the Message of the Cross

CCCNZ
Together Works Better.

Why did Jesus die?

Understanding and communicating

“the message of the cross”

CCCNZ
Together Works Better.

“The crucifixion does not easily explain itself and requires interpretation… What is the universal, world-transforming significance of the crucifixion? It is not self-evident.”

> Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*

Example Justification
Deliverance Ransom

Reconciliation Forgiveness Covenant Healing
Adoption Sacrifice Peace Immortality Glory

Redemption Triumph
Passover Propitiation

THE TYNDALE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY LECTURE, 1973*

WHAT DID THE CROSS ACHIEVE?

The Logic of Penal Substitution

By J. I. PACKER

The task which I have set myself in this lecture is to focus and explicate a belief which, by and large, is a distinguishing mark of the word-wide evangelical fraternity: namely, the belief that Christ's death on the cross had the character of *penal substitution*, and that it was in virtue of this fact that it brought salvation to mankind. Two considerations prompt my attempt. First, the significance of penal substitution is not always stated as exactly as is desirable, so that the idea often gets misunderstood and caricatured by its critics; and I should like, if I can, to make such misunderstanding more difficult. Second, I am one of those who believe that this notion takes us to the very heart of the Christian gospel, and I welcome the opportunity of commending my conviction by analysis and argument.

My plan is this: first, to clear up some questions of method, so that there will be no doubt as to what I am doing; second, to explore what it means to call Christ's death *substitutionary*; third, to see what further meaning is added when Christ's substitutionary suffering is called *penal*; fourth, to note in closing that the analysis offered is not out of harmony with learned exegetical opinion. These are, I believe, needful preliminaries to any serious theological estimate of this view.

Three explanations

"The [first] type of account… sees the cross as having its effect… on men… by revealing God's love to us."

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"A second type of account sees Christ's death as having its effect primarily on hostile spiritual forces external to us…"

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Three explanations

"The third type of account [maintains] Christ's death had its effect first on God, who was hereby *propitiated*... by dying Christ offered to God what the West has called *satisfaction* for sins."

Compare and contrast

	Moral Influence	Christus Victor	Satisfaction
Effect	On humanity	On spiritual powers	On God
Theological Champion	Abelard (1079-1142)	Origen (c. 185-253)	Anselm (1033-1109)

Origen

Jesus redeems us back from slavery to the Devil

“But to whom did [Jesus] give his soul a ransom for many? Certainly not to God. Was it perhaps, then, to the evil one? For he had power over us until the soul of Jesus was given to him as our ransom. He was deceived of course and imagined that he could have power over it.”

> *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, book 16.8

Anselm

Jesus pays the debt we owe to God for sin

"The restoration of human nature… could not have been brought about unless man repaid what he owed to God. This debt was so large that although no one but man owed it, only God was capable of repaying it… hence it was a necessity that God should take man into the unity of his person… to make the repayment."

> *Why God Became Man*, 2.18

Abelard

Jesus shows us the love of God so we will love him back

“What is this redemption of ours? … in this we are justified in the blood of Christ and reconciled to God… that his Son received our nature, and in that nature… persevered to the death and bound us to himself even more through love, so that when we have been kindled by so great a benefit of divine grace, true charity might fear to endure nothing for his sake.”

> *Commentary on Romans*, comments on 3:26

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Theological Champion	Abelard (1079-1142)	Origen (c. 185-253)	Anselm (1033-1109)
View of sin	Lack of love for God	Enslavement to hostile powers	Offence towards God
What the cross achieves	Kindling of love for God and others	Defeat of sin, death, and the Devil	Removal of guilt and shame

Some questions:

- *What Scriptures can you think of that might support these different views?*

- *Which view do you most identify with, and why? Is there any view you don't favour?*

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Biblical justification	1 John 4:7-11; Rom 5:5-10; Eph 4:32-5:2	Mark 3:23-27; Heb 2:14-16; 1 Cor 15:24-26	Rom 3:21-26; Is 53:5,10; Gal 3:10-14

A possible conclusion...

"The church needs an approach... where the various dimensions of Christ's work are all appreciated and seen as complementary rather than competitive."

> Jeremy Treat, *The Atonement: An Introduction,* p. 62

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Threefold office	Prophet	King	Priest

Turretin on Christ’s threefold office

“The threefold misery of humanity resulting from sin (that is, ignorance, guilt, and the oppression and bondage of sin) requires this threefold office… The prophetic light scatters the darkness of error; the merit of the priest removes guilt and obtains reconciliation for us; the power of the king takes away the bondage of death. The prophet shows God to us; the priest leads us to God; and the king joins us together with God, and glorifies us with him.”

> *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, topic 14 question 5

Some questions:

- *How might these different dimensions be useful in communicating "the message of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18) to people around us?*

- *In which circumstances might a non-Christian especially need to hear about Christ's love? About Christ's victory? About Christ's satisfaction?*

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