

Fearlessly Different in Christ  
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**4 . . .who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil <sup>[world]</sup> age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.**

We should consider these things: first, what was Christ's object in dying **for our sins** with regard to "his people" (**that he might deliver us from this present evil world**); secondly, what has he done to obtain this end (**he gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us for this present evil age/world**); thirdly, why did he do this? (**it was according to the will of God our Father**); and, fourthly, what should we say in response to all this? (**to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.**)

It would be good to affix this all to its historical time and place. It was at the end of the Jewish monarchical age and at the beginning of the Roman empire. And, it seems fair to suggest that it was God's choice to restart his program of recruiting from the mass of humanity, that segment or part of mankind, that would be called out as *His special people*, those *chosen* from before the beginning to be *his special possession*—identifying the referent for **our sins**, which connects with the **us** God would rescue from **this present evil world**. God is seeking a holy people "which could not, and **would not live as the rest of the world lives.**" (Spurgeon, #2483, p.4) Such a discriminatory program is clearly out of line with the modern gospel of equality and inclusivity—although not diversity(!), *for the body of Christ* as "his people," is inherently diverse (they are called from every tribe, and every nation . . . every strata of society, from every race and place). So the substance of the charge of discrimination lies in the doctrine of election. We, as the recipients of this great deliverance, are definitely "set apart," **according to the will of God . . . who is to be glorified in all of that, for all of that**. Hence we have the great calling out and we have the separation imbedded in God's plan for salvation from the beginning.

"Their moral tone, their whole thought about the things of this world and the next, was altogether different from the rest of mankind, for Christ had come to draw them out of the kennel of iniquity in which others lived like beasts, to lift them out of the bog of sin, and to make them to be pure-minded, holy, kind, generous, loving people who should be like their Master, Jesus Christ. For this purpose, the Savior died. He thought it worth his while even to die upon the cross that he might thereby make a better, purer, nobler, more unselfish, more devout people than as yet had appeared in the Roman or Jewish world; and this is what he is still doing in this present evil world, lifting up men and women out of the filthiness in which they have been wallowing, and making them love holiness, and purity, and temperance, who hate all that is evil in the sight of

the God.” (Spurgeon, #2483, p. 4) We need *deliverance* from the world’s condemnation and condition.

***Dying for our sins to deliver us*** (Pt. 1) This deliverance is from the world’s customs, fashions, habits of mind and tricks in trade. We are to set the terms of imitation (sinlessness, purity, honesty and integrity)—winning others to our ways, and pleasing to our God in everything. We will refuse to participate in the ruin of men’s souls. ***We don’t cheat, steal, terrorize or slander because the way of “holiness” doesn’t course in those channels.*** These customs are aligned with the spirit of the age: Looking out for #1 (if I can swim, let the others drown—more room for me!); I’m a survivor (every man for himself, even if I crush the widow and exploit the fatherless); they shouldn’t get in my way. Show no mercy in the marketplace, suppress, oppress and swindle at will! Take advantage of slave labor—just so as I save a buck to spend as I want elsewhere! Do whatever I want, only just stay clear of the law—do it legally! Make money, if not honestly, at least turn a profit! *This is a detestable spirit of those who live for themselves and the devil take the hindmost!* In stark contrast, we seek to be considerate and thoughtful in all ways, we ponder the impact our behavior might have on others and desist from harmful activity because ***we love the Lord our God with all our mind, heart, soul and strength! Because we love our neighbors as ourselves! We even love our enemies!*** We do good to the thankless, and even to those inclined towards evil—*following the example and promptings of our Lord and Savior*. If we are reproached for godliness, we bear it bravely.

***We are to be different, fearlessly different.*** We see approval seeking as a thorny path as we pursue what God says is “right,” We don’t take our cues from the shifting sands of taste and preference. We neither ask our neighbors’ permission and avoid enslavement to the morals, tastes, and enticements of our age. And that is because we choose to fear God above fearing our fellowman, or the suspicion, or disapproval of our fellowman! Avoid the bane of people pleasing! ***Fearlessly Christian and different***, boldly, blatantly and publicly so. We have to be defiant when it comes to the world setting the terms of our existence. We row upstream, if necessary, to avoid going with the flow, or down the path of least resistance. Christ has made sin hateful to us! If it was sin that killed him, shall we be cozy with the spear, the cross the dagger? Join with the world in casting him out?! Remember the murderous nature of sin! Shall we reverse the crucifixion of us to the world, or the world to us? Subvert our own liberation? For what cause, or towards what end??

That brings us to our second point: ***what did Christ do towards this end of rescue?*** He gave up his heavenly crown, his sovereign peace, his throne . . . all, even to his last garment! ***He gave himself for our sins!*** That was the only remedy—only by his dying in our stead could there be expiation—or, deliverance from condemnation! ***To deliver us from this present evil age.*** The godly for the ungodly! Out of gratitude for this great deliverance we should refuse to

regress! Why should we even consider going back into that bondage?  
Enslaving ourselves?!

- I urge you to consider that adultery enslaves a person to another person.
- Consider that addiction is enslavement to a substance, feeling, pleasure or activity.
- Consider that living for anything, or without God in first place in everything is spiritual bondage—it is utterly apart from his purposes for us, and from his glory.
- Think how any sin makes you an accomplice to evil.

Imagine that there is an auction block in the town square and you are in line for purchase to the highest bidder. But as you are brought forward either partially naked, or in rags and chains—so the buyers can observe what they are getting—Jesus has mercy on you. Vulnerable, humiliated and exposed as you are, and he outbids them all! Just so we were purchased with his blood, better than much gold! He leads you away and emancipates you. Yes, he declares you legally free—and forgiven? He even puts fresh clothes on you and provides shoes for your feet. He gives you, honor, the robe of sonship and makes you a co-heir with him. He offers you a place in his household as his friend and brother. Yes, he invites you to wait on him and on others, and to be a servant as he himself is a servant. This emancipation is bigger than a break in life, an apprenticeship, a job, or contract! *It is something impossible for you to do for yourself. To God be the glory!*

Would you soon return to self-seeking, rebellious and mutinous living?  
Enslave yourself again? Are you sure you wouldn't?  
Does freedom frighten you more than slavery?

May his dying cries, *as we work through the issue entailed in being fearless different*, motivate us to hate the sin which the world loves and that he died to cancel, or nullify. **Come out from among them**, says the Lord, **and be ye separate from them, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.** (2 Cor. 6:17) By removing from us **the condemnation of our sin**, in his body and on that tree where Christ paid the penalty, he has freed us—absolving us by paying off the debt—from our history and from the penalty that was our due! ***And that is the very essence of the gospel!***

Our third question was ***why, why did Christ do this for our sins?*** He did this because our holiness (sanctification) was included in the purposes of God—the will, the purposes the predestined plan of God first for the calling forth and establishing of his people—as a servant people, a royal priesthood(!) to be a blessing to the nations.

Of course, there is no guarantee that the world will receive that blessing, but we are not responsible for the outcome, we are only accountable for our service!

It took a tremendous effort, a power surge of enormous proportions to dislodge mankind from the gravitational pull of the present evil of this world. It is as if the law of gravity has a spiritual parallel: sin has a magnetism (like a loadstone, of piece of magnetite which will attract iron filings), a force that attracts and aligns our desires (for evil and not for good!).

It is sheer grace, and a full miracle that any man should live in the world and no longer be of the world!! Let alone a household of faith! If it had not been according to the will of God, surely it would not have come about as fully and as genuinely as it has. *Yet it is stated as a divine decree that there should be “a people of God, called by his name and set apart for God, **chosen from among men**—out of the mass of the ungodly! (Deut. 14:1-2; 7:7-8 and Exod. 19:5-6)* That number, drawn out by a supernatural power (as was Abraham from Ur) who would choose to pursue what is godly, right, good and holy—shucking the determinisms of heredity, environment and socialization—which stands fixed as an immovable wall—at least according to the worldly understanding of things! Freeman, born of slaves? Unheard-of, impossible—well highly improbable. These chosen ones would be washed in the cleansing blood of Jesus, undergo renewal by the Holy Spirit, so as to become a new creature in Christ(!), transformed in spirit, mind, body and soul . . . one new race in Christ! *These would attain their full promise/potential, find authenticity, integrity, embrace truth, **do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before their God!*** A spiritual Israel raised on the wreck and ruin of the former Israel which had turned away, and fallen from their high place, failed in their spiritual calling, fallen short of attaining the promises and enjoying the covenants offered them by God.

Seen as the will of God, this sanctification, this separation from the world, now unbound by ethnic, cultural and historical limitations (as was once the case, when Israel flourished as God's people in Old Testament times), is a renewal of the same redemptive plan<sup>1</sup>—only with new players in a new setting. *Obedience to this call to be God's people serving his ends is the purpose for our whole lives for our days, weeks and years*—the highest, best and most sublime purpose imaginable. It is magnificent, truly great . . . **grand in scope, particular in detail** and . . . well, inevitable. However, wherever Christians get really straight and really clear about this calling, persecution will appear. That we are so unlike the world attracts hostility—the world is into conformity, uniformity. The standard of deviation from their script is very, very narrow. The world is “intolerant” of the Christlike—the world would **annihilate the church** if only it could. And, truly, the world has sincerely tried to do just that and repeatedly failed. *Those who have been exemplary Christians can attest to that narrowness—it's join us or else!*

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<sup>1</sup> In a military analogy, this would be a counterattack, or surge . . . perhaps entailing the surrounding of enemies who have surrounded one's position.

Meanwhile our prayers should be, “Lord, fulfill your purposes in me. Accomplish your will in and through me.” There are more martyrs to die, more persecutions to follow . . . there may not be many new and inventive ways to torture and persecute the faithful, but it doesn’t matter, No martyr goes without honor, nor misses her reward. The Sanhedrin forbade the apostles to preach; they preached anyway<sup>2</sup>. They went to jail for it. John Bunyan equated not reaching with denying his Master, demonstrating the stuff of which godly men are made regardless of their historical setting.

And, finally **our fourth and final point, *what should we say concerning all this?*** Why, just this: **To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.** God is glorified in Christ’s death. The Father gave His Son to die for us. There is glorious justice in the sin debt being paid in full by him. God had to punish sin and God, with inconceivably great love, put his Son to death *that we might live through him*. There is a treasure trove of glory in the atonement, enough to ring the changes for all the ages. We will never exhaust that great and glorious theme—not ever.

*Has Jesus Christ delivered us from the world?* Have we turned to Him and found forgiveness and pardon? Can we declare that we are *accepted* in the Beloved? Well, let us begin by glorifying God for who he is and for all that he has done. Let us sing and make music, let us intone hallelujah’s and make our theme as psalm of praise. It is a very great and wonderful thing to be separated from the world . . . and, be chosen at the same time, ***to be made holy unto God***. In season and out of season, praise is always in order . . . nothing is sweeter, and nothing is better.

Redeemed from a dying world, to be fetched out from under condemnation, to be freed forever . . . and to be made a child of God! These are praiseworthy and awesome things, we should be more grateful than angels—some never fell, and have no altitude to gain. Others will never soar in heaven again. But our deliverance is greater, more astonishing, more to be wondered at. Earth has made its way to heaven! All who are adopted, are all in . . . in the stall during wintry storm, in the corral, safely folded in the pen with all God’s sheep!

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<sup>2</sup>Nearly fifteen hundred and fifty years later, an English baptist, John **Bunyan** was **arrested** under the Conventicle Act of 1593? (perhaps confused with the Act of Uniformity, 1558), which made it an offense to attend a religious gathering other than at the parish church with more than five people outside their family. (Wikipedia errs, the Conventicle Acts was 1664—he wasn’t born until 1628 and arrested in November 1660—under the Stuart Restoration Act—for holding a conventicle, an illegal religious meeting). In 2020 an Assemblies of God pastor in Canada was arrested for preaching in violation of COVID-Restrictions! Grace to You Church in California, under John MacArthur, was fined for like violations. The animus towards the church was noteworthy as some bars and strip joints remained open for gatherings in some states. Church meetings were deemed “super spreaders” but not public protests and rioting.

And, as we celebrate our *calling out*, as we rejoice in our *transformation*, let us never forget the poor souls, still bound, still enslaved, still in chains . . . let us speak to their condition and offer them hope . . . some are waiting on a single word, some are yearning for an invitation and we get to deliver that! We get to introduce our God to those who've never heard of him and, who knows, we may summon the elect to him and have the joy of it all because it is what God would have us do.

Amen.