

Substitution

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon explains how Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for sinners so that they might be made righteous before God, revealing the profound mystery of substitutionary atonement.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Topics: "Substitutionary Atonement"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon expounds on the profound doctrine of substitutionary atonement, revealing how Christ, though sinless, was made sin for sinners so that they might be made righteous. Spurgeon carefully explains the attributes of God—sovereignty, justice, and grace—and how they harmonize in the gospel. This exposition invites listeners to understand their own sinfulness and the great exchange made possible through Christ's sacrifice.

Transcript

(No. 141-142)

"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."—2 Corinthians 5:21.

A BOOK is the expression of the thoughts of the writer. The book of nature is an expression of the thoughts of God. We have God's terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning; God's loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze; God's bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving harvest and in the ripening meadow. We have God's brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes which are beheld from mountain-top and valley; and we have God's most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty in the little flowers that blossom at our feet. But you will remark that God has in nature given most prominence to those thoughts that needed to have the pre-eminence. He hath not given us broad acres overspread with flowers, for they were not needed in such abundance, but he hath spread the fields with corn, that thus the absolute necessities of life might be supplied. We needed most of the thoughts of his providence; and he hath quickened our industry, so that God's providential care may be read as we ride along the roads on every side. Now, God's book of grace is just like his book of nature; it is his thoughts written out. This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume is the heart of God made legible; it is the gold of God's love beaten out into leaf gold, so that therewith our thoughts might be plated, and we also might have golden, good, and holy thoughts concerning him. And you will mark that, as in nature so in grace, the most necessary is the most prominent. I see in God's word a rich abundance of flowers of glorious eloquence;

often I find a prophet marshalling his words like armies for might, and like kings for majesty. But far more frequently I read simple declarations of the truth. I see here and there a brilliant thought of beauty, but I find whole fields of plain didactic doctrine, which is food for the soul; and I find whole chapters full of Christ which is divine manna, whereon the soul doth feed. I see starry words to make the Scriptures brilliant, sweet thoughts to make them fair, great thoughts to make them impressive, terrible thoughts to make them awful; but necessary thoughts, instructive thoughts, saving thoughts, are far more frequent, because far more necessary. Here and there a bed of flowers, but broad acres of living corn of the gospel of the grace of God. You must excuse me, then, if I very frequently dwell on the whole topic of salvation. But last Sabbath I brought you one shock of this wheat, in the fashion of Christ's promise, which saith, "He that calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." And then I sought to show how men might be saved. I bring you now another shock cut down in the self same field, teaching you the great philosophy of salvation, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery which is brought to light by the gospel; how God is just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Let us read the text again, and then at once proceed to discuss it. I intend to do to-day, as I did last Sunday; I shall just be as simple as ever I can; and I shall not attempt one single flight of eloquence or oratory, even if I am capable of it; but just go along the ground, so that every simple soul may be able to understand.—"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."

Note the doctrine; the use of it; the enjoyment of it.

I. First, THE DOCTRINE. There are three persons mentioned here. "He (that is God) hath made him (that is Christ) who knew no sin, to be sin for us (sinners) that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons, and, certainly, unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is to us impossible.

1. Here is first, GOD. Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of heaven and of earth—the Jehovah of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture, and the God of all grace, is not the God that some men make unto themselves, and worship. There be men in this so called Christian land, who worship a god who is no more God than Venus or Bacchus! A god made after their own hearts; a god not fashioned out of stone or wood, but fashioned from their own thoughts, out of baser stuff than ever heathen attempted to make a god of. The God of Scripture has three great attributes, and they are all three implied in the text.

The God of Scripture is a sovereign God; that is, he is a God who has absolute authority, and absolute power to do exactly as he pleaseth. Over the head of God there is no law, upon his arm there is no necessity; he knoweth no rule but his own free and mighty will. And though he cannot be unjust, and cannot do anything but good, yet is his nature absolutely free; for goodness is the freedom of God's nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, nor the desires of man, nor by fate in which the superstitious believe; he is God, doing as he willeth in the armies of heaven, and in this lower world. He is a God, too, who giveth no account of his matters; he makes his creatures just what he chooses to make them, and does with them just as he wills. And if any of them resent his acts, he saith unto them:—"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God is good; but God is sovereign, absolute, knowing, nothing that can control him. The monarchy of this world, is no constitutional and limited monarchy; it is not tyrannical, but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but his; no cherubim, not seraphim can assist God in the dispensation of his government.

“He sits on no precarious throne,

Nor borrows leave to be.”

He is the God of predestination; the God upon whose absolute will, the hinge of fate doth turn.

“Chain’d to his throne, a volume lies,

With all the fates of men,

With every angel’s form and size,

Drawn by th’ eternal pen.

His providence unfolds the book,

And makes his councils shine,

Each opening leaf, and every stroke,

Fulfils some deep design.”

This is the God of the Bible, this is the God whom we adore; no weak, pusillanimous God, who is controlled by the will of men, who cannot steer the bark of providence; but a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship; a God as infinitely above his creatures, as the highest thought an fly; and higher still than that.

But, again, the God who is here mentioned, is a God of infinite justice. That he is a sovereign God, I prove from the words, that he hath made Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if he had not been sovereign. That he is a just God, I infer from my text; seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice; he is not the God whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins; you believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin; but who is so weakly merciful, and so mercilessly weak, that he passes by transgression and iniquity, and never enacts a punishment. You believe in a god, who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of your own will pacify him, that he is so weak a ruler, that a few good words uttered before him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence, if, indeed, you think he ever passes a sentence at all. Your god is no God; he is as much a false god as the god of the Greeks, or of ancient Nineveh. The God of Scripture is one who is inflexibly severe in justice, and will by no means clear the guilty. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power; and will not at all acquit the wicked.” The God of Scripture is a ruler, who, when his subjects rebel, marks their crime, and never forgives them until he has punished it, either upon them, or upon their substitute. He is not like the god of some sectaries, who believe in a god without an atonement, with only some little show upon the cross, which was not, as they say, a real suffering of sin. Their god, the god of the Socinian, just blots out sin without exacting any punishment; he is not the God of the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is as severe as if he were unmerciful, and as just as if he were not gracious; and yet he is as gracious and as merciful as if he were not just—yea, more so.

And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis. The God who is here means, is a God of grace: think not that I am now contradicting myself. The God who

is inflexibly severe, and never pardons sin without punishment, is yet a God of illimitable love. Although as a Ruler he will chastise, yet, as the Father-God, he loveth to bestow his blessing. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God, but God is love; he is full of grace, he is the plenitude of mercy,—he delighteth in mercy. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts of love above our thoughts of despair; and his ways of grace above our ways of fear. This God, in whom these three great attributes harmonize—illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice, and unfathomable grace—these three make up the main attributes of the one God of heaven and earth whom Christians worship. It is this God, before whom we must appear; it is he who has made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin.

2. Thus, we have brought the first person before you. The second person of our text is the Son of God—Christ, who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds: begotten, not made; being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father infinite? So is the Son infinite. He is very God of very God: having a dignity not inferior to the Father, but being equal to him in every respect,—God over all, blessed for evermore. Jesus Christ also, is the son of Mary, a man like unto ourselves. A man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin; a man of suffering and of woe; of pain and trouble; of anxiety and fear; of trouble and of doubt; of temptation and of trial; of weakness and death. He is a man just as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Now, the person we wish to introduce to you, is this complex being, God and man. Not God humanized, not man Deified; but God, purely, essentially God; man, purely man; man, not more than man; God, not less than God,—the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man. Of this God in Christ, our text says that he knew no sin. It does not say that he did not sin; that we know: but it says more than that; he did not know sin; he knew not what sin was. He saw it in others, but he did not know it by experience. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not barely said, that he did not take sin into his heart; but, he did not know it. It was no acquaintance of his. He was the acquaintance of grief; but he was not the acquaintance of sin. He knew no sin of any kind,—no sin of thought, no sin of birth, no original, no actual transgression; no sin of lip, or of hand, did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, spotless; like his own divinity, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. This gracious person, is he who is spoken of in the text. He was a person utterly incapable of committing anything that was wrong. It has been asserted lately, by some ill-judged one, that Christ was capable of sin. I think it was Irving who started some such idea, that if Christ was not capable of sinning, he could not have been capable of virtue. "For," say they, "if a man must necessarily be good, there is no virtue in his goodness." Out upon their ridiculous nonsense. Is not God necessarily good? And who dares deny that God is virtuous? Are not the glorified spirits in heaven necessarily pure? and yet are they not holy because of that very necessity? Are not the angels, now that they are confirmed, necessarily faultless? and shall any one dare to deny angelic virtue! The thing is not true; it needs no freedom in order to create virtue. Freedom and virtue generally go together; but necessity and virtue are as much brother and sister as freedom and virtue. Jesus Christ was not capable of sin; it was as utterly impossible for Christ to have sinned, as for fire to drown or for water to burn. I suppose both of these things might be possible under some peculiar circumstances; but it never could have been possible for Christ to have committed or to have endured the shadow of the commission of a sin. He did not know it. He knew no sin.

3. Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him. The third person is the sinner. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes within you, and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you. He has been a drunkard: he has committed drunkenness and revelling and such like, and we know

that the man who committeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God. There is another, he has taken God's name in vain; he has sometimes, in his hot passion, asked God to do most fearful things against his limbs and against his soul. Ah! there is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man, with tearful eye, and with sobbing voice exclaim, "Sir, he is here!" Methinks I see some woman here, in the midst of us, some of us have accused her perhaps, and she standeth alone trembling, and saith not a word for herself. Oh! that the Master might say, "neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." I believe, I must believe, that somewhere amongst these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart, and that heart, as it beats so hurriedly crieth, "Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, wrath, how can I get deliverance?" Ah! thou art the man, a born rebel; born into the world a sinner, thou hast added to thy native guilt thine own transgressions. Thou hast broken the commandments of God, thou hast despised God's love, thou hast trampled on his grace, thou hast gone on hitherto until now, the arrow of the Lord is drinking up thy spirit; God hath made thee tremble, he hath made thee to confess thy guilt and thy transgression. Hear me, then, if your convictions are the work of God's Spirit, you are the person intended in the text, when it says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we"—that is you—"might be made the righteousness of God in him."

I have introduced the persons, and now I must introduce you to a scene of a great exchange which is made according to the text. The third person whom we introduce is the prisoner at the bar. As a sinner, God, has called him before him, he is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious, and he desires to save him; God is just, and he must punish him. The sinner is to be tried; if there be a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving, he wants to save him; he is just, he must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved, and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, canst thou plead "Not Guilty?" He stands speechless; or, if he speaks, he cries, "I am Guilty!"

Shouldst thou smite my soul to hell,

Thy righteous law approves it well.

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty himself, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. And even if he had pleaded "not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear, for God, the Judge, has seen his sin, and recorded all his iniquities; so that there would be no hope of his escaping. The prisoner is sure to be found guilty. How can he escape? Is there a flaw in the indictment? No! it is drawn up by infinite wisdom, and dictated by eternal justice; and there is no hope there. Can he turn king's evidence? Ah! if we could be saved by turning king's evidence, we should all of us be saved. There is an anomaly in our law which often allows the greater criminal to escape, whilst the lesser criminal is punished. If the one is dastard and coward enough by betraying his comrade he may save himself. If you turn to the Newgate Calendar—if any of you have patience enough to read so vile a piece of literature—you will see that the greatest of two murderers has escaped whilst the other has been hanged, because he turned king's evidence. You have told of your fellows; you have said, "Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men; I am not as that adulterer, or even as that publican. I bless thee, I am not like my neighbor, who is an extortioner, a thief, and so on." You are telling against your neighbor; you are joint sinners, and you are telling a tale against him. There is no hope for you; God's law knows of no such injustice as a man escaping by turning informer upon others. How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there any possibility? Oh! how did heaven wonder! how did the stars stand still with astonishment! and how did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how he might be just, and yet be gracious! Oh! I think I see heaven astonished, and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour,

when the Almighty said, "Sinner. I must and will punish thee on account of sin! But I love thee; the bowels of my love yearn over thee. How can I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My justice says 'smite,' but my love stays my hand, and says, 'spare, spare the sinner!' Oh! sinner, my heart hath devised it; my Son, the pure and perfect shall stand in thy stead, and be accounted guilty, and thou, the guilty, shall stand in my Son's stead and be accounted righteous!" It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but understand this thoroughly—the wonderful mystery of the transposition of Christ and the sinner. Let me put it so plainly that every one can understand: Christ was spotless; sinners were vile. Says Christ "My father, treat me as if I were a sinner; treat the sinner as if he were me. Smite as sternly as thou pleasest, for I will bear it, and thus the bowels of thy love may overflow with grace, and yet thy justice be unsullied, for the sinner is no sinner now." He stands in Christ's stead, and with the Saviour's garments on, he is accepted." Do you say that such an exchange as this is unjust? Will you say that God should not have made his Son a substitute for us, and have let us go? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our stead; he had to drink the cup of our punishment, but he was quite willing to do it. And let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing, the substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing, because the sovereign God made him a substitute. We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great, that the wife has gone into the prison and exchanged clothes with him; and while the prisoner was escaping, the wife has remained in the prison-house; and so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution. In such a case there was a clear breach of law, and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the substitution was made by the highest authority. The text says, God "hath made him to be sin for us;" and inasmuch as Christ did stand in my room, place, and stead, he did not make the exchange unlawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with his own consent, that Christ stood in the sinner's place, as the sinner doth now in Christ's place. Old Martin Luther was a man for speaking a thing pretty plainly, and sometimes he spoke the truth so plainly that he made it look very much like a lie. In one of his sermons he said, "Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived." Now, Christ never was a sinner, but yet Martin was right. He meant to say, all the sins of Christ's people were taken off them and put on Christ's head, and so Christ stood in God's sight as if he had been the greatest sinner that ever lived. He never was a sinner; he never knew sin; but good Martin, in his zeal to make men understand what it was, said, "Sinner, you became Christ; Christ, you became a sinner!" It is not quite the truth; the sinner is treated as if he were Christ, and Christ is treated as if he were the sinner. That is what is meant by the text God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Let me just give you two illustrations of this. The first shall be taken from the Old Testament. When, of old, men did come before God with sin, God provided a sacrifice which should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The law ran, "He that sins shall die." When men had committed sin they brought a bullock or a sheep before the altar; they put their hand on the bullock's head and acknowledged their guilt; and by that deed their guilt was typically removed from themselves to the bullock. Then, the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered, and cast out as a sin offering, which God had rejected. That is what every sinner must do with Christ, if he is to be saved. A sinner, by faith, comes and puts his hand on Christ's head, and confessing all his sin, it is not his any longer, it is put on Christ. Christ hangs upon the tree; he bears the cross and endures the shame; and so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea. Take another illustration. We read in the New Testament, that "the Church (that is, the people of God) is Christ's bride." We all know that, according to the law, the wife may have many debts; but no sooner is she married than her debts cease to be hers, and become her husband's at once. So that if a woman be overwhelmed with debt, so that she is in daily fear of the prison,

let her but once stand up and give her hand to a man and become his wife, and there is none in the world can touch her; the husband is liable for all, and she says to her creditor, "Sir, I owe you nothing; my husband did not owe you anything; I incurred the debt; but, inasmuch as I have become his wife, my debts are taken off from me, and become his." It is even so with the sinner and Christ. Christ marieth the sinner and putteth forth his hand, and taketh the Church to be his. She is in debt to God's justice immeasurably; she owes to God's vengeance an intolerable weight of wrath and punishment; Christ says, "Thou art my wife: I have chosen thee, and I will pay thy debts." And he has paid them, and got his full discharge. Now, whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath peace with God, because "he hath made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

And now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text, when I just bid you remember the consequences of this great substitution. Christ was made sin; we are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach—it was in the dark past, before cherubim or seraphim had flapped the un navigated ether—when as yet worlds were not, and creation had not a name, God foresaw the sin of man, and planned his redemption. An eternal covenant was formed between the Father and the Son; wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for his elect; and the Father on his part, did covenant to justify them through the Son. Oh, wondrous covenant, thou art the source of all the streams of atoning love. Eternity rolled on, time came, and with it soon came the fall, and then when many years had run their round the fullness of time arrived, and Jesus prepared to fulfill his solemn engagement. He came into the world, and was made a man. From that moment, when he became a man; mark the change that was wrought in him. Before, he had been entirely happy; he had never been miserable never sad; but now as the effects of that terrible covenant, which he had made with God, his Father begins to pour wrath upon him. What, you say does God actually account his Son to be a sinner? Yes, he does; His Son agreed to be the substitute, to stand in the sinner's stead. God begins with him at his birth; he puts him in a manger. If he had considered him as a perfect man, he would have provided him a throne: but considering him as a sinner, he subjects him to woe and poverty from beginning to end. And now see him grown to manhood; see him—griefs pursue him, sorrows follow him. Stop, griefs, why follow ye the perfect? why pursue ye the immaculate? Justice, why dost thou not drive these griefs away?—"the pure should be peaceful, and the immaculate should be happy." The answer comes: "This man is pure in himself, but he has made himself impure by taking his people's sin." Guilt is imputed to him, and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality. At last, I see death coming with more than its usual horrors; I see the grim skeleton with his dart well sharpened; I see behind him, Hell. I mark the grim prince of darkness, and all the avengers uprising from their place of torment; I see them all besetting the Saviour; I notice their terrible war upon him in the garden; I note him as he lies there wallowing in his blood in fearful soul-death. I see him as in grief and sorrow, he walks to Pilate's bar; I see him mocked and spit upon; I behold him tormented, maltreated, and blasphemed; I see him nailed to the cross; I behold the mocking continued, and the shame unabated; I mark him shrieking for water, and I hear him complaining of the forsakings of God! I am astonished. Can this be just that a perfect being should suffer thus?—Oh, God, where art thou, that thou canst thus permit the oppression of the innocent? Hast thou ceased to be King of Justice, else why dost thou not shield the perfect One? The answer comes: Be still; he is perfect in himself, but he is the sinner now—he stands in the sinner's stead; the sinner's guilt is on him, and, therefore it is right, it is just, it is what he hath himself agreed to, that he should be punished as if he were a sinner, that he should be frowned upon, that he should die, and that he should descend to Hades unblessed, un comforted, unhelped, unhonored, and unowned. This was one of the effects of the great change which Christ made.

And, now, take the other side of the question, and I have done with explanation. What was the effect on us? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust, defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God hath rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little season pursuing his way to heaven? He has renounced these sins; he has been converted, and has forsaken them; he is going on the way to heaven. Justice, art thou asleep? That man has broken thy law; is he to go to heaven? Hark, how the fiends come rising from the pit and cry—"That man deserves to be lost; he may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins, must have vengeance." And, yet there he goes safely on his way to heaven, and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, "Behold, who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And when one would think all hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lieth still, and the fiends have nought to say; and I see him turning his face heavenward to the throne of God, and hear him cry "Who is he that condemneth?" as with unblushing countenance he challengeth the Judge. Oh! justice, where art thou? This man has been a sinner, a rebel; why not smite him to the dust for his impertinent presumption in thus challenging the justice of God? Nay, says Justice, he hath been a sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now; I have punished Christ instead of him: that sinner is no sinner now—he is perfect. How? perfect! Perfect, because Christ was perfect, and I look upon him as if he were Christ. Though in himself all black as the gates of Kedar, I consider him to be fair as the curtains of Solomon. I make Christ the sinner, and I punish Christ; I make the sinner Christ, and I magnify and exalt him. And I will put a crown of pure gold upon his head, and by-and-bye, I will give him a place among them that are sanctified, where he shall, harp in hand, for ever praise the name of the Lord. This is the grand result to sinners of the great exchange. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

II. Now, I have to come towards the close, to my second point, upon which I shall be brief but laborious. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE? Turn to the Scriptures and you will see. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, for"—here is our grand argument—"He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Men and brethren, I am about to pray to you; I am about to beseech and exhort you; may the Spirit of God help me to do it with all the earnestness which becomes me. You and I shall face each other soon before the bar of the great judge, and I shall be responsible in the day of account for all I preach to you; not for my style or talent, or want of talent, I shall only be responsible for my earnestness and zeal in this matter. And, now, before God I entreat you most earnestly to be reconciled to him, you are by nature at enmity with God; you hate him, you neglect him, your enmity shows itself in various ways. I beseech you now be reconciled to God. I might entreat you to be reconciled, because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who can abide with the eternal burnings? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. I beseech you therefore, be reconciled to God. I might on the other hand, use another argument, and remind you that those who are reconciled to God, are thereby proved to be the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. There are crowns for God's friends; there are harps for them that love him; there is prepared a mansion for every one that seeketh unto him. Therefore, if thou wouldst be blessed throughout eternity, be reconciled to God. But I shall not urge that; I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech thee, my hearer, be reconciled to God, because if thou repentest, it is proof that Christ has stood in thy stead. Oh, if this argument do not melt thee, there is none in heaven or earth that can. If thy heart melteth not at such an argument as this, then it is harder than the nether millstone, sure thou hast a soul of stone, and a heart of brass, if thou wilt not be reconciled to God who hath written this for thine encouragement.

I beseech thee be reconciled to God, because in this there is proof that God is loving you. Thou thinkest God to be a God of wrath. Would he have given his own Son to be punished if he had hated thee? Sinner if God had anything but thoughts of love towards thee, I ask, would he have given up his Son to hang upon the cross? Think not my God a tyrant; think him not a wrathful God, destitute of mercy. His Son, torn from his bosom and given up to die, is the best proof of his love. Oh, sinner, I need not blame thee if thou didst hate thy enemy, but I must blame thee, call thee mad, if thou dost hate thy friend. Oh, I need not wonder if thou wouldst not be reconciled to one who would not be reconciled to thee; but, inasmuch as thou wilt not by nature be reconciled to the God who gave his own Son to die, I must marvel at the stupidity into which thine evil nature hath hurried thee. God is love; wilt thou be unreconciled to love? God is grace; wilt thou be unreconciled to grace. Oh, rebel that thou art of deepest dye if still thou art unreconciled. Remember, too, oh, soul, that the way is open for thy reconciliation, Thou needest not be punished; yea, thou shalt not be. If thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, God will not punish thee to maintain His justice: that justice is sufficiently maintained by the punishment of Christ. He saith, "be reconciled." The child runneth away from his father when he hath sinned, because he fears his father will punish him; but when his father burns the rod, and with a smiling face says, "child, come hither," sure it must be an unloving child that would not run into such a father's arms. Sinner thou deservest the sword; God has snapped the sword across the knee of Christ's atonement, and now he says "Come to me." You deserve infinite, eternal wrath, and the displeasure of God; God has quenched that wrath for all believers, and now he says, "Come to me and be reconciled." Do you tell me that you are not sinners? I was not preaching to you. Do you tell me that you have never rebelled against God? I warn you that though you cannot find your own sins out, God will find them out. Do you say, "I need no reconciliation, except that which I can make myself?" Be warned that if thou rejectest Christ, thou rejectest thine only hope; for all that thou canst do is less than nothing and vanity. I was not preaching to thee, when I said, "Be reconciled." I was preaching to thee, poor afflicted conscience; I was preaching to thee—thou that hast been a great sinner and transgressor, thou that feelest thy guilt; to thee, thou adulterer, trembling now under the lash of conviction; to thee; thou blasphemer, quivering now from head to foot; I preach to thee thou thief, whose eye is now filled with the tear of penitence; thou feelest that hell must be thy portion, unless thou art saved through Christ; I preach to thee, thou that knowest thy guilt; I preach to thee and to every one such, and I beseech thee to be reconciled to God, for God is reconciled to thee. Oh, let not your heart stand out against this.

I cannot plead as I could wish. Oh! if I could I would plead with my heart, with my eyes, and my lips, that I might lead you to the Saviour. You need not rail at me and call this an Arminian style of preaching; I care not for your opinion, this style is Scriptural. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Poor broken-hearted sinner, God is as much preaching to you this morning, and bidding you be reconciled, as if he stood here himself in his own person; and though I be a mean and puny man by whom he speaketh, he speaketh now as much as if it were by the voice of angels, "Be reconciled to God." Come, friend, turn not thine eye and head away from me; but give me thine hand and lend me thine heart whilst I weep over thine hand and cry over thine heart, and beseech thee not to despise thine own mercy, not to be a suicide to thine own soul, not to damn thyself. Now that God has awakened thee to feel that thou art an enemy, I beseech thee now to be his friend. Remember, if thou art now convinced of sin, there is no punishment for thee. He was punished in thy stead. Wilt thou believe this? Wilt thou trust in it, and so be at peace with God? If thou sayest, "No!" then I would have thee know that thou hast put away thine own mercy. If thou sayest, "I need no reconciliation," thou hast thrust away the only hope thou canst ever have. Do it at thine own hazard; I wash my hands of thy blood. But, but, but, if thou knowest thyself to need a Saviour if thou wouldst escape the hellish pit, if thou wouldst

walk among them that are sanctified, I again, in the name of him that will condemn thee at the last day, if thou rejectest this invitation, implore and beseech thee to be reconciled to God. I am his ambassador. When I have done this sermon, I shall go back to court. Sinner, what shall I say of thee. Shall I go back and tell my Master that thou intendest to be his enemy for ever? Shall I go back and tell him, "They heard me, but they regarded not?" they said in their hearts, "we will go away to our sins and our follies, and we will not serve your God, neither fear him!" Shall I tell him such a message as that? Must I be driven to go back to his palace with such a fearful story? I beseech thee, send me not back so, lest my Master's wrath wax hot, and he say,

"They that despised my promised rest,

Shall have no portion there"

But oh! may I not go back to court to-day, and tell the Monarch on my knees, "There be some my Lord, that have been great rebels, but when they saw themselves rebels, they threw themselves at the foot of the cross, and asked for pardon. They had strangely revolted, but I heard them say, 'If he will forgive me I will turn from my evil ways, if he will enable me!' They were gross transgressors, and they confessed it; but I heard them say, 'Jesus, thy blood and righteousness are my only trust.'" Happy ambassador, I will go back to my Master with a gladsome countenance, and tell him that peace is made between many a soul and the great God. But miserable ambassador who has to go back and say, "There is no peace made." How shall it be? The Lord decide it! May many hearts give way to Omnipotent grace now, and may enemies of grace be changed into friends, that God's elect may be gathered in, and his eternal purpose accomplished.

III. And now, I close up by noticing the SWEET ENJOYMENT which this doctrine brings to a believer. Mourning Christian! dry up your tears. Are you weeping on account of sin? Why weepest thou? Weep because of thy sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment. Has the evil one told thee that thou shalt be condemned? Tell him to his face that he lies. Ah! poor distressed believer; art thou mourning over thine own corruptions? Look to thy perfect Lord, and remember, thou art complete in him, thou art in God's sight as perfect as if thou hadst never sinned; nay, more than that, the Lord our righteousness hath put a divine garment upon thee, so that thou hast more than the righteousness of man—thou hast the righteousness of God. Oh! thou that art mourning by reason of in-bred sin and depravity, remember, none of thy sins can condemn thee. Thou hast learned to hate sin; but thou hast learned to know that sin is not thine—it is put on Christ's head. Come, be of good cheer: thy standing is not in thyself—it is in Christ; thine acceptance is not in thyself, but in thy Lord; with all thy sin, thou art as much accepted to-day as in thy sanctification; thou art as much accepted of God to-day, with all thine iniquities, as thou wilt be when thou standest before his throne, rendered free from all corruption. Oh! I beseech thee, lay hold on this precious thought, perfection in Christ! For thou art perfect in Christ Jesus. With thy Saviour's garment on, thou art holy as the holy ones; thou art now justified by faith; thou hast now peace with God. Be of good cheer; do not fear to die; death has nothing terrible in it to thee; Christ hath extracted all the gall from the sting of death. Tremble not at judgment; judgment will not bring thee another acquittal, to add to the acquittal already given in thy cause.

Bold shalt thou stand at that great day,

For who ought to thy charge can lay

Fully absolved by Christ thou art,

From sin's tremendous guilt and smart.

Ah, when thou comest to die, thou shalt challenge God; for thou shalt say, "My God, thou canst not condemn me, for thou hast condemned Christ for me, thou hast punished Christ in my stead. 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who also sitteth on the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us:'" Christian, be glad; let thy head lack no oil, and thy face no ointment; "go thy way; eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath accepted thy works." Do as Solomon bids us do; live happily all the days of thy life; for thou art accepted in the beloved—thou art pardoned through the blood, and justified through the righteousness of Christ. What hast thou to fear? Let thy face ever wear a smile; let thine eyes sparkle with gladness; live near thy Master; live in the suburbs of the celestial city, as by-and-by when thy time has come thou shalt borrow better wings than angels ever wore, and out soar the cherubim, and rise up where thy Jesus sits—sit at his right hand, even as he has overcome and has sat down upon his Father's right hand; and all this because the divine Lord, "was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/substitution/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net