

## Chapter 6

# Of “Saint Paul the Apostle: His Life, Theology, and Works”

(By Fr. Matthew the Poor)

## Theology of Redemption

### Part Four

#### Second – Atonement by Substitution:

**A punishment in place of our punishment – Christ died instead of us.**

(continued from Part 3)

As we said before (in part 2 of this series), **we suffered with Him**. How come, then, do we say that He suffered instead of us?

But Christ **was crucified in us**, in our flesh, **for us** and therefore we **were crucified with Him**. **He died in our flesh for us** and therefore we died with Him. (Notice “for us” and not “instead of us.”)

**Note:** There was an error in the translation of the Eucharistic text from Greek to Arabic (this error is not in the English translation) only in the Gospel according to St. Luke. It did not happen in the Arabic translation of the corresponding texts in Mat. 26:28, Mark 14:24, or I Cor. 11:24. In Luke 22:19, 20, the words “for you = من أجلكم” were incorrectly translated “**instead of you = عنكم**”. This reversed the true meaning and corrupted the understanding of the atonement, especially among the Copts as this error was propagated to the Liturgical texts.

#### **Correction of the Atonement Theory:**

- 1- Atonement is through union rather than substitution.**
- 2- It is a sacrifice of love not of punishment.**

So, it is not good to say that the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross was offered by Christ to God **in place of me or instead of the sinners** for two reasons, each of them is more serious than the other.

#### **The First Reason:**

If Christ suffered **alone apart from me** and also died **apart from me**, i.e. **instead of me**, how was my sin transferred to Him? And how have we attained forgiveness? Also, how have we been justified in Him or even obtained His righteousness? The fact is that He took our flesh and we, united with Him, became “in Him” and He became “in us” according to His words, “... and you in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). And notice that He said this before His crucifixion!! When afterwards He suffered and died, we were in Him, and He in us; and thereby He destroyed sin in that same flesh that He took from us. Sin was not transferred to Him in theory, but rather was in Him and was destroyed in the body of our flesh, i.e. in all flesh.

+ “*God sending his own Son in the likeness of **sinful flesh**, and for sin, condemned sin **in the flesh**. That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled **in us** ...*” (Rom. 8:3-4). The requirement of the Law **in us** is the sure death of the sinner. Thus, this requirement of the Law was accomplished **in us** by death directly when Christ died, because He died with our body, i.e. we all died in Him.

+ “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, ...*” (Rom. 6:6).

So, He was never separate from us when He died. We were in Him when He died. We died in Him when He died. It is never a substitution. Therefore, it is not good to say that He died instead of us, but we should say the He died for us, because the substitution (i.e. that Christ died instead of us by receiving the punishment of our sin) weakens our relation with Christ (i.e. our union with Him). It is only through union with Him in the flesh, that He took when He was incarnated, that we can obtain the power of His death and His resurrection. St. Paul, who lived this relation says, “... *I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me ...*” (Gal 2:20). In another place, he says, “For to me, to live is Christ ...” (Phil. 1:21). And, as he expresses frequently, in this sensitive expression, how he receives everything concerning salvation, redemption, and life with Christ in firm union, he says “I have been crucified with Christ ...” (Gal. 2:20)

### **The Second Reason:**

#### **Love in the New Testament supersedes the Old Testament Punishment:**

This is centered on the relationship between the Father and the Son. “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). There is no reference here to any punishment. It is all LOVE. The act of giving here, whether from the Father or the Son, is an act of love. “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,*” (John 15:13). There is no trace of punishment here. It was not a punishment, on the side of Christ, when He offered Himself a sacrifice on the cross and accepted death but rather love. But, from our side, His death in our flesh was counted as fulfillment of a punishment. For when He fulfilled His death, He fulfilled His love, and this was for us a fulfillment of our punishment.

For if death is the wages of sin, “*the soul that sins it shall die*” (Ez. 18:20) as it was in the Old Testament, even so the Son could have accepted the punishment of death from the Father instead of us to satisfy God’s justice. But that is not so in the spirit of the New Testament and is not correct, or else the Son’s sacrifice would have been a punishment, but it is a work of love. It was love in its motivation as well as in its result. Death here was an expression of love on the side of Christ, but on our side it was fulfillment of punishment.

The Father cannot have in His heart both a wrath poured on His Son to die in our place and also the grace of love in offering His Son for us, so that we don’t perish, as the utmost expression of love for us. Also, the severe sufferings which were experienced by the incarnate Son in His death on the cross and the shame of contempt and mocking, were not an execution of punishment, imposed by His Father on Him as a substitute for us. It was, rather, to carry out a mission of love in the flesh of our humanity as an inheritance for us. Both the suffering and the death were not the dues of punishment but the dues of love, “*who loved me, and gave himself for me,*” (Gal. 2:20).

In other words, in Christ’s love, He fulfilled death which was our punishment, because of His love for us, and also for His love to His Father in His obedience and endurance of sufferings. As such, He counteracted our acts of ingratitude, ignorance, and transgressions by His acts of love, with which He also removed all our punishments.

This was the real drive of the Son’s incarnation, it was an act of **love of the first class**, quite far from being a punishment. **The Father never punished the Son but offered Him in love.** Neither did the Son punish Himself but He loved us and gave Himself for us. Not even we were

punished in reality, but we won the gifts of justification, love, and adoption. Even so God's justice was satisfied, the Law was fulfilled, and the guilty perished, since He died in our body that carried the sins and deserved death. By our death in Him, God's judgement on us was fulfilled in us not in Christ, "*That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,*" (Rom. 8:4).

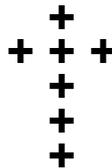
Punishment does not generate love, **but love abolishes punishment**. That is why Christ rose from the dead, because **Love never fails and never dies!** So, where is the punishment?

Notice this my reader: **The death** of the incarnate Son of God on the cross does not only lift up the punishment of sin, but it goes far beyond that to bestowing on us a new nature united with His nature. In this process He transforms us from being corporeal creation to spiritual creation and bestows on us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our bodies, which are considered God's temple in which His Spirit dwells. Also, He granted us a status of His children after we were bondservants. And as children of God, He abundantly poured in us His Fatherly love just as He loves His Son so that we live with Him for eternity.

How can we say after all of that, that in His death, Christ carried the punishment instead of us?? The truth is that with His death, He rescinded out punishment, because His death was an act of love, not a punishment. And when He rescinded the punishment, the various marvelous works of His redeeming love became manifested to all.

(To be contd.)

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*St Cyril the Great*

### **We Were All in Christ Who Died and Rose Again**

One Lamb died for all, bringing the whole flock on earth back safely to God the Father; one for all, that He might bring all under subjection to God; one for all, that He might gain them all; "*that for the future they might all no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again for them*" (2Co 5:15). For when we were guilty of many sins, and for that reason were liable to death and destruction, the Father gave His Son a ransom for us, one for all, **since all are in Him**, and he is greater than all. One died for all, **that we all might live in Him**: Death devoured the Lamb on behalf of all, and then vomited all in Him, and with Him. **For we were all in Christ, who died and rose again on our account, and on our behalf.**

*On John 1:29; LFC 1, 132.*

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