

### 3: Jesus' death upon the Cross

#### What this session covers:

	Question:	Summary statement:	Key Bible doctrine:
1	"At whom is God angry as Jesus dies?"	On the Cross Jesus was punished by God in our place	Penal-substitution
2	"How can God fairly acquit guilty people?"	On the Cross Jesus bore the sins of those united to Jesus	Union with Christ
3	"How can the Father fairly punish His innocent Son?"	On the Cross God Father, Son (and Spirit) together accomplished salvation	Trinity
4	"Was the Trinity broken as Jesus died?"	On the Cross God the Son was forsaken as a man	Impassibility of God & Chalcedonian Christology
5	"For whom did Jesus die? For everyone without exception?"	On the Cross Jesus died for those whom God has chosen	Effectual or limited atonement

#### Biblereadings: 1 Peter 2:22-25 and Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

#### Introduction: significance and background to the atonement

**Why does this matter?** Oprah Winfrey once said: "Don't make the pathetic mistake of clinging to the old rugged cross." To which we say: "Don't make the still more pathetic mistake of thinking that Oprah has the faintest idea what she's talking about."

Here we're going to see why we're to cling to the cross with all our heart. And be like Charles Spurgeon who once said: "I'd sooner have my tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ."

The **background** to the Atonement is of course the PROBLEM of sin and wrath. The problem will determine the solution. If we water down the problem we'll see no need for the kind of solution the Bible insists is necessary. So, if the problem of sin is *basically human* (ie. it screws up human relationships), then all that needs to happen is that we learn to be nicer to each other. That's the shape that salvation will take. And we'll construct a doctrine of the Cross that fits.

But the *problem is bigger*: total depravity... bound in sin... children of Adam... and *therefore under the wrath of God*. The solution must address this problem.

And because God is holy, he cannot just sweep sin under the carpet. If he is going to forgive, he must do so justly. This is something to stress with our Muslim friends. Theirs is a religion without atonement.

"Islam holds that God can pardon whom He will, and on whatever grounds He pleases. The immeasurable superiority of Christian theology is evidenced by its clear and emphatic demand that the justice and holiness of God must be maintained and that the affront which has been offered to it by human sin shall not go unpunished. The tendency in some modern systems of theology is to merge holiness and love and to assume that God can forgive sin without an atonement. But such an easy going optimism either does not know what the holiness of God involves, or fails utterly to understand the heinous nature of sin." (L. Boettner, *Atonement*, cited in CHBC Core Seminars: The Word of Christ – atonement).

The solution is Christ's saving work on the Cross – and a particular understanding of Christ's work on the cross.

**1. Question: As Jesus dies on the Cross at whom is God angry?**

**Answer: On the Cross Jesus was punished by God in our place**

A **question**: as Jesus dies on the Cross, who is God angry at? It's a good question. (I used to ask it in Sunday school when I taught 10 year olds. The children were surprised by the answer.) It's a question which gets us to the heart of the Gospel.

How do we know God is angry as Jesus dies? The Bible tells us, in Mark 15:33-34. As Jesus hung on the Cross, darkness came over the land for 3 hours. Darkness in the Bible is a sign of God's anger.<sup>1</sup>

But AT WHOM is God angry? The Sunday school children might reply: "he's angry at the people who crucified his Son." (Although you'd hope the well-taught ones might know better!)

Because God the Father is angry at HIS SON, Jesus. That's why in Mark 15:34 he cries out as he does: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." As Jesus dies on the Cross, he is forsaken by God. Cut off, abandoned by God. And – we're going to see – actively punished by God.

***In groups: read Isaiah 53:4-12 and ask of this passage:***

*What is God doing? What is the servant doing? What are we doing?*

**(a) Introducing "penal substitutionary atonement"**

What I've just described has a posh name. It's the doctrine of "**penal substitutionary atonement**." Let me explain what it means, before we go on to see the evidence for it in the Bible.

- "Penal" has to do with punishment. For example, the "penal system" is another name for our prisons.
- "Substitution" has to do with a swap – with people exchanging places. For example, one footballer comes off, another goes on and takes his place.
- "Atonement" sums up the achievement of the Cross. It's an English word that was invented to describe the achievement of the Cross. It is literally made up of "at-one-ment" – bolted together to make one word. God and human beings were enemies. They were not at one. Through Jesus death on the Cross, atonement is achieved.

But how? How is atonement achieved? The answer: through "penal substitution." Hence we're talking about a "penal substitutionary atonement." It's an atonement which is "penal substitutionary." We'll see by the end that atonement could be achieved in no other way. So:

- as he died on the Cross Jesus was punished. That's the "penal" bit.
- it's substitutionary because he was punished FOR US, instead of us.
- It's atonement, because through his penal substitutionary death sinful and hell-deserving people like you and me can be made AT-ONE with God.<sup>2</sup>

Let me give you **an illustration** before we go on. (I wouldn't normally give you an illustration before giving you the Bible's evidence. But in this case I want us to be really clear of the idea before we go on to see it in the Bible).

- if *my hand* represents your life, then let this *book* represent all that God can rightly hold against you: sin, transgression, iniquity. All the ways you have gone astray from God.
- it is a heavy book. Because it carries with it the penalty of death and hell.
- let my *other hand* represent Jesus. As he died upon the Cross, he bore my sin and the wrath of God at my sin, that I may be free from it.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the plague of darkness which God cast over the land of Egypt (Exodus 10:21-29) was the penultimate plague before His destruction of the Egyptian firstborn.

<sup>2</sup> An important related term is "propitiation" which means "to turn aside wrath." It is found in the Bible in Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, 4:10.

## (b) PSA in the Bible

Where's the evidence for this in the Bible? **Isaiah 52-53** is where we'll begin. In our reading at the start of this session, we read from 1 Peter 2 and from Isaiah. Have a look now at **1 Peter 2:22-25**

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Did you notice that the apostle Peter teaches Penal Substitution: v24, "by HIS wounds YOU have been healed." Jesus was wounded... so that we might be healed.

Did you notice too that the apostle Peter quotes from the passage in Isaiah. Peter is talking *in passing* about the atonement – he assumes the doctrine to be true. And as he quotes – in passing – from Isaiah. We learn this: that Isaiah chapters 52 and 53 teach us about what happened on the Cross. We will learn of penal substitution as we read and understand Isaiah's ancient prophecy.

So it's to Isaiah that we go. Please turn it up. Isaiah was a spokesman for God, sent to God's OT people. He prophesied in about 700BC. This passage is one of 5 which speak of a mysterious figure called "God's Servant."<sup>3</sup> We, of course, know that God's obedient servant is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The little section from 52:13 – 53:12 is divided up into 5 sections, each three verses long. And Isaiah has arranged them very deliberately. They're a sandwich – or what boffins would call a "chiasm".

- the first section and the last section mirror each other.
- The second and fourth sections mirror each other.
- And the middle bit is the meat, the heart of this passage, its centre. And it's in the middle section that we learn this: God's servant will die a penal substitutionary death.

Have a look at vv4-6. As I read, I'll emphasise the pronouns – words like "he," "we," "him."

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Can you how these verses speak of "penal substitutionary atonement"?

- Penal: notice the words that speak of punishment:
  - o stricken, smitten, afflicted, pierced, crushed, punishment, wounds,
- Substitution. Notice:
  - o "HE took up OUR infirmities."
  - o HE was "stricken by God."
  - o HE was pierced for OUR transgressions.
  - o The LORD has laid on HIM the iniquity of us all.

And of course it's not just in Isaiah that we learn of PSA. There are many other important **Bible texts on PSA**. We've no time for detail, but let me simply list some other places in God's word where we learn of it.

- Exodus 12: the Passover
- Leviticus 16: the Day of Atonement
- The whole sacrificial system (Leviticus 1-7)
- Isaiah 52:13-53:12
- Mark 10:33-45, 15:33-34
- John 3:14-18, 11:47-52

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<sup>3</sup> There are five so-called "Servant Songs" in Isaiah. They are found in 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12, and 61:1-3.

- Romans 3:21-26, 4:25, 5:8-10, 8:1-3
- Galatians 3:10-13
- 1 Peter 2:21-25, 3:18

Leon Morris put it like this:

“Was there a price to be paid? He paid it. Was there a victory to be won? He won it.  
Was there a penalty to be borne? He bore it. Was there a judgement to be faced? He faced it.

Imagine PSA is NOT true. Or that it's not true for me. Leon Morris again:

“If Christ is NOT my Substitute, I still occupy the place of a condemned sinner. If my sins and my guilt are NOT transferred to him, if he did not take them upon himself, then surely they remain with me. If he did NOT deal with my sins, then I must face their consequences. If my penalty was NOT born by him, it still hangs over me. There is no other possibility.”

Wonderfully it IS true!!!

The artist Rembrandt has a famous painting called “The Raising of the cross.” In it, he doesn't just show the dying Jesus. But he includes himself in the scene – as one of the soldiers responsible for crucifying Jesus. And if you look closely, you can see yourself in the scene as Jesus is killed. He's dying, because of you. He's dying because of me.

- He was pierced for MY transgressions... The Lord has laid on him MY iniquity.
- Each sin of every Christian was like a wound in the heart of the man of sorrows, as God laid them all on him.

So CLING to the Cross! And cling to this doctrine of the Cross.

J.I. Packer writes: “...Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive judgement for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory.” (J.I. Packer, *Celebrating the Saving Work of God*, p105.)

That is some love isn't it! God's love is not small, or wet, or wimpish, or sentimental.

Here's John Murray: “No treatment of the atonement can be properly oriented that does not trace its source to the free and Sovereign love of God.”

It's worth saying that PSA is a controversial doctrine. I want you to have a think:  
Why do some people dislike the doctrine of PSA?

*Feedback / discussion.*

Our first big point is the main thing for this session: the glorious truth of penal substitutionary atonement. The Cross of course achieved many wonderful things: reconciliation, the defeat of Satan, adoption, justification, etc. But all of those things rest on a correct understanding of PSA. Without PSA, the Cross can do nothing for us. Why? Chiefly, because we would still face our greatest problem – a holy and aggrieved God.

So, PSA matters for the good of our souls and for the health of our churches. If you ever find yourself in a church that doesn't believe it you must leave it. If you're in a church that's embarrassed to talk about it then leave it. This is the heart of the Gospel!

Our other points will be shorter. And they pick up on other Bible truths which connect with it.

## **2. Question: How can God fairly acquit guilty people?**

**Answer: On the Cross Jesus bore the sins of those people in union with Him**

A **question**: “How can God fairly acquit guilty people?” The issue here is one of justice. I hope you understand the question: God is holy and in his word he says things like “I will not acquit the guilty” (Exodus 23:7) and “he does not leave the guilty unpunished” (Ex 34:7, Num 14:18, Nahum 1:3).

However wonderful it is that my sins were laid on Jesus... that the punishment I deserved was laid on Jesus. But how is it fair? Suppose I were to murder someone. No-one else can be tried for that crime. It would be utterly unjust if someone else were tried and punished for that crime. Because I should have been tried and punished. But isn't this what PSA does? No. Because On the Cross Jesus bore the sins of those people who are joined in union with Him. Let me explain what that means.

### **(a) God deals with us in covenant relationships**

God does not always deal with us as individuals. He also treats us in those special relationships in which he has placed us. God deals with us in covenant relationships – relationships where we have a covenant head or leader.

For example, in 2 Samuel 21 Israel gets punished for the sin of their king, Saul. That's not unfair, because the king is the head of the people. The people don't have an identity separate from their king.

Jesus is our king and Christians are his people. We read about our relationship with him in verses like 2 Corinthians 5:14, “we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.” He – the king – died for all his people, and so we can say that all have died. What our King does affects all of us.

### **(b) Christians are joined to Christ**

We are specially joined to Christ, in union with him, by faith and by the work of the Holy Spirit. We're going to have a whole session on union with Christ in a few weeks.

But for now let's see that union in a couple of places in the Bible. For example we read in Romans 6:5, “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (ESV).

This is a union quite unlike any other. God does not deal with us *apart from in relationship with our head, Jesus*.

And here's why this union matters for us as we think about the Cross. **This union with Christ permits a double exchange – of both righteousness and wickedness:**

- Christ receives my wickedness... I receive Christ's righteousness.
- He is clothed in our guilt... We are clothed in his righteousness

An illustration of this is found in **human marriage**. Two people are united and – in the Bible's vocabulary – become “one.” Each brings things to the marriage – and exchange them.

- for example: an impoverished bachelor who is £50,000 in debt marries an heiress who brings £40m to the marriage. There's an exchange! She gets the debt. He gets countless riches. Because there is a just and proper exchange within a union.

An important verse for us is 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Union with Christ is described in those two amazing words “in him”. Because we are “in him” and joined to Christ notice what happens:

- sinless Jesus is made to “be sin”. That is truly amazing. That's how powerful this union is.
- and we become the righteousness of God.

### 3. Question: how can the Father fairly punish his innocent Son?

**Answer: On the Cross Father, Son (and Spirit) together accomplished salvation**

A **question**: How can the Father fairly punish His innocent Son? We've seen that Christ clothes himself with our sin and guilt. But how is this fair? After all, Christ genuinely was and is sinless.

#### (a) An accusation

It's fashionable to say that PSA is unjust. Not simply because we shouldn't be acquitted (that's rarely the alleged problem). But because Jesus is sometimes portrayed as a hapless third party who is put-upon by his wrathful Father. This is the argument of Steve Chalke in his (awful) book called "The Lost Message of Jesus." He calls PSA "cosmic child abuse." (Sadly we have to say that you shouldn't read that book with a barge pole).

#### (b) Two insufficient answers

- **"Jesus was a willing victim."** Yes he was willing and his willingness was necessary. But willingness is not enough to justify punishing an innocent third party. My willingness to go to prison for a murder you committed would not make it OK. I would still be the victim of injustice.
- **"It's fair because God does it."**<sup>4</sup> But everything God does must actually *be just*. God is a holy and just God. He cannot compromise his own character. And God doesn't like convicting the innocent.

#### (c) A proper understanding of the holy Trinity

The solution lies in a proper understanding of the Trinity. (This is something of which Steve Chalke seems tragically ignorant.) The key point is this: Father, Son and Spirit always work as one because they are one.

See John 5:19, "Jesus gave them this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.'"<sup>5</sup>

The last sentence is the key - and the original Greek is even stronger than the English translation. Jesus says, "whatever things the Father does, those things the Son does." So it's not just that they do the same *kind* of works. They actually do the *same* works. When God does something, every member of the Trinity does it. Father, Son (and Spirit) do the same works, simultaneously.

Now it's important to note this: Father and Son don't do the same works in the same way as each other. So, the Son is crucified, not the Father and not the Spirit. But the Son is not crucified *without* the Father and without the Spirit. This is what is sometimes called "inseparable operation." It describes the fact that the persons of the Trinity never act without each other.<sup>6</sup>

What about Jesus' death on the Cross? If we ask the NT "who gave Christ to be Crucified?" we get these answers: (i) the Father did - Romans 3:25, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement;" (ii) the Son did - Galatians 1:3-4, Christ "gave himself for our sins."

The work of presenting God the Son to die upon the Cross was accomplished by Father, by Son and – of course – by the Holy Spirit. If we don't understand a bit about God the Trinity, we'll get the Cross badly wrong. The Cross is NOT "cosmic child abuse." Steve Chalke wrongly assumes that the Father and the Son are *entirely separate individuals*, who *work as separate individuals*. He's not understood that they *always work as one*, because the three persons of the Trinity *are one God*. As the Nicene Creed puts it: the Son is consubstantial with the Father. He is forever the "Son of the Father" who dwells in the Father, just as the Father dwells in him. Such that Jesus can say "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

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<sup>4</sup> This is what is called "voluntarism", meaning a pure exercise of God's will apart from any other considerations.

<sup>5</sup> See John 5:19 in context of 5:19-24 and 10:37, 14:10.

<sup>6</sup> This is a conventional Augustinian view based on inseparable operation: (i) The Father lays punishment on the Son. But he does not do so without the Son and Spirit. (ii) The Son bears wrath (in his human nature), but he does not do so without the Father and the Spirit. (iii) The Son is crucified, not the Father nor the Spirit, but the Son is not crucified without the Father and the Spirit.

#### **4. Question: Was the Trinity broken as Jesus died?**

**Answer: On the Cross God the Son was forsaken as a man**

A **question**: “Was the Trinity broken as Jesus died? You can see why we might suppose that is the case. Jesus was fully God yet on the cross he was forsaken by God the Father and died (Psalm 22:1). And we’ve all probably heard talks where the preacher has taught that God the Trinity was broken or torn asunder between the Death and Resurrection of Christ. (I’ve probably *said* that too!).

But the Trinity was not broken. For reasons which we’ll touch on briefly:

##### **(a) The Trinity cannot be broken**

God IS Father, Son and Holy Spirit in permanent and loving communion. If that communion were broken, then God would cease to be God. Remember John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” You cannot tear this union apart.

##### **(b) God the Son is without end and cannot die(1 Tim. 1:17)**

The eternal Son of God took to himself another nature. He was from then on one person with two natures. But Jesus as God was eternal, unchanging, and immortal. Listen to 1 Timothy 1:17 speak about God the Son, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” God the Son is eternal and immortal – he is without end and he cannot die.<sup>7</sup>

##### **(c) We needed a human substitute for human sin**

Remember what we said last week. Sin must be punished in the nature in which it was committed. The Son suffering *as God* would not save us – it would serve no redemptive purpose.

Scripture emphasises that God had to *become man* in order to atone for human sin. For example, the Bible emphasises that Christ’s human body is the place where atonement happens:

1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

Hebrews 10:5, “... a body you have prepared for me.

##### **(d) The eternal Son suffered in his human nature**

This was the Bible summary provided at the council of Chalcedon (451 AD). Remember this from last week?

The eternal Son of God took to himself another nature. He was from then on one person with two natures. Jesus as God was eternal, unchanging, and immortal; listen to 1 Timothy 1:17 speak about God the Son, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” God the Son is eternal and immortal – he is without end and he cannot die.<sup>8</sup>

God *as God* did not suffer or die in Christ. Rather, the eternal Son *as man* suffered and died.<sup>9</sup> We affirm that God died, but that God died according to his human nature. Great is the mystery of our salvation!!

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<sup>7</sup> Other texts on God’s self-existence and eternity: Psalm 90:2, “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” Also, Psalms 90:1-4, 102:25-27, Isa 40:28-31, John 5:26, Acts 17:23-25, Rev 4:10.

<sup>8</sup> Other texts on God’s self-existence and eternity: Psalm 90:2, “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” Also, Psalms 90:1-4, 102:25-27, Isa 40:28-31, John 5:26, Acts 17:23-25, Rev 4:10.

<sup>9</sup> It is NOT that Christ’s human nature suffered. (This is what Nestorianism claimed, namely, that there was an independent existence for the human nature apart from the person). Rather, the person of Christ suffered and died. An illustration of one person with two natures may be found in human beings: humans exist in two ways (though not two natures), body and soul – but both of these are united in one person. So, when I perform an action (eg. hit the desk) is my body or my soul doing it? Answer: both – because I am doing it.

## 5. Question: did Jesus die for every person without exception?

**Answer: on the Cross Jesus died for those whom God has chosen**

A **question**: “For whom did Jesus die? For every single individual without exception?”

Or, let’s put the question another way: what was God’s intention as Jesus died on the Cross? What was the Triune God trying to do? And what did he actually do?

### **(a) Hypothetical universalism or limited atonement?**

One suggestion is what is sometimes called hypothetical universalism.

“Universalism” is the terrible lie which claims that every single person will go to heaven. It’s plain that NOT every single person receives the benefits of Christ’s death. The benefits of Christ’s work on the Cross are not applied to everyone. The Bible does not teach universalism.

But did Jesus nonetheless die for everyone – for every single individual without exception – even if not everyone is saved? You can see why we might think that. What about Bible texts which say things like “we ALL like sheep have gone astray, each of us turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us ALL” (Isa 53:6). From this we might conclude that Jesus’ death on the Cross was for every single individual in the world.

Lots of real, Bible-believing evangelicals do believe that’s the case. They believe in something called hypothetical universalism. This holds that Jesus death on the Cross made salvation *possible* for every individual, but actual only for those who repent and believe.

We’re going to see that the Bible teaches something different. Something a little surprising, but actually much better (which of course you’d expect, if it *is indeed* what the Bible’s teaching)!

I hope to show you that the Bible teaches what is called limited atonement (particular/effective/definite atonement).<sup>10</sup> Let me explain what it means, before we see some Bible evidence for it.

This phrase means that Jesus’ death was intended by God only to save his chosen people (the elect). (We’ll have a session on Predestination later on, if you’ve got questions about that subject.)

“Limited atonement” doesn’t mean that Christ’s death was limited in worth; on the contrary his blood was of infinite value and had God wanted it to save everyone he could have willed it so. However, the Cross was limited in intention. In his wisdom God wanted by the Cross only to save those whom he had chosen to save.

### **(b) Biblical evidence for definite atonement**

#### **(i) Texts stating that “Jesus died for some” (and not for all)**

For example, Jesus died for his sheep and NOT for those who aren’t his sheep.

- John 10:14-15, 26, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep...<sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.”

Also, Jesus died for the church.

- Acts 20:28, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

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<sup>10</sup> For accessible introductions to this doctrine see J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, pp137-139, John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pp59-75, and Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey, Andrew Sach, *Pierced for our Transgressions*, pp271-278.



And, he died for the elect (note how those for whom Jesus died are defined in v33 as “elect”):

- Romans 8:32-34, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life -- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

### **(ii) Texts showing that Jesus’ death actually works salvation**

If we think Jesus died for everyone without exception, then we must assume either that his death was not effective (because not everyone is saved) or else that his death was effective for everyone and that everyone is saved (this is true universalism).

But the Bible is clear that Jesus death actually worked! *If Jesus died for you then you are saved!* For example:

- 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,”
- Romans 5:9, “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”

### **(iii) Texts showing that if Jesus died for you then you will receive all blessings**

If Jesus died for you, then certainly you will live with Christ. This is what we read in Romans 6:5, “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.”

Or in Romans 8:32-34 (see above) God gives ALL THINGS to those for whom Christ died. Every blessing from God comes to those for whom Christ died. Among other things, we are promised that if Christ died for you then he will also intercede for you (while elsewhere Jesus tells us he is not praying for the world, but only for those given him by the Father<sup>11</sup>).

### **(c) Five big problems if Jesus did die for every single individual**

Bible believing Christians will all reject the idea of universalism – the idea that every individual without exception is saved. However, there are many problems and inconsistencies that remain if we argue that Jesus did die for every single individual (while maintaining that not all are actually saved).

#### **(i) Jesus’ death saves no-one**

The Cross is like a very wide bridge over which everyone walks, but it doesn’t actually get you to the other side. Something else is determinative and effective in actually accomplishing salvation.

#### **(ii) God is unjust, punishing the same sins twice**

An unbelievers’ sins are borne by Christ on Calvary AND by the unbeliever again in hell.

#### **(iii) Penal substitution is not true**

If Jesus was punished for all sins – including the sin of rejecting the Gospel – for what will unbelievers be punished in hell? Thus if we reject limited/effectual atonement, then what happened at the cross *cannot* be a penal substitution.

#### **(iv) The will and plan of God fails**

The Lord intends salvation for everyone without exception, but He knows that some will never be saved and He is unable to bring His plan to fruition.

#### **(v) The will of God is divided**

God elects *some* to salvation, but sends his Son to die for *everyone*. Or else the Trinity is divided (ie. the Father elects only *some* to salvation. But Christ dies for *everyone*).

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<sup>11</sup> John 17:9, “I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.”

**(d) What about Bible texts speaking of “all”, “every”, the “world”?**

When we read words like "all" and "everyone" in Scripture we must search the context to find out exactly what is meant. Often they don't mean "all individuals without exception", and often do mean something like "all types of people without distinction" or "all Christians without exception."

For example, what about texts like John 3:16 which states that "God loves the world"? Doesn't "the world" suggest universality? No. The point here is not that "world" stands for everyone who has ever existed without exception. Rather, the "world" in John refers (a) to an evil and God-rejecting place, and (b) the non-Jewish and Gentile world. Thus, the phrase "God loves the world" is meant to make us marvel, not that God loves so *many* people, but that God loves *this kind* of people who do not deserve his love. See John 1:10, 3:19-20, 7:7, 12:19-23. It is crucial to read texts in context is key. Here we need to work out what "world" means in John's gospel without forcing on it our own presuppositions.

**(e) In our evangelism can't we say that "Christ died for you?"**

We have no idea whether or not an unbeliever with whom we're sharing the gospel has been chosen by God. Therefore we'll want to be a bit careful in the words we use.

We'll not necessarily want to tell an unbeliever that "Christ has died for you." Why? (a) it may not be true; (b) it may let the unbeliever think that their sins are paid for automatically and that they're fine with God without repenting and believing the gospel. This, of course, is not the case.

It's better to say: "Christ died for the sins of his people." And to follow that with a challenge: "and are you one of his people." Or to say "Christ died for sinful people *like* you" and "God loves people just as sinful as you and me."

**(f) If God loves everyone surely Jesus must have died for everyone?**

The question about limited/effectual atonement is closely related to two others: (a) "But doesn't God love everyone, saint and sinner alike?" and (b) "Isn't *everyone* a child of God?" If the truth of effectual atonement seems shocking it's often because these kind of questions are quite understandably lurking in our minds.

So it's worth asking "does God love everyone without exception?" In answering this question (as with most questions) it's really important to draw a distinction. We must distinguish different kinds of love.

Psalm 145:13 states that the "Lord is faithful to all his promises, and loving to all that he has made." Thus, in *one respect* God does love everyone and everything in creation: after all, he made everyone and everything, and in his sovereignty will use everyone and everything to bring Him glory, (even if that's by acting in eternal condemnation against someone in hell).

However, in *another respect* God does not love every human being without exception. Why? Because not every human being is a child of God. Unless you are adopted into the family of God by the work of God the Trinity, you are NOT a child of God and so are not loved as a child of God. Rather, you are a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3) and of Satan (John 8:44). Such people God righteously hates. Only once made a child of God do we become objects of the Fatherly love of God. (See also Malachi 1:3 cited in Romans 9:13, God hates those whom has not elected).

Thus it would be true to say of an unbeliever: he is, from one perspective, loved by God as a creature. However, from another perspective, he is hated by God as His enemy. The latter point is worth giving some prominence to, since most folk – both in and out of churches – simply assume that everyone without exception is a child of God and therefore that everyone is loved by God in exactly the same way.

If we find this hard to grasp, just consider: "What would you think of a God who loves Hitler in the same way that he loves Jesus."

**Appendix: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, cited in 1 Peter 2:22-25 and elsewhere in the New Testament)**

See, my servant will act wisely;  
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

<sup>14</sup> Just as there were many who were appalled at him  
—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man  
and his form marred beyond human likeness—

<sup>15</sup> so will he sprinkle many nations,  
and kings will shut their mouths because of him.  
For what they were not told, they will see,  
and what they have not heard, they will understand.

**53:1** Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of  
dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.  
Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,  
yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

<sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away.  
And who can speak of his descendants?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

<sup>9</sup> He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup> After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light *of life* and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**1 Peter 2:22-25**

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.