

## SOTERIOLOGY (43)

1. God did not make Jesus Christ become our sacrifice; Christ voluntarily offered Himself as a substitute. God did not force the innocent to take the punishment of the guilty.
2. God would have been perfectly just had He allowed all sinners to pay for their own sins. It certainly cannot be a stern, unloving God who Himself provides a method of salvation. The fact that He did provide a substitute demonstrates in incomparable level of grace and mercy.
3. God's character would have truly been demeaned had not Christ's death been a substitute for sinners. Dr. Chafer, in quoting Henry Rogers, explains: "And remember, that if you insist on the injustice of God's inflicting suffering on Christ for the sins of others, you cannot escape similar difficulty, and greater in degree, on your own system; for, can it be less unjust to inflict such sufferings on Christ for no sins at all? If it be unjust to accept Him as a sacrifice for the guilty, how much more unjust must it be to insist on the sacrifice for nothing, and when the victim thrice implored in agony, that if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him" (Vol. 3, p. 66).

If Christ's death isn't a substitute for sinners, God's character is truly demeaned for Christ suffered for nothing.

4. Christ's death for sinners enhances God's character. The death of Jesus Christ is the greatest statement of the love, grace and mercy of God that will ever be displayed. Without such a Divine substitute for sinners, we would never begin to fathom the depth of the riches, wisdom and love of God. The substitutionary work of Christ enhances every attribute of God. It testifies of His justice, His holiness, His righteousness, His omniscience, His love, His grace, His mercy and His wisdom. Christ's substitutionary work does anything but demean God's character; it establishes and enhances it. This objection is one of pure folly.

**3)** Some have denied Christ's substitutionary work by saying it is impossible and illegal for God to transfer His wrath and His punishment to Jesus Christ.

The reasoning goes something like this: It is not judicially proper to transfer guilt and penalty to another person; in fact, such an action is impossible and illegal.

Again, this objection contains several flaws:

1. The impossibility and the illegality, by all rights, should be God loving and caring for any human being. Since all have sinned and willingly rebelled against God, what really seems impossible is that any man could be eternally saved from his sin. Logically speaking, it is not the transfer of wrath that seems so impossible and illegal; it is the transfer of righteousness.
2. Those that adhere to this objection attempt to equate God's justice with man's justice. In other words, they would contend that since it is impossible and illegal for men to vindicate their anger on some innocent person, it must be the same for God. The anger and wrath of a Holy God against sin cannot ever be brought down to a level of the anger and wrath of sinful men against sin. At best, men still see and feel through sinful eyes and hearts.

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Any attempt of man to compare God's perfect justice with man's injustice is what is impossible and illegal. Furthermore, not only was God's wrath and His punishment transferred to Christ, but also all sin was transferred to Christ as well, something totally impossible for man to do.

3. The substitutionary work cannot be illegal because Jesus Christ is the legal head of humanity (I Cor. 11:3). One of the reasons He came to this earth was to voluntarily assume the legal debts that we owed God because of sin that began with Adam (Rom. 5:12-21). Christ can, in fact, legally experience God's wrath and punishment for us because He is, in fact, our federal head and legal representative.

4. If it is impossible and illegal for Christ to be our substitute and take God's wrath on our behalf, where does that leave us? If Christ cannot be our substitute, then it means each one of us must, ourself, personally receive the punishment of God. Such a thought makes Christ's death useless and our eternity hopeless.

5. It contradicts the Word of God. Obviously to say Christ cannot be our substitute is to say something that contradicts the Bible, for the Bible specifically says He is our substitute. If it comes to a choice of accepting the reasoning of men versus the Word of God, only a fool will opt to trust the reasoning of sinful men. Wise people take the Scriptures as their authority for what they believe. This argument, like all others, falls far short of the truth of God.

**4)** Some have denied Christ's substitutionary work by saying that such a teaching does not promote personal holiness.

The argument goes something like this: If Christ bore our sins and took our penalty, then we are not obligated to live a life of godliness and can, in fact, live a life of sin knowing that our sin is gone and that God's wrath has been appeased.

Personally, I believe anyone who reasons this way is either completely ignorant of the Word of God or completely led by humanistic and satanic forces. More than likely it is a combination of both. Such a ridiculous argument is easily refuted:

1. If a believer does not live a holy life, he lives contrary to the Word and will of God and, in fact, lives in a manner God forbids (Rom. 6:1-2). Personal sanctification, however, cannot be equated with Christological satisfaction.

2. The teaching of Christ's substitutionary work never leaves one wanting to pursue godlessness, but, in fact, leaves one wanting to pursue godliness. Dr. Berkhof says that the teaching of Christ's substitutionary work actually offers several incentives for personal holiness. He writes: "...by emphasizing the exceeding sinfulness of sin, by displaying the unspeakable love of God and of Jesus Christ, and by the assurance of divine aid in the struggle of life, and of the acceptance of our imperfect services in Christ" (Berkhof, p. 383).

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3. It contradicts the Word of God. It is again stated that no matter how much a human reasons against the substitutionary work of Christ, the fact is it is a biblical truth. Anyone who rejects it rejects the Word of God.

Any attempt to deny the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ is satanic. Satan knows if he can keep men ignorant of this precious doctrine he can keep people either: A. Unsaved or B. Unsure.

Any person who rejects what Christ did for him is destined to receive God's wrath himself. Any believer who rejects the doctrine is destined for a life of uncertainty and ineffectiveness.

If the Bible is believed and taken literally, it cannot be denied that Jesus Christ suffered and died as a substitute for sinners.

**(Defense #5)** - The divine perfections accomplished in saving a soul demand the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ.

This final proof is another that absolutely demands the conclusion that Christ died as our substitute. The words of Lewis Sperry Chafer are powerful on this:

“Salvation of a lost soul involves much more than removal or subtraction of sin from the sinner which forgiveness achieves. Also much is added, including eternal life as the gift of God (Romans 6:23) and the righteousness of God imputed to those who believe (Romans 5:17). These two features of salvation—eternal life and the gift of righteousness—unite in the one great fact of the believer's union with Christ: ‘You are in Me, and I am in you’ (John 14:20). The first clause, ‘You are in me,’ reveals that all spiritual blessing is secured by the Christian's position in Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:3). The expression ‘I am in you’ is made possible by the fact that every Christian has eternal life as stated in I John 5:11-12. A believer's position in Christ could only be secured through what was provided for the believer's righteousness in the substitution of Christ on the cross” (*Edited Theology*, Vol. 2, pp. 56-57).

The point is if one tries to deny Christ died as a substitute for sin, then he must also deny that we have everlasting life and that we can have true righteousness before God, because every one of these issues hinge upon Christ being our substitute to such an extent that we can be so identified with Him that He takes our punishment and we receive His life. It is impossible to deny one without denying the other. It is impossible to accept one without accepting the other. If union with Christ can make us a child of God (John 1:12), then we must admit that it was our union with Christ that took away our sin and took away the penalty for our sin. All of these things are demanded in the saving of a soul.

Jesus Christ was our substitute. There is no other conclusion an honest use of the Bible will permit. To deny this is to deny one of the greatest accomplishments of Calvary.

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**Accomplishment #2** - Christ's sufferings and death was an end to the Law.

Jesus Christ brought the Law to an end by His work on the cross. This important theological matter becomes somewhat tricky to understand because the Bible makes it clear that this accomplishment is only for one who has appropriated Christ's work by faith into his life. To simply state the point—Christ's sufferings and death was an end to the Law for the believer, but the unbeliever is still under the Law, and it is still cursing and sentencing him to eternal damnation. This theological accomplishment is only true for a believer. The unbeliever is still under the Law and is still being condemned by the Law.

There are very clear statements in the Word of God that testify to these matters:

- 1) Romans 10:4 - Christ ends the Law for those who believe on Him.
- 2) Galatians 2:21 - Christ's death is meaningless if righteousness comes by the Law.
- 3) Romans 3:21-22 - God's righteousness is only found in Christ, not the Law.
- 4) Romans 4:13-16 - The Law brings the wrath of God, faith in Christ brings the righteousness and wonderful future promises of God.
- 5) Romans 3:19a - The Law will shut mouths before God.
- 6) Romans 3:19b - The Law will establish guilt before God.
- 7) Romans 3:20 - The Law will establish sin before God.
- 8) Romans 7:12 - The Law will establish the holiness of God.
- 9) Galatians 3:24 - The Law was given to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, the Law was given to show us our need of a gracious, merciful and legal substitute.
- 10) Galatians 2:16 - The Law was never given to justify a person, it was given to condemn a person to show one his need for faith in Christ.

Jesus Christ came to put an end to the Law, but only the believer is out from under the Law. The unbeliever is still being judged and sentenced and condemned by the Law (Rom. 8:1-2; I Cor. 15:56).

Every individual must either allow Jesus Christ to stand as his substitute in facing the wrath of God for violations against God's Law, or he must face it himself.

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The one who chooses to face God on the basis of his own works will discover that time and time again he has clearly violated the Law of God and will discover he fully deserves the wrath of God. However, the one who believes on Christ will discover that “Christ is the end of the law” (Romans 10:4), and that He has “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14).

This particular substitutionary accomplishment is specific, not universal. Those who believe on Christ are no longer under the Law. Those who refuse to believe on Christ are under the curse of the Law and, in fact, will be condemned by it.

**Accomplishment #3** - Christ’s sufferings and death provide redemption from sin.

Although some use the term “redemption” to refer to the entire saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross, the proper doctrinal perspective is much more restricted and specifically refers to Christ’s work on the cross in specific relationship to sin.

Theologically, the term “redemption” relates to three important concepts:

- 1) People are redeemed from something—namely from sin.
- 2) People are redeemed by payment—namely Christ’s blood.
- 3) People are redeemed to something—namely complete freedom.

As one attempts to understand the concept of redemption, one must realize that God alone is the one capable of paying a price that can satisfy the holy demands of His violated character. Dr. Chafer writes: “Redemption is an act of God by which He Himself pays as a ransom the price of human sin...” (Vol. 3, p. 88).

A good working definition of redemption is: God, through Jesus Christ, makes the complete payment in order to purchase sinful people out of their bondage of sin and sets them free.

To fully understand the implications of this precious doctrine, both the O.T. and N.T. must be examined:

### 1) Redemption in the Old Testament.

The O.T. concept of redemption primarily has to do with the nation Israel. The O.T. book of redemption is the book of Exodus, and the O.T. picture of the Kinsman-Redeemer is the book of Ruth. According to the O.T., people, possessions and property could be redeemed (Lev. 25:25, 47-48).

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### 2) Redemption in the New Testament.

Although the concept of someone being able to pay a required price in order to redeem someone or something else is found in the O.T., it is not until the full revelation of the N.T. that we see its connection to sin. Dr. Chafer observed: “It is therefore to be observed that the doctrine of redemption as set forth by the terms used in the New Testament is a complete fulfillment of the truth foreshadowed in the Old Testament” (Vol. 3, p. 90). Dr. Ryrie adds: “However, little direct association is evident in the Old Testament between redemption and sin” (*Basic Theology*, p. 290).

In the N.T., there are three very important words that give us great insight into the doctrine of redemption:

#### A. Agorazo (αγοραζω)

The basic meaning of this word is to frequent a marketplace or forum in order to buy or purchase something (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 7). The idea is to buy in the marketplace.

As this relates to salvation, this word teaches the following:

- a. Jesus Christ made the payment for all sinners. II Peter 2:1
- b. Jesus Christ made the payment of His own blood to the Father. Rev. 5:9-10
- c. Jesus Christ bought us which means we are responsible to glorify God by serving Christ. I Cor. 6:19-20; 7:22-23

#### B. Exagorazo (εξαγοραζω)

The preposition “ek” adds the idea of not only making the necessary payment for something, but also making the necessary payment and then taking the thing out of the place it was in. As it relates to salvation it means to completely take a person out of the condemnation of the Law and out of the bondage of sin. Gal. 3:13; 4:5

The basic meaning of this is to buy out of the market.

#### C. Lutroo (λυτροω)

The basic meaning of this word is to release by paying a ransom price. The added idea here is not only that Christ’s sacrifice made the necessary payment to purchase sinners out of their bondage of sin, but Christ also actually releases them or frees them from sin.