

Credo Class - Atonement - Part 3

Insufficient views of the atonement:

Last time I taught a Credo Class it was on the wonderful central doctrine of the atonement of Jesus Christ. (summarise what was taught, what is the atonement and what does it mean)

During His whole life on earth,
but especially at the end,
Christ sustained in body and soul
the wrath of God
against the sin of the whole human race.
This He did in order that, by His suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,
He might deliver us,
body and soul, from eternal condemnation,
and gain for us God's grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.

Tonight I have to address some misunderstandings and incorrect understandings and interpretations of the events of Good Friday.

Usually our approach at Calvary Cork is not to refute every possible wrong interpretation of misunderstanding, but we want to just plainly teach the Bible so that when you encounter error you will be able to see it for what it is straight away. But, since the death of Jesus on the cross in our place, for our sins, is the heart of Christianity,
(1 Cor 15:3 "of first importance" "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" - Gal 6:14 "far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.")

any deviation from **that** is not peripheral, but is a tragic aberration from the core of our belief.

Illustration: I have little quirks about my body, my right nostril is bigger than my left nostril, my second toe on my left foot is too long etc but my heart is fine. It works perfectly normal. I hesitate to point out the flaws in other churches or Christian leaders on some of those peripheral issues related to nostrils, toes, bad breath etc if I believe the heart (the core doctrine of classical historic christianity, the gospel) is correct. Yet, if there is a fault in the heart then it needs to be pointed out, and hopefully fixed.

Insufficient view number 1:
The Roman Catholic view of the atonement.

For the Republic of Ireland, we are living in a country that has been deeply shaped and its history has had huge overlaps with the Catholic church. For most people who have ever lived here their understanding of Christianity and Jesus and His gospel has been shaped by the Catholic church's version of it.

There are aspects of Christian belief that we are in 100% agreement with them on.

- Deity of Christ, Trinity, Humanity made in the image of God,

But there are some things that we are in sharp disagreement with them on.

- We believe that salvation is by **grace alone** through **faith alone** in **Christ alone** to the **glory of God alone**

- We have major differences in the way that we understand the sufficiency and authority of Scripture.

- The death of Christ, and its significance and benefits .

While the Catholic church would affirm the biblical accounts that Jesus, the innocent One, went to the cross and suffered in the place of guilty sinners, the dividing line between themselves and the evangelical theology is the sufficiency and duration of that sacrifice.

We affirm that Jesus made a complete payment for the sins of the world upon the cross. His suffering and death upon the cross was enough and sufficient to blot out and cover all of our sins. He bore the wrath of God against sin and He bore it until the end.

Isaiah prophesied that God “Shall see the fruit of the travail of His [Jesus’] soul and be satisfied - Isaiah 53:11

When Jesus knew that He had paid the full penalty for our sin He shouted out “It is finished!” - John 19:30

If Christ had not paid the full penalty, then there still would be condemnation left for us. But, since He has paid the full penalty due to us, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” - Romans 8:1

It stands to reason that Jesus bore all of our judgment upon the cross, because the point came when the punishment *stopped*. Christ’s sufferings came to an end. There is no penalty left to pay. Jesus did not suffer for eternity, Jesus suffered in a time and place, for a set amount of time, now it is over. He offered Himself, and it was a sufficient payment for the sins of the world.

What Jesus endured for those hours was enough, there is no more ongoing suffering that Jesus is going through. No more sacrifice needs to be made.

“Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:25–28, ESV)

The book of Hebrews clearly says that the sufficiency of Christ's death negated the need for additional sacrifices. The biblical word translated *once for all* (Greek *ephapax* in Rom. 6:10; Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:10) is clearly a contrast with the Old Testament yearly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement and declares the complete sufficiency of Christ's death.

This NT emphasis on the completion and finality of Christ’s sacrificial death stands in contrast to the RCC teaching that in the mass there is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ.

[evidence of this claim -]

In the Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacrifice of the Cross the Sacrificial Gift and the Primary Sacrificial Priest are identical; only the nature and mode of the offerings are different...According to the Thomistic view, *in every Mass Christ also performs an actual immediate sacrificial activity*, which however must not be conceived as a totality of many successive acts but as one single uninterrupted sacrificial act of the Transfigured Christ. The purpose of the Sacrifice is the same in the Sacrifice of the Mass as in the Sacrifice of the Cross; primarily the glorification of God, secondly atonement, thanksgiving and appeal.” Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, pg. 408

“The Holy Mass is a true and proper Sacrifice” - Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, pg. 402

“As a propitiatory sacrifice...the sacrifice of the mass effects the remission of sins and the punishment for sins, as a sacrifice of appeal...” pg. 412

John O’Brien’s book “The Faith of Millions” speaks of the supposed power that the ordained Catholic priest has to re-sacrifice Jesus. (read pg. 161 of “The RCC Controversy”)

Historic Deficient views:

1. Ransom Theory

- a. this theory claims that Christ offered himself as a ransom (Mark 10:45). Where it was not clear was in its understanding of exactly to whom the ransom was paid. Many early church fathers viewed the ransom as paid to Satan.
 - i. This view is popularized in the book & film “The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe” Aslan offers himself to the white witch in order to cover the treason of Eustace

2. Moral influence

- a. Christ died to influence mankind toward moral improvement. This theory denies that Christ died to satisfy any principle of divine justice, but teaches instead that His death was designed to **greatly impress mankind with a sense of God's love**, resulting in softening their hearts and leading them to repentance. Thus, the Atonement is not directed towards God with the purpose of maintaining His justice, but towards man with the purpose of persuading him to right action.
 - i. This view is popularized by magnets and sentiments and some worship songs that speak about the cross as ONLY a show of God’s love for us.

“I asked Jesus how much He loved me, He spread out His arms and said I love you this much...and then He died.”

3. Example Theory

- a. Jesus shows us what it is like to remain faithful to God in the midst of suffering and opposition.
- b.

4. Governmental Theory

- a. God made Christ an example of suffering to exhibit to erring man that sin is displeasing to him. God's moral government of the world made it necessary for him to evince his wrath against sin in Christ. Christ died as a token of God's displeasure toward sin
- b. Governmental theory - God punished Christ as a lesson for us to show what happens when we break His laws. He was made an example.

Now, most of these theories do contain some bit of truth, Jesus did offer himself as a ransom for us...we do learn about God’s love for man as we look at the cross....Jesus does demonstrate faithfulness and perseverance for us... the cross does remind us that God rightly judges sin.

But I have called all of these views

Insufficient view number 3:

Various Modern / Liberal / Emergent church views of the atonement.

People today don’t like hearing about hell, or the wrath of God, and penal substitutionary atonement is directly connected with the wrath of God.

Some assaults are - Those of us who hold to penal substitution disregard the life of Jesus that we see in the gospels.

Well, penal substitutionary atonement is the gospels, and secondly the life and mission of Jesus is important because it is building up to what he is doing on the cross.

Another attack is: this is a Euro-Centric oppressive theology. Minorities should reject this because it endorses oppression.

This is instead a great work of God by which He welcomes us into the people of God.

Final pushback - it doesn't emphasise the love of God.

Paul links the love of God and substitutionary atonement in Romans 5:6-11 God's love is shown in the context of Jesus' death for sin.