

Christ: God's Righteousness

The Exchange

People on occasion ask me, "Why did Christ have to die?" That is a great question. It is a question with answers on various levels. It is a question that really is at the root of the gospel. It is a question, that in part, will be answered this morning.

First, Christ had to die to make payment for mankind's sin. John records the words of the Christ, **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16) For this verse to be true and become reality it required God to make a way for our sin guilt to be taken care of. God could not be in the presence of His chosen as long as our sin debt was left unpaid. The Apostle Paul gives us the answer of how God would pay for mankind's sin. Reading from the Book of Romans chapter 3, ²¹ **"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—** ²² **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:** ²³ **for 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.** This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ **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."** Simply put, Christ had

to die to make payment for our sin debt. God's wrath was poured out on Jesus instead of us. All the wrath that God had for the sin of His people was pouted out on Jesus as He hung on the cross. That day was not only physically dark but spiritually dark while Jesus received our deserved wrath. Because of the death of Christ, God has no more wrath left for the church, it has been replaced with grace and mercy. "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:4-5) Because of Jesus' death, God sees us through Jesus' righteousness and we can once again approach Him and be in His presence. So, Jesus' death and resurrection is the perfect sacrifice, the permanent sacrifice, the eternal sacrifice that grants believers of all history salvation. Without belief in Jesus as God and one's Savior and Lord there is no salvation.

So, those born-again believe Christ died to atone and make payment for the sins of mankind. Let me ask, "Do you think Christ's death was enough payment for all of your sins; past, present and future?" If Christ only paid for the sins of mankind, then people would still not be suited for heaven. More was needed and more had to be done. Simply taking away our sins would not make people righteous. As fallen sinful people when Christ paid for your sin how long will you remain without sin; a minute, an hour or even a day? Your sins are forgiven but you do not become and remain righteous on your own.

Here is a simple illustration of what Jesus removed and what He added to make His sacrifice complete. One evening at the end of dinner I asked my 10-year-old daughter to give me her dirty, used napkin and told her I would give her a quarter in exchange. Even at 10 my daughter was pretty smart and saw that this was a good deal. She gladly gave me her napkin and I gave her a quarter. I

explained to all of my girls that what we had just done is referred as an exchange; when someone gives something away and receives something in return. I pushed onto make sure she understood - she had given me her dirty and torn napkin; which was used and worthless in exchange for a coin that had value. I explained the napkin was like our sin and the quarter was like Christ's righteousness. When Jesus died on the cross, he took our soiled, dirty and torn sins from us and placed them upon Himself. He exchanged our sin for His perfect life without sin – He also gave us something of great value – His righteousness. However, this exchange of our sin for Jesus' righteousness only happens if we repent and believe in Jesus as our Savior and when we do this - God honors Jesus' sacrificial exchange and no longer sees our sin but sees us with Jesus' righteousness. This is how we, as broken sinful people are able to come into relationship with a holy, perfect and righteous God. I saw that my 10-year-old was getting the idea of this exchange. My 8-year-old was thinking but it was not completely clear yet and my 4-year-old just wanted a quarter. You see my beloved without this exchange, if Jesus just took away our sins and nothing else, we would still be unfit for heaven and God would still remain in the distance for we would lack righteousness.

Paul understood this exchange, he wrote the church in Philippi in about 60 A.D. explaining, he exchanged his standing as a Pharisee, considered a righteous position and therefore, Paul was righteous before the people of Israel. However, Paul came to realize in reality his position as a Pharisee had little value, like my daughter's used and filthy napkin, and needed to be exchanged for something of great value. Reading from chapter 3 of the Book of Philippians, [“For we are the circumcision \(that is a spiritual circumcision\), who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for](#)

confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ **Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ **and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—** ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Taking away sin was incomplete; God had to add something – the righteousness of Christ, but it only comes through faith.

So, we understand the first reason Jesus had to die was to bear all peoples sin and receive God’s just wrath that sin brings. The second reason Jesus had to died was for righteousness, His perfection in keeping God’s law was made to be credited to those who believe in Him as God and Savior. This takes me back to my question that each of you must answer, “Do you think Christ’s death was enough payment for all your sins; past, present and future?” If not, what could you add? While you ponder these questions and we prepare to seek wisdom from God’s Word – let me take time to pray to God for His spiritual wisdom this morning.

Mediation (v. 15)

The third reason Christ had to die is found in our text this morning. Please open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 9, verse 15, “**Therefore Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal**

inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.” The Old Covenant set boundaries to control and change one from the outside, but the New worked from within.

God gave the prophets of the Old Testament foreknowledge of the New Covenant. The prophet Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet, who according to tradition wrote the Books of Jeremiah, Kings and Lamentations, six hundred years before the birth of the Messiah, God inspired him to write these words, ³¹ “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, ³² 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. ³³ For 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.** ³⁴ 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.**” (Jeremiah 31:31-34) Remember from last week, the reason God ever made any covenant with sinful mankind was that He would be glorified as the One Holy God. Through the New Covenant, we would have God and He would have His people. In order for this to happen we needed a Mediator. We cannot gain access to God through man-made religions, good works or by birthright because of sin. The only way sinful humans can gain access to God is through Jesus Christ, because He is the only Mediator who is perfect and never sinned.

People failed to keep the Old Covenant, the covenant of works. All people, including us, failed to keep God’s law perfectly. Jesus comes along and keeps the

Old Covenant for us. He is the only hope we have to gain God's favor. Jesus is the great covenant keeper. He kept the Old Covenant for us and He kept it for all those in the past. Moses was not saved because of all the animal sacrifices. He was saved because the blood of Jesus is so potent that it took away the sin of all His people past, present and future. The animal sacrifices only covered sin, but they pointed to the death of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice. The misconception is the Old Testament saints were saved by keeping the law, but we know from scripture this is not true. Reading the words of the reformed Pharisee, Paul, ¹⁰ "For **all** who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be **everyone** who does not abide by **all** things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' (Deuteronomy 27:26) ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.' (Habakkuk 2:4) " (Galatians 3:10-11) If one takes Jesus out of the Old or New then both become meaningless. This is why the end of chapter 8 it says, ¹³ "In speaking of a new covenant, *Jesus* makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." In order for the New Covenant to begin and bring new life; two deaths had to occur.

New Life (vs. 16-18)

The same Greek word translated as *covenant* can also be translated as *testament*. The difference is found in the context. Here, in verse 16 to 18 the translators were very thorough and did a great job because the writer had in mind a testament. At this point we should be thinking in terms of the last will and testament. Reading verse 16 to 18, "For where a **will** (a legal document where by the property of the deceased is transferred to their heirs) is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a **will** takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ Therefore not even the first **covenant** was inaugurated without blood." When someone draws up a will

they specifically and legally determine how their assets will be distributed after their death.

As a side point, you should have a will, for without one it is the State of New Mexico that will decide how your assets will be handled. I would think that you would desire your children or the church to receive your assets instead of the government. Also, a Trust avoids probate. As long as one lives the will does not come into effect, it is only when one dies that the will becomes affectual. But in the absence of a will and trust everything is probated and assets diminished.

Back to verse 18, even the first will and testament or the Old Covenant, had to die in order for the children of God and believers in Jesus as the Christ to receive the inheritance the New Covenant. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant. He died before the Hebrews could journey into their inheritance which was the Promised Land. Moses died because of his sin. A new Mediator has now died, risen and is eternally in heaven and His sacrifice brings in the power of the New Covenant. Christ had to die because only His death would cause the New Covenant to take effect. There were two deaths; Jesus, God the Son who was both fully human and fully God died for sin and with His death came the death of the Old Covenant and the birth of the New.

Atonement: Old Covenant (vs. 19-23)

Here in the next 5 verses the writer establishes a comparison. He shows the rituals that took place in the tabernacle and how the animal sacrificial blood was used to cleanse. He then makes a concluding statement to this section by declaring that even in the Old Covenant system blood was a cleansing agent and not permanent. Reading verses 19 to 22, [“For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and](#)

goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,²⁰ saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.”²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” The point here is that by the sacrifice and blood of animals the priest was able to purify the articles of the tabernacle through observing rituals – but the blood and rituals did not purify the sinner. Last week’s text explains this point in verse 14, “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

Do you see the difference between rituals and purified conscience? Rituals cannot do it, only the blood of Christ, our God and Savior and only Mediator can cleanse people and purify people and bring them from dead ritual of religion into a relationship with God, the living God, and give the believer a purified heart and conscience. Jesus will write His law on our minds and on our hearts in the New Covenant giving us a heart of flesh and no longer will the Old, written on stone tablets be our desire, but we will desire to live for the glory of Christ.

The writer now gives a transition verse from Old to New, “Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” (v. 23) The earthly rituals and sacrifices of the Old pointed to the better heavenly New to come.

Atonement: New Covenant (vs. 24-28)

The Old Testament priest appeared daily and repeated sacrifices over and over again. Jesus appeared once on earth and lived a perfect life and died the

perfect death; the perfect sin offering and rose from the grave to conquer death and begin our journey to eternity. This perfect sacrifice for mankind was given once because of His perfection. In order for this one-time sacrifice to reach back and reach forward, Christ had to appear not in the earthly tabernacle but in the heavenly one.

Reading Hebrews 9, verses 24 to 28, “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to **appear** in the presence of God on our behalf.²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

The first thing I want you to take note of is found at the end of verse 24, “... into heaven itself, now to **appear** in the presence of God on our behalf.” Here we observe that Jesus’ great priestly work, as He sits at the right hand of God the Father, includes intercession for His people. The purpose of the earthly tabernacle has ended and we understand this because of the connection made in verse 26, Jesus “has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

His one-time sacrifice for His people put all our sin away. He gave of Himself in the ultimate way to pay for the sin of His people and to begin the New Covenant. This again makes the meaning of the last verse of chapter 8 clear, “In

speaking of a new covenant, *Jesus* makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

Salvation and Wrath (v. 28)

When Christ returns, He returns with two objectives. The first is found in verse 28, “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Jesus will appear one more time. This time His coming will not have a thing to do with our sin but will be for the purpose of completing our salvation. He will rapture believers to our eternal home.

Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus everything we have of eternal value as believers is in heaven. Our sanctuary is in heaven, our heavenly Father is in heaven, our Savior is in heaven, our citizenship is in heaven and our treasures should be in heaven. But here we are, waiting on earth; journeying through mortal life, struggling with sin and fighting the spiritual battle against the evil one. Our health may fail, our careers may fail as we stand firm for Christ and trust in people may fail. Then why are we here? Answer, to live for the glory of God and as a testimony to salvation Jesus offers to all who believe. The Word of God reminds us, we do not belong to this world, everything we own that really matters is in heaven, because we belong to God through Christ.

What a crazy, dysfunctional world we live in. So many around us live in fear and confusion and frustration that leads to anger and separation. We see the results of the brokenness all around us every day and the news is so discouraging, the world has no hope, which is exactly as the evil one wants. But know this my beloved, because of Christ’s death, His last will and testament has taken effect and we, as believers, have inherited the distribution of His salvation and righteousness.

Therefore, as believers we have no fear, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are confident of the outcome. We live in linear history, but God is outside of history and is eternity, this is one reason we can know without doubt all promises will be fulfilled. Our inheritance begins here and becomes complete in heaven.

As Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, ¹¹ “In *Jesus* we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In *Jesus* you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:11-14) Since we have an eternal inheritance how should we live. How should this truth affect us? We have the Holy Spirit which is the proof of our inheritance. Our inheritance is in heaven and because of Christ’s great love He has given us spiritual eternity now and it will come into fruition, receiving our full inheritance when we arrive in heaven. The Holy Spirit is given to cause us to think, to know God’s truth and live eternity both now and future.

The second objective of Christ at His return is called the Day of Wrath. Both Romans and Revelation tell of the terror for unbelievers, “because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.” (Romans 2:5) As He pours out His wrath on the earth none will be able to stand. Praise God the church will have been raptured! God’s wrath and judgement will be eternal damnation. Time is short, if you do not know Christ as your Lord and Savior – come now and receive God’s eternal love, grace and mercy. Do not delay! The time is now!

After this terrible truth for unbelievers, let me conclude with the encouraging words given by God through His Holy Spirit to the Apostle Peter, for those called by God,³ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,⁵ who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:3-9) Regardless what happens on planet earth. No matter what crazy events may transpire and unsettle us, things in heaven are eternally settled and fixed.

My beloved, as Christians to bring the maximum amount of Glory to God, we need to live in our eternal fixed position as an heir with Christ, both as individuals and as a community of Christ. When bad things happen here, remember eternity is where we are journeying to. Praise the Lord for His wonderful completed work on the cross. Jesus paid our sin debt, He gave us His righteousness, and He set in motion the New Covenant. Praise be to God! All of God’s people say, “Amen!”