

“It Is Finished!”

John 19:28-30

October 12, 2014

Intro: **Question:** *What were the 3 best days of your life?*

(Think about it.... We'll come back...)

VIDEO: Skit-Guys... ***“Good Friday”*** (personal perspectives)

John 19:28-30

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty. (cf. Ps. 69:21)"

VIDEO: Gospel of John 19:16-30 (then unpack)

T/S: Let's unpack this “finished-sandwich”

KEY: ***the middle defines the sandwich!!!***

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty. (cf. Ps. 69:21)"

1. "Jesus, knowing... all things"

- A. Creator King is Crucified King... Jesus is Sovereign!
- B. Fulfilled prophecy proves faithful providence!

➤ **See Psalm 22:** (ends with "It is finished!")

(rabbinic technique: "***Ra-mez***")

16 They pierced my hands and my feet.

➤ **See Isaiah 53:**

5 But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. (NLT)

10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.

11 ...the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

12 ...He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" ([1 Cor. 15:3](#)).

Even the unusual use of a branch of hyssop to extend the sponge to Christ's lips suggests Scriptural parallels, because hyssop was the plant prescribed in [Exodus 12:22](#)...

Exodus 22:21-29

21Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. **22**Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the

blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. **23**For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. **24**You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. **25**And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. **26**And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ **27**you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

28Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

(The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn)

29At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

I. “It”

A. The cross/cup have (4) components:

- Physical pain & death
- All the sin of past & future believers
- Separation from the Father (Habakkuk 1)
- FULL wrath of God for ALL the believer’s sins

In John's Gospel, you find a number of pictures of our Lord's death: the slaying of the lamb ([John 1:29](#)); the destroying of the temple ([John 2:19](#)); the lifting up of the serpent ([John 3:14](#)); the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep ([John 10:11-18](#)); and the planting of the seed in the ground ([John 12:20-25](#)). These pictures make it clear that Jesus' death was not an accident; it was a divine appointment. He was not murdered in the strictest sense: He willingly gave His life for us. His death was an atonement, not just an example. He actually accomplished the work of redemption on the cross.

- Warren Weirsbe

The word “**atonement... *at-one-ment***” - is used to refer to the atoning death of Christ through which the sinner is reconciled to God, restored to His favor.

II. “Is” (statement of FACT!)

III. “Finished”

- Transfer (sin to Him, righteousness to us)
- Drank the “cup”
- The OLD COVENANT: **(a.k.a. Judaism)** The basic difference between the old covenant offered by God through the Mosaic law and the new covenant offered by God through Christ is not that one had commandments and the other doesn't. The key differences are that **(1)** the Messiah, Jesus, has come and shed the blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 10:29) so that henceforth he is the mediator of a new covenant, and all saving, covenant-keeping faith is conscious faith in him; **(2)** the old covenant has therefore become “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13) and does not govern the new-covenant people of God (2 Corinthians 3:7–18; Romans 7:4, 6; Galatians 3:19); and **(3)** the promised new heart and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit has been given through faith.

What's new about the new covenant is not that there are no commandments, but that God's promise has come true! *“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts”* (Jeremiah 31:33). *“I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes”* (Ezekiel 36:27).

- John Piper

- Sin & Satan were finished! (war vs battle)
- Uncertainty was finished...
- Messianic prophecy...
- Any & ALL other gospels (past, present, future)
-

The Westminster Confession says that “Sin is any lack of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.” This is perhaps the best known of man’s definitions of sin. The Bible says that “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” ([Romans 14:23](#)), that is, whatever a man does or thinks which is not an act or a thought proceeding from faith in God and guided by God, is sin. The sin may be committed in ignorance, but it is no less a sin.

T/S: Understanding “SIN” now brings me back to the cross and my opening Question to you...

Old Question: *What were the 3 best days of your life?*

(ANSWER...)

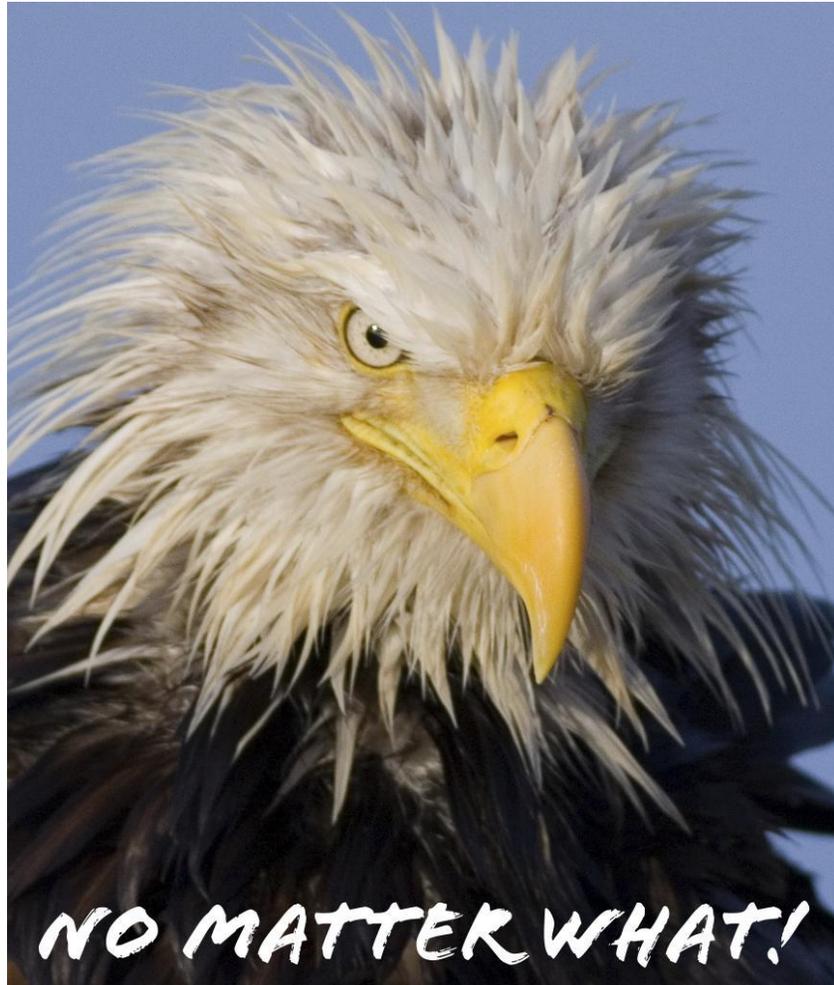
Day 1: Jesus opens the door to eternal life **(Good Friday)**

Day 2: You respond to His knock at your door

(Your BEST day!)

Day 3: You commit to LIVE His Great Commission!

(Your Christ-like, “No Matter What” day)



by contrast...

Types of people...

Sloths...

“None”

Starters...

“Fun” (marathon sprinters)

Procrastinators... ***“Run...”*** (away)

Finishers! ***“Done!”***

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VIDEO: Platt – *“Every Christian is a Missionary”*

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He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Jesus voluntarily chose to surrender His life by a conscious act of His own sovereign will.

Illustration:

I recently discovered a story that was truly astounding. Albrecht Dürer was the famous artist of the German Renaissance, who

lived from 1471-1528 in Nürnberg, Germany. Many Christians will have seen his famous wood cuttings... In 1508 Dürer made his famous "*Study of Praying Hands*," which were modeled on his best friend, Franz Knigstein.



These two men were young, poor, aspiring artists who had made a pact. They "drew straws" (or "lots" in that day) and the man who won would go on to art school, supported by the labor of the other. When one artist found fame, he would return and finance the art studies of his friend.

Dürer won... Later when he returned to his friend in Nürnberg, he found him in ill health from hard work, his fingers so disfigured through labor that he could not study art for the rest of his life. His fingers were so twisted and bent he could not even hold a brush. Dürer was filled with sorrow, and once when he saw his friend praying, he was so moved by his sacrifice and

piety that he modeled his "Study of Praying Hands" on Franz's hands. The portrait became a testimony to his friend's sacrifice that marked Dürer for the rest of his life.

³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

14For the love of Christ controls us (No More **SELF-CONTROL**), because we have concluded this: that one has died for all (No More **SELF-DETERMINATION**), therefore all have died; **15**and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves (No More **SELF-ABSORPTION**) but for him who for their sake died (No More **SELF-DECEPTION**) and was raised...

17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (No More "CAN'T"). The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (No More **EXCUSES**). **18**All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself (No More **ALIENATION**) and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (No More **AIMLESSNESS**); **19**that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (No More **CONDEMNATION**), and entrusting to us (No More **IRRESPONSIBILITY & UNACCOUNTABILITY**) the message of reconciliation (No More **EDITING**). **20**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ (No More **SELF-GOVERNANCE**), God making his appeal through us (No

More **DETACHMENT**). *We implore you on behalf of Christ (No More **VICTEM's-RATIONALIZATION**), be reconciled to God.*

21*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Praise God...

our faith is in the Final Finisher!

Let's Pray.

Study Notes:

See Philippians 4:8... in the message & Messiah at the cross!

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

John 19:28-30

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30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

*** Parallel passage with Psalm 22... (video: "Forsaken")

1 *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.*
2 *O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;*

And by night, but I have no rest.

3*Yet You are holy,*

O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

4*In You our fathers trusted;*

They trusted and You delivered them.

5*To You they cried out and were delivered;*

In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

6*But I am a worm and not a man,*

A reproach of men and despised by the people.

7*All who see me sneer at me;*

They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,

8*“Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him;*

Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”

9*Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;*

You made me trust when upon my mother’s breasts.

10*Upon You I was cast from birth;*

You have been my God from my mother’s womb.

11*Be not far from me, for trouble is near;*

For there is none to help.

12*Many bulls have surrounded me;*

Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.

13*They open wide their mouth at me,*

As a ravening and a roaring lion.

14*I am poured out like water,*

And all my bones are out of joint;

My heart is like wax;

It is melted within me.

15*My strength is dried up like a potsherd,*

And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;

And You lay me in the dust of death.

16*For dogs have surrounded me;*

A band of evildoers has encompassed me;

They pierced my hands and my feet.

17*I can count all my bones.*

They look, they stare at me;

18 *They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.*

19 *But You, O LORD, be not far off;
O You my help, hasten to my assistance.*

20 *Deliver my soul from the sword,
My only life from the power of the dog.*

21 *Save me from the lion's mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.*

22 *I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.*

23 *You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.*

24 *For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the
afflicted;*

*Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.*

25 *From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.*

26 *The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.*

Let your heart live forever!

27 *All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the
LORD,*

And all the families of the nations will worship before You.

28 *For the kingdom is the LORD'S
And He rules over the nations.*

29 *All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,
All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.*

30 *Posterity will serve Him;*

It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.

31 *They will come and will declare His righteousness
To a people who will be born, that He has performed it.*

See Isaiah 53 culminated & fulfilled in John 19:28-30:

*53:1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; **He has no stately form or majesty** That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 **He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;** And like one from whom men hide their face **He was despised**, and we did not esteem Him.*

*4 Surely **our grief He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried;** Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But **He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.***

*6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; **But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.** 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, **Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.** 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?*

*9 **His grave was assigned with wicked men,** Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. 10 **But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would***

render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because **He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.**

Exodus 22:21-29

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2 Corinthians 5:14-21

14For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; **15**and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. **17**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. **b** The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18**All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **19**that is, in Christ God was reconciling **c** the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **20**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **21**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

IV. "It" (not "I" but "it" – the difference is the "t")

- B. The “cross” is defined by the “CUP”
- C. The cross/cup have (4) components:
 - Physical pain & death
 - All the sin of past & future believers
 - Separation from the Father (Habakkuk 1)
 - FULL wrath of God for ALL the believer’s sins

V. “Is”

VI. “Finished”

- Transfer (sin to Him, righteousness to us)
- Drank the “cup”
- The OLD COVENANT: The basic difference between the old covenant offered by God through the Mosaic law and the new covenant offered by God through Christ is not that one had commandments and the other doesn’t. The key differences are that (1) the Messiah, Jesus, has come and shed the blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 10:29) so that henceforth he is the mediator of a new covenant, and all saving, covenant-keeping faith is conscious faith in him; (2) the old covenant has therefore become “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13) and does not govern the new-covenant people of God (2 Corinthians 3:7–18; Romans 7:4, 6; Galatians 3:19); and (3) the promised new heart and the enabling power of Holy Spirit has been given through faith.

In the old covenant, the gracious enabling power to obey God was not poured out as fully as it is since Jesus. “To this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear” (Deuteronomy 29:4). What’s new about the new covenant is not that there are no commandments, but that God’s promise has come true! “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Ezekiel 36:27).

- John Piper

VII. "!"

He had just emerged from three hours of darkness when He felt the wrath of God and separation from God ([Matt. 27:45-49](#)). When you combine darkness, thirst, and isolation, you have—hell! There were physical reasons for His thirst ([Ps. 22:15](#)), but there were also spiritual reasons ([Ps. 42:1-2](#)).

- Bible Exposition Commentary

After tenderly establishing His mother's care, **Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."** In His omniscience, Jesus knew there was only one remaining prophecy to be fulfilled. In [Psalm 69:21](#) David wrote, "They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar (the Septuagint uses the same Greek word translated **sour wine** in [v. 29](#)) to drink." Jesus knew that by saying "**I am thirsty**" He would prompt the soldiers to give Him a drink. They, of course, did not consciously do so to fulfill prophecy, still less to show compassion. Their goal was to increase the Lord's torment by prolonging His life.

From a **jar full of sour wine** that was **standing** nearby, one of the bystanders (probably one of the soldiers; or at least someone acting with their approval) **put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop** (cf. [Ex. 12:22](#)) **and brought it up to His mouth.** This was the cheap, sour wine that the soldiers commonly consumed. It was not the same beverage that the Lord had earlier refused ([Matt. 27:34](#)). That beverage, which contained gall, was intended to help deaden His pain so He would not struggle as much while being nailed to His cross. Jesus had refused it, because He wanted to drink the cup of the Father's wrath against sin in the fullest way His senses could experience it.

- MacArthur

Our Lord made seven statements while He was on the cross; they are known as "the seven words from the cross." First, He thought of others: those who crucified Him ([Luke 23:34](#)), the believing thief ([Luke 23:39-43](#)), and His mother ([John 19:25-27](#)). The central word had to do with His relationship to the Father ([Matt. 27:45-49](#)); and the last three statements focused on Himself: His body ([John 19:28-29](#)), His soul ([John 19:30](#); and see [Isa. 53:10](#)), and His spirit ([Luke 23:46](#)).

- Bible Exposition Commentary

John sees in Jesus' death more than the ironic drama of Christ's glory and return. He develops the story aware that these events have a theological significance as well. Jesus' death on the cross is not only about the return of the king (to heaven), but also about Jesus' care for his flock, his sacrifice, and the Spirit—all motifs discussed in the Upper Room as Jesus prepared his followers for the crisis of that afternoon. Thus John delights in seeing the symbolic meaning hidden in commonplace events. This will be true for the crucifixion and its attendant details (the title above the cross, Jesus' garments, Jesus' last words) as well as for other related scenes such as Jesus' mother, the breaking of legs, and the spear thrust. - **NIV Application Commentary**

Jesus is fully aware that the work he has been sent to the world to do is finished. He had revealed the Father's name, gathered those given to him, and exhibited God's love and revealed his word. All is finished. But he also knows that these things are a fulfillment of God's plan; the cross is a portion of the work God has sent him to do.

- NIV Application Commentary,

John 19:30, "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." What Jesus knows about the finality of his work (**19:28**) he now utters aloud (**19:30a**). This confirms the sense we have seen throughout the Passion story that here Jesus is accomplishing what he intends. He is *not* a victim, but a servant doing God's bidding. This is *not* a cry of desolation ("At last it is over!") but an announcement of triumph ("It is accomplished").

At this moment John says that Jesus bows his head and "handed over the spirit" (NIV "gave up his spirit"). The word "spirit" (*pneuma*) may be anthropomorphic (as in **11:33**; **13:21**), so that Jesus is here giving up his life. This would then compare with **Matthew 27:50** ("he gave up his spirit") and **Luke 23:46** ("Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."). This language is customary in Greek to describe death.

But John uses an unusual verb here, which does not mean "give up." The Greek *paradidomi* means to "hand over," and nowhere in Greek literature is *paradidomi to pneuma* used as a reference to death. Note that John does not refer to a recipient for his spirit, such as the Father (as in Luke). This verb means to hand on something to a successor. The expression may well be John's characteristic double meaning at work, giving the subtle, general impression that the gift of the Spirit (a part of Jesus' promised work) is active at the time of the cross. This coheres with what we learned earlier that the Spirit is linked to "the hour" (**7:39**; **16:7**); indeed it is a fruit of Jesus' death. Thus he bows his head, looking directly at those most loved, those ideal disciples at the foot of the cross—and we recognize them as the recipients of his gift. "The Spirit is not actually given (see **20:22**), but in a symbolic, proleptic fashion—at the shifting of the eras when the moment of sacrifice comes—the movement of God toward humanity is the Spirit." - NIV

Jesus said, "It is finished!" (Gk. *tetelestai*). Actually, the Lord shouted those words with a loud cry (**Matt. 27:50**; **Mark 15:37**). It

was a shout of triumph; the proclamation of a victor. The work of redemption that the Father had given Him was accomplished: sin was atoned for (Heb. 9:12; 10:12;), and Satan was defeated and rendered powerless (Heb. 2:14; cf. 1 Peter 1:18-20; 1 John 3:8). Every requirement of God's righteous law had been satisfied; God's holy wrath against sin had been appeased (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10); every prophecy had been fulfilled. Christ's completion of the work of redemption means that nothing needs to be nor can be added to it. Salvation is not a joint effort of God and man, but is entirely a work of God's grace, appropriated solely by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

At this moment of separation the pain from the nails was nothing to Jesus. Neither was the flayed back and the uneven stake. He may not have even been aware of the physical pain, for there is no experience so painful in the world or universe as separation from God. Jesus cried in the darkness, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#); cf. [Psalm 22:1](#)). No human has ever known such terror. A billion crucifixions cannot equal the pain of the curse Christ experienced for you and me. - **Preaching the Word**

Paul tells us, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" ([1 Cor. 15:3](#)). At this moment he fulfilled [Psalm 69:21](#): "...and gave me vinegar for my thirst." Even the unusual use of a branch of hyssop to extend the sponge to Christ's lips suggests Scriptural parallels, because hyssop was the plant prescribed in [Exodus 12:22](#) to be used in the application of the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorpost so the death angel would pass by.

The body of Jesus was by this time *in extremis*. He could feel the chill of death creeping through his limbs. Did he with great effort pull himself up and whisper an additional plea for relief? No. He *shouted*, "It is finished" and "bowed his head and gave up his spirit" ([John 19:30](#)). - **Preaching the Word**

The body of Jesus was by this time *in extremis*. He could feel the chill of death creeping through his limbs. Did he with great effort pull himself up and whisper an additional plea for relief? No. He *shouted*, "It is finished" and "bowed his head and gave up his spirit" ([John 19:30](#)).

"It is finished" was not a submissive cry but a shout of victory. In the Greek it was only one word, in the Greek perfect tense, meaning, "It is finished and always will be finished!" What had Christ finished? The Law itself (he had completed and fulfilled it). The Old Testament types in the ceremonial law. The Messianic prophecies. But most of all, *he had finished the atonement*.

Lifted up was He to die,
"It is finished!" was his cry;
Now in heav'n exalted high:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

— Philip P. Bliss

His cry of victory came not because he was dying a horrible death, but because "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God" ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)). He became a curse for us and was separated from God so we would never have to know the horror of eternal punishment for sin. Not even the most evil man, including Nero or Hitler, has ever known in this life the horror of being completely cut off from God. His presence was always there, if only through common grace. But Christ suffered total separation from the Father as he bore our penalty, then cried out with a joyous shout, "It is finished."

- Preaching the Word

Because he paid for our sins, we must come to him empty-handed. To come to Christ with some of our own work or goodness in hand is to

commit the infinite insult. We must come like the thief who hung beside him on the cross.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.

- Preaching the Word

BRIDGING the CONTEXTUAL GAP:

Major ideas. If we try to organize the chief themes at work in [19:16b-42](#), it becomes apparent that three major ideas are at work. (1) The subject of Jesus' kingship, which played such an important role in [18:28-19:16a](#), continues here. If Jesus is indeed "the king of the Jews" ([18:19](#)), we should expect to see kingship themes at work in the present section. On the cross, he is "lifted up" (not merely crucified), and after he dies he is buried in a manner highly peculiar for a common criminal.

(2) John's theology of the cross incorporates not simply suggestions of glorification, but also the idea that Jesus is a sacrifice dying on the cross, and we must draw our understanding of this imagery from the season in which he dies, namely, Passover. The presence of genuine Passover motifs in chapter 19 has come under debate in recent years, and occasionally commentaries will note it. But we must be clear that it *is* exegetically reasonable and defensible to see that John has a theology of sacrifice and that salvation and eternal life are dependent on Jesus' death, not merely his revelation of God. This means that John's view of Jesus on the cross coheres with the overall New Testament presentation of Christ's death. In John's thinking, there is no doubt that the "blood of Jesus ... purifies us from all sin" ([1 John 1:7](#)). Thus, we can look confidently at the cross in chapter 19 as a place of redemptive sacrifice.

(3) John also links the cross and the Spirit. Jesus' death is not merely the culmination of his life, nor is his work simply a sacrifice by which his followers may gain life eternal. Jesus' death also opens up new possibilities for spiritual life and renewal. In short, symbolism of the Spirit is at work in the description of Jesus' death, and these deserve close treatment. Christians are prone to see the work of Christ as limited to atonement, but in fact, another feature of his work, another gift from the cross, is his Spirit given in the epochal "hour" as he begins his glorious return to the Father. - NIV

CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE:

THE CROSS OF Christ is *the great sign* we have awaited throughout the entire course of this Gospel. Each of the events recorded in the Book of Signs (chs. 1-12) pointed to another event, a greater event, hallmarked by "the hour." These miracles were "signs" bearing a meaning that exceeded the mere event at hand. Stone pots in Cana, the new temple, living bread in Galilee, Siloam in Jerusalem, Lazarus of Bethany — all were important signs in their own right, but their deeper meaning awaited "the hour," that time when Christ would perform the greatest sign of all, the sign whose historic reality matches its deeper meaning.

In his death, Jesus provides the gift that every other sign promised. The bread of Galilee (ch. 6) pointed to heavenly bread, consumed when Jesus gave his flesh for the life of the world ([6:51](#)). The water of Samaria (ch. 4) or Tabernacles (ch. 7) is truly the Holy Spirit ([4:24](#); [7:39](#)), which must look toward the hour ([4:23](#); [7:39](#)) for distribution. The new temple will only discover its true meaning when Christ has died and been raised to life ([2:21-22](#)). The deeper importance of Lazarus's story is not that one man in a village is now alive, but that *the man* is present who reigns over death and life and whose own death will therefore pose to insurmountable difficulty.

The cross is therefore the great sign, the reality from which every other sign becomes like a shadow, outlining that reality but lacking its complete form. Effects of every other sign will fade. Lazarus remained mortal, the crowds in Galilee would hunger again the next day. But this final sign, this great sign, achieved a work that would never be repeated. The hour brings a work that has eternal consequences.

But since it is a sign, it is still possible for those who live in darkness, who belong to the world, to miss its meaning ([1:5](#)). Jesus is simply a dying man to the high priests. Pilate senses that something huge and important is going on here, but he lacks the moral courage to act on his instincts. But having said that, we should also note that the reality, the truth of this epochal event is so strong that it forces its way to the surface even in these men's lives. Caiaphas cannot help but describe Jesus' death as salvation for the nation ([11:50](#)). Pilate cannot help but describe Jesus as the king of the Jews ([18:39](#)). The light is shining and winning despite the darkness, despite every attempt to suppress its truth. Indeed, this is the hour "of glory" when Scripture is fulfilled ([19:24](#), [28](#), [36-37](#)), Jesus completes what he set out to accomplish ([19:30](#)), and he begins his return to the Father.

The cross and the Spirit. One of the most provocative themes in John's story of the cross centers on his many suggestions that at the time of Jesus' death, the Spirit is at work. In my exegesis I have demonstrated how this motif appears in [19:30](#) and [34](#). At the hour of death, Jesus does not "give up" his spirit as much as he "hands over" his Spirit. In the same manner the water that flows from Jesus' side recalls [7:37-39](#) and the Tabernacles water that Jesus promises will flow from within him. Throughout the Book of Signs water is frequently associated with the gift of the Spirit. In [John 1](#) Jesus' water baptism is supplanted by his being anointed in the Spirit. In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, water and Spirit form a unity bringing new life. In chapter 4 Jesus offers living water to the Samaritan woman, which (we learn later) is water that

symbolizes the Spirit, offered again as living water at Tabernacles in chapter 7. In fact, throughout the Book of Signs water is generally associated with the messianic gift that is to come, a gift that will generally arrive when Jesus is "lifted up" during "the hour."

In Jesus' Farewell Discourse he makes the explicit promise of the Spirit and links its coming with his death and departure. "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor [the Spirit-Paraclete] will not come to you" ([16:7](#)). In other words, the coming of the Spirit is dependent on the departure of Jesus; in some fashion, when Jesus dies, when he begins his departure to the Father, the arrival of the Spirit will be a feature of his gifts. In fact (as we saw in chs. 14 and 16) the identities of Jesus and the Spirit-Paraclete are so closely aligned that they are almost indistinguishable. The promised Spirit will be Jesus' alter-ego, resuming the role of Jesus after his departure.

The result of this connection between Christ and the Spirit—the promises of Christ and the gift of the Spirit—is that, despite our Trinitarian instincts, the Spirit becomes an aspect of the life of Christ in John's Gospel. The Spirit is Christ's Spirit, linked intimately to his life. In John's language, Christians do not receive the Holy Spirit, they have Christ's own Spirit (see [1 John 4:13](#)), given as a gift when his life expires. Thus we see the irony of the source of living water experiencing thirst. Thus we see symbols at work on the cross that at the moment of death, when Jesus expires, the Spirit becomes free. In John's thought Jesus Christ is like a precious vial of perfume, filled with the fragrant Spirit of God. It is a gift he offers throughout his life but cannot genuinely extend until "the hour" when the vial is broken, when the crystal is shattered and the fragrance of its contents fills the world.

The spiritual implications for this are significant. This means that the gift of Christ is not merely a gift of salvation, if by salvation we mean freedom from condemnation and the promise of eternal life. John affirms this and more. He understands that the gift of Christ has to do with

transformation and renewal. Jesus offers *life*, not mere freedom from eternal judgment. Jesus offers *himself*, and the vehicle of this gift is the Spirit, by which he and the Father will indwell the believer ([14:23](#)). Jesus came into the world in order that men and women might become children of God by the power of God ([1:12](#)). And this miracle can only take place as a result of the Spirit of God entering and transforming them. The cross and the Spirit are thus an inseparable unity in this Gospel because the Spirit is an integral feature of Jesus' own life.

All of this anticipates the giving of the Spirit in chapter 20, where John's imagery will be complete. On Easter Sunday Jesus does not send a foreign power to indwell his followers, he breathes on them, giving to them personally and filling them with his own Spirit and life ([20:22](#)).

Any evangelical theology, therefore, that disparages the Spirit, that is critical of so-called charismatic Christians *on theological grounds*, will find itself in sharp disagreement with John. But any charismatic theology that neglects the cross and only celebrates renewal and infilling will likewise find itself at odds with this apostle. For John, the work of Christ embraces both historic sacrifice and the Spirit. - NIV

(1) *Jesus as victor*. Throughout the trial sequence in [18:1-19:16a](#) we learned how John portrays Jesus as the victorious king, knowing more than his captors and controlling the progress of events. Jesus is *not* a victim in this story. The same theme appears in the story of the cross. Jesus carries his own cross and requires no help ([19:17](#)). His opponents are powerless to alter the regal title of his cross. His final cry is significant as well: "It is finished" ([19:30](#)). The word used here can mean "to bring to an end," but it bears the nuance of "to fulfill" or "bring to completion." In [4:34](#) Jesus described his "food" as doing God's will and *completing* his work. In [17:4](#) Jesus uses the same verb again: "I have brought you glory on earth by *completing* the work you gave me to do."

Now on the cross Jesus is finished as he brings to completion his divine tasks.

Why is this important? "It is finished" is our signal that God has succeeded in accomplishing everything he designed to do in the life of his Son. In Jesus Christ God himself was at work demonstrating his love for us, revealing his will for our lives, and bringing about a reconciliation that needs no supplement. *Jesus' victory is the basis of our security.* My confidence in God and the assurance of my salvation cannot be anchored in my religious performance. "It is finished." What was needed to satisfy God ought to satisfy us as well. This is the good news of the gospel.

- NIV Application Commentary

“It” = But notice, though Pilate put over His head the placard that designated His supposed crime—that He made Himself the King of the Jews—actually God saw another placard over that cross. That other placard was unseen by mortal eyes. It is referred to in [Colossians 2:13-17](#): "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

What is the apostle Paul telling us here? Man was guilty before God, violating that holy law which He gave at Sinai, "For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But there upon that cross Jesus is seen taking the law-breaker's place, and God sees, nailed on that cross, those ten ordinances given at Sinai, the law which God gave upon that mount,

the law which was just and good, but which man had violated. Because of the transgression of that law Jesus died. But had He violated it? No! That law was against us because we were the law-breakers, but Jesus upon that cross died under the judgment of that broken law. Because of what He endured when He took my place in judgment, God can now say to me: "You go free," and through faith in His blessed Son I am justified from all things. And so we who believe are

"Free from the law! Oh, happy condition!
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission,
Curs'd by the law and bruised by the fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all."

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His tunic: now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be." They had no idea when they said this, when they gambled for His clothing, when they determined not to tear the tunic in four places that every one should have a part, that they were actually fulfilling a prophetic utterance made a thousand years before in [Psalm 22:18](#); "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." "These things therefore the soldiers did." [Psalm 22](#) is a prophecy of the sufferings of our Saviour on that cross and of the glories that should follow, and when we turn back to it we see it begins with His cry of distress, and it closes with a shout of triumph. It pictures the Saviour suspended on that cross—"I may tell all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." And then in that hour of darkness He cries, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" for with these words the

psalm begins. Then it goes on, "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." It tells of the place He took in lowly grace for our redemption...

So we see Him on that cross, bleeding and dying for our sins. **But as we read on in Psalm 22** we come to the last verse where we get this, "***They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this,***" but in a more literal translation you find it reads, "***They shall declare that it is finished.***" So **the psalm** begins with the cry of distress, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and **ends with the cry of triumph, "It is finished."** - H.A. Ironside Expository Commentary "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." He knew that all things up to that present moment had been accomplished, but there was one scripture yet to be fulfilled. That was found in [Psalm 69:21](#): "They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." That 69th Psalm also portrays Him as the Sufferer upon the cross, and so that that prophecy might not go unfulfilled, Jesus cried, "I thirst." "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." "**It is finished!**" — **three words in our English Bible, only one in the Greek Testament. "Tetelestai!" — that was His cry of triumph.** He had finished the work the Father gave Him to do. He had glorified God to the full in the place where He had been so terribly dishonored, and now because of that finished work God can "be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

And so the message of the gospel that goes out to all men everywhere today is this: "The work that saves is finished! Jesus did it all upon the cross."
- H.A. Ironside

His mission accomplished, the time had come for Christ to surrender His life. Therefore, after "crying out with a loud voice... 'Father, into Your

hands I commit My spirit" ([Luke 23:46](#)), **He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.** Jesus voluntarily chose to surrender His life by a conscious act of His own sovereign will. "No one has taken it away from Me," He declared, "but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" ([10:18](#)). That He still had the strength to shout loudly shows that He was not physically at the point of death. That He died sooner than was normal for someone who had been crucified ([Mark 15:43-45](#)) also shows that He gave up His life of His own will.... No human words, no matter how eloquent, can adequately express the meaning of Christ's death.

- **MacArthur**

It is finished—As if he had said: "I have executed the great designs of the Almighty—I have satisfied the demands of his justice—I have accomplished all that was written in the prophets, and suffered the utmost malice of my enemies; and now the way to the holy of holies is made manifest through my blood." An awful, yet a glorious finish. Through this tragical death God is reconciled to man, and the kingdom of heaven opened to every believing soul.

- **Adam Clarke's Commentary.**

It is finished - My suffering: the purchase of man's redemption.

- **Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.**

[Verse 30.](#) *It is finished.* The sufferings and agonies in redeeming man are over. The work long contemplated, long promised, long expected by prophets and saints, is done. The toils in the ministry, the persecutions and mockeries, and the pangs of the garden and the cross, are ended, and

man is redeemed. What a wonderful declaration was this! How full of consolation to man! And how should this dying declaration of the Saviour reach every heart and affect every soul!

(*) "It is finished" [John 17:4](#)

(*) "gave up the ghost" [Isaiah 53:10,12](#), [Hebrews 2:14,15](#)

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

Verse 30. *It is finished! and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost*—What is finished? The Law is fulfilled as never before, nor since, in His "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross"; Messianic prophecy is accomplished; Redemption is completed; "He hath finished the transgression, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and sealed up the vision and prophecy, and anointed a holy of holies"; He has inaugurated the kingdom of God and given birth to a new world.

- **A Commentary:**
Critical, Experimental & Practical on the Old and New Testaments.

A Work Finished, a Debt Paid in Full

Then came the death of the Son of God: **So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (v. 30).** When Jesus received the sour wine, His thirst had been assuaged, and He said, "It is finished." The Greek word translated as "finished" here is *tetelestai*. It is in a form of the Greek that indicates an action that has been totally completed. It comes from the verb form of the Greek word *telos*, which is a very important word in the history of Greek thought. It is the word that means "end" or "goal."

Jesus was concerned about purpose. The significance of His entire life came down to this moment. When He said, "It is finished," He was saying not just that His life was over but that His mission had been

fulfilled. His purpose in coming to earth and going to the cross was accomplished.

Tetelestai was also sometimes used in the commercial arena in the Greek world. It was stamped on a purchase or written on a receipt, because it meant “paid in full.” Jesus said: “I’ve done it all. I’ve drunk the cup to its dregs. The sin debt of My people has been paid in full.”

With nothing left to do, Jesus “gave up His spirit.” He had said, “I lay down My life that I may take it again” ([10:17b](#)). When His mission was accomplished, when the atonement was complete, Jesus made the decision to die.

- **St. Andrew's Expository Commentary**

It is finished proclaims that all the work the Father had sent him to accomplish (cf. [4:34](#); [9:4](#)) was now completed, particularly his work of bearing the penalty for sins. This means there was no more penalty left to be paid for sins, for all Jesus’ suffering was “finished” (see [Heb. 1:3](#); [9:11-12](#), [25-28](#)). The term **gave up**, which emphasizes the voluntary nature of Jesus’ self-sacrifice (see notes on [John 2:19](#); [10:17](#)), echoes the description of the death of the suffering servant in [Isa. 53:12](#). **His spirit** does not mean the Holy Spirit but Jesus’ own human spirit, which he voluntarily released from his body that it might return to the presence of God the Father (see [Luke 23:43](#), [46](#)). His spirit would remain in heaven with the Father until it returned to his body at his resurrection “on the first day of the week” ([John 20:1](#)).

- **ESV Study Bible,**

[19:30](#) Until this time, a complicated system of sacrifices had atoned for sins. Sin separates people from God, and only through the sacrifice of an animal, a substitute, could people be forgiven and become clean before God. But people sin continually, so frequent

sacrifices were required. Jesus, however, became the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. The word *finished* is the same as "paid in full." Jesus came to *finish* God's work of salvation ([4:34](#); [17:4](#)), to pay the full penalty for our sins. With his death, the complex sacrificial system ended because Jesus took all sin upon himself. Now we can freely approach God because of what Jesus did for us. Those who believe in Jesus' death and resurrection can live eternally with God and escape the penalty that comes from sin.

- Life Application Study Bible.

His Dying Word: [19:30](#)

The dying word wherewith he breathed out his soul ([v. 30](#)): When he had received the vinegar, as much of it as he thought fit, he said, It is finished; and, with that, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. Observe,

1. What he said, and we may suppose him to say it with triumph and exultation, *Tetelestai*- It is finished, a comprehensive word, and a comfortable one.

(1.) It is finished, that is, the malice and enmity of his persecutors had now done their worst; when he had received that last indignity in the vinegar they gave him, he said, "This is the last; I am now going out of their reach, where the wicked cease from troubling."

(2.) It is finished, that is, the counsel and commandment of his Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled; it was a determinate counsel, and he took care to see every iota and tittle of it exactly answered, [Acts 2:23](#). He had said, when he entered upon his sufferings, Father, thy will be done; and now he saith with pleasure, It is done. It was his meat and drink to finish his work ([ch. 4:34](#)), and the meat and drink refreshed him, when they gave him gall and vinegar.

(3.) It is finished, that is, all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were

accomplished and answered. He speaks as if, now that they had given him the vinegar, he could not bethink himself of any word in the Old Testament that was to be fulfilled between him and his death but it had its accomplishment; such as, his being sold for thirty pieces of silver, his hands and feet being pierced, his garments divided, etc.; and now that this is done. It is finished.

(4.) It is finished, that is, the ceremonial law is abolished, and a period put to the obligation of it. The substance is now come, and all the shadows are done away. Just now the veil is rent, the wall of partition is taken down, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, [Ephesians 2:14](#), [15](#). The Mosaic economy is dissolved, to make way for a better hope.

(5.) It is finished, that is, sin is finished, and an end made of transgression, by the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness. It seems to refer to [Daniel 9:24](#). The Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world, and it is done, [Hebrews 9:26](#).

(6.) It is finished, that is, his sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul and those of his body. The storm is over, the worst is past; all his pains and agonies are at an end, and he is just going to paradise, entering upon the joy set before him. Let all that suffer for Christ, and with Christ, comfort themselves with this, that yet a little while and they also shall say, It is finished.

(7.) It is finished, that is, his life was now finished, he was just ready to breathe his last, and now he is no more in this world, ch. [17:11](#). This is like that of blessed Paul ([2 Timothy 4:7](#)), I have finished my course, my race is run, my glass is out, mene, mene-numbered and finished. This we must all come to shortly.

(8.) It is finished, that is, the work of man's redemption and salvation is now completed, at least the hardest part of the undertaking is over; a full satisfaction is made to the justice of God, a fatal blow given to the power of Satan, a fountain of grace opened that shall ever flow, a foundation of peace and happiness laid that shall never fail. Christ had now gone through with his work, and finished it, ch. [17:4](#). For, as for God, his work is perfect; when I begin, saith he, I will also make an end. And, as in

the purchase, so in the application of the redemption, he that has begun a good work will perform it; the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. What he did: He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. He was voluntary in dying; for he was not only the sacrifice, but the priest and the offerer; and the animus offerentis-the mind of the offerer, was all in all in the sacrifice. Christ showed his will in his sufferings, by which will we are sanctified.

(1.) He gave up the ghost. His life was not forcibly extorted from him, but freely resigned. He had said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, thereby expressing the intention of this act. I give up myself as a ransom for many; and, accordingly, he did give up his spirit, paid down the price of pardon and life at his Father's hands. Father, glorify thy name.

(2.) He bowed his head. Those that were crucified, in dying stretched up their heads to gasp for breath, and did not drop their heads till they had breathed their last; but Christ, to show himself active in dying, bowed his head first, composing himself, as it were, to fall asleep. God had laid upon him the iniquity of us all, putting it upon the head of this great sacrifice; and some think that by this bowing of his head he would intimate his sense of the weight upon him. See [Psa. 38:4](#); [Psa. 40:12](#). The bowing of his head shows his submission to his Father's will, and his obedience to death. He accommodated himself to his dying work, as Jacob, who gathered up his feet into the bed, and then yielded up the ghost.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

The drink of vinegar did not fully quench His thirst, but it did enable Him to utter that shout of triumph, in a loud voice, "It is finished!" In the Greek text, it is *tetelestai*; and it means, "It is finished, it stands finished,

and it always will be finished!" While it is true that our Lord's sufferings were now finished, there is much more included in this dramatic word. Many of the Old Testament types and prophecies were now fulfilled, and the once-for-all sacrifice for sin had now been completed.

The word *tetelestai* is unfamiliar to us, but it was used by various people in everyday life in those days. A servant would use it when reporting to his or her master, "I have completed the work assigned to me" (see [John 17:4](#)). When a priest examined an animal sacrifice and found it faultless, this word would apply. Jesus, of course, is the perfect Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. When an artist completed a picture, or a writer a manuscript, he or she might say, "It is finished!" The death of Jesus on the cross "completes the picture" that God had been painting, the story that He had been writing, for centuries. Because of the cross, we understand the ceremonies and prophecies in the Old Testament.

Perhaps the most meaningful meaning of *tetelstia* was that used by the merchants: "The debt is paid in full!" When He gave Himself on the cross, Jesus fully met the righteous demands of a holy law; He paid our debt in full. None of the Old Testament sacrifices could take away sins; their blood only *covered* sin. But the Lamb of God shed His blood, and that blood can *take away* the sins of the world ([John 1:29](#); [Heb. 9:24-28](#)).

There was once a rather eccentric evangelist named Alexander Wooten, who was approached by a flippant young man who asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

"It's too late!" Wooten replied, and went about his work.

The young man became alarmed. "Do you mean that it's too late for me to be saved?" he asked. "Is there nothing I can do?"

"Too late!" said Wooten. "*It's already been done!* The only thing you can do is believe."

The death of Jesus Christ is a major theme in the Gospel of John. It was announced by John the Baptist even before Jesus had officially begun His ministry ([John 1:29, 35-36](#)). Our Lord's first mention is in [John 3:14](#), where the image is certainly that of crucifixion (and see [John 8:28; 12:32](#)). Jesus often spoke of "taking up the cross" ([Matt. 10:38; 16:24](#)). After Peter's confession of faith, Jesus clearly announced that He would be killed ([Matt. 16:21](#)), and later He told the disciples that He would be crucified ([Matt. 20:17-19](#)).

In John's Gospel, you find a number of pictures of our Lord's death: the slaying of the lamb ([John 1:29](#)); the destroying of the temple ([John 2:19](#)); the lifting up of the serpent ([John 3:14](#)); the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep ([John 10:11-18](#)); and the planting of the seed in the ground ([John 12:20-25](#)). These pictures make it clear that Jesus' death was not an accident; it was a divine appointment. He was not murdered in the strictest sense: He willingly gave His life for us. His death was an atonement, not just an example. He actually accomplished the work of redemption on the cross.

- Bible Exposition Commentary

What does the Greek: "tetelestai" mean?

Literally translated the word *tetelestai* means, "It is finished." The word occurs in [John 19:28](#) and 19:30 and these are the only two places in the New Testament where it occurs. In 19:28 it is translated, "After this, when Jesus knew that all things were now *completed*, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, he said, 'I thirst.'" Two verses later, he utters the word himself: "Then when he received the sour wine Jesus said, '*It is finished*,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

The word *tetelestai* was also written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times to show indicating that a bill had been paid in full. The Greek-English lexicon by Moulton and Milligan says this:

“Receipts are often introduced by the phrase [sic] *tetelestai*, usually written in an abbreviated manner...” (p. 630). The connection between receipts and what Christ accomplished would have been quite clear to John’s Greek-speaking readership; it would be unmistakable that Jesus Christ had died to pay for their sins. – www.Bible.org

Viewing Jesus as a sacrifice that covered personal sin was important to John and his followers. Walking in the light means having the blood of Christ as a cleansing for sin ([1 John 1:7](#)). Paul presses this application further. Calling his followers to be righteous, he uses Passover terminology: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)). In other words, it was commonplace among the earliest Christians to look at Jesus as a sacrificial lamb, even a Passover lamb, slain for their benefit.

Thus, as we view Christ dying on the cross, we too at once should reflect on the benefits of his death for our lives. As Judaism viewed the lamb whose blood in the Exodus story saved them from certain death and led to freedom from captivity, so too Jesus' death brings protection and freedom and life. In his most explicit teaching on his death, Jesus speaks of this gift of his life as necessary for salvation ([John 6:51-58](#)). We cannot simply be enlightened by Jesus; we must see ourselves as *saved*, rescued from a crisis as terrible as slavery to the Egyptians. The pathos of the Passover story—its grim tale of slavery and the thrill of its redemption—must be recreated in our hearts if we are to appreciate the depth of what John saw when he witnessed Jesus dying on the cross that Passover season.

Recreating this story for people today requires that we must both dramatically relive the Passover story and Jesus' participation in it as well as generate modern stories that help us reexperience the meaning of costly sacrifice. Books of sermons have these in abundance, and sometimes I fear that they trivialize the depth of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. While many of these stories seem emotionally overcharged, I recently discovered a story that was truly astounding. Albrecht Dürer was the famous artist of the German Renaissance, who lived from 1471-1528 in Nürnberg, Germany. Many Christians will have seen his famous wood cuttings of the horsemen of the Apocalypse. In 1508 Dürer made his famous "Study of Praying Hands," which were modeled on his best friend, Franz Knigstein. These two men were young, poor, aspiring artists who had made a pact. They "drew straws" (or "lots" in that day) and the man who won would go on to art school, supported by the labor of the other. When one artist found fame, he would return and finance the art studies of his friend.

Dürer won. Later when he returned to his friend in Nürnberg, he found him in ill health from hard work, his fingers so disfigured through labor that he could not study art for the rest of his life. His fingers were so twisted and bent he could not even hold a brush. Dürer was filled with sorrow, and once when he saw his friend praying, he was so moved by his sacrifice and piety that he modeled his "Study of Praying Hands" on Franz's hands. The portrait became a testimony to his friend's sacrifice that marked Dürer for the rest of his life.

- NIV Application Commentary

His death was voluntary: He willingly dismissed His spirit ([John 19:30](#); and note [10:17-18](#)). He "gave Himself" ([Gal. 2:20](#)). He offered Himself as a ransom ([Mark 10:45](#)), as a sacrifice to God

([Eph. 5:2](#)), and as a propitiation for sin ([1 John 2:2](#)). In [Luke 9:31](#), His death is called a "decease," which in the Greek is "exodus," suggesting the Passover lamb and the deliverance from bondage. It will take eternity to reveal all that happened when Jesus Christ died on the cross.

- Bible Exposition Commentary



The Atonement of Christ

At the very heart of the Christian system lies the all-important doctrine of the Atonement. The Apostle Paul, himself an advocate of “sound doctrine,” in a condensed statement of what the Christian Church believes, said,

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures ([I Cor. 15:3, 4](#)).

Though the Gospel according to Paul included a sinless and a bodily-resurrected Christ, he gives first place to the fundamental fact that “Christ died for our sins.” In spite of the fact that some religious leaders object vigorously to the Doctrine of the Atonement, that the Death of Jesus Christ was sacrificial and necessary for man’s redemption, we proceed on a sound biblical basis to pursue this great subject.

The word “atonement” in the Authorized Version of the Bible is an Old Testament term. It appears only once in the New Testament ([Romans 5:11](#)) where it is translated “reconciliation” in the Revised Version. It is not entirely fanciful to suggest the idea of *at-one-ment* because the word atonement is used to refer to the atoning death of Christ through which the sinner is reconciled to God, restored to His favor.

To atone for means to make amends. In the Bible atonement is associated with man’s sin. God commanded Israel to set aside one day each year, the tenth day of the seventh month, which He called “the day of atonement” ([Leviticus 16:29-30; 23:27-28](#)). The people were to bring a sin offering, an innocent animal sacrifice “whose blood was brought in to make atonement” ([Leviticus 16:27](#)). God had said, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” ([Leviticus 17:11](#)) “. . . and without shedding of blood is no remission” ([Hebrews 9:22](#)).

In this study we will give thought to the biblical teaching how the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood atones for man’s sin.

Upon entering into a consideration of this majestic theme, it may be well to

remind ourselves that the Death of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary is a historical fact. Some books of fiction about the Death of Christ have come into my hands. They have a tendency to leave the mind in the dangerous state of dreamy unreality and poetic imagination. But “sound doctrine” deals with facts and not fiction. In the New Testament alone, we find almost two hundred references to Christ’s Death. Though many theologians have differed on the meaning of the Cross, the fact of our Lord’s Death has been accepted in the history of the Church. Some theologians are frank to accept the fact of Christ’s Death, and just as frank to say that they have no rationale, no theory, no doctrine of the Atonement.

We believe that men are regenerated, redeemed, reconciled to God, justified, forgiven, adopted, not by the Doctrine of the Atonement, but by the Atonement itself, by the sacrificial and substitutional death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot hope to treat thoroughly so great a subject in this brief study, but simply to state the basic elements of the Atonement so that believers may have a firm foundation for their faith.

The Erroneous Theories of the Atonement

All of the great Doctrines of the Bible have been challenged by the enemies of Historic Christianity. A distinguished University Professor wrote a book entitled, *The Human Life of Jesus*, in which he flatly denies what the Bible teaches about the Atonement. He writes, “I venture to suggest, in disagreement with the interpretation commonly followed, that Jesus could not have meant that sin, however grave, is pardoned in those who believe in Him.” He continues by stating that Jesus looked upon His crucifixion as merely “a dramatic symbol of sacrifice,” and that “the idea of vicarious repentance had not figured in His teaching.” He admits that “the kingdom of heaven is to be bought at a price, but each of us must pay the price himself.” These ideas are merely human and have no Scriptural support whatever.

Another religious leader, famous for his outspoken repudiation of the Historic Christian view of the Atonement, writes, “A father who had to be reconciled

to his children, whose wrath had to be appeased or whose forgiveness could be purchased, is not the Father of Jesus Christ. . . . Certain widely used hymns still perpetuate the theory that God pardons sinners because Christ purchased that pardon by His obedience and suffering. But a forgiveness that is paid for is not forgiveness.”

To the natural man such a view is accepted as reasonable. But having his understanding darkened, the natural man does not comprehend God’s view of the Atonement. These erroneous theories on the subject now under consideration are simply a restatement of older ideas.

The most widely believed of the erroneous theories of the Atonement is “*the moral influence theory*” which was popularized by Henry van Dyke and others. It looks upon the Death of Christ as a dramatic display designed to impress men with a sense of God’s love, and to produce in men a moral impression. It rules out the biblical idea of vicarious sufferings and substitution, and looks upon the Atonement as a mere influence which persuades men to do right. Christ’s work on the Cross is explained to be that of a martyr for a righteous cause, and it is held up as the finest example of self-sacrifice. Christ is merely our example and not our Saviour since His death was not an expiation. There is no need of a sacrifice for sin since the loving God Who dwells in Heaven will not be severe with His creatures here below. The moral influence theory holds that God is the Father of all men, and that He does not hold man accountable for sin.

Let us beware of such a distorted view of Atonement which shuts out the biblical Doctrine of Regeneration and Redemption as well as other characteristic doctrines of Christianity. No amount of feeling caused by thinking upon the sufferings of Christ can enable a guilty sinner to forsake sin and return to God. A debt must be paid for sin, and Christ has paid that debt on the Cross of Calvary.

Dr. Loraine Boettner has said that “the advocates of the moral influence theory are never tired of ridiculing the idea that God must be propitiated. They give no hint of the Scripture doctrine of the subjective effects of sin on the human heart by which it is alienated from God and unable to respond to

any appeal of right motives however powerful. They see no impassable gulf between the holy God and sinful man, and consequently, they see no reason why satisfaction should be made to divine justice.”

Another popular theory of the Atonement is known as “*the governmental theory.*” It was developed by a famous jurist named Hugo Grotius shortly after the turn of the seventeenth century. The governmental theory is approached purely from a legal aspect, and the famous jurist’s legal approach appealed to many. The essence of this theory is that God’s law and government must be upheld. It acknowledges that man is a sinner, but that the loving God who dwells above does not wish to punish sinners, though He cannot allow the dignity and high standard of His law to suffer.

Now there is an element of truth in this theory, namely, that the law is holy, and sin shall not be allowed to go unpunished, and that an “orderly government of the universe can continue only as men do have respect for law.” But according to Grotius, the only reason that Christ died was to show the antagonism of God’s law to sin, and that the punishment which Christ suffered was merely to impress others with the importance of keeping the law. In the final analysis, Christ was punished for sin merely to keep up appearances, to maintain the standard of the law and an orderly government.

The weakness of the governmental theory is in the fact that sinners are not made to see and feel how awful sin is in God’s sight, and that Christ, in His Death, had the sinner’s guilt imputed unto Him. God is represented as punishing an innocent and just person merely to make an impression upon others. This theory would have us believe that “the cross is but a symbol, designed to teach, by way of example, God’s hatred for sin.” This makes the sufferings of our Lord to have a general and impersonal relation to sinners, and that all which Christ purchased was a pardon which is offered indifferently to all men. But the governmental theory is disproved and discredited by the plain teaching of both the Old and New Testaments.

The Explanation of the Atonement

In attempting an explanation of the Atonement, it is important that we know

something of what motivated the death of Christ. The idea that our Lord died a helpless martyr is nowhere taught in the Bible. Those who have no understanding or appreciation of Jesus Christ's work for us, lack understanding also on the subject of the nature and effect of sin in all men. Many Scriptures teach clearly that the Atonement of Christ is an expiation of human sin, so that sin is that which made the Atonement necessary. Christ became incarnate in order that He should die for human sin. Whether or not the Son of God would have become Incarnate if man had not sinned, we do not know, nor do we intend to speculate. It is sufficient for us to know that it was sin which made the Cross a must in the experience of the Son of God.

Notwithstanding the false teaching of Christian Science, the existence of sin in the world is an undeniable fact. The Bible reveals and emphasizes sin's true nature and penalty. Ever since the transgression of Adam, the whole human race has groaned under the awful weight and bitter penalty of sin. The experiences of daily life testify that there is something wrong with man. Now God is not to be blamed for the terrible evil in the world. He simply made man a free agent, and man has abused his privileges.

When Griffith Roberts was Dean of Bangor, he said, "It was better for Adam that his hands were free to take the forbidden fruit, than that he should have been compelled to go about all the days of his life with his hands tied behind his back." Freedom is one of God's great blessings to man, and sin entered into the world when man abused his privilege of freedom.

The problem of evil has engaged the attention of thinking people for a long time. With every war, famine, epidemic of disease, great loss of life, has come the question, "If there is a God of love and mercy, why does He allow so much human suffering?" Let us have no hard thoughts about God in connection with the problem of sin and its accompanying sorrow and suffering. In Holy Scripture Satan is shown to be the cause of evil and its continuance in the earth. The warfare against evil is not with flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the spirit hosts of wickedness in the spirit world ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). The morals and moral judgments of us humans show that man is under the control of an evil power.

All sin is the result of Satan's evil plan and purpose to get men to live and act independently of God. The Devil sinned from the beginning ([I John 3:8](#)), and since he is the god of this world ([II Corinthians 4:3-4](#)), he has held the world system in control. All who disobey God are said to be the children of disobedience in whom Satan works ([Ephesians 2:2](#)). Satan is the greatest hindrance in the church, attacking the servant of the Lord ([I Thessalonians 2:17-18](#)), and limiting the effectiveness of the Word of God ([Mark 4:15](#)). Believers are warned to resist the Devil ([James 4:7](#)), and to exercise great care and caution lest they fall into reproach and the snare of the evil one ([I Timothy 3:6](#)). The Devil controlled Cain when he murdered his brother Abel ([I John 3:12](#)); he tempted David to sin in numbering the children of Israel ([I Chronicles 21:1](#)); he fired the passion of Judas Iscariot when he betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver ([John 13:2, 27](#)); he blinded the mind of Peter to the necessity of the atoning Death of Christ ([Matthew 16:22-23](#)); he sought to shake Paul's faith by inflicting bodily suffering upon the great Apostle ([II Corinthians 12:17](#)). These are but a few examples which show the immense burden of sin and suffering caused by the Devil.

The question of sin and its awful effects compels our thinking if we are to possess an adequate understanding of the Atonement. God has decreed from the beginning that death must follow sin, not only physical death which is the separation of the soul from the body, but also spiritual death, or the eternal separation of the whole man from God ([Genesis 2:16-17](#); cf. [Romans 6:23](#)). Since all men have sinned ([Romans 3:23, 5:12](#)), it follows that all must die because the righteousness of God demands that sin's penalty be paid. Sin is offensive to the holiness of God, so much so, that it excites His holy wrath. Where there is sin, the wrath of God can never be turned away. Several passages of Scripture tell us of God's wrath:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the *wrath of God* abideth on him ([John 3:36](#)). For the *wrath of God* is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ([Rom.1:18](#)).

. . . because of these things cometh the *wrath of God* upon the children of disobedience ([Ephesians 5:6](#)).

The wrath of God is nothing like the uncontrolled passion in men, but rather His holy and just indignation against sin.

Because of two great facts, the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, Atonement is made an absolute necessity if sinners are to be pardoned and brought to God. When we have the true conception of the holiness of God, we will have the true conception of sin, and when we have the correct view of sin, we will have an adequate view of the Atonement. The only reason that men are offended at the preaching of the Cross is because they have no adequate sense of sin and the holiness of our Lord. When a man refuses to face sin, he will find it easy to dispense with what the Bible teaches about the Atoning Death of Christ.

In defining sin, the Westminster Confession says that “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.” This is perhaps the best known of man’s definitions of sin. The Bible says that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” ([Romans 14:23](#)), that is, whatever a man does or thinks which is not an act or a thought proceeding from faith in God and guided by God, is sin. The sin may be committed in ignorance, but it is no less a sin. Sin committed in ignorance may not receive as great a punishment as sin committed willfully and deliberately, nevertheless all sin is punishable and must be punished.

We learn from the Bible that a man may sin in several ways. Let us look at some of them: A man may sin in his thoughts, for “the thought of foolishness is sin” ([Proverbs 24:9](#)).

An high look and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked is sin ([Proverbs 21:4](#)).

A man’s desires, known only to God and himself, may be sinful, for Jesus said, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart ([Matthew 5:28](#)).

When a man has been taught to do good, and he refuses to obey, he sins, for “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” ([James](#)

4:17). But the sin that is greater than all sins is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit is come, “He will reprove the world of sin . . . Of Sin, because they believe not on Me” ([John 16:8-9](#)).

The love and mercy of God are infinite and matchless, still the penalty for sin must be paid. Thus it was, in the eternal past, before the foundation of the world, that God determined and planned that atonement should be provided for His fallen creatures who would be deceived by Satan. If no plan of atonement had been proposed and perpetuated by the Godhead, all would be hopeless for mankind. And so, in the counsels of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it was decreed that One should come and offer Himself as a Divine Substitute in the sinner’s place. This necessitated the Substitute taking upon Himself a human body. The eternal Son of God was that Substitute. And so “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” ([John 1:14](#)). “God was manifest in the flesh” ([I Timothy 3:16](#)). “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” ([II Corinthians 5:19](#)).

While the work of Atonement, which includes the bearing of sin, is the work of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit ([I John 3:16; 4:10; Hebrews 9:14](#)), nevertheless it was the Son who left Heaven’s glory, and “took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross” ([Philippians 2:5-8](#)). There is no explanation of the Atonement apart from the fact that the eternal Son of God, without spot or blemish, Who knew no sin and did not sin, was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him ([II Corinthians 5:21](#)). As His Blood was shed upon the Cross, a merciful and loving God was able to cleanse and pardon guilty sinners, because the Divine Substitute took upon Himself the penalty for sin. God hates and punishes sin, but He loves the sinner, and in order to redeem those whom He loved, “the LORD laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all” ([Isaiah 53:6](#)). There is no satisfactory explanation of the Atonement apart from the fact that Christ came into this world in order that He should die in the sinner’s place. He said,

The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many ([Matthew 20:28](#)).

He foretold His death and fully explained its object. It was an essential part of the Divine plan to justify condemned sinners. Christ was “delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” ([Acts 2:23](#)). Indeed this is the heart of the New Testament.

The Extent of the Atonement

The provision of the Atonement for sin is for all men everywhere. The doctrine of Election has been misunderstood by some to mean that Christ died for a few elect people who had been given to Him by the Father and who were therefore chosen in eternity past to be His people. It is quite true that the Atonement, having been planned and worked out by God Himself, is His own personal property, and that He is absolutely sovereign in the use He chooses to make of it. Furthermore, we recognize that through the Atonement the way is now open for God to forgive and redeem as many as He chooses to call to Himself. It is His divine prerogative to save few, many, or all of the human race as He deems best. God alone is the Savior of men, and we acknowledge also from the Scripture, and from what we have seen in the world, that He does not save all. But, as relates to the extent of the Atonement, it is incorrect to say that Christ died only for those whom God saw fit to save.

I will go on record as one who affirms belief in the absolute sovereignty of God, and that nothing does or can occur except by His will. But belief in the sovereignty of God does not suggest that God acts arbitrarily without good reasons, reasons so good and so weighty, that He could in no case act otherwise than He does. Any view of divine sovereignty that implies arbitrariness on the part of the divine will, is not only contrary to Scripture but is revolting to reason. In His sovereignty God claims the right to dispose of His creatures as He will, but it is unthinkable and unscriptural, to say the least, that divine sovereignty arbitrarily condemns some men and in hard despotism sends them into the lake of fire.

I believe also in God’s foreknowledge, that is, that future events are foreknown to God, and that history will follow that foreknown course of

future events. Since God's foreknowledge is perfect, He knows the destiny of every person from eternity. But this does not in any wise rule out the biblical truth of free agency in man. Foreknowledge is not merely an arbitrary God saying: "I know what I will do." To be sure He does know what He will do, but in the matter of an individual's acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ as Saviour, it is only fair to add that God knows what that individual will do.

Calvin used the truth of God's perfect foreknowledge to set forth the mistaken idea of limited Atonement. He said that "God would have been inconsistent in sending Christ to die for those He positively foreknow would be lost." After Calvin's death, other men wrote on his ideas. One writer, in attempting to illustrate the above quotation from Calvin says, "Even a man does not expect what he knows will not be accomplished. If he knows, for instance, that out of a group of thirty persons who might be invited to a banquet a certain twenty will accept and ten will not, then, even though he may still make his invitation broad enough to include the thirty, he expects only the twenty, and his work of preparation is done only on their behalf. They do not deceive themselves who, admitting God's foreknowledge, say that Christ died for all men, for what is that but to attribute folly to Him whose ways are perfect? To represent God as earnestly striving to do what He knows He will not do is to represent Him as acting foolishly."

But did the writer use a sound illustration ? I don't think so! When God invites all men to be saved, the preparation is the same whether few, many, or all accept. The Atonement was just as necessary for one sinner as it was for one million sinners. If only ten percent of the human race accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour, He did not die in vain. There could be no waste. The *number* who receive or reject Christ has nothing to do with the preparation of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Belief in God's foreknowledge in no wise demands belief in His arbitrary condemnation of certain of His creatures. Such is an extreme view on limited atonement.

Another view that sets forth a way of salvation through Christ is *Universalism*. An extreme view on unlimited atonement is offered by

Universalism, which holds that Christ died for all men and that eventually all men will be saved, if not in this life, then through a future probation. This view has made a strong and successful appeal to the feelings of many, and it is a belief almost as old as Christianity. Universalism says, "We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness." In other words, Universalism teaches the universal fatherhood of God, and the final harmony of all souls with God.

One variety of Universalism holds that this has been made possible through the Death of Christ, and their followers quote [I Corinthians 15:22](#) for their proof text ". . . For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." But they misinterpret the text. The entire fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians has to do with the resurrection of the body, and it is by the power of the living Christ that the bodies of all men will be raised, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting condemnation. And if the Universalist insists upon using the statement, "in Christ shall all be made alive," to mean spiritual life, then he has no right to insist that all will receive spiritual life apart from being "in Christ." If a man is not "in Christ," he must be "in Adam," and only those who are "in Christ" are in the place of life. This leaves all outside who are anti-Christ and who, because of pride, selfishness, lust and indifference have refused to accept Christ.

Or, let us look at the verse from another viewpoint. The whole context is addressed to believers, and all believers who fall asleep in Christ are in Adam from the standpoint of the physical, or else they would not have died. After one becomes a Christian he does not escape physical death which God pronounced upon Adam when he sinned and fell. In the body we are in the man Adam by whom comes death, but by being in Christ by grace, we are assured of the resurrection from that death. In the first case it is by necessity of nature--it is heredity, in the other it is by our own free choice--it is personal.

That there is a sound biblical view on the extent of the Atonement between

these two extreme views seems very clear. The teaching of Scripture regarding the satisfaction and propitiation made through the Death of the Son of God means that He died for all. The provision of the Atonement is for all.

He (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world* ([I John 2: 2](#)).

The message of the Gospel is that Christ died for all.

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for *all* . . . ([I Timothy 2:5-6](#)).

The Atonement is unlimited in scope, available for all. The love of God displayed in Christ on the Cross at Calvary reached out to the whole world, and when God gave His only begotten Son, it was “*that whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life” ([John 3:16](#)). God’s desire is to save all men.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour; Who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ([I Timothy 2:3-4](#)).

Since God’s will and wish is that all men be saved, He has made ample provision for the salvation of all.

The Lord . . . is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance ([II Peter 3:9](#)).

A well-known passage in [Ezekiel 18:32](#) says,

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Here the Lord pleads with men to turn to Him for life. We know that many did not turn, His pleading having gone unheeded. What mockery this language of God would be if they could not turn!

That the Atonement is universal in its offer and provision is clear from the following Scriptures,

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all* men ([Titus 2:11](#)).

Again we must accept this statement on its face value and concede that the grace of God has brought salvation within the reach of all men. The Apostle John sounds the same note when he says,

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world ([I John 4:14](#)).

The writer to the Hebrews says,

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death *for every man* ([Hebrews 2:9](#)).

Scriptures could be multiplied that show the universality of the provision of the Atonement, but these will suffice to make it clear “that He (Christ) died for *all*” ([II Corinthians 5:15](#)).

The opportunity of being born again, of beginning again in this life, is given to all men, for when Christ died as our substitute, universal Atonement was provided. The risen Christ said to His disciples,

Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature* ([Mark 16:15](#)).

The Gospel call to the entire world is a sincere one. Our Lord had a wider outlook than Judaism. It is true that He was sent especially to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, nevertheless He most certainly taught His disciples that they were to be witnesses unto Him “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” ([Acts 1:8](#)), and He was not sending them on a fool’s errand.

The Atonement is *sufficient* for all men, but it is *efficient* only for those who believe! The effectiveness of the Atonement in any one’s life is conditioned by faith. When one refuses to believe, his unbelief does not suggest a non-existence of the provision of salvation. God provided for the salvation of all men entirely apart from, and independent of, faith. Christ died for all men whether all men believe it or not. There is universal provision in the universal offer, and the fault is man’s if it be not universal in point of effect.

The Effects of the Atonement

We are to look now at some of the effects of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as it regards God, and then as it regards man.

SATISFACTION

As it regards God, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ effected *satisfaction*. Before the sinner could enter into God’s holy presence, God had to be satisfied, not arbitrarily, but because His holiness and righteousness demands satisfaction where sin enters in. The doctrine of the vicarious death of Jesus Christ as satisfying the law and justice of God, in the place of guilty and condemned sinners, cannot be overlooked. When one begins to compare the value of the sufferings and death of the Son of God as it pertains to God, and then as it pertains to those who are saved by it, he feels almost at a loss to do so. Yet it is almost unthinkable that the Atonement could mean as much to the sinner as it does to God. The satisfaction that the sinner receives from Christ’s death is meager compared with the satisfaction received by the Father.

The moral law which God gave in the beginning expressed fully the very nature of His being. One look at the law which is holy, just, and good ([Romans 7:12](#)) showed man what the nature of God was like. When man violated the holy law of God, he sinned, thereby contradicting that nature. As a holy God, He hates sin, else He would not be holy. As a just God, He not only rewards righteousness, but punishes sin. The death of Christ provided the adequate punishment for sin which was necessary to satisfy the law and justice of God. Since all sin is primarily against God, He alone needed to be satisfied with the work of the Cross. And He was.

“How could the vicarious suffering and death of Christ make full satisfaction to the Justice of God?” We welcomed this question from a thinking young man. In a commercial or pecuniary debt, it is not so important *who pays*, but *what is paid*. If the debt is a matter of dollars and cents, it matters little, or not at all, who pays it. But Christ in His sufferings and death was not paying a commercial debt. He was paying a penal debt. No finite, fallen creature, an offender against God could ever pay in time or eternity the obligation which he owes. The truth abides that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” and since all have sinned, no sin-laden human being could pay the price for a fellow-being to the satisfaction of God. When a sinner bears his own penalty, he is lost forever. On the other hand, when a sinner accepts Jesus Christ as His Sin-Bearer, he is saved forever. Take note: God was behind the Atonement.

The penalty for sin must be paid by one who is holy if the justice of God is to be satisfied. In any study of the Atonement, the sinlessly perfect and holy character of Jesus Christ is a truth of the first magnitude. The secret of God’s satisfaction lies in the character of the One Who paid the debt for sinners. God was satisfied with the work of the Cross because the One Who died at Calvary was His own beloved Son, described in the following Scriptures as the One Who “did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” ([I Peter 2:22](#)), who was “without sin,” inherited or personal ([Hebrews 4:15](#)), and Who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” ([Hebrews 7:26](#)). Paul testified that He “knew no sin” ([II Corinthians 5:21](#)), while John declared that “in Him is no sin” ([I John 3:5](#)). Jesus was tempted, but in His essential nature He was God, and God cannot sin. Therefore, as the perfect God-Man, the blood He shed has abiding efficacy, and it satisfies the righteous demands of the holiness and justice of God. Indeed God is satisfied!

PROPI TIATION

The value of Christ's death as a vindication of God's righteousness is indicated by the word *propitiation*. **Here we enter** upon an intricate aspect of the doctrine of the Atonement. The word "propitiation" appears in the English Bible three times. The Apostle John uses it twice in his First Epistle. Speaking of Jesus Christ, he writes,

He is the *propitiation* for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world ([I John 2:2](#)).

And again,

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins ([I John 4:10](#)).

The Greek word here is "*hilasmos*," and means "that which propitiates." It signifies expiation. [Numbers 5:8](#) speaks of "the ram of atonement" (propitiation), and again in [Psalm 130:4](#), "There is forgiveness (propitiation) with Thee." Here is the sole ground upon which God shows mercy to guilty sinners. Christ alone, through the shedding of His Blood in His sacrificial and substitutionary Death on the Cross, is the Propitiation, that which expiates or propitiates. He extinguishes the guilt of the sinner by suffering the penalty for sin. Notice that it does not say that His death was the propitiation, but that He himself is the Propitiation. It is the Person of our Lord which gives efficacy to His atoning work.

In [Romans 3:25](#) the Apostle Paul speaks of Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in His Blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Here the Greek word is not "*hilasmos*," meaning "that which propitiates," but "*hilasterion*," which means, "the place of propitiation." The word "*hilasterion*" is used in [Hebrews 9:5](#), where we read: "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat (*hilasterion*, or the place of propitiation)."

“Propitiation” means “mercy seat” in [Hebrews 9:5](#), and we must go back to the Old Testament to see what the mercy seat was typically to the Israelite. The mercy seat was the golden lid or the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood of an innocent victim to atone for the broken Law. The tables of stone on which were written the holy Law were kept in the Ark. The sprinkled blood covered the broken Law and made possible a meeting place between God and the sinner ([Exodus 25:21-22](#); [Leviticus 16:2, 13-14](#)). The mercy seat was made of pure gold ([Exodus 25:17](#)), and covered the whole Ark.

Jesus Christ, the pure Son of God, is the sinner’s Mercy Seat, and His Blood covers all our sin. According to Scripture, therefore, the mercy seat in the Tabernacle was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord fulfilled the type and symbol perfectly. After His death and burial He arose from the grave, ascended into Heaven, and on the ground of His shed Blood made possible a meeting place where the sinner could come to God.

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own Blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us ([Hebrews 9:12](#)).

Christ Himself is the Mercy Seat sprinkled with His own precious Blood.

In our Lord’s propitiatory work there is no thought of God placating Himself or of appeasing His own anger. God’s feeling toward mankind has never changed. There never was a time in man’s history when God did not love him. God always has desired to bless man with salvation and its accompanying peace and joy, but the sin of man placed an obstacle in God’s way, separating the sinner from Himself. It is true that God hates sin and will always hate sin. The Death of Jesus Christ did in no wise change God’s view of sin.

The Death of Christ was a purely legal operation. The Judge took upon Himself the penalty so that the judgment seat becomes the mercy seat. The prayer of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner” ([Luke 18:13](#)), is

literally, “God be *propitious* to me a sinner.” This passage is sometimes misunderstood and misused. This man stood on Old Testament ground before the Death of Christ, and he was actually asking God to offer that one Sacrifice for sin which would put that sin away and thus provide a ground upon which a holy and righteous God could bless him with salvation. Remember, he was not asking God to be generous or lenient with him. He was merely asking God to be propitious, and in making such a request he was justified.

Now we can see plainly that such a prayer need not be uttered today. God has been propitious in Christ. The eternal Son became our Mercy Seat, and to ask God to do what He already has done would be rejecting the Death of Christ. God cannot be lenient with sin, and sinners need not beg mercy from God. God was merciful when He provided for man the Saviour, and man is saved when he believes in and receives the Lord Jesus Christ. God has paid the penalty for sin, and on that basis His mercy is extended to you today.

For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee ([Psalm 86:5](#)).

. . . With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption ([Psalm 130:7](#)).

SUBSTITUTION

In its effect toward mankind, the Death of Christ is looked upon as a *substitution*. Though we have never found the words *substitute* or *substitution* in the Bible, the idea of substitution is clearly seen in the work of Christ upon the Cross. The word *substitution* does not represent all that our Lord accomplished in His Death, but it does indicate that Jesus Christ, as the sinner’s Substitute, bore the awful judgments of God against sin.

We often hear the work of the Cross referred to as the *vicarious* sufferings and death of the Saviour. The word *vicar* refers to an agent or deputy who has been authorized to act in the place of another. Fallen man stands before God owing an obligation which he cannot pay in time or eternity. He needs

an authorized substitute to stand in his place and represent him. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Substitute so that we are benefited by His death in a unique way. The death of the sinless One was substituted for the death of sinners. Stephen died as a martyr for the truth, but in no way does his death benefit us.

The substitutionary aspect of the Atonement was clearly anticipated in the Old Testament. When God chose the harmless, gentle lamb as the principal animal for the sacrifice, He was teaching His people that they were forgiven and spared only because another who was innocent took their place and died in their stead. Furthermore, every sacrificial offering in Old Testament times was an execution of the sentence of the Law upon a substitute for the guilty one, and every such offering pointed forward to the substitutionary death of Christ. We see the type in the case of Abraham and Isaac ([Genesis 22:1-13](#)). It was a test of Abraham's faith. God had told him to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Abraham did as he was told, bound Isaac on the altar and made ready to slay him. God spoke to him and stayed his action. Then Abraham saw in a thicket nearby a ram, which God Himself had provided. Then we are told that "Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of Isaac" ([Genesis 22:13](#)).

Notice the words "in the stead of." The substitute sacrifice that saved Isaac from death is a beautiful foreshadowment of Christ being substituted in death in the stead of the sinner. It illustrates the substitutional element in the redemptive work of Christ. The prophet Isaiah wrote,

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all ([Isaiah 53:4-6](#)).

The New Testament abounds in passages which show that the Lord Jesus Christ took the place of guilty sinners in His death. The following statements which were uttered by our Lord teach us that He anticipated dying as the sinner's substitute. He said,

The Son of man came . . . to give His life a ransom *for* many ([Matthew 20:28](#)).

. . . I lay down my life *for* the sheep ([John 10:15](#)).

. . . The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give *for* the life of the world ([John 6:51](#)).

This is my body which is given *for* you . . . This cup is the new testament in my Blood, which is shed *for* you ([Luke 22:19-20](#)).

In almost all of his writings, the Apostle Paul taught that Christ's Death was substitutional. He wrote,

God . . . hath made Him to be sin *for* us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him ([II Corinthians 5:21](#)).

Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself *for* our sins . . . ([Galatians 1:3-4](#)).

. . . The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself *for* me ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse *for* us . . . ([Galatians 3:13](#)).

. . . Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself *for* us . . . ([Ephesians 5:2](#)).

. . . Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself *for* it ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).

The Apostle Peter said that He (Jesus) “bare our sins in His own body on the tree” ([I Peter 2:24](#)); and that “Christ also hath once suffered *for* sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” ([I Peter 3:18](#)). The legitimate use of these and numerous other passages imply an actual *substitution*.

RECONCILIATION

The Death of our Lord Jesus Christ effected *reconciliation*. The word “reconciliation” can be defined as “that effect of the Death of Christ upon the believing sinner which, through divine power, works in him a thorough change toward God from enmity and aversion to love and trust.” There was never a need for reconciliation before the fall of man, but when the disaster occurred in the Garden of Eden, discord crept in where harmony should have reigned. Man lost his heavenly citizenship and was made to be an alien. Adam’s sin had separated him and his God ([Isaiah 59:2](#)), and what was true of Adam, has in essence become true of all his posterity, so that man needed to be reconciled to God. Keep in mind the fact that the need for reconciliation is on the sinner’s part. Man became an enemy of God; God never became the enemy of man. Man ceased loving God; God never ceased loving man. Now reconciliation can never result until the existing enmity is removed, and since there is no enmity in the heart of God it must be removed from the heart of man. How is such an act accomplished?

Here we are to see the love of God at work. While God loathes man’s sin, His great heart of love yearns for the sinner and moves toward him in an endeavor to effect a reconciliation. Right here we can see a marked difference between human and Divine love. Human love is expressed in [Romans 5:7](#) where we read, “For a good man some would even dare to die.” Human love scarcely ever takes action unless it finds something in its object to compel it to do so. But the love of God is distinct and different from any other kind of love, for “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” ([Romans 5:8](#)), so that, “*when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of His Son*” ([Romans 5:10](#)).

At the Cross man proved to be the enemy of God by his fiendish exhibition of human hatred against God’s Holy Son. Yet it was in that very act that Divine love was moving toward its object, for there “God was in Christ, *reconciling*

the world unto Himself . . .” ([II Corinthians 5:19](#)). When Christ died, God’s attitude toward sin had been dealt with to His satisfaction so that man can be reconciled to Him. When Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He brought to an end the estrangement between God and man. You say, “There are still many enemies of God.” You speak the truth. But God has done His part. Now man must repent and turn to God. To refuse to do so is to reject that reconciliation which was made in Christ. God in Christ comes to man, pleads with him to return, offers to forgive him and to put away all his sins if he will but trust Him. And when the sinner receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he too will say with Paul,

. . . We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (reconciliation) ([Romans 5:11](#)).

Have you received the reconciling work of Christ which He effected by His Death?

In [Colossians 1:20](#) and 21, we read: And having made peace through the Blood of His Cross, by Him to *reconcile* all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He *reconciled*.

In these verses we see a two-fold aspect of reconciliation. Verse 20 tells us that God will reconcile “all things” to Himself, whether those “things” are in earth or in heaven. We are reminded that the whole creation has been affected by sin. God had said, “cursed is the ground” ([Genesis 3:17](#)), and “we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” ([Romans 8:22](#)). *The reconciliation* of “all things” in [Colossians 1:20](#) is the removal of the curse from the earth and the heavens. The cursed earth is the cause of the suffering, sorrow, catastrophes and death which come every day to the peoples of the earth. Indeed the earth needs to be purified. Yes, and the heavens also! Sin began in Heaven, when Lucifer, the son of the morning, rebelled and sought to exalt himself above the throne of God ([Isaiah 14:12-15](#)). Reconciliation to God of all things in earth and Heaven has been provided for in the shed Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ([Hebrews 9:22](#)).

But verse twenty-one of Colossians, chapter one speaks of the reconciliation of all believers to God, “And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He *reconciled*.” The reconciliation of “all things” in verse twenty-one is future. Here we see the glorious work of Christ in behalf of sinners which becomes effective the moment one believes. The believer rejoices that he has been brought back into favor with God and fully restored. We who are Christians were alienated from God and enemies in our minds. We chose our own way which was opposed to God’s, but now through the payment of the penalty by Christ, we have been reconciled to God, “in the body of His flesh through death” ([Colossians 1:22](#)). And because we are reconciled to God, *personal relations* have been settled. In a former lesson in this series on Justification we saw how *judicial relations* between God and man are settled. Here we learn that reconciliation turns the heart of the criminal toward the Judge in love.

Another aspect of the ministry of reconciliation is taught in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians. Let us read the following verses with care,

For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and, hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in His Flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that He might *reconcile* both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby ([Ephesians 2:14-16](#)).

It seems quite clear that the “enmity” spoken of here is not between a holy God and sinful man, but between Jew and Gentile. Under the law it was entirely out of order for a Jew even to eat with a Gentile. The enmity between the two is common knowledge, and it can easily be traced in history. Actually “the middle wall of partition” was the Law by which the Jew was bound.

When Peter came to the house of Cornelius, he expressed the Jewish view on this matter ([Acts 10:28](#)), and afterward his brethren took him to task for eating with Gentiles ([Acts 11:2-3](#)). In the temple of old there was a wall, separating the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Israelites, and upon which was written, “Let no Gentile, let no man of the nations, go beyond this

wall on pain of death.” In Herod’s temple the dividing line was a stone wall about five feet high, and this wall became the “enmity,” the cause of bitter feeling between the Jew and the Gentile. But early in our Lord’s public ministry He spoke to the woman of Samaria, and this in turn resulted in the evangelization of a Gentile city ([John 4:1-39](#)). He went into Galilee to bring light to the Gentiles who were in darkness ([Matthew 4:12-16](#)), and thus fulfilled the prophecy according to Isaiah ([Isaiah 9:2](#)). When He cleansed the temple ([Mark 11:15-17](#)), the Lord Jesus quoted [Isaiah 56:7](#) when God said, “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for *all people*.”

Then He went to the Cross, and, once for all, broke down the wall in His Death when He died for both Jew and Gentile. He did not attempt to improve upon either, but He made possible any number of either becoming “one new man,” reconciling them to each other, and then reconciling both to God “in one body.” How wonderful it all is! Redeemed Jews and Gentiles united through faith in our Lord’s Blood now make one new man. How far reaching are the effects of His Atonement!

REDEMPTION

In our consideration of the effects of our Lord’s Death upon the Cross, no single term in itself as mentioned above could represent His entire saving work. That work is far too extensive to be contemplated in any single phase of it. The theme is so vast that a few ideas could never indicate its fullness. And yet, perhaps no word has been used more to represent the saving work of Christ than the word *redemption*. But we must guard against confining ourselves to this or any other single term lest we restrict the work of the Cross.

Redemption means to buy back something that had been temporarily forfeited. Dr. L. S. Chafer says,

Redemption is an act of God by which He himself pays as a ransom the price of human sin which the outraged holiness and government of God requires. Redemption undertakes the solution of the problem of sin, as reconciliation undertakes the solution of the problem of the sinner, and propitiation undertakes the problem of an offended God. All are infinitely important and

all are requisite to the analysis of the whole doctrine of Christ's *finished work*, a work finished to the point of divine perfection. Though parts of one complete whole, these great themes should never be treated as synonyms.

The biblical idea of redemption means to redeem a thing that is rightfully one's own, but for a time is in the possession of another whose price must be legally met. Like every phase of the great doctrine of salvation, redemption is entirely the work of God Himself. When any man is redeemed, God Himself does it.

The biblical idea of redemption is not confined to the teaching of the New Testament but is found throughout the whole Word of God. Someone once said that the whole Bible *is redempto-centric*. We will have little difficulty in tracing the doctrine of redemption in the Bible if we keep in mind that the terms *ransom* and *redemption* are practically the same in meaning. Wherever you have redemption it is implied that a ransom price has been paid.

The Old Testament doctrine of redemption expresses the thought of setting free by payment of a ransom price. The thing redeemed might be a person or an inheritance. If a man became burdened with debt, and after mortgaging his entire property he still could not satisfy the claims of his creditors, he might mortgage himself, his own strength and ability. Actually he would become a kind of slave to his creditor. But, says God,

After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him ([Leviticus 25:48](#)).

Notice that the redemption must be accomplished by a relative, the next of kin, which idea has led to the meaning of the title *Kinsman-Redeemer*. Boaz became Ruth's kinsman-redeemer ([Ruth 4:4-6](#)), a beautiful type of our Lord Jesus Christ Who came from Heaven to earth that He might be a perfect Kinsman-Redeemer for us. Not only must the kinsman be the next of kin, but he must be able also to pay the price of redemption. Whatever the price, it must be paid by the redeemer ([Leviticus 25:27](#)). Christ alone could pay the price of the sinner's redemption, and this He did. "Christ hath redeemed us" ([Galatians 3:13](#)) with His own "precious Blood" ([I Peter 1:18-19](#)).

In the New Testament, three different Greek words are used to translate redemption, and without an understanding of these words the distinctions which they teach are lost to the reader of the English text:

(1) *Agorazo*, which means to purchase in the market.

(2) *Exagorazo*, which means to purchase out of the market.

(3) *Lutroo*, which means to loosen and set free.

The scene is that of a slave market, and the sinner is pictured as being in slavery, a bond-slave to sin, or as Paul says “sold under sin” ([Romans 7:14](#)). He is dominated by Satan ([Ephesians 2:2](#)), condemned ([John 3:18](#)), sentenced to die, for “the wages of sin is death” ([Romans 6:23](#)). The Son of God became our Kinsman-Redeemer when “He also Himself likewise took part of the same (flesh and blood)” ([Hebrews 2:14](#)), took the place of the sinner-slave, was made a curse for us, and shed His Blood as the ransom-price of our redemption ([Matthew 20:28](#)). When He made the purchase in the market, He paid for every sinner-slave who was in bondage to sin, so that redemption was provided for all. (See [I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23](#); and [II Peter 2:1](#)). This is *agorazo*, the purchasing in the market.

But redemption is more than merely paying the price. After our Kinsman-Redeemer paid for us in the market, then He took us out of the market. He has taken us out of the market so that we shall never again be for sale or exposed to the lot of a slave. Of course He takes out of the market only those who will go with Him, and when the sinner is willing to trust his Redeemer Who paid the ransom price, he is assured of deliverance from the hopelessly enslaved condition of bondage to sin. This goes beyond *agorazo*, the mere payment of the requisite price in the slave market. It takes us out of the market. This is *exagorazo*, the purchasing out of the market. It is used at least four times in the New Testament, twice with reference to the redemption of Jewish believers from the curse of the broken Law ([Galatians 3:13; 4:4-5](#)).

The third Greek word used to translate redemption is *Lutroo*, and it indicates that the redeemed one is “loosened” or “set free.” This word directs our

thinking to the actual liberation. The disciples, on the way to Emmaus, said, “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed (*lutroo*) Israel” ([Luke 24:21](#)), referring, of course, to the deliverance of the Jews from Roman tyranny. The corresponding noun appears in the following two passages where the same subject is in view. Zacharias said, “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed (wrought redemption for) His People” ([Luke 1:68](#)). Anna “Spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” ([Luke 2:38](#)). This is redemption in its fullest meaning, for Jesus Christ did not pay the ransom in order that the sinner’s bondage should be merely transferred from one master to another. It is as Dr. L. S. Chafer has said, “He has purchased with the object in view that the ransomed one may be free. Christ will not hold unwilling slaves in bondage.”

And yet redemption does include a sort of new slavery, for the believer is redeemed, not only “*out of*” the market of sin, but “*unto*” God. Our redemption song is,

. . . Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us *to God* by Thy Blood . . .
([Revelation 5:9](#)).

Notice that we are redeemed “to God.” Now we know that this can mean the future redemption of the body and its ascension into God’s presence. But can it not refer also to the believer’s present separation unto the Lord? Do we not, in a voluntary sense, become bond slaves of Jesus Christ? The Apostle Paul referred to himself as “a servant (bondman) of Jesus Christ . . . separated unto the gospel of God” ([Romans 1:1](#)). Paul was redeemed, not only from his former manner of life, a slave unto sin, but he was redeemed unto God, voluntarily becoming Jesus Christ’s bondman.

This truth is typically set forth in the Old Testament. The seventh year in Israel’s national life was a year of release for the poor and of the Hebrew servant. Read [Exodus 21:1-6](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:16-17](#). If a slave served his master for six years God said that “in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing” ([Exodus 21:2](#)). But he was not forced to go. If the slave loved his new master, he could voluntarily remain as a slave. The voluntary relationship was sealed by the master piercing the slave’s ear through with an

aul. Now the Christian has been set free by the Redeemer, but he has the choice to yield himself to the One who has redeemed him. Our Lord Jesus is the perfect example of a voluntary servant, the description of which is found in [Psalm 40](#),

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened . . . Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God . . . ([Psalm 40:6-8](#)).

This Old Testament portion is quoted in [Hebrews 10:7](#), and it speaks of our Lord as the yielded Servant Who is in every respect the perfect fulfillment of the type. As the yielded Servant, “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” ([Philippians 2:8](#)), that He might redeem us from sin’s awful slavery and death. Now His desire is that we voluntarily yield ourselves to Him.

In the believer’s redemption there is a three-fold experience, *one* of which is already past, the second being in the present, the *third* being yet future.

(1) Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself to redeem us from the *penalty* of sin.

. . . we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ([Ephesians 1:7](#)). (See also [Colossians 1:14](#).)

Notice the words “we *have* redemption.” This is not something that we are seeking after, nor that which we hope to receive, but it is our present possession--“we *have* redemption.” Because all who were under the law failed to keep God’s Law, they were under its curse,

For as many as are the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ([Galatians 3:10](#)).

If any man hoped to be redeemed by the Law, he must be a doer of *all* that the Law involves, for “He is debtor to the whole law” ([Galatians 5:3](#)).

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ([James 2:10](#)).

Now we have not kept the whole Law, and we know it. But our blessed Redeemer fulfilled its every righteous demand, and then suffered and died upon the Cross bearing our curse, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” ([Deuteronomy 21:33](#), [Galatians 3:13](#)). All who seek shelter under His shed Blood are redeemed from the guilt and penalty of sin. Every believer is “justified (declared righteous) freely by His grace through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus” ([Romans 3:24](#)). We may not always feel saved, but “we have redemption.” Some would tell us that we are fallen from grace, but “we have redemption.” The Devil would lead us to believe a lie, but “we have redemption.” The redemption that is in Christ Jesus has settled the sin question, so that we have been delivered from the wrath and righteous judgment of a holy God. Redemption from sin’s penalty is the believer’s present possession.

(2) Look now at the *second* aspect of redemption. The work of the Cross consists of far more than deliverance from the *penalty* of sin, for it is set forth clearly in the Scriptures that the Death of our Lord makes possible also deliverance from the *power* of sin as well. The Apostle Paul wrote,

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might *redeem us* from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ([Titus 2:11-14](#)).

We stress repeatedly the fact that salvation is not of works, for no works of ours could avail for our redemption. In other words, we are not redeemed by our being good or trying to do good, but redemption by the Blood of Jesus Christ does provide for the Christian’s deliverance from the power of sin. We cannot be content to know that we have been delivered from Hell. Christ died to deliver us from things that are unholy. We are saved unto good works

([Ephesians 2:10](#)). This is the practical aspect of our redemption, deliverance from the power of evil in this life.

Two verses of Scripture come to mind, both from the pen of the Apostle Paul, and both introduced by the words, “This is a faithful saying.” The first says that it is a faithful saying, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” ([I Timothy 1:15](#)). The second tells us that it is a faithful saying, “that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” ([Titus 3:8](#)). We have been redeemed from sin’s penalty; we are being delivered daily from sin’s power. May we ever walk close to “Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood” ([Revelation 1:5](#)).

(3) The *third* aspect of redemption looks ahead into the future, extending to the deliverance of the body as well as the soul and spirit. Both body and soul are under the sentence of death, and both need to be redeemed. Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul said,

. . . after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the *redemption* of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory ([Ephesians 1:13, 14](#)).

This passage informs us that God has a purchased possession yet to be redeemed, so that we are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” ([Romans 8:23](#)). For that day we are waiting, watching for the coming of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Who shall change our vile body (or, the body of our humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself ([Philippians 3:20, 21](#)).

In our present physical weakness and infirmity we are looking ahead to the redemption of our bodies, when “we shall be changed” ([I Corinthians 15:52](#)), and “ye shall be like Him” ([I John 3:2](#)). Oh, glorious redemption! Oh, wonderful Redeemer!

- (**Article shared by www.Bible.org**)