

No Substitution for Substitution

The Necessity of the Cross

Mark Bickel – Crossroads March 29, 2009

INTRO: The Next Few Weeks

- **Cross:** this week “theological” implications for our life, next week more “personal, emotional” look at the curse
- Join us as we look at Holy Week on **Maundy Thursday**, then for **Good Friday** and **Easter Worship** with entire congregation
- **Resurrection & New Life:** Celebrate resurrection on Easter evening, look at our new life in Christ in weeks to follow

Recent Quotes about the Death of Christ (small group discussion)

- In the cross we experience **God’s ultimate example of love** as he allows Christ to suffer the same kind of injustices that we suffer
- At the cross the love of **God finally wins out over the wrath** of God
- On the cross Jesus “**soaked up** all the forces of hate, rejection, pain and alienation all around him”, “**absorbing**” the pain of our broken relationship with God.
- To view the cross as God venting his anger on his Son for offences he has not committed is to make God guilty of “**cosmic child-abuse**”
- **I Corinthians 1:18** – *For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the Power of God*
- **I Corinthians 2:2** – Paul says – *For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified*

Propitiation and Expiation: - Turning Away God’s Wrath

Expiate: to cover sin

Propitiate: to turn away God’s wrath, to appease or satisfy

The Justice and Truthfulness of God (Genesis 1-3, Rom 5:6-8)

Genesis 1-3 (summary): creation, fall, promise of death

READ Romans 5:6-8: while sinners Christ died

- **Goodness / Justice demands death**
 - Physical, Relational, Spiritual
 - We would be offended / say not holy without justice
- **Truthfulness / Trustworthiness demand not overlook sin**
 - *Ex. Child* “I will punish if take cookie”, then not
 - *Ex. Child* “I will reward with” – do you believe?
- **Justice & Truthfulness exclude “simply forgive”**
- **Quote:** “*Pierced For Our Transgressions*”, page 125

Atonement and Penal Substitution: - Christ’s Blood for Us

Atonement: reparation for offence or injury, reconciliation

Penal Substitution: one takes the place of another, bearing the penalty due them - Christ’s death bore God’s wrath instead of us

Passover (Exodus 12)

Exodus 12 (summary):

- Last plague unique – on Egypt & Israel!
- Both guilty of Idolatry, both deserve death of youngest son
- God provide way of escape for Israel – but only with blood
- Observed every year as remembrance of slavery, salvation and deliverance – remember God’s love, wrath & mercy

Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)

Leviticus 16 (summary):

- **Sacrificial System** so sinful can come to God – need blood
- **Day of Atonement** one **fast** of year, high holy day
 - High Priest **assure holiness** – keep self from unclean
 - Enter Holy of Holies, before **mercy seat of God**
 - Sacrifice **bull** for the sins of the high priest
 - Also 2 **goats** – 1st sacrificed for sins of the people
 - 2nd is the **scapegoat** – **READ Leviticus 16:20-22**
 - Remains of offerings burned outside camp

Christ’s Substitutionary Death (Hebrews 7-10 ; Romans 5:9-11)

I Corinthians 5:7-8: *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival*

Hebrews: All about Christ fulfilling, being better than OT shadows

- **READ Hebrews 7:22-28**
 - Christ died once, for all – ending regular sacrifice
 - Christ holy, sinless – no need to sacrifice for self
- **READ Hebrews 10:1-4 ; 11-14**
 - Law a shadow – can’t make perfect, even with offering
 - Sacrifices actually yearly reminder of sin!
 - Blood of bulls and goats can not take away sin
 - Christ offered self, own blood, once for all – does take away sin and perfect
- **READ Romans 5:9-11**
 - Justified – by Blood - Saved from the Wrath of God
 - Reconciled to God – by death of Son ; Saved by his life

Answers and Applications:

- Cross as “example of love”

- The cross is **example of ultimate love**, and Hebrews says Christ can identify with us since he suffered as we do
- BUT this is **not enough**, not even central to the gospel – even Hindu’s can acknowledge this!
- Gospel says **Christ died for a purpose**, to save sinners; death is more than example or way to relate
- note also word “allows” – **God does not ‘allow’ Christ to die**, he planned it before time began, and Christ gives up life voluntarily
- note also **Jesus does not stand with us, but as substitute for us**

- Cross as “love over wrath”

- It is **true love and mercy meet** with justice and wrath at the cross
- But **Love and wrath were not in conflict** in God!
- Wrath & Love go hand in hand (**need justice and trustworthiness**)
- God **not a wrathful God in OT who becomes loving at the cross**

- Cross as “absorber of pain and evil”

- First off, **not Biblical language** – Bible never says ‘absorb’
- Jesus does not ‘soak up’ our pain, he **fully takes our sin** on him, and he **endures the righteous wrath of God**
- he also does not simply ‘absorb’ sin or evil, he **conquers it once for all, rendering it sin, death and Satan powerless** forevermore

- Cross as “cosmic child abuse”

- First off, “**Child Abuse**” suggests **undeserved abuse** on someone who either **does not want it / can not understand it** – Jesus **voluntarily** took our sin on himself, thus the punishment was **fully deserved** and was afflicted on someone who with **full knowledge** willingly took it
- **Bigger issue** – we **do not like the picture of God’s wrath**, or of Christ suffering at the hand of God – **we want to soften both God and the Cross to make it palatable** – but the Scriptures talk of God’s justice and wrath, as well as the cross as violent, bloody and awful – all as part of God’s plan and Jesus’ will – so if we stand on Scripture as the Word of God we have to talk in those terms!

- Cross as “substitution”

- The **problem** with all these quotes: They **undermine a central truth** of the Gospel!
- **We deserve God’s Wrath**, and He will execute that on us unless a substitute is found
- **Christ is that substitute**, but that means he must shed his blood, and bear the full wrath of God
- **Anything less is not the gospel, because anything less still leaves us under the wrath of God!!!**

- Implications of the Cross for This Week!

- **See how awful sin really is** – both the wrath we deserve, and the punishment Christ endured due to our sinfulness!
- **Trust God** who has shown himself faithful in the hardest things
 - if God could go back on his word, would he not have compromised on this – to remove the punishment of death so as not to have to kill his own son!
 - If he will not compromise there, you can trust every Word
- **Meditate on the Cross** – the real cross, the ugly, horrific, cruel cross on which the creator of the universe dies a violent death not just for you, but in your place, where you would have been for all eternity (take the **next two weeks** and look at the cross more closely)
- **Live out of Christ’s new life** (more on that in a **few weeks**)
- **Worship God!** For this is true undeserved love and mercy.

Closing: Two songs (*on video, Hillsong versions on iWorship*)

- o When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
- o Worthy in the Lamb (with Crown Him With Many Crowns)