

Christ's Death Met Man's Need¹

The Roman soldiers crucified Jesus in April of AD 33. But he was not the only one who suffered that same fate. Around that time, the Roman Empire put to death thousands of criminals. Jesus was one of a huge number of people who suffered death by crucifixion.

But Jesus' death on the cross was unlike all the other crucifixions of that time. Jesus' death on the cross was utterly unique. Jesus' death had a meaning and purpose not like anyone else who had the misfortune of ending up on a Roman cross.

By the way, Jesus death by crucifixion is one of the most well-attested historical events from ancient times. Jesus' death is not a legend or a myth; it's historical fact. But what is the meaning or significance of that fact? How does his death have any value for us, who live almost 2000 years later?

The death of Christ on the cross had a spiritual value for those who believe in him. In some way, Jesus' death was beneficial for others. In certain ways, Jesus' sacrificial death is beneficial for all people. In fact, it's beneficial for the entire creation.

Today I'd like to consider four areas of human need that the death of Christ meets. Jesus' death on the cross meets our human need in four distinct ways:

- I. Christ's sacrifice on the cross takes away believers' guilt.
 - A. The Bible tells us that Jesus' death was a sacrifice, an offering to God.

Ephesians 5:2 *"Christ...gave Himself up, ...an offering and a sacrifice to God"*

Hebrews 9:26 *... He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

1 Corinthians 5:7 *"Christ our Passover has been sacrificed."*

Jesus' death was a sacrifice. No one else who died on a Roman cross did it as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus' death was utterly unique.

¹ Much of this based on Rolland McCune's Systematic Theology notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

- B. The death of Christ followed the pattern of Old Testament sacrifice.
- Leviticus 17:11 *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.*
1. OT animal sacrifices provided forgiveness and a restoration to standing in nation of Israel for those OT believers who participated in them.
- Leviticus 4:26–31 ... *the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.*
- Psalm 103:12 *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*
- Isaiah 38:17 ... *You have cast all my sins behind Your back.;*
- Micah 7:19 ... *You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*
- Participating in those animal sacrifices in faith provided actual forgiveness of sins and restoration to a proper relationship with God.
2. Further, OT animal sacrifices pointed ahead to the death of Christ. They were pictures, shadows, and patters that symbolized a final, perfect sacrifice.
- John the Baptist described Jesus as the “lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
- C. Sacrifice deals with guilt. I.e., the only reason to make a sacrifice is that you are guilty of sin.
- a) A guilty person has broken God's law; he's been convicted and found guilty. Those guilty of sin are liable to punishment. The punishment for offending God is death. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
 - b) How does God deal with human guilt? He established a sacrificial system whereby a perfect, sinless life could substitute for the punishment that a guilty human deserved.
 - c) “The shedding of blood” speaks of the violent termination of a life. A sacrificial death is the yielding up of a life as a means of payment.

Hebrews 9:22 *“Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”*

- d) For a guilty sinner to stand before a holy God there must be a sacrificial death as the wages of sin. Substitutionary sacrifice is the yielding up of an innocent life in the place of the guilty sinner.
- D. What about Hebrews 10:4 *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*

1. The OT sacrifices did not grant *final* removal of guilt in God's eyes. These sacrifices had to be repeated over and over because they provided no final, permanent removal of guilt. Final salvation is based on the final, complete, satisfactory atonement of Jesus. OT saints were saved “on credit,” looking forward to Jesus' final payment.

Romans 3:25 *God set forth [Jesus] as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed*

2. Animal sacrifices were valid in the mind of God on the basis of the coming sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 9:15 ... *He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, ...*

3. The sacrifice of Christ provides final and permanent removal of sin.
4. The OT sacrificial system dealt with the problem of sin, but it was only temporary. Those sacrifices could not take away sin permanently.

Heb 7:19 *for the law made nothing perfect; ...*

Hebrews 10:1–4 *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? ... 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*

5. Jesus' sacrifice was final and permanent. It happened only once, and it provided the final atonement/payment for all sin—past, present, and future.

Rom 8:3 *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh*

Hebrews 9:26 *... He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

Hebrews 10:12 *Having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time.*

Jesus' sacrificial death provides for the total and complete removal of guilt.

Who experiences the blessing of having his guilt removed? Does Jesus' sacrifice apply to everybody? While everyone could be saved through Jesus' sacrifice, it applies only to believers. If you are not a Christian, you are still in your guilt and sin. It has not been removed; you remain guilty and liable to God's severe judgment.

Trans: The sacrifice of Christ provides for the removal of our guilt due to our sin. His death for us puts away our sin; he takes it away and purges it, providing forgiveness for those who believe. Jesus' atonement meets the need of our guilt.

- II. Christ's redemption/ransom releases believers from bondage.

Matthew 20:28 *The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.*

Ephesians 1:7 *In Him we have redemption through His blood.*

- A. Redemption is necessary to relieve our bondage or slavery.

1. To redeem means to buy out of slavery. It is deliverance by paying a cost. The solution to the problem of bondage is a payment.
2. In what sense are we in slavery or bondage before getting saved? The Bible mentions several senses in which we are in bondage:
John 8:34 "Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin."
Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law."
2Ti 2:26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.
Titus 3:3 "Enslaved to various lusts and pleasures."

B. Redemption sets us free from bondage.

1. Christ's death is like the payment of a ransom. To ransom someone is to pay a price to release him from bondage. His death was the payment of a ransom.
Matthew 20:28 "To give His life a ransom for many."
1 Timothy 2:6 "Who gave Himself as a ransom for all."
2. Christ's death is a redemption, i.e., a purchase, a buying out of the marketplace.
Romans 3:24 "Being justified...through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."
Ephesians 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood."
Titus 2:14 "That He might redeem us from every lawless deed."
1 Peter 1:18, 19 "You were not redeemed with perishable things, ... but with precious blood of Christ."
Revelation 5:9 ... You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation

Jesus death purchased us out of the slave market of sin. He ransomed us; he paid the price for our release.

Whom does Jesus' death redeem/ransom? Is everybody set free because of Jesus' death? Jesus death could set everyone free, but some people reject this payment; they refuse the ransom. Only believers enjoy this freedom from bondage. Those who reject Christ are still in bondage and slavery to sin.

Trans: Jesus' death paid the purchase price or the ransom payment for our sins. Jesus bought us out of the slave market of sin. Our spiritual bondage/slavery was met by Jesus' satisfactory payment.

III. Christ's atonement propitiated God's wrath against our sin.

1 John 2:2 *"He is the propitiation for our sins."*

A. Propitiation solves the problem of God's wrath against us as sinners. To propitiate means to placate, appease, to satisfy, or turn aside one's anger or wrath.

1. God has wrath against our sin.

Deuteronomy 9:19 *I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. ...*

John 3:18 *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

John 3:36 *"The wrath of God abides on him."*

Romans 1:18 *"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness . . ."*

2. God's wrath is based on his holiness. God's wrath is His holy reaction to those who violate his law. It is the settled opposition of His holiness against evil, His perfect attitude against sin.

And all of us deserve the wrath of God because we have sinned.

B. Jesus' death on the cross propitiated God's wrath.

1. The OT sense of this word means "to wipe away." It refers to appeasing or pacifying wrath. It's often translated as "forgive."

Psalm 78:38 *"But He . . . forgave their iniquity, . . . often He restrained His anger.*

Psalm 79:9 *“Deliver us, and forgive our sins.”*

2. The NT words likewise mean to placate, appease, pacify. The blood of Christ appeased/satisfied God's holy displeasure against our sin.

Hebrews 2:17 *“To make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*

Romans 3:25 *“Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood.”*

1 John 2:2 *“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.”*

1 John 4:10 *God “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

Trans: As sinners, we deserve God's wrath. But Jesus' sacrifice on the cross propitiated/appeased/satisfied God's wrath against our sin. He endured God's wrath on our behalf.

For whom does Christ propitiate God's wrath? Is God appeased regarding the sin of all people? The value of Jesus' death is sufficient to propitiate God's wrath toward anyone, but it applies only to believers. Only believers in Christ experience the propitiation of their sin. God's wrath is turned away only for those who believe in Jesus.

If you don't believe in Jesus, you are still under God's wrath and condemnation. The wrath of God abides on you, and it will do so eternally unless you repent and turn to Christ in faith.

IV. Christ's atonement reconciles us to God.

A. Reconciliation solves the problems of enmity and alienation.

1. Sin produces estrangement, enmity, and hostility between the *offended* God and the *offending* sinner.

Isaiah 59:2 *“Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.”*

Romans 5:10 *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, ...*

Colossians 1:21 *“And... you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind...”*

Ephesians 2:12 *“Separated from Christ, without God.”*

Ephesians 4:18 *“Alienated from the life of God.”*

2. God is hostile and is the enemy of the unsaved sinner. God is at enmity toward everything and everyone that is evil. His demand for holiness causes Him to turn away from sinners.
 3. People often focus on the love and mercy of God, as if those are the only attributes that he has. But the primary and governing characteristic of God is his holiness. God's holiness demands that sin be punished. Those who sin without repentance are under God's wrath.
 4. Further, because of our sinfulness, we are naturally hostile to God. He's against us, and we are against him. There is mutual hostility between God and the unsaved sinner.
- B. Reconciliation removes that hostility and restores peace, harmony, and favor between the sinner and God.
- C. The death of Jesus for our sins brings about this reconciliation. Our sins caused the conflict, but Jesus' death for our sins paid the price and wiped away our sins. Thus, there is no more conflict. We can enjoy a peaceful relationship with God.

Romans 5:10 *“... while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.”*

2 Corinthians 5:18 *“...God ... reconciled us to Himself through Christ.”*

Reconciliation affects those on both sides of the conflict.

God's wrath is appeased; his anger against our sins ends. So God no longer sees us as guilty sinners.

The sinner no longer sees God as a vengeful judge.

The conflict/hostility between the sinner and God is removed. The result is a peaceful relationship.

Is this state of reconciliation true for everyone? Everyone could be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. But sadly, many people have no desire to be reconciled to God. Reconciliation is for believers in Christ; Jesus reconciles those who come to God through him. We must receive this reconciliation by faith in the person and work of Christ.

Romans 5:11 *“Through [Christ] we have now received the reconciliation.”*

2 Corinthians 5:20 ... *we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for us—the atonement—meets our spiritual needs as sinners.

- ✓ His sacrifice takes away our **guilt**. His death deals with the fact that we violated God's law. His death removes our guilt.
- ✓ His redemption releases us from **bondage**. His death meets the need of our spiritual slavery.
- ✓ His atonement propitiates/appeases God's **wrath** against us. His death meets the need of God's anger against us as sinners.
- ✓ His atonement reconciles us to God. His death meets the need of our alienation/**separation** from God.

Guilt, bondage, wrath, and separation—these are the problems that Jesus' death solves.

All of this is true only for those who have “received the atonement.” You have to receive it and apply it to yourself. How? Repentance of sin and faith in Christ. As soon as you repent and believe the Gospel, your guilt is taken away, your enslavement to sin ends and you are set from God's wrath, and you are now at peace with God.

Of course, if you fail to repent and believe, none of these things change; your spiritual needs are not met. You are still guilty for your sins, enslaved to sin, under God's wrath, and separated from God. That is not a good state to be in. 2 Cor 5:20 *Be reconciled to God*

On this Good Friday, we celebrate what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Through his death, our guilt is removed, our enslavement ends, God's wrath is turned aside, and our relationship with God is restored. Believers in Christ receive all of these benefits through the death of Christ. That's why we call the day of Jesus' death Good Friday.