

VIII. THE CROSS OF SALVATION

The Greatest Gift to Mankind

We have seen that Jesus came as a Prophet, not only speaking the Word of God as the prophets of old, but as the Word Himself. We saw that He came as King to redeem and establish His Kingdom by fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption and fulfilling and procuring the previously made covenants and their respective blessings. And now, as His earthly ministry comes to its violent end, we will see Christ as the great High Priest, who not only offers the great and final sacrifice, but who actually *is* the great and final sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This gives us a profound clarity to Abraham's statement to his son Isaac that "God will provide for Himself the lamb."⁵⁸³

**From Jesus' youth, indeed even from his birth,
the cross cast its shadow ahead of him.
His death was central to his mission.**

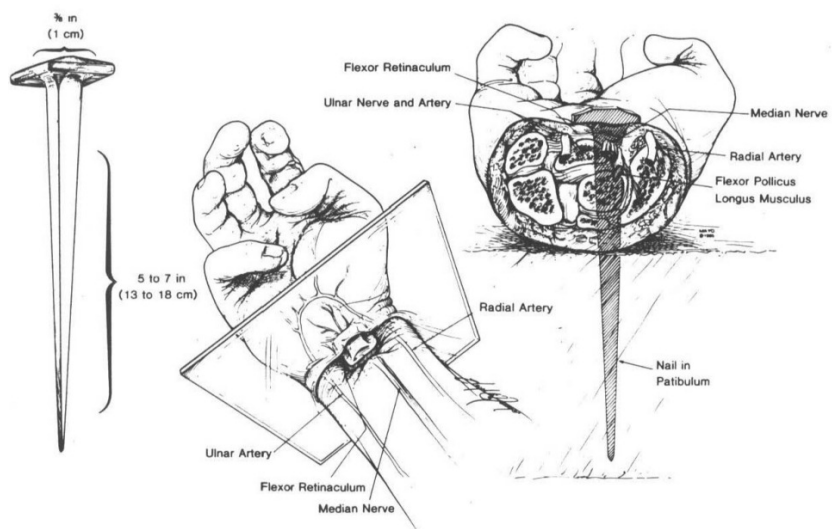
-John Stott⁵⁸⁴

Let's look now, at what the sacrifice of the Lamb entailed as we see Jesus the High Priest offer Himself simultaneously as the sacrificial Lamb.

CRUCIFIXION

After His arrest, false conviction, and flogging, Jesus was given His cross and taken to the Place of the Skull, called Golgotha, outside of the city walls.⁵⁸⁵ There, He was stripped of His clothes to be prepared for His ridicule and torture, and the soldiers gambled for His clothing, which as we saw, fulfilled prophecy.⁵⁸⁶

He was then laid down on the ground upon the cross. His hand was stretched out onto one side of the crossbeam, and a 6-8 inch nail was driven through it at the wrists in between the bones. Piercing here would give enough support so that He could hang without the weight of His body pulling down and ripping the nail through the hand. The other hand was then stretched as far as possible and pulled very tightly to the other side, pulling on the already nailed first hand, as the same thing was done to the other wrist. This puncture would sever the median nerve, which would cause a severe burning and shooting pain and would paralyze His hand. This method also minimized bleeding, which would prolong the suffering through a slow, painful death.



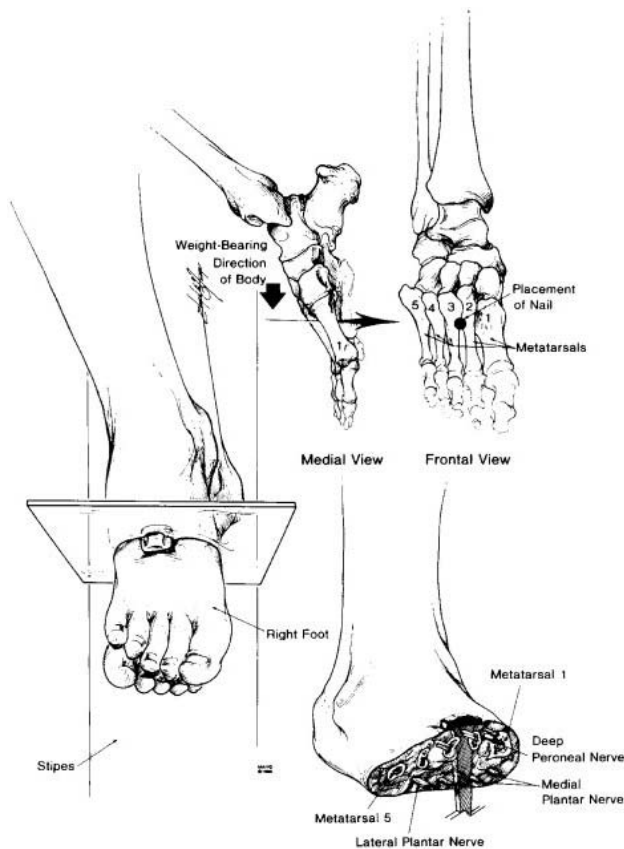
From that point the cross was raised, and the weight of the body would pull against the wrists. The shoulders and elbows would dislocate out of the joints; ligaments and tendons would tear. The feet were then lifted up by bending the knees, and a small platform was placed under the feet to support them. This support, as well, was given to prolong the life of the condemned. His feet were then either placed one on top of each other, or possibly side by side, and a nail was driven through them into the small platform. A small wooden seat was placed underneath Him, also to give Him some support, so that suffering would be prolonged.

⁵⁸³ Genesis 22.8

⁵⁸⁴ *The Cross of Christ*, pg. 23

⁵⁸⁵ Matthew 27.33 // Mark 15.22 // Luke 23.33 // John 19.17

⁵⁸⁶ Psalm 22.18 // Luke 23.34, 35 // John 19.23, 24



Above Him was placed a sign which Pilate apparently wrote or dictated to be written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, which said “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”⁵⁸⁷ This infuriated the Jews, who wanted Pilate to not write that He is the King of the Jews, but that He *said* He was King of the Jews. Nonetheless, Pilate didn’t bother with their argument.⁵⁸⁸ With His crown of thorns, the sign above His head, and the small wooden seat on which He sat, this would be His throne. This is how His people would crown and exalt their King.

While He hung there, raised between two thieves, insults and ridicule would be hurled at Him by people passing by. They would tell Him to prove He was the Son of God by coming off of the cross.⁵⁸⁹ The restraint shown by God made flesh, to choose instead to pursue His love for His Father and His love for His broken image bearers is unfathomable. Seeing as well how God the Father restrained His own anger against this atrocity for the sake of their redemption is unreal!

As He hangs on the cross, breathing becomes nearly impossible, because the position of the body with outstretched arms causes the chest to be in a nearly perpetually expanded position. The only way to breathe would be to push down with the feet onto the nails in order to lift the body up ever so slightly. The nails would push

against and tear tissue between His metatarsals. His bare, raw, and scourged back would rub against the rugged cross. Dehydration would kick in quickly, due to the loss of blood. That, mixed with limited oxygen to flow into the lessened blood supply, would cause the heart to beat faster and faster, trying to keep up with the demand.

Eventually, the arms would fatigue, cramps would set in, His pectoral muscles (chest) and His intercostal muscles (ribs) were unable to act. Air would come in, but air could not go out, as He couldn’t lift Himself up to exhale. The carbon dioxide level would rise to a deadly state; the usual death for the condemned would be suffocation due to this. It only depended on the strength of the condemned.

This torture could go on for days, as it often did. However, due to the Passover coming, the Jewish leaders needed these three men dead before sundown, when the Sabbath would commence. They weren’t going to wait for suffocation to happen naturally, so they would cause it to happen quickly. To do this, it was common practice in expediting death to break the legs of the condemned, as to force asphyxiation by the weight of the body on unsupported legs. The soldiers then went up to the two thieves, and with large sledge hammers, and broke their legs. This is, in actuality, an act of “mercy” since it brought their suffering to an end quicker. Upon approaching Jesus, however, they were surprised to find that He was already dead. In order to make sure, they pierced His side where His lungs were. A mixture of blood and water poured out.⁵⁹⁰ His legs were not broken, again fulfilling prophecy.⁵⁹¹

When this flowing of blood and water would happen, it was a sign that the heart, under extreme pressure and overworking, would finally burst. Rather than the normal death of suffocation, with Jesus the kidneys had already shut down in order to preserve fluid due to dehydration, and low blood pressure would cause Him to faint. This low blood pressure would cause what is called hypovolemic shock, which would cause fluid to accumulate in a sac around the heart, which is called pericardial effusion, and around the lungs, which is called pleural effusion. He suffered a heart failure. When the side was pierced, the spear would rupture the sac around the lungs and heart, causing both blood and water to flow out.

The Lamb of God had been slain. He had died of a broken heart.

⁵⁸⁷ Matthew 27.35-37 // Mark 15.24-26 // Luke 23.37, 38 // John 19.18, 19

⁵⁸⁸ John 19.20, 21

⁵⁸⁹ Matthew 27.39-44 // Mark 15.29-32 // Luke 23.39-42

⁵⁹⁰ John 19.34

⁵⁹¹ Exodus 12.46 // Psalm 34.20 // John 19.32-36

Who KILLED Jesus?

MOTIVATED BY LOVE

Before taking in what exactly this has done for us and what the ramifications are, it is important for us to establish, if it hasn't been already, who exactly killed Jesus. This truth of Christ being our substitute is a critical one in our faith. It is one that has been under attack, really for ages, but even much more in recent years. We can first look at some of the obvious perpetrators, and we can see specific actions by:

- The Pharisees who sought purposely to kill Him.
- The Jews who agreed with the Pharisees.
- The Romans who had the power to kill or release.
- Pontius Pilate who specifically was given authority and even thought of Him as innocent.
- Judas who betrayed Him.

Then, of course, most of us are aware that it is our own sins that necessitated the death of Christ, which we have seen building up to this point. But it is important to remember, that even though it was indeed the Pharisees, the Jews, Rome, Pontius Pilate, Judas, and even our own sins that handed over Jesus to be crucified, we must note the essential truth that there was another who planned and initiated the death of Jesus:

His Father.

It was, in fact, the plan and purpose of God the Father that handed Jesus over to be crucified. It was His idea, His plan, His solution, and His covenant, and it was planned long ago, before even creation itself; but this was for a far different reason and purpose than what we claim (for our reason to kill Him was to enjoy our sin and rebellion).

Look at this incredible verse that speaks of Christ's death as being God's *definite* plan (not a Plan B), but yet that it was also us as humanity who are the ones who crucified and killed Him:

Acts 2.23

...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

It was God the Father who initiated, because of His love, this Covenant of Redemption. It was He who desired to send His only begotten Son.⁵⁹² He was willing to offer up His own Son to be executed, His Son in whom He was well pleased,⁵⁹³ His Son who created the universe together with, created each of us with, and had perfect fellowship and unity with.⁵⁹⁴ He knew that the only way for this atonement to happen was by punishing His very own Son with His own holy wrath and anger. His love for His broken image bearers was so great, that He would be willing to go this distance.

And to take this further, even, it was also *Jesus Himself* who willingly agreed to this Covenant of Redemption and handed Himself over to be crucified.⁵⁹⁵ In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew that this was the only "cup" that He could drink from His Father. This was the *only* way that we could be redeemed, and Jesus was willing to take this cup. But what exactly was this "cup" from God? The Word would point us towards this being the "cup of the wrath of God."⁵⁹⁶ And yet, He was willing, as He said "not My will be done, but Your will be done."⁵⁹⁷

Yes, we should not see this as a berated innocent Son who was forced by His vengeful Father to take on a punishment that He did not deserve. For incredibly, amidst His torture by His broken image bearers, Jesus even declared "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing."⁵⁹⁸ He desired our redemption. Furthermore, we should not see Jesus as the "compassionate God" trying to appease the Father who is the "angry God." No, we see that it was the

⁵⁹² John 3.16, 17

⁵⁹³ Matthew 3.17 // Matthew 12.18 // 2 Peter 1.17

⁵⁹⁴ John 1.1-5, 17.24 // Genesis 1.26 // Hebrews 1.10

⁵⁹⁵ Hebrews 12.2 // John 10.14, 15, 18

⁵⁹⁶ Job 21.20 // Isaiah 51.7, 22 // Jeremiah 25.15 // Revelation 14.10, 16.19

⁵⁹⁷ Matthew 6. 10, 26.39

⁵⁹⁸ Luke 23.34

perfect love of God the Father that initiated this Covenant of Redemption, as we see in the verses below; it was His plan of love and desire for restoration!

Ephesians 1.3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he [God the Father] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. *In love* 5 he [God the Father] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, *according to the purpose of his [God the Father's] will*, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. [emphasis mine]

Ephesians 2.1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were *by nature children of wrath*, like the rest of mankind. 4 *But God[the Father]*, being *rich in mercy*, because of the *great love with which he loved us*, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses [imprisoned enemies], [He, God the Father] made us alive together *with Christ—by grace you have been saved—* 6 and [He, God the Father] raised us up with him [Jesus, God the Son] and seated us with him [Jesus, God the Son] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he [God the Father] might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith*. And this is not your own doing; *it is the gift of God*, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God [the Father] prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. [emphasis mine]

Romans 5.6-8

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God [the Father] shows *his love for us* in that while we were still sinners [enemies hated by God], Christ died for us. [emphasis mine]

What *amazing truths!* That *although* we had the wrath, anger, fury, and hatred of God on us as law breakers, God the Father had a “great love with which He loved us”! His heart was bent on redeeming a people to be His people! He deeply wanted to be their God! He wanted His glory, mercy, love, and grace to be praised! This is absolutely incredible, a holy God who devises a sacrificial plan of restoration for His enemies!

And yet we *also* see also that it was Jesus as well who willingly, because of His equal love for mankind, took on this enormous role in our salvation. Look at the great truth in this verse:

Hebrews 12.2

[We are] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who *for the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. [emphasis mine]

Jesus looked with joy towards this work of redemption, because He the blessed hope that a people whom His Father had chosen would be His. He would receive a faithful, spotless bride as a reward for the fulfilling of this covenant. She would rule and reign with Him as He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. She would forever be His. For this reason, Jesus willingly laid His life down.

John 10.14, 15, 18

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep... 18 No one takes it [My life] from me, but I lay it down of *my own accord*. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received *from my Father.*” [emphasis mine]

Interesting and amazing is we see that the task (the Covenant of Redemption) is “from my Father,” but that Jesus was not coerced, for it is He Himself who lays His life down of His own accord. It was His desire as He agreed by His own will to accept the charge of His Father. They are unified in this plan for us, His bride. Absolutely incredible.

So yes, sin indeed needed to be punished, and yes, God the Father punished His very own beloved and innocent Son. And yes, because of this, God had to look away from His Son in that moment, for the first time ever, because man alone could receive the punishment of sin. The filthy, dirty, unholy sins of the world were placed on this perfect Lamb, and yes, Jesus was forsaken in that moment by His Father⁵⁹⁹ (which I would argue was far more excruciating for Jesus than the actual cross itself). This, as painful as it was for both Jesus and His Father, was the necessary action needed for sin, the only possible action, and Jesus was the only recipient able to bear the wrath that was incited against sin. This was the cost of sin, and yet it was also the cost of love.

What Did Jesus Accomplish on the Cross?

Here is what we know so far: God made all things “good,” but humanity turned on its Creator and sin entered the world. God, being a holy God, wants to redeem His people from sure destruction, but the only way for this is through a Kinsman Redeemer, as it was man that broke the law, so therefore a perfect man needs to pay the penalty, so therefore God (perfect) became flesh (man) as Jesus and was executed on the cross.

But why death, and why such a brutal death? Could Jesus not have simply purchased us back simply by living a sinless life and declaring us “not guilty” out of His mercy? Could He have simply annihilated sin and death into non-existence? Was the cross the only option? If so, why, and what did it in fact accomplish? As we have seen already, we know that it is not just sin that God needs to destroy, but that it is the sinner that needs to be punished as well. Therefore, as Jesus declares here, it was indeed necessary:

Luke 24.25, 26

And he [Jesus] said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Matthew 26.39

And going a little farther he [Jesus] fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Here in the above verse from **Matthew**, even as Jesus prays the night before He dies, He prays that if it is possible, to take the cup from Him. But, as it were, it was not possible to have it any other way. This is the only way.

As we uncover what exactly the cross did, we will see that it was truly necessary. As we look at what Jesus accomplished, both in His life (fulfilling the Law) and in His death (the sacrifice for the broken Law and law breakers), we can say that collectively the many things it accomplished culminate in simplest terms under the word *atonement*.[♣] Atonement literally means “at-one-ment.” It reconciles and unites two parties who are at odds and makes them “at one” with each other. But let’s take a piece by piece look at what the purchase of this atonement entails and what exactly the cross has done for us. What are the building blocks that make this atonement so great, so rich, and so deep?

Justice

Because God is a holy and perfect God, as we have seen His wrath burns against sin and sinners.⁶⁰⁰ Sin is absolute rebellion, a spit in the face of the Creator. Our beautiful and glorious Maker, who fearfully and wonderfully made each and every one of us,⁶⁰¹ has been disregarded, disrespected, and rejected by His own pinnacle of creation, His very own image bearers. We must remember that when we sinned in the Garden, we sinned against God, and God alone,⁶⁰² and because He is a righteous, holy, and perfect Judge,⁶⁰³ He must punish law-breakers. Therefore, for God to ignore sin and side-step the issue would compromise His own character and holiness, and He, as He says, must remain faithful to Himself.⁶⁰⁴ He cannot let sin go unpunished, and His wrath needs to be appeased and satisfied. And the only way for the judgment of a good judge to be satisfied is for the law-breaker to be punished.

⁵⁹⁹ Psalm 22.1 // Matthew 27.46

⁶⁰⁰ Psalm 5.5 // Hosea 9.15 // Amos 5.21 // Malachi 1.3 // Romans 9.13 // Revelation 2.6

⁶⁰¹ Psalm 139.14

⁶⁰² Psalm 51.4

⁶⁰³ Psalm 50.6, 75.7, 82.1, 105.7 // Ecclesiastes 3.17, 12.14

⁶⁰⁴ 2 Timothy 2.13

No good judge is satisfied with lawbreakers being exonerated.

Now, to be clear, when we talk about “satisfying” God’s wrath, we aren’t talking about the wrath of some false god whose anger demands the death of a man diagnosed with a brain cloud (for all you *Joe Vs. the Volcano* fans). This is not a testy, emotional wreck of a god who is easily angered and only satisfied and appeased by the slaughter of innocent victims. No, this is quite the *opposite*! This is a God whose wrath is against the *sinners* that have *destroyed His own image*!



One of the worst movies of all time.

This holy God is bent on destroying the sin, death, evil, and sinners who distorted His creation and His perfect glory; He is *not* bent on destroying His creation which He deemed as “very good” (but became distorted), but rather He wants to *restore, redeem, reconcile, and resurrect* His creation! This is precisely why His anger burns hotly and is enraged towards law breakers, sin, and death; additionally, one therefore could say, that His anger is also fueled *by His eternal love*. It is fueled *by His love for holiness, purity, peace, unity, solidarity, health, community, relationship, beauty, life, innocence, and even His very love for love itself*.

God’s pure and powerful love is the motivator for this righteous and just wrath.

This is not a selfish, sporadic, fly off the handle tantrum, but a slowly churned, patient, yet all-consuming fire. Therefore, as John Stott specifically writes “God’s love is the source, not consequence, of the atonement,”⁶⁰⁵ then immediately quotes P.T. Forsyth who said:

The atonement did not procure grace, it flowed from grace.

In other words, Stott continues, “God does not love us because Christ died for us; Christ died for us because God loves us. If it is God’s wrath that needed to be propitiated, it is God’s love that did the propitiating.”⁶⁰⁶

Therefore, it could further be said that God’s wrath needed to punish the sinner and be satisfied due to His love. This is, in fact, even what a good human judge is motivated by. Yes, he incurs the “wrath” of his gavel, by way of law enforcement, upon lawbreakers, but he does this because of his love for truth, justice, and the protection of all that are not lawbreakers.

The two concepts of God’s wrath and love are not in opposition with each other; rather, they complement each other in unity.

So as we see even in this human example, they do in fact complement each other, and are completely compatible with each other. In one fell swoop a human judge raps his gavel out of both wrath and love simultaneously. God is not “sometimes loving” and “sometimes angry.” He is unchanging.⁶⁰⁷ God is love.⁶⁰⁸ God is holy.⁶⁰⁹ God is just.⁶¹⁰ God has many perfect and holy attributes, and none of them contradict or oppose the others. He is complete, whole, and perfect. He is not a schizophrenic God or a manic depressive God. His wrath and hatred for all that is evil is an act of His holiness, perfection, justice, and indeed, His love.

Mercy

The problem with the human example of a judge is that God is faced with a much more heart-breaking issue. The reality for this righteous Judge is that “*all* have fallen short of the glory of God.”⁶¹¹ “There is no one who does good, no, not one.” This Judge, who *must*, in His holiness and perfect justice, punish sinners (which again is fueled by His grace and love as He hates to see what sin and death has done to His image bearers). In doing this, He knows that He would

⁶⁰⁵ pg. 171

⁶⁰⁶ pg. 172

⁶⁰⁷ Hebrews 13.8 // Job 23.13

⁶⁰⁸ 1 John 3.16

⁶⁰⁹ 1 Samuel 2.2, 6.20 // Psalm 99.5 // Isaiah 5.16

⁶¹⁰ Deuteronomy 32.4 //

⁶¹¹ Romans 3.23

be heartbreakingly forced to destroy His creation as we cling on to the sin that entangles us. Make no mistake, He will destroy sin, and if as the law breaking sinners we are clinging on to this sin, as the saying goes, “the captain must go down with the ship.”

This is His “dilemma,” as He also is a God of mercy. He wishes that none should perish,⁶¹² but He also desires that all evil would be destroyed.⁶¹³ And, as another saying goes, He can’t simply have His cake and eat it too. Can a just and righteous God also show mercy without compromising His justice? Could any earthly judge remain just and right if He has mercy on a convicted, tried and true murderer? Or would that judge cease being “in his right(eous) mind?” When we speak of God “forgetting our sins,”⁶¹⁴ it should be clear that He doesn’t just snap His fingers and forget sin. No, it cannot be repeated enough, *sin must be dealt with*.

PROPITIATION

And so we see that sin necessitates a holy punishment, the punishment coming in the form of God’s anger and wrath. His wrath, as we said, needs to be satisfied. This, then, is what we call *propitiation*.♣ God’s wrath needs to be propitiated, or in other words, satisfied.

As it stands, we have become, by human heritage and by choice, the bearers of sin, and so we stand in line to be the recipient of God’s holy wrath. A quick word search on the word “wrath” (over 250 verses) in the bible will quickly show you that we could not bear it.⁶¹⁵ Because of our imperfection, we could not satisfy, or propitiate, the wrath of God, and would instead be destroyed by it; therefore, we would need to be separated from God as His wrath is poured out against us as sinners. Only someone who lived up to God’s holy standard could rightly take on God’s wrath and propitiate it, rather than be destroyed by it.

His wrath will either consume or be satisfied.

Either we can try to satisfy God’s wrath, or we can have Christ do it for us.

Romans 3.23-26

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as *a propitiation* by his blood, to be received by faith. This was *to show God’s righteousness*, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was *to show his righteousness* at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

God *had* to destroy sin also to show that He was truly a righteous and just Judge! For so long, by His patience He allowed mankind to live as we wanted. He didn’t immediately kill us when we sinned, nor did He enact any permanent solution for sin which would then also take us out in the process. In His patience He allowed sin to persist. It was only a matter of time that God would show His justice, righteousness, and fury against sin. This gift of the Lamb of God, Jesus the Christ, would be the showing of His justice, to let the world know that “I AM the Lord.” His wrath would be shown as it was poured out on His very own Son, and this perfect sacrifice of the Man who fulfilled every part of the Law would satisfy, or propitiate, God’s wrath.

1 John 2.2

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

John 3.36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

1 Thessalonians 5.9, 10

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

⁶¹² 2 Peter 3.9

⁶¹³ Revelation 20.3

⁶¹⁴ Jeremiah 31.34 // Psalm 103.2

⁶¹⁵ Exodus 22.24, 32.11 // 2 Kings 22.13 // Psalm 21.9, 38.1, 59.11 // Ezekiel 16.42, 43, 20.33-38 // John 3.36 // Romans 1.18, 2.5-8, 4.15, 5.9 // Ephesians 5.6 // 1 Thessalonians 2.16 // Revelation 6.16, 17, 12.12

This is so important for us to see that God's wrath had to be satisfied first *before a relationship would even be possible*. John Stott points out that since *we* are the enemy of God, it is *only God who can be the one to initiate reconciliation*.⁶¹⁶

Colossians 1.21, 22

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...

This verse shows us that "in order to present" ourselves to Him holy and blameless, He must *first* reconcile us in His body of flesh by His death. His righteous wrath toward His enemy must first be satisfied and propitiated. There is no way for us, as enemies, to go to God first. He has been wronged, and God must be the one to reconcile with us. Of course we know that because He is a holy and perfect God, He is not obligated to reconcile with law breakers, but as we see again in **1 John 4.10**:

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

2 Corinthians 5.18, 19

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

The dilemma, as we already saw, was that only God *could* atone, as He alone is perfect, but yet only man *should* atone, because it was man that broke the holy Law of God (and yet, as it were, man *could* not atone, because man was no longer perfect, and God *should* not atone because He would break His own Law and compromise His holiness by not punishing sin rightly. It's a bit of a catch twenty-two).

Hebrews 2.17, 18

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

PENAL SUBSTITUTION

Therefore we need a substitution to take our place, since we could not bear this wrath. This, now, is exactly why the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God made flesh, was necessary. This is also exactly why we see that it was the plan from all along for Christ to be crucified. It was not a "plan gone wrong," He never intended to leave the earth unscathed. He came to receive and propitiate the wrath of His Father, to pay our debt, to atone for our sins, to complete the Covenant of Redemption.

This is called *substitutionary atonement*. In particular, one type of substitutionary atonement is called *penal substitution*,♣ meaning that there is an actual penalty that sin incurs upon the substitution.

Romans 6.23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Since the offender cannot pay the price, a substitution needs to take on the penalty/punishment so that atonement can happen. But here is sort of the "catch" when it comes to penal substitution. Again, keeping in mind that God is a good and righteous Judge, the substitution must be "real." For instance, Jeffrey Dahmer's mom could not have walked into the courtroom and said "Judge, I'm willing to substitute myself for the sake of my son because I love him."

What would the judge say? "Umm, yeah, ma'am, that's not gonna happen. You're a sweet old lady, and your son is a serial killer. That's not really a fair deal."

Truly, a good judge would not convict an innocent woman for the atrocities of a serial killer, no matter how impassioned she is to save him.⁶¹⁷ Jesus did not just come impassioned with love for us as His image bearers. He did

⁶¹⁶The Cross of Christ, p. 195

not just stand before His Father, the Judge, and say, "Father, punish Me instead." God's response would be the same as Dahmer's judge: "Son, that's not going to happen. You are My one and only Son in whom I am well pleased, and You are innocent."

So then, for this to actually be acceptable, His wrath, as we have seen needs to be satisfied, justice must be served, and the only way for it to be satisfied is for it to *actually* be unleashed upon sin, not an innocent Man. The only solution then, is that Jesus would have to actually become our filthy, evil, wicked sin.

This is the deep reality of the Scriptures when it says that Christ *became our sin* (see **2 Corinthians 5.21** below). It does not mean that *He* sinned, but that He *became* sin. Our sin, like in the Old Covenant with animals, was *imputed*,♣ or transferred onto this sacrifice.⁶¹⁸ What imputed means is that the actual guilt of wrongdoing and sin was placed on the substitution. It's an actual transfer of actual ownership.⁶¹⁹ It would be like if you had massive financial debt, and someone put it in their name. You impute your debt upon someone else. They are credited with your account. This sacrifice, animals in the Old Testament, Jesus in the New, actually *became* our sin. Look at these verses:

2 Corinthians 5.21

For our sake he [God the Father] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin...

Galatians 1.3, 4

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father...

It is with a heavy heart that we recognize that when a holy God looked upon His "Son in whom He was well pleased"⁶²⁰ who was dying on the cross, He had to turn away because the beautiful and holy Jesus would soon become the disgusting, unholy, defiling, and wretched sins of all time.⁶²¹ It's for this reason why Jesus cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"⁶²² In that moment, Jesus, and Jesus alone in His humanity, bore the wrath of His Father as His Father turned His face from the disgusting sin that Jesus had become. As He wore the crown of thorns, the King of kings became the curse, and God's cup of fury, wrath, anger, and hatred was poured out upon Him. He not only is the great High Priest, but the Lamb of God.

When Jesus took the cup of wrath that the Father had given Him, and we He had drank the very last drop, He turned that cup upside down, completely emptied, and declared, "it is finished."

Isaiah 53.12

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

1 Peter 2.24

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Even as I write this and think about it, it weighs me down and brings tears and sorrow to my heart. In my haste, I want to declare as Peter did, "far be it from You, Lord!"⁶²³ Peter was horrified of the idea of Christ being executed, and I, with a sorrowful heart, am horrified at the thought of Christ becoming my sin. And so like Peter, the thought of this makes me ashamed. But as Jesus rebuked Peter, I know I must rebuke that thought as well, because it is this way, and

⁶¹⁷ Incidentally, though Dahmer's mother didn't stand in her son's place, Jesus did. Dahmer put his faith in Jesus Christ while in prison, and so Jesus became Dahmer's penal substitution.

⁶¹⁸ Exodus 29.15-18 // Leviticus 1.4, 4.24, 16.21

⁶¹⁹ The word "imputed" is mostly used in the KJV and NKJV, but the NASB and ESV also use it in certain contexts. The NIV and sometimes the NASB uses the word "credited," and the ESV at times uses "counted" in addition to "imputed." All of these speak of an actual transfer of ownership.

⁶²⁰ 2 Peter 1.17 // Luke 3.22

⁶²¹ Hebrews 9.26 // 1 John 2.2 // John 1.29

⁶²² Mark 15.34 // Matthew 27.46

⁶²³ Matthew 16.21-23

only this way, that I can be justified: by His grace, through faith. This then also, is His pleasure and purpose. Far be it from us that we oppose His good pleasure and purpose.

When we take into account the glory and mystery of the Trinity (three Persons in one holy essence), the glory and mystery of the incarnation (hypostatic union of 100% God and 100% Man), we see that this is the only way the wrath of a holy God could be satisfied by the offering of a sinless Man! *No other plan exists that deals with the problem of sin!* John Stott states in his incredible book, *The Cross of Christ*, this great insight:

It is God himself who in holy wrath needs to be propitiated, God himself who in holy love undertook to do the propitiating, and God himself who in the person of his Son died for the propitiation of our sins. Thus God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger by bearing it his own self in his own Son when he took our place and died for us.⁶²⁴

And because of this, it also brings a great joy, humility, and desire to worship. Because we must remember, this was no obligation that God *had* to do this. The Father did not *have* to send His Son to save *any* of us! He very well could have, *in perfect justice*, punished us for the sins that we have committed. He could have rightly separated us from Him as we have chosen to turn our backs on Him. He didn't have to give up His only begotten Son, but He wanted to.⁶²⁵

The dying Jesus is the evidence of God's anger toward sin; but the living Jesus is the proof of God's love and forgiveness.

-Lorenz Eifert

A Sad Side Note on the Doctrine of Substitutionary Atonement and Penal Substitution

Unfortunately, this is one of the many critical doctrines that gets distorted or blatantly rejected for one reason or another, whether an objection of this as being a form of cosmic child abuse or the denial of God being capable of this kind of wrath or anger.

In today's day and age, it has been most denied by folks in the Emergent Church circle (but not all of them), such as Brian McLaren (contributor to *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, by Baker and Green),⁶²⁶ William P. Young (author of *the Shack*, pg. 119⁶²⁷), Doug Pagitt (author of *A Christianity Worth Believing*, ch. 10), and Alan Jones, who wrote *Reimagining Christianity*, which has these quotes:

The Church's fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be reimagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it. (pg. 132)

The other thread of just criticism addresses the suggestion implicit in the cross that Jesus' sacrifice was to appease an angry god. Penal substitution was the name of this vile doctrine. (pg. 168)

On the back of this book, *Reimagining Christianity*, McLaren offers his endorsement by saying "Alan Jones is a pioneer in reimagining a Christian faith that emerges from authentic spirituality. His work stimulates and encourages me deeply."

This unfortunate take on the necessity of our sin being punished stems from a deeper theological error on original sin. This error can be summed up by McLaren in his book *The Last Word and the Word After That*:

The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God's big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin. (pg. 134)

⁶²⁴ pg. 172

⁶²⁵ John 3.16

⁶²⁶ McLaren is one of the main leader/teachers in the Emergent Church movement. He also authored books such as *A Generous Orthodoxy* and *Secret Message of Jesus*.

⁶²⁷ In reality, the whole book is about the non-need for penal substitution and denies it at every corner. He expressly declares that Papa (the older, black, motherly woman who is God the Father) bears the scars of the cross because the Father was on the cross with Jesus. As we saw in Chapter 2, this is called modalism (as well as the classic heresy of patripassionism, which means "father suffering"; this heresy makes penal substitution impossible) which stems from his unbiblical egalitarian view, which also, of course, infiltrates every corner of the book.

So naturally, without the “pesky legal problem” of original sin, the view that sin doesn’t need to be punished becomes evident, such as in William P. Young’s book *the Shack*, where the character who portrays God the Father says:

I don't need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It's not my purpose to punish it; it's my joy to cure it. (pg. 119)

Again, this points to the idea that we are the victims of sin in need of a cure, rather than the law breakers ourselves. The problem, then, puts God in a moral dilemma. If we are victims of sin, and God’s desire is only to cure it rather than punish it is actually true, then God would be morally obligated to rescue us, if we are truly and only victims. To leave helpless victims to die and face eternal torment would be unjust and unloving.

This is further why McLaren, Pagitt, and Young have distorted views on hell. McLaren denies that hell exists as God’s punishment,⁶²⁸ Pagitt denies the doctrine of hell and that it is a real place,⁶²⁹ and Young speaks ambiguously in his book and in interviews as he flirts with the idea of ultimate reconciliation, which means that eventually everyone will go to heaven.⁶³⁰ In the end, these men, and many others, may deny describing themselves as “universalist” (which is a term saying that there are many roads to salvation and that no one receives eternal punishment), but they remain incredibly vague in giving a real working definition of what happens to people who die in their sin without the atonement of Christ on their life.

EXPIATION

Therefore, it is the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God that enables our sin to be removed, placed on the Lamb, and paid for by the wrath of the Father. But not only is it removed from us, but the leftover stain of sin on our life is also taken away. This is what we call *expiation*.♣ This is incredible news for us, because this means that not only are the sins that we have committed removed from our life in the sight of God, but also the residual effects of the sins done *to* us are cleansed.

Often times, we do become victims of sin. I have warned at least a few times that we should never minimize ourselves to just being victims of sin, but that isn’t to say that we are *never* victims of sin. Quite often, we are. In this fallen world, fellow image bearers of God face rape, molestation, theft, murder, suicide, insults, gossip, insecurity, ridicule, sickness, disease, divorce, affairs, emotional hurts, spousal abuse, verbal abuse, starvation, persecution, and abandonment. All of these leave us stained and imperfect. We can very easily walk around as feel as though we are damaged goods, unworthy of love or acceptance.

What Christ’s blood does for us is not only removes the guilt of our own sin, but also removes the stain of these sins done to us, as well as the stain of the sins we have committed. His blood washes us, cleanses us, and makes us new. Our sins aren’t just transferred to Christ and then God says, “okay, cool, hope you can figure it out!” No, rather He cleans us up, cleanses us, reassures us of His love for us, and begins the new work of sanctification in us by the power of His Holy Spirit.

If you have been purchased by Christ by the atoning work, you can *know* beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have been made clean in *every imaginable way*. You are His promised possession, His beautiful and spotless bride.

REDEMPTION

When we speak of redemption, we often think of something that has been sold and needs to be repurchased, or redeemed, or possibly something that has been lost (maybe into slavery) that needs to be purchased back. In our case, we have indeed sold ourselves into the slavery and bondage of sin and death, becoming slaves to evil and our sinful nature. We need to be redeemed, or purchased back. This of course, as we have seen, is the basis for our need for a Kinsman Redeemer. It is He alone who can open the prison cell door for us and free us from the slavery of sin and death. The Word uses the word *ransom*♣ to describe the picture of us being held captive and imprisoned.⁶³¹



⁶²⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SOUfsX2fbk>

⁶²⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0isqLRhCl0> Though the interviewer, Todd Friel, is, I think, pretty rude and arrogant at times, the answer that Pagitt gives are alarming and revealing. Part 2 is even more astonishing.

⁶³⁰ <http://morebooksandthings.blogspot.com/2009/03/transcript-of-interview.html>

⁶³¹ Isaiah 35.10, 43.1, 3 // Jeremiah 31.11 // Micah 6.4 // Matthew 20.28 // Mark 10.45 // 1 Timothy 2.6 // Hebrews 9.15 // Revelation 5.9

Matthew 20.28

...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

1 Timothy 2.5, 6

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Hebrews 9.15

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (NIV)

1 Peter 1.17-21

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

But in light of God’s wrath needing to be satisfied that we just looked at, when we speak of redemption and ransom, it is important to remember that our Kinsman Redeemer did *not* come and offer His perfect blood as a payment *to* sin and death (or Satan, for that matter). No, because as it is, death, sin, and Satan are owed absolutely *nothing!* They are just cruel taskmasters; pawns, as it were. If I may offer an analogy, when we commit a crime against society, we go to jail. To get out, our debt to society isn’t paid to the prison guard or the jail cell, and yet not even to the warden. But our debt is paid back to society, since it is society that we have offended. So concerning the idea that **1 Peter 1.18** says that we were “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers,” we are not paying the ransom *to* those ways, sin, death, or Satan, even though it is they that imprison us, but we are being ransomed *from* them. As we have seen, the offended party in this is God and only God.⁶³² His holy Law was broken, and to *Him* this payment must be made to reconcile the debt of sin.

The blood of Christ as it was spilled out became the purchase of our redemption, our ransom. The price has been paid, we have been redeemed, freed from the captivity and penalty of death, and freed to the hope of eternal life. The ultimate power of the curse has been crucified as it was placed onto Christ.

Galatians 3.13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...”

Jesus experienced the curse of His Father. All of the Father’s hatred towards sin, evil, and sinners was placed on His Son. He bore the weight of the sins of the world. And this, though on one hand was devastating to the Father, as this was indeed His Son in whom He was well pleased, this also pleased the Father.

Ephesians 5.2

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

And yet again, we see this paradoxical picture God’s ability to be completely whole: He was grieved at the death of His Son, poured out His wrath upon His Son, and yet also was pleased by the fragrant offering of the death of His Son. Only God could be so whole and complete to be able to righteously contain all of these truths at once.

And yet, to be even more clear, what pleased God the Father was not the subjective knowledge of His Son being punished and killed, but the objective truth that sin was taken care of in totality, that His justice was served, and His mercy would be enabled. What pleased God was that His Covenant of Redemption was fulfilled, which meant the redemption of His image bearers and the purchasing, redemption, and ransom of a worthy and pure bride for from death and slavery for His Son, His Son in whom He was well pleased.

⁶³² Psalm 51.4

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

In addition to what actually happened on the cross is the event that happened after the cross. Though sin was atoned for, it was the resurrection of Christ, body and Spirit, three days later that *proved* that it was, indeed, finished.



1st century tomb in Jerusalem.

Jesus' body, accompanied only by a few that were unafraid of public consequence, was taken and laid in the tomb of man named Joseph of Arimethea, which again fulfilled prophecy, as he was a rich man and this was a new tomb.⁶³³ Because the Pharisees knew that the claim of Christ was that He would raise in three days, they requested that the government would put a Roman guard, which was a small platoon of able bodied soldiers, outside of the tomb to watch and protect it from a hoax or some attempt to steal the body of Christ to "prove" His resurrection. On the tomb was placed a Roman seal, which, if broken, meant death for the perpetrator *as well as* the guards that were given the charge to protect it.

On the third day, however, the tomb was empty, the seal was broken, and the guards were nowhere to be found, no doubt either hiding for their life, or maybe some would have been more noble and had turned themselves in for their sure punishment of death. Regardless, the body was gone.

Could these fishermen and tax collectors have taken out a highly trained group of Roman soldiers who had the incentive of their own self-preservation? Was Jesus actually not dead and therefore was somehow able, after thirty-nine lashes, being crucified, and having His side pierced, was wrapped in over a hundred pounds of burial linens and spices to then live in an enclosed tomb with no food, water, or air, and, and then finally roll a massive stone away from the entrance of His tomb only to take on a group of highly skilled Roman guards?

No, neither of these are plausible, and even secular first century Jewish (not a Christian Jew) historian Josephus didn't repudiate this fact. As a matter of fact, no one has been able to explain what happened to the body of Jesus. No one, except of course, than Jesus Himself and the many witnesses that saw Him!

He subsequently appeared to His disciples, alive, in His own body, as a resurrected and glorified Jesus. But to be clear, as He declared to them, "it is I myself." It was not a manifestation or ethereal illusion, and He is very clear to say "I have flesh and blood, a ghost does not have flesh and blood."⁶³⁴ No, it wasn't Jesus in Spirit, or as a ghost. It was Jesus. The living, breathing, Jesus, body and Spirit. And what was the first thing He said to them? "You guys got anything to eat around here?"⁶³⁵



Jesus wrapped in 100 lbs of linen and spices.

Yes! He was hungry! I love this, because after all, He was indeed human! But He was also God, and so He broke the power of sin and death, and He rose from the grave to prove it! He was glorified, as He foretold!⁶³⁶ The work set before Him was done, and His people are now proven to be freed from the curse of sin and death. Because of this, we can hope in the many rewards and promises that the cross purchased for us. We will see more of the ramifications of His resurrection in the coming chapters, when we look at the details of our salvation and glorification, but for now, let us focus on the "here and now" benefits of the cross.

⁶³³ Isaiah 53.9 // Matthew 27.57-60

⁶³⁴ Luke 24.39

⁶³⁵ Luke 24.41

⁶³⁶ John 6.39, 12.23, 16.14

THE REWARDS OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Christ after His death on the cross leaves us explicitly with a great and wonderful truth: that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Messiah, who came as Prophet, Priest, and King to sacrifice Himself as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. This is our blessed hope as believers, and foolishness to those who don't believe. Bono, the lead singer of the band U2, was interviewed once when this very topic came up:

Bono: But I love the idea of the Sacrificial Lamb. I love the idea that God says: Look, you cretins, there are certain results to the way we are, to selfishness, and there's a mortality as part of your very sinful nature, and, let's face it, you're not living a very good life, are you? There are consequences to actions. The point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the world, so that what we put out did not come back to us, and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death. That's the point. It should keep us humbled. It's not our own good works that get us through the gates of heaven.

Assayas: That's a great idea, no denying it. Such great hope is wonderful, even though it's close to lunacy, in my view. Christ has his rank among the world's great thinkers. But Son of God, isn't that farfetched?

Bono: No, it's not farfetched to me. Look, the secular response to the Christ story always goes like this: he was a great prophet, obviously a very interesting guy, had a lot to say along the lines of other great prophets, be they Elijah, Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius. But actually Christ doesn't allow you that. He doesn't let you off that hook. Christ says: No. I'm not saying I'm a teacher, don't call me teacher. I'm not saying I'm a prophet. I'm saying: "I'm the Messiah." I'm saying: "I am God incarnate." And people say: No, no, please, just be a prophet. A prophet, we can take. You're a bit eccentric. We've had John the Baptist eating locusts and wild honey, we can handle that. But don't mention the "M" word! Because, you know, we're gonna have to crucify you. And he goes: No, no. I know you're expecting me to come back with an army, and set you free from these creeps, but actually I am the Messiah. At this point, everyone starts staring at their shoes, and says: Oh, my God, he's gonna keep saying this. So what you're left with is: either Christ was who He said He was the Messiah or a complete nutcase. I mean, we're talking nutcase on the level of Charles Manson. This man was like some of the people we've been talking about earlier. This man was strapping himself to a bomb, and had "King of the Jews" on his head, and, as they were putting him up on the Cross, was going: OK, martyrdom, here we go. Bring on the pain! I can take it. I'm not joking here." The idea that the entire course of civilization for over half of the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside-down by a nutcase, for me, that's farfetched.⁶³⁷

Bono is absolutely right. The fact that Jesus is the Son of God, God incarnate, not just *a* prophet who *speaks* the Word of God but *the* Prophet who *is* the Word of God brings us many great benefits given to us because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

GIFT RIGHTEOUSNESS

When we looked earlier at how our sin was imputed onto Christ, we stopped short in a key verse that shows us the awesome truth that follows.

2 Corinthians 5.21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, *so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* [emphasis mine]

Romans 4.24, 25

It [righteousness] will be counted [imputed, KJV; credited, NASB], to us who believe in him [God the Father] who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

As crazy as it is that God allowed Christ to become our sin, He then allows an incredible exchange to take place, that we would become *His* righteousness! This again is what we see in this verse:

Romans 6.23

For the wages of sin is death, but the *free gift of God* is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

⁶³⁷ <http://www.thepoachedegg.net/the-poached-egg/2010/09/bono-interview-grace-over-karma.html>

Martin Luther, the great Reformer, said it this way:

Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him and say, “Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am Your sin. You took on You what is mine; yet set on me what is Yours. You became what You are not, that I might become what I was not.”⁶³⁸



Martin Luther

JUSTIFICATION

This free gift of righteousness through the atonement gives us what the Word calls *justification*.♣ Once our sins have been expiated by Christ and His sacrifice propitiates (satisfies) the wrath of God, we are given gift righteousness, and when God now looks upon us, He sees us as righteous, and therefore, in His eyes as Judge, we are justified before Him.

To be justified is to say my sin record is “just (as) if I’d” never done it.

It is here, and only after this has taken place, that God truly forgets our sins and sees them no more, as was prophesied in **Jeremiah 31.34b** concerning the New Covenant to come, when the Lord said, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Additionally, we see New Testament quote and echo this in many places,⁶³⁹ including these:

Hebrews 8.12, 13

“For I [the Lord] will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” 13 In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Hebrews 10.16-18

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” 17 then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Romans 3.21-26

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 5.1, 2

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5.6-11

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

⁶³⁸ Martin Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, from the *Library of Christian Classics*, volume 18, pg. 110

⁶³⁹ Romans 8.30-33, 10.10 // Galatians 2.16, 17, 3.8-11, 24 // Titus 3.7 // James 2.21-25

Indeed, we have been made pure, clean, and new by cleansing through the blood of the atonement!

2 Corinthians 5.17-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

1 Corinthians 6.11

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Romans 8.1-4

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,

CHRISTUS VICTOR

The cross also serves as an unlikely, but triumphal victory over sin, Satan, evil, and death. I say unlikely because it was in mockery that Christ was raised as a King on His wooden cross of a throne and donning His crown of thorns, but it was on that very cross where He conquered all of His enemies. To embody this we have the Latin phrase of *Christus victor*.♣ This was one of the earliest teachings on the atonement by the early Church Fathers, but it was “replaced” by the “satisfaction” model that we looked at earlier, which was first developed by a great theologian, the Archbishop of Canterbury named Anselm, in the 11th century. Later on, theologians saw that there was no need to “replace” it, but that it still fit “in addition to” the satisfaction model.

Jesus spoke about this in **Matthew 12.28, 29**, when He first was displaying His authority over the enemy by casting out demons, citing that He could do this because He had bound “the strong man,” who is Satan. At the cross, the power of Satan is crushed, and the sting of death is gone.



Amazingly, this victory was hidden in the Old Testament. For truly, as we know that Satan does indeed know Scripture, a plain picture of what the victory of the Messiah would look like and how it would be obtained had to be hidden. Therefore, Satan, unbeknownst to himself, truly believed that he would have victory by killing the Christ. He did not guess that God would be able to make ultimate victory come out of what looks like a humiliating defeat (furthermore, God wasn't just “able to make ultimate victory come,” but that He *planned* it from eternity past that this is how victory would come!).

Seriously, this was the very first (and very best) episode of “Punk'd” ever!

It is for this reason that we know that we do not have to be afraid or intimidated by the enemy, because he has no sting, and he is unable to re-capture us. We have been purchased by Christ.

CHRISTUS EXEMPLAR

Lastly, what we see as a benefit of the cross is that the work of Christ on the cross becomes our example. This Latin phrase of *Christus exemplar*♣ means that Christ is the ultimate example to us of obedience, humility, devotion, perseverance, glorification of God, and many other traits. We can look to Him, as our faithful High Priest, who endured all things and therefore can be our example.

When we are going through tough times, He understands. When we are being ridiculed, He knows the feeling. When we become tempted, He has been there. When we suffer wrongly, He identifies with us.

Hebrews 4.15, 16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

✠ TAKING UP OUR CROSS DAILY ✠

And so now we see that the central event of the Covenant of Redemption made between the Trinity was now fulfilled at the cross by the Lamb of God. As Jesus indeed declared, “it is finished,” because of the plan sent *from* the Father, *through* the agreement of the Son, and the application of the reward of this Covenant *by* the Holy Spirit. Don’t you just love the mysterious beauty of the Trinity?!

But we must take note that Christ died to save us from hell, but not to save us from the cross. He died so that we could be glorified, but not to keep us from being crucified. Yet this death we die and crucifixion we bear is not unto eternal death and punishment for sins, but it is a place undying commitment to our Savior who laid His life down for us. As the Word says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”⁶⁴⁰

For the Christian the cross of Christ is not merely a past place of substitution. It is also a present place of daily execution. A place where we go to daily, not to crucify Him again, but to remind ourselves of the great gift that we were given and to ask in faith for the promises and rewards of the cross on a daily basis. It is at the cross where we realize that we have freedom for our sins, that we are reminded that we are a prized possession, and that we are cleansed and purified. It is at the cross where we daily go to where we find rest, where we find joy, and where we find peace, both with God and with others.

For us believers, going to the cross daily is not a place of condemnation, a lonely walk to our death; it is a place of liberty, as we crucify ourselves with our Lord, because it is only when we die with Him that we also live with Him.

Romans 6.5-11

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2.20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2 Corinthians 13.4

For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor and theologian during the Nazi regime said:

**The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life.
But the cross meets us at the beginning of our communion with Him.
When Christ calls a man, He bids him, ‘come and die with Me.’**

Due to his faith’s conviction to resist the Nazi regime, Dietrich was executed by hanging as a martyr after two years in a concentration camp by the Nazi regime; it was only one month before the Nazi regime would admit defeat.

⁶⁴⁰ Luke 9.23

He was condemned to death on April 8, 1945. He would be stripped naked, led into the gallows, and fitted with a thin wire for his strangulation. Upon his death, the doctor at the concentration camp who witnessed the execution wrote:

I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer... kneeling on the floor praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the few steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.⁶⁴¹

Jesus was his *Christus exemplar*.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer, circa 1930's

⁶⁴¹ *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, by Eberhard Bethge, pg. 927

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Why Understanding The Cross Is Necessary

Result #1: Understanding His wrath causes you to understand the love of God.

Without God's wrath, we don't know the extent of His grace. Without God's wrath, we don't know the extent of His forgiveness. Without His wrath, we don't know the extent of His great love for us.

It's like the old saying, "the proof is in the pudding," or the old Ragu commercials, "it's *in* there!" The only way to know the depth, extent, power, and beauty of God's love is to see proof. Seeing and understanding the severity of God's wrath, that only His perfect Son could satisfy it; that it must be satisfied; that there was no compromise; that He would be completely right and justified to unleash it on all of us; that Jesus went to the cross to take it on so that we could live; that it was actually *fueled* by love, because its purpose was to destroy sin. All these things give us a profound understanding that forgiveness, though free for us, was not free for God. It was a sacrifice of epic proportion.

I think that is what makes it so interesting. God didn't, and couldn't, as we've seen, just snap His fingers of forgiveness. Sin had to be dealt with. The crazy thing is that He could have dealt with it very easily. He could have just poured out His fury and anger and wrath upon it, destroying every last bit of evil, including all of us, who completely deserved it.

But He didn't do that. Instead, the way He dealt with sin would actually cost Him something. He would sacrifice His own Son. Jesus would lay down His life and *take on* His Father's wrath. And for what reason? Because of His great love for us.

Ephesians 2.4, 5

But God, being rich in mercy, *because of the great love with which he loved us*, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— [emphasis mine]

Result #2: It gives you hope and faith to pray for everyone you know.

When you see the extent of what God has done in order to redeem for Himself a people, it gives you faith to pray more and share more with others that don't know Him.

For one, you are way more excited about your own salvation. You go through your daily life and are amazed at all you have been given. You are constantly reminded that you deserve death and the wrath of God, but yet His wrath has been satisfied, and the atonement has been applied to your life! The more this reality sits in, the more you can't wait to pray and share your faith, since you know, by this proof, that God's love for His image bearers is great!

For two, knowing that it is God who does the initiating of reconciliation gives up hope for those that we know who seems so stubborn or blinded. Knowing that it is "by grace, through faith" that they are saved, and not by their own works or wisdom, you *know* that they are always only one step away from having their eyes opened. Your desire for prayer increases because you realize that, though they are further from God than they think (since sin is an eternal and distant chasm), they are closer than they think (since grace extends to the furthest reaches of sin).

Result #3: Knowing about His blood takes away shame.

His blood doesn't *only* take away your sins, but it takes away the *stain* of our sins. His blood completely washes us clean and makes us new; not just clean from our sins but the sins done to us.

Far too often we will find it in ourselves to forgive others, but yet we remain with the feeling of filth and violation on our own lives. This can't and shouldn't be. The blood of Christ is sufficient for our purity, sufficient for our cleansing, and sufficient to make us new in all ways! Don't demand more from Christ; He has already done what is necessary for all that you need!

Result #4: The cross keeps us aligned daily.

When we keep the cross in mind, it keeps us on our knees, humbly walking and seeking Him. But it doesn't "keep us in line" out of fear, as if the cross is some type of scarecrow or warning sign to us if we disobey. Rather, the cross is our sign of hope, freedom, and life. It is our sign that there is *no condemnation*, because when we see the cross, we see that the condemnation has been paid for.

Romans 8.1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The cross keeps us aligned because it keeps us thankful and in awe. It keeps us in a place of worship because we understand the depth and distance which God went in order to spare us. Our motivation isn't out of fear, but out of a loving and worshipful devotion for the God who loves us beyond measure.

When we stop repenting daily, we stop being disciples.

The Word says that whoever wants to follow Christ and be His disciple, must pick up his cross daily. Picking up our cross daily reminds us that daily repentance is necessary for our spiritual health, freedom, joy, peace, and ability to glorify God. It is necessary for a life of real discipleship. Every day that we don't go to Him in repentance, we give sin and pride that much stronger of a foot in the door.

Result #5: The cross shows us that we don't have to work to earn or keep God's love. We can stop trying to please Him, because He is pleased in Christ.

Repentance doesn't mean forgiveness. We have forgiveness. Repentance is *turning* from the sins that you have been forgiven of.

This is important for us to remember, because rather than saying "God, forgive me for this or that which I did today," we should be praying, "God, I am sorry for what I did today, and I humbly thank You for Your blood that has already paid for it. I want tomorrow to be a new day, as I repent [turn away] from my sin and ask by the power of Your Spirit inside me that I instead choose life and choose to glorify You."

Do you see the difference? The first, though shorter, seeps of guilt and shame. It seeps of a desire to appease God and keep Him happy and merciful with you. But the second seeps of freedom! It seeps of an acknowledgement, yes, of shortcoming, but an acknowledgement of the freedom already available to us! The second one acknowledges that we don't have to continually seek approval and right standing with God and that we don't have to continually try to please Him, because He is already pleased *in Christ!* The cross gives God pleasure, and if we are believers hidden in Christ, we have His pleasure forevermore!

Result #6: Understanding the cross shows us that there was so much more accomplished than we think.

Oftentimes we "minimize" the cross to our means to get to heaven. I put that word in little quote fingers because if that was the *only* benefit of the cross, it would still be an unbelievably incredible benefit! So I don't mean to make it a small benefit, but to show that there are *more* benefits to the cross than that!

Without going into detail, I decided to copy the list of benefits that John Piper cites as the basis for his book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die*. In the book, which is available for free in PDF form online,⁶⁴² he gives each reason two or three pages each to explain.

⁶⁴² http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/books_pojc/bpoj_c_all.pdf

Fifty Reasons Why Christ Suffered and Died:

- 1 To Absorb the Wrath of God
- 2 To Please His Heavenly Father
- 3 To Learn Obedience and Be Perfected
- 4 To Achieve His Own Resurrection from the Dead
- 5 To Show the Wealth of God's Love and Grace for Sinners
- 6 To Show His Own Love for Us
- 7 To Cancel the Legal Demands of the Law Against Us
- 8 To Become a Ransom for Many
- 9 For the Forgiveness of Our Sins
- 10 To Provide the Basis for Our Justification
- 11 To Complete the Obedience That Becomes Our Righteousness
- 12 To Take Away Our Condemnation
- 13 To Abolish Circumcision and All Rituals as the Basis of Salvation
- 14 To Bring Us to Faith and Keep Us Faithful
- 15 To Make Us Holy, Blameless, and Perfect
- 16 To Give Us a Clear Conscience
- 17 To Obtain for Us All Things That Are Good for Us
- 18 To Heal Us from Moral and Physical Sickness
- 19 To Give Eternal Life to All Who Believe on Him
- 20 To Deliver Us from the Present Evil Age
- 21 To Reconcile Us to God
- 22 To Bring Us to God
- 23 So That We Might Belong to Him
- 24 To Give Us Confident Access to the Holiest Place
- 25 To Become for Us the Place Where We Meet God
- 26 To Bring the Old Testament Priesthood to an End and Become the Eternal High Priest
- 27 To Become a Sympathetic and Helpful Priest
- 28 To Free Us from the Futility of Our Ancestry
- 29 To Free Us from the Slavery of Sin
- 30 That We Might Die to Sin and Live to Righteousness
- 31 So That We Would Die to the Law and Bear Fruit for God
- 32 To Enable Us to Live for Christ and Not Ourselves
- 33 To Make His Cross the Ground of All Our Boasting
- 34 To Enable Us to Live by Faith in Him
- 35 To Give Marriage Its Deepest Meaning
- 36 To Create a People Passionate for Good Works
- 37 To Call Us to Follow His Example of Lowliness and Costly Love
- 38 To Create a Band of Crucified Followers
- 39 To Free Us from Bondage to the Fear of Death
- 40 So That We Would Be with Him Immediately After Death
- 41 To Secure Our Resurrection from the Dead
- 42 To Disarm the Rulers and Authorities
- 43 To Unleash the Power of God in the Gospel
- 44 To Destroy the Hostility Between Races
- 45 To Ransom People from Every Tribe and Language and People and Nation
- 46 To Gather All His Sheep from Around the World
- 47 To Rescue Us from Final Judgment
- 48 To Gain His Joy and Ours
- 49 So That He Would Be Crowned with Glory and Honor
- 50 To Show That the Worst Evil Is Meant by God for Good

PRACTICAL TOOLS

♣ Definition of Terms ♣

Atonement: Atonement literally means “at-one-ment.” It reconciles and unites two parties who are at odds and makes them “at one” with each other. Biblically, the atonement is when we refer to the work of Christ. But this work is not just His death on the cross, but His sinless life and perfect obedience, culminating with His death. It is through His perfect life and perfect sacrifice that He becomes out atonement.

Propitiation: Propitiation means to “satisfy.” When we sinned, God’s justice necessitated a punishment upon sin, and that punishment meant His wrath would consume sin. To propitiate God’s wrath means to satisfy it, and the only way to satisfy it is for it to destroy sin. If we choose to try to propitiate His wrath, we will be utterly destroyed. So we needed Jesus to propitiate God’s wrath. His perfect life and fulfilling of all the requirements of the Law made propitiating God’s holy wrath possible.

Ransom: This is a word used to describe the picture of us being held captive and imprisoned, and the payment that is necessary to set us free. Though we were captives to sin and death, however, the ransom is not paid to them, as Jesus owes sin and death nothing. The offended party is God, and the Ransom, Jesus, was a worth Ransom.

Justification: To be justified is as if your sin record is “just if I’d” never done it. To be justified means your sin record is forgiven.

Christus Exemplar: This Latin phrase means that Christ’s work on the cross is an example of us. We are to take up our cross daily and live our lives selflessly. We are to crucify our flesh on a daily basis through repentance. This is not to keep God’s pleasure, that is worked out in the atonement, but this is a response to God’s pleasure.

Christus Victor: This is a Latin phrase that means that in Christ we have complete victory, because He has complete victory over His enemies. We need not be afraid of Satan, sin, demons, or evil, because He has proven Himself victorious and has conquered sin, death, and the enemy, and will one day have all of His enemies under His feet.

Gift Righteousness: This is the free gift of righteousness that is imputed onto us upon having the atonement applied to our life by grace through faith. This gift righteousness is a free gift, unmerited by us.

Substitutionary Atonement: This is a phrase used to describe the idea that Jesus is a substitution standing in place of our judgment.

Penal Substitution: This is a specific type of substitutionary atonement that states that there is an actual penalty for sin that needs to be paid. The Word says that the penalty is death, and when Christ becomes our substitution, He must taste death as the penalty and wear the wrath of God on His shoulders.

Imputed: To have something imputed means to have it transferred onto something. It means that the actual guilt of wrongdoing and sin was placed on the substitution. It’s an actual transfer of actual ownership. Likewise, Christ’s righteousness is imputed, or transferred, onto us.

Recommended Resources

Theology Books

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem. Chapter 27.

Doctrine by Mark Driscoll. Chapter 8 deals with the cross.

Salvation Belongs to the Lord by John Frame. Chapter 11 deals with what Jesus did for us.

Books

The Cross of Christ by John Stott. One of the best books I've ever read.

Death by Love: Letters from the Cross by Mark Driscoll. A book that writes about every aspect of the cross but in the form of letters to be people. For example, a letter written to a girl who was raped and Mark writes to her to tell her that Jesus is her expiation, meaning that the cross cleanses her from sins done to her. Another is written to a child molester, telling him that Christ justifies him by His blood.

Fifty Reasons Jesus Came to Die by John Piper.

Vintage Jesus by Mark Driscoll. Sort of the modern day and age version of *More Than a Carpenter*. There is a whole sermon series on their website based on this book.

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sermons

www.marshillchurch.org Type in "cross." Choose from a few sermons:

- Christ on the Cross 12 week Series, which includes:
 - Jesus Died in Our Place
 - Jesus Died to Crush Our Enemies
 - Jesus Died for Our Freedom
 - Jesus as Our Sacrifice
 - Jesus Died for Our Unrighteousness
 - Jesus Died to Forgive Us
 - Jesus Took Our Wrath
 - Unlimited Limited Atonement
 - Jesus Paid Our Debt
 - Jesus Died as Our Example
 - Jesus Died to Cleanse Our Filth
 - Jesus Died to Reveal God

- "Predestination" from their Religion Saves series.
- "Predestination" an 8 minute clip from their Trial series (**1 and 2 Peter**).
- "Grace" from their Religion Saves series.
- "Penal Substitution" a 4 minute clip from their Doctrine series.
- "God Dies" from their Doctrine series.

www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages This is Wayne Grudem's sermons going through his book, *Systematic Theology*. Go to the sermons on Chapter 27

www.desiringgod.org This is John Piper's ministry. Along with audio or video sermons, he has the transcripts as well. The list under "Web Articles" for desiringgod.org has mostly audio sermons attached to the articles.

Web Articles

fm.thevillagechurch.net. This is the church where Matt Chandler, a gifted teacher, is the Teaching Pastor at. Go here, click on "Resource Library," select "Articles and Position Papers," and scroll down at articles on atonement.

www.monergism.com is a great site in general, but this particular link has a lot of information on atonement theology.

www.gotquestions.org If you tend to have lots of questions in general, this is a great website to get to know. Go here and search "atonement," "cross," "justification," "ransom," "propitiation," you name it.