

BURNING TRUTH: THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

The Work of Christ: The Necessity and Nature of the Cross (22)

THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

John 3:16 – *There is nothing outside of God that required him to forgive sinners their deadly offense. But when he chose to redeem sinners from the Fall, it became necessary to send his Son to die on the cross. Thus, the cross is a contingent necessity, not an absolute necessity.*

Luke 24:26 – *According to the Old Testament Scriptures, the cross of Christ is necessary.*

Matthew 26:36-46 – *Christ's prayer proves that the cross was the immutable will of God*

Hebrews 2:10 – *Christ's incarnation and Creation's future glory necessitate the cross.*

Hebrews 8:3 – *Christ's priestly mediation and the Mosaic law demands a sacrifice/offering.*

Hebrews 9:22-23 – *It is not repentance, or amendment, but atonement that provides forgiveness.*

Any other reasons?

1. Every other scheme is ineffective (**cf. Rom 3:27; Gal 2:20-21**)
2. Only the cross unifies the justice and mercy of God (**Exod 34:6-9**) – Deny the cross and deny God's holy wrath against sin; Deny the cross and deny his grace, because it minimizes the offense that God must pardon.

THE NATURE OF THE CROSS

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified** by his grace as a gift, through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had **passed over** former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. (**Rom 3:23-27**)*

1. **Law-Court:** God justifies the sinner as he declares the guilty sinner innocent. Christ's death cancels the record of legal demands (Col 2:14) and imputes Christ's righteousness (2 Cor 5:21).
2. **Slavery:** Christ's redemption liberates the sinner from captivity to sin, Satan, death, and hell. Christ does not pay off the devil. Rather, God's grace satisfies (pays for) God's wrath
3. **Temple Worship:** Christ's blood covers the believer's sin, cleansing him and making him pure. The term *hilasterion* has been debated propitiation, expiation, atoning sacrifice.

Atonement *The general term that describes all that Christ did to earn our salvation. In the OT, it has a more specific meaning related to the sacrifices.*

Active Obedience *Christ's lifelong obedience to all that God commanded. (**Matt 3:15; Rom 5:19**)*

Passive Obedience *Christ's voluntary obedience to endure suffering on the cross in our place.*

Reconciliation *The removal of enmity and the restoration of fellowship between two parties; in the atonement, we were reconciled to God, and God was reconciled to us.*
(2 Cor 5:14-21)

Redemption *Taken from OT slave laws and Greco-Roman culture, the act of buying back sinners out of their bondage to sin and Satan through the payment of a ransom.*
(Mark 10:45)

Expiation	<i>Directed towards sin, Christ's death cancels penalty of sin (Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 4:10)</i>
Propitiation	<i>Directed towards the wrath of God, Christ's death appeases God's wrath, so that he is able to express his love and favor (Rom 3:26; 1 John 2:1-2)</i>
Penal Substitution (Anselm, John Stott)	<i>The view of the atonement that holds Christ in his death bore the just penalty of God for our sins, and did so as a substitute. This view has also been called the satisfaction view or vicarious atonement.</i>
Christus Victor (Gustav Aulen)	<i>A complementary view of the cross that understands Christ winning a victory over sin, death, hell, and the powers.</i>
Moral Government (Hugo Grotius)	<i>A deficient view of the cross that understand's Christ's death as simply a display of public justice, that would motivate humanity to holy living.</i>
Moral Influence (Peter Abelard)	<i>A deficient view where Christ's death was not a payment for sinners but simply a demonstration of love that meant to induce a thankful response.</i>
Moral Exemplar (Liberal Theology)	<i>A deficient view where Christ's life is unique but not supernatural; thus his exemplary lifestyle is the point. He died for his beliefs—social justice.</i>

Let it be remarked, then, that... atonement, reconciliation, and redemption direct our attention to the **effects** of Christ's work; ... propitiation to the source of sinner's **danger**, the wrath of God which needs to be appeased;... satisfaction, substitution, and vicarious to the **medium** [or way] of deliverance; and... expiation to its **nature** as a deliverance from guilt.¹

THE BENEFITS FROM THE CROSS

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer 31:31-34; quoted in Heb 8:8-11).

1. Redemptive Promise *Forgiveness is the central promise ("for"). All others depend on this ground. Guilt, sadness, shame, death are removed because of God's forgiveness in Christ.*
2. Legal Promise *The law of God will be written on the hearts of men
The curse of the law and God's judgment has been overturned.
The Holy Spirit is a legal benefit. He causes us to walk in obedience.*
3. Relational Promise *God's presence will abide with his people. This overcomes the problem of estrangement and alienation (Eph 2:11-22). This satisfies our longing for God.*
4. Revelatory Promise *God's people will know the Lord. This overcomes the noetic (mental) effect of the fall. To know God is eternal life. Heaven will be the ever-increasing joy of knowing God.*

¹William Symington, *On the Atonement and Intercession of Christ* (1834), 18.