

## **BIBLICAL CHRISTOLOGY – THE WORK OF CHRIST (PART I)**

### **PRAYER**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW**

Why in the world was Jesus of Nazareth executed on a Roman cross? This question, more than any other, gets you to the core message of Christianity. Some protest that the traditional Christian view of the cross amounts to “divine child abuse” – how could God the Father orchestrate the excruciating death of his own Son?<sup>1</sup> Others, like our Muslim friends, declare that Jesus didn’t actually die. It only seemed that he was crucified.<sup>2</sup> Others portray Jesus as the ultimate tragic hero, one who stood up to an unjust world system but was ultimately crushed as the wheel of history turned on him. His death was unfortunate and unnecessary. To the contrary, the Bible depicts the death of Christ, and indeed all of his redemptive work as a whole, as the most significant, valuable and profound event of history. The work of Christ quite literally is our only hope.

Here we arrive at a climax in Christian theology. We’ve considered who God is – his triune nature and spotless character. We’ve considered how he made the world for his glory and humankind as the pinnacle of his creation to represent his rule. We’ve seen how God governs and directs all of history by his sovereign hand and how humankind freely rebelled against God’s reign. And we’ve seen how God, who is rich in mercy, sent his Son. Jesus Christ now is and forever will be one person with two natures. He is fully God – come to reveal God to us and to accomplish the Father’s plan. And he is fully man, identifying with us in our weakness, tempted in every way yet without sin. What did he come to do? You see it at the top of your handout: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15).

So today and next week we want to study the work of Christ. Why? First, because this is crucial to get right. If we misunderstand what Jesus came to do, we risk missing out on the salvation that he accomplished and misleading others about the most important news in history. But second, we study this because Christ is worthy of worship and honor for what he’s done. Nothing fires the affections of our hearts like remembering the price that he paid for us. All theology is practical; but the work of Christ especially so. Whatever your struggles, temptations and pains – the sacrificial suffering of Jesus and his victorious resurrection provide an unshakeable ground of confidence and hope for us.

With that in mind, let’s begin with

#### **II. An Overview of the Work of Christ**

One handy way to summarize Christ’s work is through the three offices he fulfills. He is our prophet, priest and king.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the Steve Chalke quote here: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/defending-my-fathers-wrath>

<sup>2</sup> Qur’an, Sura 4:157: “That they said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah”;- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.”

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, these roles almost overlapped – for example in Moses who was descended from a priestly line and interceded for the people before God, yet who was designated as a prophet in Deuteronomy 18. Or David, who ruled as king yet also danced before God’s presence wearing a priestly garment. These hints point forward to one who would fulfill all these roles perfectly.

- Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God, the Prophet who spoke God's Word and who was himself the Word made flesh. We know God through Christ. Heb 1:1-2, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."
- Jesus is also the ultimate high priest who mediates a new covenant between God and his people. We are reconciled to God through Christ. Hebrews 7:26: "It was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens."
- And Jesus is the great King of the universe who rules with peace and justice. We are citizens of the kingdom of God through Christ. He inaugurated his kingdom in his first coming, and he will consummate the kingdom at the end of time: Rev 19:11, 16: "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

So, we should praise Jesus because he is our prophet, priest and king. We need no other. He is sufficient and pre-eminent in his revelation, his sacrifice, and his rule.

Another way to summarize the work of Christ, which we'll follow for the rest of our class, is to consider Jesus in his humiliation and exaltation. We see this in a classic passage like Phil 2:7-11. Jesus "emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." That's his humiliation – his incarnation, perfect life, and sacrificial death. Then, Paul goes on: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed him the name that is above every name." That's his exaltation – his resurrection, ascension, session (being seated on his heavenly throne), and his return. Herman Bavinck wrote, "The whole New Testament teaches the humiliated and exalted Christ as the core of the gospel."<sup>4</sup>

### III. The State of Humiliation

For the rest of our class today, let's look at the first half of this pair – the work Jesus Christ accomplished in his state of humiliation.

First, we should begin with **A. The Incarnation of Christ**. Why did the Son of God take on human flesh? For us and our salvation. We spoke of this extensively last week when we discussed the humanity of Christ, so I won't repeat what we said then. It's simply worthwhile to savor the beauty of this mystery. The Son of God was born as a baby to be our New Adam. The infinite one got tired and slept, the all-powerful one felt our weakness, the all-present one took on a human body. He shared fully in our humanity in order to serve as our representative and priestly mediator before God the Father. Hebrews 2:14-17: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore

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<sup>4</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 418.

he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

But Jesus didn’t only take on our humanity; letter **B**, he lived a **Sinless Life**. This is also called Christ’s **Active Obedience**. The first Adam disobeyed. But Jesus, the New Adam, fully obeyed his Father. Israel broke God’s law, but Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17).<sup>5</sup> He is like a New Israel. This is a crucial point, because we too have followed in Israel’s disobedient footsteps. Jesus is the one who, to use a striking phrase from Matthew 3:15, came to “fulfill all righteousness.” Through faith, his righteous record is imputed to us.

Christ’s active obedience should console us. He has felt the pull of temptation and the allure of sin. He doesn’t reprimand us when we’re tempted, like the coach who barks at his team, “you just need to toughen up!” He tenderly, gently comforts us and invites us to find help in him. He welcomes us gladly when we admit our total dependence on him. Hebrews 4:15-16, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

## QUESTIONS?

As wonderful as Christ’s incarnation and sinless life were, they didn’t complete his work. Turn in your handout to **C. The Death of Christ**. In Mark 8, as soon as Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ, Jesus teaches “the Son of Man *must* suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.” Here, we tread on especially holy ground. Jesus became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. This is sometimes called his “passive obedience” – not in the sense that he was a tragic victim of fate, but that he lovingly obeyed the Father’s plan by submitting to the penalty of death that our sins deserved.

What did Christ’s death accomplish? His death was so monumental, the New Testament speaks of it using several related, overlapping themes and metaphors.

First, **1. Christ is our Penal Substitutionary Atoning Sacrifice**. This is the predominant way the Bible describes the death of Christ, so we’ll spend the most time on this point.

Atonement is a word that refers to the restoration of right relationship between man and God; it also carries the connotation of the sacrifice that is made or price that is paid for such right relationship to be possible.

Let’s begin with *The Necessity of Atonement*. Here we need only to recall our class a few weeks ago on the problem of sin. We stand guilty before God as those who are represented by Adam. We have confirmed our guilty sentence by our own filthy deeds. As John 3:36 says, the wrath of God remains

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<sup>5</sup> Remember, Old Testament Israel was called God’s “Son” in Exod 4:22. They were given life by God and were to represent him in the world the way a son carries on his father’s reputation. But after God led them through the waters of the Red Sea, they disobeyed him in the wilderness. Their hearts were hardened and their deeds were rebellious. The New Testament presents Jesus as the New and better Israel. He is the Son of God in the fullest sense. In Matthew 3, Jesus goes through the waters of baptism; the voice from heaven says “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased,” and immediately Jesus like Israel is tempted in the wilderness. But *he* perfectly obeys.

on all who are outside of Christ. Eph 2:3 says we are by nature objects of wrath. This is because God is good. His law is right, his holiness is unimaginably pure, and his justice is totally right. Therefore, he won't allow evil and wickedness to go unpunished. He won't sweep our sin under the rug.

So, God ordained the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament to convey graphically the utter necessity of atonement. Animals were slaughtered daily as prescribed by Leviticus. Why? As Heb 9:22 explains, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The wages for sin is death, according to Rom 6:23. This lesson would be engrained in the minds of every Israelite, because the floor of the temple would be covered with blood. God didn't need to save anyone. But in his mercy he provided regular sacrifices that all pointed forward to the final sacrifice that would atone for sin decisively.

That leads us to *The Nature of the Atonement*.

Christ's atoning death was "**penal**." That is, *he* suffered the penalty that our sins had incurred – the wages of death. Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities." 1 Pet 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."

His death was also **substitutionary**. He took the death we rightfully deserved, in our place. The idea of substitution was built into Israel's history from the beginning. Just think of the Exodus, where a lamb was slain, as it were, instead of – in the place of – the oldest son in the family. It's no wonder John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29) and that Jesus died during Passover. Isaiah 53:12, he was numbered with the transgressors. 2 Cor 5:21 "For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

John Stott has memorably written, "The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man."<sup>6</sup> When we reflect on Christ's substitution for us, how could our hearts not well up in praise? As the hymn so powerfully puts it, "Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood; Sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

Next, what is the *Result of the Atonement*, or what did this penal, substitutionary death accomplish for God's people? For one, it accomplished the **propitiation** of God's wrath, meaning that God's good anger against sin has been resolved and removed by Christ's sacrifice. The prophetic books of the Old Testament depict God's good anger against all wickedness as him pouring out the cup of his holy wrath. For all who trust in Christ, he drank that cup on the cross. He experienced God's rightly terrible opposition against sin – the opposition that we deserved to know eternally. This is what Paul refers to in Galatians 3:13 when he says that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." The obedient one absorbed the curse that was due to disobedient sinners like us.

Maybe the clearest passage on propitiation is Rom 3:23-25: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." As we saw

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<sup>6</sup> *Cross of Christ*, 160.

earlier, the shedding of blood is necessary for atonement. Jesus Christ is that blood sacrifice that was acceptable to God. And we should remember, that while propitiation is *necessary* because God is holy, it is *possible* because God is supremely loving and gracious.<sup>7</sup> 1 John 4:10, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

So, that’s propitiation. Christ’s death also accomplished **expiation**, which means his death fully covers the guilt of our sin. We are no longer guilty before God, but declared innocent. John 1:29, “Behold the Lamb of God who *takes away* the sin of the world.” The law brings condemnation because it exposes how we’ve fallen short of God’s standard, but Col 2:14 says God forgave all our trespasses “by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

Not only this, but Christ’s death also brought about our **purification**, or what theologians sometimes call **positional sanctification**, meaning we have been cleansed and set apart as acceptable to God. No longer are we stained by sin; we have been washed (1 Cor 6:11). 1 John 1:7 says “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” The author of Hebrews in 9:14 says the blood of Christ purifies our conscience so that we can now serve the living God.

As you can see, Christ’s work on the cross changes everything for us. So it’s worthwhile to pause here and praise God that Christ’s work was totally effective. As the verse we opened up with says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and that’s exactly what he did. We contribute nothing to our salvation. Jesus didn’t purchase a possibility for salvation that *we* then need to activate. He didn’t come to make atonement a potential reality, but an actual reality for those who would repent and believe. We can see that in the very nature of atonement itself. Substitution, biblically, means substituting for a definite group of people. That was the case with the Passover Lamb and with the Old Testament sacrifices. Even these sacrifices, which previewed Christ’s atonement, actually accomplished the purification of the worshiper, even though that type of purification was only temporary. How much more, then, does Christ’s sacrifice actually achieve propitiation, expiation, and permanent purification for God’s people! He died, Eph 5:25 says, for the church, his Bride. He is *our* substitute.

This atonement is applied to us by the Holy Spirit when we are converted, when we turn from our sin and trust in Christ. So, all three persons of the Trinity act harmoniously in the great work of redemption. Christ’s death was as a substitute for all those the Father elected, which are all those to whom the Spirit gives the gift of new life. Believer, are you ever tempted to doubt or forget Christ’s love for you? Look to his substitutionary atonement. When he went to the cross, he had you in mind. In John 17, his high priestly prayer, he prayed “for those who will believe in me” – that’s you. He sweat drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane because he knew he was about to take the punishment for your sins – forever. The holes in his hands will forever be monuments of his love for you and for me. <sup>i ii</sup>

## QUESTIONS?

As I said earlier, the New Testament describes the death of Christ using overlapping terms and images. We spent most of our time on substitutionary atonement, but let’s move to four more important and beautiful aspects of what he did for us on the cross.

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<sup>7</sup> Stott: “It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God’s love is the source, not the consequence, of the atonement.” *Cross of Christ*, 174.

## 2. Christ is our Legal Substitute

This is the glorious truth of **justification**. Here scripture uses the language of the law court to convey our salvation. We are guilty before God's judgment seat. But Christ takes our sentence. As a result, we are declared innocent – but not only that! That would be nice, but only for about 2 seconds, until we sin again! Also, Christ's perfect righteous record is credited or "imputed" to us. He takes our rap sheet, and God the judge treats us according to Christ's upright and perfectly innocent standing. Isa 53:11 highlights how the suffering servant would "make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."

By providing Christ for our justification, God vindicates his justice while at the same time showing marvelous mercy to sinners. Paul explains that when Old Testament believers sinned, God was simply withholding his punishment – until the death of Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, he took the legal guilt for all the sins of all believers: past, present, and future. Rom 3:24-26, we 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." So, contrary to what many people think and even teach, we can never earn enough merit before God to stand before his judgment seat – even if that merit could be earned through good deeds and the sacraments. Rather, God in his justice declares us righteous because Christ's death pays the sentence of our guilt and his righteousness is accounted to us. So mercy and justice meet at the cross. Praise Christ, the one who brings our justification.

**3. Christ is also our Redeemer.** Here scripture uses the imagery of the slave market. We are slaves to sin, unable to free ourselves from our voluntary bondage. Christ purchases our forever freedom. Mark 10:45, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Some over the years have suggested that Jesus paid this ransom to Satan, but there's no scriptural basis for that. Rather, this redemption is the payment God himself demands because of his justice. Our sin has locked us into captivity to his judgment. Christ's blood – that is, the ending of his life – is what releases us from this captivity. Our judgment fell on him. As 1 Pet 1:18-19 says, "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

Practically, this means that we belong to Christ. We're no longer slaves to sin! We have a new master and his yoke is easy and his burden is light. You were bought with a price, Paul says. Therefore glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6:20). Satan can lie all he wants, but he has no power over us and sin has no claim on us. Col 1:13-14, we have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son, in whom we have redemption.

But not only are we set free from sin and death, we now enjoy a new relationship with God:

## 4. Christ is our Reconciler

This is where the work of Christ becomes especially sweet. The Bible doesn't only describe our salvation in terms of justice, redemption, and sacrifice, but also in terms of relationship. We were God's enemies. Now, in Christ, we are his adopted sons. Our alienation from God began when Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden. Our hostility with him was no Cold War – it was all-

out battle. We raged against him and his ways. This is why Luke 15 is maybe my favorite chapter in the Bible – because we can all identify with that prodigal son who takes and takes from his father and yet spurns relationship with him.

Again, Christ's substitution is at the heart of our reconciliation. Rom 5:1, "Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom 5:10, "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

Scripture uses the beautiful imagery of the family to describe our reconciliation. Gal 4:4-6, "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." God hears our prayers. He cares for us tenderly as a father. As adopted children, the inheritance of the kingdom that belongs to Christ is now our inheritance too.

One implication of this reconciliation to God as our father is that we are all united as brothers and sisters in his household. Jew and Gentile, black and white, young and old, powerful and weak – Eph 2:14, "[Christ] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility."

#### Finally, **5. Christ is our Victor**

By his death and resurrection, Jesus conquers Satan, sin and death on our behalf. That's why when he talks about his upcoming death in John 12:31, Jesus says "now will the ruler of this world be cast out." Col 2:15, "God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" – that is, in Christ and in his victorious death. 1 Cor 15:56-57: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." No one can stand against him, and in him we are more than conquerors. This reminds us that the substitutionary death of Christ not only reconciles us to God, it brings us into a glorious state of triumph and hope. Not because of what we've done, but because of what he's done. But this is a good place for us to close for today, because the victory of Christ is closely tied not only to his death but to his resurrection. In fact, everything that we've said today about his death would be meaningless and vain if it weren't for this glorious truth – Jesus rose from the dead. That is why the atonement, justification, redemption, reconciliation, and victory he provides are rock solid and guaranteed. Because he was no mere man. He conquered death and rose so that all who are united to him by faith can share his new life. That's what we'll think about next week. But for now, let's pray and praise God for the death of his Son.

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<sup>i</sup> Here is a fuller section on the extent of the atonement that was written in 2016 but I decided not to use it in the class for the sake of space and because this is a potentially confusing topic.

This discussion of the effectiveness of the atonement helps us address the common question of the *Extent of*

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*the Atonement.* For whom did Christ come to die? Did he atone for the sins of everyone without exception, or did he specifically die for the elect, the people of God? Evangelicals offer different answers to this question, and our statement of faith doesn't require you to take any particular position. But I'd like to argue that the nature of the atonement shows that Christ died specifically for us, his bride.

Here's what I mean. If we look at the nature of substitution, it means substituting for a definite group of people. That was the case with the Passover lamb and with the Old Testament sacrifices. Those animals weren't substitutes for all of mankind, but for a particular subset of people. It's the same with Jesus. He came to sacrifice himself for God's people. This flows from the argument of Hebrews chapters 7-10: Jesus mediates a New Covenant, and this covenant is specifically made, according to Heb 9:15, with "those who are called" – that is, those whom God sets aside as his new covenant people. Jesus, in his own words, came to give his "life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), to "lay down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Or, Paul says in Eph 5:25, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for *her* to make her holy." In Acts 20:28, he strikingly declares that God "obtained [*the church*] with his own blood." Now, this isn't a statement about the merit or value of Christ's sacrifice – of course, he was God, so his sacrifice was infinite in value. We're talking about its design: It was intended for the salvation for of God's chosen people. This view, which I'm defending from scripture, has been called "limited atonement" or "particular atonement," but I think the best title is "definite atonement" because that sums up what is so encouraging about this truth: Christ died to secure the redemption of God's chosen people, and he has done so definitely, effectively, with nothing lacking in the substitutionary atonement he has accomplished. This atonement is applied to us by the Holy Spirit when we are converted, when we turn from our sin and trust in Christ. That's when we're saved. But the point is that Christ's death was as a substitute for all those the Father elected, which are all those to whom the Spirit gives the gift of new life.

Of course, there are common counter-arguments to this view. Many will point out several New Testament verses that talk about Christ coming to provide atonement for "all" people or the "whole world." We don't have time to go through each of these passages, but I would suggest that if you look at the context, the author isn't intending to say that Christ died for all people without exception, but rather that he came to save all sorts of people without distinction.

Take 1 John 2:2 for example: "[Christ] is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." What does John mean by this? Clearly he doesn't believe that all people everywhere will be saved, because his whole letter warns about false teachers and people who deny Christ.<sup>1</sup> Rather, look at 1 John's emphasis on loving your brother and walking in the fellowship of the light. His point seems to be that Jesus' death wasn't for the Jews only, as many Jews might have believed, but Christ's atonement was for all peoples – Jews and Gentiles. John is referring to all people groups and not to every single person. Again, you can disagree with the perspective I'm teaching here. But I think that this is actually a wonderfully encouraging point: Christ died for us, his sheep, his bride. When he died, if you're a believer, he had you in mind. Nothing can undo the atonement he has made for you. It was totally effective. Praise God for Christ, our substitute!

## ii More material on limited atonement from a previous version of this class:

John Owen, a 17th Century theologian who wrote one of the greatest books ever written on the Atonement, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, provides a strong argument for the position that the unlimited merit of Christ death was limited in its intent.

Owen starts out with Isaiah 53:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This passage makes it clear that Christ died for sins and brought peace with God. According to Owen there are three possibilities:



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1. Christ died for some of the sins of all men;
  2. Christ died for all the sins of all men;
  3. Christ died for all of the sins of some men.

No one says that the first possibility is true. If Christ died for only some of the sins of all men, then all would be lost because of the sins that Christ had not died for.

The second statement is that "Christ died for all the sins of all men." Undoubtedly, Christ would not have to do anything more to have died for all the sins of all men, but if this is true, then why are not all saved? The answer normally put forth is "Because of their unbelief; they will not believe." But Scripture tells us that unbelief is categorized as a sin. If it is a sin, then according to the proposition that "Christ died for all of man's sins," Christ died for that sin. Why should that particular sin hinder them more than their other sins for which Christ died? Why isn't that sin covered by Christ's blood, as well? So we see that this statement cannot be true either. While obtaining salvation and giving salvation are not exactly the same thing, they must not be separated either.

It is the third statement that accurately reflects the whole of Biblical teaching: Christ died for all of the sins of some men. That is, he died for the unbelief of the elect so that God's punitive wrath is appeased toward them. This is saving grace. When we are before the judgment seat of God, we will have nothing to boast about before our Creator. We cannot pat ourselves on the back for believing. Salvation is all of grace. We are not left to accomplish our own new birth and bring ourselves to faith, no we hear the voice of the Shepherd calling, and we follow him, finding ourselves to be drawn irresistibly out of darkness into his marvelous light. This is Biblical theology at its best. This is the most tremendous, the most glorious, the most staggering thing in the universe and in the whole of history.