

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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Lenten Sunday. Quinquagesima.

Introduction.

I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Thus Christ our Saviour speaks in a parable about His impending suffering. The parable is taken from the custom of that time of completely immersing the person to be baptized. The Saviour means to say that just as one baptized is covered with water, so He must be covered with sores and wales and bathe in His own blood. The words are recorded in Luke 12. 50.

After the great, lamentable misfortune of the fall into sin, man could be saved in only one way: the Son of the living God must become a true man and submit to suffering and death for His brethren, the poor children of Adam, whose nature and fashion He assumed. His whole life was one of suffering. The weaknesses and infirmities of our nature, which He had taken upon Himself, were a constantly oppressive burden, and the poverty and wretchedness to which He had freely submitted on our behalf were sources of unceasing affliction.

Still this was not sufficient for the redemption of the fallen race. The wearisome life which the Saviour led in this world terminated with still more grievous suffer-

ing, with the most severe pains, and with death itself. Jesus foresaw the inevitable. He knew that the poor human race could not be saved by any other means than the strictest payment and the bloodiest atonement. As a true man, with human feelings, He shuddered at the gruesome anguish and agony and the dreadful pains which He must suffer. But He did not hesitate in the least. He had resolutely determined with His heavenly Father to save the sinful world. The great work of redemption could not by Him be called in question. On the contrary, the Saviour longed to finish it, though it had to be done by the most grievous shedding of His blood. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He says, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?"

It is considered to be something great and excellent, when a person calmly submits to the inevitable. It is considered to be an evidence of great friendship, when some one lovingly and freely takes upon himself to endure the hardships of another. But to long for the greatest pains merely in order to save others — this is an entirely divine love, shown by no one except our divine Saviour.

Proposition.

THE GREAT LOVE OF OUR SAVIOUR AS MANIFESTED IN HIS SUFFERING FOR US

- I. The great love.
- II. How we should reciprocate this love.

First Part.

The Great Love.

The love of Jesus is great, for He is great who has loved us. It is a great act of friendship, when a man is willing to suffer for another, and it becomes greater, the more exalted and noble the person is who thus suffers for the other. It is, then, the very greatest love, when the most exalted God Himself has been pleased to suffer on our behalf. Our Saviour is also true God, the Son of God, by whom all things are made. In His divine nature He is immutable, and hence exalted above suffering; but He became a man in order that He might, in His human nature, suffer and die for us. God, who is the Highest, desired to thus humiliate Himself and to bear the punishment for our sins. The Almighty, whose power is manifested in the creatures, from the largest, who frighten us with their bigness, to the least, who by reason of their smallness escape our vision, God whose wisdom is portrayed in every flower of the field and in every blade of grass trampled under our feet, was "delivered unto the Gentiles. He was mocked, scoffed at, spitted upon, scourged and crucified."

The love of Jesus Christ shown us in His suffering is great, for we, the objects of that love, are small and quite inconsiderable. The Creator has been pleased to suffer for those created by Him, indeed, for creatures who had not remained in the perfection which they had received at His hands, but had fallen into the most nefarious wretchedness and the most horrible wickedness. When a great general falls in battle, it is customary to erect a monument to his memory, bearing the in-

scription that he died for his beloved fatherland. Indeed, it is true that he died for his brethren and friends at home, but Jesus did much more: He died for His enemies. The apostle Paul has therefore erected the following memorial to the once crucified Saviour, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The greatest Love has died for His enemies, the holy God for such as were an abomination in His sight, the righteous God for those who had greatly offended Him.

The love of Jesus, shown us in His suffering, is great, for the suffering which He endured was great. He was tightly bound when delivered to the Gentiles. He was buffeted by those who mocked Him. He was bent down toward the earth and scourged. Taunts and jeers followed Him to the cross. His patient silence did not deter His enemies from following Him with their mockery to the very end. And yet His physical suffering can scarcely be compared with His mental agony, for the Son of man endured anguish unto the sweating of blood and unto the pains of hell, even to the extent that He was forsaken by God. This is what the Son of man suffered for us, until He gave the greatest evidence of His love by dying for us. Though a friend may sacrifice much for another, he nevertheless saves his own life, as the dearest of all. When a friend loves unto death, love can go no further. Jesus has given evidence of such love, as He also avers, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The love of Jesus, shown in His suffering, was great,

for great was the distress from which He delivered us. Look at your life. Consider what you have done. Judge of what you have merited. How would you fare, if you had no Saviour? What would be your lot at the end of your life? Hell would be gaping to devour every soul on departing hence, if Jesus had not "ransomed them from the grave and redeemed them from death." He assumed the debt and paid it. The guilty debtor need not now be delivered into the hands of the executioners until the debt be paid. Jesus has endured the punishment for sinners, and they may be spared. God reveals His righteousness by faith unto them that live by faith, "passing over the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." It was through His death that Jesus "brought to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," and delivered them who before had been in the service of sin and subject to the bondage of Satan.

The love of Jesus, shown in His suffering, is great, for great is the glory which is thereby secured. "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Every one converted from the service of unrighteousness unto faith in Jesus Christ becomes righteous, for His fulfillment of the law is attributed unto every one that "believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." When a person becomes thus justified by faith, he obtains "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He enters into union with Christ, who lives in such a person, and for whom to live is Christ. He may indeed rarely experience the full comfort of his justification and the joy of his election, but he nevertheless looks

with patience for the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," and he fights the good fight, confidently hoping to gain the imperishable crown of glory.

Second Part.

How We Should Reciprocate the Great Love, Which the Saviour Has Shown Us in His Suffering.

He that has received open eyes of understanding, anointed with eyesalve, enabling him to rightly evaluate the Saviour's love, must, in the first place, consider the suffering of Jesus greater than all his sins. If Jesus is greater than you, then His payment is also greater than your debts. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. A grievous suffering like His cannot be in vain for any one who rightly wishes to appropriate its blessings. The powerful fetters of Satan cannot avail against so mighty a Redeemer. He is the stronger One, who overcomes the strong enemy; "He taketh from him his whole armor, and divideth his spoils." Honor, then, your Saviour as He deserves to be honored. Acknowledge Him as the mighty Saviour that He is, and do not make of yourself an exception to His unlimited redemption. If He has borne the burden of your sins, then lay them down at His feet, and if He has opened the dungeon of darkness, you should no longer remain in your wretchedness, since the Son of God offers to make you free indeed.

If you have been set free, thank Him for your deliverance, and render unto Him praise for your redemption. As a bird escaping from the trap, immediately, on the very first branch where its feet find rest, begins to chirp its song of gladness over its deliverance, and as

a prisoner, losing his fetters, stretches out his hands to his deliverer, thanking him for his new-won liberty, so likewise should every saved soul, when the snare is broken and he is set free, raise his voice in praise to his Saviour and lift high his arms to glorify his Redeemer. All creatures praise Him as their Creator; surely, then, man should glorify Him as Saviour. "The heavens declare the glory of God," every bird pipes its own lay to His honor, every brooklet ripples its gladsome voice in acknowledgement of Him who guides its course. Should not man, then, praise Him the more — man, whom He has saved from the greatest distress? Though weakness constrains his voice and destruction fetters his tongue, he should nevertheless, standing on the shore of the deep waters of misery, praise God for his salvation and join with the church triumphant, "saying with a great voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.'"

If Jesus has given Himself in death for you, you should give yourself to Him. Though you are only a poor and wretched creature, give Him your heart. It is a small reward for the great labor which He has had to save you from your sins. Since He willingly assumed the fashion of a servant on your behalf, you should feel in duty bound to serve Him all the days of your life. He showed you such love while you were yet His enemy, and therefore you should feel all the more constrained to love Him, when the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart. St. John says, "We love, because He first loved us," and again, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Since Je-

sus has been pleased to suffer inexpressibly much for you, should not you be willing to suffer a little for Him? Of what consequence is the slight disgrace caused you by the world in comparison with the shame which the Son of God must suffer to save you from eternal death? "Consider, therefore, Him that hath endured such gain-saying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls." If Jesus suffered, bearing His cross and your heavy burden of sin, you should not deem it grievous to deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Him.

Application.

Such, O man, is the love which your Saviour has shown you. Where, then, is the love which you should show Him in return? Are you not one of those concerning whom the Lord complains,

"They have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love."

You know that He hates an ungodly manner of life, but you persist in living thus. You know that intentional sins provoke Him to anger, and still you continue to violate His commandments. Do you not fear that the wrath of the Lord Jesus will, upon His final coming in judgment, prove quite as great as the grace shown at His first advent and birth? Alas! How can it be otherwise? His righteousness must be quite as infinite as His mercy. How shamefully you change His grace into opportunity, license, and boldness to sin! Jesus has redeemed you, but you again give yourself into bondage.

Jesus has bought you to be His own, and you have surrendered yourself to the power of Satan. Wretched creature, how do you treat yourself? Jesus has shown you love, but you act as though you were your own worst enemy. You cast yourself into the misery from which Jesus has saved you. You thoughtlessly neglect the salvation which He has procured. Who shall save you, if you thus persist until the hour of death to neglect so great a redemption? Who shall be able to bless you, if your Saviour who has procured salvation for you has been neglected during your lifetime, and if in your death you have been by Him eternally condemned? Verily, there is no other Saviour than He. When He shall no longer be a Saviour, but throughout eternity a judge and an avenger, what can you expect but judgment, condemnation, and eternal pain?

If your sins sicken your heart, if Satan is threatening you, and if you fear death, then know that you are redeemed. Learn to know it more and more in the words of life, and pray God that you may be enabled to believe it with certainty and assurance in your heart. Your sins shall then be forgiven, just as surely as Jesus has made payment for them, and you shall be delivered from the power of darkness, just as surely as He has redeemed the world. You shall be clad in His eternal righteousness when you put off the defiled garments of your own righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus shall become, not only your everyday attire, in which you shall walk securely through this earthly vale of misery, but also your festal garb, in which you shall be able to stand before Him on the great day of His coming.

But remember that when Jesus has received you to be

His own you cannot longer live unto yourself. All that you have belongs to Him and should be submitted to Him, sacrificed for His service. Do not become a backslider, who believes for a while, but falls away in times of temptations. Seek your comfort in His love alone, your enlightenment in His word, and your hope in His righteousness. Then shall your love to Him, kindled in your heart by the gospel of His love, be fanned into a brighter flame and increased by that same love of Christ. If you love Him who has first loved you, you must also love them that He has loved, for "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart. You shall then, in childlike innocence, enjoy the peace of children, and though this peace be disturbed by the threats of Satan, it shall not fail, but rather be translated into the beautiful "rest that remaineth for the people of God." The comforts of the Holy Spirit, though here often covered with the miseries of this life, shall be changed into eternal joy. It is the Eternal who has procured this for you, and the righteousness which He has given is also eternal. "Even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." Amen.