

Atonement 3
The Sacrifice of the Cross
Philippians 2:1-13

Sermon

Hobart, May 20th, 2012

Devonport, June 16th, 2012

Launceston, May June 17th, 2012

Philippians 2:1-13

¹ Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? ² Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,^{*}
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges^{*};
he took the humble position of a slave^{*}
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,^{*}

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.¹

^{*} Or *Being in the form of God.*

^{*} Greek *he emptied himself.*

^{*} Or *the form of a slave.*

^{*} Some English translations put this phrase in verse 8.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Php 2:1-13). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

I. WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT HOW JESUS' CRUCIFIXION WAS NOT JUST ANOTHER TRAGIC DEATH

A. BUT AS THE SON OF GOD, FULLY HUMAN, AND FULLY DIVINE,

1. Jesus Christ changed the world in all aspects, then, now and forever by reconciling, achieving atonement between God and his creation
2. Bringing us back into a harmonious, fruitful relationship

B. WE SAW THAT THERE ARE THREE PARTICULAR EFFECTS AND BENEFITS TO HIS DEATH

1. Victory
2. Justice
3. Sacrifice

C. FIRSTLY WE LOOKED AT THE VICTORY JESUS WON THROUGH HIS LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION

1. How he took on all we suffer
2. All the pain, the guilt, all the evils and injustices we, our neighbours and all the powers and governmental authorities have inflicted on ourselves and each other
3. And how he won a total victory over them all for us all
 - a) A victory won by love and humiliation, as opposed to violence and raw power

D. LAST TIME WE LOOKED AT HOW JESUS BROUGHT JUSTICE

1. How he fulfilled and continues to fulfil Isaiah 61 and all the prophecies about the Kingdom of God

2. Setting all wrongs right, healing and rescuing the oppressed, forgiving us all and giving us a new reconciled life with God.

a) A new life in which we are led to have new hearts that lead to living and sharing God's justice, his compassion and love with others

3. And how all of this will bring about the fair, just and peaceful world we all long for-- heart by heart and person by person

S.P.S:

E. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT THE "SACRIFICE" ASPECT OF JESUS' SAVING ACTS

1. How Jesus' sacrificed so much in order to save us and bring us into the new life God created us for from the beginning

F. PRAYER

BODY:

II. SACRIFICE

A. GOD DID NOT FIX THE PROBLEMS OF OUR HEARTS AND OUR WORLD BY DIVINE FIAT

1. By just using his power to make it happen

2. God has sacrificed so much to bring about his will on earth

3. He could have made Adam and Eve obey him

a) He could have made a world in which everything automatically did what he wanted

b) But that would have gone against who he is

(1) It would not have allowed us to be free, it would not have allowed us to become like him, free to choose, full of character and internal love and deep compassion and righteousness

(2) We would not be truly like him if we obeyed because we had to, or we were forced or intimidated into it

c) This is the problem we saw with the law

(1) It is an external power that can only state in human language and limited terms what is right and wrong

(2) It cannot make us like God,

(3) That has to be a transformation that we voluntarily, willingly want to engage in

d) God's endeavours through the law were sacrificial

(1) They were incarnational and condescending

4. In other words, God stooped down to our level

a) He used human language to express his will

b) That required a great compromise, a great sacrifice

c) It is like us trying to communicate to a small child who can only understand a few words

(1) We have to humble ourselves, get down and communicate at their level, in ways they can understand

B. SACRIFICE MEANS

1. Giving up something valuable for a cause or someone else

2. Dictionary;

destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else

an act of offering to a deity something precious; *especially*: the killing of a victim on an altar ²

3. In ancient religious practice, people gave sacrifices in order to please their gods, in order to atone for their sins and be on the god's good side again

a) But the God of the Bible is a God of humility, who sacrifices himself for the sake of others

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sacrifice>

b) By becoming one of us he, himself becomes the sacrifice to bring about atonement and reconciliation

III. THE INCARNATION WAS GOD'S ULTIMATE ENDEAVOUR TO COMMUNICATE HIMSELF AND HIS LOVING PLAN TO US ALL

A. GOD BECOMING ONE OF US, PART OF HIS CREATION, WAS AN ENORMOUS AND ASTOUNDING ACT OF SACRIFICE FROM BEGINNING TO END

1. We learn about this in;

Philippians 2

2 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

B. THIS IS THE LIFE OF THE TRINITY

1. The life that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have been sent by the Father to share with us

a) The life of intimate, close, harmonious comforting fellowship

(1) ***Koinonia*, partnership, fellowship, communion, living and sharing life together**

b) Having hearts that are tender and compassionate, seeking justice and fair treatment, seeking to restore and enhance relationships, to love our neighbour as ourselves

² Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.³

2. This implies sacrifice

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Php 2:3-4). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

3. Why would this harmony in the church, this community of members loving one another, living and working together in with one mind and purpose make Paul really happy? (v.2)

a) Paul knew this was God's will, God's ultimate purpose

(1) **It was what he as an apostle was called to communicate and encourage the church to understand and live**

(2) **He knew it was what Jesus came to teach, and why the Holy Spirit was sent**

4. He now goes on to show how Jesus lived this life as one of us

a) Revealing God's nature and his plan to include us all in his life through Jesus and the work of his Spirit

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,*

he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges*;

he took the humble position of a slave*

and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,*

5. It was like God becoming a dog or a rat in order to communicate to dogs or rats

6. It was done with the attitude mothers have in making so many sacrifices for their children, willingly and in love

C. AS PAUL SHOWS, JESUS' WHOLE LIFE WAS A SACRIFICE

* Or *Being in the form of God.*

* Greek *he emptied himself.*

* Or *the form of a slave.*

* Some English translations put this phrase in verse 8.

1. This culminated in the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice to fulfil, finalise and replace all religious sacrifice
2. All endeavours to reconcile ourselves and please God

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

3. Not only did Jesus' win victory over evil and sin, and bring justice, setting things right between us and God,
 - a) Jesus displayed God's sacrificial nature of love, compassion and willingness to do anything, no matter what the cost, in order to bring us back into relationship with himself
 - b) And to lead us in living and sharing his life, including sacrificial love

D. SACRIFICE IN THE OLD COVENANT

1. Involved human's giving up of their best possessions, sacrificing things vital to their well-being, in order to show their repentance for their sins, and devotion to God
 - a) They hoped their sacrifices would be accepted, and they would be forgiven and accepted
2. Hebrews makes clear that the old covenant with its laws, temple and sacrificial system is all made redundant because "it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).
 - a) Hebrews shows how these things were a shadow of Jesus, who was the real, once and for all sacrifice
3. Paul in Philippians shows how Jesus reveals what true sacrifice is all about, what it looks like, and what it accomplishes

E. JESUS'S, GOD IN THE FLESH, DIED AS ONE OF US, AS A CRIMINAL, FOR US

1. He died for you and for me, as you and me

- a) He died, once, and for all
2. He fulfilled and completed and replaced all human endeavour to get right with God
 - a) He fulfilled and completed all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, and all religious rituals
 - b) He made them all redundant and obsolete
 - c) He not only refrained from disobeying any of the Old Covenant laws
 - (1) **He obeyed them all**
 - d) He lived and fulfilled what they intended to bring about in human lives, but could not
3. He did this all **as** you and me, **as all** mankind
 - a) He became the second Adam
 - b) The first righteous, faithful human being
4. He changed human existence, by redeeming it, and giving each and every one of us opportunity to live the new life in unhindered relationship with God
 - a) To be the people we were created to be, honoured and glorified, at God's right hand

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

F. THIS IS WHAT THE ASCENSION, THAT TOOK PLACE JUST BEFORE PENTECOST SIGNIFIES

1. Jesus, the first righteous, faithful human being, who sacrificed himself for us all
2. Being resurrected and ascending as a glorified human to sit at God's right hand

- a) To be the one who is both God and man
 - b) Uniting God and man
 - c) Giving us access to God through him
3. Giving us *koinonia*, fellowship and communion with God
- a) Bringing about *kattalage*; restoration, atonement, reconciliation, our salvation

G. V 12: DISPLAY OUR SALVATION

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.

1. Why does it say we work hard?
 - a) To show the results of our salvation
 - b) We want to capitalise on the freedom, the victory, the relationship with God that is now ours
 - c) Showing God how much we respect him and stand in awe of who he is
2. We work hard, not to get saved, but because we are already saved
 - a) We work hard, not to keep laws or by human effort, or self-discipline (as we saw last time in Colossians 2), and get salvation by our own efforts, but because we appreciate and are enthusiastic to show God our respect for all he has done for us
3. We work hard because of the sacrifice and love that God has expended in his Son to save us
4. We work hard because we are willing and devoted partners with God

¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

- a) Bible Knowledge Commentary;

The verb **works** (v.13) means “energizes” or “provides enablement.” God makes His own both willing and desirous to do His work.⁴

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ’s return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

H. PAUL’S SACRIFICIAL LIFE

¹⁷ But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God,* just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy.
¹⁸ Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

I. SO AS PAUL ADMONISHES THE PHILIPPIANS

1. in great contrast to the individualistic, ungodly, “me-first” mentality of our world,
2. in partnership with Jesus, we are to pour out our lives, our minds and bodies, sacrificially, as an offering to God, fully and completely
3. This is what showing the results of our salvation, our atonement—being like God, living in Christ, sharing the life of God—is all about—being living sacrifices!

CONCLUSION:

A. LET’S SEE IF WE CAN SUM UP OUR THREE DISCUSSIONS OF JESUS’ ATONEMENT

1. Jesus’ won **victory** on the cross,
 - a) not by annihilating one's opponents,

⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (655). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

* Greek *I will rejoice even if I am to be poured out as a liquid offering.*

b) but by suffering through the violence that they do and thus robbing it of evil of its power.

c) Victory here results by overcoming evil with love, not evil with evil.

2. Jesus in his life and death, fulfilled all the prophecies of God bringing **justice** to his people and all the earth.

a) Of dealing with those who perpetrate evil, and rescuing the victims.

(1) **Of healing the sick, and restoring relationships through grace and forgiveness.**

b) At the cross Jesus set right all things

(1) **He didn't do it by punishing and destroying, but by taking on the penalty of sin we all deserved, upon himself. He who was the only one who lived in full dependence upon the Father, and never sinned.**

(2) **The judge took our place in the dock, and took upon himself our judgment. Showing that the concern of God's justice is not punishment but setting things right.**

3. Sacrifice

a) Jesus' atoning acts brought about **victory** and **justice**.

(1) **But they were brought about through great *sacrifice*.**

b) Jesus gave his life in the ultimate religious act

(1) **He voluntarily, in love for us and his Father, gave himself as the once and for all, perfect sacrificial offering**

(2) **He gave and gave sacrificially from his birth through to his death. Always seeking the good of others before himself.**

B. RELATIONSHIP

1. Why did Jesus do all these things?

a) What was the point of his life, death, resurrection and ascension

2. ATONEMENT

a) *Kattalage*... "at-one-ment", reconciliation, setting things right, setting us free from our sin and those of others

b) Reuniting God and humankind, and humans and the creation.

3. Only through condescending, humbling himself to become a human being, one of us, could God accomplish this atonement, this reconciliation

a) Only through the Son of God becoming a human being and remaining forever a human being, could man and God be united

C. SO WE SEE THAT ALL OF JESUS' HUMAN LIFE:

1. His birth, his life, his teaching, his healing, his death and resurrection, and his ascension, and his future return

2. All work together to bring about the ultimate atonement and reconciliation, the new kingdom of justice, righteousness, peace and love

3. Murray Rae; writes that in beholding the death of Christ...

the metaphors of atonement (here, victory, justice and sacrifice) invite us to a new understanding of what victory, justice and sacrifice mean.

In light of the cross **victory is shown to be won, not by annihilating one's opponents, but by suffering through the violence that they do and thus robbing it of its power.**

Victory here means to overcome evil with love.

Or in the metaphor of justice, the cross reveals that **justice is done, not when a suitable punishment has been imposed upon the offender but when the judge takes upon himself the consequences of the offence and thus reconciles the offender to himself.**

Justice, understood in light of the cross, while properly understood still as the means of dealing with offence, is not what we thought it was, or is not the same thing, at least, that we normally see going on in our law courts and prison cells. The judge judged in our place, throws new light on what justice truly is. Its proper concern is not punishment but setting things right...

And finally sacrifice: here the primary referent of the metaphor is a religious context, the ritual means of dealing with sin, but also in this case, the metaphor, when used of Christ's death, invites us to a new way of

understanding how sacrifice accomplishes reconciliation between humanity and God.

[Sacrifice] is not accomplished by heaping our sins upon a scapegoat as a symbol of our own repentance, but rather by God's giving up his own life as the outworking of his love. The redundancy of the old sacrificial system is made clear in Hebrews where it is claimed that it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4). The old meaning of sacrifice has also to be left aside in favour of a new understanding brought about when, through the metaphor, we are invited to apprehend the cross.⁵

D. CLEARLY THEN

1. We learn about the only full and real victory over the problems of life,
2. The only true and complete justice, and about what sacrifice really is
 - a) Through Jesus' incarnation, particularly through his death on the cross

E. LET'S CONTINUE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THIS ALL MEANS FOR OUR LIVES AND THAT OF ALL HUMANKIND, NOW AND FOREVER!

⁵ Murray Rae, 'The Travail of God', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2003, Vol 5, pp. 50-51.