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Fifteen Words of Hope

5: 21

Fifteen words of hope DIG: How can an absolutely and infinitely holy God be reconciled to sinners? Who is the only One who could make the first move in the process of reconciliation? On what basis is Yeshua guilty? Who benefits from this process? What is the benefit?

REFLECT: When you think of your life before being saved, what are you most grateful for now that you are a new creature in Messiah? How are you growing in your relationship with the Lord? Healthy things multiply. Who are you discipling? What gives you hope?

Yeshua gave up everything so you could have everything.

There have been many plagues in human history, but there is one plague that is more widespread and deadly than all the others combined. It is, as the Puritan writer Ralph Venning called it, “the plague of plagues.” It affects every person who ever lived – and is one-hundred percent fatal. Unlike other plagues, which cause only physical **death**, this plague causes spiritual and eternal **death** as well. It is the plague of **sin**.

But the Good News is that there is a cure for **the sinner** infected by the deadly **sin** epidemic. **ADONAI**, in **His** mercy and **love**, provided a remedy for **sin** – the sacrifice of **His Son**. **And it is all from God, who through the Messiah has reconciled us to Himself and has given us the work of that reconciliation, which is that God in the Messiah was reconciling mankind to Himself, not counting their sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors of the Messiah; in effect, God is making his appeal through us. What we do is appeal on behalf of the Messiah, “Be reconciled to God” (5:18-21)!** But this **reconciliation** raises some profound questions. How can an absolutely and infinitely holy **God** be **reconciled** to **sinners**? How can **His** just and holy character, which demands the condemnation and punishment of all who violate it, be satisfied? How can those who

deserve no mercy receive it? How can **God** uphold true **righteousness** and at the same time give grace? How can the demands of both justice and **love** be met? How can **God** be **righteous Himself and also the One who makes sinners righteous (Romans 3:26)?**

As hard as those questions seem, one brief verse answers them all and resolves the seeming paradox of redemption. With a consciousness that is reflective of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**, this one brief sentence, **fifteen Greek words**, carefully balanced, almost chiasmic, resolves the dilemma of **reconciliation**. It reveals the essence of the atonement, expresses the heart of the gospel, and articulates the most glorious truth in Scripture – how fallen mankind’s **sin**-surrendered relationship to **ADONAI** can be restored. Like a cache of rare jewels, each word deserving careful examination under the magnifying glass of Scripture, it yields truths about **the benefactor, the substitute, the beneficiaries, and the benefit.**

The benefactor: He made (5:21a). The end of **5:20** reveals the antecedent of “**He**” to be **God the Father**. **Reconciliation** is **His** plan, and **it** could not occur unless **He** initiated and sustained **it**. **Sinners** cannot devise their own religious approach to **God**, because they are **dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1)**. The damning lie of all false religions is that mankind can reconcile themselves to **God** by their own efforts. All attempts to do so are futile. **The righteous deeds of sinners are like a filthy garment; and all of them wither like a leaf, and their iniquities like the wind, take them away (Isaiah 64:6)**. As a result, **there is none righteous, not even one (Romans 3:10)**.

The only way **reconciliation** can take place is if **ADONAI** reaches out to **sinners**, as **He** did by the sacrifice of **His Son**. **It** flows out of **God’s love**; it was because **He** so loved the world that **He** gave **His only and unique Son**, so that everyone who trusts in Him may have eternal life (**John 3:16**). **God demonstrates His own love for us, wrote Paul, in that while we were still sinners, Messiah died for us (Romans 5:8)**; though we were **His enemies** we were reconciled with **God through the death of His Son (Romans 5:10)**. Because **God is so rich in mercy and loves us with such intense love that, even when we were dead because of our acts of disobedience, He brought us to life along with the Messiah (Ephesians 2:4-5)**. It is this emphasis on a loving **God** reaching out to lost **sinners** that sets those who worship **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** apart from all the false religions in the world.

Yeshua did not go to the cross because fickle people turned on **Him**, though they did. **He** did not go to the cross because demon-deceived false religious leaders plotted **His death**, though they did. **Messiah** did not go to the cross because Judas betrayed **Him**, though he did. **He** did not die because an angry, intimidated a Roman governor into sentencing **Him** to crucifixion, though they did. **The Son of God** went to the cross as the outworking of **God's** plan to **reconcile sinners** to **Himself**. In **Peter's** first sermon, **he** declared to the nation of **Isra'el** that **Yeshua** was **delivered over [to death] by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23, 3:18, 13:27; Matthew 26:24; Luke 22:22; John 18:11; Hebrews 10: 5-7)**. Only **God** could author and execute the plan of redemption and **reconcile sinners** to **Himself**. That plan is so utterly beyond the comprehension of the lost that it seems like **foolishness** to them (see the commentary on **First Corinthians** to see **link click An - The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**). No religion of human design has seen anything like it.

The substitute: This sinless man be a sin offering (5:21b). This description points unmistakably to the only possible sacrifice for **sin**. It eliminates every human who ever lived **for there is no man who does not sin (First Kings 8:46), since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)**. Only one who was **sinless** could qualify to bear the full wrath of **God** for **the sins** of others. The perfect sacrifice for **sin** would have to be a human being, for only **a man** could **die** for other men and women. Yet, **He** would also have to be **God**, for only **God** is **sinless**. That narrows the field to one, **the God-man, Yeshua Messiah**.

After presenting **Yeshua** as the absolutely holy substitute for **sinners**, **Paul**, prompted by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, makes the remarkable statement that **God made Him a sin offering**. That is an important phrase and requires a careful understanding. It does not mean that Yeshua became a sinner. As **God** in human flesh, **He** could not possibly have committed any **sin** or in any way violated the Torah of **ADONAI**. It is equally unthinkable that **YHVH**, whose **eyes are too pure to approve of evil (Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:13)**, would make anyone **a sinner**, let alone **His** own holy **Son**. **He** was the unblemished **Lamb** while on the cross, personally guilty of no **evil**. **Isaiah 53:4-6** describes the only sense in which **Yeshua** could have been made **sin**: **In fact, it was our diseases He bore, our pains from which he suffered; yet we regarded Him as punished, stricken and afflicted by God. But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, went astray; we**

turned, each one, to his own way; yet **ADONAI** laid on Him the guilt of all of us.

Messiah was not made a **sinner**, nor was **He** punished for any **sin** of **His** own. Instead, **the Father** treated **Him** as if **He** were a **sinner** by charging to **His** account the **sins** of everyone who would ever believe. All those **sins** were charged against **Him** as if **He** had personally committed **them**. It was at that moment when **Yeshua** cried out in a loud voice, saying: **My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me (Matthew 27:46)?** It is crucial, therefore, to understand that this was the only sense in which **Yeshua** was made **sin**. **He** was personally pure, yet officially guilty; personally holy, yet criminally responsible. But by dying on the cross, **Messiah** did not become evil like we are, nor do redeemed **sinner**s become inherently as holy as **He** is. **ADONAI** credits believer's **sins** to **Messiah's** account, and **His righteousness** to our spiritual bank account. Were it not for this fact, no one could be reconciled to **God**.



The beneficiaries: on our behalf (5:21c). The word **our** refers back to the phrase **ambassadors for Messiah** in **5:20**; to those to whom **the message of reconciliation** was given (**5:19**), who have been **reconciled to God (5:18)**, and are **new creations (5:17)**. Although **Messiah** died for the whole world, **His** substitutionary **death** was only effective (resulting in eternal life), for those who would believe in **Him (Jn 1:12, 3:16-18; Rom 10:9-10)**, all those whom **the Father** gives **Him** and draws to **Him (John 6:37 and 65)**. The fact that **ADONAI** raised **Yeshua from the dead** is proof that **God** accepted **His** sacrifice **in order to make us righteous** (see the commentary on **Romans, to see link click Bf - The Means of Justification**).

The benefit: So that in union with Messiah we might fully share in His

righteousness (5:21d). When we believe **that Messiah died for our sins, in accordance with what the TaNaKh says, and that He was buried, and He was raised on the third day (First Corinthians 15:3b-4a)**, then all **the righteousness of Messiah** is transferred to our spiritual bank account. At that moment we are just as **righteous** as **Messiah**, minus **His** deity. The very **righteousness** that **God** requires before **He** can accept us, is the very **righteousness** that **Messiah** provides.

Because **Yeshua** paid the full penalty for the sin of the world on the cross, the wrath of **God** was fully satisfied so that **He** was free to act positively on behalf of **sinners**. **The psalmist** declared: **O LORD, if you kept a record of sins, who, ADONAI, could stand? But with You there is forgiveness so that You will be feared (Psalm 130:3-4)**. In metaphorical pictures of **forgiveness, God** is said to have removed our **sins from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12)**; **threw all our sins behind His back (Isaiah 38:17)**; promised **never to remember them (Isaiah 43:25)**; hidden **them from His sight behind a thick cloud (Isaiah 44:22)**; and **threw them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19)**.

On the cross **Ha'Shem** treated **Yeshua** as if **He** had lived our lives with all our **sin**, so that **God** could then treat us as if we lived **Messiah's** life of pure holiness. Our **sinful** life was legally charged to **Him** on the cross, as if **He** had lived it, so that **His righteous** life could be credited to us, as if we lived it. This is the doctrine of imputation, where **Messiah** imputed, or transferred, **His righteousness** to us at the moment of faith (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God does for Us at the Moment of Faith**). That truth, expressed so concisely and powerfully in these fifteen words of hope, is the only cure for the plague of **sin**.¹⁴⁶

Remember what God has already done for you. If **ADONAI** never did anything else for you, **He** would still deserve your continual praise for the rest of your life because of what **Yeshua** did for you on the cross. **God's Son** died for you! This is the greatest reason for worship. Unfortunately, we forget the cruel details of the agonizing sacrifice **God** made on our behalf. Familiarity breeds complacency. Even before **His** crucifixion, **the Son of God** was stripped naked, mocked, crowned with thorns, and spit on contemptuously. Abused and ridiculed by heartless men, **He** was treated worse than an animal.

Then, nearly unconscious from blood loss, **He** was forced to drag a heavy and cumbersome crossbeam, weighing from 75 to 125 pounds, up a hill to the waiting

vertical post. It was placed across the nape of **Messiah's** neck and balanced along the shoulders. Its splinters quickly found their way to open wounds on **His** shoulders. Then **He** was nailed to it and was left to die a slow, agonizing death. While **His** lifeblood drained out of **Him**, hecklers stood by and shouted insults, making fun of **His** pain and challenging **His** claim to be **God**.

Next, as **the Lamb of God** took all of mankind's sin and guilt on **Himself**, **God the Father** looked away from that ugly sight, and **Yeshua** cried out: **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** **Messiah** could have saved **Himself** – but then **He** couldn't have saved you.

Words cannot describe the darkness of that moment. Why did **God** allow and endure such ghastly, evil treatment? Why? So you could be spared an eternity in hell, and so you could share in **His** glory forever. Forever is a long time. The Bible says: **Messiah was without sin, but for our sake God made Him share our sin in order that in union with Him we might share the righteousness of God (5:21 TEV).** **Yeshua** gave up everything so you could have everything. **He** died so you could live forever. *That alone* is worthy of your continual thanks and praise. Never again should you wonder what you have to be thankful for.¹⁴⁷

*Dear Heavenly **Father** and **Savior**, Praise **Your** great love that offered the wonderful gift of **Yeshua's** righteousness to all who love and follow **Yeshua** as **Lord** and **Savior (Romans 10:9-10)**. Some are laughed at, mocked or beaten, but soon they will be with you in your eternal home of joy and peace. Life's trials will be over – replaced by an eternal life in heaven filled with great joy and perfect contentment. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18).***

*It will be worth it all, when we see **Yeshua!** Life's trials are gone forever – instead life will be so wonderful, far exceeding anything we have ever known! **He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away (Rev 21:4)**. I worship **You** now and love to put **You** first in my life in everything I do, say and think. I love **You** dear **Father** and I look forward to worshiping and praising **You** thru all eternity! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen.*