

Christ, and Him Crucified
 Pastor Sam Richards
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He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Isaiah 53:3 These words are from several universes away from both Galatians 1, and the world we currently inhabit. Allow me to illustrate from an on-line dating blog (written by Susan Al-Safadi):

He says he misses me, which I find bewildering; I don't miss people I've never met. You know what I miss? I miss my bed at the end of a long day in the office. I miss the thrill of hearing the Game of Thrones theme tune at the beginning of a new episode. I miss ordering large fries at Five Guys without being told they feed a family of four.

<https://yallaletstalk.com/its-not-me-its-you-my-experience-rejecting-an-arab-guy/>

Missing her bed after a day at the office? The Game of Thrones theme tune? Large fries at Big Guys? That strikes me as rather uninspiring(!), or banal when set beside **despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief**. Yet that is the world of Susan Al-Safadi who wrote the above selection. She is writing about rejecting someone. She also opined about the psychology of rejection:

There have been dozens of studies into the psychology of rejection. Put a person in an MRI machine and scan their brain whilst asking them to think of a time they've been rejected, and the same parts of their brain light up as the parts that do when you experience actual physical pain. And the truth is rejection is painful – what is more agonising (sic) than putting your truest self out there only to realise (sic) that for some, it's not good enough? However, the most damaging part of rejection is in fact self-inflicted; letting that drop in self-esteem translate into a blow to your self-worth is incredibly easy. So, we spend our lives putting ourselves on the line knowing every person we meet or experience we have is just another chance you won't be accepted. But we do it anyway because the payoff is big.

There were no offices to come home from in Isaiah's day, nor later in Paul's day *but there was "rejection."* There was rejection long before there was the "pop psychology" of rejection which Susan writes has produced "dozens of studies" based on MRI brain scanning which "equate" the experience of rejection with

“actual physical pain.” This suggests that “actual” makes the “physical” pain more real: “And the truth is rejection is painful.” I agree. There is this key distinction: whereas our rejections are painful, Jesus’ are redemptive. Galatians is primarily about Paul’s struggle with rejection (of his pastoral leadership and of his Christ!).

I also think that the pain inflicted on Jesus as He experienced contempt/despising; rejection/**like one from whom men turn their face**; and grief—so as to identify with us on a much more profound level than is entailed in our “psychologized world” of on-line dating. How we are getting on with God certainly trumps how we are getting on with another human being. Susan’s world has twin horizons: “self-esteem” and “self-worth.” Her “putting herself on the line” is certainly *incommensurate* with Jesus putting himself on the cross—she is aiming at a relationship to “achieve personal happiness.” That is as banal as fries at Big Guys regardless of how many they purport to feed! Jesus was aiming at a relationship concerned with our souls’ redemption/salvation. Jesus was identifying with us so that the question directed at Paul (**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?**) resonates with eternal significance, and addresses our everlasting destiny. When romance, and on-line dating cease to matter so much, what will we do with ourselves?

Jesus was rejected so that we might be accepted. And the knowledge that we are made acceptable to God is a huge piece of coping with rejection from Susan’s level on up. Above the psychological we find the supernatural, of the divine strata where those who are in Christ live, and move and have their being.

Paul self-identifies as being one **in Christ. This is his “new identity” and what is important is that it become yours!** And that is based on, because of, his view of the atonement. In Christ he is known, affirmed and recognized—which are the true concerns of Susan, concerns that she is ignorant of in her pop psychologized existence, hip existence. Her worldview is inward. The escape from within-ness is the gift of life in Christ.

Popularly, atonement might be understood by the syllabic breakdown at-one-ment and means little more than “one-ness with God.” *This is hardly a sufficient, adequate view of Paul’s meaning!* What Paul has in mind is this: the capability of God to re-adjust man (to supernaturally endow man with a new, and better heredity). We could say that God aims to “supernaturalize” man: a new nature, a purified state, an expunged record of prior transgressions—that wipes the record of our transgressions clean. We are rendered different, qualitatively new and better. Who we are in Christ is nobler, more excellent and enduring. **And what**

we do flows from whose we are—it is not a means of getting there. This is great news on every level (including the spiritual), physically, we may know of persons who are short, and wish to be taller and perhaps we know a few who are taller and wish to be shorter. But I am purposing to use “heredity” in a more spiritual application here and that is why I said, a “better heredity.” Before we get to that, we should observe that the implication *of man needing readjustment.* It is neither biogenetic, nor autobiographical—it is a gift!

That suggests that something is out of line, or out of alignment (like your wheels after driving through the pot hole seasons of spring!)—so going in for a realignment is familiar territory to most car owners in New England! We know about taking our car in. We know about visiting the chiropractor.

The implication here is that something is out of joint, or wrong with us. And that something could be inherited, spiritual or environmental. So, is there something wrong with us? And if we say sin is what is wrong with us, what do we mean by that? (Certainly we would mean more than acting up, or acting out, messing up and doing bad things.) We should mean the general, or “thorough going anarchy” of our human condition, marked by our “heart mutiny” or full-throttled mutinous rebellion against God and, through him, actually, the good, the true, the honest and beautiful! What we are attempting here is simple: we are trying to walk with *what Paul might mean* by “heredity,” by the misaligned affects of sin on us: the warped, disfigured, spoiled, or soiled in us—which requires the deep cleansing of the blood of Christ. His doctrine of the atonement is *by implication* in view. Can God create in me a new heart? Can he renew a right spirit within me? Can he, or can’t he? Or are such longings foolish, unattainable pipe dreams?

What would it take for our situation to be turned around? Nothing less than the death on a cross of God’s Son. Not that we would have ever been able to prescribe so radical a remedy, *let alone perform it*—no, this was God’s plan from before the whole deviation occurred. *It was in his eternal counsels.* God knew it would take something, or someone from outside the fallen world (someone as exceptional, say, as a Joseph among the sons of Jacob—only more so). It is in the divine disposition to bring order out of chaos (**The earth was without form and void** seems to reflect the aftermath of the rebellion in heaven. Gen. 1.2) The unmitigated disaster of Job’s turned upside down life, a catastrophe(!), is resolved through repentance and restoration. He lost everything so that God could humiliate Satan through Job’s faith! Of course, Jesus himself is the supreme example of God’s redemptive bent!

God’s divinely appointed “Rescuer” (Savior, Redeemer, Messiah) would perform the readjustment (through His rejection!); and, putting us right with God,

reorients, rectifies and provides the remedy. So Jesus pays the price of our redemption through the shedding of his blood (“Christ and Him Crucified”). And, immediately upon our recognition of the fact that God in Christ was redeeming us *by condemning sin, once for all and finally*, atonement occurs. When we accept God’s verdict on sin (and sinners—our selves included) as worthy of death and as accomplished on the cross, we, just as we are, are returned to God’s grace through his forgiveness by faith.

It is the Holy Spirit’s function to apply the unction/oil of Christ’s atonement to us personally—imparting to us the life of Christ. We know instantly that we have been born from above, that we are “fully alive,” whereas formerly we were sleep walking (**Awake O sleeper¹, arise from the dead and Christ will give you light:** Eph. 5:14), were “unconscious, blind, deaf, mute, or otherwise impaired”—living a diminished, partial, or inauthentic life, metaphorically dead (yes, dead in trespasses and sins and dead to the Spirit). As Christians we already possess what the world is seeking for! We have true life, and authentic being. We are not pretending, or posing, pleasing others—to be bound to Christ is to live

above convention, above living by rote or rules²! CHRIST IN US RENDERS US HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS! We are rooted without being “root bound!” We are defined by what Christ has freed us to, and not by what he has freed us from. Legalistic prohibitions are less important than our freedoms: what we can do far exceeds what others imagine bound as they are in taboos and restrictions. If you wish to know what **alive in Christ** looks and feels like stay tuned to our study of the Apostle Paul!

And, possessing the life of Christ in us, we entered the region where Christ is and we partake of fellowship with Him, even our crucified and risen Lord—both in us, and in our midst. *Imparted, ingested and internalized Christ!* The implications of this implantation are everlasting: his efficacy, his moral purity, his uprightness, his nature and his character (all constituents of our new heritage!) become our present, readjusted existence, our actual reality. This means, as

¹ **Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem** (Isiah 51:17); and **Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; and Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you . . . and His glory will be seen upon you, And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.** (Isaiah 60:1,2-3) . . . **the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory, and your days of mourning will be ended. Your people shall all be righteous.** (v. 20)

² God’s rules, statutes, ordinances, commandments and laws are guard rails more than prison bars—more to keep us on the road than to impede our forward movement. People who obey the warning signs arrive more safely and more often than those who don’t. A false dichotomy is created where we are urged to forget about the destination and focus on the journey! We should do both; they are mutually enriching.

that new creature in Christ, we carefully equipped, *empowered* to do all that he commands us—and to do it perfectly, compellingly, completely and winsomely.

For it is the case that we no longer “live,” but Christ in us is fully alive. The proof of our readjustment is the open, manifestation *in our present flesh* of our obedience. *We run errands for God daily . . . and this is the fulfillment of our calling as his servants. It is thrilling, and adventuresome to actually do what we were designed for, created for—this is self-fulfillment* (I mean, doing for Him is *more fulfilling* than doing for me). Pleasing him makes me happy. Is it not so for you? The quest and the reward both matter.

Only those who know Christ can tell us about Him as He is!³ We must turn the tables on those who have turned the tables on us! *They, the New Left*, are the negative ones; they are the *reactionaries* (not revolutionaries as they boast!): the anti-historical, the anti-religious, the anti-God folk! The anti-culture, also known as the cancel culture, are reactionaries, feeling themselves as “change agents and revolutionaries.” ***They deny that The kingdom of God has come, but we are present citizens in that very kingdom.*** They speak of their “utopia,” their aspirations, voice their dreams of truth, peace and justice. We speak of our King Jesus. Their “dreams” are the very articles of our inheritance. *We have what they want!* Perhaps you did not hear plainly:

30But of him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:
KJV

Or: But *it is* due to Him *that* you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, NASB 1 Cor. 1:30

Christ and His Cross are necessary because no man can, by praying accomplish his full, entire redemption! There is no ability in the generous, even the best impulses of his human nature, to produce a heart pure enough to see God (though Christ has seen Him)! Sheer moral endeavor cannot yield that holy blamelessness that Christ conveys by imparting himself to us. The word most often associated with atonement is “substitutionary.” Once again, what the word means popularly is rather deficient: it means Jesus bears my punishment and I get to go scot-free.

Biblically, however, the meaning has a two-fold significance: it means Christ for me (or, in my place as the reference to his bearing the punishment due us

³ Those who imagine themselves more compassionate than God and who pontificate on who Jesus is, or how Christians should think, or act—are “out of bounds,” just blowing second-hand smoke!

implies) and it means Christ in me. This second meaning speaks to the indwelling Christ as a powerful, radically working yeast, or leaven(!) which “proof” the whole dough. ***It is a dynamic, transformative presence within*** (hinted at by language such as **eat my flesh. . . drink my blood** on a material level which Jesus equates to “**having my life within you**”⁴-John 6:53). This sense of things helps us understand Jesus’ **I am Jesus whom you are persecuting**. (Acts 9:5) Or, if we understand Christians to be His anointed ones, there are two places in Scripture where people are warned not to harm God’s anointed, his prophets, or holy ones (Psalm 105:15 and 1 Chron. 16:22). In the New Testament imagery we are portrayed as members of His body—so that harming us is hurting Him. These passages all speak, in diverse ways, **to Christ in us the hope of glory**. (Col. 1:24-29) See Galatians 1:15-16, 2:20 and 4:19.

When John writes, **He that doeth righteousness is righteous (1 John 3:7b)**, it must appear that he means that Christ in us conveys to us his righteousness, along with his other attributes say, of sinless heredity and character (holiness, love, purity, goodness, kindness etc). His perfections in us remain his perfections but they are on display, or revealed in me. Therefore it simply is not possible to believe in God, or in Christ, and remain the same old, miserable and crooked sinner for all time. We are changed from glory to glory until in heaven we take our place! (Fully sanctified and completely glorified starting now.) What happens is that we are changed; we are made *underserving of censure*. God sees us invested with the blamelessness of His glorified Son—as identified with the Cross. And that is what is meant by our readjusted condition, that is us, realigned (and renovated)—and while this a process, as in a realization of spiritual maturity—it is the new creature that is being perfected by Christ from within—not through bible study, or praying, or service (as in good works)—but as a result of Christ substituted in me/the real outcome of atonement.

The blessing of Christlikeness is the very, very best blessing of all.

So let me come full circle and speak, in closing to rejection. Christ was rejected so that he might make you accepted. Rejection then becomes like persecution—not so much about me, as it is about you and Him. When you reject me, and Christ in me, you are indeed rejecting Him. You might want to ponder that on your way out the door! Oh, don’t forget your hat!

Amen

⁴ This **within you** is a matter of spiritual occupation, Christ’s residing within—not one’s inner being, essential core. We are occupied territory and that is what we seek within: namely, Him.