

## Substitution

Sunday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1990

### 2 Corinthians 5:21

*“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

The Title of my message today is: “Substitution.” I’ll be using for my text, a scripture found in Second Corinthians Chapter 5: verse 21. If you want to take your Bible and follow along as I preach, I would be happy for you to do so.

If we would learn the gospel, the gospel of the grace of God, we’ve got to learn the meaning of the word substitution. That is what Abel’s sacrifice is all about. Back yonder, years ago, two brothers, Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices before the Lord. They both built an altar, and both came to worship God.

Cain brought the fruit of his own labor, the things that he had worked, provided and offered unto the Lord. Abel brought a sacrifice; he brought a lamb. He slew the lamb and put the blood on the altar. The scripture says, *“God had respect to Abel’s offering but He rejected Cain’s offering.”* Abel brought a substitute. He brought one in his place. Another died and shed its blood in his place. That is substitution.

Is this not what God taught Abraham when he went to the top of Mount Mariah to sacrifice Isaac? God told Abraham to take his son, his only son, to Mount Mariah and sacrifice him there as an offering. He bound Isaac and put him on the altar and would have slain his son. He raised the knife and God said, *“Touch not the lad.”* Abraham looked over and there in the bushes was a ram caught by his horns. God told him to take the ram and put it on the altar in the place of his son. So, he substituted the ram for Isaac. The ram died and Isaac lived.

Is this not what the Passover is all about, down in the land of Egypt? God would deliver Israel out of Egypt. God told him to *“Take a lamb without spot or blemish, the firstling of the flock. Slay that lamb and roast it with fire. Put its blood on the doorpost and on the lenti. He said, When I see the blood I will pass over you.”* In other words, the lamb died and the firstborn son lived. The lamb was a substitute.

Is this not what Isaiah is saying in Isaiah 53:4 through 6? He wrote this, *“He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.”* That is substitution. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve turned everyone to his own way. The Lord hath laid on Him, (Christ) the iniquity of us all.”*

Is this not what Peter writes in First Peter 3:18? *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Christ suffered the just for the unjust (or in the stead of, in the place of, or as the substitute of the unjust), that He might bring us to God.”* In other words, all that God commands and all that the law requires of us and all that justice demands of us was met and fulfilled by our Redeemer that He might bring us to God. If one would learn the gospel, he must learn the meaning of substitution. If one would faithfully preach the gospel, then he must preach substitution.

There is a single verse of scripture that I announced to you a few moments ago in Second Corinthians Chapter 5. I don't believe that there is another verse in the Bible that is clearer on this matter of substitution than Second Corinthians 5:21. I told someone recently that it is not how much of the Bible you read or how much scripture you read. It is what you receive and understand. It is laying hold of it in your heart.

You can read three or four chapters and not understand it, experience it, or enter into what it is saying. This does no good. But, if you get a hold of one verse of scripture, this is God's Word. If you can really get a hold of one verse of scripture and really enter into it, lay hold of it and experience what that one verse is saying, it will be so worthwhile. So, this one verse of scripture, if you can learn in your heart the meaning of this one verse of scripture, you will learn the gospel of God's grace, the gospel of God's glory and the gospel of God's mercy.

Listen to what it says in Second Corinthians 5:21; *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* Did you hear that? *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* I hope to deal with two things primarily. We may get to the third, but certainly, these two things.

First of all, we are going to be looking at the truth of substitution found in this verse of scripture. We are going to look at the purpose of it, the purpose of substitution. If we have time, we will be looking at the joy of substitution.

Here is the truth of it, let's look at the verse again, *“For He, (that is the Father, the Heavenly Father, the Almighty God of heaven and earth) hath made Him, (the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man) to be sin for us,”* (Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, you and me). Here we have three persons. I want you to note this carefully, He, Him and us. *“He hath made Him to be sin for us, He knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”*

Let's take these three persons, (He, Him and us) and see what it is saying. Take the word He. *"He hath made Him to be sin for us."* I don't claim to be able to comprehend Almighty God. I cannot tell you all about God. I don't know everything about God. I don't understand everything about God. The apostle Paul said, *"O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His ways past finding out. Who hath known the mind of the Lord?"* I don't claim to know how to explain God or how to comprehend God or to understand Almighty God. I do know, from the Word of God, a few things about (He), the Heavenly Father.

First of all, I know this; He is absolutely Sovereign. God Almighty, (omnipotent is the word) God rules over all. Someone said to David; *"Where is your God?"* He said, *"Our God is in the Heavens."* What is He like? *"He hath done whatsoever He pleased in the armies of heaven among the inhabitants of this earth; in heaven, earth and under the earth."* He is absolutely, indisputably, unchangeably, infinitely, Sovereign, our God reigns and rules. He rules over the minutest things. *"Even the hairs of your head are numbered."* Our Lord said; *"Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father."*

Another thing that I know about God is that He is Holy, infinitely Holy. *"The Lord is in His Holy temple."* The Bible is His Holy Word. The angels are His Holy angels. The place where He dwells is the Holy of Holies. When the priest comes before Him, He comes with a miter, which is written *"Holiness to the Lord, God is Holy."*

I do know this; God is Just. He will punish sin. *"The Judge of the earth will do right."* God will do right. He is Just, Holy and Righteous.

I know this also; God is love. The scripture tells me that *"He is rich in mercy for His great love, wherewith He loved us. He delights to show mercy. He is plenteous in mercy. There is plenteous redemption with Him."*

God is gracious. Did you hear that? God is gracious. When you learn the gospel of substitution then you will learn how God can manifest all these attributes. There is His Sovereignty, His Holiness, His Justice, His Righteousness, His love and His grace. How can God be Just and at the same time show love? How can He punish sin and forgive the sinner? How can God be Righteous, unchangeably Holy and Righteous and yet, at the same time, show mercy to the guilty?

When you discover that you discover the gospel. This is what I am saying, God doesn't change His character to save our soul. God doesn't change His character to redeem us from sin. I'm talking about "He" (*He hath made Him to be sin for us*), "He," the Almighty God.

All right, watch the second person, *“He hath made Him.”* Who is this? This is the Son of God, the second person of the blessed Trinity. *“What think ye of Christ, who’s Son is He?”* Who is Jesus of Nazareth? He is the Son of God. I don’t understand the Trinity, do you? I do know that when God spoke at the beginning of creation, He said, *“Let us make man.”* When He spoke to Isaiah one time, He said, *“Whom shall we send, who will go for us?”*

When the Lord Jesus came into the world, the Father said; *“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”* Our Lord Jesus said one time; *“I’ll pray the Father and He will send you the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.”* John wrote, *“There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost.”* I just know this; Jesus Christ is God.

The scripture says; *“Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. The government shall be on His shoulders and thou shalt call His name Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”* Then, it is said, *“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name Immanuel, God with us.”*

This Jesus is God. He made all things. *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”* He is the image of God, and He is equal with God. He said, *“I and My Father are one.”* Also, the Father spoke to the Son and said; *“Thy throne O God is forever.”* He hath made Him, the Son of God.

He’s not only the Son of God; He is the Son of man. When Mary was with child, the angels said to Joseph; *“Don’t be afraid to take Mary to be your wife, for that Holy Thing conceived in her is the Son of God; and she shall bring forth a Son. You call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.”* That’s right; *“In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, (the Son of man) made under the law, to redeem them born under the law.”*

He is called in the scripture, *“The second Adam, the second man.”* It is said, *“He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.”* It is said, *“That He is made like unto His brethren.”* He hath made Him, the Son of God, Son of man, and the perfect God-man.

He is also the perfect man. He knew no sin. You see; *“He hath made Him, who knew no sin to be sin for us.”* He did no sin and committed no sin. He wasn’t acquainted with sin. He saw sin in others but He, Himself, knew no sin. That is hard to even imagine isn’t it?

It's hard to imagine, a man, a human being walking on this earth in flesh and blood and bones. He never thought anything wrong or said anything wrong or imagined anything wrong. He didn't even dream anything wrong or do anything wrong. He was perfect. He was so perfect that the Heavenly Father said; *"I am well pleased."* He had a perfect righteousness. He knew no sin. This Jesus, Son of God, Son of man and the perfect man is our High Priest and sacrifice. He is our mercy seat and atonement. *"God set Him forth to be a mercy seat."* By His death He justified us. By His life, He gave us righteousness.

He goes by many names. He is called the Messiah; He is called the Christ. He is called the Mediator; He is called My Servant. He is called mine Elect, Prophet, Priest and King. He is called the Lord and He is called the Lamb. He is called the Lion of Judah and Shiloh. He's called that Righteous Branch. *"But, He the Father, hath made Him, to be sin for us."* He is that wonderful person, that unique individual, that God-man who came into this world and died on the cross, and was buried and rose again. *"God hath made Him to be sin for us."* Christ is our Substitute, a Mercy Seat, a Saviour and a Reconciler.

Here is the third person, *"For us."* The third person is us, the sinners. I don't know why it is that it is so difficult for people to admit that they are sinners. Can you tell me why? Why is it so difficult for people to admit that they are sinners? God says that you are a sinner and that I am a sinner.

He said, *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* God says, *"There's none good, no not one. There are none righteous; there are none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are all together become unprofitable."* God said that He looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did do good and sin not. He said, *"Every imagination of man's heart is evil continually."* We have all sinned. The Bible says that we are sinners. The Word of God says, *"If any man say that he hath no sin, he is a liar."* That makes him a sinner.

Our conscience tells us that we are sinners. Does your conscience tell you that you are a sinner? I've had people tell me, who were once members in what they call "holiness churches," who professed to live without sin. They had professed that they lived above sin and that their sinful nature had been eradicated. Each one that I have ever talked to said that they never really believed it. They knew in their hearts that they were sinners. Their conscience troubled them and disturbed them. They never told anybody, but they knew that they were sinners.

Isaiah, the prophet of God, said that too. He said, *"I am a man of unclean lips; I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips."* King David, a man after God's own heart, said,

*“My sins are ever before me.”* Paul said, *“I am the chief of sinners. O wretched man that I am.”* The Publican cried; *“God be merciful to me the sinner.”*

I was preaching on this same subject one time on television (this was several years ago). There was a young man in the State of Virginia, who turned the television on, and one of the first things that he heard me say was, “You are a sinner and I am a sinner. That is one thing that we have in common; I’m a sinner and you are a sinner.” He went over and turned the television off. He said, “I’m not a sinner.” He went over and sat down in his chair. He sat there and started thinking about what he had just said, “I’m not a sinner!” He knew better and you know better. He got back up and walked back over to the TV and turned it on and said, “Well, maybe I am a sinner.” He sat and listened to me preach the gospel. He learned the gospel and God saved him.

I will tell you this; Christ is the friend of sinners. He came into the world to save sinners. It is not your sins that will keep you from His mercy; it is your righteousness. It is not your sins that will keep you from God; it is your righteousness. Christ said, *“I didn’t come to call the righteous, I came to call sinners to repentance.”* He died for sinners. He gave His life for sinners. *“He (the Father) hath made Him (the Son) to be sin for us.”* He didn’t know any sin. He didn’t have any sin. Therefore, He could be a righteous substitute for you and me. That is the truth of substitution. Do you have it? *“He made Him, (our substitute), to be sin for us that we might be made, (in Him, through Him, and because of Him), the righteousness of God in Him.”*

Now, the Book of Job continuously asks this question; *“How can man be righteous with God? How can man be Just with God? How can He be clean that is born of a woman?”* David once asked this question, *“Who can stand in God’s presence, who can ascend into His Holy hill?”* The answer is, *“He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, one who has never lifted up his soul to vanity, or who has never sworn deceitfully.”*

That is not you and that is not me nor is it any son of Adam. That is Christ! He had clean hands and He did no sin. He had a pure heart and He knew no sin. He never swore deceitfully, or lifted up His hands in deceit. He never sinned. That is what He came to do. He came to do for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves. He came to do what the law demanded what God commanded and what the law expected and what justice demanded.

That was the purpose of His life and that was the purpose of His death. He satisfied God’s law, God’s justice, God’s Righteousness and Holiness. He did this in our place and in our stead. *“He (God the Father) made Him (the Son) to be sin,”* (a substitute, a sin offering, a sacrifice, a Representative, a Surety for us in our place and in our stead). Everything God required, everything God demanded, had to be met and He had to fulfill

and complete it. He did just that for us in our place and in our stead. This was in order that we might be made in Him, the righteousness of God. My friend, that is substitution.

The next word is satisfaction. What Christ came to do, He did do. What He came to accomplish, He accomplished. That is what He prayed in John 17, when He prayed that High Priestly prayer. He said, *“Father, I have finished the work you gave Me to do.”* I finished it. You gave Me a work to do and I finished it.

What work did He give Him to do? The work was to make us the righteousness of God in Him, to be an effectual Substitute. He said, *“I finished what you gave Me to do, now glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.”* You see; Paul wrote in First Corinthians one, *“Of Him are you in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”* Christ Jesus is made all those blessed things to us. You are in Christ by His grace and by His mercy.

Here is my last point: Look back before verse 21 and at verse 18 (Second Corinthians Chapter 5), *“And all things are of God.”* Everything is of God. *“God worketh all things after the council of His own will.”* All things are of God, *“Who hath reconciled us.”* Do you remember the three persons? *“He made Him (Christ) to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* All right, *“All things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself.”*

Reconciled? We were enemies but He has reconciled us. *“We were strangers and foreigners and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”* God hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ. That is how He did it! This was done by Christ’s effectual work, by Christ’s obedience, and by Christ’s blood. God has reconciled us unto Himself. *“And He hath given to us this ministry.”* This is what I am talking about, the ministry. This is what I am in. This is what I am doing; I’m ministering. This is a ministry of reconciliation.

Look at this next verse, *“To wit.”* Do you see those two little words, *“to wit?”* To wit, means namely, *“that God was in Christ.”* That man Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. God was in Christ reconciling this sinful world unto Himself.

He wasn’t charging our sins unto us, and was not imputing our sins unto us, but charging them to Christ. Do you see that? *“He made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin.”* He charged our sins to Christ. He imputed them to Christ. He laid them on Christ. He put them on Christ. Christ bore our sin. Do you see that? Oh, that is good news and reconciliation is a joy!

Namely, this is our message, this is our ministry, to tell people that God was in Christ. Christ is not just a miracle performer. He's not just a religious reformer, He is the Messiah, He is the Christ and the anointed one of God. *"God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself."* He was not charging our sins unto us but laying them on Christ.

All preachers of the gospel are true men sent of God to proclaim the Word of God. Look at *verse 20*, Paul says, *"Now then, we are ambassadors of God as though God did beseech you by us."* This is as if God did speak to you by us. *"Be ye reconciled to God."* Bow to Him, receive Him, believe Him, lay hold of this gospel, look into it and cry for His mercy. Do you see that?

Oh, that is the joy of this thing. *"All things are of God who hath reconciled Himself to us by Jesus Christ."* He has given to us these earthen vessels, these mere mortals, this glorious ministry of reconciliation, *"Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."* He was charging our sins to Him.

Now then, I am an ambassador of Christ and I cry, *"Be ye reconciled to God,"* look at our text, for, I've got good news, *"He made Him to be sin for us. He knew no sin in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*