**The Festival of Good Friday**,

10 April 2020,

*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christ Bore the Punishment**

**for the Sins of Men to Save Men.”**

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin;

that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

**II Corinthians 5:21.**

**Introduction**.

The Apostle St. Paul makes plain that Christ bore not His own sin but rather the sins of others, of all men, of us, on Good Friday.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 The Apostle writes that He was “made to be sin for us”, namely, our sin was reckoned to Him.

The Apostle also makes plain that Christ took the guilt of our sin and replaced with His Righteousness, the Righteousness of God. Not only did Christ wipe clean our slates by His Passion but He also filled them up with the Righteousness pleasing to God forever.

Finally, because it is Christ who carried out this task, we that how greatly God cares for us. God Himself bore our burdens in order to deliver us from sin to everlasting Righteousness and everlasting life.

Christ bore not His own guilt and punishment, but the guilt and punishment of all men on Good Friday in order to save men from their sins.

**I. God Himself Bore the Punishment for the Sins of All Men on the Cross.**

**A. The Cross of Christ reveals the magnitude of man’s sin.**

Good Friday, while a day of Good News for men because God bore the burden of their sins and instead of making them do so forever, reminds us again of the gravity of sin. In order to heal the wound inflicted by sin, God Himself had to come down and attend to it. St. John Chrysostom puts in this way in sermon from around the 5th century:

... the wound required so great attendance, that the Lord of all came down to die, and so put a stop to the evil ... .[[2]](#footnote-2)2

The Lutheran Church confesses:

Yes, what more forceful, more terrible declaration and preaching of God's wrath against sin is there than the suffering and death of Christ, His Son? But as long as all this preaches God's wrath and terrifies people, it is not yet the preaching of the Gospel nor Christ's own preaching, but that of Moses and the Law against the impenitent. For the Gospel and Christ were never ordained and given for the purpose of terrifying and condemning, but for comforting and cheering those who are terrified and timid.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

According to Scripture, Christ’s death reveals both God’s love and God’s wrath. This truth is brought out in this very passage, Rom. 5:8-11: ‘Hated by God (... lying under God’s wrath), we were reconciled to God.’ Love prompts God to reconcile us to Himself by the death of His Son, that is, to render satisfaction to His punitive justice. Scripture teaches that God’s compassionate will or love does not preclude the settlement with the righteousness of God, but includes it.[[4]](#footnote-4)4

The wound was so great because one sin against God is infinite and eternal because the One offended, namely, God, is infinite and eternal. Consequently, only God Himself, who is the offended party, could possibly repair the wound. Sin is huge because sin creates an offense God who is infinite and goes on forever.

**B. God Himself bore the consequences of the sins of men in order to deliver them from sin into everlasting Righteousness and life.**

Notice, however, God Himself shouldered this horrible burden Himself and did not make sinners bear this terrible burden. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

God reckoned sin to Christ, not to men, in order for Christ Himself to burden guilt of sin and its payment.

Christ could bear that terrible burden because while True Man He is also the True God, Almighty to do all things. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

The wrath of God was inflamed by sin. This wrath was greater than what heaven and earth would be able to endure, for it was as big as God Himself. Therefore, to endure and assuage this wrath, an almighty power was needed. Such a power resides only with God; that’s why God became man, so that the wrath of God would direct itself upon the truly guilty because He was a man, and yet was able to bear this huge burden because He was God. Through sin the inborn righteousness of man was lost; if he was to be reconciled with God, he had to obtain this righteousness again. Man himself could not achieve this, for anything he might have done, such he already owed to God beforehand. Thus also no angel or any other creature was able to earn a righteousness for man, for whatever they did, they were already obligated to render to God beforehand. That’s why God became man, so that a complete righteousness was again won for and give to mankind, and man was again reconciled with God without damaging [violating] the righteousness of God.[[6]](#footnote-6)6

The Apostle St. Paul, as does Dr. Gerhard, also speaks of Christ establishing men in the Righteousness of God:

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

In other words, *Christ wiped clean our slates of the guilt of sin and filled up our slates with His Righteousness that is forever pleasing to God because He is God and the Righteousness is His*. The Apostle St. Paul writes that Christ submitted to all the commandments we had to submit in order to fulfill them for us and give His Fulfillment to us:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are son, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

On the Cross Christ prayed to God:

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?[[9]](#footnote-9)9

Rather than curse God and die, as Job’s wife urged in the midst of his horrible suffering1[[10]](#footnote-10)0, Christ continued to appeal to God as His God, calling Him “My God”. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes of the Miraculous Obedience of Christ for us:

Yet, while Christ knows Himself totally forsaken of God in the abyss of hell, He cries, “My God, My God!” Even in such an abject condition, as He was in, He still clings to God as His personal God. This was a God-pleasing prayer that as it were issued from the pit of hell. This is something extraordinary, something unheard of. In the midst of the torments of hell Christ asserts that as His Son He will cling to God and claim Him as His own! Never before and never after has such a confident prayer issued from the abyss of hell on the part of those who are damned in that place. Ordinarily from those who suffer the torments of the damned come only cries and sighs of despair, never prayers of faith. It was by this prayer that Christ conquered and overcame the power of hell.1[[11]](#footnote-11)1

God Himself bore the guilt of men’s sins on Good Friday by His Passion in order to wipe clean their slates of that guilt and to fill up their slates with the Righteousness of God that is forever pleasing to God.

**II. Christ Wraps Men in His God-Pleasing Righteousness to Save and Give Life Everlasting.**

**A. The Gospel Absolves men of sin and wraps men in the Righteousness of God in Christ.**

Christ wrapped Himself in our guilt in order to enrobe us in His Righteousness which is forever pleasing to God through the Gospel. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

To put on Christ means to put on the Righteousness of God. For Christ was, as the Apostle St. Paul writes, made “...*to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”1[[13]](#footnote-13)3 In the first place, *this point tells us again that Christ Himself is the Almighty God because His Righteousness for us is identified as the Righteousness of God*. Finally, through the Gospel Christ wraps us in the Righteousness of His Passion for us.

In addition, there is nothing to sully this Wonderful Righteousness of Christ in Holy Baptism because Holy Baptism at the same time Absolves of sin. The Evangelist St. Luke writes:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off. *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

Through the Gospel Christ removes the guilt of sin and robes us in His Righteousness forever pleasing to God.

**B. The Gospel saves and gives life everlasting.**

Where we have Absolution of sin and the Righteousness of Christ, we can expect to have and do, indeed, have salvation and life everlasting. The Apostle St. Peter writes that the Gospel saves through the Remission of sins:

The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience1[[15]](#footnote-15)5 toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... .1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

Finally, through this Remission of sins and the Righteousness of Christ, we also gain life everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

**Conclusion**.

On Good Friday, God Himself bore the wounds we earned by our sins and Atoned for them. In addition, God also Fulfilled all Righteousness for all men. That’s why Good Friday is good -- because God Himself and not sinners shouldered for us our burdens caused by our sins and delivered us from them.

Through Gospel God Absolves us of that sin and robes us in the Righteousness of God in Christ. Now men are forever pleasing to God and gain, thereby, salvation, life everlasting, and the resurrection of the body.

Amen.

1. 1The prophet Isaiah prophesied Christ would suffer not for His sins but for the sins of the people: “But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” **Isaiah 53:6**. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2St. John Chrysostom, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted, September 1980, p. 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3The Formula of Concord, **Article V.12**, Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Reader's Edition, p. 555. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pp. 352, 353, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**II Corinthians 5:21.** [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. David O. Berger, Decatur, IL: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, pp. 37, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7**II Corinthians 5:21.** [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8**Galatians 4:2-6**. “As my *Priest*, Christ *fulfilled the Law* in my stead perfectly (active obedience), *sacrificed Himself* for me (passive obedience), and still *intercedes* (pleads) for me with His heavenly Father.” *The Small Catechism*, question 132 B, p. 108.

   “This teaching of Scripture [of Christ’s *Active Obedience*] is of great practical importance. In his life of faith the Christian continually resorts to Christ=s vicarious fulfillment of the Law. Luther: ‘He satisfied the Law; He fulfilled the Law perfectly, for He loved God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His strength, and with all His mind, and He loved His neighbor as Himself. Therefore, when the Law comes and accuses you of not having kept it, bid it go to Christ. Say: There is the Man who has kept it; He fulfilled it for me and gave His fulfillment to me. Thus the Law is silenced.’” Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 375, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**St. Mark 15:34**. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10“Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” **Job 2:9**. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11*Lectures on Select Psalms*, tr. the Rev. Dr. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 67, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12**Galatians 3:26-27**. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13**II Corinthians 5:21.** [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14**Acts 2:38-39**. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15“The Greek word for ‘answer’, as is universally accepted, has in forensic language become a technical term for ‘agreement’. Contained in the original meaning of the word was the fact that the signing of an agreement began with the question: ‘Do you solemnly promise?’ This was eventually lost in idiomatic usage so that by this word as legal expression the Greek came to think only of the legal stipulation itself. And this meaning fits admirably in our passage, the only one in which the word is found in the New Testament. Baptism is the stipulation, or, to say with Luther, ‘the covenant of a good conscience’ in relation to or with God. Baptism cleanses the conscience from sin and its guilt, generates a good conscience which looks up to God joyfully and confidently, standing in union and communion with God. On the basis of this passage from Peter we commonly speak of the baptismal covenant. Cremer’s explanation keys in with this: ‘The claim, the title, which a good conscience has to God.’” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on the First Epistle of St. Peter*, tr. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date, pp. 165, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16**I Peter 3:21**. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**Titus 3:4-7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)