

Theology II: Work of Christ (Part 3)

Session 6 - Dr. Jeremy Kimble

REVIEW

- **The Classical Theory.** The central idea in this family of theories is that of **Christ's victory over Satan**. It was arguably the **earliest** of the three theories to develop, appearing first in **Irenaeus**, who saw Christ as the **ransom** paid to Satan (Bible doesn't affirm that Satan is equal to God) to justly free those under his sway. Later fathers developed the idea of Christ as the bait used by God to catch Satan. Seeing his human nature, Satan thought he could capture Jesus, but after taking him into his dominion in death, the divine nature was **unveiled** and Christ arose, shattering the gates of hell and freeing its captives.
- **Subjective Theories of the Atonement.** The word subjective here refers to the fact that all these theories see the cross as seeking to change how we respond **subjectively** to God. Jesus is loving... we should be loving like that -drawback... wasn't there more work done on the cross other than being an example? It removed the need to satisfy God's wrath.
- **The moral example theory** and **moral influence** theory may be traced back to **Peter Abelard** (1079-1142). He broke with his Anselm's view of the atonement and proposed that Christ died as an **example of love** to us, which we should follow, and that Christ's death **inspires** us to do. It denies any need for God to be **satisfied**; his arms are open to receive us, and Christ's death exercises a moral influence that impels us to respond to the love of God.

*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**.* John 3:36

- **Objective Theories.** These theories insist that the atonement made an objective change in our condition before God. The atonement itself flows from the love of God (1 John 4:10). What Christ has done has changed things **relationally**. Whether or not humans respond is secondary.
 - There are two main varieties of this view. The oldest goes back to **Anselm** and his famous book *Cur Deus Homo?* (Why God Became Man). In it, he sees sin as an offense against God's honor. By not submitting ourselves completely to God, we take from Him the **honor** we ought to show and thus we are in God's debt. But it is a debt we cannot pay, for **present obedience** cannot make up for **past disobedience**, since present obedience is required anyway. Moreover, no human can pay for another, for he owns his own debt. Thus, humanity owes a **debt** to God, that each one must pay, yet no one can repay; no one except God Himself. Thus, only the **God-man** could atone... ignores the issue of guilt.

HISTORICAL ILLUMINATION

- **Objective Theories.** The **Reformers** fall within this same family, but differ from Anselm in seeing sin as a violation of God's **law** and **justice**, rather than God's honor. It is the demands of justice that must be satisfied. This seems to be Paul's concern in Rom 3; how can God save anyone and do it justly? Christ's death as our **substitute** and as God's **punishment** of sin satisfied the demands of God's justice. God says, 'Not guilty'.
- This view, called the **penal substitutionary** view, or **vicarious** atonement, became far and away the most widely accepted view among Protestants, and is still **central** in evangelical thinking about atonement today.

*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. Rom 3:26*

Christ is only our example if we are "in Christ" and not guilty, and have the Spirit of God in us to operate in a way where we could actually obey in any measure... what God asks of us. Christ is victorious over sin and Satan and death. Satan's stronghold on you is sin... that's broken because of an objective work that Christ has done.

TALKING POINT

"The fact that the cross isn't a form of **cosmic child abuse** - a vengeful father, punishing his son for an offence he has not committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a construct stands in total contradiction to the statement "God is love." If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus' own teaching to love your enemies and refuse to repay evil with evil. The truth is the cross is a symbol of love. It is a demonstration of just how far God as Father and Jesus as his son are prepared to go to prove that love. The cross is a vivid statement of the powerlessness of love."

Steven Chalek British Baptist minister, former United Nations' Special Adviser on Human Trafficking and a social activist.

How would you respond to this statement? (view in opposition)

God tells us not to repay evil with evil because He is the one who will seek our vengeance as a just holy God. (Rom 12)

The more Chalek says God is love... he's saying God is just.(2 Thess 1) Communicable attributes - love (1 John 4) and holiness (Isa 6). You can't take one without the other.

Contradicts itself.. vengeful father/punishing his son... but it's all done out of love.

Culture vs in Scripture... we see a willing Son, an initiating Father, doing a work for us that is not child abuse, it is willing, and good, and holy, and it is loving.

The Bible must transcend culture.

Extent of the atonement.

- The question, “**For whom did Christ die?**” has been one of the most disputed questions concerning the atonement down through history.
- Its importance lies not only in its own intrinsic value, but the implications it carries for other areas of theology, such as the relationship of **divine sovereignty** and **human responsibility**, the **achievement** of Christ on the cross, Christ as **Savior**, and how one presents the gospel.

You can't speak of sovereignty in a way that cancels out human freedom because the Bible doesn't. You can't speak of human freedom in a way that cancels out God's sovereignty because the Bible doesn't. It affirms both.

- There are three possible interpretations of this issue, though only two are usually considered as live options by evangelicals.

(1) **Universalism**: Christ died for all; therefore, all are saved.
Not an option. Hell is real. (Revelation)

(2) **General**: Christ died for all, but only those who respond in faith are saved.
Christ made salvation possible.

(3) **Limited (or particular)**: Christ died for a limited, particular group, all of whom are saved. “The church”-people of God. Makes salvation definitive.

Orthodox Christianity: Jesus died and his atoning work is sufficient. Perfect. Flawless. All that it should be. You are only saved if you repent of your sins and believe in the Gospel of Christ. In Acts 2 Peter doesn't say, “If you're part of the elect, you're fine.”

*And Peter said to them, “**Repent and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38*

- The last two represent the Arminian and Calvinist positions. It should be noted that one reason why they ended up with differing conclusions is that they formulate the question in different ways.
 - Arminians focus on the extent of the **provision** of atonement: did Christ purpose to make provision for both the elect, who He would draw to faith, and for the non-elect, whose salvation He also desires?
 - Calvinists frame the question in terms of the extent of the **application** of the atonement: does Christ's death actually pay for the sins of all people or only the elect?
 - Arminians do not deny that the application of the atonement is **limited**; nor do Calvinists deny that the death of Christ is sufficient for humanity in **general**. Thus, the way one puts the question influences the answer one receives.

Extent of the atonement (con't)

- Arguments for general allotment.

- There are several specific verses with a **universal** referent:

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the **world**!" John 1:29*

*"For God so **loved the world**, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

*who gave himself as a **ransom for all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Tim 2:6*

*For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the **Savior of all people, especially of those who believe**. 1 Tim 4:10*

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that **all** should reach repentance. 2 Pet 3:9*

*He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the **whole world**. 1 John 2:2*

- There are theological arguments that can be made. God often provides more than we **appropriate**. For example, much of the universal revelation in the world is ignored. It is also argued that 2 Pet 2:1 claims some of those bought by the Master are unbelievers, and not just the elect.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 Pet 2:1

*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save **his people** from their sins.' Matt 1:21*

*I am the good shepherd. **I know my own** and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. John 10:14-15*

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Eph 5:25

- Arguments for limited atonement.

- Some verses state that Christ died for a **specific group**: "his people" (Matt 1:21); "his sheep" (John 10:14-15); "his church" (Eph 5:25).
- The stronger support comes from reflection on the idea of Jesus as **Savior**. He didn't just make my salvation **possible**; He saved me. Furthermore, if Christ really died for all, if he **paid** for their sins, then God would be wrong to punish them again. Finally, the ideas of redemption, sacrifice, and propitiation imply a definite atonement.

- Evaluation. We find biblical warrant for dividing the question into God's **provision** of the atonement and the application of that atoning work. Scripture leads us to conclude that God loves all people and that Christ died to **provide** salvation for all. This should be preached to all **indiscriminately**. (to all without hesitation)
- But beyond this, (Eph 5, John 10, Matt 1) God loves His **sheep** with a special love, and by divine will the Spirit **applies** the benefits of Christ's death to the elect. Thus, Christ died to make atonement for all to the end that its effects would be applied to the elect. (Who are the elect? Why do some and others don't? Covered in Soteriology - Doctrine of Salvation).

Most often we view election as a problem.

1. Doubt your own salvation - am I one of the elect?
2. Someone you know is struggling - How do I know if they're saved or not?

Romans 9 - When Paul outlines election, predestination, or foreknowledge it is always to do 2 things: 1 Assure you of your faith or 2. As part of the elect... pursue holiness. Take joy in being a part of the people of God and... proclaim the Gospel.

THEOLOGICAL FORMULATION

- **Christ Obeyed for Us (Sometimes Called His "Active Obedience").**
 - Christ had to live a life of **perfect obedience** to God in order to earn righteousness for us (Phil 3:9)
 - His perfect obedience becomes our **positive moral righteousness**. (1 Cor 1:3)

Imputation: something is put into my bank account that wasn't earned by me or brought in by me. Jesus's righteousness is imputed to me. Alien righteousness.

- **Christ's Sufferings for Us (Sometimes Called His "Passive Obedience").**
 - **Suffering for His Whole Life:** Christ endured **temptation, opposition, grief** over the deaths of loved ones, and much more. (Isa 53:3)
 - The pain of the Cross:
 - **Physical Pain and Death**
 - The Pain of **Bearing Sin** (Isa 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21)
 - **Abandonment** (Mk 14:34-42, 50; Matt 27:46)
 - Bearing the **Wrath** of God - Jesus was a propitiation for our sins (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10)
- The work of the cross is so extensive and multi-faceted that Scripture uses a variety of terms and images to convey its meaning.

Obedience
Redemption

Sacrifice
Victory

Propitiation
Example

Reconciliation

- **Obedience**

- See Romans 5:19. He came from heaven, not to do his **own** will, but the will of the **Father** (John 6:38); his brothers and sisters are those who do the will of the Father (Matt 12:50); and he could claim to always have done that which pleased the Father (John 8:29; Heb 4:14).

For as by the one man's disobedience (Adam) the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience that many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19

- Because of his obedience, he can provide what we need: **pardon** for our sins and **perfect** righteousness. Apart from that perfect obedience, he could not be our **substitute** and **sin-bearer**, and the source of righteousness and salvation (Heb 5:7-9).