

Theology II: Work of Christ (Part 4)

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CHRISTOLOGY

Person of Christ

Work of Christ - Atonement (extent - theories) - Terminology

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	Sacrifice	Propitiation	Reconciliation
Redemption	Victory	Example	

- **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).

Active Obedience - His Life

Passive Obedience - dying on our behalf

THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

Sacrifice

- The modern reader may find the detailed instructions about sacrifices boring, gory, and irrelevant, but God was preparing his people to understand the meaning of the Messiah's death. Jesus is recognized as the fulfillment of all the OT **sacrificial system**. John, Paul, and Peter all refer to him as the **Lamb of God** (John 1:29, 1 Cor 5:6-8, 1 Pet 1:18-19), and the book of Hebrews clearly sees Jesus as the fulfillment of both the sacrifices and the priesthood (Heb 9:11-14).

*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*

- In the OT the one seeking forgiveness placed his hands on the animal to be sacrificed, symbolizing the **transference** of guilt from the person to the animal as the substitute (see Lev 1:4, which is typical OT usage). The scapegoat of Lev 16:20-22 is the background for the One who carries away our sin (1 Pet 2:24).

- The support for the idea that atonement involves the **payment** of the **penalty** for sin can be seen in what happened to the animals sacrifices. They were slaughtered; their **blood** (for the symbol for life in the OT) was poured out. And it was the pouring out of life that made atonement (Lev 17:11; cf Heb 9:22). The clear teaching of the NT is that “the wages of sin is death,” and the pouring out of the blood of sacrificed animals is difficult to explain apart from the idea that the animal was not only the substitute for the sinner, but was paying the penalty due to the sinner for his sin.
- To atone for our sins, it was not enough for Jesus to **suffer** a little; he had to die, for that is the penalty we place ourselves under when we sin.

*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*

Propitiation

- This term means that atonement involves **satisfaction** of divine wrath by means of **substitution**. **Expiation** refers to **cleanness**. (cleaned by the sacrifice)
- Rom 3:25 shows it is Christ’s death that allows God to **justly justify** sinners. Chapters 1-2 of Romans have demonstrated that all of humanity is under the righteous wrath of God. But now the wrath is averted (satisfied) by the work of the Son, shedding his blood in the place of sinners (cf Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

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

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Isa 53:4-5

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Cor 5:21

*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. 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 3:25-26

Reconciliation

- The root of the Greek word means to **change** or **exchange**, and the idea that developed around the form of the word used in the NT is clearly to exchange **enmity** for **friendship**. Thus we are brought back into right relationship with God. God takes the initiative, and reconciles us through the work of the cross.
- See Rom 5:10-11, 2 Cor 5:18-20, Eph 2:11-16, Col 1:19-22.

... Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 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. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Cor 5:18-20

Redemption

- In all Scripture, the idea of redemption appears more than 150 times, many of those times very direct NT references to the cross, including the most explicit statement about the cross that we have from the mouth of Jesus himself (Mk 10:45, Matt 20:28).
- The basic idea behind this term: someone **enslaved** is **liberated** by the payment of a price, usually called a ransom.
- As the subjects of redemption, we are seen as **helplessly enslaved**, having no resources with which to free ourselves. We are under the dominion of **sin** and **Satan** (Rom 7:14, Heb 9:15), under the curse pronounced by the law on those who break the law (Gal 3:10).
- Redemption cost Jesus his life (Mk 10:45); it required the precious blood of a spotless Lamb (1 Pet 1:18-19). An **infinite price** was paid.
- Because the price given as a substitute is accepted, there can be **no further claim** on the redeemed. He is free. (Great tool of the enemy is to accuse and condemn)

There is... no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rom 8:1

Victory

- The work of Christ is seen as a victory over all the forces of evil: over **Satan** (John 12:31), over **death** and **sin** (1 Cor 15:53-55); over the **power of authorities**.
- This is all possible because Jesus died as our substitutionary sacrifice.

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, (heart) God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He **disarmed** the rulers and authorities (Eph 6 demonic satanic authorities) and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Col 2:13-15*

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass... "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory?... your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:53-57/ Isa 25:8

Example

- 1 Pet 2:21 and 1 John 3:16 clearly affirm the idea that at least one purpose of the atonement is as the supreme example of self-giving love. Clearly, this is not the central idea of the atonement. Our death cannot atone, redeem, reconcile as Christ's did. But we should have the same love, the same willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the good of another.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow his steps. 1 Pet 2:21

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 1 John 3:16

By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:6

WWJD? I'm not Christ. He's the GOD-Man! Our only hope is the Holy Spirit.

THEOLOGICAL FORMATION (con't)

- The ideas of **substitution** and **sacrifice** (objective theory) should be seen as the hub of the wheel as it relates to the atonement. All of these various facets are spokes pointing to the center, which again is penal substitution.
- In summary, Jesus won the **victory** over sin, death, and Satan through his substitutionary death and **resurrection**.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- **Teach it**
 - If the work of Christ is the basis for our salvation, then it merits more **study** and **proclamation** than most Christians and churches give it. A firm grasp of the work of Christ fortified believers in past years, and can and should do so today.
 - One way churches can teach the work of Christ is by calling attention to the doctrine that is in the songs we sing. For example, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" gives a thoroughly subjective view of the atonement; "Jesus Paid It All" or "In Christ Alone" state the objective view; "A Mighty Fortress" expresses the classical motif of victory. Explain the doctrinal meaning behind the words.

And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18

Resource: The Cross of Christ by John Stott. (Dr. Kimble's top 10 list)

Live it. If the cross is the center of Christian Faith, it must shape the Christian life.

- **In our relationship to God**, the cross should produce attitudes of joy, boldness, and love, and should lead to meaningful celebration of the Lord's Supper, and be emulated in the offering of spiritual sacrifices by believer-priests (Rom 12:10).
- **In our relationship to ourselves**, the cross teaches us to deny our false, fallen self (as we are allied to take up our crosses and crucify the sinful nature) and to be true to our true selves (that new creation we become through the cross, who you already are in Christ), and leads to self-giving, sacrificial service, love in the home, church, and world. Seek to serve.
- **In our relationship to enemies and evil in the world**, the cross calls us to stand for justice (as God did in requiring sin to be punished) and to overcome evil with good (as Christ triumphed by suffering; Rom 12:17-21). Don't take your own vengeance.
- **In our relationship to suffering**, the cross teaches us endurance in suffering, that suffering can be redemptive, that it may be a necessary part of service, and that we have a sure hope of final glory beyond suffering. Above all, the cross shows us a God who did not hold himself immune from suffering. We know a God who entered our suffering to bear and transform it.