: (1) the King's threefold sovereignty, and (2) the Lamb's threefold submission.

The King's Threefold Sovereignty

Only eleven disciples entered the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, and only three of those were invited to go with

him still further into the shadows and quiet of the garden. But even those three could not enter all the way into his sufferings. Moving a stone's throw beyond his disciples, Jesus fell to the earth and cried out to God, asking if there be any alternative to drinking this bitter cup of suffering. There are no words strong enough to express his suffering in this garden. Mark says that he was 'sore amazed' (Mark 14:33); Luke, that he was 'in an agony' (Luke 22:44); and Matthew, that he cried out: 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' (Matt 26:38). In summary, Jesus was overwhelmed, immersed, and burdened down with grief. He knew with perfect clarity, even before they happened, that intense sufferings would descend upon him. The full weight of sin and the awful curse that his Father placed upon it would be imposed upon him. Even worse, his Father's comforting presence would be withdrawn from him in the midst of this horrible suffering.

If the power of his Godhead had not sustained him, Jesus could not have endured the horrors of Gethsemane, to say nothing of what was to follow. Three times Jesus leaves his disciples to cry out as he writhes in agony of body and soul on the ground. 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done' (Luke 22:42). Jesus sweats drops of blood as the enemy is approaching to betray him. He suffers and prays as his choicest friends are sleeping.

After the third session of prayer, Jesus goes forth to meet Judas and a band of soldiers. This is the same disciple who an hour or two before sat with him at the Last Supper.

Judas left the table early to go to the chief priests and Pharisees with an offer to assist them in arresting Jesus. During the time of Passover, hundreds of soldiers, called the Roman cohort or band, guarded the temple against revolutions or uprisings. They were the most highly trained Roman soldiers in the entire army.

The chief priest and Pharisees went to the captain of this band to ask for some soldiers to arrest Jesus. They had to convince the captain that the Nazarene named Jesus was about to incite a riot or lead a revolt and needed to be stopped. The captain agreed to send a large part of the band to arrest Jesus. Scripture says a great multitude of people followed Judas to the garden, including Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers. Many of the soldiers in the band came well equipped; they were armed with swords and staves, carrying torches and lamps to light their way in the night

and to locate Jesus in case he tried to hide in the foliage of the olive trees. So they approached the garden to surround it and tighten the noose around Jesus. No doubt they expected to find him cowering under one of the olive trees, hiding behind its foliage like a defeated Saddam Hussein cowering in a pit. Perhaps they feared that he and his followers would offer armed resistance. The only uncertainty was whether they had the right man. That was solved by arranging for Judas to kiss the man they are looking for. Thus the plans are complete. They are certain that this time Jesus will not escape.

Are we two-faced in our walk and our talk? Do our spouse and children see us behave differently at home from church? Would our colleagues in the office recognise the man we try to be at church?

The King's Sovereign Question

Suddenly Jesus takes charge as Gethsemane's King. He walks boldly into the moonlight and asks the sovereign question: 'Whom seek ye?' Judas is so intent on his devilish plans that he is blinded to Jesus' sudden display of his royal glory. Judas boldly greets Jesus with 'Hail, Master', and kisses him. The Greek form of the verb implies a repeated action – that is, Judas kisses Jesus repeatedly, so that the entire multitude knows this is the dangerous Nazarene. Those kisses

burn – they sting and betray. Astonishingly, God permits this; and even more astonishingly, Jesus responds to Judas' audacity with a very mild rebuke, saying, 'Friend [imagine that: friend!], betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?'

Judas gave every appearance of being a religious, pious man two hours before at the Supper. Now he betrays his Lord with a kiss. What a hypocrite!

Tragically, we by nature are no better than Judas. We too have rejected and betrayed Christ with our blatant unbelief and, as believers, with a vain show of religion. We too succumbed to the temptation to bargain away our profession of faith in him for whatever the world offers us. Even after we receive grace, the Holy Spirit must teach us that each new sin is another hypocritical kissing of Jesus. That is particularly true of ministers who sin far too easily although we know better. How we need to cry out, 'O God, preserve me. Keep me from sinning, and from hypocrisy!'

Do we, like Judas, sit with believers one moment, and strike up a bargain with God's enemies the next? Are we two-faced in our walk and our talk? Do our spouse and children see us behave differently at home from church? Would our colleagues in the office recognise the man we try to be at church?

In a loud, clear, kingly voice, Jesus asks, 'Whom seek ye?' There is such boldness in these words. The band of soldiers is prepared to surround the garden and lift their lamp-poles high to search for a man in hiding. But now Jesus steps boldly into the light and asks, 'Whom seek ye?'

This question also comes to us today: 'Whom seek ye?'

We are all seekers, but what or whom do we seek? Jesus, the only Saviour? Then what kind of Jesus do we seek? The multitude in the garden also seeks Jesus. They want 'Jesus of Nazareth' – literally, 'Jesus the Nazarene'. Nazareth is considered a place of reproach; you may recall how Nathaniel asked, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Though the title Jesus of Nazareth can be used reverently (eg Acts 2:22), this multitude is implying that Jesus is a false prophet and a wicked man. They want to arrest Jesus so they can ridicule, despise and trample upon him.

We also do this by nature. We try to ignore the true Saviour and his calling. We shrug off Jesus' question by saying, 'I can't save myself anyway'. But if we refuse to answer his question, 'Whom seek ye?' now, we will

be forced to answer it when everything and everyone we have sought will become public on the Day of Judgment.

You may argue, 'But I am much more religious than that!' Indeed, you may well be. But what kind of Jesus are you seeking? What kind of Jesus are people in your church seeking? Do you preach to them in a searching manner, separating the precious from the vile? Is your preaching discriminatory? Millions of people today say they have received Christ, yet give little or no evidence that they have been spiritually awakened from the dead. They do not need Jesus as living Saviour and Lord, and remain unresponsive to his spiritual beauty and glory. Unlike Paul, they don't count everything loss for the sake of the excellency and surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as the altogether lovely Bridegroom and Lord (Phil 3:8).

John Piper describes this problem well:

'When these people say they "receive Christ", they do not receive him as supremely valuable. They receive him simply as sin-forgiver (because they love being guilt-free), and as rescuer-from-hell (because they love being pain-free), and as healer (because they love being disease-free), and as protector (because they love being safe), and as prosperity-giver (because they love being wealthy), and as Creator (because they want a personal universe), and as Lord of history (because they want order and purpose); but they don't receive him as supremely and personally valuable for who he is ... They

don't receive him as he really is – more glorious, more beautiful, more wonderful, more satisfying, than everything else in the universe. They don't prize him, or treasure him, or cherish him, or delight in him. Or to say it another way, they "receive Christ" in a way that requires no change in human nature. You don't have to be born again to love being guilt-free and pain-free and disease-free and safe and wealthy. All natural men without any spiritual life love these things. But to embrace Jesus as your supreme treasure requires a new nature. No one does this naturally. You must be born again (John 3:3). You must be a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). You must be made spiritually alive (Eph 2:1-4).¹

The King's Sovereign Self-identification

Jesus then responds to the multitude with a second manifestation of his kingship, declaring his sovereign self-identification. He says simply, yet profoundly, 'I am he.' *Ego eimi* – literally, 'I am'. As he does in other 'I am' statements in the Gospel of John, it appears that here too Jesus is proclaiming his deity. In John 8:58, Jesus says, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' In response, the Jews took up stones to kill him. Jesus now uses the same language that the Lord used in Exodus 3 and is repeated throughout Isaiah 40-55, in identifying himself as 'I am' Leon Morris writes: 'The soldiers

had come out secretly to arrest a fleeing peasant. In the gloom they find themselves confronted by a commanding figure, who so far from running away comes out to meet them and speaks to them in the very language of deity.'²

Jesus' proclamation has such profound effects on the multitude that the people fall backward to the ground (v6). What good are all the torches, lamps, swords, staves, officers, soldiers, and captains against Jesus who proclaims that he is the great 'I am' – the great Jehovah, the unchangeable covenant-keeping God who was, is, and will always be what he is? Even in the state of his humiliation, one word from Jesus' lips is enough to make an entire multitude fall to the ground. What then will be his power when he comes as Judge at the last day? Scripture tells us that every knee will bow – some out of gratitude and love for being saved, and others in fear of everlasting perdition who cry out for the mountains and hills to cover them. Robert Rollock (c 1555-1599), wrote:

'If the bleating of a lamb had such force, what force shall the roaring of a lion have? Where shall the wicked stand? And if the voice of the Lord Jesus, humbly, and like a lamb, standing before them himself alone, and speaking with such gentleness, had such an effect as to throw them down upon

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¹ John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010) p71.

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) p658.

the ground, what effect shall that roaring, full of wrath and indignation, at that great day, not out of the mouth of a lamb, nor of an humble man, Jesus of Nazareth, but out of the mouth of a lion, out of the mouth of Jesus Christ the Judge, sitting in his glory and majesty, and saying to the wicked, "Away, ye cursed, to that fire which is prepared for the devil and the angels" (Matt 25:41), what effect, then, shall that voice have?'³

What a difference between these two responses to Jesus' sovereign self-identification, 'I am!' These words comfort his disciples and terrorise his enemies. Those who were once enemies are now his friends, causing them to fall forward in respect before him. What must it have been for Peter and the disciples to see not only the multitude, but also Judas, fall back before Gethsemane's Lamb? As they gaze upon a helpless Judas, their former friend, how can they help but think, 'There, but for the grace of God, go I!'

Has the great 'I am' ever made you fall before him in awe of his powerful justice and merciful grace, crying out, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David'?

Gethsemane's King lets the confused and frightened band of soldiers get back on their feet. With royal authority, he then repeats the question: 'Whom seek ye?' At this point, don't you want to cry out to the multitude: 'Do you not understand that the One you are seeking to arrest is

not only Jesus of Nazareth but the very Son of God? Don't you see the danger of challenging this King? Repent! Repent and bow before him before he destroys you.'

But the multitude is still totally blind. Incredibly, they repeat their first answer, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' We should not be surprised. God is a God of second chances, but unbelievers will continue to cling to their rejection of God's Word if the Holy Spirit does not cause the scales to fall from their eyes.

The King's Sovereign Substitution

To their second rejection of him, Gethsemane's King not only speaks with a sovereign question and sovereign self-identification, but also with sovereign substitution. 'I have told you that I am he: if therefore you seek me, let these go their way' (v 8). What a staggering expression of kingly love this is! Not a single soldier dares to draw his sword against Jesus or his disciples – not even when Peter lunges at Malchus and cuts off his right ear.

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) wrote, "Those words, "If ye seek me, let those go their way," were like coats of mail to them ... The disciples walked securely in the midst of the boisterous mob ... The words of Jesus proved to be a right royal word; it was a divine word; and men were constrained to obey it."⁴

Christ's mediatorial grace for his people is expressed in verse 9: 'That the saying

might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.' Protecting his disciples was more than just kindness on Christ's part; he was fulfilling the Father's commission to save his sheep. The Father has entrusted his elect to Christ for salvation, and now Christ will walk alone to the cross so that not one will be lost. Christ's royal words will come true (John 6:39; 10:28; 17:2,12,19). As Don Carson notes, Christ's care for the physical safety of His disciples offers us an 'illustration' of his work for their spiritual salvation.⁵

So Christ tells the soldiers to take him but to let his disciples go. Those who could not watch with him even for one hour now hear their glorious King declare that he is willing to be arrested, bound, and led away as a lamb to the slaughter so that they might go free. He will be scourged, but not they. He will be crucified, but not they. He will fulfil the words of Isaiah 53:5, '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.' Truly, there is nothing more loving than what he says: 'Let me be bound for their sakes.' Have you seen Christ standing in the place of his apostles, his people, his church – and you? Have you experienced the power of his substitutionary, royal love?

If Jesus Christ had fled at this moment or simply destroyed his enemies, our salvation would have been impossible. So he stands his ground, saying: 'Let these go their way.' He stands his ground so that even cowards like us may be caught in his eternal net of love and drawn to safety with his cords of love. But he also stands his ground so that servants of God like us could be given 'a royal passport in the way of providence', as Spurgeon called it, and

Protecting his disciples was more than just kindness on Christ's part; he was fulfilling the Father's commission to save his sheep.

then he added, 'Fear not, servant of Christ, you are immortal till your work is done.'⁶

Verse 12 says, 'Then [literally, therefore] the multitude took Jesus.' So after he clearly showed who was in charge in uttering his sovereign questions, revealing his sovereign self-identification, and declaring his sovereign substitution, Jesus is bound and led away (vv12-13a). He turns himself over to his enemies. The

King's amazing sovereignty gives way to the Lamb's equally amazing submission.

The Lamb's Threefold Submission

We first see Christ's submission in his willingness to be arrested. Verse 12 says, 'Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus.' The original word translated 'took' is actually the official term for a formal arrest. So the soldiers formally arrested Jesus for the purpose of charging him. And Christ willingly submits. See how the Good

³ *Select Works of Robert Rollock*, ed. William M Gunn (1844–1849; repr. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008) 2:24.

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, 'The Captive Saviour Freeing His People,' Sermon 722 on John 18:8, 9, 25 Nov. 1866, in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 12 (repr. Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim Publications, 1973) p 650.

⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) p579

⁶ Spurgeon, 'The Captive Saviour Freeing His People' p652.

Shepherd is willing to lay down his life for his sheep! Behold the voluntary offering of Christ! See how he lays down his life and no one takes it from him (John 10:17-18)!

Spurgeon said, 'You are clear that he went willingly, for since a single word made the captors fall to the ground, what could he not have done? Another word and they would have descended into the tomb; another, and they would have been hurled into hell ... There was no power on earth that could possibly have bound the Lord Jesus, had he been unwilling.'⁷ Instead, the sovereign, speaking King willingly becomes a submissive, silent Lamb.

Jesus wasn't intimidated. He believed the promises of the Word of God that he would have God with him. He believed the prophecies of that Word would be fulfilled. Jesus knew that this was his Father's appointed hour of suffering. All history had been moving toward this hour of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. God had been at work during all the previous centuries from the creation of the world and the fall of man, down to this very night, with this hour ever before him. God willed it, God planned it, God worked it all out. The incarnate Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of man, is publicly arrested and taken. No one can tamper with God's plan – not Judas, Caiaphas, Herod, nor Pilate, much less the fearful disciples. God decreed the rise and fall of nations and empires for this end; he decreed that the high priest and his cohorts should conspire to kill Jesus, that Judas should betray him into their hands, that wicked King Herod and weak Pontius

Pilate should fall in with their plans. So Jesus knew what was coming. Satan's hour had arrived, but ultimately it would be Jesus' hour. In dying, he would destroy the devil who had the power of death. He would make the destruction of death itself an absolute certainty.

Jesus knew that his hour had also come – his hour! He wasn't afraid because his Father, the God of providence, with his hand of almighty and everywhere present power, was in absolute control. Judas, Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and the Jerusalem multitude could not so much as move without his will. That same God is in control of your life also. Nothing happens because of chance. When your worst fears are realised it isn't that the Son of God has stepped away from the throne of the universe, abdicating responsibility for what is happening and abandoning you to the evil that is in the world. Rather, He is operating among the affairs of men. Do you believe with the Psalmist:

*Not unto us, O Lord of heaven,
but unto Thee be glory given;
In love and truth thou dost fulfil
The counsels of thy sov'reign will;
Though nations fail thy power to own,
yet thou dost reign, and thou alone!*

And with William Cowper:

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain:
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.*

Everything that happens to us is according to a plan and timetable that was fixed before the foundation of the world. No one but the Lamb of God has been found worthy to execute that plan for the salvation of his people. What befalls us in this life is all part of the will of our Father in heaven as executed by our Saviour. What a comfort for a Christian!

Second, we see Christ's submission in his willingness to be bound. Jesus' hands are chained like those of a murderer or criminal. Tradition claims that when people were arrested to be brought to a Roman judge, the accusers bound the hands of the accused so tightly that blood came out of the ends of their fingers. The goal was to prejudice the judge against the accused and so incline him to find the accused guilty as charged. That is probably what the soldiers do to Jesus. The soldiers bind the hands of One who would gladly have gone with them unfettered. They bind the blessed hands of One who never sinned, healed the eyes of the blind and the lame, and blessed little children. They bind the hands of One who washed his disciples' feet and broke bread for them in the Upper Room. They bind the hands that have dripped with bloody sweat in prayer to the Father. Yet Jesus offers his hands to be bound in meekness and humility.

Jesus' bound hands are symbolic of much more. Let me mention four ways this is so.

WHAT BEFALLS US IN THIS LIFE IS ALL PART OF THE WILL OF OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN AS EXECUTED BY OUR SAVIOUR. WHAT A COMFORT FOR A CHRISTIAN!

1) Jesus is bound to set us free from the bands of sin. Proverbs 5:22 says that by nature we are 'holden with the cords of [our] sin'. By grace, Jesus became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). Fettered with our sins, he let himself be arrested and be held captive to free us from the captivity of sin and Satan, and from the bondage of being prisoners of hell. As Rollock observed, 'Christ's bondage corresponds to and counteracts our being bound as captives to sin, the devil, and death. He is a fit Redeemer for sinners because He was bound as we were.'⁸ Therefore, when he arose and ascended on high, he led captivity captive – bound by the cords of love – to capture his people in the net of his substitutionary gospel. By his Spirit, he is still drawing sinners with those bands of love today.

2) Jesus is bound so that his people might be bound to him by obedience and love to serve him all their days. When they see him voluntarily bound for their sake, they become willing to be his servants forever. When they see him bound for their sake, no persecution becomes too much. When they view his bonds, their afflictions and trials are sweetened and sanctified. They may even rejoice in suffering under his banner of love like Paul and Silas, who sang in prison and counted it joy that they were reckoned worthy to suffer for Christ's sake (Acts 16:25). When the early church father, Ignatius, was bound and chained for

⁷ Spurgeon, 'The Captive Saviour Freeing His People' p650.

⁸ Rollock, *Select Works*, 2:39.

confessing Christ, he regarded his bands as spiritual pearls. Do you know the joy of being bound for Christ's sake as his willing servant? Do you ever feel the sweetness of his bonds in pastoral ministry when you are persecuted for Christ's sake?

3) Jesus is bound as the Second Adam to restore in the Garden of Gethsemane what was lost by the first Adam in the Garden of Eden. (1) The first Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden; the Second Adam bore sin in the Garden of Gethsemane. (2) The first Adam was surrounded with glory, beauty, and harmony in Eden and refused to obey; the Second Adam was surrounded with bitterness and sorrow in Gethsemane and was obedient unto death. (3) The first Adam was tempted by Satan and fell; the Second Adam was tempted by all the forces of hell, and did not fall. (4) The first Adam's hands reached out to grasp sin; the Second Adam's hands were bound to pay for sin. (5) The first Adam was guilty and arrested by God during the cool of the day; the Second Adam was innocent and arrested by men in the middle of the night. (6) The first Adam hid himself after fleeing; the Second Adam revealed himself after walking into the moonlight. (7) The first Adam took fruit from Eve's hand; the Second Adam took the cup from his Father's hand. (8) The first Adam was conquered by the devil; the Second Adam conquered the devil. (9) The first Adam forfeited and lost grace in Eden; the Second Adam merited and applied grace in Gethsemane. (10) The first Adam was driven out of Eden; the Second Adam was willingly led out of Gethsemane so that room might be made in the heavenly garden of paradise for sinners who trusted in him. Praise be to God – Christ regained all that was lost in Adam, and more;

in Eden, the sword was drawn and the conflict of the ages began; in Gethsemane the sword was sheathed, and the eternal gospel was displayed.

4) Jesus is bound above all by the will of the Father. 'He spared not his own Son'; that his people might be spared. His being bound is one of the ingredients of the cup that he had to swallow in paying for the sins of his people. He was bound to himself and to his own work which he had undertaken from eternity. He was bound to fulfil the eternal covenant of redemption. God bound to God – how wondrous our God of salvation is!

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ is the lowly Servant of the Lord. He did not come to earth to do his own will but to do the will of him who sent him. As Isaiah 42:1-2 tells us, Jesus was the obedient Servant of the Lord whom God chose, in whom God delights, and upon whom God puts his Spirit. Likewise, as the Suffering Servant, it pleases the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin (Is 53). Jesus thus moves ahead with quiet determination to do God's will. As he says in John 10:17-18, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.'

Third, we see the Lamb's submission in his being led away. The Leader and Shepherd of God's people is led away as a 'lamb to the slaughter'. 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as

a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth' (Is 53:7).

It is remarkable how fully this prophecy was fulfilled. Sheep that were fed in the fields of Cedron were often led through a sheep-gate to be sacrificed. This was a type of the messianic Lamb of God to come, for the Lamb of lambs is now led through that same gate to be sacrificed. He is led from place to place like a wandering sheep so that you and I, who are wandering sheep, might find rest and guidance in him.

Jesus is led a total distance of seven miles before being crucified. He is led from Annas to Caiaphas to Pilate to Herod back to Pilate and then to the cross to be crucified. What a wonder that this innocent Lamb not only lets himself be taken and bound but is willing to be taken from place to place while knowing that his end will be the cross!

Let us ever thank the Triune God for our great substitutionary Lamb, who was led away so that we might one day be led into heavenly mansions! Have you ever seen such a complete and willing substitute? Praise God that he was taken for criminals, bound for captives, and led away for wanderers.

In the midst of it all, he was a willing, submissive servant. We are like sponges soaked in salt water: when people press on us, we squirt out bitter words of complaint and resentment. But when Christ is crushed under malice and hatred, not one evil word comes out of his mouth.

His gentleness reveals that he is a perfect Saviour from sin and a perfect example for us.

We read in 1 Peter 2:21-25, 'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.'

Jesus is the Lord God Almighty, the great I am. His very name and word can bring men and angels to their knees... He is everything we need.

Conclusion

Jesus is the Lord God Almighty, the great I am. His very name and word can bring men and angels to their knees. He is a Saviour for the lost, a Redeemer for the guilty, a Physician for the sick, a Friend for the needy, an Intercessor for the sin-accused, an Advocate for the law-condemned, a Surety for the debt-plagued, a Healer for the broken-hearted, a Helper for the self-ruined, and an altogether lovely Bridegroom for an unfaithful bride. He is everything we need.

We cannot imagine a fuller redemption or a deeper love than what is provided by Gethsemane's Lamb. He who is taken and arrested also takes and arrests sinners, causing them to cry out, 'What must I do to be saved?' He who is bound binds his

people so that they declare death on their self-righteousness and flee to Christ alone. He who is led away leads sinners to see that salvation is exclusively in him and applies it to them so that they glorify him for his full and free salvation.

Apart from his great love for us, nothing explains our Lord's willingness to be arrested, bound, and led away; but in so doing he shows himself to be the perfect Christ for his own. He is arrested so that he can arrest us as our Prophet and bring us from darkness into his marvellous light. He is bound so that we can be freed from the burden of sin and guilt that threatens to destroy us, when as both Priest and victim he offers an acceptable sacrifice to God on our behalf. He is led away so he can govern us as our King by his Word and Spirit, leading us back to God, and preserving, guiding, and defending us in the salvation he has purchased for us.

How unspeakably beautiful is our Lord Jesus Christ! Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) said, 'In the person of Christ do meet together infinite majesty, and transcendent meekness.'⁹ This, Edwards said, is what makes Christ so very excellent. He is the mighty and terrifying King, at whose presence the earth quakes. Yet he exhibits the greatest humility, even under the bitter attacks and injuries of his enemies. May Christ's unique combination of majesty and meekness win your heart to forever adore him.

What a wonder it is that the great Deliverer delivers himself up; the divinely

appointed Judge is arrested as a common criminal; the great Liberator is bound; the great Leader is led away. Let us praise Gethsemane's Christ, the King of kings and the Lamb of God, and resolve to trust him more fully, follow him more obediently, and look the more expectantly for his return to take us to himself. Let us take with us five practical ways in which Christ as Gethsemane's King and Lamb should impact our faith and life:

- » Let us honour his authority as King with greater fear and reverence.
- » Let us submit to the trials he imposes on us without complaint – indeed, with cheerfulness and thanksgiving – so that we may drink the cup he places in our hands rather than to plead for another.
- » Let us learn to know when silence is a more powerful testimony in the presence of evil and unbelief than any words we might say.
- » Like Paul, let us cherish the privilege of being admitted to the fellowship of his sufferings.
- » Let us honour his giving up of himself for us with more complete surrender of ourselves to him, so that we would request to be his willing servants, now and forever. ■

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⁹ The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 19, Sermons and Discourses, 1734–1738, ed. M. X. Lesser (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) p568.

KEES VAN KRALINGEN

JESUS'

PREPARATION

For His

Impending Death

LESSONS FROM JESUS'
SAYINGS ON THE CROSS

Despite all life's uncertainties, one thing is absolutely certain: our life will come to an end. Most people prepare for many things they expect in life, such as their children's future or their pension, even though these expectations are fraught with uncertainty. Strangely enough though, not everyone prepares for the one thing that is certain: death. In some cases, this may not be possible as in the case of a fatal accident, especially when this happens at a relatively young age. But in many other cases, where preparation is possible, people still tend to avoid thinking about the end of life. A Christian, however, may be expected to approach this matter in a very different way. After all, they can look forward to a life after death and an eternal presence with their Lord and Saviour. But this security does not make preparation before death irrelevant. Jesus shows us this through the last moments of his life as he prepares for his own death on the cross.

In his last words and acts Jesus shows us how he prepared not only himself, but also others, for his passing. A few years ago, it struck me how much we can learn from the way Jesus approached his death. This becomes especially clear in the final words he spoke on the cross. Whilst suffering unspeakably, he found strength to utter some profoundly moving and important words which even included addressing those standing nearby. Most readers will be familiar with the hugely important messages contained in these seven sayings of Jesus for every believer in whatever stage of life. But they also have a special relevance to the topic of this article. I will focus especially on what these words of Jesus tell us about

preparation for death and helping others to do so. First I will present some general biblical instruction followed by a discussion of these words from Jesus on the cross.

The biblical view of death

In contrast to what most people think, death is not a natural phenomenon; it was not a given within creation. Instead, it was the penalty of the fall in sin of Adam and Eve which applied to all humanity because Adam represented the whole human race (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12-21). But God provided the way of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. This implies that death for a Christian is now no longer a penalty but the door to eternal life. Although it is the last enemy, its sting has been removed; Jesus has conquered death and God gives us the victory through him (1 Cor 15:55-57).

Jesus' teaching

Jesus did not only suffer and die on the cross, but also satisfied the demands of God's holy law for us. He perfectly followed the will of God the Father in our place, and for us. This also applies to everything Jesus said and did up to the end of his life. His final words are unique not only because of what they mean for our salvation, but also because they serve as an example to us for the way we approach death. Jesus' words contain rich teaching, comfort and encouragement because they are the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

Teaching given during his life on earth

At three different times, Jesus spoke specifically about his suffering and death

(Luke 9:18-27, 43-45; 18:31-34). When a woman anointed him with oil, Jesus explained that she had done this in preparation for his burial (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). These passages teach us that Jesus was well aware of his impending death and did not avoid talking about it. This reminds us of the case of King Hezekiah in the Old Testament, who also received an announcement about his death with the command to take the necessary action (2 Kings 20:1; Is 38:1). The lesson for us is that we need to think about our end of life, prepare for it and talk about it. In short, to take the necessary action.

But not only did Jesus show how he approached his own death – Jesus also experienced the pain and sorrow of being the one left behind through the death of his loved ones. He displayed this in his response of deep compassion and sorrow at the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:33-36). We should therefore never deny the legitimacy of mourning for the death of those close to us.

Jesus in Gethsemane

Matthew's account of Jesus' last night in Gethsemane tells us that he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Jesus confirmed this when he said: *'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death...'* (Matt 26:37-38). For Jesus this had a very special meaning: he was aware that he was about to bear the punishment for sin and experience the wrath of God. At this moment Jesus thought about his relationship with God, his Father. When we approach the end of our lives, we

should also focus on our relationship with God. As believers, however, we do not have to face the same terrifying prospect that Jesus faced, for the very reason that Jesus underwent his death for us in our place and as our substitute. We can have this tremendous comfort and assurance, that there is now no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). Nothing, absolutely nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39), which means that contemplating our relationship with God can only mean contemplating our salvation and the knowledge of eternal life after death.

They also give valuable instruction for the pastoral care which we can give to people in that situation.

Jesus' sayings on the cross

Each of these seven sayings has a rich and deep meaning for all believers, but they also teach us some important lessons for the way we approach the end of our lives. They also give valuable instruction for the pastoral care which we can give to people in that situation.

The first thing that Jesus said when nailed to the cross was *'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'* (Luke 23:34). His words are directed to his Father, and they reflect his attitude to the people carrying out his execution. This suggests that we have to think about our relationship with other people. As we have been forgiven, so we should forgive others also as Jesus had already taught earlier (Matt 6:14-15). With the end of our lives approaching, this takes on even greater significance. One of the questions pastors may have to raise with people

in that situation is whether they still harbour unresolved grievances. Following Jesus' teaching, this will be the time to deal with this.

The following words of Jesus show his great love and care for his mother. We read in John 19:26-27, *'When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.'* This is a really moving example of Jesus' care for his mother. This example shows us that it is appropriate and commendable to take care of those whom we will have to leave behind. In this way, we may well be able to take burdens from the shoulders of relatives and friends. At the same time, we have to be careful not to add to their burden by asking them to carry out impossible or unrealistic tasks. This is another area where guidance can be offered through pastoral care.

Then Jesus addressed the repentant robber and murderer who was crucified together with Jesus as follows: *'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise'* (Luke 23:43). This clearly shows that the souls of believers will be united with Christ immediately after death. That is why Paul could say, speaking about the possibility of his death, that to die would be gain, and to be with Christ would be far better (Phil 1:21-24). Other texts refer to the same wonderful truth (Psalm 73:24-25; Matt 8:11; John 14:2; 17:24; 2 Cor 5:8; Heb 6:20). This is clearly a message of great comfort for believers and for those

who mourn over the death of believing relatives and friends. It is a great privilege when we have good reasons to rejoice in this truth in situations of pastoral care.

In these first three sayings Jesus focused on other people. The final four sayings tell us more about Jesus' experience of his suffering and death on the cross. His next words are a cry to God: *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). These words reflect the immeasurably deep suffering and God's absence that Jesus experienced. We know that this is all because he took our sins upon himself. He was made sin for us and upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace (2 Cor 5:21; Is 53:5). His sufferings expressed in this cry of agony are therefore totally unique. Believers can, however, also experience times in their lives in which they do not experience the presence of the Lord and his love for them. This can have all kind of reasons. This may especially happen when believers go through a time of suffering in life and during the terminal phase of their life. In such a situation, those offering pastoral care can point to Christ's suffering and the fact that he did this for us in order to save us. He went through the deepest agony of the soul that anyone can ever go through, which is why the writer of the letter to the Hebrews can say:

'Since then we have a great high priest who passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted

as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb 4:14-16).

After this outcry of his spiritual suffering, Jesus said *'I thirst'* (John 19:28). Someone standing by gave him sour wine to drink, after which Jesus spoke his next words. Jesus' short cry thus confirms his terrible physical suffering as well. This event also shows that we can and have to relieve physical suffering as much as is possible nowadays through palliative care. In this we can be grateful to our Creator for the wisdom he has given to medical staff to discover the many ways of treating pain and other symptoms.

After this event Jesus said *'It is finished'* (John 19:30). These words of course have a totally unique and glorious meaning, pointing to the perfect sacrifice that Jesus made to provide atonement for sin. A Christian can never make the same claim, but he or she never even has to do this, because Jesus has accomplished everything! When believers evaluate what they have achieved in their lifetime, they will know that even their best deeds and most impressive performances can never meet God's standard. Jesus' work and life, however, was perfect. He is our substitute, and Christian believers can therefore close their earthly pilgrimage by looking at Jesus and trusting in what he has accomplished. This is why Paul

can say at the end of his life that he has fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7-8). Earlier he could say: *'I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me'* (1 Cor 15:10). It is a tremendous blessing when we can look back on our

lives trusting in God's grace in Christ.

Then Jesus utters his final words before his death: *'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'* (Luke 23:46). Because Jesus has accomplished such a perfect salvation, a Christian believer can now also commit his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

Conclusion

In reading Jesus' very last sayings, we can see why Paul, speaking about death, can say that 'we are of good

courage' (2 Cor 4:16-5:10). This is even more true because we know that Jesus did not stay in his grave, but rose from death victoriously. His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection (Rom 6:5; 1 Cor 15:20-22). This is our hope of eternal life (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Jesus' suffering and death on the cross and his glorious resurrection are key elements of the great gospel that we have received and in which we are called to believe. These gospel truths also gain particular significance at the end of our lives as believers and offer a rich source of ways to help believers at the end of life with biblical, pastoral care. ■

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HELP! I CANT FORGIVE



A SERIES OF STUDIES ON FORGIVENESS

THIS IS THE
SECOND PART
IN THIS SERIES;
SEE RT 275
FOR PART 1 /
SECTIONS 1-3.

4. How does God forgive? Forgiveness and justice

Forgiveness and justice are closely related in that forgiveness presupposes an injustice. In the act of forgiving one determines not to proceed with the demands of justice; one does not prosecute.

In the Bible God is portrayed as a God of forgiveness. But given that he is a holy God, a righteous God, how can he be said to neglect the demands of justice? What confidence

can we have that we are truly forgiven and that our sins will not be remembered and recalled at the last day if, in fact, justice has been overlooked? How can we trust a God who lays aside the demands of justice? How, in a moral universe where God is said to uphold justice, is it possible that there is forgiveness? The dual aspects of forgiveness and yet unswerving adherence to justice are found in numerous texts, among them Exodus 34:6-7:

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.

Consider this from another angle. Whilst you might be able to forgive those who ask your forgiveness, what of those who do not? What of occasions when there is an acute sense of injustice and yet the person concerned has no inclination to repent and seek forgiveness? Even where a person does ask your forgiveness, the injustice done may be of such a nature that you find it hard, if not impossible, to forgive. Is it reasonable in such cases to expect you to forgive? The following verses throw light on this issue:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore

you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matt 5:43-48).

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7:59-60).

Even where a person does ask your forgiveness, the injustice done may be of such a nature that you find it hard, if not impossible, to forgive. Is it reasonable in such cases to expect you to forgive?

It is important to recognise that the opposite of forgiveness is not simply unforgiveness, but revenge or vengeance. The text we considered as supplying the essential ingredients of the biblical concept of forgiveness contains this word:

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD (Lev 19:18).

When we forgive, we do not seek revenge, nor do we avenge the wrong done to us. Now, that wrong may have involved considerable injustice being done to us and we may feel keenly such wrong. How can we then forgive? How can we resist the temptation to exact the just penalty for such an action done to us? Is forgiveness, by its very nature, contrary to justice? Forgiveness, unless correctly understood, can easily be perceived as condoning sin, not taking justice seriously.

The great exemplar of forgiveness is God himself. Is God's forgiveness at the expense of justice? Is he unrighteous to

forgive? The key passage with which to answer this question is Romans 3, especially verses 23 to 26.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Something, Paul says, was demonstrated in the death of Christ, and that was the righteousness of God. The claim might well have been made that in some way God was unjust in that he had not judged certain individuals in the Old Testament era but rather had passed over their sins. How was it possible for him to do this and yet remain just? Was God showing favouritism? Was he above his own law and ignoring its righteous demands? Then again, how can he be righteous and yet justify the ungodly today? Paul's answer is that God's righteousness is upheld by the death of Christ. The death of Christ was necessary in order for God to be both just and the one who passes over sin. When Christ died, his death atoned for the sins previously committed by those whose sins God had forgiven. In the same way, the sins of those who believe in Jesus now have been laid to Christ's charge and punished in his person.

'When God does not punish the sinner, that might well show him to be merciful or loving; ... but just? It would mean that God condones evil. Justice demands that the guilty be punished just as it demands that the innocent go free. So God might be accused of being unjust. Not any more, says Paul. The cross shows us God's inflexible righteousness in the very means whereby sin is forgiven' (Leon Morris, The Epistle to the Romans).

FORGIVENESS, UNLESS CORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD, CAN EASILY BE PERCEIVED AS CONDONING SIN, NOT TAKING JUSTICE SERIOUSLY.

'The problem was this. God had always revealed himself as a God who hated sin. He had announced that he would punish sin, and that the punishment of sin was death. He had announced that he would pour out his wrath upon sin and upon sins. And yet, here was God for centuries, apparently, and to all appearances going back on his own statements and on his own Word. He does not seem to be punishing sin. He is passing it over. Has God ceased

to be concerned about these things? Has God become indifferent to moral evil? How can God thus pass over sin? That is the problem. And it was a very real problem ... He held back his wrath throughout the centuries. He did not disclose it fully then; but he has disclosed it fully now. He has declared it now' (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Romans: Atonement and Justification).

From the example of God's forgiving us, we can deduce certain principles:

1. Forgiveness is not as such a primary virtue of God's revealed character. By that I mean that he is not forgiving in

the same sense that he is loving, holy, and all-powerful. In order to be forgiving, he must do something first. The penalty of sin must be exacted before sin can be overlooked and the sinner forgiven.

2. The penalty for sin is always exacted by a just and holy God, even when that sin is forgiven. Either the penalty is exacted from the sinner or from his substitute, Christ. The penalty is remitted in the case of the individual; but in order that justice be satisfied, the penalty in absolute terms is always required at the hand of another. Justice's demands must be satisfied. Forgiveness is never at the expense of justice.

3. In the case of God's forgiveness, he suffers the penalty himself. In requiring the penalty of our sins at the hand of Christ, he took the very judgment of our sins into the persons of the Godhead. Forgiveness is therefore immensely costly. A price is paid by the innocent; in fact, by the victim of the offence.

These principles we shall find most valuable to bear in mind as we progress in our study of this subject. They will help us to avoid much muddled thinking and sentimentality that adheres to this topic. We can now apply these principles beneficially in our consideration of the cross:

1. In divine forgiveness, the attributes of God meet in an amazing way. His love, his grace, his justice, his compassion, his mercy, and his forbearance all combine in order that the sinner may be freed from the guilt of his sin and released from the debt incurred by

the transgression. It is not simply the expression of one attribute of God's character but a manifestation of God in all his glory, and in all three persons of the blessed Trinity, working together to accomplish this great work.

*Great is the gospel of our glorious God,
Where mercy met the anger of God's rod;
A penalty was paid and pardon bought,
And sinners lost at last to him were brought.
(William Vernon Higham, 1926-2016)*

2. Our actions have consequences; our sins incur a penalty. Though we may have that penalty remitted and cancelled, yet the penalty remains to be paid. Forgiveness is not cheap. It took Calvary to forgive the least sin.

*Oh teach me what it meaneth,
That sacred crimson tide,
The blood and water flowing
From thine own wounded side.
Teach me that if none other
Had sinned, but I alone,
Yet still Thy blood, Lord Jesus,
Thine only, must atone.
(Lucy A Bennett, 1850-1927)*

3. In divine forgiveness we see how God suffers the consequences of our sin himself. He is long-suffering (2 Peter 3:9). When he forgives, it is because he himself has been willing to pay the price. Thus, when we forgive, we must be willing to sustain loss, endure hardship, suffer injustice. How willing are we to follow his example?

*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted,
forgiving one another, even as God in Christ
forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as
dear children (Eph 4:32-5:1).*

If we insist on the principle that the offender must pay, then we deny fundamentally the gospel. The gospel is 'good news' that the sinner will not suffer who has faith in Jesus Christ. Christ, the innocent, forgives the guilty as he suffers in their place.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor 5:18-21).

*On the Mount of Crucifixion
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the flood gates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And heaven's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.
(William Rees, 1802-83; tr. by William Edwards, 1848-1929.)*

5. I'm angry, I can't forgive! Forgiveness and vengeance

Forgiveness is often presented as swallowing an injustice. We let people off the hook. The story is told of a judge who was very merciful. A man was brought before him who had raped

a woman, killed her children and mutilated her husband. Such horrific crimes outraged the community, but as the judge questioned the offender he felt compassion and told him that despite his crimes he was going to be merciful and let him off. The man returned home and before long murdered again. Once more he appeared before the judge who was again compassionate and let him go free. At this the population were outraged and

If we insist on the principle that the offender must pay, then we deny fundamentally the gospel.

demanding that they be rescued from this merciful judge before they were all killed.

Can forgiveness ever be reconciled with justice? Does forgiveness inevitably involve the denial of justice for the victim? In requiring that we do not take vengeance, is God condoning sin and denying the principle of justice? Is taking vengeance always wrong? These

are some of the questions we will seek to answer in this chapter.

The New Testament repeats the command not to take vengeance, but in doing so appends a reason for this.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the LORD' (Rom 12:19).

With this Hebrews agrees:
For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge his people.' (Heb 10:30).

We are not to avenge ourselves, because vengeance belongs to the Lord; it is his

sole prerogative. This brings us to the first key to forgiveness: God's vengeance.

Now, as soon as we speak of vengeance some people think that it belongs to the Old Testament and that the New Testament is completely different in its portrayal of God. Some refer to the God of the Old Testament as though either God has developed or at least that our understanding has evolved. It must be stressed at the outset that God in his character does not change. The God of the Old Testament, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall see that the New Testament contains a number of references to God's vengeance. In commanding us to love our enemies, however, is the New Testament in conflict with the Old? Not at all.

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again (Ex 23:4).

This also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above. If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted myself up when evil found him (indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for a curse on his soul) (Job 31:28-30).

If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me, or have plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue me and overtake me; yes, let him trample my life to the earth, and lay my honour in the dust (Psalm 7:4-5).

The problem of most approaches to forgiveness is that they say little if anything about justice.

Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask me things that I do not know. They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother. But in my adversity they rejoiced and gathered together; attackers gathered against me, and I did not know it; they tore at me and did not cease; with ungodly mockers at feasts they gnashed at me with their teeth (Psalm 35:11-16).

Whilst there are degrees of fullness there is no contradiction between the Testaments. We shall therefore be drawing upon both Testaments to gain an understanding of this issue.

The problem of most approaches to forgiveness is that they say little if anything about justice. Whilst this may not be a problem when we are considering small offences, it is when graver crimes are committed. We are made to be moral creatures, knowing right and wrong, and have an in-built sense of justice. To deny this may cause huge emotional and psychological damage.

Justice is not merely a factor when we are the victim but also when we are witnesses of injustice. We see oppression of the innocent on our TV screens and, although we are not directly affected, we feel a sense of outrage and resentment towards the perpetrators. What Romans 12:19 teaches is that there is a God of justice who promises that he will repay.

There is a moral ruler whose role it is to administer justice; vengeance will be forthcoming. This is set forth as a comfort and encouragement and as the reason why we must not take vengeance ourselves.

Vengeance is a difficult task and one beyond our capabilities. It requires an accurate knowledge of the offence and a great degree of self-control. To require this of the victim is to ask too much and God relieves us of the obligation. Because we are victims the tendency will be to be too harsh and, because we cannot read the heart of the offender, to misjudge their motives and actions. All is open to God who sees all and knows the thoughts of men and their intentions. Vengeance is safe with God and in his hands it is a righteous thing.

God's motivation in taking vengeance is made clear in the following passage:

Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them.' For the LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is no one remaining, bond or free. He will say: 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you, and be your refuge. Now see that I, even I, am he, and there is no God besides me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who

VENGEANCE
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THING.

can deliver from my hand. For I raise my hand to heaven, and say, "As I live forever, if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay those who hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy." Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and render vengeance to his adversaries; he

will provide atonement for his land and his people (Deut 32:35-43).

Here God is seen to:

- » Vindicate his people: For the LORD will judge his people (v36).
- » Have compassion on his servants: For the LORD will ... have compassion on his servants (v36).
- » Execute justice: My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay those who hate me (v41).
- » Avenge bloodshed and settle debts: For he will avenge the blood of his servants, and render vengeance to his adversaries (v43).

God provides a limited role for legitimate authorities to take vengeance, but in so doing ensures that it is not the victim who is taking action personally. This goes a long way to prevent the dangers

previously highlighted. The law is administered dispassionately without regard to persons or personal injury.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practises evil (Rom 13:1-4).

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good (1 Peter 2:13-14).

In commanding us not to avenge ourselves, God is not unmindful of the injustice done to us but assures us that justice will be administered by one able to do so. This is meant as a comfort, for in many cases the perpetrators are beyond our reach, though not beyond his. All will one day be called to account, rich and poor, high and low. God knows the injuries suffered. There is a higher court than even the supreme court in a land or the European Court of Human Rights.

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your

riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord (James 5:1-7a).

The cries of the wronged are heard by God and he acts on their behalf. Such a righteous display is a cause of rejoicing:

The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, so that men will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely he is God who judges in the earth' (Psalm 58:10-11).

God's vengeance is part of salvation:

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his own arm brought salvation for him; and his own righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; the coastlands he will fully repay (Is 59:16-18).



The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn (Is 61:1-2).

The fact that God will take vengeance is meant to assure us that our not taking vengeance still means the perpetrators of wrongs will be held accountable. In forbidding us to take vengeance, God has not asked us to tolerate injustice or condone wrong but rather to commit our way to him:

Do not say, 'I will recompense evil;' wait for the LORD, and he will save you (Prov 20:22).

This is a comfort to the saint:

Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you' (Is 35:4).

Consider David's example:

Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you (1 Sam 24:12).

And that of Christ:

Leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in his mouth'; who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23).

We have an advocate.

The first stage of forgiveness, our not avenging ourselves, is possible whilst justice is still upheld. But does this not mean that we have simply exchanged the act of taking vengeance for a desire that God will? Is this really biblical forgiveness? Isn't there something quite despicable about a smug satisfaction that a person will receive their come-uppance even though we are not directly involved? Can it ever be right to desire vengeance? Is this not a concept found in certain places in the Old Testament and never in the New? We will now turn to Scripture to seek an answer to these questions. ■

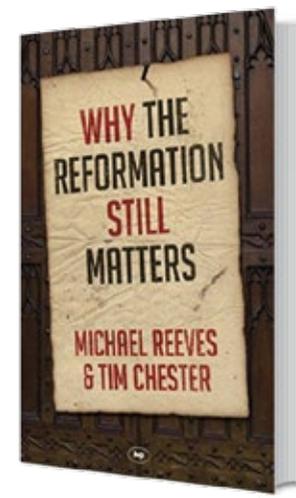
(to be continued in the next issue of RT).

Phil Roberts is pastor of Hartshill Bible Church, Stoke-on-Trent, UK.

Book Review

Why the Reformation Still Matters

Author: Michael Reeves, Tim Chester
Publisher: IVP
Pages: 175
ISBN: 978-1-78359-407-8



With the 500th anniversary of the Reformation upon us, if you are doing nothing else to mark it – and you should be! – at least read this book. It sets out clearly the great biblical truths which had been buried, and were in many cases being denied, and which by the mercy of God Luther and others rediscovered and began to preach and apply to worship and life. It shows how these are still the battleground with Rome, despite ecumenical attempts at confusion and denial of this issue. It shows how these truths really matter to God, and so to Christians and churches everywhere and in all times including our own. It should stir you to worship and holy living and reformation of your church as much as this is needed.

The authors say, 'It is our contention that five hundred years on evangelical churches would be well served by a rediscovery of Reformation theology. The thought of the Reformers not only

challenges Catholic practice; it also challenges many aspects of evangelical practice. The Reformers are not embarrassing grandparents – they are vital conversation partners with the potential to renew and reinvigorate our churches' (pp17-18).

Justification by faith was the initial doctrine which Luther rediscovered, through his own struggles to know the forgiveness of his sins. Being assured that God has forgiven you and counted you righteous in Christ is the pillar of the Christian life. 'Justification is not simply a doctrine to demarcate the true church. Nor is it merely a doctrine to be preached to unbelievers. It is the source of comfort and hope in the midst of the struggles of life' (p31).

However, Luther found that the battleground with Rome quickly shifted. It began with, 'Will God declare you righteous



New Books

The following books have been published recently and are recommended for your attention. This time the focus is on books relating to the Reformation:



so you can enter heaven as you trust in Christ in this life, or as your relative gives money to a seller of indulgences to release you from purgatory?' It quickly moved to, 'Luther says the first, because the Scripture says so with God's authority; and the Pope says the latter, on his own pretended authority as vicar of Christ on earth'. 'Faith alone was at the heart of the content of the Reformation ... Scripture alone was at the heart of its method' (p36).

The book shows how this rediscovery of the sole authority of Scripture opened all the other errors of Rome to scrutiny: on sin and grace, the Cross and the Mass, union with Christ, the nature of the church and the priesthood of believers, the life which pleases God. On each of these there are lucid and heart-warming insights. There are also disturbing facts. Did you know that some who claim to be 'Protestant' teach purgatory (and not just C S Lewis)?

The book lets Luther and others such as Calvin, Zwingli and Tyndale speak for themselves. It reminds us that it is important to sing hymns that declare God's great truths, for we learn, for good or ill, a lot of what we believe from hymns, and if we don't sing them we forget so much.

Truth matters! For salvation and for holy living, we must believe and glory in God's revealed truth. We cannot believe God unless we believe the truths of his Word. We cannot glorify God unless we respond to them in faith and by his grace live them out. You will learn from this book. There is much in a small compass here. To quote all that would be worthwhile to quote in it would be to reproduce much of the book. Buy it and read it and think through what it says in the light of the Scriptures, It will help you to be a deeper 'Reformation Today' person! ■

- R C Sproul, *Are We Together? A Protestant Analysis of Roman Catholicism* (Reformation Trust), 129pp. ISBN 978-1567692822.
- Leonardo De Chirico, *A Christian Pocket Guide to the Papacy* (Christian Focus)
- Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone. The Authority of Scripture*
- Carl Trueman, *Grace Alone. Salvation as a Gift of God*
- Stephen Wellum, *Christ Alone. The Uniqueness of Jesus as Saviour*
- Thomas Schreiner, *Faith Alone. The Doctrine of Justification*
- David Vandrunen, *God's Glory Alone. The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life*
- Jason Helopoulos, *These Truths Alone: The Five Solas* (Good Book Company)
- Carl Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life* (Crossway)

Also one single book on the 5 Solas:

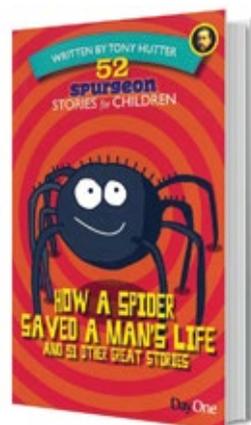
We are not able to supply these books; please consult your own bookshop.

Children's Books

Good material for children is always in demand. The following series of books is recommended:

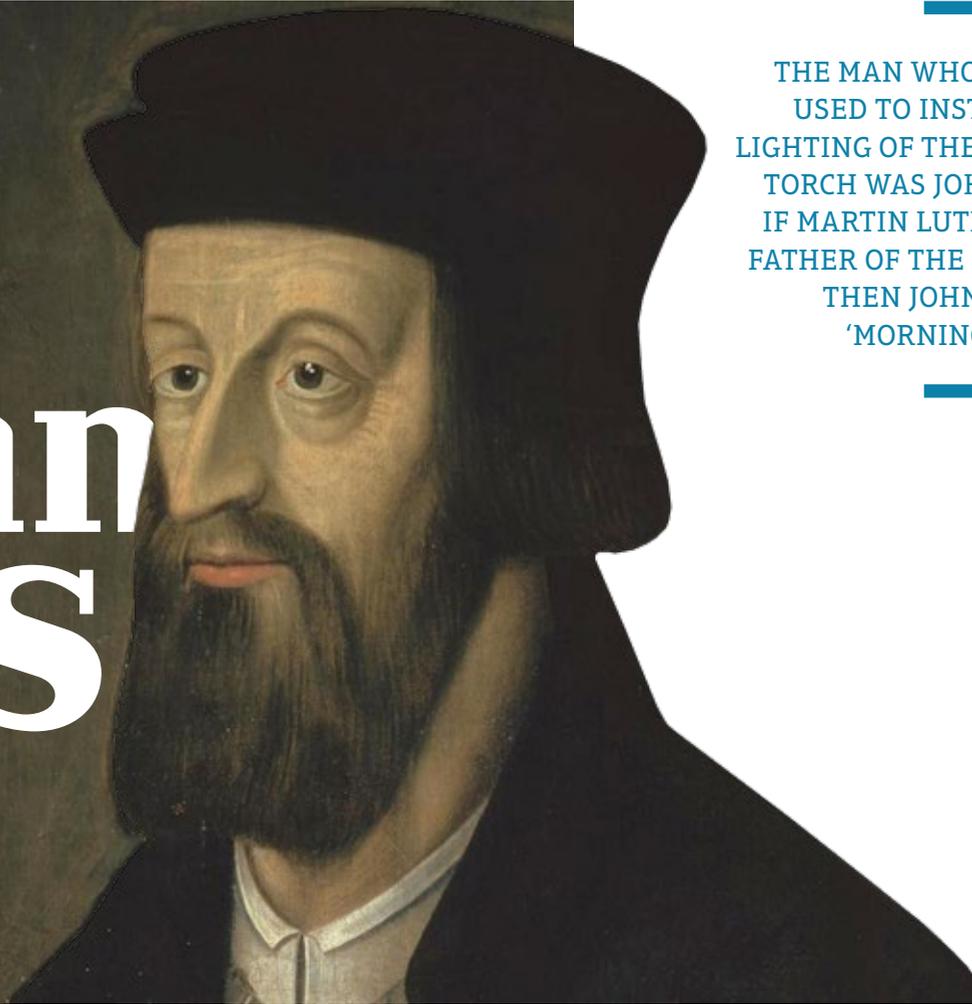
- Tony Hutter, *52 Spurgeon Stories for Children* (Day One)

Books 1-3 are entitled: *How a Spider Saved a Man's Life*; *The Milk's Been Stolen Again*, and *A Fly on the Nose*. Book 4 has appeared relatively recently and is entitled *Keep Inching Along*.



A Brief Account
of the Life

Jan Hus



THE MAN WHOM THE LORD
USED TO INSTIGATE THE
LIGHTING OF THE REFORMATION
TORCH WAS JOHN WYCLIFFE.
IF MARTIN LUTHER WAS THE
FATHER OF THE REFORMATION
THEN JOHN WAS ITS
'MORNING STAR'.

Introduction

When Martin Luther walked up to the doors of Wittenburg Castle Church on the last day of October in 1517 and nailed his 95 Theses of Contention to the doors, he did so not in isolation or independently from history. He stood, as we all do, on the shoulders of those who have gone before, and although Martin became known as the Father of the Reformation, he was in fact not the instigator of it, rather the torch bearer, as spiritually and physically the Reformation had been lit over 100 years previous. As on the day the church began at Pentecost when 'tongues as of fire appeared' so too the tongues of fire would appear again to begin the Re-formation of the church, only this time with the flames of papal human bonfires. The man whom the Lord used to instigate the lighting of the reformation torch was John Wycliffe. If Martin Luther was the Father of the Reformation then John was its 'Morning Star'.

John was born in England in 1328 and while teaching at Oxford he soon became a thorn in the side of the papal church. His teachings took

on the Roman church in a full frontal attack. He taught that the Bible alone was the final authority in all matters of faith and practice; he vigorously showed from Scripture that Christ alone was the head of his church, and he denied transubstantiation, the papal bull and indulgences. However, although these two men have been recognised by church history as the main instigators of the Reformation, there was another man who also had a large impact on it but who is not as well recognised for his work as Wycliffe and Luther: his name is Jan Hus.

Birth and Ministry

Jan was born on 6 July 1369 in Husinec (German - Hussinetz), a small town 70 miles south of Prague, Bohemia (modern day Czech Republic). Jan took his surname from his home town but shortened it to Hus. Early in his life, he decided that he would like to enter the priesthood as 'I could have a good income and a nice toga, and so that people will regard me with respect'. He eventually went to Charles University, in Prague where he studied theology and gained a BA, BTh and MA and in 1398 he became professor of theology. In 1400 he was ordained into the priesthood and it's around this time that he came to true conversion. 1402 brought two new challenges to Jan, first he was made the rector of the university and second he was appointed the preacher of Bethlehem Chapel in Prague where he preached in Czech and not Latin. Both of these positions were later taken away from him. It was during this period whilst rector and preacher that Jan came to understand the abuses and manipulations of the church, which was helped in part by the writings of John

Wycliffe. In 1382 Richard II of England married Anne of Bohemia, and it was after the marriage that Anne encouraged cultural exchanges to begin between England and Bohemia, one of which was the exchange of students with Oxford University.

At this time, Wycliffe was a prominent figure at the university and had written many books and treatises on the state of the church. As these exchanges grew, many of the Bohemian students returned home and took with them the writings of Wycliffe. One of the main instigators of this influx of Wycliffe's writings was Jerome of Prague. It was Jerome who while at Oxford had translated Wycliffe's writings from English into Czech. They were then distributed all over Bohemia. It was as Jerome and other students returned to Prague, in particular to Charles University, that Jan became aware of John Wycliffe and avidly read his books. It was also at this time that Jerome met Hus and began to work with him in reforming the Bohemian church. Jerome was not a priest but rather a philosopher and theologian; but because of his close relationship and work with Hus he was still seen as a heretic by the Roman church and was eventually burnt at the stake on 30 May 1416 for his part in the early reformation.

However, as Hus read Wycliffe and understood his theology, he was also encouraged to speak out against the clerical abuses and unbiblical teachings and practices of the church.

Some of the abuses which he openly spoke of from the pulpit, were:

- » Priests having mistresses, and owning businesses such as brothels, bars and abattoirs.
- » Indulgences being sold to raise funds for a war chest for Pope John XXIII against Pope Gregory XII.
- » Ecclesiastical offices being sold to the highest bidder (a practice called simony; Acts 8:20).
- » Nepotism (undue favour in appointing one's relatives to office) was rife.¹⁰
- » People had to pay for baptisms, marriages, confessions, last rites and even for forgiveness and salvation.
- » Relics being sold, such as (supposedly) the nails and wood from Christ's cross & thorns from His crown

In 1403, Wycliffe's works were attacked and condemned by the university but Jan was asked to defend Wycliffe's teachings, which he did. However, this open display of agreement with Wycliffe brought Jan to the attention of the church hierarchy and marked him out for investigation. Then in 1409 Pope Alexander V issued a papal bull renouncing the heresies of Wycliffe and ordered that all of his books be handed over to the church. This bull also included a ban on certain areas of Bohemia for preaching any type of rebuke against the church. Only priests appointed by Rome could practise and preach in these areas. There was of course

a period of outrage and uproar among the people at the enforcing of this decree, but this did not stop Archbishop Sbynko, the man assigned to enforce this bull, in excommunicating Hus and burning 200 of Wycliffe's books. However, with the support of the local populace, Jan ignored this decree and carried on preaching at Bethlehem and rebuking the abuses that he saw.

Although Hus had the support of the people and the University of Prague at this time, an interdict was placed on the whole city by the Roman church until such time as he was handed over to them for explanations. Jan and the city ignored this interdict but when Jan began attacking and admonishing the system of papal Indulgences, then the university felt he had gone too far and so removed their support of him. At this, King Wenceslas IV, who had been a strong admirer of Hus, also removed his support for him, thereby, leaving Jan no choice but to leave the city and go into exile in 1412. Although Jan was in exile and was restricted in many of his daily routines, such as preaching and teaching, the Lord, (as he was to do with Martin Luther 100 years later, when he was in exile), did not allow Jan to waste this time, and it was during this exile that he was most theologically productive, he translated the New Testament into the vernacular for all Czech's to own and read; he wrote a dissertation on simony, and many other tracts; he also wrote his magnum opus, 'De Ecclesia' (On the church).

¹⁰ Nepotism is the practice among those with power or influence of favouring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs; English Oxford Living Dictionaries. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>

In this book he criticised many of the basic doctrines of the church; he rejected the teaching that the pope is the head of the church and the cardinals its body. He wrote in chapter 7 'Thus the pope is not the head nor are the cardinals the entire body of the holy, Catholic and universal church. Christ alone is the head of that Church and all predestined together form the Church, and each one is a member of that body, because the bride of Christ is united with him.' He also attacked papal succession where he wrote in chapter 7 an exegesis of Matthew 16:18 and stated, 'Thus, because of this confession, which was so clear and firm, Christ said to Peter, the rock, "I tell you, you are Peter" (that is, the confessor of the true rock which

is Christ), "and on this rock" (which you confessed, that is, on Me) "I will build" (through steadfast faith and perfecting grace) "My church" (that is, the convocation of the predestined who after this life are appointed to receive glory.'

Trial and Martyrdom

This book in effect signed Jan's death warrant, and after it was published the pope demanded that Hus go to Rome and explain his doctrines and although Hus was open to such a public explanation of his teachings he was not prepared to go to Rome to do so. Then in 1414 the Council of Constance was convened, of which its main focus was to find an end to the Great Schism (the dispute and separation of the

Eastern and Western churches), and to deal with the crisis in the papacy: Pope John XXIII v Pope Gregory XII (there were two of them denouncing each other!). It soon diversified, however, into an attack against Hus and the heresies which were being spoken of in Bohemia. Because Hus had already agreed to defend his teachings in open debate, but not go to Rome to do so, King Sigismund of Hungary offered Hus a guaranteed safe journey to and from Constance if he would go and explain himself. Hus agreed and so on 11 October 1414 he left Prague and set off for Constance with a royal guard and a papal representative and arrived in Constance on 3 November.

On reaching Constance, he began to prepare his defence but he also preached and administered mass, even though he was still officially banned from doing so. However, although he had been given an assurance of safe passage by Sigismund, the cardinals had given no such assurance and so would not honour the agreement made to a 'heretic', therefore on 28 November, Jan was arrested and placed in a cell at the monastery at Gottlieben. Because of the terrible state of his cell, Jan soon became ill and his health deteriorated quickly but he continued to write and his letters were smuggled out of the monastery. By making the decision to arrest Hus, the cardinals had in fact already found him guilty of heresy before the council had even begun its deliberations. The cardinals used the fact that he had already been declared a

heretic to give Sigismund an escape route for his personal guarantee.

According to the cardinals the promise given to Hus was not binding because as a heretic '... when a man fails in keeping faith with God, it is allowed to fail in keeping faith with him'. So although Sigismund wanted Hus released he succumbed to the cardinals agenda because he wanted their support for him to be crowned King of the Holy Roman Empire, which he was in 1433. There were also further implications of this pre-judgment, in that as a 'declared heretic' Hus had no legal rights or privileges, which meant that he could not defend himself or his theology. At his trial 39 charges were brought against him, 26 of which came directly

from his book 'De Ecclesia'. He was also falsely accused of denying the historical doctrine of the Trinity, in that the Trinity did not consist of three person's but four, Hus being the fourth. Of the 88 voting representatives, 51 voted in favour of Hus being declared a heretic and 45 of these demanded the death penalty. One of Hus's fiercest accusers was the Bishop of Liege who stated 'Whosoever teaches the Bible to the common rabble, casts pearls before swine and thus sins against the Holy Ghost. For this reason I condemn Hus'.

The date of the conclusion of the trial was 6 July 1415, his birthday and also the day of his execution. He was taken directly from the trial to his execution, where he was disrobed of his clerical attire and dressed in a white robe; his hair was cut

HE WAS GIVEN A FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO RECANT HIS HERESIES BUT INSTEAD HE SAID "IN EVANGELICAL TRUTH I WANT TO DIE!"

 Trial of Hus



so roughly that part of his scalp was removed and blood flowed down his face. A paper bishop's mitre was then placed on his head, which included drawings of demons dancing and tearing a soul to pieces and the words 'Arch heretic' written on it. At this, he dropped to the ground and began to pray for his enemies and recite Psalm 31. He was then tied and chained to a stake and the books of John Wycliffe and straw were placed around him to act as kindle. Before the fire was lit, he was given a final opportunity to recant his heresies but instead he said 'In evangelical truth I want to die!' Then the order was given to light the pyre; as the books and wood were lit and the flames began to engulf him, he began to sing the Kyrie eleison, 'Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me'. His earthly birthday was finished but his new birthday was just beginning in the presence of the Lord. When the flames eventually died and his ashes cooled, what bones remained intact, were gathered up, taken away, smashed and thrown into the Rhine River so that his followers had no shrine or grave to attend and no honour could be brought to him.

Legacy

So, with his books destroyed, his body burnt and his ashes discarded, the church hierarchy thought that was the end of Hus, but they were wrong. His supporters carried on his life, his teachings, and his example, from which the Hussite movement grew and the Moravian church was born. Although it has been said that Jan Hus was no more than a copier and disciple of John Wycliffe, who just translated Wycliffe into Czech; this does Jan a disservice. He was different

from Wycliffe, he lived in a different era, in a different context and he did not agree with everything that Wycliffe taught. However, Wycliffe did help him to formulate his own understandings of the church and openly question the church of his time; *De Ecclesia* makes both of these aspects abundantly clear.

The light from the fire that burnt Hus at the stake can still be seen today, and we should be grateful that the Lord raised up such a man that we can look back to and learn from. John Wycliffe, Martin Luther and John Calvin may have been designated by history as the men of the Reformation but we should not forget the life and legacy of Jan Hus. If we do, we will be the worse for it and we may open ourselves up to repeat some of the clerical and ecclesiastical abuses that were made during his life. Let us forever remember and hold on to the basic doctrines that Hus taught, such as: Christ alone is the head of the church; no one has the right to ask for payment for salvation; Scripture alone is the final authority; the pastor is to lead by example and mirror Christ. Martin Luther wrote in 1529, after reading *De Ecclesia*, 'I have kept to and taught all the teachings of John Hus, and I did not know it up to now. John of Staupitz, who was Vicar General of the Augustinian friars in Germany also did it. He was Luther's boss, and as such encouraged Luther in his newly found doctrinal convictions. In short: we are all Hussites, and did not know it. Even Paul and Augustine...'

May we too be Hussites. ■

Steve Whitaker is the pastor of Atworth Independent Church, UK.



📷 Hus Monument

Further reading

- The Letters of Jan Hus; The Online Library of Liberty; <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/huss-the-letters-of-john-hus>
- Schaff, David S. *John Huss: His Life, Teachings and Death, After Five Hundred Years* (Classic Reprint, 2015)
- Budgen, Victor. *On Fire For God, The Story of John Huss* (Evangelical Press, 2007)
- Schaff, David S. *De Ecclesia, The Church*, by Jan Hus: <https://archive.org/details/deecclesiachurch00husjuoft>

Carey Ministers Conference

3-5 January 2017



A report by David Earl

They say a good breakfast sets you up for the day. The Carey Conference is something like that. It's a great way to start the year with its balanced diet of church history, theology, preaching, prayer and fellowship.

Well attended, it was a joy to catch up with old friends as well as to get to know people at the conference for the first

time. I spoke with pastors from the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. Though the work can be tough going with little to show for our efforts, it was very encouraging to hear several stories of people being converted.

This year, being the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation, we began with a paper on Martin Luther. Instead



Dr Leonardo De Chirico

of simply telling us his story, which I imagine most at the conference knew well, Paul Gibson focussed on Luther's weaknesses and struggles. Through these *Anfechtungen* God taught Luther to look away from himself and to Christ.

There are voices telling us that the Reformation is over. Most notably Pope Francis recently joined with Lutherans in Lund, Sweden, where commitment to pursuing unity and cooperation between the two churches was made. Leonardo De Chirico, who pastors a church in Rome, presented an in-depth analysis of Roman Catholicism today. Over three sessions we heard how, though Pope Francis uses evangelical language and seeks to welcome everyone, the doctrines

of Rome have not changed. Language is being blurred in an attempt to minimise differences while at the same time indulgences are still being granted.

Linda Allcock led the women's sessions this year from the book of Titus. She also shared in the questions and answers session how, not unlike Luther, studying Romans as a student had transformed her understanding of the gospel.

A couple of papers were not directly related to the Reformation, but proved very helpful. Ian Fry spoke on making disciples of the next generation. It was refreshing to hear a thoroughly biblical approach to youth work from Psalm 78:1-8 that aimed at raising tomorrow's Christian



Rupert Bentley-Taylor

leaders. John Benton challenged us from the life of Samson, arguing that the deeper idol behind his sin of lust was his desire for success. When frustrated in his pursuit of success he became angry and resentful. Then instead of looking to God, he turned elsewhere for comfort.

Rupert Bentley-Taylor opened his sermon from Isaiah 55 on 'The Power of the Word' with a quote from Luther: 'I

did nothing; the Word did everything.' He also preached the closing sermon of the conference with an encouraging reminder of 'The Power of the Gospel' from 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. God chooses the unimpressive to do his work and yet 'a community of nobodies is the most impressive thing in the universe'. May we all go on preaching this life-giving message of Christ crucified, and may God give the increase in 2017. ■

Evangelical church in Rome



Dr Leonardo De Chirico is pastor of the Evangelical Church Breccia di Roma. The church meets in a remarkable place right in the centre of Rome.

Services – in Italian – are held on Sundays at 17.30. The address is: Via S.Eufemia 9 (close to Piazza Venezia), Rome. The website is www.brecciaroma.it. ■

Inauguration of a new President in the USA

The following message was posted by publisher Crossway on their blog (www.crossway.org) on the Inauguration Day of President Trump in the USA (20 Jan 2017):

Dual Citizens

'In some ways, today is like any other day. As Christians, we live as dual citizens – sojourning here on earth while we lift our eyes and eagerly await our coming King. While our country transfers leadership today, let's remember our humanity, his eternal lordship, and our ultimate hope. These nine passages can help centre our gaze on Christ – our just king who reigns now and promises to return, bringing true and lasting peace.'

Then they proceed to quote these nine texts in full. I only list them here and would urge you to read these texts for yourself and to use these as an incentive

to pray. These texts speak powerfully to all of us in whatever country we may live and whatever the position of our government and head of state may be: stable, unstable, or in a state of transition.

These are the texts:

- » Philippians 3:17-4:1
- » Jeremiah 23:5-6
- » Psalm 72:11-19
- » Mark 10:35-45
- » Romans 13:1-7
- » Isaiah 9:6-7
- » 1 Timothy 2:1-6
- » Psalm 75:1-7
- » John 14:27-31 ■





Update on Recent Conferences

The table gives an overview of conferences held in various locations in Southern Africa in November 2016 and January 2017. The total number of books distributed since 2006 now stands at 91,739.

COUNTRY	LOCATION	DELEGATES	BOOKS Sold & Free
South Africa	Mseleni	39	226
South Africa	Empangeni	34	364
Lesotho	Maseru	19	122
South Africa	Estcourt	45	245
South Africa	Umlazi (Durban)	10	133
South Africa	Hillcrest	70	1190
South Africa	Newcastle	65	411
South Africa	Sakile (Standerton)	14	159

Report from the Conferences:

The conferences in January focused on the theme of 'The Biblical Pastor'. The programme included the following lectures:

The Pastor:

- » As a man called by God
- » As preacher of Old Testament narrative
- » As shepherd
- » As preacher of the law and the gospel
- » In his personal holiness as leader of the church
- » As preacher of Old Testament prophecy
- » As theologian
- » As ambassador of Christ



 *Rebecca preparing for the book sales*

The speakers were Pastor Lawrence Lama, (pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Kabwe, Zambia. He serves as Baptist Union of Zambia Executive Secretary), and Pastor Christopher Mnguni (elder of Duduza Christian Fellowship; for the past 6 years he has served in the church plant in Daveyton).



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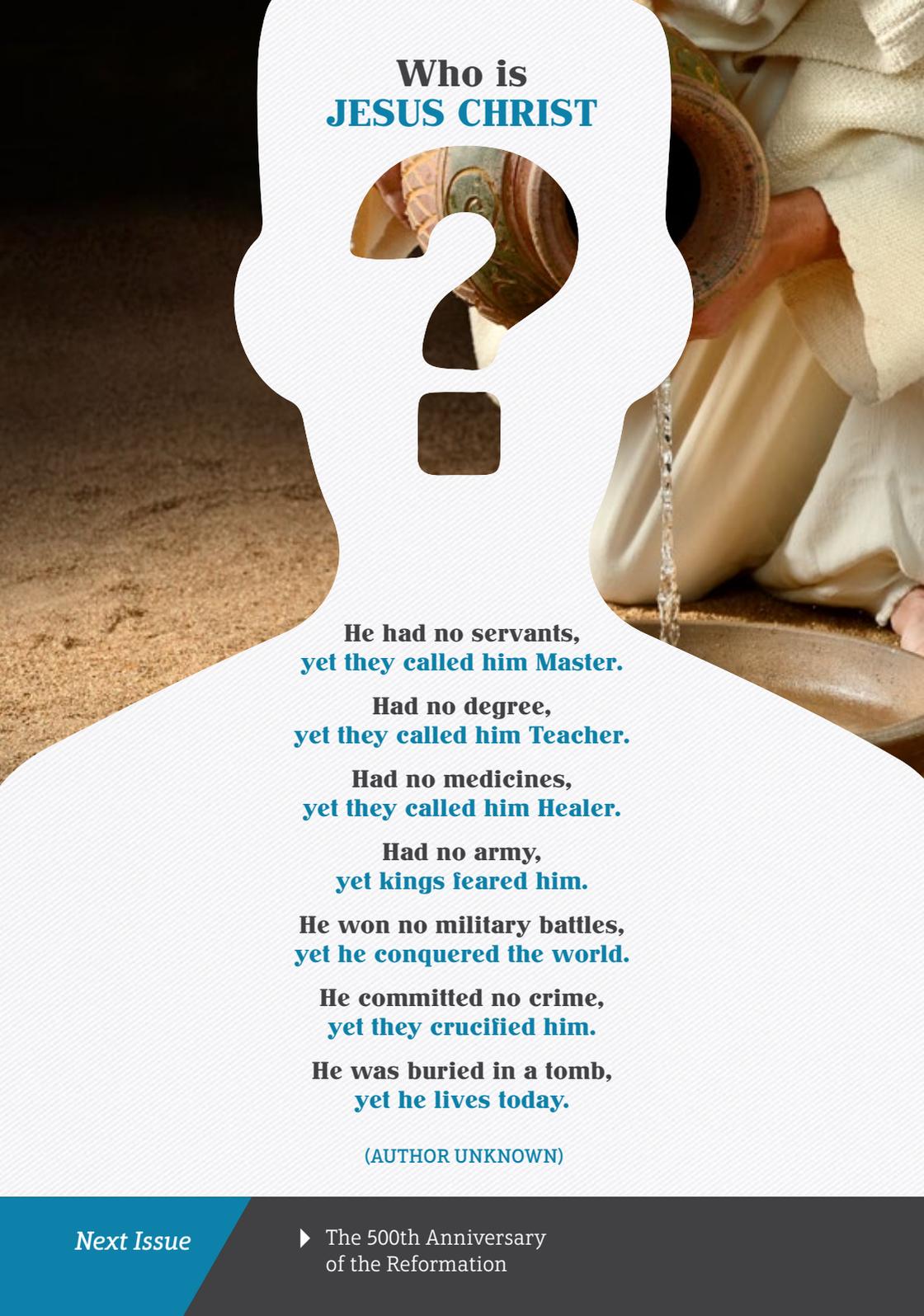
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Further Details

Further details about individual APC conferences are available from Phil Roberts (phil@tentmaker.org.uk) or Frederick Hodgson (frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)



Who is **JESUS CHRIST**

**He had no servants,
yet they called him Master.**

**Had no degree,
yet they called him Teacher.**

**Had no medicines,
yet they called him Healer.**

**Had no army,
yet kings feared him.**

**He won no military battles,
yet he conquered the world.**

**He committed no crime,
yet they crucified him.**

**He was buried in a tomb,
yet he lives today.**

(AUTHOR UNKNOWN)