

The Achievement at the Cross

Record***

Prayer

Today we are here to remember the death of our saviour, but I cannot tell only half of the story. In most places I have attended the death of our saviour is a somber occasion. While the act of his crucifixion is horrendous, and perhaps the most horrible way to die one could imagine, I find that because I understand the sacrifice, what it has achieved and the purpose my saviour had in coming and dying on that old rugged cross, to be a great victory. It is a victory over the enemy, it is a victory over death.

On Easter, we will celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and it is a wonderful and joyous occasion. It gives us the hope of eternal life. We serve a risen saviour and an awesome God, a new day dawned and a new age was begun when he died and today I want to celebrate what my saviour accomplished by his death.

I want to discuss four terms that we throw around in Christian circles without a proper, or complete at least, understanding of what they mean. So often they are used as synonyms when they are not.

Today I want to talk about the achievement of the Cross from four aspects:

- 1) Propitiation
- 2) Redemption
- 3) Justification
- 4) Reconciliation

These words are more than merely images of salvation; they each speak of a different aspect of the awesome work that Jesus accomplished at the Cross of Golgatha. Did you know that Golgatha means: The Place of the Skull.

Today it is my intention to show how each of these four terms is part of a whole salvation plan.

Let's look at some definitions first:

Propitiation:

Win or regain the favour of God, by doing something that pleases him

Cf. late Middle English (as propitiation): from Latin propitiat- 'made favourable', from the verb propitiare, from propitius 'favourable, gracious'

Redemption:

The action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil

The action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt

The action of buying one's freedom

Justification:

The action of declaring or making righteous in the sight of God

Reconciliation:

The restoration of friendly relations

What does all this mean, and why the definitions?

- When we define Propitiation, we see rituals at a temple to gain the favour of God.
- When we look at Redemption, we see a financial transaction a payment like in a market place
- When we examine Justification, we are thrown into the image of the proceedings inherent with a court of law
- When we consider Reconciliation, we usually have an image of home or family where we experience struggle but yet work it out to be in one accord.

Why I use these four terms:

Why I use Propitiation:

Romans 3:24-25

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²⁴ They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Him as a propitiation^[a] through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.

Footnotes:

- a. *[Romans 3:25](#) Or as a propitiatory sacrifice, or as an offering of atonement, or as a mercy seat; [2Co 5:21](#); [Heb 9:5](#)*

1 John 2:1-2

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

***2** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One. ² He*

Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

As we can see, to propitiation somebody means to appease or pacify his anger. God's Holy wrath and his loving sacrifice of his one and only son Jesus was an initiative to avert his own anger. God could not simply allow sin to go unpunished; it would go against his very nature. God is truth, light, just. God hates sin but it wasn't in wrath he sent his son, it was his redemptive love.

It seems obvious that wrath, anger and propitiation go together, in that propitiation goes hand in hand with the placating of wrath, but if we really examine the intent here and purge the wrath of the ideas unworthy of God, propitiation becomes a sacrifice of Love not of a God who allows his son to be slain to assuage his anger.

This forces us to examine whether the atoning action is God or Mankind's. If we agree that it is God's as indicated that Propitiation is the correct word, if we believe it to be man's then the word should be expiation or our dealing with of sin and guilt. This is a subtle difference, but a significant one of perspective.

Don't be confused expiation is necessary in our walk with God; this is just not the context.

The actual original word used in the bible is "hilaskomai" which means propitiation not expiation. With this in mind, we need to understand three things:

- 1) Sin arouses the wrath of God the Father
 - a. God's anger is way different than ours. We are angered by injured vanity, yet God is angered by evil.
- 2) Who makes the propitiation?
 - a. We alluded to this earlier but in a pagan context it is always human beings who perform some rite, ritual or sacrifice to assuage an angry god.
 - b. The bible tells us that there is nothing that we can do... We cannot compensate for our own sins or turn away God's anger at sin. God took the initiative to bring us back into atonement with him.

Pay attention! This is important to get right...

God does not love us because Christ died for us. Christ died for us because God loves us!

God himself, who in his Holy wrath against our sin must be propitiated, undertook the propitiation himself for us, through the blood of his Son Jesus. God bore his anger in his own self, through his own Son who died for us.

Why I use Redemption:

Redemption means to buy back. It can be either a purchase or a ransom. We were captive to our sin, which made redemption necessary. When we looked at the perspective of propitiation we focused on the wrath of God which was placated by his love at the cross, as we turn now to redemption we see God interceding in the plight of sinners. These slaves to sin are redeemed by the cross.

The Greek words *lytroo* – redeem and *apolytroosis* – redemption are derived from the word *lytron* which means "a ransom or price of release." This was a technical term used at the time of Christ for the purchase of a slave.

In redemption we see that there is a financial transaction, a price paid. Don't see how a financial transaction relates to the cross? I ask you to consider:

Mark 10:45

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.^[a]

Footnotes:

- a. [Mark 10:45](#) Or in the place of many; [Is 53:10-12](#)

The words here are literally: "antilytron hyper pollon" which means "a ransom in place of and for the sake of many"

To really understand this, I ask that you consider that redemption is a synonym for the transaction necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Considering the state we were in: Sin, Decay, Futility and pain we should also consider the blood of Christ, which is the price with which, we have been redeemed.

Consider:

Galatians 3:13

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed.^[a]

Footnotes:

- a. [Galatians 3:13](#) [Dt 21:23](#)

Christ did not pay for our redemption with silver and gold but with his blood. He was the perfect sacrifice, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Here is the part of redemption that so many Christians miss...

Christ's blood describes not just participation in his life but it draws attention to our Redeemer in that the person of the redeemer now has proprietary rights over his purchase.

1 Corinthians 7:23

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²³ *You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.*

Hey! Once we were slaves to sin, now we are slaves to Christ and in HIS service is true freedom. Remember when I said that every choice you make is either one of faith or one of fear? Like that old song says: "Your gonna have to serve somebody, now it might be the devil or it might be the Lord, but your gonna have to serve somebody."

Why I use Justification:

We have seen two perspectives of achievement the Cross at this point. We have seen the perspective of the temple courts (propitiation) and the perspective of the marketplace (redemption). As we delve into Justification we will see the third perspective of the Cross, that of the court of Law. I ask you to consider a point for a second before we proceed: Justification is the opposite of condemnation.

The wrath of God is appeased; then we see our negative selves in the redemption of us from our sin and depravity. It is here we begin to understand the value of our redemption; we begin to recognize what our rescue means to us and how it has been purchased by the high cost of Christ own life blood.

Justification is the counterbalance of redemption. In justification we obtain a righteous standing before God. Despite our sin, Christ's blood paid the price; we are no longer depraved before God, but wrapped up in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are therefore positionally sanctified, because of our relationship with Jesus. He has justified us. We have seen God as Judge and King but he has another aspect... and that is as Father. He has adopted us and reconciled us to himself.

Let's look at an example of Justification:

Luke 18:13-14

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹³ *"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest^[a] and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me^[b]—a sinner!'* ¹⁴ *I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Footnotes:

- a. [Luke 18:13](#) = mourning
- b. [Luke 18:13](#) *Lit God, be propitious to me; = May Your wrath be turned aside by the sacrifice*

We are justified when we come to him humbly and repent and accept what his blood has done for us. Justification means that Christ takes our place and we take his. We are the adopted sons and daughters of the almighty, because of the Cross.

Isaiah 53:11

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹¹ He will see it^[a] out of His anguish,
and He will be satisfied with His knowledge.
My righteous Servant will justify many,
and He will carry their iniquities.

Footnotes:

- a. [Isaiah 53:11](#) *DSS, LXX read see light*

People we cannot be our own saviours, we cannot justify ourselves. Many have tried and all have fallen short, Jesus is the lone way we have to be justified.

John 3:16

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹⁶ "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

We are justified by God on the basis of our faith alone. Faith without works is dead, but works without faith is not enough. We simply do not have the capacity for self-justification before God. Man is justified by God's grace alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

⁸ For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—
⁹ not from works, so that no one can boast.

Justification means that we are forgiven, accepted and right with our God. It is simply that we enjoy the righteous status that he has conferred upon us. It covers us positionally... Sanctification is therefore instantaneous and ongoing. We are righteous before God and in right standing, but we still go through the process whereby the Holy Spirit brings about the likeness of Christ within us. Our justification is the holiness of our status... not necessarily of our character.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹⁸ We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at^[a] the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory;^[b] this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.^[c]

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) Or are reflecting
- b. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) Progressive glorification or sanctification
- c. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) Or from the Spirit of the Lord, or from the Lord, the Spirit

Does this mean we just go on sinning and counting on God's grace?

Romans 6:1

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

The New Life in Christ

6 What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply?

No it means we can now through Christ reach for what we could not achieve in and of ourselves. Romans 3:10 tells us that none of us is righteous.

Romans 6:2-3

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

² Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

2 Corinthians 5:17

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things^[a] have come.

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) Other mss read look, all new things

Our Salvation is comprehensive and Justification is but one aspect of it.

If you want to understand justification, here is the Coles note version:

When our God justifies us sinners, he is not declaring bad people to be good, or saying that they are not sinners, his is declaring them legally righteous. They are

now free from the liability because Jesus has already served our sentence. We are Justified by his blood.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ has justified us, he died and rose again, he now sits at the right hand of God the Father and intercedes for us.

Romans 8:1

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

The Life-Giving Spirit

8 Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus,^[a]

Footnotes:

- a. *Romans 8:1* Other mss add who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit

We are justified and nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Why I use Reconciliation:

We have taken a journey today from the temple, to the slave market and then to the courts of law in our quest to understand the Cross of Christ. Now we will look at reconciliation. To reconcile means to restore a relationship, to renew a friendship. Our original relationship, which was broken with God through sin, has now been restored by Christ. Reconciliation with God is a true beginning, we are once again at one with God the Father. Christ's blood has created a new covenant between us and God almighty. Justification showed us our legal standing before our Judge, Reconciliation is the restoration of our relationship with our Father in our home. It is our aspect of relationship with God as his children. We now once again have access to God once again. When Christ died on the cross the holy of holies that was separated by a curtain a foot thick was ripped in two. Prior to Christ's death the priest would only enter once a year into Gods presence and he wore a rope on his ankle so that if he offended God and died they could drag him out... We now have access to the almighty creator of the universe, God himself, anytime we choose. We can walk in relationship with him all the time. Christ blood bought us that privilege. What is truly amazing is that we did not initiate this... our reconciliation was born in the very heart of God, who in his love for us, gave up his one and only Son that we could be back in right relationship with him. God is the author and finisher of our faith, Christ is the agent of reconciliation. No other substitution was possible, only God was good enough to be our eternal sacrifice only he could buy us back. Only he could reconcile us to himself.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²¹ He made the One who did not know sin to be sin^[a] for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Footnotes:

a. [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) Or be a sin offering

God finished the work of reconciliation for us on the cross. It is a finished work, no more is required. The way has been paved. This does not mean that it is not necessary for sinners to repent and be forgiven from their sins. It means that the path of reconciliation has been established. We still must choose whom we will serve.

Conclusion:

Propitiation shows us God's righteous wrath against our sin, redemption illustrates our captivity to sin, justification points out our guilt, and reconciliation shows our alienation from God. These four things show us clearly our need for the achievements of the Cross, our very need for God.

These images also show us that the initiative was taken by God not man to make things right. He has, in essence, propitiated his own wrath because of his love for us. He has redeemed us from our miserable bondage, because of his love for us. He has justified us and declared us righteous and he has reconciled us to himself. In every instance one thing is plain, Christ is the substitutionary sacrifice for us. His substitution in all these four aspects is the heart of atonement itself.

If you take one thing away today from this message it should be that God loves you and he has gone to great lengths to make you his own. He has sacrificed his very life to free us, to make us his own, to show us how much he loves and values us. On this Good Friday, I humbly ask that you consider that which Jesus has achieved on the cross. Sure salvation is for all but never ever forget that the cross is a personal thing, Jesus came and gave his blood to save you...

Prayer