

# The Scapegoat

By Dutch Sheets

The Concept of a scapegoat comes from this redemptive intercessional work of Christ and illustrates well our concept of carrying something away.

A scapegoat takes someone else's blame and resulting consequences. In the Old Testament two animals were used on the Day of Atonement. One was sacrificed, the other was used for the scapegoat. After the high priest placed his hands on the scapegoat's head confessing the sins of the nation, it was released into the wilderness never to be seen again. It symbolized Christ the scapegoat crucified outside the city *bearing away* our curse.

Christ, the scapegoat, bearing our curse is well illustrated by a story I read in the book *What It Will Take to Change the World* by S.D. Gordon. The following is my paraphrase of this story about a couple who discovered that their 14-year-old son had lied to them. The young boy, whom we'll refer to as Steven, had skipped school three consecutive days. He was found out when his teacher called his parents to inquire about his well-being.

The parents were more upset by Steven's lies than his missing school. After praying with him about what he had done, they decided on a very unusual and severe form of punishment. Their conversation with him went something like this:

"Steven, do you know how important it is that we be able to trust one another?"

"Yes."

"How can we ever trust each other if we don't always tell the truth? That's why lying is such a terrible thing. Not only is it sin, but it also destroys our ability to trust one another. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your mother and I must make you understand the seriousness, not so much of skipping school, but of the lies you told. Your discipline will be that for the next three days, one for each day of your sin, you must go to the attic and stay there by yourself. You will even eat and sleep there."

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So young Steven headed off to the attic and the bed prepared for him there. It was a long evening for Steven and perhaps longer for Mom and Dad. Neither could eat, and for some reason when Dad tried to read the paper the words seemed foggy. Mom tried to sew, but couldn't see to thread the needle. Finally it was bedtime. About midnight as the father lay in bed thinking about how lonely and afraid Steven must be, he finally spoke to his wife, "Are you awake?"

"Yes. I can't sleep for thinking about Steven."

"Neither can I," answered Dad.

An hour later he queried again, "Are you asleep yet?"

"No," answered Mom, "I just can't sleep for thinking about Steven all alone up in the attic."

"Me neither."

Another hour passed. It was now 2:00 A.M. "I can't stand this any longer!" murmured Dad as he climbed out of bed grabbing his pillow and a blanket. "I'm going to the attic."

He found Steven much as he expected: wide awake with tears in his eyes.

"Steven", said his father, "I can't take away the punishment for your lies because you must know the seriousness of what you have done. You must realize that sin, especially lying, has severe consequences. But your mother and I can't bear the thought of you being all alone here in the attic so I'm going to share your punishment with you."

Father lay down next to his son and the two put their arms around each other's necks. The tears on their cheeks mingled as they shared the same pillow and the same punishment...for three nights.

What a picture! Two thousand years ago God crawled "out of bed" with His blanket and pillow—actually three spikes and a cross of crucifixion—"staked" His tear-stained cheek next to ours and bare our punishment for sin. His attic was a tomb, His bed a slab of rock and the cheek next to His was yours and mine.

That's right. Christ was not alone on the cross. We were with Him. He was actually there to join us in our sentence of death. No, we may not have been there physically, but we were there spiritually (see Romans 6:4,6). And of course, as He hung there He was "bearing" some things. Our sins were being "laid on" Him and He was carrying them away.

Christ didn't quite finish the job, however.

Wait! Before you "stone" me, please look at Colossians 1:24: "*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.*"

Submitted By Tom Stephens