

## **WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR THREE**

### **We Reap What Christ Sowed – The Cross/Chapter One: Our Human Condition**

The importance of what Jesus did when He was here on earth cannot be minimized. His life was perfectly sinless and completely righteous. His death on the cross was not some tragic martyrdom, but a sacrifice for sin. The vindication of His life and the validation of His death took place when He rose from the dead. At the heart of the entire process stands the concept of *substitution*. God's solution for man's problem involves the provision of a substitute, who could do for helpless and hopeless sinners like us, what we could never do for ourselves. On the one hand, that meant living a perfectly righteous life. On the other, it required that Jesus become a substitutionary sacrifice for sin, satisfying God's justice in a manner which would have been impossible for any of us. *Through this redemptive work, a solution has been provided for our human condition.* God is now giving each of us the opportunity of receiving forgiveness instead of condemnation, of escaping death and experiencing life. One passage that enhances our appreciation of Christ as our substitute is found in Galatians 3:13, where we read this –

**“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, ‘CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE.’”**

The principle of substitution is set forth here in the Greek preposition “*huper*,” which is translated by the word “for.” It indicates that Jesus did something on our behalf and in our place. Namely, He became a curse for us. The curse speaks of our fallen condition that brings us under God's judgment and condemnation (Deuteronomy 27:9-26). The latter part of Galatians 3:13 consists of a partial quote from Deuteronomy 21:23, which describes the Old Testament practice of executing a criminal through stoning, followed by placing him upon a stake, in order to symbolize rejection by God. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, the curse of God which rested on us was placed upon Him. The physical symbol of the curse throughout human history has been the thorn (Genesis 3:17-19). The fact that Jesus wore a crown of thorns during His crucifixion, speaks not only of the Roman mockery of His Kingship, but of what took place there spiritually on our behalf. This substitutionary transaction produced an eternally significant result: it redeemed us from the curse of the Law.

This exchange could not have taken place with just anyone. It required someone who was without sin, and who had the capacity to take upon himself the just punishment due to all sinners. This is why Christ's person is so strongly connected to His work. *Who He was enabled Him to do what He did.* Only God incarnate was up to such a task and it was fulfilled completely by Jesus Christ. The trade-off involves more than being forgiven. Our sin is not only imposed upon Him, but His righteousness is credited to us. In the language of the New Testament, *substitution provides for justification.* Nowhere in the Bible is this principle described with greater beauty and brevity than in 2 Corinthians 5:21 –

**“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

Every one of us can experience this blessing by simply placing our trust in Jesus Christ.