

blunder that real honour must come by way of gift. But Christ tells them: No, it must be earned before it can be had. In the world, where there is so much falsehood and fraud and injustice, you may buy or beg a distinguished place or name; but in the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of truth and justice and righteousness, each will get the place and the name he merits by his endeavour. But to save them from another blunder, Christ also tells them what is the way to true greatness. It is not to walk the earth as a lord, demanding homage and service from all; it is to walk in the way of a servant, and be content with the work of ministering. The kingdom of God is the reverse of the kingdoms of earth. In them men seek and find by loud self-assertion; by thrusting others down and then climbing over their prostrate bodies; by cunning, or cajolery, or violence; but in that kingdom the greatest are they who serve, the most honoured are they who seek an obscure usefulness. The highest illustration He can give them of that principle is Himself. He, the highest, best, most royal in strength and beauty—the very Son of Man—has come to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. The last clause of the verse is a great deal larger than the first. To give His life a ransom for many is more, more in its intensity and larger in the area of its teaching, than the assertion that He had come to minister unto others. It is nothing less than the laying bare of the great and strong foundations of the temple of Humanity that Christ was building up. It is the secret of Christ's, and of every Christian's, enthusiasm—love—a self-sacrificing love. He has come to give His life a ransom for many. That is sacrifice—it is vicarious sacrifice.

Let us look at that a moment. Men object to the term very much. They say you must not talk about Christ's vicarious sacrifice, for there is no such thing. Christ's work, they say, had reference to man and only to man. God was always a tender Father, full of love and ready to forgive. That is the broad theology, or the advanced school. Well, I am a member of that advanced school, but I believe most earnestly in the sacrifice, the vicarious sacrifice, of Christ. I believe He did what He said here, "give His life a ransom for many." How can I say—how can any man say that there is no such thing as vicarious sacrifice when all the world abounds with it. It is pressed upon our sight every day and every hour; life is sacrificed for life. The earth is one great altar streaming with the blood of offering. I don't know when it begun nor when it will cease. We know that long before the advent of man to this earth the mighty lizards tore each other to pieces in the slimy mud and primeval marshes of the world. There they are in the fossil state, kept at the British Museum and other-where, dreadful but unquestionable witnesses to this great law of sacrifice, vicarious sacrifice—one creature sacrificed for the life of another. The same thing is going on now. The feeble animal becomes a prey to the stronger one, the mouse becomes food for the hawk; the lion devours the antelope; the tiger leaps on the ox; and man himself, man at his best, is doing the same thing—he feeds on animals. By no consent of their own they suffer and die for us; their lives are the ransom for ours.

And it does not end there. The life of the animal is sacrificed for man, and man takes the life of his fellow-man for ransom. I don't mean Cannibalism, but the way in which human beings by the thousand are not only sacrificed to the lies, and cowardice, and selfishness, and lust of others, but to the wants and necessities of others. You and I have a share in it every day, and we cannot help it. The law of vicarious sacrifice is interwoven with all our civilised life; and the higher and more perfect the state of our civilisation, the more pressing seems to be the demands of that law. Look at the life of a great city, and you will see how imperious is that law of sacrifice. To meet our wants men have to work at unhealthy trades and in a poisoned atmosphere; they are not free to do it even; they are lashed into it by the whip of a stern necessity. While you are listening to the glorious harmonies at a concert, a man perhaps is blowing his lungs away into his instrument. The glass blower works, knowing that his days are numbered. Thousands of women in our cities are week by week making garments with a double thread—"at once a shroud and a shirt"—and we reap the benefit of it. The work must be done, done at the price of life-breath. Lace makers go blind at their work. Miners go down into the dark, and the dirt, and the pestilent vapour—and we get our metals, or coals.

But it does not stop there; the law seems to spare none. The rich are burdened and taxed for the poor; honest men have to work for the support of rogues; the idle everywhere prey upon the hardworking and industrious part of the population. By no consent of my own I have to pay for the maintenance of those who can but will not provide for themselves.

Now, how has all this come about? To whom, to what is this great and continual sacrifice? The stronger among animals did not demand it of the weaker. The need was in the stronger; and in preying upon others they did but obey a natural instinct. The sacrifice is made to the law of being, and God is the author of that. He has ordained that life shall live upon life; that life shall be the ransom for life. It is not the result of sin—a moral perversion of the universe; it is the natural and necessary working of an eternal law. Sin has perverted that law, misused it, broken it; but it has the great right of God as foundation. It is very dark, and a great mystery; but there it is—vicarious sacrifice.

It is very dark on that side, but very bright and all glorious on the other. The sacrifice I have spoken of is involuntary; it is a thing imposed; it is wrung out at the cost of tears and groans and suffering and death. But there is a voluntary sacrifice; in it there are tears and groans and suffering and death, but not a speck of darkness and not a shadow of mystery, for it is all voluntary; it is the outburst of the heart's love. Men do, they suffer, they die for others because they love those others. And this voluntary sacrifice changes the whole aspect of the law which imposes it. It is no longer dark, pitiless and mysterious; it is transfigured and made radiant. In our midst every day we have the working of this glorious law which demands that men shall offer vicarious sacrifice. Every day the saint suffers for the sinner—the good bear the iniquities of the bad. What are all our social, charitable and philanthropic institutions, our hospitals and reformatories? Why, instruments by means of which the honest and upright and good ward off from the vicious and idle and profligate the consequences of their sin. The desert of the idle is hunger, starvation; but the industrious step between him and the penalty, and say, "No, we hate his sin, he shall not die for it, we will feed him." The fool is shielded

from the results of his folly: and the mad from the consequences of his madness. Some men bear what is actually due to others. And not simply in a general way by public institutions, but they thrust themselves between the sinner and his punishment. How many a mother has suffered for her children's sake till her heart broke? How many fathers now are almost every day receiving the knife thrust into their own quivering flesh to shield their sons? Many of you are bravely standing between your children and a bad world; you want to keep them pure; you want to save them from suffering; you use your brains to spare theirs; you deny yourselves to give them an education; you die daily on their behalf; you find joy in suffering for them; and all that is vicarious sacrifice. The foolish and the wicked do not bear the full penalty of their sins; and the wise and the good suffer for them and save them.

And that law is stronger and more beautiful in its operations than any other law which is known to man. See the workings of that, and you see religion in its fullness. Why then should it be said that a vicarious sacrifice could never be; that it would not be just or righteous for Jesus Christ to bear the sins of others and give His life a ransom for many? It is considered not only just and righteous in the life of the family and the nation, but absolutely necessary. We know that without it society would never hold together. And is Christ to be denied the joy of giving free, full, infinite exercise to His unbounded love? The father and mother suffer to save their children, and shall not He, who is father and mother of all mankind, suffer to save His own? The patriot dies for his country, and shall not Christ die for the world which He has made and loved? I do not see then, why it should be called a strange and unjust transaction when we speak of Jesus Christ as standing between the sinner and the consequences of his sin; when we say that He bore the sins of the whole world, and that by His stripes we are healed. For I find vicarious sacrifice down at the very roots of being, and sending the sap streaming upward to nourish the fibre of the tree of life. I see it breaking out in one direction, and it is called patriotism. I see it building hospitals for the sick and homes for the poor, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and it is called charity. And it is charity; love in motion; love doing; love giving out itself to others; it is vicarious sacrifice. And then I can confidently turn to Him who was all love, who was God to man and man to God, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Behold Him who died, the just for the unjust, and gave His life a ransom for many.

And why should this view of Christ's suffering and sacrifice give us hard thoughts of God the Father, causing us to think of Him as the grim chancellor of the moral realm, administering justice according to technical covenants, and demanding so much suffering for so much mercy to be shown? We don't complain against God when parents suffer for their children, or good men suffer for bad men. We know that it is the working of a law by which life is being purged and perfected; we know that they who suffer, impelled to it by a great love, find joy in pain, and pluck life from the very jaws of death. And so in a higher, nobler and diviner way did Jesus Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, endure the cross, despising the shame. It was His Father's will, and it was His delight. In love, in obedience to the law of His being, He gave Himself to death, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. There was no infinite anger to be appeased by human agony; there was no grim, fierce justice demanding satisfaction; but man had sinned, and the effects must follow, no power in heaven or on earth could stop them; the penalty must be borne, but by whom? "By Me," said the Son of God; and "He gave His life a ransom for many." You say, "Then Christ was smitten by God?" Yes, in the sense that God is author of the law which demands it everywhere and for everybody. The patriot is sacrificed to the heroic fidelity of his life to the public good. The martyr's blood is shed as a seal and a witness of that holy faith by which he longs to light and bless the world. The missionary goes forth to lands of fever and malaria and to early death for the sake of giving the heathen some glimpses of truth. Do you look on the imprisoned patriot, the ashes of the martyr, the fever-stricken frame of the missionary, and say, "This is cruel, for it is vengeance; God has smitten the men?" Oh no. And no more ought we to say that God imposed suffering upon Christ. God did not tear His flesh and torment His spirit; God did not stretch Him on the cross and crown His brow with the cruel thorn. Christ stepped into the place of suffering and died for man—died in his stead—bore his stripes and ransomed him.

I have based my argument for Christ's vicarious sacrifice on the fact apparent to us all that the good do willingly and with love suffer for and instead of the bad. If motherhood and fatherhood can do it, then why not Christhood? If earthly love is equal to it, then surely heavenly love may be. And if it is just and good and beautiful in the family and the nation, then why not in Him who is elder Brother of all the world. But though I have put it in that way, I hope I shall not be understood to teach that Christ's sacrifice was only that of a martyr, greater in degree but similar in kind to that which Paul or Latimer offered. For I believe that there entered into the death, the sacrifice of Christ, elements other than those which belong to any, even to the suffering and death of the best of men: that there were in it avowed, though unexplained, relations to the unseen world, to moral influences and to the eternal King of the universe. I believe that the sacrifice of Christ had some influence that was far different from anything we know. What it is I cannot tell. It is simply given as a fact, and left there; as a fact I accept it and leave it there. It is a dark place, but from it issues a stream of living waters, and I with joy stoop down and drink.

Now, friends, I have just two words to say about this—"Christ gave His life a ransom for many" for you—believe that. Behold in Him your Saviour, your Redeemer. Accept the ransom He died to give you. Faith in Him as your sacrifice, means a full and loving acceptance of the great, glorious, eternal life He offers. Believe His word and take His gift.

And then, copy Him. He gave Himself to others and for others—do that. You cannot die for others, but better still, you can live for others. Give of your strength to the weak—give your bread to the hungry—give your money for the spread of truth and righteousness in the earth. Christ demands that He "gave Himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Work good works, always living unto Him who died for you and rose again.