

THE SOTERIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHYSICAL  
SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST

by

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On the contemporary theological scene, there is a tendency on the part of some to exclude the physical sufferings and death of Christ from His substitutionary sacrifice for sin. One notable champion of this viewpoint, who is found within the conservative camp, is Robert B. Thieme, Jr.

Thieme does not believe that Christ's physical sufferings and death were savingly efficacious or substitutionary. He contends for this doctrine for two main reasons. First, he denies that physical death was instituted at the Fall as a penalty for sin. Thieme reasons that if physical death is not penal, neither was Christ's physical death. Second, Thieme argues that Christ's physical death is not substitutionary because it does not exclude any believer from dying physically.

In Part One Thieme's first point is discussed. He is found to be in error. Genesis 2:17 teaches that Adam was liable to death the moment he disobeyed. The physical aspects of the curse for sin are delineated in Genesis 3:15-19, 22-24. One of these curses is "unto dust shalt thou return," which is guaranteed by Adam's expulsion from the garden. Romans 5:12f and 1 Corinthians 15:56 links physical death with Adam's disobedience and God's law. Therefore, physical death is part of the penalty for sin.

In Part Two Thieme's second contention is discussed. Again he is found to be in error. Christ's death is savingly efficacious for it makes provision for the forgiveness of sin (Mt. 26:28), reconciliation (Col. 1:22; 1 Pet. 3:18), sanctification (Heb. 10:10), propitiation (Rom. 3:25), redemption (Eph. 1:7), and justification (Rom. 5:10). His physical sufferings and death are substitutionary as well. The New Testament teaches that His death was "for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), the bearing of "our sins" (1 Pet. 2:24), and "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18).

In Part Three the relationship concerning the physical death of the believer and Christ's physical death are examined. The believer still dies because of sin's effect on the body (Rom. 8:10). However, the penal aspect of death is absent for the believer (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:55-56; Gal. 3:13-14).

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## PREFACE

There is no grander theme in all of Scripture than Christ's death in behalf of the believer. This writer is extremely thankful that God providentially led him to this topic. It was the privilege of this student to do much reading in soteriology. As a result, he gained a much greater appreciation for the sacrifice which Christ made on his behalf. It is hoped that any who read this thesis will be greatly impressed and humbled by the cost necessary to purchase salvation.

This writer wishes to express his appreciation to the men who have guided him during this investigation, Dr. Charles R. Smith and John Sproule. These men have not only concerned themselves with theological accuracy but with this student's spiritual well-being also. For this, the writer is most grateful.

The labors in the production of this thesis have not been this student's alone, He wishes to express his deep gratitude to his wife who has been a faithful friend and companion. When needed, she spoke encouraging words of cheer or gave necessary exhortation in order that her husband might finish the race. For such love and devotion as hers, this writer inadequately gives his thanks. This thesis is not mine alone, it is ours.

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## INTRODUCTION

There is not a more glorious theme to the believer in all of Scripture than that of God's grace. The most pleasing sound in the ears of a Christian were spoken by the apostle Paul who said that Christ "loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). For the one in Christ, the study of the grace of God in the death of Christ brings him inexpressible joy for the cross of Christ accomplished his redemption. To tamper with the doctrine of soteriology is destructive, but to analyze it is edifying. It is therefore with great delight and trepidation that one undertakes to scrutinize such a marvelous subject as the death of Christ.

### The Need for this Study

If one is to understand the basis upon which he may approach God, he must fully comprehend the means by which his reconciliation was procured. The physical sufferings and death of the Savior are spoken of in many different ways in the Scriptures. Both the Old and New Testaments prophesied of His death (Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Mt. 16:21). In several places the New Testament uses the physical sufferings of Christ to encourage the believers during their times of tribulation and to instruct them as to how they ought to suffer as well (Jn. 15:18-21; 1 Pet. 3:13-18).

The Scriptures also teach that the manifold things

which Christ endured taught Him the meaning of obedience (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). Furthermore, because Jesus persevered during those various seasons of suffering, He is pre-eminently qualified to be an emphathetic and merciful High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 3:14-16). The physical death and resurrection of Christ portrays the spiritual death of the believer to sin and his resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6:1-11). It is also quite obvious that Christ could not have been raised from among the dead had He not first died physically (1 Cor. 15:36).

The truths concerning the death of Christ delineated above are, for the most part, believed by men of nearly any theological persuasion. Even those who teach the condemned doctrines which have been dubbed the "Commercial," "Moral Influence," and "Governmental" theories of the atonement agree with such ideas concerning the death of Christ. What needs to be asked is this, "Is there more to the death of Christ?" That is: "Are the physical sufferings and death of Christ efficacious as well as His spiritual death?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The term "efficacious" will be used throughout these discussions in the sense of "savingly efficacious." This is particularly true in regards to Christ's physical death. R. B. Thieme said, "It was His substitutionary spiritual death which was efficacious for our salvation, not His physical death." Robert B. Thieme, Jr., The Blood of Christ (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1972), p. 10. Thieme does not view the physical death of Christ as effectual in accomplishing the salvation of the souls of men. However, Thieme does indicate that Christ's physical death did accomplish its end in another sense. This will be noted later in this Introduction.

"Are they substitutionary?" "Do they save?" In other words: "What is the exact relationship of the physical sufferings and death of Christ to soteriology?"

The answer to these questions has an impact not only upon theological exactness but upon evangelism as well. For too long and too often modern day evangelists have toyed with their audiences' emotions by vividly picturing for them a grotesque sufferer agonizing upon a cruel cross while His enemies prance back and forth in front of the cross glorying in their triumph by cursing and mocking the brutally beaten Son of God. This type of preaching brings results for sure but tends quite often to diminish if not obliterate the real meaning of the cross. If the physical sufferings and death of Christ are not the means by which atonement was accomplished, then they ought to be greatly minimized in one's thinking. In its place the cry of the Savior, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) and all that it embraces ought to be magnified. However, if the physical sufferings and death which Christ endured are just as effective as the spiritual death in His sacrifice for sin, then they should both be equally magnified but not to the expense of their true intent. There was a definite, objective design to everything which Christ underwent. It is therefore needful to determine the exact relationship which the Savior's sufferings and death have to soteriology.

The Reason for this Study

There has arisen, of late, those who deny any saving value to the physical sufferings and death of Christ. The one who notably champions this view is a pastor in Houston, Texas, Robert B. Thieme, Jr. Thieme contends for this view for three basic reasons. First, he denies that physical death was instituted at the fall as a penalty for sin. Thieme taught,

Adam did not die physically the moment he sinned. He died SPIRITUALLY! He was cut off or separated from God. He did not die physically until he was 930 years old (Gen. 5:5). Therefore, "the wages of sin" obviously is not physical death (as is taught in just about every Bible school in the United States). The wages of sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if physical death is not a penalty for sin, Christ's physical death was not penal in nature.

Second, Thieme does not assign any efficacy to Christ's physical death because each man must die for himself. That is, no man can exempt another man from dying physically by dying in his place. Thieme has made some statements in this regard which have been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. He has said, "A physical death cannot be a substitutionary death. You can only die for yourself . . . . When it's your turn to die, you'll die for yourself."<sup>2</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., Angelic Conflict (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1971), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "1 John 1:17," 1 John Series (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1969), Tape 2.

Thieme becomes the object of severe criticism when he applies this to the death of Christ. "When Jesus died physically and dismissed His spirit, he died for himself."<sup>1</sup> It is quite obvious that Thieme is avoiding at all cost any idea that Christ's physical death is substitutionary. By so doing, Thieme demonstrates a great deficiency and flaw in what he considers to be the teaching of most orthodox theologians. Though not responding to this quote directly, Thieme challenges the concept set forth by Paul Fink.

Further, when the physical aspect of the atonement (i.e., the remedy for physical death) was realized by the Lord's physical death, He cried: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46).<sup>2</sup>

According to Fink the remedy for the sinner's physical death was Christ's substitutionary physical death. If this is true, then the believer ought not to die. However, he does die. On this basis Thieme has removed Christ's physical death from the sphere of substitution. This same problem was stated by one whose orthodoxy is unimpeachable, Robert Dabney.

From spiritual death, all believers are delivered at their regeneration. Physical evils and bodily death remain, and inasmuch as the latter was a most distinctive

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Thieme does not mean by this statement that Christ died as a penalty for His own sins; nor does he intend to mean that Christ died to atone for His own transgressions. Rather, Thieme means that Christ's physical death was not substitutionary for other men's physical death.

<sup>2</sup>Paul R. Fink, "The Use and Significance of EN HOI in 1 Peter" (Hereinafter referred to as "EN HOI"), Grace Journal 8:2 (Spring, 1967), p. 38.

and emphatic retribution for sin, the question is, how it comes to be inflicted on those who are absolutely justified in Christ. On the one hand, bodily death was a penal infliction. On the other hand, we have taught that believers are justified from all guilt, and are required to render no penal satisfaction whatever (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 10:14). Yet all believers die?<sup>1</sup>

The third reason why Thieme does not view physical death as efficacious is seen in his exposition of John 19:30, "It is finished!"

Most people think that when the Scripture says, "Christ died for our sins" (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3), it refers to His physical death. . . . When Jesus said, "It is finished," He was ALIVE; He was speaking! He kept saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" . . .

Upon the completion of bearing our sins in His own body (1 Pet. 2:24), He said, TETELESTAI (perfect tense of TELEO)--"It is finished in the past, with the result that it keeps on being finished forever!" Salvation was completed BEFORE He died physically. Physical death was no problem. He simply dismissed His spirit; it was painless--the horrible agony was spiritual death.<sup>2</sup>

One can readily see that Thieme's position is not without its reasons. The objection which he raises to those who maintain the vicarious nature of Christ's physical sufferings and death are not easily overruled. Therefore, the soteriological significance of Christ's sufferings and death are herein investigated in order to ascertain the solution to the proposition expounded by Thieme and those in basic agreement with him.

Another reason for considering this topic is that with

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<sup>1</sup>Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), pp. 817-18.

<sup>2</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., Celebrityship of Jesus Christ (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1973), p. 29.

rare exceptions has this subject been isolated and carefully scrutinized. As one journeys through the plethora of material about Christ's death, he is amazed by the assumptions that are unquestioningly accepted. Charles Hodge, for instance, in his discussion of the sanctions of the Covenant of Works clearly teaches that the punishment of sin is the dissolution of the body as well as spiritual death.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the same volume, Hodge speaks of Christ's sufferings and death as being penal and vicarious. Hodge does this repeatedly, almost on every page, from page 464 to page 638. Not once does he attempt to elucidate the sense in which Christ's physical death is penal and vicarious. Therefore, this topic is considered in order to do what few have done before.<sup>2</sup> The physical sufferings and death of Christ will be set apart in order to determine their exact relationship to soteriology and to set forth solutions to the intriguing problems raised by Thieme.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (London: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1960), II, 120. Hodge also terms spiritual and eternal death penal as well.

<sup>2</sup>Some who have addressed themselves to this topic are: Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 670-71. Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), II, 314; VII, 112-15. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, pp. 817-29. John Dick, Lectures on Theology, 2 vols. (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878), II, 292-311. John Murray, Collected Writings of John Murray, 2 vols., ed. by Iain Murray (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976-1977), I, 39. Augustus Hopkins Strong, Systematic Theology (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1907), pp. 982-84.

### The Design of this Study

Because the subject material concerning the death of Christ is so diverse and yet all encompassing, it is wise to set forth several presuppositions which shall be assumed during the investigation of this topic.

The first assumption during this study is that Christ did indeed die spiritually in His work upon the cross.<sup>1</sup> This idea is held by nearly all orthodox scholars and denied by very few.<sup>2</sup> John Gill has stated this very clearly.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr. uses two verses to emphatically teach that Christ died spiritually (Mt. 27:46 and Isa. 53:9). Matthew 27:46 is quite easy to perceive as spiritual death. However, Isaiah 53:9 is questionable. Thieme teaches that because מָוֹת is plural, Christ thus died twice on the cross. 1 John Series (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, June 23, 1969), Tape 2. Thieme has also been known to cite Colossians 2:12, νεκρῶν being plural, as a New Testament counterpart to Isaiah 53:9. Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 16. However, Thieme commits two fallacies in so doing. The first is a fallacy of logic. A plural word means two or more. Why does Thieme refer to only two deaths of Christ? The second fallacy in his argumentation is a linguistic one. Because a Hebrew word in the plural does not necessarily indicate plurality. A Hebrew word may be written as a plural for sake of intensification. The plural of מָוֹת may indicate a violent death. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 560. Also νεκρῶν is an adjective and not a noun. It refers to the dead ones out from whom Christ was raised. Had Paul wanted to refer to a plurality in Christ's death, he could have used the plural of θάνατος.

<sup>2</sup>Spiritual death will be used throughout these discussions as a term descriptive of one destitute of the life of God (Eph. 2:1). This encompasses the inability of the unbeliever to receive spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14); his loss of the favor of God (Rom. 8:8); his walk which is exceedingly sinful (Eph. 4:17-19). Though it is true that Christ died spiritually, this does not mean that He became a sinner. He was forensically constituted a sinner, thus spiritually dead.

Now besides this corporeal death which Christ endured, there was a death in his soul, though not of it, which answered to a spiritual and an eternal death; for as the transgression of the first Adam, involved him and all his posterity in, and exposed them to, not only a corporeal death, but to a moral or spiritual, and an eternal one; so the second Adam, as the surety of his people, in order to make satisfaction for that transgression and all others of theirs, must undergo death, in every sense of the threatening, Gen. 2:17.<sup>1</sup>

Because the objective of this study is to determine the soteriological significance of Christ's physical sufferings and death, Christ's spiritual death will only be mentioned scantily and in passing. This must not be interpreted to mean that Christ did not die spiritually. While the Savior was bearing the sins of the world, He was separated from the Father, that spiritual union was severed. Indeed Christ did die spiritually. This is one of the undergirding presuppositions of this investigation.

A second feature of Christ's cross work which will be assumed is that whatever the Father designed in Christ's death to be savingly efficacious is indeed substitutionary as well. This hardly needs to be demonstrated. The New Testament abounds with this idea. This is most readily seen through the prepositions the New Testament writers use to convey this thought. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered

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<sup>1</sup>John Gill, A Body of Divinity, Book V, Chap. 4 (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1971), p. 407. See also J. H. Traver, "The Biology of Salvation," Bibliotheca Sacra 120:479 (July-September, 1963), p. 255. See also G. I. Williamson, ed., The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964), p. 77.

unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for ( ἀντὶ ) many" (Mk. 10:45). "For scarcely for ( ὑπὲρ ) a good man would some even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for ( ὑπὲρ ) us" (Rom. 5:7-8). "And he (Christ) is the propitiation for ( περὶ ) our sins: and not for ( περὶ ) our's only, but also for ( περὶ ) the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2).<sup>1</sup>

Having said this, there is one other aspect of substitution which needs to be clarified. It is true that Christ as the substitute for the world appeased the wrath of God and that Divine justice was satisfied when it smote Christ, the Sin-bearer. However, this does not mean that the sufferings of Christ would have been more severe had there been one more person born into the world for whom the substitution was designed. The sufferings of the Savior would not have been intensified or diminished if one more person had

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<sup>1</sup>It has long since been recognized by scholars that ὑπὲρ can convey substitution just as forcefully as ἀντὶ. However, there is still some debate concerning περὶ. All three Synoptics record the Lord's institution of the Eucharist. They all record Jesus as saying, "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many," or as Luke has it, "for you." It is interesting to note that both Mark and Luke use ὑπὲρ but Matthew uses περὶ. See Hans Conzelmann, "On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in 1 Cor. 15:3-5," Interpretation 20:1 Trans. by Mathias Rissi. (January, 1966), p. 19. In Exodus 14:14 Moses told the Israelites, "The Lord shall fight for ( περὶ ) you, . . ." See also Ernst Harold Riesenfeld, " περὶ ," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols. Ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), VI, 53-56.

been born than was born or even if one more sin had been committed than was committed. The fact which must be kept in view is that the importance is not the severity of Christ's sufferings but rather their design. They were intended to fully satisfy the demands of God. In this regard A. A. Hodge, said,

Consequently, what Christ suffered is by no means the same with what his people would have suffered, when considered as suffering, but is precisely the very same when considered as penalty.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere Hodge said, "We believe that while the sufferer is substituted, the penalty as penalty though never as suffering, is identical."<sup>2</sup> Christ did indeed suffer greatly at the hand of the Father. It is the duty of the student and preacher of Scripture not to dramatize the events of the cross lest one receive the impression that Christ endured the cross merely for suffering sake and not to satisfy the justice of God.

Christ's obedience to the Father in dying secured for the believer such graces as propitiation, redemption, reconciliation, and justification. That Christ procured these gifts is not the design of this investigation. Instead, the quest into the physical sufferings and death of Christ is to determine if those physical aspects of the Redeemer's death provide for the believer propitiation, redemption,

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald A. Hodge, The Atonement (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

reconciliation, and justification. The design of this thesis is to establish the validity of either including or excluding Christ's physical sufferings and death as a legitimate means to those ends.

Finally, it is not the design of this study to determine the physical causes for Christ's physical death. Some have suggested shock, others suggested a rupture of the heart, and others asphyxiation. Still others believe that Christ's death was due to an extreme loss of blood.<sup>1</sup> Many others believe that Christ's death is merely due to the fact that He dismissed His spirit (Lk. 23:46 cp. Jn. 10:17-18).<sup>2</sup> Besides being immaterial to this study, such discussions are quite out of this writer's ability. Other more qualified men have battled over this matter.<sup>3</sup> Let them argue that point.

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<sup>1</sup>John Wilkinson, "The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ," The Expository Times 83:4 (January, 1971), 104-107. See also Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The Significance of the Blood of Jesus," Bibliotheca Sacra 130:518 (1973), 99-109.

<sup>2</sup>R. O. Ball contends with this view saying, "If this is a power which was unique to Jesus, then it raises the question of his full humanity. If men have not the power, apart from the deliberate act of suicide, to choose the moment of death, then Jesus did not experience death as men know it, and in human terms his was not a real death, but something different. The outcome of crucifixion was death. Jesus accepted death in this manner." "Physical Cause of the Death of Jesus (A Theological Comment)," The Expository Times 83:8 (May, 1972), 248.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Kenneth Leese takes issue with Dr. John Wilkinson on each of his points. "Physical Causes of the Death of Jesus: A Medical Opinion," The Expository Times 83:8 (May, 1972), 248. An investigation into the physiological causes of Christ's death is intriguing. However, it is evident that

It is the object of this investigation to determine the soteriological significance of the Savior's physical death and not its physiological cause.

#### The Method of Procedure

R. B. Thieme, as cited earlier, sets forth three basic reasons which state his reasons for not considering the physical sufferings and death to be savingly efficacious. He, first, does not consider physical death a penal evil. Therefore, according to Thieme, the physical aspects of Christ's sufferings are not a part of the substitutionary sacrifice for sin. Parts One and Two will examine the veracity of Thieme's conclusion. Part One will be devoted to a discussion of physical death and its relationship to original sin; that is, was physical death instituted at the fall as a penalty for man's sin? Part Two will set forth the Scripture's teaching concerning the physical sufferings and death of Christ. Are they savingly efficacious as Thieme denies?

The second reason why Thieme does not include the Savior's physical death in the sacrifice for sin is that no man's physical death can be a substitutionary death. That is, one man's death cannot exempt another man from dying

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Ball, Leese, Wilkinson, and others are in danger of missing the most important point by trying to determine the exact mechanics of Christ's death. The point is not what caused Christ to die, the fact is that He died. That is the important element and not the cause of His death. The mechanics of His death was as in every man's death, the soul separated from the body.

physically. Part Three will set forth the relationship between Christ's physical death and that of the believer's.<sup>1</sup>

The third reason why Thieme does not regard Christ's physical death as working with His spiritual death as a proper sacrifice for sin is because Christ pronounced the full accomplishment of His sacrifice before He died physically. Since this cry of the Savior indicates the accomplishment of redemption to which nothing can be added, it is obvious to Thieme that physical death is excluded for Christ was still alive when He cried, "It is finished." However, there is a fundamental fault in Thieme's thinking at this point. Two other times John recorded a similar phrase to "It is finished." In each case the actions which occurred subsequent to this statement are not excluded. In John 17 there is a record of Jesus praying to the Father. At the beginning of this prayer, Jesus said to the Father, "I have finished (τελεωσας) the work which thou gavest me to do." This proclamation came from the Savior's lips even before He was arrested. Should one then conclude that the cross was not part of the work which the Father gave the Son to do? Is the life of Christ prior to this prayer efficacious and not His sacrifice on the cross? Such a conclusion is

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<sup>1</sup>Not all of the verses of the Old and New Testaments which could conceivably apply to this study are herein considered. Rather, this writer has selected for discussion only those verses which most directly speak to the issues at hand.

unthinkable. The New Testament everywhere associates the accomplishment of redemption with the cross (Col. 1:20).<sup>1</sup> No part is given to a discussion of this point because it turns out at last to be no point at all.

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<sup>1</sup>A similar idea is found in Revelation 16:17. At the end of the tribulation the seventh angel pours out his bowl. As he pours out the contents of the bowl into the air, he cries, "It is done." Does this mean that even the bowl which he is pouring out is not part of God's wrath upon the inhabitants of the world? One would expect the angel to pour out his bowl and then say to God, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." What Jesus and the angel have done is project themselves beyond the accomplishment of their respective acts. In this projected position, they can look back upon their individual works and speak of them as being accomplished. Just because Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" before He died does not mean that physical death is excluded from the accomplishment of redemption.

## PART ONE

### IS PHYSICAL DEATH PENAL IN NATURE?

Robert B. Thieme, Jr. has sought to deny that Christ's physical death saves. One means by which he attempts to substantiate this belief is by denying that physical death is a penal consequence for sin. If this can be demonstrated from Scripture, then Thieme has almost virtually eliminated all objections to his premise. For, if physical death is not penal in nature, then neither was Christ's physical death. Thieme is well aware of the fact that his assertions on this subject are contrary to main-stream fundamentalism.

Therefore, 'the wages of sin' obviously is not physical death (as is taught in just about every Bible school in the United States). The wages of sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).<sup>1</sup>

It is the design of this part to examine the teachings of Thieme, and those in agreement with him, concerning the relationship between death and sin. Was Adam created immortal? Was physical death instituted as a penalty for sin, or was it brought in merely as a result of the real penalty, spiritual death? These are some of the questions to be considered in this part.

The method of procedure in part one will be devoted first to the examination of the Old Testament texts

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, Angelic Conflict, p. 16.

(Gen. 2:17; 3:19). Next, some New Testament Scriptures will be studied (Rom. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 15:22,56). In this manner one will be able to determine if physical death is a penalty for sin.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PUNISHMENT THREATENED

God created the heavens and the earth and all that is within them very good (Gen. 1:31). On that perfect earth God designated a particular location for the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-14). To be found in the garden, in particular, are Adam and Eve, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:7-8). These three elements form the core of the record concerning the fall of man. Having placed man in the garden of Eden, God gave Adam the freedom to eat of any tree he so desired except one. The one tree from which man was absolutely forbidden to eat was the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). This prohibition was enforced by the threatened death with which Adam would be afflicted if he disobeyed. What exactly did the Lord mean when He said, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17)?

#### In the Day Thou Eatest Thereof

For various and sundry reasons, some theologians have excluded physical death from the penalty threatened upon Adam. The main center of attention in Genesis 2:17 is upon the phrase "in the day" (בַּיּוֹם). What exactly is the import of this prepositional phrase?

Thieme is convinced that the death threatened upon Adam for disobedience does not include physical death. He seeks to sustain his belief by attaching great significance to the word "day."

Adam did not die physically the moment he sinned. He died SPIRITUALLY! He was cut off or separated from God. He did not die physically until he was 930 years old (Gen. 5:5). Therefore, "the wages of sin" obviously is not physical death. . . .<sup>1</sup>

By arguing in this manner, Thieme has attempted to accentuate the immediacy of the execution of death. The end result of such reasoning is that physical death is not included in the penalty for sin because Adam did not die physically the very day, or moment, in which he ate the forbidden fruit.

D. N. Sheldon has arrived at the same conclusion in a manner quite similar to that of Thieme's. Sheldon has said,

Now if we suppose here any reference at all to bodily death, . . . we at once involve ourselves in a great and apparently inextricable difficulty. We compromise the veracity of God; we make Him pronounce a sentence which He does not execute; for Adam and Eve did not die corporeally, did not suffer the extinction of their earthly life the very day in which they partook of the forbidden fruit, but lived, according to the account which we have of them, hundreds of years after this time. Is there then any way of avoiding the conclusion that bodily death is no part of the threatening pronounced against them?<sup>2</sup>

It is quite obvious that Sheldon also places great emphasis upon the word "day." He is so convinced of his position that he accuses all who wish to include physical death in this

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, Angelic Conflict, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>D. N. Sheldon, Sin and Redemption (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Co., 1856), pp. 82-83.

threat of bringing the veracity of God into question.

Though such arguments appear to be very persuasive, one must seriously question whether they are as convincing as these men think they are. Geerhardus Vos takes a position opposite to the one proposed by Thieme and Sheldon. His comments are equally convincing.

Finally the stressing of the phrase 'in the day' in 2:17, is not only uncalled for, but, in view of the sequel of the narrative, impossible . . . Some knowledge of Hebrew idioms is sufficient to show that the phrase in question means, 'as surely as thou eatest thereof.' Close conjunction in time is figuratively used for inevitable evenuation.<sup>1</sup>

This affirmation is substantiated by an exact linguistic parallel found in 1 Kings 2:37. In that passage Shimei is the subject, not Adam. Shimei had previously cursed David (2 Sam. 16:5-14). Some time after Shimei had cursed David, he repented of his sin and made confession to David (2 Sam. 19:18-23). David promised Shimei that he would not put him to death. From his death bed, David told his son, Solomon, to put Shimei to death as he best saw fit (1 Ki. 2:8-9). When Solomon took the throne, he told Shimei to build a house in Jerusalem, and that if he ever left the city, he would be put to death. This is the way the text is stated, "For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou

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<sup>1</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 48-49. See also James O. Buswell, *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), I, 281. "At the time, 'day,' of sin, the individual became liable to the penalty."

shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die . . ."  
 (1 Ki. 2:37). The parallelism between Genesis 2:17 and 1  
 Kings 2:37 is in this manner.

In the day ( $\square \dot{\imath}^{\prime} \ddot{\imath}$ )	thou goest out thou eatest thereof
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Thou shalt surely die ( $\square \dot{\imath}^{\prime} \ddot{\imath} \square \dot{\imath}^{\prime} \ddot{\imath}$ )	1 Kings 2:37 Genesis 2:17
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Despite the threat of death, three years later Shimei went to Gath to retrieve two runaway slaves. After Shimei had returned with his slaves, Solomon received the report of Shimei's departure from Jerusalem. Because of this, Solomon had Shimei put to death (1 Ki. 2:43-46). It took Shimei at least two days to go to Gath, recover his slaves, and return to Jerusalem. Because Solomon did not punish Shimei within the twenty-four hour day, indicated by  $\square \dot{\imath}^{\prime} \ddot{\imath}$  if Thieme's premise is correct, should one condemn Solomon of murder, should he seek a different meaning for death, or should he seek a different meaning for  $\square \dot{\imath}^{\prime}$ ? The first of these suggestions is unwarranted. It was a matter of capital punishment which is never considered murder. The execution by Benaiah makes it very obvious that the death of Shimei was physical (1 Ki. 2:46). Therefore, one has only one alternative. He must pursue a different meaning for  $\square \dot{\imath}^{\prime}$ .  $\square \dot{\imath}^{\prime}$  does not refer, in this passage, to the immediate execution of the death penalty upon Shimei. Rather it means, "the day you leave Jerusalem, your doom is sealed." It is then, as Vos has accurately proclaimed, a figurative usage "for inevitable eventuation."

If the phrase "in the day" (וּבַיּוֹם) is treated as a Hebrew idiom, the impact upon Genesis 2:17 is very clear. וּבַיּוֹם does not indicate the day in which the full execution will be exacted. Rather, it forcefully points to the absoluteness of the threatened penalty. It is not true that the exact definition of "death" may be determined simply by lengthy discussion about the word מוֹת, as Thieme believes. Even if one might wish to consider Genesis 2:17 distinct from 1 Kings 2:37, his conclusions at best are only tentative and highly suspect. Men like Thieme ought to, at least, admit the possibility of physical death because of the idiom found in 1 Kings 2:37.

#### Thou Shalt Surely Die

Thieme endeavors to teach that only spiritual death is the penalty for sin. In giving his exegesis of Genesis 2:17, Thieme omits physical death from the penalty for sin.

Genesis 2:17 also describes the penalty for sin in connection with that tree: '. . . for in the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt surely die' (literally from the Hebrew). The word 'dying' refers to spiritual death (separation from God in time); 'thou shalt surely die' refers to physical death.

Adam did not die physically the moment he sinned . . . Therefore, 'the wages of sin' obviously is not physical death. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This statement reveals both a logical and a linguistic flaw in Thieme's thinking. Thieme has argued against himself. His exposition of the penal clause found in Genesis

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, Angelic Conflict, p. 16.

2:17 includes both spiritual and physical death. The penalty, according to Thieme, is "dying thou shalt die." Thus to Thieme both spiritual death ("dying") and physical death ("thou shalt die") describe the penalty for sin. Chafer, who believed that physical death was instituted as a penalty for sin, arrived at this conclusion by translating  $\text{מָוֹתְךָ מָוֹת}$  "dying, thou shalt die," just as Thieme does.<sup>1</sup> Concerning this phrase, he said, "On that day, also, he began to die physically, and, though many hundreds of years may have intervened, he finally perished physically."<sup>2</sup> The Septuagint has rendered these Hebrew words in a similar fashion,  $\theta\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\ \lambda\acute{\iota}\pi\omicron\theta\alpha\nu\acute{\epsilon}\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon$ , "to death you shall die," or "in death you shall die." It appears that the Septuagint also conveys the idea that there is a death within a death. This translation is in perfect accord with Thieme's. It is manifest that Thieme has admitted a self-destructive, logical fallacy into his argumentation. He has clearly stated that the content of the death threatened in Genesis 2:17 is both spiritual ("dying") and physical ("thou shalt die").

The type of idiomatic expression found in Genesis 2:17 ( $\text{מָוֹתְךָ מָוֹת}$ ) is quite common in the Old Testament. The Hebrew construction is an infinitive absolute ( $\text{מָוֹת}$ ) followed by a finite verb ( $\text{מָוֹתְךָ}$ ). Gesenius mentioned

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<sup>1</sup>Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 vols., VII, 112.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Genesis 2:17 in his discussion of the infinitive absolute.

He described the function of the infinitive absolute in this verse as

The infinitive absolute used before the verb to strengthen the verbal idea, i.e. to emphasize in this way either the certainty (especially in the case of threats) or the forcibleness and completeness of an occurrence. In English, such an infinitive is mostly expressed by a corresponding adverb, but sometimes merely by putting greater stress on the verb. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Grammatically, the translation "dying thou shalt die" is inaccurate. The rendering in the King James Version, "thou shalt surely die," is well done. If Thieme's translation and interpretation of this construction is followed in other passages of Scripture, the results are ludicrous. In Genesis 2:16 this same construction is found אָכַל תֹּאכַל. Should this be rendered "eating thou mayest eat," as if there are two various ways of eating. The exact expression מוֹת תָּמוּת (Gen. 2:17) is also found in 1 Kings 2:37. Should this be translated, "dying thou shalt die?" Did Shimei die twice or in two different manners or senses? This expression means nothing more than "thou shalt surely die" or to put it in modern English, "without a shadow of a doubt, you are going to die." Therefore, Thieme has also committed a grammatical blunder.

It has been demonstrated that men like Thieme and

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<sup>1</sup>E. Kautzsch, Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, ed. by E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 342, (section 113, part n, comment (a)).

Sheldon have read too much into the text of Genesis 2:17. The text only says, "as surely as you disobey, so certainly will you die."

Ralston, while commenting on Genesis 3:15-19, has made a statement which helps greatly in determining whether or not physical death is included in Genesis 2:17.

To suppose that the entire malediction, as here specified, was not embraced in the previous threatening, would be to charge the Almighty with unnecessary severity, for in strict justice, nothing could have been required more than the execution of the penalty . . . If the above be admitted as true, we have here a positive proof that the sorrows and afflictions of life, together with the final dissolution of the body, were embraced in the penalty.<sup>1</sup>

The picture which Ralston paints is this. A father threatens his children with corporal punishment if they are caught stealing. In the course of time, one of the children is found out to be a thief. When the father discovers this fact, he is true to his word; he spansks the sinning child. However, in a fit of rage he makes the punishment more severe than was originally pronounced. He not only spansks the child but confines him to his room for a month, assigns to him five chores to be done each day for that month, and forbids him to watch any television during the course of that month. If Thieme's interpretation of Genesis 2:16,17 is correct, then such a picture is true of God. The punishment is meted out in Genesis 3:15-19. If only spiritual death was threatened to Adam,

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas N. Ralston, Elements of Divinity (Louisville: Morton and Griswold, 1847), pp. 85-86.

why did God make the penalty more severe? Why did He condemn the woman to sorrow in child bearing? Why did God curse the ground for man's sake? Is not this going beyond what was threatened? On this basis, then, it is not possible to exclude from the words of Genesis 2:17 physical death which was inflicted on Adam 930 years after he sinned.

Ralston has further observed that

The law was here given, not to the body of man, previously to its union with the soul, but to man in his compound character, after his two natures had been united, so as to constitute but one person; therefore the penalty is not denounced against the body alone, but against man in his entire nature. It was not said, 'In the day thou eatest thereof' thy body 'shall die,' nor even thy soul 'shall die,' but 'thou' meaning Adam, a compound being, consisting of soul and body; 'thou,' in thy entire nature, 'shall die.'<sup>1</sup>

When God said to Adam, "thou shalt surely die," He was speaking to the entire man, body and soul. Therefore, one logically assumes that the death spoken of there must be both spiritual and physical. The judgment was exacted throughout the whole of Adam's life. He died spiritually the moment he disobeyed. When he ate the forbidden fruit, the germ of death was placed within him, making him subject to sickness and disease, and the full maturation of Adam's entrance into the state of death occurred when he died physically.

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<sup>1</sup>Ralston, Elements of Divinity, p. 86. See also John Miley, Systematic Theology, 2 vols. in the Biblical and Theological Library, 7 vols., ed. by George Crooks and John F. Hurst (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892), V:I, 431.

Calvin has also brought in a rational argument for his position that Genesis 2:17 definitely has physical death in view.

But is it asked, what kind of death God means in this place? It appears, to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell. He was, in every respect, happy; his life, therefore, had alike respect to his body and his soul, since in his soul a right judgment and a proper government of the affection prevailed, there also life reigned; in his body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly free from death.<sup>1</sup>

According to Calvin, Adam possessed spiritual and physical life. God threatened Adam with death if he would eat the forbidden fruit. When Adam sinned, he lost that which he formerly possessed. This loss was in the soul as well as in the body. Death, to Calvin, is both spiritual and physical. At this point both Covenant Theology and Dispensational Theology, to some, extent, converge. Both systems teach that Adam, prior to the fall functioned under a covenant. Covenant theologians call it the Covenant of Works, while some Dispensationalists speak of it as the Edenic Covenant. In the system of Covenant Theology Adam would either gain life in all its fulness through obedience or lose life in all its facets through disobedience.<sup>2</sup> The Dispensationalist does not believe

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, Genesis, 2 vols., in Calvin's Commentaries, trans. by John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>This must not be interpreted to mean that Adam was created imperfect and that death would have been his lot anyhow. This student knows of no Covenant Theologian who would even consider such a position as a possibility. The state

that Adam could work for life for he already had it. He could only lose this life through disobedience. Adam's life would have been sustained and confirmed through obedience. The significance here is that both systems maintain that the life, whether earned or sustained and confirmed, is life in its fullest sense. It embraces both spiritual and physical life. Therefore, death must encompass the opposite, that is, the loss of spiritual and physical life.

One more thing needs to be noticed before concluding the discussion of this verse. Forty-two times in the Old Testament the expression  $\text{לִמְוֶת מוֹת}$  occurs. Only three times is this expression used to point to the certainty of death apart from a judgmental context. Thirty-seven times, excluding Genesis 2:17; 3:4,  $\text{לִמְוֶת מוֹת}$  is stated as a penalty for disobedience. In each case there is stated a condition to be fulfilled and a penalty threatened, death, just as in Genesis 2:17. Also in each case, the death with which men are intimidated is physical death. Therefore, if one is to derive the definition of death in Genesis 2:17

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in which Adam was created was only temporary for the sake of probation. It was not and could not be an everlasting state. By means of the temptation Adam and his race would be elevated to "eternal life" or demoted to "death." It is that state to which the believer is raised in Christ. It envelops both body and soul. See Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 211-18. Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, 2 vols., I, 309-16. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, pp. 292-305. Archibald A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), pp. 309-14. C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols., II, 117-22.

merely from the words themselves, he must of necessity conclude that מוֹת גִּבּוֹרִים includes physical death, and physical death as a penalty for sin. If forty other times מוֹת גִּבּוֹרִים refers to physical death and thirty-seven of these are judgmental in nature, why must physical death be excluded from this same expression found in Genesis 2:17?<sup>1</sup>

Thieme admits that his teaching on this point of doctrine runs counter to the accepted orthodox position.<sup>2</sup> However, Thieme's belief must be held in question because it cannot be sustained from the text. He has failed to see the idiomatic implications of מוֹת גִּבּוֹרִים. He has also admitted into his argumentation points which prove that which he attempts to disprove. There is nothing in the words of Genesis 2:17 which cause one to dogmatically exclude physical death from the threatened penalty for sin.

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<sup>1</sup>Such argumentation is obviously one sided. One could turn the whole argument around and create a chaos of interpretation. Assuming that the death referred to in Genesis 2:17 is both spiritual and physical and that the threat is located in the words מוֹת גִּבּוֹרִים, should one read spiritual and physical death into every other passage where מוֹת גִּבּוֹרִים is found? The only thing being demonstrated here is that one cannot absolutely exclude physical death from Genesis 2:17 just because of the construction. This is apparently Thieme's intention. Thieme, Angelic Conflict, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Most theologians view death as spiritual, physical, and eternal. See Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 217. George Bush, Notes, Critical and Practical on the Book of Genesis, 2 vols. (New York: Mark H. Newman and Co., 1848), I, 63. Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, 2 vols., I, 281. John Gill, A Body of Divinity, p. 315, (Book 3, Chap. 7). William T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), II, 158.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PUNISHMENT PRONOUNCED

It can be admitted, even by way of concession, that the death threatened in Genesis 2:17 is undefined as to its exact intent. Therefore, one must seek a proper definition of this death penalty in other portions of Scripture. The first place one ought to investigate is Genesis 3:14-24. The content of this judgment is found in these verses. Two verses will be the center of attention in this chapter (Gen. 3:19,22). It is hoped that the study of these verses will help determine if physical death was inflicted upon man as a punishment for his sin.

Because there are two schools of thought concerning physical death and its relation to the penalty for sin, there logically exists two interpretations of Genesis 3:19. When Adam disobeyed, the Lord God cursed the ground for Adam's sake. Adam's occupation would not change, for he still was a tiller of the ground (Gen. 3:17-19). However, his labor became very toilsome for thorns and thistles now hindered his work. Because of this, Adam had to eat the fruit of his labor "in the sweat of his face" all the days of his life. It is quite obvious that physical death is referred to in this curse. In verse seventeen God said, "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

Twice in verse nineteen physical death is mentioned, "till thou return into the ground," and "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." What exactly was the Lord's intent in the references to Adam's physical death?

#### Till Thou Return Unto the Ground

Nestled within Genesis 3:19 are two references to Adam's physical death. Concerning the first of these references "till thou return unto the ground," Cuthbert Simpson said,

It has already been noted that there is no suggestion here that man would have lived forever had he not eaten of the forbidden fruit. Rather, the implication is that man would have regarded death not as the last fearful frustration but as his natural end.<sup>1</sup>

Sheldon is in agreement with Simpson for he stated,

We believe that they received from their Maker a body which was subject to old age, decay, and death; and that their sin produced in them no immediate change in this respect. They were subject from the beginning to the great law of mortality.<sup>2</sup>

According to these men physical death was man's lot even from creation. Adam was not merely given a body in which physical death was a possibility but, more pointedly, the inevitable

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<sup>1</sup>Cuthbert A. Simpson, Genesis in the Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols., ed. by George A. Buttrick, et. al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), I, 512.

<sup>2</sup>D. N. Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, p. 85. See also Derick Kidner, Genesis (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), p. 65.

end of Adam was physical death even from creation.<sup>1</sup>

Von Rad, who is in full agreement with Simpson and Sheldon, believes that the phrase "till thou return unto the ground" only indicates the point at which man's hardship in labor would terminate.<sup>2</sup> Von Rad places great emphasis upon the preposition  $\tau\lambda$ . "The curses . . . affirm that hardship and wretchedness will continue until man in death returns again to the earth."<sup>3</sup>

Vos does not agree with Von Rad's exposition of this clause. Concerning it, he has said,

The conjunction 'till' is not simply chronological, as though the words could mean: 'thou wilt have to endure hard labor up till the moment of death.' The force is climactic: 'thy hard labor will finally slay thee.' In man's struggle with the soil, the soil will conquer and claim him.<sup>4</sup>

One must agree with Vos that  $\tau\lambda$  in this instance is climactic. That is, the climax of man's struggle with the soil will be death. But, is this what God intended by this statement? Vos must also be questioned concerning his authority

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<sup>1</sup>D. N. Sheldon checks himself at this point. He states that if Adam and Eve had "always maintained their integrity, would at the proper time, have passed out of their original corporeal life into some higher state of existence." D. N. Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, p. 85. Though there is an element of truth in this statement, it is still quite obvious that he regards physical death as Adam's created lot.

<sup>2</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, Genesis, trans. by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 48.

for such an interpretation of  $\tau_{\perp}$ . Can  $\tau_{\perp}$  ever convey such a climactic meaning? Can  $\tau_{\perp}$  indicate the results of any given action? It is more probable that  $\tau_{\perp}$  merely indicates a future event which will cause man's struggle with the soil to cease.

However, Simpson's and Von Rad's interpretation must still be rejected for two reasons. Do the Scriptures anywhere assume the physical death of man from creation? Would physical death have been Adam's lot whether he obeyed or disobeyed? Pendleton said, with regard to bodily death, that "the Bible knows nothing of death where sin is not."<sup>1</sup> This assertion is well substantiated by several New Testament passages. Romans 5:12 teaches that death came by sin. Paul also taught that "the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15:56). James taught this by saying that "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:15). Again, Paul openly declares that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Several of these verses will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. For now, in the light of these verses, Simpson's and Sheldon's statement that the physical death of Adam is everywhere assumed, regardless of obedience or disobedience, is highly suspect.

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<sup>1</sup>J. M. Pendleton, Christian Doctrines: A Compendium of Theology (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1906), p. 167.

Unto Dust Shalt Thou Return

The second reference to Adam's physical death in Genesis 3:19 is expressed thus, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Some scholars have intimated that this clause implies that there was something inherent in the physical make up of Adam which would not permit him the status of immortality. One has said that "a body formed from earthly materials could not be essentially immortal."<sup>1</sup> Sheldon states the same.

The appointment to bodily death is not, if we understand this language, here spoken of as a part of the curse, and a result of sin. It is rather spoken of as a thing settled previously and from the beginning; settled by man's nature and origin from the dust; before a law had been given, and much more before any had been transgressed.<sup>2</sup>

Sheldon's position is an unproven supposition. Why is it that he maintains that dust must necessarily return to dust? Can Sheldon prove that there is something inherent in dust which would have caused it to return to dust?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Genesis in Old Testament Commentaries, 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, N.D.), I, 66.

<sup>2</sup>Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, p. 88. Even though Adam would have died in any case, Sheldon does teach that Adam's disobedience did affect him physically. "But I do not deny that sin often hastens, and often aggravates bodily death; for this would be the denial of known facts. Nor do I deny that there may be such a connection between the soul and the body, that the sin of the one always, perhaps, communicates some disturbance to the other." Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>This writer is not capable of discussing with academic excellence the chemical structure and function of man. However, it does appear that God has so made man that periodically the bodily chemicals of man are replaced by new ones

Also, must one necessarily maintain that this clause, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," is only a naked statement indicating that man dies because he is made of dust? Could it not be that this sentence is also a penal pronouncement? In other words, the sentence which God pronounced upon Adam was two-fold, (1) he would eat by the sweat of his brow, (2) he would return to the dust from which he was originally taken. Leupold wrote that

the fate of his body is foretold: being dust, it must return to dust. Though this is stated as an inevitable consequence, it will not do to claim the physical dissolution would have been man's lot anyhow. For this statement is part of the general penalty. This penalty now determines that man's lot after the body must be to return to the dust whence he came.<sup>1</sup>

Even Keil and Delitzsch, who taught that dust in and of itself could not be immortal, said that Adam's return to the dust was "the fulfillment of the threat, 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'"<sup>2</sup> What is there to

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so that man may continue to live. If one may assume that this was the manner in which God intended man to function even from creation, then God has made provision even within the chemical make up of man for him to live forever. Man does not continue to live because the process of chemical renewal, since the Fall, does not function to such a degree that man may continually live. Even Sheldon admits this fact. Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942), I, 176.

<sup>2</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, Genesis, I, 81. See also Gill, A Body of Divinity, p. 315, (Book 3, Chap. 7). Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, 3 vols., II, 158. Albert Barnes, Romans in Notes on the New Testament, ed. by Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 126. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p. 301. "But the main point is: that to a

prohibit one from believing that here in the delineation of the curse, "unto dust shalt thou return" is a part of the curse as well? Why is it that all the statements surrounding this one are dubbed temporal "curses," but not this one?<sup>1</sup> One's interpretation of Genesis 3:19 appears to be quite arbitrary if he includes Adam's sweaty toil in the punishment for sin, but excludes his return to dust from this same pronouncement of judgment.

In order to avoid the teaching of Sheldon that man would have died simply because of his physical constitution, some theologians have spoken of physical death as a natural result of spiritual death but not as a direct punishment for sin.<sup>2</sup> Johnson attempts to demonstrate that such semantical argumentation is unwarranted.

Some theologians distinguish between the natural consequences and the penalties of the fall. They may be distinguished in idea, but are not distinct in fact.

(a) all penalties are natural consequences. The wrath of God is as natural as the reproaches of conscience; and the suffering which he inflicts is as natural a result of his wrath as any harm which the sinner does to himself.

(b) all the natural consequences of the fall are penalties. They are the sanctions which belong to law as an element in the constitution of moral beings;

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moral person, dissolution is not a mere chemical result, but a penal misery. Does this befall a responsible agent absolutely guiltless? The assertion is abhorrent to the justice and goodness of God. Physical evil is the appointed consequence of moral evil, and the sanction threatened for the breach of God's will."

<sup>1</sup>Von Rad, Genesis, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Thieme, 1 John Series, Tape 2.

so that inwrought evils are as manifest agencies of the divine government as are statutory punishments.<sup>1</sup>

How does one determine the difference between a natural consequence and a penal consequence? Can they indeed be distinguished? It appears that the two are so interwoven and indistinguishable that they are interchangeable terms. The one includes the other. This can be easily demonstrated, even by assuming Thieme's position. When God threatened man with spiritual death upon disobedience, He knew that this death would result in physical decay and death. So then, physical death is of necessity subsumed under spiritual death. Therefore physical death must be included in God's statement "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

One could also argue that Genesis 2:17 only speaks directly of physical death. However, this does not exclude spiritual death, for spiritual death may be considered as assigned means to that end. The one necessarily includes the other. So that, to withhold spiritual death is to withhold physical death. Or when physical death was threatened, spiritual death was threatened as well. Therefore, when God threatened death in Genesis 2:17, He did not exclude the one from the other. If one wishes to draw such a sharp contrast and distinction between spiritual and physical death, he may

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<sup>1</sup>E. H. Johnson, An Outline of Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1895), p. 141.

do so, but he has entered the realm of the impossible. Concerning such a venture, Dick has said, "If men will make themselves ridiculous, by venturing opinions stamped with folly and absurdity, let them beware of exposing their Maker to contempt."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Expulsion From the Garden

After God pronounced the curses upon Adam and Eve, He clothed them and expelled them from the garden. Adam was put out of the garden "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Gen. 3:22). If God had left Adam in the garden, Adam could have freely eaten of the tree of life and consequently lived forever. One must be careful as he deals with this text lest he ascribe to it a mythological sense. All the people, places, things, and events in the Genesis narrative were real. They are not vestiges of an earlier myth.<sup>2</sup>

It appears from the text (Gen. 3:22) that the tree of life had the power to convey life. If Adam had eaten of this tree after being put out of the garden, he would have lived forever. Whatever this may mean, one thing must be kept in mind. There was nothing inherent in the tree which could magically convey life.

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<sup>1</sup>Dick, Lectures in Theology, 2 vols., I, 466.

<sup>2</sup>See Nahum Sarna, Understanding Genesis, Vol. I in the Milton Research Center Series (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1966), pp. 25-27.

This remarkable power was characteristic of the tree not by its inherent natural qualities but by virtue of the power of the Word of God, who was pleased to ordain that such should be the effect of partaking of the fruit of this tree.<sup>1</sup>

The tree of life, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, did not operate independent of God. It was God who created these trees (Gen. 2:9). These trees were placed there by God for His own purposes. They were subservient to the will of God. Any power to convey life or death comes not from the trees themselves but from God their Creator. Because of this, most commentators ascribe to the tree sacramental value.<sup>2</sup>

Because of Adam's sin, God punished him by sending him out of the garden. In this manner God was making it absolutely certain that man would die physically. The access to the only available means of life was cut off. The life support mechanism was disconnected. Therefore, the victim died. God not only threatened man with death (Gen. 2:17) but also pronounced physical death as a part of the curse for sin. In order to make sure that the sentence would be meted out, God expelled man from the garden.

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<sup>1</sup>Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 2 vols., I, 181. See also Keil and Delitzsch, Genesis, I, 66. Edward J. Young, In the Beginning (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), p. 108. Robert S. Candlish, The Book of Genesis, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1868), I 40.

<sup>2</sup>Candlish, The Book of Genesis, 2 vols., I, 40. See also Keil and Delitzsch, Genesis, I, 66.

Sheldon, and others, do not believe that Genesis 3:19 states that man's return to the dust is a penal consequence for sin. Rather, they believe that Adam was destined to physical death even from creation because, by creation, he was subject to physical death. According to these men, Genesis 3:19 only states the manner in which man's struggle with the soil will end, that is, by physical death. However, this premise must be rejected. The New Testament clearly states that death, in all its facets, is due to sin. Even Thieme readily admits this. Further, the clauses "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" are stated as a curse in the same manner as are the other curses in this context. In order to insure that this curse would not be thwarted, Adam and Eve were sent from the garden. Ralston very clearly demonstrated that physical death is a penalty for sin by stating the connection between Genesis 2:17 and 3:19.

We may not only infer that this entire malediction was embraced in the penalty, but also, that so far as the language extends is a comment upon the penalty itself. If the above be admitted as true, we have here a positive proof that the sorrows and afflictions of life, together with the final dissolution of the body, were embraced in the penalty.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ralston, Elements of Divinity, pp. 85-86.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION OF ADAM'S SIN

The New Testament mentions Adam as the first sinner in only three places (Rom. 5:12f; 1 Cor. 15:21-22,45; 1 Tim. 2:13-14). He is named twice as a reference point in a chronology without any indication of his fall (Lk. 3:38; Jude 14). Only in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 is death expressly linked with Adam's sin. This chapter will examine the latter two of these most prominent passages in order to ascertain the relationship between sin and death.

#### Death Came by the One Man Adam

In Romans 5:12 Paul taught that "sin entered into the world, and death by sin." This came about because of the disobedience of one man, Adam. Because of Adam, sin entered into the world and consequently death. The first thing to be established from this passage is the exact content of "death." There is no doubt that spiritual death is included in this death for because of Adam's sin, all men are constituted sinners and thus are the subjects of spiritual death. What needs to be established is whether or not Paul includes physical death in this declaration.

Even if one assumes that Thieme is correct by stating that only spiritual death is the penalty for sin, he still

cannot exclude physical death from this passage. The two, of necessity, go together. It was by Adam that physical death came. It was even by sin that physical death became a reality. Therefore, to declare that this passage does not have reference to physical death is an unwarranted assumption. The one who maintains such a position has unmistakably foisted his presuppositions upon the text. He has programmed the computer to give him the answer he desires to see. Nowhere does this passage exclude physical death. In contrast it is everywhere implied.

One may even say that verse fourteen speaks of spiritual death reigning as king over its subjects. However, upon what basis does he exclude physical death? Is it not true that all those who lived from Adam to Moses died physically? Why then is the reign of death extended only to spiritual death.<sup>1</sup>

Thieme has admitted that physical death came through Adam. What he does not believe is that this physical death is penal in nature. Once again Thieme has argued against himself. By allowing physical death to be even remotely

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<sup>1</sup>See Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols., II, 248-9. Sheldon said, "When for instance, Paul says in the fourteenth verse, that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," he certainly cannot design to tell his readers, that the generations thus included all yielded to the law of mortality, a fact which his readers well knew, and which was foreign to his argument; but he meant to tell them, that these generations were sinners, and morally condemned." Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, pp. 96-7.

connected with the death of verse twelve, he has made a grand mistake. What did Paul mean, "sin entered into the world?" Sin is no an entity in itself even though it is here personified. Sin here refers not only to the transgression of Adam but more pointedly to the guilt which attended that sin. It is guilt that is the point of attention. How is it, if Thieme is correct, that Paul can speak of guilt, yet not consider this death penal in nature? The words themselves demand such an interpretation. Death passed upon all men for all are guilty of sin, they all sinned in Adam. Thieme should also be questioned concerning the mention of law, without which guilt is impossible, in verses thirteen and fourteen. Paul contrasts the Mosaic law to the law which Adam violated. He assumes that the punishment under one law is identical to the punishment under the other. The Mosaic Covenant promised physical death to the one who disobeyed it. One can only assume with Paul that the same is true of the law which Adam broke. The point is this, death was threatened upon breach of the law, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). How then can law, sin, guilt, and death be mixed without coming to the conclusion that Paul includes physical death in the penalty for sin?

Earlier in Romans Paul sought to demonstrate the sinfulness of man by several quotes from the Old Testament (Rom. 3:13-18). In this passage Paul said, "Their throat is an open sepulcher, their tongues have used deceit, poison is

under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, there is no fear of God before their eyes." Because Paul displays that man's bodily parts are participants in sin, why should one exclude these instruments from punishment? One might say that eyes, feet, tongue, and lips are used by Paul to signify the whole of man. Men do not fear God. Men are swift to shed blood. Men speak cursing and bitterness. To consider these terms as synecdoches is highly commendable. If it is the man who sins, and not just his body or soul, why is it that only his soul is punished? The point in Romans 5 is that Adam sinned and Adam was punished. It is not merely the bodies of men or just the souls of men that sin, it is men that sin. Therefore, death passed upon all men, not just on their souls or just on their bodies but upon them as a whole. The continual emphasis in this context is upon the sin of the one man, the offense of the one man. It is not the sin of the soul or the offense of the soul, it is the disobedience of the man. Therefore, the punishment must be of the man, both body and soul.

In this same context Paul said that "we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). Sheldon does not believe that the death Paul mentioned here includes physical death. He contends that only spiritual death is in view.

This spiritual significance of the term (death) is the only one that is admissible in the fifth chapter. . . . Whoever will attentively examine this whole passage . . . will mark how death is uniformly put in contrast with life, meaning certainly spiritual life, can hardly fail to convince himself, that spiritual death, condemnation following sin, is exclusively intended.<sup>1</sup>

However, Sheldon has failed to "attentively examine this whole passage." In this passage one not only sees a contrast between life and death but, even more so, a contrast between Christ and Adam. Adam, by his disobedience, gained condemnation unto death. In stark contrast, Christ, by His obedience, acquired justification unto life. In other words, Christ won back that which was forfeited in sin by Adam.

Eternal life embraces the entire man, body and soul. This is why eternal life can be a present possession (Jn. 3:36), but yet a future possession (Rom. 2:7). It is true that the believer is now spiritually alive. However, it is not true that he is free from indwelling sin or that his body is free from the effects of sin. When Christ returns for His own, He will not only fully eradicate the believer's remaining depravity but will also restore his body. This Paul calls "the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

If eternal life is all encompassing, which it is, then the corollary is also all encompassing. "The gift of God is eternal life," but in contrast "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). How is it then that Sheldon can deny

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, p. 96.

that physical death is penal in nature? Physical death is not only the consequence of sin but also comprises part of the condemnation for sin. According to Romans 5, the death which passed upon all men is not only spiritual but physical also. This death came about because of the disobedience of Adam.

#### In Adam All Die

In 1 Corinthians 15:22 is a confirmation of Paul's teaching in Romans 5:12-14. In this text Paul once again contrasts that which was instituted by Adam and that which issues forth from the work of Christ. In verse twenty-one Paul said that death came by ( ὁ ἄνθρωπος ) man, Adam, but that resurrection life also came by ( ὁ ἄνθρωπος ) man, Christ. The emphasis in verse twenty-two is centered upon the results of being united to Adam or to Christ. All those who are united to Adam ( ἐν Ἀδὰμ ) receive death by this union. However, all those united to Christ ( ἐν Χριστῷ ) obtain resurrection life ( ζωοποίησις ) by virtue of their union with Christ.<sup>1</sup> This section will investigate the type of death Paul means here, and also the nature of this death.

It is very obvious that Paul had physical death at

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<sup>1</sup>The "all" of verse 22 has been severally understood. Boyer believes that the "all" in both instances refers to all humanity without exclusion. James L. Boyer, For A World Like Ours, (Winona Lake: B. M. H. Books, 1971), Footnote 2, p. 140. For the view that all means all to whom they are united, see Charles Hodge, A Commentary on 1 Corinthians (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), pp. 324-5.

the fore of his thinking as he wrote this discourse on the resurrection.<sup>1</sup> In verse twenty the Apostle mentions that Christ arose from the dead, which clearly is bodily resurrection. The intent of the phrase "them that slept" again is evident. Physical death is in view. In verse twenty-one the contrast between Adam and Christ begins. One ought to notice that, by saying death came by man and that the resurrection of the dead came by man, the corollary between physical death and bodily resurrection is clearly stated. Because Paul is speaking of bodily resurrection from the dead, he is also speaking of physical death for it is because of Christ's resurrection from the dead that the believer will eventually be freed from death. This same contrast is displayed in verse twenty-two even though the emphasis varies from that of verse twenty-one. "In Adam all die" but "in Christ all shall be made alive." Even Thieme will not object to considering death here to be physical in nature. He admits that even physical death came through Adam. His position, though, is that because Adam disobeyed the direct command of God, he died spiritually. A direct, natural consequence of spiritual

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<sup>1</sup>This does not imply that spiritual death is foreign to Paul's thinking. "By man came death refers to the penalty pronounced on the first sin (Gen. 2:17). This was more than physical death but it included it . . . When man sinned, he passed into a new state, one dominated by, and at the same time symbolized by death. It is likely that spiritual death and physical death are not being thought of as separate, so that the one includes the other." Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 214.

death is physical death. What he will not permit is for one to attribute to this death a penal nature.

Sheldon will not even go as far as Thieme has gone.

He proclaims that

this passage does not ascribe the natural death of all men to the sin of Adam, but simply to Adam, as the beginning of the race. I understand its meaning to be--All resemble him in being mortal, in being appointed to death, as he was . . . In other words, all men by virtue of their descent from an originally mortal progenitor, are subject to bodily death.<sup>1</sup>

Sheldon cannot be correct. Otherwise, resurrection would come in the same manner. If Adam was the beginning of his race, then Christ is the origin of his race. Adam is the progenitor of his descent and Christ of His descent. Such a belief is in direct opposition to John 1:13.

1 Corinthians 15:22 plainly teaches that physical death came by means of Adam, and that all men die because of their union with Adam. It is implied here, especially in light of verse fifty-six, that this death was precipitated by the disobedience of Adam.

Barrett has spoken concerning the nature of death in 1 Corinthians fifteen. It is not only physical but penal as well.

Taking death as a given fact, sin is what embitters it, not only psychologically, in that it breeds remorse, but also theologically in that it makes it clear that death is not merely a natural phenomenon, but a punishment, an evil that need not exist, and would not exist if man

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, p. 97.

were not in rebellion against his Creator.<sup>1</sup>

Thieme is greatly disturbed by such a statement for he relegates physical death to the realm of natural phenomenon because of spiritual death. Barrett considers physical death not only a natural phenomenon but a penal evil also. Two things should be demonstrated in order to indicate the truthfulness of Barrett's position. Smith has stated the first point well.

The position that temporal death is a penal consequence of sin is confirmed by the fact that redemption contemplates the resurrection, the restoration of the body.<sup>2</sup>

Sheldon, in order to maintain his position that death was not instituted because of sin, said the exact opposite of Barrett.

We add that it did not belong to the design of Christ to save any from corporeal death. Still His salvation must be commensurate with the evil caused by sin; and we hence infer that a liability to physical death is not among these evils. Our Savior nowhere teaches us to look upon the death of the body as in itself an evil, and to see in it a proof of our own guilt.<sup>3</sup>

Sheldon has adequately seen the tension in the position of Thieme. He cannot comprehend sin, death, and redemption without seeing guilt, punishment, and release.<sup>4</sup> It would not

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<sup>1</sup>Charles K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 383.

<sup>2</sup>H. B. Smith, System of Christian Theology (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1885), pp. 267-8.

<sup>3</sup>Sheldon, Sin and Redemption, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>Redemption is included because the resurrection of Christ is the basis for the salvation of the body at Christ's appearing which Paul calls "the redemption of the body" Rom. 8:23).

seem that Paul would speak of the body's redemption if it were not a penal instrument. One must agree with Sheldon that if redemption signifies release from a penalty in other passages (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), then it must here also. If this is not the case, then why does Paul speak of the resurrection of Christ as a release, redemption from the death inflicted through Adam?

The second feature of 1 Corinthians 15 which identifies physical death as a penalty for sin is found in verse fifty-six. In this verse Paul states that sin causes death and that sin issues forth from law. If there was no law, there would be no sin which in turn eliminates death. Death in this portion of Scripture is obviously physical because of the general context of bodily resurrection from the dead and because of the mention of the grave (1 Cor. 15:55). When physical death is so intricately linked with sin and law, one cannot avoid the evident implication that physical death is indeed included in the penalty for sinning against the law.<sup>1</sup>

Boyer has succinctly but adequately stated the point of this text.

The hurt and pain of death, of course, is in its punitive character. Death is the consequence of sin, aggravated

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<sup>1</sup>Law in this verse, because it is true in any event whether Jew or Gentile, does not refer specifically to the Mosaic Law. It may have reference to the law stated in Genesis 2:17. However, it probably refers to the general moral law of God which Israel had in written, revealed form and which the Gentiles have as the works of law written on their hearts (Rom. 3:2; 2:15).

as well as revealed by the law.<sup>1</sup>

Paul then states that all die in Adam. By this death, Paul means not only the dissolution of the body as a mere biological fact, but that this dissolution is a penalty for sinning against the law of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Boyer, For A World Like Ours, p. 146.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION: PART ONE

One method Thieme has used to demonstrate that Christ's physical death does not save is to deny that physical death is a penalty for sin. This part examined a few key texts in order to ascertain the truthfulness of Thieme's position. By so doing, it was discovered that Thieme's position is not the most exact.

The Scriptures indicate that Adam became liable to death the moment that he ate the forbidden fruit and not that the full execution of death was meted out that very day, as Thieme asserts (Gen. 2:17). In Genesis 3, Moses further recorded some of the means by which the penalty was carried out. The means isolated for examination in this part were physical death (Gen. 3:19) and expulsion from the Garden (Gen. 3:22-23). The New Testament also bears witness to the fact that physical death is a penal evil. Paul, in specific, indicates the penal nature of physical death by linking death with law and sin (1 Cor. 15:56).

These and other arguments, when taken together, indicate the error within Thieme's system. They do more than this though. Thieme has sought to deny that Christ's physical death is penal in nature by denying that physical death itself is not a penalty for sin. Because Thieme's

argumentation is faulty, his conclusions are in error as well. The Scriptures do indeed indicate that physical death is a Divine judgment for sin. Therefore, one logically concludes that Christ's physical death is also penal.

## PART TWO

### EXAMINATION OF THE PHYSICAL SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST

As one reads the theologians concerning the physical death of Christ, he discovers that not all of the scholars are in agreement. H. Daniel Friberg has ascribed saving efficacy to Christ's physical death by stating that

the Gospel ascribes a very great importance to the termination of Christ's earthly life; it is his death on the cross that is pre-eminently the saving event.<sup>1</sup>

To the contrary, men like Thieme avow the exact opposite interpretation of Christ's physical death. Thieme has very dogmatically stated, "And His physical death has nothing to do with salvation. I mean NOTHING!"<sup>2</sup> Thieme places all of the saving efficacy in Christ's spiritual death.

But when the sins of the world were put on Christ on the cross, He died spiritually. He was judged by SPIRITUAL DEATH. The phrase, "Christ died for our sins" (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3), is explained by other passages, such as 1 Peter 2:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. The principle is very clear in Scripture. When Christ died for our sins, He wasn't dying physically.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. Daniel Friberg, "Why Christ Died," Christianity Today 13:20 (July, 1969), p. 896.

<sup>2</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "A Sermon on John 19:31-37," Gospel of John Series (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1967), Tape 54.

<sup>3</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 17. Thieme has made statements which are hard to reconcile with this assertion. In the same book, p. 16, Thieme says, "It was the soul as

Thieme identifies three explanations for the Savior's physical death.<sup>1</sup> First, by virtue of the fact that Christ was a true human and that He died spiritually, his physical death was an attendant circumstance. That is, Christ's physical death was a natural result of His having been put to death spiritually. Second, Christ's physical death served as tangible evidence of His spiritual death. Third, Christ died physically in order that He might rise from the dead and thus be the "first-fruit." At this very point some men have become lost in Thieme's dogmatism and have ceased to really listen to what Thieme is saying.<sup>2</sup> Thieme has taught,

But Christ died twice that we might be born twice. Even as Adam in his fall became spiritually dead, and later died physically, so the Last Adam, Christ, identified with our sins in spiritual death and also died physically. . . . It was necessary for Christ to die both physically and spiritually. . . . His physical death and resurrection guarantees us a new resurrection body. He had to die physically in order to be resurrected.<sup>3</sup>

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well as the body of Jesus Christ that bore our sins." He makes a contradictory statement in the 1 Peter 3:18 passage. Even so, Thieme tenaciously proclaims and defends the efficacy of Christ's spiritual death only.

<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "Death of the Lord Jesus Christ," Categorical Bible Studies, ed. by Ralph Braun (Brookings, Oregon: Berean Fundamental Church, 1972), Note 118, pp. 137-8.

<sup>2</sup>Charles J. Woodbridge, A published letter to Bob Walters concerning the teachings of Robert B. Thieme, Jr., August 3, 1971. "The disjunction between Christ's 'spiritual' death and His 'physical' death is perilous in the extreme. If His physical death were not really necessary having died 'spiritually,' he would not really have needed to die physically at all!"

<sup>3</sup>Thieme, "Death of the Lord Jesus Christ," Note 118, pp. 137-8.

Friberg has included the physical death of Christ as part of the substitutionary sacrifice for sin. R. B. Thieme has boldly questioned such a declaration. Part two will question the validity of Thieme's attack upon those who believe that Christ's physical death saves. In this part, the teaching of Jesus and three other New Testament authors will be examined concerning the significance of Christ's physical sufferings and death. This will be done by isolating several selected verses from each man's statements. Also to be found in this part is a brief discussion concerning the New Testament concept of blood as it relates to the blood of Christ.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE TEACHING OF THE SAVIOR

Many times Jesus spoke of His coming death. At times the foretelling of His death was very understandable (Mt. 16:21; 17:12; Mk. 10:33-34; Lk. 17:25). On other occasions he veiled His speech concerning His death in enigmatic and figurative language (Mt. 26:45; Jn. 2:4; 2:19; 16:16f). Out of the many times Jesus spoke of His death, one of the most striking speeches from the Savior has been selected for discussion in this chapter.

The night in which the Savior was betrayed, He left His church with a ritual by which she could remember the basis upon which her salvation rests. This ritual is known as the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. In the institution of this practice, Jesus used some very graphic language.<sup>1</sup> He said, "'This is my body which is for you'<sup>2</sup> and the cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins." What exactly do these terms mean and what is

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<sup>1</sup>Only certain aspects of the Eucharist will be examined. Other phases of the Communion Table are left untouched because they are either unrelated to the topic at hand or because they are far beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>2</sup>The words recorded by the apostle Paul are included in the present discussion. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:23 that he received revelation concerning the events of the night in which Christ was betrayed from the Lord. Therefore, Paul's record in 1 Corinthians 11 is another independent witness to the proceedings of that night.

their significance?

### Body and Blood as Figures

There have been two major views concerning the Lord's mentioning of His body and blood. The first interpretation not only speaks of bread and wine as figurative language, but body and blood as well. Thieme teaches that body has reference to Christ's person while the blood refers to His work.<sup>1</sup> Thieme is not alone in such a belief. Anderson seeks to demonstrate this same idea concerning body in specific by an attempt to reconstruct Jesus' words in Aramaic.

Also if we could assume behind the Greek words for my body here (to soma mou) not the Aramaic (bisri=my flesh) but guphi (myself), we may perhaps the more readily take my body to signify, as it can do in Greek, "my person," "my whole being."<sup>2</sup>

Lane concurs with such a notion for he says,

In the figurative saying about the blood, Jesus was not referring to his physical body as such, but to himself. He said: "I am myself this (bread)" or "my person in this (bread)," . . .<sup>3</sup>

According to this view both the reference to Christ's body and the reference to His blood are figures of the same thing.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "Communion Table," Categorical Bible Studies, ed. by Ralph Braun (Brookings, Oregon: Berean Fundamental Church, 1972), Category 105, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh Anderson, The Gospel of Mark in The New Century Bible, ed. by Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (Greenwood: The Attic Press, 1976), p. 313.

<sup>3</sup>William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 506.

Jesus is not referring exclusively to His bodily parts but to Himself as an entire person. Thus according to Anderson and Lane it is the sacrifice of the person, Christ, body and soul, that is the oblation for sin.

Thieme introduces a thought in his notes concerning the figurative usage of body which can be quite devastating to his belief. He says the bread "speaks of the work of Christ, emphasis in the PERSON of Christ (incarnation)."<sup>1</sup> In the incarnation the Logos took to Himself among other things a body. If  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  refers to the incarnation, it must of necessity refer to that which was assumed at the incarnation. Therefore, to mention the incarnation in reference to the Eucharist is to admit that what Christ acquired in the incarnation was precisely that which was given in sacrifice for His disciples. Even if Jesus intended for  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  to be taken figuratively, one must admit that because the man as a whole is being spoken of, his corporeal nature cannot be left out. Otherwise, man is a schizophrenic being who at times acts as a body and at other times as a soul. Therefore, Thieme ought to admit that the offering of Christ's body, involving physical sufferings and death, is the means by which remission of sins is accomplished.

#### Body and Blood as Physical Substance

However, there are some commentators who, though not

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, "Communion Table," Category 105, p. 117.

necessarily disagreeing with this double figure view, place their emphasis elsewhere. Such men consider the words of Jesus concerning His body and blood to be just that, references to His literal body and blood.<sup>1</sup> Hendrikson says,

Accordingly, the meaning of "the broken bread" and the poured out wine is correctly indicated in a Communion Form which represents Christ as saying: "Whereas otherwise you should have suffered eternal death, I gave my body in death on the tree of the cross and shed my blood for you, . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Though it is conceivable that body and blood could be taken figuratively, the question remains, "Was this the intention of the Savior?" According to the former view Jesus used bread to symbolize His body which in turn was a figure for

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<sup>1</sup>"In the explanatory saying concerning the bread (1 Cor. 11:24) either Paul or the community before him adds to  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  the interpretation  $\tau\acute{o}$   $\acute{\upsilon}$  $\pi\epsilon\rho$   $\acute{\upsilon}$  $\mu\acute{\omega}$  $\nu$ . The stress, then, is not on the substance, corporeality, but on the act denoted thereby. As the saying about the blood of Jesus is a figurative robe for the idea of self-sacrifice, so the body of Jesus is not important as substance but as the body which is offered up for the community, indeed, as the act which reconciles the community." Eduard Schweizer, " $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), VII, 1067.

<sup>2</sup>William Hendrikson, Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew in The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 909-10. See also R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), p. 625. D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark: A Portrait of the Servant (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 352-3. Johannes N. Geldehuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 555. All of these men consider body to be body and blood to be blood. They unmistakably speak of the Eucharist elements as referring to Christ's physical sufferings and death.

something else, His person. Would the Lord have instituted a memorial service which in and of itself would confuse those who participate in it? What proof can Anderson show which would convincingly demonstrate that Jesus used  $\eta\theta\eta\gamma$  and not  $\gamma\psi\zeta$ ? What is it that caused men like Lane to consider  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  to be figurative in usage at all? It surely is not because he did not wish to assign any saving value to the death of Christ for he said, "The allusion to his violent death in the redness of the wine and the reference to the shedding of blood are unmistakable."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps they have done so because they consider  $\alpha\iota\mu\alpha$  to be figurative and therefore do the same with  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ . What guide lines do these men follow in their interpretation of Scripture? What prompts them to consider this or that metaphorically and this or that literally? Perhaps these men have over-extended their figures too far at this point.

From his investigation into the theological significance of  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ , Gundry has arrived at a conclusion which is quite in contrast to the views expressed by Anderson and Lane. Concerning Jesus' institution of the Eucharist, Gundry has said,

Thus, in the Words of Institution emphasis lies on the violence of Jesus' physical death as a sacrifice. Of course, the whole man is involved in the death of the physical body. But in themselves the flesh/body and blood-violently separated in sacrifice-refer solely to the physical aspect of death, from which the involvement

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<sup>1</sup>Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, p. 517.

Jesus not only spoke of His impending death, but also gave to His disciples the meaning of it. While holding the bread in His hand, Jesus said, "This is my body which is for you."<sup>1</sup> This is obviously sacrificial language, which by its very nature is substitutionary and efficacious when considered a sacrifice for sin which His death certainly was. He also said that by the shedding of His blood, by His violent death, God could remit the guilt, forgive the sin of those who are in a covenantal (New Covenant) relationship to Him.

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<sup>1</sup>See Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 562. Even if the phrase ἡμῶν κλώμενον is part of the original text, one must be careful how he speaks of Christ's broken body for John 19:36 says, "a bone of him shall not be broken." See R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), p. 1024.

of the whole man may only be inferred.<sup>1</sup>

When one reflects upon the manner of Christ's sacrifice, he sees a person who was whipped, beaten, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross upon which He died. How can one read the words of Christ when He inaugurated the Eucharist without picturing in his mind the inhuman, physical sufferings and death of his Redeemer? One must spend full concentration in order not to see a suffering, bleeding person, for the words themselves portray such a picture.

Two views have been presented concerning the words of the Eucharist. For the purposes of this study, it can be demonstrated that both interpretations basically agree that the physical sufferings and death of the Messiah are spoken of in the Eucharist. Lenski says, "'Body' and 'blood' are each given separately, for in the sacrifice the blood flows out and is separated from the body."<sup>2</sup> Lane, on the other hand, says that Jesus' reference to the redness of the wine points not only to His shed blood but to His violent death.<sup>3</sup> Are the physical sufferings and death of Christ a genuine part of His substitutionary sacrifice for sins? According to both of these views, the answer must be affirmative.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. Gundry, SOMA in Biblical Theology in Society for New Testament Studies, no. 29, ed. by Matthew Black and R. Wilson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel, p. 625.

<sup>3</sup>Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, p. 517.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE TEACHINGS OF PAUL

Of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, thirteen were written by the Apostle Paul. Paul has been considered by many to be the great systematizer of theology in the New Testament. Surely, a man of this high stature and fame has said something concerning the physical sufferings and death of the Savior. Indeed, Paul has said much concerning the atonement of Christ. Two verses from the pen of this apostle will be examined in this chapter. They will be studied to display the emphasis Paul placed upon the body and death of Christ. By so doing, one will be able to determine what soteriological significance Paul placed upon the physical sufferings and death of Christ.

#### Christ's Work in the Body

In Colossians 1:22 Paul declared that the believer in Christ is reconciled "in the body of his (Christ's) flesh through death." The Colossian believers were alienated and enemies to God because of their wicked works (Col. 1:21). But God reconciled them. Reconciliation, according to these verses was accomplished through death (διὰ τοῦ θανάτου). Having mentioned death, the issue is closed for some. They consider death here to mean physical death. However, not all

are so eager to espouse such a belief. For them reconciliation was accomplished through the spiritual death of Christ and definitely not through His physical death or a combination thereof.<sup>1</sup> What then does Paul mean when he says that Christ "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death?"

Thieme teaches that "body of His flesh" refers to the humanity of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Thieme is attempting to avoid the physical implications which this verse places upon Christ's substitutionary physical death. He has broadened the meaning of "body of His flesh" to mean the whole person of Christ, His humanity. By so doing, Thieme can determine which aspect of Christ's humanity he wishes to have in view. Because of Thieme's presuppositions, he must attach all efficacy to Christ's spiritual death, suffering in the soul. Therefore, what Thieme is really doing by extending the phrase "body of His flesh" to encompass Christ as a whole, is providing himself an answer to the obvious physical statements of the verse.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "Barrier: Reconciliation," Categorical Bible Studies, ed. by Ralph Braun (Brookings, Oregon: Berean Fundamental Church, 1972), Category 52, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>See also Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "Reconciliation," Categorical Bible Studies, ed. by Ralph Braun (Brookings, Oregon: Berean Fundamental Church, 1972), Category 478, p. 621.

<sup>3</sup>Thieme does not absolutely rule out all reference to the physical death of Christ. However, the physical death of Christ is only so that the believer might have a new resurrection body. The real accomplishment of reconciliation

Because Thieme intends for  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  to refer to the humanity of Christ, he has admitted into his argumentation that which argues against his own belief. If  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  indicates the person of Christ as a whole, then it must include His body along with His soul. Gundry opposes those who assume the holistic concept in  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ , as Thieme does here. In his concluding remarks, Gundry asserts that

Paul fully personalizes soma as a necessary part of the human constitution and of authentic existence. However, he neither dematerializes soma in theological usage nor makes it comprehend the total person. To do either would lay upon the term a burden heavier than it can bear. Rather, without having to do double duty for the spirit, soma gains theological significance as the physical body, man's means of concrete service for God.<sup>1</sup>

The evident identification of death which Paul demonstrates, and which Thieme seeks to avoid, is striking. Paul unquestionably teaches that the reconciliation between God and His enemies was accomplished through ( $\delta\epsilon\lambda$ ) the death of Christ. What Thieme openly ignores is that Paul clearly identified the type of death of which he speaks. Paul said that this death was "in the body of flesh." The sphere ( $\epsilon\nu$ ) of this death was "in the body of flesh."

He . . . in his body of flesh (that was the sphere of the reconciliation), and through his death (that was the instrument) had brought about a return to the proper

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is in the bearing of sins penalty which he attributes to the spiritual death of Christ. Thieme, "Barrier: Reconciliation," Category 52, p. 61.

<sup>1</sup>Gundry, SOMA In Biblical Theology, p. 244.

relation between the Colossians and their God.<sup>1</sup>

That Paul is using the body to refer to the physical body of Christ is quite evident for "the added genitive helps to emphasize the physical nature of the body which suffered the (well known) death. . . ."2 The body spoken of is one which is made of flesh. Even if "flesh" is much broader and refers to human nature, or humanity, the point remains intact. Paul says that the method by which reconciliation is procured is the death of Christ in the sphere of the body, that is physical death. Ralph Martin believes that the phrase "the body of his flesh" "is just the expression needed to underline the physical cost of the church's redemption. . . ."3

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<sup>1</sup>William Hendrikson, Exposition of Colossians in The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 83. See also John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians (Minneapolis: James and Knoch Christian Publishing Co., reprinted 1977), p. 82. F. F. Bruce believes that, "the preposition ἐν probably has instrumental force; His body of flesh was the instrument or organ of the reconciliation which He established in His death." F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 212.

<sup>2</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 69. Lenski understood the genitive in Colossians 1:22 to be descriptive of the kind of body, a body made of flesh. F. F. Bruce calls this a Hebraism. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians, p. 212. See also Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph P. Martin, Colossians: The Church's Lord and The Christian's Liberty (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 58.

### Christ's Work in Death

While writing to the Corinthians, Paul wanted to clarify the doctrine of resurrection. The Corinthians were beginning to waver in their belief of a bodily resurrection. The entire fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is devoted to Paul's teaching on this subject. This is the longest and most detailed treatise in the New Testament concerning resurrection. Paul's primary appeal to the Corinthians is that if there is no resurrection then Christ did not rise and that their faith in Christ is groundless. Paul everywhere assumes the death of Christ in these verses. Only in verse three does he directly mention that Christ died. In that same verse, Paul attaches soteriological significance to that death for he said, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Does this mean that Christ only died spiritually for sins as Thieme asserts?

Thieme very openly says concerning 1 Corinthians 15:3, "In fact Christ died twice on the cross. Once spiritually when he bore our sins and this is the death referred to here."<sup>1</sup> According to Thieme the physical death of Christ occurred for two reasons. First, "His physical death simply indicated that his mission was accomplished on earth. His

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "1 Corinthians 15," in the 1963 Basics (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publication, 1963), Tape 3.

work was finished."<sup>1</sup> Second, "His physical death and resurrection guarantees us a new resurrection body. He had to die physically in order to be resurrected."<sup>2</sup> For Thieme 1 Corinthians 15:3 speaks of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for sin as being spiritual death alone.

Even though Thieme's delineated reasons for the physical death of Christ are accurate, one might wonder if there is not more to the Savior's death. One would rightly suspect that because Paul is teaching bodily resurrection here, death in this passage must correspondingly be physical death. If 1 Corinthians 15:3 is the spiritual death of Christ, one quickly notices a missing feature. The burial of Jesus' body is mentioned and even its resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4). However, according to Thieme's view there is not a single reference in verses one through five to the death of Christ's body. The chain of events which are listed in their chronological order has a missing link. Also, one readily perceives that Thieme has not observed the interrelationship of the various phrases of verses three through five. James Boyer has accurately observed these relationships.

The good news by which they have been saved consists of two historic facts, Christ's death and resurrection, and their explanation and interpretation 'according to the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "Romans 3," The 1963 Basics (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1963), Tape 3.

<sup>2</sup>Thieme, "Death of the Lord Jesus Christ," Category 118, p. 138.

Scriptures.' The first of these historic facts, that Christ died, was proved by His burial. The second historical fact, that he arose again the third day, was proved by His being seen (by many groups listed in v.v. 5-9).<sup>1</sup>

Schutz has adequately demonstrated this very point.

ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν	ὅτι ἐγήγερται
ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν	τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ
κατὰ τὰς γραφάς	κατὰ τὰς γραφάς
καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη	καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη

The parallelism between the two units would be exact and the function of each concluding ὅτι clause is to underline the claim lodged in the initial verb: that 'he was buried' confirms his death just as 'he appeared' confirms his resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

This verse teaches exactly what Thieme does not teach. He teaches that only Christ's spiritual death is savingly efficacious. "It was His substitutionary spiritual death which was efficacious for our salvation, not His physical death."<sup>3</sup> When Thieme sees the sacrificial phrase, "for our sins," he immediately identifies the death referred to in this verse as spiritual death. However, the fact that Christ was buried demonstrates that He died physically. The death spoken of in verse three is physical death which Paul identifies "as a sacrifice or propitiation for our sins."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Boyer, For A World Like Ours, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>John Schutz, "Apostolic Authority and the Control of Tradition in 1 Corinthians 15," New Testament Studies 15:4 (1969), p. 448.

<sup>3</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Hodge, A Commentary on 1 Corinthians (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p. 312.

Also, Thieme teaches that the physical death of Christ indicated that Christ's mission, that is dying spiritually, was accomplished. However, these verses teach that the physical death of Christ was part of the sacrifice for sin. It was just as much a part of Christ's mission of propitiation as His spiritual death. The demonstration that the Savior's mission was completed is not the physical death of Christ but the burial. Indeed, the apostle Paul by mentioning that Christ was buried demonstrates that Christ died physically which, Paul says, is for sins (Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE TEACHING OF HEBREWS

The writer of Hebrews, in a most striking manner, compares the old covenant to the new covenant. The old was transitory, the new everlasting. The old was shadow, the new substance. The old was ineffective, the new effectual. In this grand book, the author displays the superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood to that of the Aaronic. The high priest of the Old Covenant (Mosaic) is inferior when compared to the better High Priest of the New Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. One is taught in Hebrews that the Mosaic Covenant gave way to a better covenant, the New Covenant. It is no surprise, then, when this author displays to his readers the superiority of the New Covenant sacrifice to that of the Old Covenant sacrifices. Two portions from this book will be examined to help determine if the better substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is at all physical in nature.

#### The Purpose for the Incarnation

Christ came not to take an interest in angels but to help the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16, note ἐπιλαμβάνομαι). The Logos did this by becoming "in all things . . . like his brethren" (Heb. 2:17). In the midst of stating the manner and reason for Christ's humiliation, the writer of Hebrews

sets forth a purpose for the Incarnation (Heb. 2:14-15). From these verses one learns that Christ partook of flesh and blood in order "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Having said this, the question re-emerges once again, "What type of death is being spoken of here?" There seems to be two intentions of Christ's incarnation found in this passage. The one is "to destroy him that had the power of death," and the other to "deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Concerning the first of these intended ends of Christ's death, there is much speculation. The speculation does not bring into question the fact that the devil's power was broken. This is clearly attested to in the New Testament (Jn. 16:11; Col. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:8). However, the commentators do attempt to establish the exact sense in which Satan had the power of death. John Owen lists three different ways this may be understood. It may be that Satan has power over death because he instituted death, because he executes death, or because he causes people to fear death.<sup>1</sup> The first of these assumptions can be stated

Thus Satan exercises the power of death in that he promotes sin and rebellion against God, slanders God's

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<sup>1</sup>John Owen, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 4 vols. (London: J. Haddon, 1840), II, 397-98.

people, and calls for their death from God.<sup>1</sup>

According to this view Satan has the power over death because he prompts men to do those things which will lead to death. It must be noticed that the death spoken of here is none other than physical death. Acts of sin are both a result of and the evidence of spiritual death. Spiritual death is the necessary predecessor of wicked deeds. According to Kent, death is the outcome of these sinful actions. Therefore, the death spoken of in this passage cannot be spiritual death, but physical death.

The second view states that Satan executes death, that is, he puts people to death. There are specific instances in Scripture in which death is either attributed directly to Satan or implied (Job 1:12, 18-19; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). Satan is called a murderer, and that from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). This could mean that Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin so that they and the whole race died. However, contextually Jesus is referring to the crowd's attempt to kill him (Jn. 8:37,40,59). It is more likely that Jesus is contrasting the death of Abel with His own. Just as Satan prompted Cain to kill Abel because Abel's works were righteous (1 Jn. 3:12), so in this instance Satan was inciting the evil hearts of the Jews to kill Jesus because His words were truth (Jn. 8:44-45). It seems from Scripture that the activity of Satan in putting

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<sup>1</sup>Homer A. Kent, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1972), p. 59.

people to death, either directly or indirectly, is not his continual work. Rather, Satan performs this work only on special occasions. Even if it is Satan's lot to put every man to death, this death is physical death, not spiritual. Every man is born spiritually dead, indeed, he is conceived in sin (Psa. 51:5).

Concerning the third view, Owen said,

God having passed the sentence of death against sin, it was the power of Satan to terrify and affright the conscience of men, with the expectation and dread of it, so bringing them into bondage.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that this interpretation does not really see two intentions of the Incarnation in these verses. The purpose of the Incarnation is to free men from bondage. Those who are spoken of here, whom Christ came to redeem, "were all their lifetime subject to bondage." They were in bondage to Satan. Satan is the one who holds the dominion over them, he is their despot and they his abject slaves. The Devil maintains his absolute authority over them (2 Tim. 2:26) by cracking his whip of fear. Satan continually dangles the thought of death before his subjects' eyes. He causes those in his realm to fear death. "Death . . . is the master weapon of Satan."<sup>2</sup> With this weapon Satan intimidates his slaves. He makes this weapon subserviant to his purposes. The death

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<sup>1</sup>Owen, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 4 vols., II, 398.

<sup>2</sup>Reuben Omark, "The Saving of the Savior," Interpretation 12:1 (January, 1958), 45.

mentioned in Hebrews 2:14-15, according to this third interpretation, is also physical death. People are born spiritually dead. They live their lives in this state unaware of their true spiritual condition. It is not possible for men to fear that of which they are unaware. Therefore, the death spoken of in Hebrews 2:14-15 must of necessity be physical death. Christ took to Himself flesh and blood in order that He might die physically. By this physical act, Christ frees men from the fear of that death.

#### The Offering of Christ's Body

When one reads Hebrews 2:14, he learns that Christ partook of the same nature as those whom He came to redeem. He became "flesh and blood." This is a synecdoche which refers to the humanity of Jesus, both material and immaterial. However, the language in Hebrews 10 is very distinctive. From it one learns that Christ took to Himself a body and that it is the offering of this body that makes provision for sanctification (Heb. 10:5,10).

Under the Mosaic economy, the Israelites offered animals as an offering for sin. These were "a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things" (Heb. 10:1). They were temporary and ineffectual as well. This same writer demonstrates that the offering of these animals could never perfect their offerer (Heb. 10:1). If they could, there would not have been sacrifices made from year to year.

Had the animal sacrifices been effective in making the offerer perfect, the sinner having only once offered his sacrifice would have been reckoned as righteous. This is not the case, nor the design, of the sacrifices prescribed in the Mosaic Covenant. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). The Lord was not pleased to accept these offerings as the final payment for sin. How then could sin be expiated?

The author gives the exact method by which sin is expiated in Hebrews 10:5,10. The shedding of the bulls' and goats' blood was not the ultimate method by which man would be sanctified. The final sacrifice for sin came through the offering of a body. This body was prepared for Christ (Heb. 10:5).<sup>1</sup> Bruce says that "His fulfillment of God's will to the uttermost involved the 'offering' once for all of His body--that body prepared for Him at His incarnation."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>How and why the Hebrew differs from the LXX at this point and why this author quotes the LXX instead of translating the Hebrew is beyond the scope of this discussion. It is an inviting side track into which this writer will not venture. Because of the object of this investigation, it is best to say with Alford, "How the word  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  came into the LXX, we cannot say: but being there, it is now sanctified for us by the citation here: not as the, or even a proper rendering of the Hebrew, but as a prophetic utterance, equivalent to and representing the other." Henry Alford, "Hebrews," The Greek New Testament, 4 vols., rev. by Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), IV, 189.

<sup>2</sup>F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 236.

However, Bruce goes on to say, "the offering of His body is simply the offering of Himself."<sup>1</sup> It appears that Bruce prefers to understand  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  in a holistic sense. That is, the writer of Hebrews is not saying that it is the physical body of Christ alone which is the sacrifice for sin, but rather, the whole person of Christ, body and soul. Though the holistic belief concerning  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ , as expressed by Bruce, is held by many, it is a highly questionable position.<sup>2</sup> Also, by making  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  refer to the entire person, Bruce must include in the substitutionary sacrifice for sin the offering of Christ's body.

There are some scholars who understand "body" in verses five and ten to be body, physical. They see no metaphorical expression as does Bruce. They simply believe that Christ in the Incarnation received among other things a physical body and that it is the offering of this body which sanctifies the believer. Barnes has said, "It was not merely his doing the will of God in general, but the specific thing was the offering of his body in place of the Jewish sacrifices."<sup>3</sup> This must not be taken to mean that such men see no figurative language in Scripture but are wooden literalists.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>See Gundry, SOMA In Biblical Theology.

<sup>3</sup>Albert Barnes, The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews in Notes on the New Testament, ed. by Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 228.

They see nothing in this passage which would prevent them from considering "body" in these verses to refer to the literal, physical body of the Lord. At other points they would acknowledge that emphasis is placed upon the Savior's soul or blood or even His entire humanity.<sup>1</sup> But here they contend that the emphasis is obviously upon His physical substance called body. It is, then, through the offering of the physical body of Christ that the believer is sanctified once for all.

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<sup>1</sup>Owen, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 4 vols., IV, 282-3.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE TEACHING OF PETER

On more than one occasion Peter nobly proclaimed that he would gallantly defend his Master from falling prey to the Jewish leaders who sought to put his Leader to death (Mt. 16: 21-22; 26:35). It was Peter who drew the sword and cut off the ear of Malcus in defense of his Lord in the garden when Judas betrayed the Savior (Jn. 18:10). Peter had not yet fully comprehended that Christ came to save his very soul through death. Yet, it was through the preaching of this bold apostle that 3,000 were converted at Pentecost. After the Lord's resurrection Peter, with the other disciples, at last did understand the reason and intent of Christ's death. In all five chapters of Peter's first letter, the sufferings of Christ are directly stated (1:2,11,19; 2:24; 3:18; 4:1,13; 5:1). Two of these verses will be examined in this chapter for they have within their contexts some necessary qualifiers which will help determine the exact nature of Christ's redemptive sufferings.

#### Christ Bore Our Sins

There are two expressions in 1 Peter 2:24 which link the sufferings of Christ with soteriology. The first is that Christ "bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and the

second is "by whose stripes we are healed." As was seen before, just the mere mention of  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ , to some scholars, does not necessarily indicate physical substance.  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ , according to these men, may equally as well denote the entire being as a person. If Peter intended for  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  to stand for the entire person, why is it that some, as R. B. Thieme, abstain from teaching that the physical sufferings and death of Christ are savingly efficacious? Why does Thieme only place sacrificial sufferings in the soul? Even if Peter did use  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  to connote the person as a whole, he must of necessity include within that statement the fact that Christ suffered substitutionally both physically and spiritually and that both sufferings and both deaths are necessary if the full payment for sin is to be met.

Some scholars take  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  in a most literal manner. According to them  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  is the literal, physical body of Jesus. Lenski believes that the physical sufferings and death of Christ are substitutionary just because of the words used in this verse. Concerning  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  he said,

Peter is exact: Christ carried our sins 'in his body' (Heb. 1:5: 'a body didst thou fit for me'). We see Christ on his way to Golgotha, his body loaded with all our sins, bruised, broken, suffering, to die the bloody death on the cross.<sup>1</sup>

Lenski further believes that the physical sufferings and

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistles of Peter (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 123.

death are in view here because Peter mentions stripes (μώλωψ). Both Lenski and Bigg believe that the mere mentioning of stripes ought to cause one's mind to envision the scourging which Christ endured (Jn. 19:1; Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15). These cruel beatings ripped open the flesh, creating welts, which Peter said brings spiritual healing.<sup>1</sup>

One finds Thieme's comment concerning this verse contradictory to his beliefs concerning the death of Christ. He has said that "it was the soul as well as the body of Jesus Christ that bore our sins."<sup>2</sup> How can Thieme make such a claim, yet fail to see that Christ's physical sufferings and death are substitutionary as well as His spiritual death? This is very hard to understand because Bigg points out that

ἀναφέρειν is commonly used in the LXX of bringing a sacrifice and laying it upon the altar, and the phrase ἀναφέρειν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον bears an unquestionable similarity to the common ἀναφέρειν ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον, Jos. 2:21; Lev. 14:20; 2 Chron. 35:16; Bar. 1:10; 1 Macc. 4:53. Here St. Peter puts the cross in the place of the altar.<sup>3</sup>

The altar is the cross and the sacrifice is the body of Christ, not just His soul. Because the body was sacrificed for sin, one must admit that "these words plainly intimate

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 124. See also Charles Bigg, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), p. 149.

<sup>2</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Bigg, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Epistles of Peter, p. 147.

that the sufferings (physical) of our Lord were penal, that is, they were the manifestation of the displeasure of God against sin . . . ."<sup>1</sup> Through the sufferings and physical death of the Lord the believer has spiritual healing and he, as a sheep that went astray, is returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul (1 Pet. 2:25).

### Christ Died in the Flesh

After one has done some study in 1 Peter 3:18-22, he leaves his labors with the distinct impression that he has grappled with one of the most difficult passages in the entire New Testament. John Brown gives witness to this fact.

The only meaning that the words will bear without violence being done them is, that it was when he had been put to death in the flesh, and quickened in the Spirit or by the Spirit, whatever that may mean, he went and preached; and that 'the spirits,' whoever they be, were 'in prison,' whatever that may mean when he preached to them.<sup>2</sup>

Verse eighteen is the center of attention in this section for it speaks of Christ's sufferings, of His death, and of His being made alive. Besides having theological battles fought over it, the textual critics also question the exact reading of certain words or clauses in the verse.<sup>3</sup> Though

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<sup>1</sup>John Brown, Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, 3 vols. (Evansville: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1958), II, 176.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 455-56.

<sup>3</sup>Some manuscripts have ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν inserted between ἁμαρτιῶν and ἀπέθανεν. Thus they read, "Christ also once suffered for you concerning sins." There is also a

they provide quite interesting research, for the purpose of this paper any discussion of these textual matters will be skirted. The core of investigation into this verse is the participial clause "being put to death in the flesh." What exactly did Peter mean when he said that Christ was put to death in the flesh?

There are two views concerning "flesh" which are pertinent to the study of this verse. Barnes has stated the views in this manner,

What is fairly implied in the phrase, the flesh? Does it mean simply his body, as distinguished from his human soul? Or does it refer to him as a man, as distinguished from some higher nature, over which death had no power?<sup>1</sup>

Barnes is quite convinced that Peter uses σάρξ in this verse to refer to the entire person of Christ. He has said concerning σάρξ,

It is the usual way of denoting the human nature of the Lord Jesus, or of saying that he became incarnate, or was a man, to speak of his being flesh . . . .<sup>2</sup>

If Barnes' position concerning σάρξ is adopted, one cannot assume that the physical death of Christ is not in

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debate about the exact word which should serve as the main verb. Whether the main verb is ἀποθνήσκω or πάσχω is of little consequence to this study. The examination of 1 Peter 3:18 is to determine if Peter includes or excludes Christ's physical sufferings and death when he writes of the substitutionary atonement. There is also some question as to whom Christ is bringing to God, us (ἡμᾶς) or you (ὕμᾶς).

<sup>1</sup>Albert Barnes, The First Epistle General of Peter in Notes on the New Testament, ed. by Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-76.

view here. Barnes does not exclude the Savior's physical death from this phrase but rather, he expands it to include the sufferings within Christ's soul. It is the contention of Barnes that the whole person died, not just His body. This belief is very accurate. In suffering for sin, Christ did indeed suffer in His soul. But it is no less true, as Barnes believes, that Christ's body suffered and died for sin as well. Barnes is seeking to exalt both Christ's spiritual and physical deaths by assuming that *σᾶρξ* refers to the whole person. Thus, according to this view, the physical sufferings and death of Christ were part of the substitutionary sacrifice for sin by which men are brought to God.

The position that *σᾶρξ* refers to the physical body of the Lord is clearly stated by Selwyn.

Though the language is simple and untechnical, it is not without doctrinal bearings. *Θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκί* refers to the reality of Christ's physical death; and the invariable connotation of the word in the Gospels, i.e. "put to death," makes it probable that the violence of Christ's death is also in the Apostle's mind here. In the natural and physical order (*σαρκί*), He was the victim of a judicial murder.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that even Thieme agrees with Selwyn here. Thieme states that this participial clause ought to be translated "having received death in the sphere of his body."<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Gordon Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., Victorious Proclamation (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1972), p. 22. Thieme follows this statement with this comment, "Christ received spiritual death as a result of bearing our sins in

position that *σῶμα* refers to the physical body becomes even more striking when one realizes that "quickenened by the Spirit" (*ζωοποιοηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι*) is a reference to Christ's resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Selwyn's beliefs concerning the soteriological significance of Christ's physical sufferings and death is quite clear. According to him, Christ's physical death is penal in nature. It is also quite clear that Jesus' physical death is substitutionary for it was "the just for the unjust." Furthermore, His physical sufferings were savingly efficacious for by them men are brought to God, that is, reconciliation was accomplished. One wonders how Thieme can readily acknowledge that Peter is speaking of Christ's physical death and resurrection in this verse and yet still deny any saving efficacy to that death. His own statement here contradicts his whole premise stated elsewhere that Christ's physical death is not a substitutionary death.

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His body." This is a true statement, but Thieme's intention in this declaration is the elimination of the physical death of Christ from His substitutionary death. As was seen in the examination of 1 Peter 2:24, however, "bearing our sins in His body" is distinctively sacrificial language. The language does not exclude physical death as Thieme thinks, but makes Christ's physical sufferings and death for sin obvious.

<sup>1</sup>See Henry Alford, "1 Peter," in The Greek New Testament, 4 vols., rev. by Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), IV, 365. Barnes, The First Epistle General of Peter, p. 176. Brown, Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, II, 463ff. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistles of Peter, p. 157. Thieme, Victorious Proclamation, p. 22.

For the purpose of this investigation it does not matter if one adopts Barnes' or Selwyn's view concerning σάρξ.<sup>1</sup> Both men agree that the participle θανατωθεὶς expresses the manner in which men are brought to God, that is, by being put to death. Also, both men agree concerning the nature of the death. It is judicial, substitutionary, and among other things, physical.

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<sup>1</sup>This student believes that the best views concerning this verse are those expressed by Alford, "1 Peter," in The Greek New Testament and Brown, Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF BLOOD

In contemporary theology a battle has been bitterly waged over the exact meaning and import of the "blood of Christ." The battle has been fought between liberal and conservative. It has also been a matter of contention within conservative circles. It has set brother against brother. The solution to this problem is not easily determined. No matter which position one holds, he is attacked from both sides of the fence. Therefore, this chapter will not attempt to please one and all. Neither will it parade itself as the final solution to the problems attended to in the interpretation of the "blood of Christ." An entire thesis needs to be directed toward this most noble subject. Therefore, the discussion of this topic will herein be, by nature and design, cursory.

#### The Blood as a Representative of Death

After listening quite extensively to taped sermons and reading the books which Thieme authored, Bob Walter came to the staunch conclusion that Thieme was an apostate who teaches blatant heresy. In August of 1971 Walter's church published a document in which Walter accused Thieme in three areas regarding the "blood of Christ."

- (1) Thieme denies that the Blood of Christ at Calvary is to be taken literally with regard to our salvation:
- (2) Thieme denies that the Blood of Christ was shed at Calvary:
- (3) Thieme denies that Christ literally presented His Blood to the Father in Heaven:<sup>1</sup>

Some of the controversy concerning Thieme's teaching on the blood of Christ has resulted from a failure on the part of his opponents to fully comprehend what he has meant by his dogmatic assertions. Thieme is first of all lashing out at three major misconceptions about the blood of Christ. First, Thieme seeks to thwart the attempt by some who teach that there was something inherent in the blood of Christ which saves. M. R. DeHaan, because he believes the life is exclusively in the blood, also believes that sin and death are conveyed through the blood.

This very fact that sin is in the blood necessitated the Virgin Birth of Christ if he was to be a son of Adam and yet a sinless man. For this reason, Christ partook of Adam's flesh which is not inherently sinful, but He could not partake of Adam's blood which was completely

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<sup>1</sup>This document was produced by Bob Walter, pastor of the Bible Covenant Baptist Church in Media, Pa., and endorsed by the Elder Board of his church. This document contains letters written to Bob Walter either in response to specific questions about "blood" and "death" or in response to a printed copy of Thieme's message of 1 John 1:7. A typed copy of the sermon was sent to Charles J. Woodbridge, Spiro Zodhiates, Stewart Custer, George H. Mundell, and Oliver B. Greene. Walter did not send a copy of the message to Dallas Seminary but made a phone call to them. Philip R. Williams responded to Walter's phone call with a letter. The questions of Walter are answered in this letter. Another phone call was made to Stuart E. Lease, President of Lancaster Bible College. Lease was contacted because Thieme had held a taper's conference on the facilities of the college.

impregnated with sin.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the Incarnation, DeHaan said,

Mary contributed the body of Jesus and He became the 'seed of David according to the flesh.' The Holy Spirit contributed the Blood of Jesus. It was sinless blood. It was Divine blood.<sup>2</sup>

Oliver Greene is in full agreement with DeHaan. He said, "The blood He shed on the cross was real blood, and it was not the blood of man. It was the blood of God."<sup>3</sup> Such statements openly display three major fallacies. First, DeHaan demonstrates his crass literalism in his reference to the "seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3). "Flesh" in this verse does not merely refer to His body but to His being. Christ was both man (verse 3) and God (verse 4). Christ had all the attributes of humanity, material and immaterial. That is what is meant by "flesh." Second, if one interprets quite literally as DeHaan does, what do the Scriptures mean when they say that Christ partook of flesh and blood like that which His brethren had? To say that Christ did not have human blood is to deny His real humanity and to obliterate His mediatorship. Third, this view attributes God with corporality. What is the "blood of God" or Divine blood? Does God have bodily parts with blood coursing through His

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<sup>1</sup>M. R. DeHaan, The Chemistry of the Blood (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, n.d.), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Oliver B. Greene, A published letter to Bob Walter, August 9, 1971.

veins? Behm has accurately said that, "the interest of the New Testament is not in the material blood of Christ, but in His shed blood as the life violently taken from Him."<sup>1</sup> This is exactly the intent of Thieme. "There is no efficacy in the actual, literal, physical blood of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

The second misconception which Thieme attempts to obliterate is that Christ bled to death. If some believe that Christ bled to death, they are few in number or have quite infrequently written about it.<sup>3</sup> Thieme asserts that Christ

did not bleed to death. The beautiful thing about His blood is that it had a tremendous amount of Vitamin K, for it coagulated almost immediately. There was a little bleeding from the hands and feet--but very little. Superficial skin wounds, such as were caused by the crown of thorns, and puncture wounds caused little loss of blood.<sup>4</sup>

Even B. B. Warfield generally agrees with this statement for he says that "Jesus' death was not actually an especially

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<sup>1</sup>Johannes Behm, "αἷμα," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), I, 174.

<sup>2</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup>Wilkinson, "The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ," pp. 104-7. See also Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The Significance of the Blood of Jesus," Bibliotheca Sacra 130:518 (1973), 99-109. Hughes argues against J. A. Bengel (1687-1752) who taught that Christ bled to death and carried his blood to heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 13.

bloody death."<sup>1</sup> Warfield seeks to substantiate this by citing that, except for John 19:35, the Evangelists said nothing concerning Christ's blood when they recorded the events of the crucifixion.<sup>2</sup>

The third misconception which Thieme attempts to correct is stated by Greene and DeHaan.

I believe with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength that the blood of Jesus is in heaven now.<sup>3</sup>

That blood CANNOT PERISH. I do not know where that blood is now but I suspect it is in heaven somewhere just as fresh and as potent as when it was shed nineteen hundred years ago. When I get to heaven, I shall not be surprised to find a diamond studded, golden basin next to the throne with the very blood, the precious incorruptible blood which was shed at Calvary, and as we gaze upon it we will sing . . . .<sup>4</sup>

Thieme boldly states that it is heresy to believe that Christ's blood was caught in a bowl and carried to heaven.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere Thieme asserts that such a belief comes directly from Rome.<sup>6</sup> The notion that Christ's blood is located in heaven in a bowl comes from a misconception of Hebrews 9:12.

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, The Person and Work of Christ, ed. by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1950), p. 422.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

<sup>3</sup>Greene, A letter to Bob Walter.

<sup>4</sup>DeHaan, The Chemistry of the Blood, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "1 Peter 1:19-20," 1969 Basics (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1969), Tape 19.

The text says that Christ entered the holy place, not "by ( ⚡ ) the blood of goats and calves, but by ( ⚡ ) his own blood." This verse mentions nothing of blood which is carried to heaven. He did not enter with His blood but by means of His blood.

There are several problems facing this interpretation of DeHaan. First, it does not take into account that not every occurrence on the Day of Atonement has its correspondent feature in Christ's death. Second, the language of the text is not carefully followed.

Aaron certainly carried the sacrificial blood into the holy of holies, but our author deliberately avoids saying that Christ carried His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>1</sup>

Third, this view implies that the sacrifice of Christ was not complete on the cross. On the Day of Atonement, propitiation was not accomplished until the blood was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat. However, the Scriptures everywhere assign the accomplishment of redemption to the finished cross work of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

When one considers the misconceptions and romantic ideas that are propagated within the conservative camp, such as those previously mentioned, he must with all diligence constrain himself lest he with Thieme openly shout to heaven

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>See Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The High-Priestly Sacrifice of Christ," Bibliotheca Sacra 130:519 (1973), 195-212.

about the falsehood of such notions.<sup>1</sup> Having demonstrated what Thieme does not teach concerning the blood of Christ, it will now be shown what Thieme does teach about this doctrine.

Thieme teaches that the "blood of Christ REPRESENTS SPIRITUAL DEATH!"<sup>2</sup> Thieme does not believe that the basis for man's salvation is to be found in the blood which flowed from Immanuel's veins.

You think that somehow there is some efficacy in the blood that came from Immanuel's veins--and there isn't! There never was a "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins."<sup>3</sup>

When Thieme thinks of the blood of Christ, he does not muse on the literal blood of Christ, nor does he perceive that the blood has reference to the physical sufferings and death of Christ. The blood of Christ portrays for Thieme the sufferings which Christ endured in the soul. The blood of Christ represents His spiritual death.

There are two factors which perhaps indicate the reason for Thieme's position. First, Thieme is well enough

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<sup>1</sup>Walter has accused Thieme in three respects. Two have been mentioned. It is not true that Thieme denies that Christ shed blood on Calvary. "Jesus Christ bled from His hands, from His feet, and from His face where He had been beaten up--literal blood." Robert B. Thieme, Jr., "The Blood of Christ," Categorical Bible Studies, ed. by Ralph Braun (Brookings, Oregon: Berean Fundamental Church, 1972), Category 73, p. 77. Also Thieme is accused of denying that Christ carried His blood to heaven. This is true, He did not carry His blood to heaven in a bowl. For such a position he must be commended.

<sup>2</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

acquainted with the writings of Biblical scholars to know that "blood" is a figure of speech. In one of his sermons Thieme cited Arndt and Gingrich as one of his authorities.<sup>1</sup> Arndt and Gindgrich indicate two major usages of αἷμα.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand αἷμα may refer to literal human blood, but on the other hand it is used figuratively of blood and life which are given as an expiatory sacrifice. It is true that Arndt and Gingrich say that αἷμα may be used figuratively. However, Thieme has not read his source properly. αἷμα, they say, is used as a figure for "blood and life as an expiatory sacrifice." Blood and life are not figurative expressions, as it appears Thieme thinks. Rather, blood and life are the things which are portrayed in the word αἷμα. Arndt and Gingrich agree that αἷμα is used figuratively but they do not agree that αἷμα is used figuratively of spiritual death only. They attach strong physical implications to αἷμα by mentioning blood and life. However, there are others along with Arndt and Gingrich to which Thieme might have appealed. B. B. Warfield said, "and certainly in the New Testament it is precisely in the blood of Christ or in His cross, symbols of His death that the essence of His sacrificial character is

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, 1969 Basics, Tape 19.

<sup>2</sup>Wm. F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 22.

found."<sup>1</sup>

Thieme is very insistent that "the Bible be interpreted in the light of its time."<sup>2</sup> The Jew of the New Testament times thought in Old Testament terms. Leon Morris has discovered that at least 203 times in the Old Testament  $\text{דָּם}$  refers to a violent death.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to conclude "that the evidence afforded by the use of the term dam in the Old Testament indicates that it signifies life violently taken."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, for the believing New Testament Jew,

Like the cross ( $\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ ), the "blood of Christ" is simply another and even more graphic phrase for the death of Christ in its soteriological significance.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, Thieme has acknowledged that "blood" is properly a figure of speech.

Some attempt to foil the teaching of Thieme by making reference to the shed blood of Christ. Zodhiates places much weight upon the word "shed,"  $\epsilon\kappa\chi\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ .

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<sup>1</sup>Warfield, The Person and Work of Christ, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup>Thieme, 1969 Basics, Tape 19.

<sup>3</sup>Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), p. 110.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Behm, " $\alpha\dot{\iota}\mu\alpha$ ," I, 174. Even one like Westcott who argues that  $\alpha\dot{\iota}\mu\alpha$  is a symbol of life and not death agrees that  $\alpha\dot{\iota}\mu\alpha$  is a figure of speech and not to be taken absolutely literally. "The Blood, in other words, represents the energy of the physical, earthly, life as it is . . . ." Brooke F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), p. 294.

The Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was truly shed from His Body on the Cross. The word 'shed' in the Greek is 'EKCHUNO' which is a late form of 'EKCHEO' which literally means 'to pour out.' This word could not by any stretch of the imagination even mean 'dribbling out,' as Mr. Thieme teaches in his thesis.<sup>1</sup>

In making such statements Zodhiates is not on the best of grounds. "αἷμα ἐκχέειν" is found in the LXX as a rendering of "דָּם יִשָּׁךְ" (Gen. 9:6; 37:22; Deut. 19:10; 1 Bas. 25:31; Isa. 59:7).<sup>2</sup> This is true even in passages where the literal shedding of blood is not even in view. These passages merely refer to death, irrespective of the manner in which the life is taken. This is also true of the New Testament. "αἷμα ἐκχέειν" or ἐκχύσειν is also used for 'to kill,' though with no specific reference to the actual shedding of blood (Lk. 11:50; Ac. 22:20; Rom. 3:15; Rev. 16:16)."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Zodhiates does not necessarily thwart Thieme's belief by making reference to ἐκχύω.

A second reason why Thieme considers αἷμα figurative is his interpretation of the substitutionary death of Christ. Thieme teaches,

Christ deliberately CHOSE to go to the cross, for He knew that there He must suffer substitutionary spiritual death. It was His substitutionary spiritual death which was efficacious for our salvation, not His physical death.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spiro Zodhiates, A letter to Bob Walter, August 3, 1971.

<sup>2</sup>Behm, "αἷμα," I, 173-4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 10.

When Thieme considers Christ's death, he sees two deaths, spiritual and physical. He regards Christ's spiritual death as an effective substitution for sin. His reasoning goes something like this. Man was inflicted with spiritual death when he sinned. Christ died spiritually in substitution for men. Therefore, when men believe, they are released from spiritual death because Christ bore their penalty, spiritual death.

Thieme did the same concerning physical death, assuming the standard orthodox belief. Man was punished with physical death because of his sins. Christ died physically in substitution for men. Thus, when these men believe, they are freed from physical death because Christ bore their penalty of physical death. If this latter conclusion is correct, then only two in all of history have ever really been redeemed men. These are Enoch and Elijah for they were freed from spiritual death and physical death. Can this be? Was not Moses, whom God buried, a saved man? David's body saw corruption in the grave. Was he not regenerated? The apostle Paul was ready for death, yea, he even longed for it (Phil. 1:23). Did Christ really love Paul and give Himself for Paul (Gal. 2:20)? Because Moses, David, Paul, and all believers suffer physical death, Thieme concluded that Christ's physical death was not substitutionary.

Thieme sees in Scripture that the blood of Christ is very effectual. It purchased four glorious graces for the

believer.<sup>1</sup> In his category on "the Blood of Christ" he lists these doctrines as expiation (Rev. 1:5), redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), justification (Rom. 5:9), and sanctification (Heb. 13:12). Because Thieme believes that the physical death of Christ was ineffectual in obtaining these four graces, he therefore excludes it from the realm of the substitutionary atonement. On the other hand, the spiritual death of Christ was very effectual, restoring the spiritual union between God and man which was broken by sin. According to Thieme, because Christ's spiritual death alone is savingly efficacious and substitutionary and because  $\alpha\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha$  indicates death, the conclusion is that only Christ's spiritual death is signified by the term "blood."

Having demonstrated his position, Thieme's argumentation must still be questioned. First, it has been adequately demonstrated that  $\pi\tau$  and  $\alpha\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha$  or  $\pi\tau$   $\eta\theta\upsilon\sigma$  and  $\alpha\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha$   $\epsilon\kappa\chi\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$  can be figurative expressions of death. The death spoken of wherever these phrases are found is physical death. One must be very suspicious of Thieme's assumptions for it alters the figure. When Jesus spoke of His "shed blood" (Mt. 26:28), or Paul of propitiation through His blood (Rom. 3:25), or Hebrews of sanctification through His blood (Heb. 13:12), or Peter of redemption through His blood (1 Pet. 1:19), the readers naturally pictured in their minds physical death; for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-19.

that is what αἷμα portrayed to them. If the writers of the New Testament wanted their readers to think otherwise, they should have spoken more clearly. They ought to have placed something somewhere in the context when speaking of αἷμα or even of Christ's death which would have been more definitive. Paul or Peter should have plainly said that they were not speaking of Christ's physical death. They should have identified a shift in the figure. Thieme, while attempting to interpret the Scriptures in the times when they were written, assumes too much upon the part of the recipients of the New Testament epistles. It is true that these believers were acquainted with the sufferings which took place in Christ's soul, but this in no way excluded from their thinking the physical sufferings and death of Christ which were encompassed in the phrase τὸ αἷμα Χριστοῦ .

Thieme also demonstrates a great fallacy in his own reasoning. While attempting to differentiate animal life from human life, Thieme made some statements which defy his own system.

Blood is the seat of animal life, . . . What is the seat of human life then? The soul! The animal does not have a soul. 'The life of the flesh is in the ANIMAL'S blood.' The flesh is animal flesh. Quadruped! Not human beings. . . . And that is the interesting thing--for the life of a human being is in the soul (Jas. 2:26). As long as the soul is in the body, the person is alive; when the soul leaves the body, the person is physically dead.

Remember that the soul is located in the cranium, and therefore the heartbeat is not the true issue as to whether a person is alive or dead. The criterion is the impulse in the brain . . . Once 'EEG' registers negative, the soul has vacated the body and the person is dead.

So physical death is the separation of the soul (and spirit, in the case of believers) from the body.

It was the soul as well as the body of Jesus Christ that bore our sins.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite obvious that what Thieme means by "soul" in these statements is physical life. The conclusion which such reasoning arrives at is very evident if Thieme's logic is carried through. Because it was the soul of Christ which suffered for sin, it was also the physical death of Christ which was offered up as a sacrifice for sin. By Thieme's own teaching the "blood of Christ" represents Christ pouring out His soul unto death, which includes physical death. Thieme's system is not self-consistent. By this means, it openly demonstrates its insufficiency in portraying the truth. His system is insufficient and false for it only presents a half-truth.

#### The Blood as a Representation of Life

Westcott does not believe that  $\alpha\{\mu\alpha$  is a representation for death. Rather, he teaches that it represents life.

For it must be observed that by the outpouring of the Blood the life which was in it was not destroyed, though it was separated from the organism which it had before quickened.<sup>2</sup>

The blood signifies the "liberation of the principle of life by which it had been animated, so that this life becomes available for another end."<sup>3</sup> The chief verse to which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup>Brooke F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

Westcott and men who agree with him appeal is Leviticus 17:11, "the life of the flesh is in the blood."

This interpretation of "blood" is very hard to understand for three reasons. First, the exact designation of "life" which is released is vague. Westcott said that

The Blood, in other words, represents the energy of the physical, earthly life as it is . . . . The Blood poured out is the energy of present human life made available for others.<sup>1</sup>

What does this mean? Does this mean that the one in union with Christ receives a new physical, earthly life? It strongly implies the immortality of the physical life of the believer. Can this be so?

Second, it has been adequately demonstrated, even earlier in this chapter, that  $\alpha\iota\omega\alpha$  and  $\alpha\iota\omega\alpha$  can refer to death in general. Four more verses will be set forth to further demonstrate this principle. In all these instances, blood and death are used as interchangeable terms and ideas. Concerning Joseph, Judah said, "What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood (Gen. 37:26)? Psalm 72:14 says, "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight" (see also Ps. 116:8,15). In the New Testament two verses concerning the Savior's blood/death can clearly demonstrate this also. Colossians 1:20 reads, "and, having made peace through the blood of his cross," while verse twenty-one through

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<sup>1</sup>Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 294.

twenty-two says that "he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death." Hebrews 9:14 speaks of Christ's work as being through His blood whereas verse fifteen declares that it is "by means of death."

Third, the more one reads concerning Westcott's position, the more disconcerted he becomes with it. It appears quite orthodox and any disagreement only semantical at first. However, as one continues to read and meditate upon this interpretation of the "blood of Christ" he begins to understand that some men have adopted such a view

in order to avoid the doctrine of the wrath of God, which we have already considered. They do not like that, indeed they abominate it. This is their way of getting rid of the idea of the wrath of God, of getting rid of the idea that God punishes sin, of getting rid of propitiation.<sup>1</sup>

Such men affirm that the wrath of God is incompatible with a loving God. To mention propitiation in relation to God is to attribute to God the capricious nature of pagan deities. By Westcott's method, expiation is substituted for propitiation and the offense of the cross alleviated.

Concerning Leviticus 17:11, only two brief comments will serve to demonstrate that the teaching in this verse is in harmony with the argumentation set forth in the previous section of this chapter. First, Westcott places much emphasis upon the fact that the blood because it is life is

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<sup>1</sup>D. M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25 (Atonement and Justification) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 87.

set apart and thus not eaten.<sup>1</sup> Is Westcott unaware of the fact that the fat of the animal as well as the blood is not to be eaten (Lev. 3:16-17)? Second, sacrificially speaking, the life of the animal devoted for the oblation was in it as long as the blood was in the animal. Until the animal was bled, it was alive. Therefore, when the blood was poured out, it meant that the animal was dead. "The blood was taken as proof positive . . . that the animal had suffered death."<sup>2</sup>

Boettner has stated the case concerning the "blood of Christ" quite well.

The term 'blood' as used in theological language is, of course, to be understood as a figure of speech. It is used as a synonym for Christ's atoning death, and it designates the price which He paid for the redemption of His people.<sup>3</sup>

This designation of Christ's death under the symbol of "blood" of necessity includes His spiritual death for the death He died was spiritual in nature. However, this concept strongly militates against any who want to erase Christ's physical death from the accomplishment of redemption. The "blood of Christ" indeed refers to His violent death which by its nature and design involved the shedding of blood, but more

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<sup>1</sup>Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Lloyd-Jones, Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25 (Atonement and Justification), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Lorraine Boettner, The Atonement (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 24.

important it places Christ's death in the sphere of sacrifice for sin.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Warfield, The Person and Work of Christ, p. 421ff.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONCLUSION: PART TWO

Robert B. Thieme, Jr. has consistently denied that Christ's physical death is savingly efficacious. The only death which Jesus died which is substitutionary, according to Thieme, is His spiritual death. Thieme dogmatically denies any substitutionary element in the Savior's physical death.<sup>1</sup> It is only in Christ's spiritual death that the believer has such grace gifts as expiation, redemption, justification, sanctification, and forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is the conclusion of this investigation that a position like Thieme's is in error. The Scriptures definitely teach that Christ's physical death is substitutionary. Jesus said that His blood was shed for many (Mt. 26:28). Paul said that Christ "died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). Peter clearly indicated the substitutionary element in Christ's physical death when he said that it was "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18). Earlier in his letter, Peter said that Christ bore "our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). Just from these few verses one can see that Christ's physical death is substitutionary.

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, The Blood of Christ, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-20.

Thieme is correct in stating that the spiritual death of the Savior provides for redemption, expiation, forgiveness, and sanctification. However, he is quite wrong in his belief that Christ's physical death did not accomplish these as well. Jesus said that His body and blood were given "for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26:26-28). Paul said that Christ's death "in the body of His flesh" reconciled the believer to Himself. Peter intended the same when he taught that Christ's "being put to death in the flesh" is the means by which men are brought to God (1 Pet. 3:18). The writer of Hebrews taught that it was "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" that "we are sanctified" (Heb. 10:10). Finally, by using the term "blood," the writers of the New Testament identify Christ's physical sufferings and death with the purchasing of redemption (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Paul also taught that God is propitious toward the one who has faith in Christ's blood (Rom. 3:25). The Scriptures will not allow Thieme's premise to stand. God's Word teaches that all of Christ's sufferings, both in body and soul, made provision for all that is necessary for the salvation of the believer.

## PART THREE

### WHY MUST THE BELIEVER DIE?

Thieme teaches that Christ died physically for Himself.<sup>1</sup> He does not mean by this statement that Christ had some sins which needed to be atoned for before He could offer Himself as the real sacrifice for sin. This declaration is Thieme's manner of expressing that Christ's physical death was not substitutionary. One cannot exempt another from dying physically by dying in his place. Each man must die for himself. According to Thieme, it is in this manner that Christ died for Himself. By this bold ascertain, Thieme has struck at a point which he feels orthodoxy has failed to see. That is, if Christ's physical death is substitutionary in the same sense as His spiritual death, then all believers must be exempt from dying physically. This appears to be a formidable piece of logic. However, does it match the teaching of Scripture?

Thus far this study has determined that the physical death of Christ is substitutionary. It has also been demonstrated that physical death was instituted as a penalty for sin. God stated the curse for disobedience in these terms, "unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Paul wrote to the

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<sup>1</sup>Thieme, 1 John Series, Tape 2.

Corinthians that death was instituted because Adam sinned against God's law (1 Cor. 15:56). He also taught very clearly that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

When one considers these two doctrines, his mind is filled with questions, some of which he is even afraid to ask. Even though Christ died for the believer, must the believer still suffer under the justice of God? Is there some sort of purgatory through which the one in Christ must pass? Do not the Scriptures teach that the one who is justified before God is also at peace with Him (Rom. 5:1)? Do they not also assert that "there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1)? Another question, perhaps even more important than these, is this, "Is the sacrifice of Christ effective only to a certain degree? Did Christ fail to accomplish a full and complete redemption? If one believes that Christ's physical death saves and that physical death was instituted as a penalty for sin, these questions must be answered.

The main question to be answered in this part is "why does the believer die?" This quandry encompasses all of the questions previously asked. Dabney stated the problem quite well.

From spiritual death, all believers are delivered at their regeneration. Physical evil and bodily death remain; and inasmuch as the latter was a most distinctive and emphatic retribution for sin, the question is, how it comes to be inflicted on those who are absolutely justified in Christ. On the one hand, bodily death was a penal affliction. On the other hand, we have taught

that believers are justified from all guilt, and are required to render no penal satisfaction whatever (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 10:14). Yet all believers die?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, pp. 817-8.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S PHYSICAL DEATH

Fink has assumed that Christ's physical death was efficacious in the sense that it was substitutionary for the sinner's physical death.<sup>1</sup> Thus far, the conclusion to this study of Christ's death has been that His physical death is efficacious, even substitutionary in nature. However, this must not be interpreted to mean that Christ's physical death excludes the believer from dying physically as Fink implies. If Fink's implication is correct, then only Enoch and Elijah were regenerate men for they did not see death. This obviously is an inadequate view of the substitutionary element in Christ's death. Therefore, one must search to ascertain the exact manner in which Christ's physical death was substitutionary.

#### The Spiritual Effects of His Death

Because men are sinners by nature and choice, they are in need of such graces as propitiation, reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification. According to Thieme, only the spiritual death of Christ procures these gifts, not His physical death, nor a combination of the two.

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<sup>1</sup>"Further when the physical aspect of the atonement (i.e., the remedy for the physical death) was realized by the Lord's physical death, He cried, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Lk. 23:46)." Fink, "EN HOI," p. 38.

Thieme chides all who hold to the standard orthodox position that both the spiritual and physical sufferings of Christ are the substitutionary sacrifice for sin. However, Thieme misunderstood his opponent. He assumes that the orthodox position teaches that the Savior's physical death is substitutionary for the believer's physical death. That is, Thieme believes that the standard belief concerning the physical death of Jesus ought to exempt the believer from dying physically. (Christ's physical death was given in substitution for the believer's physical death in only one sense which will be examined later.) What Thieme has failed to see is that Jesus' physical death is substitutionary in the same sense as was His spiritual death. It was, along with His spiritual sufferings, the necessary means by which sinners are united to God.

The Scriptures teach that the blood of Christ propitiated God's wrath (Rom. 3:25). They also declare that His blood redeems men from the bondage of sin (1 Pet. 1:19). The Bible also proclaims that Jesus' blood is the basis for forgiveness (Mt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7). It was through the offering of His body that men are sanctified (Heb. 10:10). The physical death of Christ makes provision for reconciliation (Col. 1:22; 1 Pet. 3:18). The Word of God also teaches that the obedient death of God's Son is the basis for justification (Rom. 5:9).

The Bible does not agree with Thieme that only the

spiritual death of Christ restores man to spiritual health. Nor does it teach that only the physical death restores man. Rather, the Scriptures declare that all which Christ suffered, both in body and soul, was given as the necessary substitute for sinners so that the believer may enjoy a full and free salvation. This salvation encompasses such gifts as justification, forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, and sanctification.

#### The Physical Effects of His Death

The solution to the problem concerning the believer's physical death is found in 1 Corinthians 15:55-56, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The reading of these verses gives one the distinct impression that death and the sting of death are not inseparably united together. They are separable. It is possible to have death without the sting of death attached to it. By His death, burial, and resurrection Christ has removed from death its sting for His own. In speaking of sin and death, one ought not to exclude the legal aspects. It is the law which demonstrates and aggravates sin which is punishable by death, physical (1 Cor. 15:55). The sting is sin which finds its source of strength in the law.<sup>1</sup> However, Christ by His

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<sup>1</sup>"So far, therefore, as the thought of physical death does suggest itself as a penalty for sin, the penal element is in the fatal sting." Milton Terry, Biblical Dogmatics (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907), p. 122.

obedience has fulfilled the law. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). Every believer in Christ has imputed to him the perfect righteousness of Christ and is thus justified before God (Rom. 5:12ff). On this basis then, to the believer "death has lost its sting; for its sting was sin, but through the blood of Christ he guilt is cancelled, and will not appear against him in judgment."<sup>1</sup> It is true that Dick is referring to the death of Christ and not His sinless life but a principle is in view here. Sin and guilt are not imputed to the one who has the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, God cannot condemn the believer, who is justified, to death.

Christ not only lived a righteous life before the law but also died in the room and stead of sinners. In doing this, Christ bore the curse of the law; He "redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13). Even though the first person plural pronouns of this context refer specifically to the Jews, Paul does not intend to exclude the Gentiles from this statement. In these verses Paul is speaking of the justification of Gentiles as opposed to those under the law. The basis for the Gentiles' justification is no different from that of the Jews'. Concerning verse fourteen, Eadie said,

The ἵνα points to the final purpose expressed by ἐξ ἡμετέρας and the clauses connected with it,

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<sup>1</sup>Dick, Lectures in Theology, 2 vols., II, 297.

and not simply with  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\alpha$  , . . .<sup>1</sup>  $\chi\epsilon\nu\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma \acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho \eta\acute{\mu}\omega\nu$

The intention of God in making the curse of the law fall on His Son was not to justify the Jew only, but all those who are of the faith of Abraham, Jew or Gentile. The basis upon which both are justified is the same, the bearing of the laws' curse by Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Because Christ has died physically, borne the curse of the law, He has removed from death its sting. Therefore, death for the believer holds no condemnation. Not only is death's sting gone, but the grave's victory is gone because of the resurrection. Gill has dramatically stated this truth.

To sanctify the grave, and make that easy and familiar to saints, and take off the dread and reproach of it; Christ pursued death, the last enemy, to his last quarters and strong hold, the grave, drove him out from thence, and snatched the victory out of the hand of the grave; so that believers may, with pleasure, go and see the place where their Lord lay; which is now sanctified, and become a sleeping and resting place for them until the resurrection morn; and may say and sing, in view of death and the grave; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians (Minneapolis: James and Klock Christian Publishing Co., reprint 1977), p. 250.

<sup>2</sup>One ought to remember that even though the Jews had the written law of God, the Gentiles were not without law. They had the "works of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15). This does not mean they observed the civil and ceremonial law, but the emphasis of Paul in both instances is upon the unchanging moral law of God.

<sup>3</sup>Gill, A Body of Divinity, p. 410, (Book V, Chapter 5).

The Good Shepherd has truly gone before His sheep (Jn. 10:4). Mays believes that the resurrection indicates that "the vicarious suffering and punishment of the man Jesus has robbed death of its character as judgment . . . ." <sup>1</sup> Chafer has most accurately stated that

It may be said, however, that though death, as the only way of departure out of this world, continues even for the believer until the coming of Christ, its judgment aspect is lifted forever. <sup>2</sup>

The physical death of Christ not only frees the believer from spiritual death, but liberates the sting of death from death as well. The believer does die, but not as the penalty for sin because Christ bore that penalty for him.

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<sup>1</sup>James L. Mays, "Understanding the Death of Jesus," Interpretation 24:2 (1970), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 vols., II, 314.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE REASON FOR THE BELIEVER'S DEATH

At this juncture one might question why God did not totally abolish death for the believer. God has not implicitly stated all the reasons for not eliminating the believer from death. This chapter is comprised of implication from Scriptures and the suggestions of godly men concerning this matter.

#### The Effects of Sin

In Romans 8:10 Paul said that "the body is dead because of sin." Paul intends by this statement to convey that "the body is dead in the sense that it is not only obnoxious to death, but as it is already the seat of death. It includes in it the principle of decay."<sup>1</sup> Some might wish to disagree with Hodge, stating that  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  is used in this verse in apposition to  $\sigma\alpha\rho\varsigma$  and the carnal mind found earlier in the chapter. However, this does not seem to be the case for several reasons. First, Paul mentions the resurrection of the "mortal body" in verse eleven. This would seem to answer

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Hodge, A Commentary on Romans (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 258. See also Frederic L. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ed. by Talbot W. Chambers, trans. by A. Cusin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), p. 305. "The human body bears within itself from its formation the germ of death; it begins to die the instant it begins to live."

to the death of the body in verse ten. Second, if  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  refers to indwelling sin, the phrase "because of sin" is unintelligible. Paul could not be referring to the believer's death to sin as he did in chapter six. He is not speaking of death to sin ( $\tau\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ) but death because of sin ( $\delta\iota\alpha\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\upsilon$ ). This death cannot be spiritual death because in the latter verse Paul told the Roman believers their spirits were alive because of righteousness. Death here is none other than physical death. Even though Christ has freed the believer from the penal aspect of death brought about by sin, He has not totally freed him from all the effects of sin. Sin began its course from conception. This course is not absolutely changed just because one is converted. The one in Christ is not exempted from disease, nor is he completely liberated from indwelling sin, even though its power is broken. Dick states this same principle with a question.

If we ask, why believers undergo temporal death, although Christ has atoned for their sins? May we not with equal reason ask, why they are not completely delivered from the pollution of sin as well as from its guilt, as soon as they believe?<sup>1</sup>

The Lord has taught why the believer dies, because of sin. However, He has not given instruction as to the reason for not totally sanctifying the believer the moment he believes. It is not completely true that man's problem of

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<sup>1</sup>Dick, Lectures in Theology, 2 vols., II, 293.

physical death is solved by Christ's physical death, as Fink teaches.<sup>1</sup> This is true from the standpoint of judgment but absolutely false concerning physical corruption. The believers' physical death is not answered by Christ's physical death. Rather, "the divine cure for physical death is resurrection."<sup>2</sup> Christ died and rose again so that at His appearing he might "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).

#### The Effects of Grace

God in grace has not only removed the sting of death from death, but it appears to some that in grace He has still allotted to the believer physical death in order to further conform him to the image of Christ.

Dabney believes that those in Christ die for three reasons. He cites 1 Peter 4:12-13 to justify his idea that death is the supreme test of the power of faith.<sup>3</sup> Second, he states that "bodily death does not cease to be to the believer a real natural evil in itself, and to be feared and felt as such."<sup>4</sup> Though such a supposition contains a strand of truth (Acts 5:11), one ought not to unquestioningly adopt this statement. It has been demonstrated earlier that Christ

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<sup>1</sup>Fink, "EN HOI," p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 vols., VII, 114.

<sup>3</sup>Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p. 820.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 818.

took the element of fear out of death (Heb. 2:15). The fear mentioned in Acts is not of death but of a failure to obey. Also, if the believer is to fear death, Paul must have been some sort of a masochist for he longed for death in order that he might be with his Lord (Phil. 1:23).

Third, Dabney said that "according to that plan of grace which God has seen fit to adopt, bodily death is a necessary and wholesome chastisement for the good of the believer's soul."<sup>1</sup> Because Dabney does not elucidate on this principle of chastisement, one is not sure about the exact intent of his teaching. He does clearly draw a sharp distinction between retributive justice and corrective chastisement.<sup>2</sup> However, what is the positive truth which one ought to derive from this statement? If Dabney has in mind such instances as Acts 5:1-11 or 1 Corinthians 11:30, one might be disposed to agree with him. However, even in those instances one must assume that Annanias and Saphira and the many who sleep were true believers. This may not be inferred from the context of each passage, depending upon one's view of perseverance. Moreover, it was not Paul's or Luke's intent, in recording these incidents, to assure their readers concerning the eternal state of those who died. If Paul meant to absolutely teach that those who were punished were

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 818-9.

believers now in glory, then he was implying that one shall be saved regardless of the character of his life. Paul would be promoting carnal living. Rather, Paul's intent is to warn his readers in order to urge the elect unto holiness of life. Therefore, Acts 5, 1 Corinthians, or 1 John 5:16-17 may not be appealed to in order to demonstrate that the Lord chastises His own with death. Dabney's statement, however, seems to imply that the chastisement for good concerns all believers and not just remote instances. Such a position implies that all believers die the sin unto death. Can this be so? Dabney's third reason for the believer's death is hardly the case.

Dick has made several suggestions as to why the believer is not instantly delivered from physical decay and corruption. He readily acknowledges that his proposals are but mere opinions whose content may vary in degree concerning the exact truthfulness of the matter concerning the believer.

It could be that death

is to inspire them with abhorrence of sin, which is followed by such fatal effects; to keep them humble and to give them an opportunity to display their faith, and patience, and hope.<sup>1</sup>

Dick further suggests that

In the case of the saint, it terminates his long and painful struggle with sin, and completes his restoration to the image of God, . . . . It closes also the scene of his sorrows; it releases the weary sufferer, and dismisses him to rest; it removes the veil which conceals the

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<sup>1</sup>Dick, Lectures in Theology, 2 vols., II, 294-5.

glories of the eternal world; it breaks down the partition-wall which separated him from his God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 295.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### CONCLUSION: PART THREE

When one speaks of Christ's physical death as substitutionary in nature, he must be careful lest he convey a wrong impression. Christ's death is substitutionary in a judgmental sense only. His physical sufferings and death along with His spiritual death brought about forgiveness of sins, justification, redemption, sanctification, reconciliation, and propitiation, only to mention a few grace gifts. As such His death was the judgmental basis upon which God bestows these graces upon the one who believes. Christ's physical death is also judgmental in that by it He bore the curse of the law. He freed men from the sting of death. Consequently,

we are sure that whatever may be the proceedings of Providence towards them (which are in Christ Jesus), they are not to be considered as effects or indications of wrath.<sup>1</sup>

The Scriptures implicitly teach (Rom. 8:10) that the believer's body dies because of sin's effect. What they do not display is the reason for a progressive and ultimate sanctification rather than an immediate and conclusive glorification. Some suggestions have been offered as to why the believer still faces death, most quite possible true but

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

unproven by Scripture. It is only when the resurrection life of the Lord is finally applied to the believer, at His coming, that the perplexities of the believer's physical nature are rectified.

## CONCLUSION: GENERAL

It has been the intent of this study to demonstrate that Christ's physical sufferings and death were just as savingly efficacious and substitutionary as His spiritual death. In seeking to substantiate this belief, it was determined that physical death is a penal evil because of sin, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This was done in order to determine whether or not Christ's physical death was penal in nature. Because Christ was made to be "sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21) and because He suffered under the wrath of God for sin (Isa. 53:10), one ought to believe that Christ's physical death was penal.

Various texts in the New Testament were examined in order to ascertain the validity of Thieme's contention that only Christ's spiritual death was a substitutionary and savingly efficacious death. From this investigation, it was determined that Jesus' physical death was substitutionary, "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18). It was also discovered that His death was savingly efficacious for by it Christ procured forgiveness, propitiation, redemption, justification, reconciliation, and sanctification.

It remained, then, to determine what relationship Christ's physical death sustains to the death of the believer. One thing that His death did not do is exempt the believer

from dying physically. However, His physical death did accomplish two things necessary for a complete salvation. First, Christ by His death bore the penal element of death for the believer. God's children do indeed die physically because of the corruption of sin upon the body (Rom. 8:10), but their death has no penal element in it. Christ took the penal sting out of the believer's death because of His own death. Second, had Christ not died, He could not have been raised from the dead. The physical corruptions brought about by sin are not taken away by the death of Christ, but rather, by His resurrection. This blessed resurrection state which is free from physical corruption and death is applied to the believer at the coming of the Lord (Phil. 3:10-21). It is in these senses that Christ's physical sufferings and death are related to soteriology.

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