



# THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL

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*As Revealed in Jesus' Final Prayers*

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## *An Introduction and Overview*

### I. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE TRUE HEART OF THE GOSPEL AND UNDERSTANDING OUR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- A. I once heard an army chaplain in World War II recall his experience of shepherding young men on the front lines. He told how he would wake up most mornings to preach to and pray for a new platoon being sent to battle. He said that as he stood in front of them with the Word of God in his hands gazing into their young eyes he was aware that he wasn't going to see most of them again as so many would leave the company of companions to die on a foreign battlefield. He said that that experience dominated his preaching and his praying. I feel the same way in these days. Not because I am an army chaplain on the front lines of a global conflict but because I'm surrounded by young adults that I most likely will not see again. Some because life will lead them elsewhere until we meet again in eternity and others because still after hearing everything they've heard, seeing all that they've seen and tasting all that they've tasted will walk away into destruction. Many who now *appear* to be "of us" will depart "from us" (1 John 2:19) to be swallowed up by the spirit of the age and ultimately the fire of eternal punishment.
- B. It's not that I am being overly pessimistic or intentionally negative – for God saves and mighty is His arm; and we are approaching awesome days when millions will flood into the Kingdom. But I'm being realistic about those in our midst according to what we can observe about our culture and about the Scriptures say. We're living in a generation that knows much about cultural jargon but little about the true Gospel. ***And it's terrifying.***
- C. It's imperative that we get a high vision of the Gospel; one that honors all that the prophets, apostles and martyrs lived and died for; one that esteems and respects the Word of God; one that is worthy of the Lord Jesus; and one that is worthy of our living and dying for. And so, I wish that this would be seared onto the back of our eyelids: That the key to corporate and individual security, stability and consistency is our understanding, embracing and celebrating of the true Gospel.
- D. And why I am so concerned about our young adults "on the front lines" is because they've been drinking from so many polluted wells of so many polluted Gospels; so much so that the church in the western world has nearly lost her equilibrium altogether. Hell is being denied, abortion is being justified, the cross is being deemed barbaric and unnecessary and God is

being told what He is allowed to be like. And the cost of such deviations and such distortions is a whole generation of young adults who are disillusioned by the immaturity, insincerity and stupidity of a church that cares little about the things that our fathers have bled and died for. Whether they know it or not, they're angry because we've discarded the Gospel of our fathers and have embraced a cultural Gospel of convenience and compromise.

- E. We've been so influenced by false Gospels that the identifying of them as false is considered unloving, unbiblical and unreasonable. What many don't understand is how unfathomably costly it is to embrace and preach false Gospels; in this age and the next.
1. Galatians 1 – "Let them be accursed"
  2. Galatians 5:12 – "I could wish that they'd castrate themselves..."
  3. The way the apostles dealt with deviations from what we could call the "heart of the Gospel" – See 1 Corinthians 1:1-4
    - a. Dogs
    - b. Swine
    - c. Liars
    - d. Antichrists
    - e. Thieves
    - f. Hypocrites
    - g. Pigs
  4. It's important that we don't buy into the cultural lie that says it's arrogant, unloving and unbiblical to call people and views wrong, heretical and unacceptable. We're to walk in humility and gentleness yes, but we're to be bold and not tolerant of heresies that will cost people more than we could ever imagine.

## II. THE CROSS OF CHRIST AS THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL & THE PRAYERS THAT ARTICULATE IT

- A. If what we call "the Gospel" were water the cross of Christ would be the well-spring and source. One who understands the cross of Christ, that is, the

death of Christ, understands the Gospel. He who does not understand the cross of Christ does not and cannot understand the Gospel.

- B. The Gospel is not “Jesus loves you” or “Ask Jesus into your heart and you will go to heaven.” These are cheap phrases that our shallow Christian culture employs as substitutes for the authentic Gospel message.
- C. The Gospel before it is anything is “Christ and Him Crucified.” (1 Cor. 2:2) It is the testimony of the death of Christ; both the meaning and significance of it.
- D. In this session we’re going to look at the heart of the Gospel as revealed in 4 prayers of Jesus in the last 24 hours of His earthly life. These are the most significant and revealing prayers ever prayed in human history. Moreover, they are the most consequential prayers in history. Many prayers have been prayed, but none as profound, powerful, consequential and sublime as these.
- E. In them we see four nuances of the Gospel; rather, four nuances of the atonement made through the death of Christ:
  - 1. The **Necessity** of the Atonement – “If it is possible let this cup pass from Me”
  - 2. The **Source and Motive** of the Atonement – “...That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them...”
  - 3. The **Nature** of the Atonement – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?”
  - 4. The **Accomplishment and Achievement** of the Atonement – “It is finished!”
- F. Before we jump into these subjects in the next four sessions I want to turn our attention to Ephesians chapter 2; a chapter that is rich in content concerning the nature of the true Gospel. This chapter will serve as a launching pad for us to approach the prayers of Jesus.

### III. AN OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS 1:1-2:10

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. **Redemption – Accomplished and Applied** (1:3-14)
  - 1. The Father Who Predestines (1:3-6)
  - 2. The Son Who Purchases (1:7-12)
  - 3. The Spirit Who Quickens and Seals (1:13-14)

- C. **Redemption – Understood and Celebrated (1:15-23)**
    - 1. Prayer (1:15-19a)
    - 2. Proclamation (1:19b-23)
  - D. **Redemption – Accomplished and Applied (2:1-10)**
    - 1. The Necessity of Redemption (2:1-3)
    - 2. The Source of Redemption (2:4)
    - 3. The Accomplishment of Redemption (2:5-6)
    - 4. The Purpose of Redemption (2:7)
    - 5. The Nature of Redemption (2:8-9)
    - 6. The Result of Redemption (2:10)
- IV. REDEMPTION – ACCOMPLISHED AND APPLIED – (1:3-14)**
- A. The Father Who Predestines (1:3-6)
    - 1. The Father in His Infinite Generosity (1:3)
    - 2. The Father in Predestination (1:4-5)
    - 3. The Father in His Lavish Bestowal of Free Grace (1:6)
  - B. The Son Who Purchases (1:7-12)
    - 1. The Son Securing the Redemption of Men through His blood (1:7-8)
    - 2. The Son Securing the Consummation of All things through His Death (1:9-10)
    - 3. The Son Securing Our Inheritance and His Father's Will (1:11)
    - 4. The Son Securing the End for Which God Created All Things (1:12)
  - C. The Spirit Who Quickens and Seals (1:13-14)
    - 1. The Spirit Sealing the Redeemed (1:13)
    - 2. The Spirit Given as a Pledge (*Arrhabon*)<sup>1</sup> Securing our Inheritance (1:14)
- V. REDEMPTION – UNDERSTOOD AND CELEBRATED – (1:15-23)**

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek word (728) is the word for a “monetary earnest” that is paid as a guarantee that the person will receive what was purchased and that the other party would receive the full payment. The payment ensures the object and the full payment. This transaction is a pledge of what is to come. The word means “sign” or “foretaste.”

- A. Prayer (1:15-19a)
  - 1. That the God of Jesus Christ and Father of Glory may: (1:17a)
    - a. Give the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God (1:17b)
    - b. Enlighten the eyes of our understanding that we would know: (1:18a)
      - i. The hope of His calling (1:18b)
      - ii. The glory of His inheritance in us the saints (1:18c)
      - iii. What is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe (1:19a)
- B. Proclamation (1:19b-23)
  - 1. The Spirit who Answers and Performs that Prayer Works in Accordance with the Strength and Might of God (1:19b)
  - 2. Which is the Same Spirit that Raised Christ from the Dead <sup>2</sup> and Seated Him in Heavenly Places (1:20)
  - 3. And He is Seated Far Above all Rule, Authority, Power, Dominion and Name (1:21)
  - 4. The Father Put Everything in Subjection Under His Feet and Gave Him as Head of the Church (1:22)
  - 5. The Church is His Body and He Fills All in All (1:23)

## VI. REDEMPTION – ACCOMPLISHED AND APPLIED – (2:1-10)

- A. The Necessity of Redemption (2:1-3)
  - 1. Dead in Trespasses and Sins (2:1)

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, in his commentary on Ephesians writes: *“Have you ever thought of the ascension of Jesus as God bringing the saving work of Christ full circle? In the incarnation, the second Person of the Godhead added perfect humanity to His undiminished deity. In His incarnation, the Lord Jesus laid aside the use of some of His glory and power. In His resurrection and ascension, the Lord Jesus took perfect humanity to heaven, where He was given immeasurable power and authority. Now, in heaven we have a mediator between us and God, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).”*

2. Walked According to the Spirit of the Age (2:2)
  3. Lived in the Lusts of the Flesh (2:3a)
  4. Lived Indulging the Desires of the Flesh and of the Mind (2:3b)
  5. Were by Nature Children of Wrath (2:3c)
- B. The Source of Redemption (2:4)
1. God's Rich Mercy (2:4a)
  2. God's Great Love with which He Loved Us (2:4b)
- C. The Accomplishment of Redemption (2:5-6)
1. When we were Dead in our Transgressions He Made us Alive Together with Christ (2:5a)
  2. By an Effectual Work of Grace (2:5b)
  3. He Raised Us Up and Seated Us with Christ in Heavenly Places (2:6)
- D. The Purpose of Redemption (2:7)
1. That in the Ages to Come, He might show the Surpassing Riches of His Grace in Kindness Towards Us in Christ (2:7)
- E. The Nature of Redemption (2:8-9)
1. By Grace We've Been Saved (2:8a)
  2. Through Faith (2:8b)
  3. Neither of Which are From Us but are Gifts from God (2:8c)
  4. Completely and Absolutely Apart from Works (2:9a)
  5. Once Saved, All Reason for Boasting is Gone (2:9b)
- F. The Result of Redemption (2:10)
1. We are His Workmanship Created in Christ (2:10a)

2. Created for Good Works Prepared Beforehand to Walk in (2:10b)

## VII. SUMMARY

- A. We see three prominent events taking place in this passage:
  1. The Father Predestining Children of Wrath to Adoption
  2. The Son Redeeming Children of Wrath Out of Sin into Grace
  3. The Spirit Regenerating Children of Wrath to Believe and Receive
- B. These three things share these characteristics:
  1. They are Wrought by God Alone
  2. They are Not Wrought by Man/Man Does Not Initiate or Contribute
  3. They are Not Deserved
  4. They are Not Progressive
  5. They are Not Subjective
  6. They are Not Known Apart from Revelation
  7. They are Eternal in Character
  8. They are Upheld by the Intercession of Jesus in Heaven

## *The Necessity of the Atonement*

In this session we're going to explore the subject of the necessity of the atonement. It's been said that the sound of jingling keys doesn't make every man's heart jump and skip a beat. It's only he who has known the confines of a dungeon who is filled with joy when he hears the sound of keys. So it is with the person and work of Christ. A high estimation of the intrinsic goodness of humanity and the low estimation of the majesty of God results in a low view of the cross of Christ and resistance towards the realities that allegedly nailed the Darling of Heaven to Roman cross beams.

The Gospel is principally about a Baptism of blood and a sacrifice of life. But why? Could there have been another way? Was the cross necessary or not? Contemporary preachers are telling us that "God is not angry" and that "sacrifice" is a pagan concept that "cannot be traced to the New Testament." They tell us that blood and death are things of archaic religions of old. They tell us that God is love and man is morally neutral with a free-will towards both good and evil. The Scriptures paint a radically different picture; a picture that is both wounding and comforting – for as the Puritans said, "The same sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay."

### **Outline:**

1. The Components of the Prayer
2. The Nature of the Necessity
3. Embracing the Absolute Necessity of the Atonement from Scripture
4. Embracing the Reality of Universal Condemnation apart from Christ
5. The Necessity of the Atonement as Declared at the Second Coming

### **I. THE COMPONENTS OF THE PRAYER OF MATTHEW 26:39**

***"And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed saying "My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39)***

- A. We read in the synoptics that this particular night was particularly cold. Inside the city Romans guards gathered wood to burn to keep themselves warm. Meanwhile, tucked away in the Garden of Gethsemane, was a man covered in sweat convulsing violently as blood flowed out of His pores. On that frigid night Jesus lay on the ground saturated in His own sweat, tears and blood. And yet not one blow had been laid against Him yet.

B. What was going on? What are we to understand about this prayer? Jesus was saying this: "Father, I am aware of what has been written and spoken by the prophets since the great rebellion. I am aware of what has been spoken concerning the next 12 hours. And I know that this has been decreed long before We ever said 'Let their be light!' But Father, is it possible for these things to be exchanged for something else? Is there an alternative to the next 12 hours? Is it possible for Me to set this cup aside? *Is it possible?*"

C. In verse 42 Jesus rephrases His prayer:

***"My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done."***

B. First off, before we dive into the heart and implications of this prayer, what is "the cup"?

1. Job 21:20 – "Drink of the wrath of the Almighty"
2. Psalm 75:8 – "the cup...the wicked of the earth must drink..."
3. Isaiah 29:7-10 – "Drunk but not with wine...the Lord has poured..."
4. Isaiah 51:17, 21-22 – "The cup of His anger, the bowl of reeling;" "the wrath of the Lord;" "the cup of My anger"
5. Isaiah 63:6 – "...made them drunk in My wrath..."
6. Jeremiah 25:15 – "The cup of the wine of My wrath"
7. Revelation 14:10 – "drink the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger..."
8. Revelation 16:19 – "...the cup of wine of His fierce wrath..."
9. Revelation 18:6 – "...pay her [Babylon the whore] back...with the cup..."

B. As Jesus lay their covered in His own blood anticipating the Baptism of Blood that was now imminent, He was swallowed up in the same resolve that consumed Him for the last 3 1/2 years – the resolve to die. For the answer from heaven was clearly: "It cannot pass." Later that night in John 18:11 Jesus said to Peter:

***"Put the sword into the sheath; the cup with which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"***

## II. THE NATURE OF THE NECESSITY

- A. What we have here is the **necessity of the atonement**. That is, the absolute need for the death of Christ. But before we argue that the death of Christ was **absolutely necessary** let us first understand that it was first **conditionally necessary**. This means that it wasn't necessary in the absolute sense first. It **became** absolutely necessary. It wasn't necessary until God **decreed redemption** over a perishing race. Once that was established, **then** the death of Christ became necessary.

## III. EMBRACING THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT FROM SCRIPTURE

The writers of the New Testament presented the death of Christ as being a product of absolute necessity in view of God's decree to redeem men. It's imperative that we understand, embrace and proclaim the death of Christ as absolutely necessary and that we understand what Scripture has to say about that necessity. That is, *why* was it necessary?

- A. In the first weeks of the formation of the church following the resurrection and ascension we see that the necessity of the atonement was deeply ingrained into the thinking, preaching and praying of the first generation Christians.

1. The first preaching in Acts 2

***"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus of Nazarene, a Man attested to you by miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." (Acts 2:22-24)***

2. The prayer meeting in Acts 4:

***"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your Holy Servant Jesus, whom You did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." (Acts 4:27-28)***

- B. A very telling passage of Scripture concerning the meaning and significance of the death of Christ is in John chapter three with the account of Jesus' night meeting with Nicodemus:

***"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."* (John 3:14)**

1. The reason for His being "lifted up" is seen in the next verse when we read ***"that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."* (3:15)**
2. Jesus' death was directly motivated by God's love (3:16)
3. Jesus' death was designed to save people not to condemn them (3:17)
4. Jesus' death was a statement of our present condemned state before God (3:18)
5. Jesus' death was necessitated by God's commitment to love men who are committed to and destined for eternal damnation (3:19)
6. Jesus' death was necessitated by the reality of the abiding wrath of God upon all of unregenerate humanity (3:36)

- C. Consider Jesus' words to Pilate:

***"Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.""* (John 19:10-11)**

1. Jesus said these words so as to say: "Pilate – you are a puppet of providence. I was born to die. I was destined for this moment. And nothing you or anyone could ever do could ever thwart or hinder those purposes. I am going to bleed Pilate. I am going to die. My Father has promised that He would send a deliverer to "crush the head of the serpent" (Gen. 3:15). And I am here to do just that."
2. To affirm the absolute necessity of the atonement is to affirm the absolute sovereignty of God. If God could've been thwarted or hindered, then we are above all people to be most pitied.

- D. The writer of Hebrews' says chilling words concerning the relationship between blood-shedding and atonement:

***"...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." (Hebrews 9:22)***

1. What does this obscure text mean? The author is writing to Jewish believers who are familiar with the Levitical sacrificial system. This passage is a direct reference to Leviticus 17:11 where we read:

***"For the life of the flesh in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of life that makes atonement." (Leviticus 17:11)***

2. The key concepts here are "life in the blood" and "blood by reason of life makes atonement." The point is this: Sin requires a covering. That's what atonement means: 'a covering.' Either sin is covered by blood or it is covered by wrath. What it is covered by blood we call it atonement, when it is covered by wrath we call it punishment or propitiation.
3. Jesus had to die for our forgiveness because "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) That means, if you sin, you'll die for those sins in those sins. The blood of Jesus was shed because Jesus died in our place and claimed those wages that were deservedly ours.
4. God cannot forgive people in the same way that people can forgive people. In Proverbs 17:15 we read that ***"He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord."*** That's why Paul says that Jesus was "a propitiation in His blood" for us in Romans 3:24-26. Because when Jesus was made a propitiation for us and shed His blood, He became "just" and "the justifier." He only way to retain His justice and forgive sin was by substitution of which Jesus satisfied.

- E. The preaching of John the Baptist:

***"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)***

1. What if there was no Lamb? What would we say of sin? Jesus says in John 3:36 that the wrath of God abides on all. The reason for this is sin. For God to redeem men, He must take away sin. And the only way to remove sin is by annihilating it quenching His furious hatred of it. The sacrificial Lamb is the means by which that occurs.

2. Remember back to Genesis 22.
  - a. Father is told he must slay and burn his only Son, the Son of promise.
  - b. The Father takes his Son to a specific hill riding on a donkey with two men.
  - c. The Son walks up the hill voluntarily towards His death carrying wood to die upon.
  - d. The Son is placed on the wood as the Father positions himself to slay Him and holocaust Him.
  - e. Right before he plunges the knife into his Son's chest, the Angel of the Lord appears and says:

***“Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear/love God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.’ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. And Abraham called the place THE LORD WILL PROVIDE, as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it will be provided.’” (Genesis 22:12-14)***

3. The apostle John develops this theology of sacrificial Lamb in the book of Revelation. We read of two very important passages concerning this issue:

***“Worthy [is the Lamb]...for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every....” (Revelation 5:9)***

***“...the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world...” (Revelation 13:8)***

- F. In John 12 Jesus makes an incredible statement concerning his view of his life:

***“Now My soul has become greatly troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father glorify Thy name.” (John 12:27-28)***

- E. In Luke 24, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus walks with a few disillusioned and depressed disciples perplexed over what took place in Jerusalem over the last 3 ½ years. Jesus rebukes them saying:

***“O foolish [dumb] and slow [thick, calloused, and unresponsive] of heart to believe in all that prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (24:25-26)***

1. A failure to understand the absolute necessity of the sufferings of Christ warrants Jesus' assessment of us as those who are “Foolish and slow of heart.” (Luke 24:25-26)
2. Jesus' first issue to deal with in regards to setting the disciples in the right direction post-resurrection was grounding them in the absolute necessity of His death.
3. The suffering of Christ, according to Jesus, is a prophetic reality that can be traced throughout the Old Testament.
4. It was necessary for the death and resurrection of Jesus in order to procure salvation. Without it, salvation is entirely impossible.

#### IV. EMBRACING THE REALITY OF UNIVERSAL CONDEMNATION APART FROM CHRIST

In John 3 Jesus makes two very startling statements. First that “He who does not believe has already been condemned” (3:18) and then that “He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (3:36) We need to understand the heart of what Jesus is getting at here. The New Testament abounds with the reality of the present universal condemnation of unregenerate humanity.

Stephen Charnock wrote: “Every sin is a kind of cursing God in the heart, an **aim at the destruction of the being of God**; not actually, but virtually; not in the intention of every sinner, but in the nature of every sin. That affection which excites a man to break His law, would excite him to annihilate his being if it were in his power. A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God; and **could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed...** and since man is **so deeply in love with sin**, as to count it the most estimable good, he cannot but wish the abolition of that law which checks it, and, consequently, the change of the Lawgiver which enacted it; and **in wishing a change in the holy nature of God, he wishes a destruction of God**, who could not be God if he ceased to be immutably holy.”

- A. John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus' ministry (Matthew 3)

1. Matthew 3:7 – “He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.”
  2. Matthew 3:9 – “Who warned you of the wrath to come?”
  3. Matthew 3:12 – “The axe is laid at the root of the tree (of Abraham).”
- B. The preaching of Repentance by John and Jesus shows that sin can bring nothing but punishment from God.
1. Matthew 4:16 – “People sitting in darkness...in the land and shadow of death.”
  2. Jesus demands repentance from all – Mark 1:15; 2:17
  3. Repentance is the first note struck by the prophets, apostles and Jesus.
    - a. Zechariah 1:3-6 – Zechariah
    - b. Matthew 3:1 – John the Baptist
    - c. Matthew 4:17 – Jesus
    - d. Mark 6:12 – The Twelve
    - e. Acts 17:30 – Paul
  4. Perfection is required not mere moral improvement – Matthew 5:48
- C. The Implications of Jesus' Righteous Requirement is Devastatingly Revealing
1. “A study on the Sermon on the Mount is a disturbing exercise. There are some passages that are comforting, but the total impact of the Sermon is devastating.”<sup>3</sup>
    - a. Lust is Adultery (Matthew 5:27-29)
    - b. Anger is Murder (Matthew 5:21-22)
    - c. Go the second mile (Matthew 5:41)
    - d. Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44)

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<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*; pg 22

- e. Be Perfect in the same way that God is Perfect (Matthew 5:48)
2. Jesus casually speaks of men as being evil near the end of the Sermon (Matthew 7:11). He slips it into His teaching on prayer as if it were a basic and commonly known fact. It isn't debatable whether or not Jesus views men as evil. He does.
3. If Jesus views men as being naturally evil and sinful, then surely He must have consequences in mind. Jesus was not silent over the issue of eternal punishment:
  - a. "The Judgment" – Matthew 5:21, 22; 7:1
  - b. "The hell of fire" – Matthew 5:22
  - c. "Thrown into hell" – Matthew 5:29
  - d. "Cast into the fire" – Matthew 7:19
  - e. "Perish" – John 3:16
- D. Jesus' Pronouncements of Judgment; temporally and eternally
  1. Capernaum will be "brought down to hell" – Luke 10:15
  2. "Fear Him who after He has killed has the power to cast into hell" – Luke 12:5
  3. Those who deny Jesus no on earth will be denied by Jesus "in the presence of the angels of God" – Luke 12:9
  4. "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven" – Luke 12:10
  5. Some will bear a "greater condemnation" – Luke 20:47
  6. For Jerusalem there was, and there is coming, "days of vengeance" when "all things that are written may be fulfilled" – Luke 21:22
  7. Many "will seek to enter in, and not be able" – Luke 13:24
  8. It would be better for Tyre, Sidon and Sodom than for cities that Jesus ministered in – Matthew 11:20-24

9. "Woe (curse) to you Scribes and Pharisees!" – Matthew 23
  10. Every plant that is not planted by His Father will be "uprooted" – Matthew 15:13
  11. "The door will be shut" – Matthew 25:10
  12. "When the crop permits, immediately He puts in the sickle" – Mark 4:29
  13. He that does not believe "will be condemned" – Mark 16:16
  14. "The wrath of God abides on them" – John 3:36
- E. Jesus' Parables which expressly teach us about mercy, kindness and love are only intelligible behind a backdrop of judgment.
1. The Parable of the **Unmerciful Servant** concludes with a word concerning punishment – Matthew 18:23-25
  2. The Parable of the **Landowner** concludes with a word of judgment; of "miserably destroying those miserable men" – Matthew 21:33-45
  3. The Parable of the **Wheat and the Tares** concludes with a word of condemnation; of angels and evildoers being "cast into the furnace of fire" – Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
  4. The Parable of the **Net** concludes with a word of condemnation; of the wicked being cast "into the furnace of fire...where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" – Matthew 13:47-50
  5. The Parable of the **Rich Fool** concludes with eternal judgment; of the "fool" having his "soul required" of him – Luke 12:16-21
  6. The Parable of the **Noble Man and his Money** concludes with violent condemnation; of "those enemies of His who did not want Him to reign over them...brought to Him" so that He can "slay them in His presence" – Luke 19:12-27
  7. The story of the **Rich Man and Lazarus** is about eternal punishment; clearly the backdrop of the story is of judgment and condemnation – Luke 16:19-31

- F. C. Ryder Smith writes: “An attempt has been made to show that Jesus himself did not accept this teaching [of wrath and judgment], on the ground that (except in Luke 21:23) He uses neither of the Greek *words* translated “wrath” or “anger”, but this is to be a slave to the letter. Without the *concept*, some parables – such as those of the wheat and the tares, or of the Man who built on sand, or of the Sheep and Goats – mean nothing. Without it, much of the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus would hardly make sense. Without it, such phrases as “eternal fire,” “the outer darkness,” “Gehenna,” and “where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” would not only be symbolic, but symbolic of nothing. Without it Jesus’ use of the word “perish” would lose its meaning.”<sup>4</sup>
- G. Jesus’ teaching on the End of the Age
1. No flesh surviving – Matthew 24:21-22
  2. The Days of Vengeance Being Fulfilled – Luke 21
  3. Dividing the Sheep Goats – Matthew 25
- H. Jesus’ cry of dereliction – Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34
1. Why have You forsaken Me?
  2. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “He who knew no sin became sin...”
  3. Galatians 3:13 – “He became a curse...”
  4. Romans 8:3 – “...condemned sin in His body...”
  5. “It is impossible to hold that He was afraid of leaving this life. It was not death as such that He feared. It was the particular death that He was to die, that death which is ‘the wages of sin’ as Paul puts it (Rom. 6:23), the death in which He was at one with sinners, sharing their lot, bearing their sins, dying their death.”<sup>5</sup>
  6. C.E.B. Cranfield rejects the “softening explanations” saying that “The burden of the world’s sin, His complete self-identification with sinners, involved not merely a felt, but a real, abandonment by His Father.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *BDS*; pg. 127

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*; pg. 47

<sup>6</sup> Cranfield, *Commentary on Mark*

7. Mark 14:36 – “Let *this cup* pass...”
  8. “In the Old Testament the metaphorical use of “cup” refers predominantly to God’s punishment of human sin...His cup is the cup of God’s wrath against sin.”<sup>7</sup>
  9. “Christ as reprobate bears damnation on His shoulders to defend and shelter those who are in Him from it, however merited.”<sup>8</sup>
- I. The apostles spoke often of the pressing reality of the wrath of God:
1. Romans 1:18 – The wrath of God is revealed against all....
  2. Romans 2:5 – Storing Up wrath for yourself
  3. Romans 2:8 – To them, wrath and indignation
  4. 2 Corinthians 5:11 – Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men
  5. Ephesians 2:3 – Children of wrath
  6. Ephesians 5:6 – The Wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience
  7. Colossians 3:6 – On account of these things the wrath of God will come
  8. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come
  9. 1 Thessalonians 2:16 – The wrath of God has come upon them forever an altogether
  10. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 – These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction
  11. Hebrews 10:27 – A certain terrifying expectation of judgment
  12. Hebrews 10:31 – It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> J.K.S. Reid, *SJT*; pg 181

13. James 5:5 – You have fattened yourself for the day of slaughter
  14. Jude 7 – Undergoing the punishment of eternal fire
  15. Revelation 6:16 – Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb
- J. The New Testament ends with the Book of Revelation. In chapter 16 we read that this age is concluded when 7 bowls of wrath are dispensed on the earth as God's final air strike against everything that He despises. Those bowls are said to be the "fullness" of the wrath of God. That wrath is consummate and complete. It produces a comprehensive purgation of the whole earth.

#### V. THE NECESSITY OF ATONEMENT AS DECLARED AT THE SECOND COMING

The second coming is a sort of vindication of the sacrificial death of Christ in that He vindicates what He has been saying about the state of humanity since Genesis 3; that is, that men are under the wrath of God and are in desperate need of atonement.

- A. **Revelation 19:11-21** – A tattooed Man with weapons filling city streets in the Middle East with blood.
- B. **Isaiah 63:1-6** – A vision of Messiah covered in blood from head to toe as He slaughters multitudes of people in the final hours of this age.
- C. **Zechariah 14:1-3** – A prophecy concerning Jesus' last minute intervention in Jerusalem when He leads a military campaign against the armies that have sieged Jerusalem.

## *The Source of the Atonement*

One of the most famous passages ever is quite possibly the most overlooked. In John 3:16 we read that ***“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life...”*** That is the source of the atonement – the boundless, infinite and eternal love of God. The problem though for many of us is that “Jesus loves you” means little or nothing to us. The whole concept of love has been so tainted and perverted that our hearts remain unmoved by such an idea. So what I want to do in this session is consider what the Scripture has to say about ***the quality of the love that dreamed up the atonement.***

When speaking about the atonement it's common to hear about what happened on Golgotha and what it achieved, but rarely is the heart of God presented as the source and wellspring of all that transpired on that mysterious mount. To rightly understand the nature of the atonement and the glory of the achievement of the atonement we need to fix our gaze upon the source of the atonement – the eternal and infinite love of God. The quality of this love is seen and felt when we see what was in Jesus' heart and on Jesus' mind as He went to the cross. It is said that He went to the cross “for the joy set before Him.” This session will be an exploration of that joy and the incredible love behind it.

### **I. THE SOURCE AND MOTIVE OF THE ATONEMENT (JOHN 17:24-26)**

***“Father I desire that they also whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory....that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them...” (John 17:24-26)***

- A. This is one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture. It's Jesus' wish list of what He wants more than anything else; the things that He was willing to bleed Himself dry for.
- B. Here we see the chief design behind the crucifixion and the interpretive key of the redemptive plan of God. These are Jesus' last words before the cross and can be considered His “final request.” The other prayers were prayers for Himself whereas this prayer is for human beings. We need to understand this request as framing the entire Passion Week and interpreting the Golgotha. The request is three-fold:
  - 1. That we would be joined in union with Jesus forever
  - 2. That we would behold the glory of Jesus forever

3. That we would love Jesus the way that the Father loves Jesus forever
- C. Having settled His sure plight and having embraced the necessity of His death He cries out: "As My blood flows out of Me and stains the soil red, may My reward be love from those for whom it flows! Let my death be honored by the securing of pardon, faith and love for a remnant of the world's worst! May you satisfy Me with the fullness of My inheritance – the saints!"
- D. The writer of Hebrews tell us to:

**"...fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross..." (Hebrews 12:2)**

1. The joy set before Him is no more clearly explained than in these passages of Jesus' priestly prayer in John 17:24-26.
  2. The cross is more than legal acquittal and judicial pardon. Though it provides us with these things, the chief end of the atonement was not "forgiveness" and "pardon." While forgiveness and pardon are enough for us to celebrate for an eternity of eternities, it isn't the pinnacle of God's redemptive purposes. These things are all means to an end. And that end is this three-fold request in John 17:24-26.
  3. Paul develops nuances of this request in **Ephesians 1:4-6**.
    - a. God chose us to be with Him in heaven in holiness (**v. 4**). This is another way of saying "to be with Me where I am."
    - b. God predestined us to be sons with Jesus to 'the praise of the glory of His grace' (**v. 5**). This is another way of saying "to behold My glory."
    - c. God predestined us to be delighted in (**v. 6**). This is another way of saying "that the love with which you have for Me may be in them" as the way in which we grow in love is by first being loved (1 Jn. 4:19).
- E. When we think about the cross of Christ we need to think about what heart and what sort of person would dream it up in the first place. And then we need to ask "why?" That is, what is in it for Him? What is the intended outcome? What is the design of it? What is the chief end of it? When He decreed that Jesus would be slain before the foundation of the world, what did He have in His heart?

- F. Considering the fact that history culminates with a chorus of “Hallelujah’s” and a wedding feast we have a good idea of what He had in mind when He dreamed up the cross. And we have a good idea of what “the joy set before Him” means.

## II. THAT WE WOULD BE JOINED IN UNION WITH JESUS FOREVER

- A. This request is the chief end of the Gospel. There is not a higher boast of men nor is there anything greater to desire. To be “with Him where He” is the crowning glory of our lives. It is the highest aspiration that one could ever have. It is the greatest privilege in the universe.
- B. It’s no wonder then that this would dominate the mind of the apostle to the Gentiles. This cry is the equilibrium of all Paul’s theology. Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” 114 times in his epistles. To be with Him is what theologians call “the doctrine of our union with Christ.”
- C. One of the most profound explications of this request is in Ephesians 5:25-32. In this passage Paul begins with an exhortation to married couples and slips into a discourse on the meaning and implications of the death of Christ.
1. Jesus’ death is the preeminent marital example for husbands because of the giving of His life “for her” (5:25)
  2. His death procured our full and complete expiation and sanctification (5:26)
  3. His death was designed to produce a wife who is holy and blameless (5:27)
  4. A husband loves his wife because he has become one with her and loves himself when he loves her (5:28)
  5. Jesus nourishes and cherishes us (5:29)
  6. Through His death we have become one with His body (5:30)
  7. Our relationship with Jesus is fundamentally the same as that which was laid forth in Genesis 2:24 (5:31)
  8. That statement is to be understood as a picture of the chief end of the Gospel (5:32)

### III. THAT WE WOULD BEHOLD THE GLORY OF JESUS FOREVER

A. In the 1700's a man named Jonathan Edwards wrote a series of discourses that were later compiled into book entitled "*The End for Which God Created the World.*"

B. In he argued that:

"The end of the creation is that the creation might glorify [God]. Now what is glorifying God, but a rejoicing at that glory he has displayed?"<sup>9</sup>

"God is glorified within Himself these two ways: 1. By appearing... to Himself in His own perfect idea [of Himself], or in His Son, who is the brightness of His glory. 2. By enjoying and delighting in Himself, by flowing forth in infinite . . . delight towards Himself, or in his Holy Spirit...So God glorifies Himself toward the creatures also in two ways: 1. By appearing to... their understanding. 2. In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself...*God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.* When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the world that He might communicate, and the creature receive, His glory; and that it might [be] received both by the mind and heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory [doesn't] glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it."<sup>10</sup>

C. I believe Edwards stumbled upon one of the most profound truths that can be found on the pages of church history. His message is invaluable. I assure you that you will struggle to find anything comparable to Edwards understanding of the necessity of what he called "religious affection." He argued that men ought:

...to be endeavoring by all possible ways to inflame their desires and to obtain more spiritual pleasures. . . . Our hungerings and thirstings after God and Jesus Christ and after holiness can't be too great for the value of these things, for they are things of infinite value. . . . [Therefore] endeavor to

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World*, in John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton, Ill.:Crossway Books, 1998), 158, paragraph 72.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies,"* ed. by Thomas Schafer, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, ed. Thomas Schafer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 495, Miscellany #448; see also #87, pp. 251-252; #332, p. 410; #679 (not in the New Haven volume); emphasis added. In another place where Edwards speaks of God's joy in being God and our joy in his being God, he makes explicit that this is why God's passion for our joy and his glory are not at odds.

promote spiritual appetites by laying yourself in the way of allurements...<sup>11</sup>  
 There is no such thing as excess in our taking of this spiritual food. There is no such virtue as temperance in spiritual feasting.<sup>12</sup>

- D. The glory of God, according to Moses, is the Name of God.
1. The term "glory" is thrown around quite flippantly within church circles. As a result few people know how to even define the glory of God in a Biblical manner. We have the greatest working definition of "glory" in Exodus 33:18 and on when Moses makes a bold request of God by asking, "***show me your glory.***"
  2. By this Moses is asking to see *God*, not just the manifestation of God's presence. The Lord responds to Moses request. The Lord said something profound to Moses in this response:
 

***"I Myself will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you...."*** (Ex. 34:19)

    - a. "*Let me see your glory!*" – "*All My goodness will pass before you!*"
    - b. "*Let me see your glory!*" – "*I will proclaim My name!*"
  3. By asking to see God's glory in his literal appearance, something strange happened – *Moses didn't record it!* Think: Moses saw God and then wrote *nothing about it!* Instead of recording what he saw, Moses records what He heard:
 

***"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."*** (Exodus 34:6-7a).
  4. This then, is what Paul is referring to when he speaks of "***beholding the glory of the Lord***" in 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6. It centers around the attributes and even more specifically so, the emotions of God. The ones God speaks of center around those attributes which pertain to our relationship with Him. We need to make note that they are attributes that pertain to *affection*:

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from an unpublished sermon, "Sacrament Sermon on Canticles 5:1" (circa 1729), edited version by Kenneth Minkema in association with The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Yale University.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "The Spiritual Blessings of the Gospel Represented by a Feast" in *Sermons and Discourses*, 1723-1729, ed. Kenneth Minkema (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 286.

- a. Compassion
  - b. Graciousness
  - c. Happiness/Gladness (Slow to anger)
  - d. Love
  - e. Dedication/Commitment/Loyalty (Faithfulness)
  - f. Forgiveness
5. When Paul talks about ***“beholding the glory of the Lord”*** he is referring to gazing at, peering into, and cultivating insight into and experience of the emotions of God, that which moves in God’s heart. By focusing our hearts and minds on these things, we will be transformed to possess them within ourselves, towards God and towards others.

#### IV. THAT WE WOULD LOVE JESUS THE WAY THE FATHER LOVES JESUS FOREVER

- A. Jesus has defined our identity as His Beloved. That is our primary identity. And His sacrifice secured that identity.
- B. This prayer unequivocally states that Jesus desires love over labor. That is, the longing of His heart is not for missionaries and laborers to emerge but for lovers to emerge. John Piper says it this way:

*“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is the ultimate, not missions, because God is the ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal in missions.”*<sup>13</sup>

1. A paraphrase of what Piper is saying is this: God did not save you for you to serve Him; He saved you to love Him. The chief end of your life is seeing Jesus and loving Him for all that He is to spend eternities with Him in consummate pleasure.

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<sup>13</sup> John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 11.

- C. The request here is not simply about love but concerning a quality of love; "as You have loved Me..."
- D. Jesus is affirming the supremacy of the First Commandment for all time. For an eternity of eternities, love will be the supreme thing.
  - 1. Matthew 22:37
  - 2. 1 Corinthians 13
  - 3. Revelation 2:1-5
- E. The purpose of *all information* is to get us to this end.
- F. The Motive (driving force) of Jesus' passion to Give Himself for us is love
  - 1. John 13:1-3
  - 2. Revelation 1:5
- G. The death of Christ was the greatest demonstration of love imaginable
  - 1. 1 John 4:10-19
  - 2. John 15:13
  - 3. Galatians 2:20

## *The Nature of the Atonement*

Having considered the necessity and source of the atonement, we now turn to consider the nature of the atonement. That is, what actually happened as Jesus died on the cross?

### I. INTRODUCING THE TEXT

***“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” (Matthew 27:26)***

A. In this prayer we see and understand the nature of the atonement; that is, the chief design of the crucifixion; and the primary explanation of the death of Christ. Though the death of Christ is extremely nuanced and is significant for a multiplicity of reasons, there is one fountainhead that all of the streams, rivers and tributaries flow from. That is, sure His death won a victory of Satan and powers of darkness, sure His death was an example that we would follow and sure His death was a legal act whereby God was satisfied and thereby justified sinners judicially. But what I believe this passage suggests is that at the root of all these accomplishments and nuances of the death of Jesus is the profound reality that Jesus was “pierced for our iniquities” and “crushed for our transgressions.” That is, Jesus was condemned with a divine condemnation in our stead. That is, Jesus was our substitute and died the death that we should have died.

1. My God? – The Focus of His Prayer
2. Why? – The Nature of His Prayer
3. Have You? – The Objectivity of His Prayer
4. Forsaken? – The Agony of His Prayer
5. Me? – The Mystery of His Prayer

### II. THE OPTIONS OF WHAT JESUS MEANT BY THIS QUOTATION OF PSALM 22

There are a number of theories about what we're meant to understand about this passage and the quotation of forsakenness from Psalm 22.

- A. The theories are:
1. A Cry of Anger
  2. A Cry of Loneliness
  3. A Cry of Victory
  4. A Cry of Dereliction
- B. This was not (1) a cry of anger, (2) loneliness or (3) victory as many attempt to prove. It was as it reads *a cry of dereliction*. To be derelict is to be abandoned and forsaken. When Jesus says "forsaken" He means *forsaken*. In this session we're going to explore what that means and why.
- C. "I decline to accept any explanation of these words which implies that they do not represent the actual truth of our Lord's position." (Dale)<sup>14</sup>
- D. **The interpretive key of Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22 is bound up in the answer to the question "Who killed Jesus?"** If that is appropriately answered, the issues become clear and Psalm 22 makes sense.
- E. Spurgeon writes: "The crucifixion of Christ was the crowning sin of our race. In his death we shall find all the sins of mankind uniting in foul conspiracy. Envy and pride and hate are there, with covetousness, falsehood, and blasphemy, eager to rush on to cruelty, revenge, and murder. The devil roused around the seed of the woman the iniquities of us all: they compassed the Lord about, yea, they compassed him about like bees. All the evils of human hearts of all ages were concentrated around the Cross: even as all the rivers run into the sea, and as all the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, so did all the crimes of man gather to the slaying of the Son of God. It seemed as if hell held a levee, and all the various forms of sin came flocking to the rendezvous; army upon army, they hastened to the battle. As the vultures hasten to the body, so came the flocks of sins to make the Lord their prey. By all the assembled troops of sins there was consummated the foulest crime which the sun has ever beheld. By wicked hands they did crucify and slay the Saviour of the world."<sup>15</sup>
- F. But still, we ask, who killed Jesus? Scripture is as clear as it is nuanced. Mark says that it was the Romans, Peter says that it was the Jews, Paul said that it was the powers and principalities, Isaiah said that it was the Father, The

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<sup>14</sup> R.W. Dale, *Atonement*; pg. 61

<sup>15</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, a sermon entitled *Pilate and Ourselves Guilty of the Saviour's Death*

writer of Hebrews says that it was by the Holy Spirit and nearly all of the NT writers say that Jesus offered Himself. If we understand Acts 2:22-23 and 4:27-28 rightly, it appears that all of these key players were part of God's providential purpose of crucifying Jesus. And interestingly, the purpose of it was to atone for the sin that was demonstrated by killing Jesus!

- G. Many in our generation are shunning the idea that Jesus died for sin and was punished on our behalf. The primary reason for this is because of a contention with the notion that men are depraved sinners and that God reserves the right to punish them for it. In response to this sort of thinking, listen to the words of Stephen Charnock:

**“Every sin** is a kind of cursing God in the heart, an **aim at the destruction of the being of God**; not actually, but virtually; not in the intention of every sinner, but in the nature of every sin. That affection which excites a man to break His law, would excite him **to annihilate his being if it were in his power**. A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God; and **could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed...** and since man is **so deeply in love with sin**, as to count it the most estimable good, he cannot but wish the abolition of that law which checks it, and, consequently, the change of the Lawgiver which enacted it; and **in wishing a change in the holy nature of God, he wishes a destruction of God**, who could not be God if he ceased to be immutably holy.”

### III. THE IMPORTANCE OF ISAIAH 53 IN UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT

- A. There is nowhere in Scripture that articulates the core message of this prayer better than Isaiah 53. In these 15 verses (52:13-53:12) Isaiah paints the most vivid portrait of the glory of the Divine Person and Work of Christ of anywhere in Scripture. In this session I want to explore four theological elements, components or themes that are the most prominent in the text. They are:

1. Incarnation (53:1-3)
2. Imputation (53:4-6)
3. Substitution (53:4-6)
4. Punishment (53:4-5, 10)

### IV. THE CRUCIFIXION AS INCARNATION

A. 1 Timothy 3:16

<sup>16</sup> ***And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (1 Tim 3:16)***

B. John 1:14-18

<sup>14</sup> ***And the Word [who "was God" (v.1-3)] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*** <sup>15</sup> ***John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.""*** <sup>16</sup> ***And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.*** <sup>17</sup> ***For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*** <sup>18</sup> ***No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*** (John 1:14-18)

C. "There is no one who *can* make this satisfaction [of bearing the penalty of divine wrath for sin] except God Himself. But no one *ought* to make it except man; otherwise man does not make satisfaction. Therefore it is necessary that one who is the God-man should make it." (Anselm)

D. Sam Storms writes: "The Word became flesh / God became human / the invisible became visible / the untouchable became touchable / eternal life experienced temporal death / the transcendent one descended and drew near / the unlimited became limited / the infinite became finite / the immutable became mutable / the unbreakable became fragile / spirit became matter / eternity entered time / the independent became dependent / the almighty became weak / the loved became the hated / the exalted was humbled / glory was subjected to shame / fame turned into obscurity / from inexpressible joy to tears of unimaginable grief / from a throne to a cross / from ruler to being ruled / from power to weakness."

E. "The concern of this Christology, as of the New Testament Christology which molded it, is soteriological, and its key-thought is participation through exchange. This idea is spelled out as follows. The Son of God came down from heaven in order to bring us to share with him the glory to which he has now returned. By incarnation he entered into solidarity with us, becoming through his Father's appointment the last Adam, the second head of the race, acting on our behalf in relation to God. As man, he submitted to the great and decisive exchange set forth in II Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become

the righteousness of God." "This," said Luther, "is that mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners, wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's, and the righteousness of Christ is not Christ's but ours. He has emptied himself of his righteousness that he might clothe us with it, and fill us with it; and he has taken our evils upon himself that he might deliver us from them. So that now the righteousness of Christ is ours not only objectively (as they term it) but formally also."<sup>16</sup>

- F. "...it is impossible to hold the historic doctrine of the cross without holding the historic doctrine of Jesus Christ as the one and only God-man and Mediator...Neither Christ alone as man nor the Father alone as God could be our substitute. Only God in Christ, God the Father's own and only Son made man, could take our place. At the root of every caricature of the cross there lies a distorted Christology. The Person and Work of Christ belong together. If He was not who the apostles say He was, then He could not have done what they say He did. The incarnation is indispensable to the atonement."<sup>17</sup>

## V. THE CRUCIFIXION AS IMPUTATION

- A. The writers of the New Testament were very clear – Christ died in our place and suffered the penalty for sin. This was made possible by what is called "imputation." The word means:<sup>18</sup>
1. attribute a bad action: to attribute a usually undesirable action or event to somebody.
  2. attribute a quality: to attribute a quality to a person, cause, or source.
  3. law charge somebody responsible for another's crime: to bring legal charges against somebody because a person that he or she is responsible for has committed an offense .
- B. Some Important Passages Attesting to Imputation
1. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – Became Sin; Became Righteous
  2. Galatians 3:13 – Cursed
  3. Romans 8:1-3 – Condemned
- C. The Levitical Method of Slaughtering the Animal

<sup>16</sup> J.I. Packer, *Sola Fide*

<sup>17</sup> John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*; pg. 188-189

<sup>18</sup> Encarta® World English Dictionary © & (P) 1998-2004 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

- D. “Representative Substitution, as the way and means of atonement, was taught in the typical form by the God-given Old Testament sacrificial system. There, the perfect animal that was to be offered for sin was first symbolically constituted a *representative* by the sinner’s laying his hand on its head and identifying it with him and him with it (Lev. 4:4, 24, 29, 33), and it was killed as a *substitute* for the offerer, the blood sprinkled “before the Lord” and applied to one or both of the altars in the sanctuary (Lev. 4:6-7, 17-18, 25, 30) as a sign that expiation has been made, averting wrath and restoring fellowship.”<sup>19</sup>
- E. Imputation Makes Propitiation Possible. The word “propitiation” is used four times in the New Testament. It is used to communicate:
1. Paul’s Understanding of the Basis of God’s Justification of Sinners – Romans 3:21-26
  2. The Purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God – Hebrews 2:17
  3. John’s Understanding of Jesus’ Heavenly Ministry – 1 John 2:1-2
  4. John’s Definition of the Love of God – 1 John 4:8-10
- F. But is propitiation necessary? Is the forgiving of sin something that needs to begin with God or with men? Can’t the word just mean “expiation”?<sup>20</sup>
1. In the NEB and the RSV versions of the Bible you’ll notice that “propitiation” cannot be found. They use “remedy for the defilement” and “expiation.” So what’s the difference? What does the word (*hilaskomai* – Rom. 3:25, *hilasmos* – Heb. 2:17, *hilasterion* – 1 John 2:2; 4:10) actually mean?
  2. Expiation means half of what propitiation does. “Expiation is an action that has sin as its object; it denotes the covering, putting away, or rubbing out of sin so that it no longer constitutes a barrier to friendly fellowship between man and God. *Propitiation* however, in the Bible,

<sup>19</sup> Packer, pg. 38

<sup>20</sup> Expiation is far more attractive than propitiation to many because it removes the subject of the wrath of God from the picture. In the last century a man by the name of C.H. Dodd brought “expiation” into the picture by reviving a heretical view of the atonement that was proliferated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Faustus Socinus by suggesting that forgiveness does not hinge on propitiation – thus going against the grain of Biblical exegesis and much church history. Dodd was following in the footsteps of a liberal German scholar named Albrecht Ritschl who argued that “there is in God no such thing as anger occasioned by human sin, and consequently no need or possibility of propitiation.”<sup>20</sup> These men all argued that the propitiation word group in the New Testament doesn’t imply the appeasing of wrath but the putting away of sin.

denotes all that expiation means, *and the pacifying of the wrath of God thereby.*"<sup>21</sup>

3. "If one reduces the language of Scripture from "propitiation" to "expiation" in all instances, he still must answer the question, "**Why should sins be expiated?** What would happen if no expiation were provided? Can one deny that, according to the teaching of Scripture, men will die in their sins?" The logical implication of the denial of propitiation as unworthy of God is the teaching that God will ultimately manifest His forgiving love to everyone, regardless of how one is related to Christ – a point of view that is increasingly the vogue, but one that is contrary to Scripture."<sup>22</sup>
- G. There is a **double imputation** in this passage: (1) the imputation of sin to Christ and (2) the imputation of justifying righteousness to those for whom He died (see v. 11).
1. "Now, as justifying righteousness is not inherent in us, but imputed to us; so our condemning sin was not inherent in Christ, but imputed to him. There would else [otherwise] be no consistency in the antithesis: 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21). He knew no sin, yet he became sin. It seems to carry it [the idea] further than only the bearing [of] the punishment of sin. He was by law charged in our stead with the guilt of sin. Our iniquities were laid upon him (Isaiah 53:6). The prophet had spoken (verse 5) of Christ bearing the chastisement of our peace, the punishment of our sin, and then seems to declare the ground of that, which consisted in God's imputation of sin to him in laying upon him the iniquities of us all. What iniquities? Our goings astray, our turnings every one to his own way. He made him to be that sin which he knew not, but he knew the punishment of sin. The knowledge of that was the end of his coming. He came to lay down his life a ransom for many. He knew not sin by an experimental inherency [something in his own nature], but he knew it by judicial imputation. He knew it not in regard of the spots, but he knew it in regard of the guilt following upon the judgment of God. He was righteous in his person, but not in the sight of the law pronounced righteous as our Surety till after his sacrifice, when he was 'taken from prison and from judgment' (Isaiah 53:8)."<sup>23</sup>

## VI. THE CRUCIFIXION AS SUBSTITUTION

<sup>21</sup> J.I. Packer, *In My Place Condemned He Stood*; pg. 32, Crossway

<sup>22</sup> Paul K. Jewett, *Propitiation in The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; 4:904-5

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Charnock, *The Imputation of Sins*

- A. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

***“I make known to you brethren, the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you also stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)***

- B. Romans 5:8-10

- C. Galatians 2:20

- D. Galatians 3:13

- E. 1 Peter 2:24

- F. Hebrews 9:28

- G. 2 Corinthians 5:14

- H. Mark 10:45

- I. “The theological words “satisfaction” and “substitution” need to be carefully defined and safeguarded, but they cannot in any circumstances be given up. The biblical Gospel of atonement is of God satisfying Himself by substituting Himself for us. The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts Himself where only God deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”<sup>24</sup>

- J. “...the key to the whole of the New Testament teaching...bids us say as we look at the Cross, *He bore our sins, He died our death*. It is so, His love constrains us...The whole secret of Christianity is contained in Christ’s death, and in the abandonment of the soul to that death in faith. It is from Christ’s death, and the love which it demonstrates, that *all* Christian inferences are drawn. Once this is accepted, everything else is easy and secure. [For] ‘When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; *much more* then being justified now in His blood shall we be saved through Him from the wrath. For if when we

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<sup>24</sup> John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*; pg. 188

were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved in His life.' (Rom. 5:8) The *much more* implies that in comparison with this primary, this incredible proof of God's love, everything else may be taken for granted. It is the same argument which is employed again in 8:32: 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us *all thing?*' The propitiatory death of Christ, as an all-transcending demonstration of love, evokes in sinful souls a response which is the whole of Christianity. The love of Christ constraineth us: whoever can say that can say all that is to be said about the Christian life."<sup>25</sup>

## VII. THE CRUCIFIXION AS PUNISHMENT

"At the birth of the Son of God there was brightness at midnight; at the death of the Son of God there was darkness at noon." (Douglas Webster)<sup>26</sup>

The definition of penal substitution is "that Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive and divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory. To affirm penal substitution is to say that believers are in debt to Christ specifically for this, and that this is the mainspring of all their joy, peace and praise both now and for eternity."<sup>27</sup>

### A. The Logical Flow of Romans 1-8

1. 1:18 – cf. 24, 26, 28 – "*Wrath* is revealed against;" "He gave them up"
2. 2:1-16 – "*Storing up wrath*;" "to those...wrath and indignation"
3. 3:9 – "all are *under sin*"
4. 4:5 – "the *wicked*"
5. 5:9-10 – "*saved from the wrath* of God;" "we were enemies"
6. 8:1-3 – "no *condemnation* for those in Christ;" "*condemned sin* in the flesh"

### B. Mark 14:36 – "Let *this cup* pass..."

1. Job 21:20

<sup>25</sup> James Denney, *The Death of Christ*; pg. 178

<sup>26</sup> *In Debt to Christ*; pg.46

<sup>27</sup> J.I. Packer, *What Did the Cross Achieve?*; pg. 25

2. Isaiah 29:7-10
  3. Isaiah 51:17, 21-22
  4. Isaiah 63:6
  5. Jeremiah 25:15
  6. Revelation 14:10
  7. Revelation 16:19
  8. Revelation 18:6
- C. "...believers know that "much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him." (Rom. 5:9) What has happened? The wrath of God against us, both present and to come, has been quenched. How has this been effected? Through the death of Christ. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." (Rom. 5:10) The "blood" – that is, the sacrificial death – of Jesus Christ abolished God's anger against us and ensured that His treatment of us forever after would be propitious and favorable. Henceforth, instead of showing Himself to be against us, He would show Himself in our life and experience to be for us. What then does this phrase "a propitiation...by His blood" express? It expresses, in the context of Paul's argument, precisely this thought: that *by His sacrificial death for our sins Christ pacified the wrath of God.*"<sup>28</sup>
- D. Stephen Charnock writes: "Not all the vials of judgments, that have, or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious devils, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, **as the wrath of God let loose upon his Son**. Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely, than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of his dying groans...in this he (the Father) **lets out his wrath**, as it were, **against Himself**, against his Son, one as dear to him as himself...as if his affection to His own holiness surmounted his affection to his Son."
- E. The idea that God was satisfied when Christ was crucified is being hotly contested and vigorously rejected by many in the last few decades:

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<sup>28</sup> Packer, pg. 34

1. By no means is this a new or novel idea. It's simply a redux of the same gross heresy espoused by such men <sup>29</sup> as Peter Abelard (1079-1142), Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) who all rejected the involvement of the wrath of God in the Crucifixion of Jesus to construct yet another salvation-by-works Gospel.
2. "It is worth noting that the 'fire and brimstone' school of theology who revel in ideas such as that Christ was made a sacrifice to appease and angry God, or that the Cross was a legal transaction in which an innocent victim was made to pay the penalty for the crimes of others, a propitiation of a stern God, find no support in Paul. These notions came into Christian theology by way of the legalistic minds of the medieval churchmen; they are not biblical Christianity." (William Neil) <sup>30</sup>
3. "[They] want us to believe that on the day Adam fell, God the Father was filled with a bloodthirsty anger that demanded punishment before He would even consider forgiveness...they want us to believe that when Jesus Christ hung on the cross, the Father's anger and wrath were poured out upon him, instead of us. But that is to assume that the Father was changed by Adam's sin, and that His heart is now divided toward His creatures...Adam's plunge was met by the same God, and by same determination to bless, and by the same passionate love that birthed creation in the first place." (Baxter Kruger) <sup>31</sup>
4. "...If God punishes Jesus for our sin, does God really forgive anybody? If you owe me a hundred dollars and I won't let you off the hook till someone pays me, did I really forgive your debt? Why does God frequently forgive people in the Bible without requiring a sacrifice? So too, are sin and guilt the kind of things that can literally be transferred from one party (us) to another (Jesus)? Where is the justice in God killing his innocent Son because of what we humans did? Does Jesus reveal God's love for us, or placate God's wrath towards us? And doesn't this way of thinking

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<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, the men in history who have challenged the involvement of the wrath of God in the Crucifixion have also challenged the idea that God knows the future or is Sovereign over history. So it's no wonder that Open Theists and Nonviolent atonement proponents are now bed fellows in this present generation. It's simply history repeating itself.

<sup>30</sup> From *Apostle Extraordinary*; pg. 89-90

<sup>31</sup> Taken from an article written by Kruger entitled "*Why I Left Calvinism*." His theology and his message are quite clear in this essay. The article can be found here at <http://baxterkruger.blogspot.com/2008/04/why-i-left-calvinism.html>

presuppose that you can attain a good, loving result through violence? Does the end justify the violent means? Isn't this the sort of thinking that has fueled the endless cycle of violence that's characterized human history?...one of the main texts used to support the Penal Substitution view of the atonement is Romans 3:25 where (in many translations) Paul says God put forth Christ to be "the propitiation for our sins." Penal Substitution theorists argue that "propitiation" means something like "appeasement." They hold that Jesus appeased (or "satisfied") the Father's wrath against sin. [There is] a compelling argument that the word for "propitiation" (*hilastarion*) actually means "a place for atonement" - referencing the mercy seat in the ark of the Old Testament. So Paul is simply saying God presented Jesus to be the place where we receive mercy."<sup>32</sup>

5. "I feel certain that [Jesus] would not have preached to us of a God who would be appeased by the cruel sacrifice of a tortured body...I cannot accept either the hypothesis that the appalling death of Jesus was a sacrifice in the eyes of God for the sins of the world, or that God, in the shape of His Son, tortured Himself for our redemption..."<sup>33</sup>

F. "It is one thing to say that the wrathful God is made loving. That would entirely false. It is another thing to say the wrathful God *is* loving. That is profoundly true. But it is also true that the wrath by which He is wrathful is propitiated through the Cross. This propitiation is the fruit of the divine love that provided it...the propitiation is the ground upon which the divine love operates and the channel through which it flows achieving its end."<sup>34</sup>

### VIII. WHY WE NEVER HAVE TO PRAY THIS PRAYER

A. The glorious reality about this prayer is that, because Jesus became one of us (**incarnation**), became our sins in the eyes of God (**imputation**), died for us (**substitution**) and bore the penalty for sin (**punishment**), we have lost every plausible reason to ever pray this prayer.

B. 'If He fulfilled not justice, I must; if he underwent not wrath, I must to eternity.' (John Owen)

C. We never have reason to ever pray this prayer for:

<sup>32</sup> Taken from Boyd's website: [www.gregoryboyd.blogspot.com](http://www.gregoryboyd.blogspot.com)

<sup>33</sup> Sir Alister Hardy, *The Divine Flame*; pg. 218

<sup>34</sup> John Murray, *Redemption – Accomplished and Applied*; pg. 37-38

“If Thou hast my discharge procured, And freely in my room endured, The whole of Wrath divine, Payment God cannot twice demand, First at my bleeding Savior’s hand, and then again at mine....”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> An excerpt from A.M. Toplady’s hymn “*From Whence This Fear and Unbelief?*”

## *The Accomplishments of the Atonement*

### I. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE ATONEMENT – IT IS FINISHED (JOHN 19:30)

***“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled....said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit.” (John 19:30)***

- A. You could argue that this fourth one is a proclamation more than a prayer. While I don't diminish this as a proclamation, I believe that it is first and foremost a prayer – a prayer of intercession signifying the mediation between God and man.
- B. We read in Isaiah 53:10-12 that as Jesus hung on the cross He was making intercession for the transgressors to make many righteous. The climax of that intercession – having begun in the Garden – was this cry. It was the God-man's statement of perfect obedience to God. It was the ultimate intercession that forged our way to the father. And it was the most significant prayer in history that solidified the Godhead's plan of redemption.
- C. So, *what* exactly is finished? What is meant by these three words? The answer is three-fold:
  - 1. It is the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry
    - a. Jesus was born to die. He took on flesh and became a man for this one reason: to bleed for a damned humanity.
    - b. A skim through the Gospel of Mark leads one to the conclusion that Jesus was obsessed and consumed with His imminent death on a cross.
    - c. This statement was the climactic declaration to God that He had fulfilled His mission and had done all that was asked of Him.
  - 2. It is the culmination of Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice
    - a. There in the darkness as He hung and bore on His body the wages of sin the first and most necessary element of what

theologian have longed called “the Great Exchange” took place: Jesus fulfilled His mission as sin-bearer and was swallowed up the wrath of God for our sin.

- b. He quenched the fury of God against sin and drank the cup of wrath dregs and all. The substitution of sin bearing was complete.
  - c. Wrath was satisfied and justice was glorified. God’s righteousness was vindicated and His holiness was demonstrated.
3. It is the culmination of Jesus’ work securing our pardon and justification
- a. There in the darkness “He became sin” and we “became the righteousness of God.” This is the second element of the “Great Exchange.”
  - b. Jesus’ death secured our pardon (the forgiveness of our sins) and our justification (the imputing of Christ’s righteousness to us).
  - c. In the negative sense the punishment for sin was complete. In the positive sense the requirements for justification were complete. On the cross as the Father pronounced His Son to be an offering for sin, and as Jesus offered Himself “by the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9) we were declared righteous and lovely in the eyes of the One who cannot look upon sin.

## II. THE CULMINATION OF JESUS’ EARTHLY MINISTRY

- A. 33 years or so prior to the moment this prayer was prayed a star arose over a small backwoods village in Israel. For around 30 years we hear nothing of this “Immanuel.” And then, in the fifteenth year of Tiberias Caesar, the word of the Lord comes to His cousin John in the wilderness (Luke 3:1-5). Shortly after that, the multitudes that John was drawing in the desert are pointed to this obscure carpenter from Nazareth. And for the next 3 ½ years we witness the unleashing of a whirlwind. Jesus storms up and down this little nation in Middle East preaching “the Gospel of the Kingdom.” But what is interesting to note is that His preaching was accompanied by a multitudes of promises of His imminent and necessary death. That is, Jesus was consumed with death; He was bent on a baptism of blood.

- B. If there was one overriding message to be drawn from Jesus' life before Golgotha it would be "I was born to die." And if there was one overriding message on Golgotha, it would be "I was born to die." And if there is one overriding message of the church from then until now, it is surely, "He was born to die."
- C. This cry "It is finished" is indicating the completion of that mission and the fulfillment of that message. Jesus wasn't the victim of a cruel martyrdom – He was the author of a necessary sacrifice that was to procure salvation for the world. And this marked its end.
- D. J.I. Packer points out **four realities** noticeable in the book of Mark that attests to the fact that death was the driving force of Jesus' life:
1. Jesus was **a man of action** always on the move, always provoking things, always stirring things always precipitating things; so much so that by the time He "gives up His Spirit" we're made to feel as though He controlled the totality of all that occurred!
  2. We get the impression that Jesus was a man who knew Himself to be **Divine** (Son of God) fulfilling a Messianic role (Son of Man). And the more Jesus gave Himself to His disciples the more they were perplexed and confused about what they were being told. The more they were told about Him the less they knew about Him! As Jesus confessed to be both God and Savior it was clear that He was both God and Man. And that raises very serious questions for anyone paying attention (insert Anselm quote).
  3. By the logic of the first two impressions we connect with the idea that **this God-Man preached that His central mission was to die**. Four times at least – after Peter's confession of Jesus' Messiah-ship at Caesarea Philippi – Jesus promises that He would be killed and would rise from the dead (8:31, 35; 9:9, 31; 10:33-34). He was clear that this death was certain (12:8; 14:18, 24) and that this death was prophesied in Scripture (14:21, 49). The message of Jesus concerning the explanation for His divine life in flesh was that "the Son of Man [came] to give His life for a ransom for many." (10:45)
  4. The final impression will be that **His death was the most fearful ordeal**; mysteriously fearful. In Gethsemane "horror and dismay came over Him" and He said that "My heart is ready to break with grief." (14:34) As He prayed He didn't simply kneel in reverence but rather "threw Himself on the ground" in horror of what was to come. He prayed "take away this cup from Me." After resolving to drink the cup

given to Him He cried out from the Cross “My God my God, why have you forsaken Me?!” (15:34) If He was convinced He was to die, and was predicting His death consistently, what explanation is there for such a display of fear, horror and grief? Did He have a timid streak? Was He in all truth a coward? *Or*, was He intensely aware that as He hung on the Cross He would be hanging to quench the wrath of God against sinners? James Denney writes:

“May we not urge that these experiences of deadly fear and of desertion are of one piece with the fact that in His death and in the agony of the Garden through which He accepted that death as the cup which His Father gave Him to drink, Jesus was taking upon Him the burden of the world’s sin, consenting to be, and actually being, numbered with the transgressors?”<sup>36</sup>

### III. THE CULMINATION OF JESUS’ SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE

- A. The overarching theme concerning the nature of Jesus’ death was that it was that which was done “for us.” That is, it was substitutionary.
- B. There in the darkness as He hung and bore on His body the wages of sin the first and most necessary element of what theologians have longed called “the Great Exchange” took place: Jesus fulfilled His mission as sin-bearer and was swallowed up the wrath of God for our sin.
- C. He quenched the fury of God against sin and drank the cup of wrath dregs and all. The substitution of sin bearing was complete.
- D. Wrath was satisfied and justice was glorified. God’s righteousness was vindicated and His holiness was demonstrated.
- E. Three key passages signifying the completion of substitution and the nature thereof:
  1. Galatians 3:13 – The cursing of the Son of God was complete
  2. Romans 8:1-3 – The condemnation of the Son of God was complete
  3. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – The imputation of sin to the Son of God was complete

<sup>36</sup> James Denney, *The Death of Christ*; (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911) pg. 46

#### IV. THE CULMINATION OF JESUS' WORK SECURING OUR PARDON AND JUSTIFICATION

- A. Thirdly, the cry signals Jesus' affirmation that He has met all the requirements to secure the pardon and the justification of sinners. ***Nothing else is required.*** But, some may say, "What about faith?" Jesus' death secured our justification, and, I believe, also secured our faith and sanctification. That is, faith is not a work that we do *in light* of the cross but a gift we receive *because* of the cross.
- B. We were not simply pardoned and forgiven. We were justified. That is, the cross did not simply procure the forgiveness of our past sins up that point when we "receive Him" but actually imputed, credited and ascribed the very righteousness of Christ to us as if it were our own. In the same way that Jesus was counted "sin" though He was not, so too have we been counted "righteous" though we are not. It is the great glory of the Gospel.

## *The Meaning and Significance of the Death of Christ*

*The following chapter was structured around a chapter in J.I. Packer's book "Knowing God" entitled "The Heart of the Gospel"*

### I. THAT WHICH IS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE IN REGARDS TO THE GOSPEL BY WHICH YOU NOW STAND AND BY WHICH YOU WERE SAVED

A. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul writes:

***"I make known to you brethren, the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you also stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)***

B. Paul is explaining the heart of the Gospel that he preached to these people; he's telling them of the sum and substance of the faith. And it's important that we give this passage the attention that it deserves. For in it the apostle says a very important statement:

***"...I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..."***

C. Thus, in this session I want to show how the life of Christ was centrally motivated by the death of Christ and that this life, death and resurrection constitute the central message of the Gospel. Furthermore, I want to show that the crucifixion of Jesus is actually what we ought to call "the heart of the Gospel;" that Jesus died *for our sins* as a *propitiation* – a word and concept we will soon define and present.

D. We must understand the meaning behind and the significance of the death of Christ; and what is meant by "died for our sins." Our "standing" and our "salvation" rests upon an accurate estimation of what was meant by the crucifixion of Jesus.

### II. INTRODUCING PROPITIATION – WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

## A. Pagan Propitiation

1. Around 1000 B.C. – during the Trojan War – it's said that a Greek general named Agamemnon, while in pursuit of an abducted Princess – Helen of Troy – , sent word home to retrieve his daughter to be brought to him. The Greek forces sent after their hostage was detained by persistent contrary winds. So, to pacify the malice of the gods, Agamemnon ceremonially slaughtered his daughter as a sacrifice. As the story goes, the sacrifice was sufficient and the west winds blew again – and the fleet reached their destination.
2. This example – among millions – of pagan sacrifice is typified by a selfish commercialism, crisis management, heavenly manipulation and divine bribery.
3. In Pagan sacrifice men are cunningly selfish and the god being sacrificed to is cruel, vain, moody, temperamental and vindictive. It could be said that in pagan religion the gods are just extensions of men's corrupt nature and greed for selfish gain. In Biblical propitiation, men are still cunningly selfish and horrendously evil; but the difference here is that God is altogether different from them.
4. The idea of propitiation – which means the averting of Divine wrath by an offering – is found throughout Scripture running from Genesis to Revelation. In order to rightly see it, we need to define what it isn't – by identifying the differences between pagan and Biblical sacrifices – and what it is – by looking at Scripture to see it as the Biblical authors saw it.

## B. Propitiation in the Bible

1. In the Old Testament
  - a. Sin Offering
  - b. Guilt/Trespass Offering
  - c. The Day of Atonement (Lev. 4:1-6:7; 16:1-34)
  - d. Numbers 16:41-50
  - e. Numbers 25
2. In the New Testament:

- 2
- a. Paul's Understanding of the Basis of God's Justification of Sinners – Romans 3:21-26
  - b. The Purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God – Hebrews 2:17
  - c. John's Understanding of Jesus' Heavenly Ministry – 1 John 2:1-2
  - d. John's Definition of the Love of God – 1 John 4:8-10

C. Does the word mean **Expiation** or **Propitiation**?

1. In the NEB and the RSV versions of the Bible you'll notice that "propitiation" cannot be found. They use "remedy for the defilement" and "expiation." So what's the difference? What does the word (*hilaskomai* – Rom. 3:25, *hilasmos* – Heb. 2:17, *hilasterion* – 1 John 2:2; 4:10) actually mean?
2. Expiation means half of what propitiation does. "Expiation is an action that has sin as its object; it denotes the covering, putting away, or rubbing out of sin so that it no longer constitutes a barrier to friendly fellowship between man and God. *Propitiation* however, in the Bible, denotes all that expiation means, *and the pacifying of the wrath of God thereby.*"<sup>37</sup>
3. Expiation is far more attractive than propitiation to many because it removes the subject of the wrath of God from the picture. In the last century a man by the name of C.H. Dodd brought "expiation" into the picture by reviving a heretical view of the atonement that was proliferated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Faustus Socinus by suggesting that forgiveness does not hinge on propitiation – thus going against the grain of Biblical exegesis and much church history. Dodd was following in the footsteps of a liberal German scholar named Albrecht Ritschl who argued that "there is in God no such thing as anger occasioned by human sin, and consequently no need or possibility of propitiation."<sup>38</sup> These men all argued that the propitiation word group in the New Testament doesn't imply the appeasing of wrath but the putting away of sin.

<sup>37</sup> J.I. Packer, *In My Place Condemned He Stood*; pg. 32, Crossway

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*; pg. 33

4. "If one reduces the language of Scripture from "propitiation" to "expiation" in all instances, he still must answer the question, "Why should sins be expiated? What would happen if no expiation were provided? Can one deny that, according to the teaching of Scripture, men will die in their sins?" The logical implication of the denial of propitiation as unworthy of God is the teaching that God will ultimately manifest His forgiving love to everyone, regardless of how one is related to Christ – a point of view that is increasingly the vogue, but one that is contrary to Scripture."<sup>39</sup>

#### D. The Nature of the Wrath of God

1. This debate between expiation and propitiation is more serious than we understand at a casual consideration. By embracing expiation and rejecting propitiation we're embracing a Gospel that claims God has no anger, fury, wrath or hatred against sin. And if we say that wrath is not a Biblical category, then the Cross takes on a completely different meaning. So by embracing one word over another our perspective changes dramatically which ends up determining how we view the Cross and how we view our relationship with God. So before we can determine which word best suits the text and the subject of the nature of the Gospel altogether we need to consider whether or not the out-breaking of Divine wrath against sin is a Biblical concept.
2. Consider Paul's argument in Romans 1-8:
  - a. 1:18 – cf. 24, 26, 28 – "*Wrath* is revealed against;" "He gave them up"
  - b. 2:1-16 – "*Storing up wrath*;" "to those...wrath and indignation"
  - c. 3:9 – "all are *under sin*"
  - d. 4:5 – "the *wicked*"
  - e. 5:9-10 – "*saved from the wrath* of God;" "we were enemies"
  - f. 8:1-3 – "no *condemnation* for those in Christ;" "*condemned sin* in the flesh"

<sup>39</sup> Paul K. Jewett, *Propitiation in The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; 4:904-5

3. "...believers know that "much more than, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him." (Rom. 5:9) What has happened? The wrath of God against us, both present and to come, has been quenched. How has this been effected? Through the death of Christ. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." (Rom. 5:10) The "blood" – that is, the sacrificial death – of Jesus Christ abolished God's anger against us and ensured that His treatment of us forever after would be propitious and favorable. Henceforth, instead of showing Himself to be against us, He would show Himself in our life and experience to be for us. What then does this phrase "a propitiation...by His blood" express? It expresses, in the context of Paul's argument, precisely this thought: that *by His sacrificial death for our sins Christ pacified the wrath of God.*"<sup>40</sup>
  4. Wrath is a personal and active force namely because God is the One offended; not some law or system that is distinct from Himself. God hates sin with an unfathomable hatred. So to propitiate that wrath is not to bribe or coerce Him who is wrathful but to *satisfy Him* by the punishing and attacking of the thing that provokes Him. Yes laws were broken and yes systems have been threatened, but to speak of propitiation is to speak of an unimaginably fierce wrath that necessarily has its fountain-head and well-spring in God Himself; to speak of propitiation is to speak of the quenching of that wrath.
  5. All of the theories of the atonement – that is, what was the atonement all about? – run aground if they fail to address the issue of Divine wrath. Yes Jesus died to liberate us from the power of sin and Satan (Christus Victor) but what of wrath? Of course Jesus died to be our supreme example (Christus Exemplar), but what of wrath? Surely Jesus died because God's law and justice demanded it (Moral Government), but again, what of wrath? This benefits and nuances of the atonement have relevance only as much as wrath has been quenched. And if it has yet to be quenched, then surely none of these theories are in anyway relevant.
- E. The idea that God was satisfied when Christ was crucified is being hotly contested and vigorously rejected by many in the last few decades:

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<sup>40</sup> Packer, pg. 34

1. By no means is this a new or novel idea. It's simply a redux of the same gross heresy espoused by such men <sup>41</sup> as Peter Abelard (1079-1142), Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) who all rejected the involvement of the wrath of God in the Crucifixion of Jesus to construct yet another salvation-by-works Gospel.
2. "It is worth noting that the 'fire and brimstone' school of theology who revel in ideas such as that Christ was made a sacrifice to appease and angry God, or that the Cross was a legal transaction in which an innocent victim was made to pay the penalty for the crimes of others, a propitiation of a stern God, find no support in Paul. These notions came into Christian theology by way of the legalistic minds of the medieval churchmen; they are not biblical Christianity." (William Neil) <sup>42</sup>
3. "[They] want us to believe that on the day Adam fell, God the Father was filled with a bloodthirsty anger that demanded punishment before He would even consider forgiveness...they want us to believe that when Jesus Christ hung on the cross, the Father's anger and wrath were poured out upon him, instead of us. But that is to assume that the Father was changed by Adam's sin, and that His heart is now divided toward His creatures...Adam's plunge was met by the same God, and by same determination to bless, and by the same passionate love that birthed creation in the first place." (Baxter Kruger) <sup>43</sup>
4. "...If God punishes Jesus for our sin, does God really forgive anybody? If you owe me a hundred dollars and I won't let you off the hook till someone pays me, did I really forgive your debt? Why does God frequently forgive people in the Bible without requiring a sacrifice? So too, are sin and guilt the kind of things that can literally be transferred from one party (us) to another (Jesus)? Where is the justice in God killing his innocent Son because of what we humans did? Does Jesus reveal God's love for us, or placate God's wrath towards us? And doesn't this way of thinking

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<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, the men in history who have challenged the involvement of the wrath of God in the Crucifixion have also challenged the idea that God knows the future or is Sovereign over history. So it's no wonder that Open Theists and Nonviolent atonement proponents are now bed fellows in this present generation. It's simply history repeating itself.

<sup>42</sup> From *Apostle Extraordinary*; pg. 89-90

<sup>43</sup> Taken from an article written by Kruger entitled "*Why I Left Calvinism*." His theology and his message are quite clear in this essay. The article can be found here at <http://baxterkruger.blogspot.com/2008/04/why-i-left-calvinism.html>

presuppose that you can attain a good, loving result through violence? Does the end justify the violent means? Isn't this the sort of thinking that has fueled the endless cycle of violence that's characterized human history?...one of the main texts used to support the Penal Substitution view of the atonement is Romans 3:25 where (in many translations) Paul says God put forth Christ to be "the propitiation for our sins." Penal Substitution theorists argue that "propitiation" means something like "appeasement." They hold that Jesus appeased (or "satisfied") the Father's wrath against sin. [There is] a compelling argument that the word for "propitiation" (*hilastarion*) actually means "a place for atonement" - referencing the mercy seat in the ark of the Old Testament. So Paul is simply saying God presented Jesus to be the place where we receive mercy."<sup>44</sup>

5. "I feel certain that [Jesus] would not have preached to us of a God who would be appeased by the cruel sacrifice of a tortured body...I cannot accept either the hypothesis that the appalling death of Jesus was a sacrifice in the eyes of God for the sins of the world, or that God, in the shape of His Son, tortured Himself for our redemption..."<sup>45</sup>

### III. DEFINING PROPITIATION

#### A. Four Facts About Propitiation Necessary to Understand

##### 1. *Propitiation is God's Initiative*

- a. In paganism, man propitiates God by a sort of bribe. In Scripture God propitiates His wrath by His own initiative and His own action. We read that "*He set forth Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:25-26) and that "*He sent His Son.*" (1 John 4:10)
- b. Man did not take initiative to make God benevolent towards Him. It wasn't Jesus that persuaded Him to be kind to us and not violent. It was the Father who sent His Son to die in the stead of those whom He had chosen to save. He made provision by an act of unthinkable love.
- c. Murray writes: "The doctrine of propitiation is precisely this – that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that He gave

<sup>44</sup> Taken from Boyd's website: [www.gregoryboyd.blogspot.com](http://www.gregoryboyd.blogspot.com)

<sup>45</sup> Sir Alister Hardy, *The Divine Flame*; pg. 218

His own Son to the end that He by His blood should make provision for the removal of His wrath. It was Christ's so to deal with the wrath that the loved would no longer be the objects of wrath, and love would achieve its aim of making the children of wrath the children of God's good pleasure."<sup>46</sup>

- d. ***"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins...We love because He first loved us."*** (1 John 4:10, 19)
- e. And that is the great difference between pagan propitiation and Biblical propitiation – one is a man-initiated commercialistic bribe of a vindictive deity whereas the other is a God-initiated act of sacrificial love whereby wrath is quenched and love is demonstrated. Man performs one, God the other.

## 2. ***Propitiation was Made by the Death of Christ***

- a. The concept of blood-shedding communicated the violence of death. In Leviticus 17:11 we read that life is in blood and that when it is shed – and when there is death – atonement is made. Atonement was made by Jesus' blood, by Jesus' death.
- b. This is called "representative substitution;" whereby God, in the flesh, stands in the stead of the guilty "under the axe of God's judicial retribution." See Galatians 3:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:14, 18-21)
- c. "Representative Substitution, as the way and means of atonement, was taught in the typical form by the God-given Old Testament sacrificial system. There, the perfect animal that was to be offered for sin was first symbolically constituted a *representative* by the sinner's laying his hand on its head and identifying it with him and him with it (Lev. 4:4, 24, 29, 33), and it was killed as a *substitute* for the offerer, the blood sprinkled "before the Lord" and applied to one or both of the altars in the sanctuary (Lev. 4:6-7, 17-18, 25, 30) as a sign that expiation has been made, averting wrath and restoring fellowship."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> John Murray, *The Atonement*

<sup>47</sup> Packer, pg. 38

- d. On the Day of Atonement, two goats were used. One was killed as in offering and the other was sent away after the priest's had laid hands on its head and put Israel's sins "on the head" of the animal. The double ritual taught a single lesson: that through the death of the representative substitute, God's wrath is averted and that sins are borne away out of sight. This Day of Atonement was the backdrop of Paul's teaching on propitiation.

### 3. ***Propitiation Manifests God's Righteousness***

- a. Contrary to popular belief, sending Jesus to die as our representative substitute doesn't call the righteousness of God into question but actually establishes it.
- b. ***"Jesus Christ, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation...to demonstrate/declare His righteousness...for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier..." (Rom. 3:25-26)***
- c. "Paul's point is that the public spectacle of propitiation, at the cross, was a public manifestation, not merely of justifying mercy on God's part, but of righteousness and justice as the basis of justifying mercy."<sup>48</sup>
- d. This declaration, this demonstration was necessary because, as we read in the following verses, "in the forbearance of God He passed over sins previously committed.... (v. 25b)." It's not been God's desire since the flood to deal with wicked men in an act of cataclysmic judgment that we deserve. Since the flood men have been as wicked as those before but God has providentially been "passing over" sins in "forbearance." This passing over was not forgiveness but the prolonging of mercy and the postponement of judgment. The question then, is, if God, the Judge of the living and the dead, blesses wicked men (Acts 14:17) and chooses not to punish them as their sins deserve, is He not unjust and unrighteous? That is the issue Paul is dealing with.
- e. The question was answered before it was asked in Romans 2:1-16 when the apostle makes clear that there is coming a Day of Reckoning when all men will receive from God what

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<sup>48</sup> Packer; pg. 39

their sins deserve. Romans 3:21-26 is the second part of the answer to the question of God's righteousness. Here Paul says that *Jesus* received from God what our sins deserve. Here Paul argues that God "justify" wicked men and still retain His "justice" but setting forth Jesus as a "propitiation." For by the substitutionary death of Christ, sin has been counted, justice has been shown, judgment has been inflicted, retribution has come and wicked men have been justified. The Gospel message is that either we quench the wrath of God or Jesus quenches the wrath of God.

- f. "Thus the righteousness of God the Judge, which is set forth so vividly in the doctrine of divine wrath in the first part of Paul's letter, is set forth again in Paul's doctrine of how divine wrath was quenched. It is vital to his argument to show that the truths of salvation and damnation alike manifest the essential, inherent retributive justice that belongs to the divine character. In each case – salvation of those who are saved, and the damnation of those who are lost – retribution falls; punishment is inflicted; God is righteous, and justice is done."<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. ***Propitiation Demonstrates God's Love***

- a. John Murray says that "It is one thing to say that the wrathful God is made loving. That would *entirely false*. It is another thing to say the wrathful God *is* loving. That is *profoundly true*. But it is also true that the wrath by which He is wrathful is propitiated through the Cross. This propitiation is the fruit of the divine love that provided it....the propitiation is the ground upon which the divine love operates and the channel through which it flows achieving its end."<sup>50</sup>

### B. The Death of Christ was Principally about Quenching God's Wrath against Sin

#### 1. ***The Basic Description of the Death of Christ in Scripture is as Propitiation***

If we were to summarize what has already been said, and if we were to summarize the Gospel itself, we would say that "propitiation" is most basic and explanatory word to articulate the Gospel message.

<sup>49</sup> Packer; pg. 40

<sup>50</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*; pg. 37-38

For in propitiation we find that God's love is demonstrated, God's justice is vindicated, God's mercy is administered and God's wrath is placated. And that is the core message of the Gospel.

2. ***Though only Mentioned Four times, the Concept is Throughout Scripture***

If one were to glance over such texts as Romans 1-5, Galatians 2-3, Ephesians 1-2, Hebrew 8-10, 1 John 1-3 and various sermons in the book of Acts, the word "propitiation" would be found only four times. The concept however is presupposed throughout all of these incredible passages. Variety of language does not imply variety of thought.

3. ***All Other Salvific Concepts Rest Principally Upon Propitiation***

All of the following concepts have to do with the putting away of sin and the restoring of broken fellowship between sinful men and a holy God. Also, all of them are founded on the fact that divine judgment has been averted by virtue of the death of Christ. These concepts are rooted and interpreted by the word "propitiation." Without it these words and concepts lose their meanings altogether.

- a. ***Reconciliation*** (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20-22)
- b. ***Redemption*** (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 1 Pt. 1:18; Rev. 5:9)
- c. ***Sacrifice*** (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:1-10:18)
- d. ***Self-Giving*** (Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 1 Tim. 2:6)
- e. ***Sin-Bearing*** (John 1:29; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pt. 2:24)
- f. ***Blood-Shedding*** (Mark 14:24; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 1:5)

C. Five Vital Matters that Put Propitiation Into Perspective

1. ***The Driving Force of Jesus' Life***

- a. Clearly and without a shadow of a doubt Jesus was driven by His imminent death. There is no more obvious reason for His life than His death. His mission was defined as "being obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:8) It was "for [that] very hour that [He came]." (John 12:27) Prophetically

(Isaiah 53) and historically (the Gospels) it's clear that Jesus was consumed with this end – horrific death on a Roman cross.

- b. J.I. Packer points out **four realities** noticeable in the book of Mark that attests to this fact of death being the driving force of Jesus' life:
- i. Jesus was **a man of action** always on the move, always provoking things, always stirring things always precipitating things; so much so that by the time He "gives up His Spirit" we're made to feel as though He controlled the totality of all that occurred!
  - ii. We get the impression that Jesus was a man who knew Himself to be **Divine** (Son of God) fulfilling a Messianic role (Son of Man). And the more Jesus gave Himself to His disciples the more they were perplexed and confused about what they were being told. The more they were told about Him the less they knew about Him! As Jesus confessed to be both God and Savior it was clear that He was both God and Man. And that raises very serious questions for anyone paying attention.
  - iii. By the logic of the first to impressions we connect with the idea that **this God-Man preached that His central mission was to die**. Four times at least – after Peter's confession of Jesus' Messiah-ship at Caesarea Philippi – Jesus promises that He would be killed and would rise from the dead (8:31, 35; 9:9, 31; 10:33-34). He was clear that this death was certain (12:8; 14:18, 24) and that this death was prophesied in Scripture (14:21, 49). The message of Jesus concerning the explanation for His divine life in flesh was that "the Son of Man [came] to give His life for a ransom for many." (10:45)
  - iv. The final impression will be that **His death was the most fearful ordeal**; mysteriously fearful. In Gethsemane "horror and dismay came over Him" and He said that "My heart is ready to break with grief." (14:34) As He prayed He didn't simply kneel in reverence but rather "threw Himself on the ground" in horror of what was to come. He prayed "take away this cup from Me." After resolving to drink the cup given to Him He cried out from the Cross

“My God my God, why have you forsaken Me?!” (15:34) If He was convinced He was to die, and was predicting His death consistently, what explanation is there for such a display of fear, horror and grief? Did He have a timid streak? Was He in all truth a coward? *Or*, was He intensely aware that as He hung on the Cross He would be hanging to quench the wrath of God against sinners? James Denney writes, “May we not urge that these experiences of deadly fear and of desertion are of one piece with the fact that in His death and in the agony of the Garden through which He accepted that death as the cup which His Father gave Him to drink, Jesus was taking upon Him the burden of the world’s sin, consenting to be, and actually being, numbered with the transgressors?”<sup>51</sup>

## 2. *The Destiny of Those Who Reject God*

- a. There are those who choose to believe that God rejects no one and that eternal punishment is a myth. These “Universalists” couldn’t be any more wrong. Those who reject God in this life will be rejected by God in the next.<sup>52</sup> Of all the Gospel writers Matthew is the clearest about hell.
  - i. “The Judgment” – Matthew 5:21, 22; 7:1
  - ii. “The hell of fire” – Matthew 5:22
  - iii. “Thrown into hell” – Matthew 5:29
  - iv. “Cast into the fire” – Matthew 7:19
- b. Universalists argue that all will be saved – even Judas. The problem with this theory is that Scripture abounds with statements concerning eternal punishment; and that Jesus makes it clear that Judas was lost and rejected by God and

<sup>51</sup> James Denney, *The Death of Christ*; (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911) pg. 46

<sup>52</sup> C. Ryder Smith writes: “An attempt has been made to show that Jesus himself did not accept this teaching [of wrath and judgment], on the ground that (except in Luke 21:23) He uses neither of the Greek *words* translated “wrath” or “anger”, but this is to be a slave to the letter. Without the *concept*, some parables – such as those of the wheat and the tares, or of the Man who built on sand, or of the Sheep and Goats – mean nothing. Without it, much of the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus would hardly make sense. Without it, such phrases as “eternal fire,” “the outer darkness,” “Gehenna,” and “where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” would not only be symbolic, but symbolic of nothing. Without it Jesus’ use of the word “perish” would lose its meaning.”<sup>52</sup>

that it would have been better if Judas was never born (see Mark 14:21 and John 17:12).

- c. Our understanding of the cross of Christ must in some way be connected with our understanding of eternal punishment. The Lake of Fire sheds much light of the death of Christ. We would be foolish to assume that the two matters had nothing to do with each other.
- d. Calvary shows that through propitiation, the final judgment of God upon sin has been executed; the Darling of Heaven born it in our place.

### 3. ***God's Gift of Peace***

- a. Nearly everyone would agree that the Gospel offers peace – but few can accurately explain what this peace means, implies or includes. The employment of the right words does not necessarily mean that we can be sure that we have the right meanings and the right understanding of those words. Peace is one of those words.
- b. The peace of God is not primarily a feeling but a position because of propitiation. The feeling must be founded upon that position or it's illegitimate.
- c. "The peace of God [according to many] brings two things: both power to face and live with our own badness and failings, and also contentment under "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (for which the Christian name is God's wise providence). The truth that this account ignores is that the basic ingredient of God's peace, without which the rest cannot be, is pardon and acceptance into Covenant – that is, adoption into God's family. But where is this change of relationship with God – out of hostility into friendship, out of wrath into fullness of love, out of condemnation into justification – is not set forth, the Gospel of peace is not truly set forth either."<sup>53</sup>
- d. After the resurrection Jesus came to the disciples and said "Peace be with you." As soon as He said it "He showed them His hands and His side." (John 20:19-20) Jesus was showing

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<sup>53</sup> Packer, pg. 48

them that He was “the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Because of this, He has made “peace through His blood shed on the Cross.” (Col. 1:20)

#### 4. ***The Dimensions of the Love of God***

- a. Paul prays for the Ephesians by asking that they “may have power with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that passes knowledge.” (3:18-19) The love of God certainly has an incomprehensible nature to it for Paul to pray this way – to ask that men would “grasp” something that “passes knowledge.” Nevertheless, this love *can* be grasped. Otherwise Paul wouldn’t pray this. How is it grasped?
- b. The answer to the question is this: *By understanding the sacrificial death of Jesus; the propitiation for our sins.* We understand this when propitiation is placed within its context in the rest of the book – the eternal purpose of God according to Paul includes the “election,” “redemption,” “regeneration,” “preservation” and “glorification” of those called. All of these realities find a logical and theological foundation in the atoning death of Christ.
- c. Redemption, remission of sins and the bringing near of those who were “afar off” is accomplished by “blood.” (1:7; 2:13) Similarly, in chapter 5 Paul points to the sacrificial death of Jesus as the demonstration and measure of His love for us. (see 5:2 and 5:25)
- d. Because of the display of love on the Cross by virtue of death, we see that Christ’s love is *free* and undeserved (2:1-10), *eternal* (1:4), *unreserved, sovereign* (1:14; 2:7-10; 4:11-16, 30; 5:26-27).
- e. John 13:1-5 – He showed them the full extent of His love

#### 5. ***The Meaning of God’s Glory***

- a. The name and nature of God was most profoundly glorified when Christ was crucified.
- b. Revelation 5:9-10 – Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

- c. John 12:27-28 – For this hour I have come....glorify your name
- d. John 13:31 – Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him
- e. John 17:1 – The hour has come, glorify your Son that Your Son may glorify You
- f. John 17:22-26 – That they may behold My glory....I have made known Your name to them and will continue to make it known

## *The Death of Christ is the Heart of the Gospel*

*“Now I make known to you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)*

1. The Gospel is to be Embraced as the Essence of Reality
2. The Gospel is to be Preached
3. The Gospel is to be Received
4. The Gospel is How we Stand
5. The Gospel is How we are Saved
6. The Gospel is to be Held Fast
7. The Gospel is First and Foremost About the Death of Christ for Sin

### **I. THE GOSPEL IS TO BE EMBRACED AS THE ESSENCE OF REALITY**

*“Now I make known to you, brethren, the Gospel...”*

- A. The point of focus here is this issue of “the Gospel.” The “Gospel” to Paul was not some generic message that is communicated at conversion to be later discarded and ignored as merely introductory but that which everything is founded upon, sustained by, points to and is enveloped by. The Gospel to Paul was the quintessential declaration of reality itself that swallows up all things, includes all things, gives meaning to all things and defines all things. He saw the Gospel as the comprehensive inclusion of all things by which we “live, move and have our being.”
- B. “The Apostle had already preached the Gospel to these people! He was their father in the faith! Yet he sees the greatest need to continue teaching the Gospel to them, not only to remind them of its essential ingredients, but also to expand their knowledge of it. At their conversion, they merely began a journey of discovery that would encompass their entire life and carry on through the endless ages of eternity – the discovery of the glories of God revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>54</sup>
- C. “We have forgotten that genuine, enduring passion is born out of one’s knowledge of the truth, and specifically the truth of the Gospel. The more

<sup>54</sup> Paul Washer, *The Gospel 10*, HeartCry Missionary Society Newsletter September 2007-November 2007

one comprehends its beauty, the more one will be apprehended by its power. One glance of the Gospel will move the truly regenerate heart to follow. Every greater glimpse will quicken its pace until it is running recklessly toward the prize. Such beauty, the truly Christian heart cannot resist. This is the great need of the day! It is what we have lost—the preaching of the Gospel.”<sup>55</sup>

- D. We're living in an hour of history when *reality* needs to be identified and contended for. We aren't talking about doctrine as intellectual hobby or theology as recreation for the gifted or subjects as private fancy – we're talking about the sum and substance of reality itself.
- E. The apostle John said it this way:
- “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in truth...” (3 John 4)*
- F. That which we call “the Gospel” isn't about peripheral issues up for debate and speculation; for the apostles and the Lord Jesus were unambiguous about what constitutes their Gospel.
- G. In Galatians Paul makes shocking remarks about how we're to approach the issue of the Gospel:
- “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different Gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the Gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a Gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a Gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6-10)*
- H. Why is Paul so concerned? Why would he condemn people to hell just for distorting the Gospel? – Because the Gospel is the most important thing that we could ever consider; and to hold it, communicate it or promote it distortedly is to bring condemnation on yourself. Why? – Because we're talking about *reality* not some petty religion.

## II. THE GOSPEL IS TO BE PREACHED

*“...the Gospel which I preached to you...”*

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*

- A. Preaching is out of style in our generation. It's seen as arrogant, presumptuous and foolish. The modern man prefers speakers to demonstrate humility and compassion by being open to those with opposing ideas.
- B. Men like Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley, Brainerd, Spurgeon and Owen weren't received by all – they were seen as arrogant, presumptuous and foolish. They were unwavering in their commitment to the foundational elements of the Gospel; the very things Paul is laying out in this passage.
- C. The statement by St. Francis of Assisi has become a mantra for the prophets of tolerance and relativism of our generation – “Preach the Gospel; if necessary use words.” While Assisi's statement has a significant meaning, it is not an axiom by which we understand true Christianity. True Christianity is that which is preached. For history shows that the church grows most under anointed preaching. Where there is weak and relativistic preaching the people of God will be weak and relativistic. If the preaching is humanistic the people will be humanistic. Preaching produces things in it's hearers (see Romans 10).
- D. The prophets all experienced a manifestation of divine power known as “the word of the Lord.”
- “...in the year that Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up...” (Isaiah 6:1-2)*
- “...in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, the word of the Lord came to [Jeremiah]...” (Jeremiah 1:1-2)*
- E. John the Baptist is one of the clearest pictures of anointed preaching that we have:
- ...“in the fifteenth year of Tiberias Caesar....the word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness...” (Luke 3:1-5)*
- F. In the Book of Acts we see the formation of the New Testament church. This season of history was ushered in by anointed preachers:
1. Jesus – Acts 1
  2. Peter – Acts 2-3
  3. Peter and John before the leaders – Acts 4

4. The church praying for anointing and boldness to preach – Acts 4:29-31
  5. Peter commanded to stop preaching – Acts 5:28
  6. The apostles quit all other work and give themselves to prayer, study and preaching – Acts 6
  7. Stephen is murdered for preaching – Acts 7
  8. Preachers scatter in all directions because of persecution – Acts 8:1-4
  9. Philip preaching in Samaria – Acts 8:5
  10. Peter and John sent to Samaria to preach because it received Philip so well – Acts 8:14
  11. Philip preaches to the Ethiopian – Acts 8:25-40
  12. Jesus preaches to Paul on the road to Damascus – Acts 9:1-6
  13. Immediately Saul begins to preach in the synagogues – Acts 9:20
  14. Peter preaches to Gentiles – Acts 10
  15. Peter preaches in Jerusalem – Acts 11:1-18
  16. Prophets and preachers begin to emerge in Antioch – Acts 11:19-30
  17. James is executed by Herod for preaching – Acts 12
  18. The first international missions movement begins in Antioch with the commissioning of Saul and Barnabas – Acts 13
- G. The final generation will witness the greatest manifestation of preaching in church history:
1. Revelation 10 – Messengers to all nations
  2. Revelation 11 – The Two Witnesses
  3. Revelation 14 – Angelic proclamation

### III. THE GOSPEL IS TO BE RECEIVED

*"...which also you received..."*

- A. This word "receive" is absolutely radical. To receive the Gospel is to reject, condemn and denounce all its alternatives. The Gospel is not something to be received along with things but in the place of all things. – Luke 14:26-27
- B. "...when two things are contrary or diametrically opposed to one another, to receive the one is to reject the other. Since there is no affinity or friendship between the Gospel and the world, to "receive" the Gospel is to "reject" the world. In this is demonstrated just how radical the act of receiving the Gospel can be. To receive and follow the Gospel call is to reject all that can be seen with the eye and held in the hand, in exchange for what cannot be seen. It is to reject personal autonomy, the right to self-government, in order to enslave oneself to a "messiah" who died two thousand years ago as an enemy of the state and a blasphemer. It is to reject the majority and its views, in order to join oneself to a berated and seemingly insignificant minority called the Church. It is to risk everything in this one and only life in the belief that this impaled prophet is the Son of God and the Savior of the world."<sup>56</sup>
- C. 1 John 2:15-17 – Do not love the world or the things of the world..."
- D. James 4:4 – "You adulteress, friendship with the world is enmity with God..."
- E. To receive the Gospel is to trust solely and exclusively in the person and work of Christ. Exclusive trust on this age is seen as foolish and arrogant. But in the eyes of heaven, only exclusive trust is true trust. Because to contribute to our salvation is to denounce all that the Gospel is proving our distrust in the person, work and words of Jesus.
- F. "I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name..."
- G. God doesn't ask men to make Him Lord. He is Lord. He commands all men everywhere to repent and to believe upon Him for redemption. When men reject this, the Psalmist says that God sits in the heavens and laughs (Ps. 2). We're fools to think that He is moved by our rebellion. He is Lord whether we submit to Him as one or not.
- H. In the same way that a rock thrown into the middle of a lake makes ripples to touch every inch of shoreline, the impact of receiving the Gospel touches every part of our lives. If it hasn't and if it does not – then we have not yet received the Gospel.

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<sup>56</sup> Washer

- I. Jesus drove the multitudes from Himself in John 6 by commanding the crowds to “eat [His] flesh and drink [His] blood.” They couldn’t stomach the message and turned away en masse. Jesus was asking them to take in all that He is and to find all their sustenance in Him and Him alone.
- J. To receive the Gospel is to receive the words as though they were from the lips of God Himself: - 1 Thessalonians 2:13

#### IV. THE GOSPEL IS HOW WE STAND

*“...in which you also stand...”*

- A. This issue of “standing” speaks of foundations. (See 1 Corinthians chapter 3)
- B. Matthew 7:13-14 – The house built on sand and the house built on rock
- C. The prophets “stood” before the Lord.
- D. “...in your faith you are standing firm...” (2 Cor. 1:24)
- E. “...having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...” (Romans 5:1-2)
- F. Standing is a mode of being; it speaks of our posture of heart, soul and mind. It is a way in which we understand the core of a man.
- G. “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand...”
- H. It’s one thing to profess to be a Christian. It’s an entirely different thing to stand upon the Gospel. Paul was writing to a community of people who were mixed – there were genuine believers standing on the core message and promises of the Gospel and there were those who were professing but standing in darkness.
- I. We walk through this life in constant struggle battling with our weak flesh and immaturity. Our standing is not one of complete victory of every moment of every day. No, we fail and struggle and fall and crumble. But at the end of the day it is upon the foundation of Christ that we stand. For “it is the Lord who is able to make [us] stand.” (Romans 14:4)
- J. “Now to Him who is able to keep [us] from stumbling...” (Jude 24-25)

## V. THE GOSPEL IS HOW WE ARE SAVED

*"...by which also you are saved..."*

- A. Undoubtedly the greatest unblushing promise of the Gospel is "salvation." Many other things can and must be celebrated – but nothing more than salvation. The Gospel is first and foremost how men and women are saved by God.
- B. Salvation presupposes crisis. Our crisis is nuanced. We are "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) who are all have "fallen short" (Rom. 3:23) and have "no fear of God in our eyes." (Rom. 3:10-19) We are enemies (Rom. 5:10), sinners (Rom. 5:8-9), sons of Satan (John 8), sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-3) and lost sheep. Our nature governs our will and our emotions. So our behavior and our nature condemn us. God's wrath is kindled against us and we are faced with eternal punishment. ***We don't appreciate our salvation rightly because we haven't understood our plight rightly.***
- C. Peter says that the end of our faith is the "salvation of our souls." (1 Peter 1:3-9)
- D. "What are any of these things compared to the gift of salvation and of knowing Him? Away with those who would seek to coax us to devotion by promising us things other than Jesus Christ. If everyone we have every loved was taken from us, and our body lay rotting on a dung heap, and our name was slandered by friend and enemy alike, we should still find all the devotion we need to love, praise, and serve Him in this one thing – He shed His own blood for our souls. Pure and undefiled religion is fueled by this one holy passion."<sup>57</sup>
- E. Biblically and historically the preaching of the Gospel is in its purest form when the certainty of judgment and eternal punishment is stressed and when the certainty of salvation by trust in Jesus is stressed. Our generation is laboring to minimize, diminish and water down both of these things. We *must* emphasize the reality of eternal punishment and we *must* emphasize the sufficiency of the person and work of Christ. If we do not present Christ as men's only hope we have not presented Christ and we have not preached the Gospel.
- F. "Although it would be beyond radical in this modern age of evangelism, we would do well to cry out to the masses, "Jesus Christ, promises you two

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things: an eternal salvation in which to hope and a cross on which to die. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'." <sup>58</sup>

## VI. THE GOSPEL IS TO BE HELD FAST

*"...if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain..."*

- A. Charles Spurgeon said that the doctrine he preached more than any other was the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints." At the core is says that "He who began a good work in your will bring it to completion." (Phil. 1:6) It says that we are saved by grace, kept by grace and glorified by grace. While I affirm that doctrine we need to understand what is meant by it.
- B. The doctrine of perseverance has been so brutally distorted and has been used to coddle multitudes into a false assurance of their salvation when they have never in fact been saved. (This is due largely to the fact that we have equated salvation with praying a prayer at an altar)
- C. This verse doesn't negate the doctrine of perseverance – it explains it and articulates it. It says that we are saved IF we hold fast. That conditional word is so important to understand.
- D. "Their perseverance does not save them or make them objects of grace, but reveals that they are objects of grace and truly saved by faith. To put it plainly, the proof or validation of genuine conversion is that the one who professes faith in Christ perseveres in that faith and grows in sanctification throughout the full course of his or her life. If a man professes faith in Christ and yet falls away, or makes no progress in godliness, it does not mean that he has lost his salvation; it simply reveals that he was never converted at all." How do we know this? – Because the apostle John tells us that that which is truly born of God believes and overcomes.
  - 1. 1 John 5:1-5 – "He who is born of God believes and overcomes..."
- E. This doctrine of perseverance is so crucial to preach rightly in our day. At the end of the age there is coming a massive falling away from the faith. (2 Thess. 2:3) Multitudes and multitudes who profess to be Christians will walk away from Christ forsaking Him and His cross to end up in the Lake of Fire. We must stress the reality of this – but we mustn't do so in such a way that (1) makes men feel they need to contribute to their salvation with fleshly works or (2) that causes the genuine and the sincere and the born again to be troubled and distraught.

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- F. We must preach the two-fold message of John 6:37:

*"All that the Father has given Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out..."*

1. None can come to faith but by the Father drawing them
2. God will never cast out ANYONE who comes to Him.

- G. "In the midst of much carnality, the Apostle Paul did not ask the Corinthians to reevaluate their conversion experience in the past, but to examine their lives in the present."<sup>59</sup>

*"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test." (2 Co. 13:5)*

- H. But what if we can't stomach the idea that men can't fall away from the faith? Spurgeon says it well: We give our hand to every man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may. The doctrine of election, like the great act of election itself, is intended to divide, not between Israel and Israel, but between Israel and the Egyptians, not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of the world. A man may be evidently of God's chosen family, and yet though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election. I hold that there are many savingly called, who do not believe in effectual calling, and that there are a great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe the doctrine of final perseverance. We do hope the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We do not set their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think us mistaken too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy; and when we meet around the cross, we hope that we shall ever feel that we are one in Christ Jesus."
- I. The word "saved" becomes a misnomer if we say that men can will and work their way out of salvation. See, the question isn't can men lose their salvation, the question is *can God Jesus lose His salvation*. If salvation is of the Lord, then the focal point becomes sovereign grace not human ability.

**VII. THE GOSPEL IS FIRST AND FOREMOST ABOUT THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR SIN AND HIS SUBSEQUENT BURIAL AND RESURRECTION; THAT IS, THIS IS THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY**

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*"...for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."*

- A. Paul says here is that the death of Christ is the crowing glory of the Gospel – it is the sum and substance of the Gospel. Every other story, element, theme, reality and subject bows to the cross of Christ. Everything in Scripture pays homage to the bloody Messiah hanging on Roman cross beams.
- B. Creation is astounding, the Exodus is moving, the Exile is terrifying, the signs and wonders are amazing and the Second Coming is breathtaking. But they all pale in comparison to the supremacy of this one event. It is, in the words of the apostle, "of first importance."
- C. All of the mysteries contained in the Bible will be understood at the consummation of the age. We will know about Genesis 1. We'll understand the parting of the Red Sea. We'll even have the Second Coming all worked out in explicit detail. But the cross is a different story. The cross is that which we will be contemplating and gazing upon with wonder for an eternity of eternities. We will be lost in the majesty and mystery of it for ever and ever and ever.
- D. "There is something worse than holding our silence while the lost world runs headlong into hell. It is the crime of preaching to them a watered down, culturally carved, truncated Gospel that allows them to hold to a form of godliness, while denying its power, to profess to know God, while denying Him with their deeds, and to call Jesus "Lord, Lord", while not doing the Father's will. Woe to us if we preach not the Gospel, but even greater woe if we do so incorrectly!"<sup>60</sup>
- E. We must preach Christ and we must preach Him crucified. And we must preach:
  - 1. The necessity of His crucifixion
  - 2. The explanation of His crucifixion
  - 3. The accomplishments of His crucifixion
- F. Christ died *FOR SIN*. There is a movement that is attacking this reality. And it's disgusting and overtly unbiblical. Paul says with absolute certainty that Jesus died for sin. To say that Jesus died for any other reason that "for sin" is

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absolutely bogus. Jesus was “made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13), “condemned” for us (Rom. 8:3) and counted as “sin” for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He died “for us” (Gal. 2:20), in our place, as a “sacrifice” (Eph. 5:2), for “our transgression” (Is. 53:4-6) and for “our iniquity (Is. 53:4-6).” To deny that He died for sin is to deny the faith. That’s why this is such an important debate.

- G. ‘If He fulfilled not justice, I must; if he underwent not wrath, I must to eternity.’ (John Owen)<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *The Death of Death and the Death of Christ*