

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 19:18,30

"They crucified Him... He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

We're looking at what the fullness of Jesus' words "It is finished" mean. If we take the definitions of sin (debt, unrighteousness, law-breaking and anger at God), then the first word which deals with sin is the word *Ransom*. Read Mark 10:42-45. Jesus says that He came "to give His life a ransom for many..." The Scriptures more frequently speak of this a *Redemption*, which carries the same idea. We need redemption because we have a debt that we have incurred due to sin. We have run up a tab that we are unable to pay and we need to be redeemed from our sin.

The price of our redemption is the blood of Christ that was poured out on the cross. Peter tells us "You were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot..." (1 Peter 1:18,19). Jesus Christ has become our Redeemer. He has bought us, He has purchased us with His blood, He has paid our debt of sin.

The second word to look at is the word *Propitiation*, which deals with our sin as unrighteousness. This word is most clearly put forward in Romans 3:25 and relates to God's disposition towards unrighteous sinners - which is wrath (read Romans 1:18). Propitiation basically means to make appeasement of someone's anger. God's anger is against sin and that anger needs to be removed or we will be consumed by His fiery judgment. It is in Romans 3:25 that Paul tells us what appeases this anger - it is the blood of Christ - "Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood..."

The third word to look at is the word *Substitution*, which deals with our sin as a breaking of God's Law. This is a common Old Testament picture which we see is the Passover at the Exodus and in the Day of Atonement where the lamb was killed and a scapegoat released.

The prophet Isaiah especially show the nature of Christ's substitution in our place. Seven times Isaiah indicates that Christ took our place in Isaiah 53:4-6 - "borne our grief's... carried our sorrows... wounded for our transgressions... bruised for our iniquities... the chastisement for our peace was upon Him... by His stripes we are healed... laid on Him the iniquity of us all..."

When we come to the New Testament we see it still more: Paul writes that Christ has become a curse for us (Galatians 3:13), Christ became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) and Christ is our Passover, bearing our death (1 Corinthians 5:7). Substitution has been seen as being unfair. People ask, "Is it fair for God to punish someone else for our crimes against the Law?" The answer is that it would be unfair if Jesus Christ was an innocent third party, but He is not. He is God.

John Stott puts it this way: "It is the Judge Himself who in holy love assumed the role of the innocent victim, for in and through the person of His Son He Himself bore the penalty which He Himself inflicted... The substitute for the lawbreakers is none other than the divine Lawmaker Himself."¹

The last word we will look at is *Reconciliation*, which is to deal with our sin as a hatred towards God. Paul writes "For... when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." (Romans 5:10). God has made peace where there was once hatred through the blood of the cross.

So when Jesus then says "It is finished" He is saying that God, through Christ is paying the debt of sin that we owe. God, through Christ is appeasing His own anger against sinners for their unrighteousness. God, through Christ is upholding His own justice by punishing Himself for our sins. God, through Christ is expressing His nature of love and mercy through reconciling us with Himself by the blood of the cross.

TableTalk

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Acts 20:28 on *Redemption*

Read Exodus 12:5-7,13; Leviticus 16:7-9,21,22 on *Substitution*

Read Colossians 1:19,20 on *Reconciliation*

Look at these two verses: Isaiah 45:21; Romans 3:26. What two primary characteristics of God's nature meet together in the cross?

¹The Cross of Christ, John Stott, pg. 159