

TTS Foundations 2023/24: **[S11] "For Our Sake" (P3/5)**

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[1] How Did the Cross Save Us? – Introduction

[1A] The Danger of Familiarity

- **Before we begin, we must be aware of a clear danger here.**
 - More so than in any other TTS session, this will probably feel like well-trodden territory.
 - (Like I'm teaching you how to suck eggs!)
- **In many respects, this is understandable.**
 - Not only are there *many* passages to which we could refer.
 - ALSO – the Evangelical trad tends to be strong here.
 - Yes, Evangelicalism is a bit hard to define nowadays...
 - BUT – re: Bebbington's summary (or 'quadrilateral definition') of Evangelicalism [1989].
 - Biblicism / Conversionism / Activism / and **Crucicentricism** – a focus on the Cross.

[1B] The Difficulty of Precision

- **The danger is not ignorance – but complacency.**
 - I.e. 'Oh yeah, I know all about the Cross, that's Sunday School stuff'.
 - BUT – my suspicion?
 - Most Evangelicals would find precision difficult.

To be good theologians, we must be *disciples*.

And to be 'disciples' requires us to be *disciplined*.

AND THUS – we must be rigorous about all of our beliefs.

NOT JUST those we find tricky or controversial.

We therefore start with a sure baseline. (A control sample!)

LOOK: 2 Cor 5:19 – God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

LOOK: 2 Cor 5:15 – AND *somehow*, the death of Christ achieved this.

(Re: "*For our sake* he was crucified under Pontius Pilate")

[2] How Did the Cross Save Us? – An Ancient Response

[2A] Church History and the Significance of the Cross

- **As we said last time – the Cross of Christ isn't a theory.**
 - It was a *real* event in human history, with a *real* effect.
 - Nevertheless, if this event somehow procured our salvation, we *must* come to terms with it – understand its significance.
- **DISCUSS:** imagine you've been asked to 'explain' the Cross.
 - How did Christ's death bring about salvation?
 - Be as precise as possible.
- **Whether we're aware of it or not, we are indebted to God's people here.**
 - All throughout Church history, we see believers reckoning with this event – getting to grips with the Cross.
 - Many of us assume their answers without realising.
 - Some reject their answers without good reason.
 - IN WHAT FOLLOWS – we will examine how Church history has accounted for the Cross.

[2B] Introducing the Christus Victor Model

- **Very quickly after the apostles, the ancient Christians developed a specific account of the cross.**
 - One attentive to a particular kind of Scriptural language.
 - (NOTE: not the only ancient response, but a dominant one.)
 - **LOOK:** Mark 10:45 / 1 Tim 2:5-7 / 1 Pet 1:18-19 / Rev 5:9
 - **DISCUSS:** What do you think this involves?
- **This ancient Christian account of the Cross focused on Christ having ransomed us by his death on the Cross.**
 - We touched on this a little in S9:
 - "*Salvation is like...*" – buying slaves out of helplessness, re: Exodus etc.
 - Immediately, we might start asking some important Qs.
 - E.g. How were we ransomed in the first place?
 - E.g. What (or who) are we ransomed from?
- **How did the ancient Christians answer these questions?**
 - **LOOK:** Col 2:13-15 / 1 John 3:8
 - KEY: Christ saved us by rescuing us from Satan.
 - The Fall sold humanity into Satanic bondage.
 - "*He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son*" [Col 1:13]

[3C] Irenaeus & Rufinus on the Christus Victor Model

- **This is called the *Christus Victor* model.**
 - It's one of the oldest accounts of Christ's work on the Cross.
 - "Thus the powerful Word and true human being, ransoming us by his own blood in a rational manner, gave himself as a ransom for those who have been led into captivity. The apostate one unjustly held sway over us, and though we were by nature the possession

of Almighty God, we had been alienated from our proper nature, making us instead his disciples. Therefore the Almighty Word of God, who did not lack justice, acted justly even in the encounter with the apostate one, ransoming from him the things which were his own" [Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.I.1]

- How did this happen? How did Christ beat Satan?
 - "[The purpose of the Incarnation] was that the divine virtue of the Son of God might be like a kind of hook hidden beneath the form of human flesh ... to lure the prince of this world into a contest; that the Son might offer him his human flesh as a bait and that the divinity which lay underneath might catch him and hold him fast with its hook. ... Then, just as a fish when it seizes a baited hook not only fails to drag off the bait but is itself dragged out of the water to serve as food for others; so he that had the power of death seized the body of Jesus in death, unaware of the hook of divinity which lay hidden inside. Having swallowed it, he was immediately caught. The gates of hell were broken, and he was, as it were, drawn up from the pit, to become food for others" [Rufinus of Aquileia, *Expositio Symboli* 14]

REFLECT: What are your thoughts on *Christus Victor*?
Do you think it's a good or helpful account? Why / why not?

[3] How Did the Cross Save Us? – A Medieval Response

Christus Victor is an ancient account of the Cross.

BUT – it wasn't the final word, and the Church was far from finished.

We turn to a medieval Italian monk, who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury...!

[3A] On the Life of Anselm of Canterbury

- **Born 1033AD (Aosta, N.W. Italy):**
 - Mother died when Anselm was an adolescent.
 - Father became hostile.
 - Anselm left and abandoned a wealthy inheritance.
- **On Anselm's education:**
 - 1059AD: Anselm arrived at Bec Abbey, Normandy.
 - Accepted external pupils.
 - 1060AD: Anselm becomes a monk.
- **On Anselm's career:**
 - A mix of pastoral and academic duties:
 - 1063AD: Anselm became the chief teacher at Bec.
 - 1079AD: Anselm becomes leader of Bec Abbey.
 - 1093AD: Anselm chosen to succeed his former abbot as Archbishop of Canterbury.
 - Eventually, Anselm dies in 1109AD (Canterbury).
 - One of the most significant Western theologians.
 - Writes his works as prayers.

[B] On Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?*

- **Around 1093AD, Anselm composed *Cur Deus Homo?***
 - Hugely influential and important text.
 - Anselm's stated purpose: "I am attempting for a little while, insofar as the heavenly grace deigns to allow me, to arise to contemplate the logic of our beliefs. ... [The] subject-matter [is] precious [and] in conformity with the fact that it is about someone beautiful, 'with beauty excelling the sons of men' (Ps 44:3 VG), it is itself correspondingly beautiful in its logic" [CDH Commend. + I.1]
- **To this end, he provides an account of the Cross based in medieval 'feudal' society.**
 - One that would have resonated deeply with his contemporaries. (ALSO: honour + shame.)
 - It's called the '**Satisfaction Model**'.

[3C] Anselm's Satisfaction Model

- **Anselm agreed with the notion of ransom:**
 - "It was from our sins and from his own anger and from hell and from the power of the devil that God ransomed us, and he came himself to drive out the devil on our behalf because we were ourselves incapable of this" [CDH I.6]
- **However, Anselm was careful to avoid one key mistake:**

- “[Given] that neither the devil nor man belongs to anyone but God, and that neither stands outside God’s power: what action did God need to take with, concerning, or in the case of, someone who was his own, apart from punishing this bonds slave of his who had persuaded his fellow-bonds slave to desert his master and come over to join him...?” [CDH I.7]
 - Christ certainly defeated the devil.
 - But God didn’t need to ‘pay’ the devil anything.
 - God is sovereign over all things.
- **So Anselm re-orientates the idea of ransom completely:**
 - **NOT:** God offering up a baited payment to Satan.
 - **BUT:** the God-Man paying our debt of honour to the Father.
 - “[Everyone] who sins is under an obligation to repay to God the honour which he has violently taken from him, and this is the satisfaction which every sinner is obliged to give to God” [CDH I.11] – **i.e. this is not something we can escape from, payment is necessary.**
 - “But this cannot come about unless there should be someone who would make a payment to God greater than everything that exists apart from God” [CDH II.6] – **i.e. the payment required exceeds anything a creature could offer.**
 - “But the payment rests with man, and no one else, to make the payment referred to. Otherwise mankind is not making recompense” [CDH II.6] – **i.e. the payment exceeds human potential, but it’s necessary for humans to pay it. So we’re in a dilemma.**
 - “[No] one can pay except God, but no one ought to pay except man: it is therefore necessary that a God-Man should pay it” [CDH II.6] – **i.e. the payment is God-sized, but a human must pay it, hence the need for a God-Man!**
 - (We must note the importance of Anselm’s feudal context here.)

REFLECT: What are your thoughts on Anselm’s account of the Cross? Do you think it’s a good or helpful account? Why / why not?

[3D] In response to Anselm – Abelard’s ‘Moral Influence’ Model

- Peter Abelard [1079-1142AD] – French scholastic (Heloise!)
 - **The moral influence model.**
 - “Christ has united our human nature to himself, and by suffering in that same nature has demonstrated to us that supreme love... Therefore, our redemption through the suffering of Christ is that deeper love within us which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also secures for us the true liberty of the children of God” [Expositio in Epistolam ad Romanos II]

[4] How Did the Cross Save Us? – A Reformation Response

Are there things to critique in what we've heard so far? Of course.

AND YET – to a greater or lesser extent, there's also truth.

Ransom / Satisfaction – an attempt at an 'Objective' Atonement.

Exemplar theology – an attempt at a 'Subjective' Atonement.

[4A] The 'Plurivocality' of Scripture on the Cross

- **They reflect the 'plurivocality' of Scripture – i.e. when Scripture describes the Cross, it does so in diverse ways.**
 - Christus Victor: "*He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*" [Gen 3:15]
 - Christ defeated Satan – Amen.
 - Satisfaction: "*The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*" [1 John 4:4]
 - God owes Satan nothing – Amen.
 - We owe God everything – Amen.
 - Only the God-Man can do this – Amen.
 - Exemplar: "*We love because he first loved us*" [1 John 4:19]
 - God is love and the Cross is proof it – Amen.
 - God in Christ is our Example – Amen.
- **BUT – these models also have limitations.**
 - Christus Victor:
 - Satan and God's sovereignty.
 - Satisfaction:
 - Anselm's feudalism / the Scriptural 1:1.
 - Exemplar:
 - Can't account for judgement / Can't account for Total Depravity / Can't account for God-centred salvation.

None of these models account for the full witness of Scripture.

None of these models answer how exactly Christ's death saved us.

None of them provide for us the 'main thing'.

LOOK: Isa 52:13-53:12

REFLECT: What are your thoughts / observations?

It's a sacrifice of Expiation – "*made us whole*" [53:5b]

It's a sacrifice of Propitiation – "*crushed for our iniquities*" [53:5a]

[4A] On Penal Substitution

- **What we're talking about here is called 'Penal Substitution'.**
 - **LOOK:** Rom 5:6-11
 - *Penal:* Christ suffered the Father's wrath, the just punishment for our sin.
 - *Substitution:* he does so in our place, vicariously.
 - Calvin describes this doctrine beautifully:
 - "Thus we shall behold the person of a sinner and evildoer represented in Christ, yet from his shining innocence it will at the same time be obvious that he was burdened with another's sin

rather than this own. He therefore suffered under Pontius Pilate, and by the governor's official sentence was reckoned among criminals. Yet not so – for he was declared righteous by his judge at the same time, when Pilate affirmed that he 'found no cause for complaint in him' (John 18:38). This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God (Isa 53:12). We must, above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life – as if God's righteous vengeance which the Son of God has taken upon himself, still hung over us" [*Institutes* II.XVI.5]

[4B] On the Reputation of this Doctrine

- **AND YET – this account of the Cross is the most pilloried in the modern Church.**
 - The academic class in particular scoff at this.
 - "The conclusion is inescapable that satisfaction atonement is based on divinely sanctioned, retributive violence. ... Anyone uncomfortable with the idea of a God who sanctions violence, a God who sends the Son so that his death can satisfy a divine requirement, should abandon satisfaction and Anselmian atonement forthwith" [Weaver, *The Non-Violent Atonement* 2001]
 - "The fact is that the Cross isn't a form of cosmic child abuse – a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement: 'God is love'" [Chalke, *The Lost Message of Jesus* 2003]
 - "[Even] at the age of ten I thought this explanation was pretty repulsive as well as nonsensical. What sort of God was this, getting so angry with the world and the people he created, and then, to calm himself down, demanding the blood of his own Son? And anyway, why should God forgive us by punishing somebody else? It was worse than illogical, it was insane. It made God sound like a psychopath. If any human being behaved like this we'd say they were a monster" [John, Lent Talk 2007]
- **You might remember various controversies surrounding Getty's / Townend's *In Christ Alone*:**
 - "On that Cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied"
 - (Various liberal Churches have changed the lyrics, because of their objection to penal substitution.)

[4C] Penal Substitution and Passover

- **BUT WAIT – what's going on? Why is PS so mocked and pilloried? Why is it so opposed?**
 - Does it have absolutely no foundation in Scripture?
 - **LOOK:** Luke 22:14-16
 - **DISCUSS:** What are your thoughts / observations?

- **The context of the Last Supper is all-important – it's a "fulfilling" of the Passover meal.**
 - **LOOK:** Exo 9:16
 - God's plan in the Passover story.
 - To display his power / To glorify his name.
 - **LOOK:** Exo 11:4-7
 - God's distinction in the Passover.
 - He protects and preserves his elect.
 - **LOOK:** Exo 12:1-14
 - The Lamb is sacrificed.
 - This is to be continued as a "day of remembrance".
 - There is blood, and there is bread.
- **KEY POINT: the blood of the Lamb makes the wrath of God 'pass over' God's people!**
 - This is then taught throughout the NT.
 - **LOOK:** John 3:36 / Rom 5:8-9 / 1 Thess 1:9-10 / 1 Thess 5:9

[4D] An Answer to Penal Substitutions' Critics

- **Given that it's so clearly taught, why do people reject it so fiercely? What is the big problem?**
 - **DISCUSS:** So why do you think people object to it?
 - Why do you think the reaction to it is so fierce?
 - We can think of general and specific reasons.
- **We can identify a handful of general reasons.**
 - A certain theology of justice.
 - In God, in society, in the home.
 - Re: "*The judge of all heaven and earth does right*" [Gen 18:25]
 - A certain understanding of Scripture.
 - A 'redemptive hermeneutic' – the need to retrieve, even *rescue*, God from the Scriptures.
- **BUT – we can also identify four specific reasons.**
 - **FIRST:** "*It's a Reformation invention!*"
 - "And therefore in the last times the Lord has restored us into friendship through his Incarnation, having become 'the mediator between God and men'; propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned, and cancelling our disobedience by his own obedience" [Irenaeus – *Against Heresies* V.XVII.1]
 - "[The] Father of all wished his Christ for the whole human family to take upon him the curses of all ... His Father caused him to suffer these things in behalf of the human family" [Justin Martyr – *Dialogue With Trypho* 95]
 - Similar sentiments in Augustine, Athanasius, Ambrose, etc.
 - **SECOND:** "*It's child abuse!*"
 - The Cross was the result of one, united, Triune will.
 - "Nor does the Father's not sparing him mean that the Son was handed over for us against his will... [The] Father and the Son and the Spirit of them both work all things together and equally and in concord" [Augustine – *De Trinitate* XIII.15]

- "For the Father did not coerce Christ to face death against his will, or give permission for him to be killed, but Christ himself of his own volition underwent death in order to save mankind" [Anselm – CDH I.8]
- THIRD: "*It implies the Father changes his mind!*"
 - Recall S2 – on the Goodness of God (his personality).
 - He is capable of being more than one thing at once.
 - "The fact that we were reconciled through Christ's death must not be understood as if his Son reconciled us to him that he might now begin to love those whom he had hated. Rather, we have already been reconciled to him who loves us, with whom we were enemies on account of sin. ... Therefore, he loved us even when we practiced enmity toward him and committed wickedness. Thus in a marvellous and divine way he loved us even when he hated us. For he hated us for what we were that he had not made; yet because our wickedness had not entirely consumed his handiwork, he knew how, at the same time, to hate in each one of us what we had made, and to love what he had made" [Augustine – John's Gospel CX.6]
- FOURTH: "*It sanctifies violence!*"
 - To the contrary, it's how God destroys violence.
 - He takes it, consumes it, and makes it unnecessary.
 - Re: Graubelle man – late 3rd Cent BC, German paganism – Christ defeats and puts an end to this *in his own body*.

There is an arrogance to those who reject PS that I find unsettling. They think they're the inheritors of a rich tradition, which we benighted Evangelicals have rejected.

The reality? WE can affirm all of these models, to a greater or lesser extent, insofar as they reflect Scripture – but THEY must shut themselves off from that which the Bible + Church history teaches.

[5] Conclusion – The Beauty of Penal Substitution

The tragedy is that unless this note is sounded, there can be melody – but *never* harmony. The pieces of Scripture simply won't fit together, and we won't be able to account fully for the Cross.

By way of a conclusion, allow me to suggest three reasons.

[5A] Most Direct Scriptural Model

- **FIRST: Pen Sub best reflects Scripture's most direct way of speaking about the Cross.**
 - There are differences in the way in which the Word speaks.
 - Approximate language – i.e. "salvation is like...".
 - Accommodation language – i.e. "*under his wings you will find refuge*" [Ps 91:4].
 - BUT ALSO – direct language.
 - When God tears the veil a little and describes heavenly things as much as we might comprehend.
- **When Scripture speaks about Christ's work on the Cross, it might speak approximately ("the Cross was like a ransom").**
 - BUT – when it speaks most directly?
 - It often employs PS logic – re: "*saved through him from the wrath of God*" [Rom 5:9]

[5B] Penal Substitution and the Seamless Garment

- **SECOND: there is a seamlessness between Pen Sub and other foundational doctrines of Christian theology.**
 - For example:
 - *GIGAWAN*: re: his justice and goodness.
 - Also *Election*:¹ a definite payment for a people.

¹ This is known as 'Limited' or 'Definite' atonement. Let me be clear on a few things here. **First:** I'm more than aware that many Christians throughout Church history have differed on this, both before and after the Reformation. There are many nuances here, and a simple description, such as the one offered above, can't provide the full picture. However, it is my suggestion that Definite Atonement – given all we've established – is the most reasonable, and most Scriptural perspective. **Second:** on the note of Scripture, some might very reasonably cite those passages that suggest a universal atonement – e.g. "*we are convinced that one has died for all*" [2 Cor 5:14]. It's impossible to address every instance in full, but let's quickly discuss this one example. Paul continues: "*one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him*" [vv.14-15]. Note that Paul doesn't just say that Christ died for all – he also says that having died for all, all have died, and now those who live do so for Christ. We therefore have a couple of options here. Either every single human being died at the Cross, but only a select few have been resurrected (which implies election), or every single human being died and will live (implying universalism). **Third:** some would balk at the suggestion that the atonement is in any way 'limited'. This seems contrary to God's love for the world. Note, however, that the atonement *must* be limited in at least *some* way. My suggestion here is that Christ's death is limited in scope but unlimited in effect – i.e. Christ died only for his people, but his death was a definite and actual punishment for their sins. Those who disagree are suggesting that Christ's death is unlimited in scope but limited in effect – i.e. Christ died for every single human being to ever live, but this was merely a potential payment conditional upon their acceptance of it.

- (On the connection to election, consider Grotius² and Owen.)³
- *Union*: joined with him in his death.

[5C] The Pastoral Beauty of Penal Substitution

- **THIRD: Penal Substitution is the stuff of rejoicing.**
 - If there's any problem with PS, it's not that it's false.
 - Rather, the kind of language that's required to describe it can obscure what's *actually* happening.
 - **LOOK:** Rom 5:6-8
 - In a scene of unimaginable horror – there is *love*.
 - See him die, see him perish, see him suffer – *as you and for you*.
- **Penal Substitution can be multiple things at once.**
 - Sobering (re: wrath + sin) / Upsetting / Tragic.
 - **BUT ALSO – LOOK:** 2 Cor 5:21.
 - KEY POINT: Christ becomes YOU, in all your ugliness, so that he might have you forever.
 - He knew you would sin – and yet, here he is, volunteering to be your Protector.
 - *"The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, not the moon by night"* [Ps 121:5-6]

"Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness" [Isa 10:22]

"As long then as the former time endured, He permitted us to be borne along by unruly impulses, being drawn away by the desire of pleasure and various lusts. This was not that He at all delighted in our sins, but that He simply endured them; nor that He approved the time of working iniquity which then was, but that He sought to form a mind conscious of righteousness, so that being convinced in that time of our unworthiness of attaining life through our own works, it should now, through the kindness of God, be vouchsafed to us; and having made it manifest that in ourselves we were unable to enter into the kingdom of God, we might through the power of God be made able.

But when our wickedness had reached its height, and it had been clearly shown that its reward, punishment and death, was impending over us; and when the time had come which God had before appointed for manifesting His own kindness and power, how the one love of God, through exceeding regard for men, did not regard us with hatred, nor thrust us away, nor remember our iniquity against us, but showed great long-suffering, and bore with us, He Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities, He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the

² Hence Hugo Grotius' so-called 'Governmental Theory', which Grotius suggested as an alternative to PS so as to avoid these decretal consequences. Hugo Grotius [1583-1645] was a Dutch theologian. His Governmental Model suggests that Christ did not make a definite payment for sin. Indeed, the Son's death was not even a punishment for sin, as this would imply Penal Substitution. Instead, Christ's death displayed God's regard for justice, and God relaxed his law so that it satisfied him. The Cross also served to deter us from sin.

³ Hence John Owen's [1616-1683] syllogism – if Penal Substitution is true, then either **(1)** Christ died for all of the sins of all people; **(2)** some of the sins of all people, or **(3)** all of the sins of some people. **If (1)** – then all will be saved. **If (2)** – then some sin hasn't been paid for, and so all will go to hell. **If (3)** – then PS applies only to God's people.

blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for those who are mortal.

For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors! Having therefore convinced us in the former time that our nature was unable to attain to life, and having now revealed the Saviour who is able to save even those things which it was [formerly] impossible to save, by both these facts He desired to lead us to trust in His kindness, to esteem Him our Nourisher, Father, Teacher, Counsellor, Healer, our Wisdom, Light, Honour, Glory, Power, and Life, so that we should not be anxious concerning clothing and food." [Mathetus (c.150AD) – *Epistle to Diognetus IX*]

**This is not a random act on God's part.
He does nothing without a τέλος.**

KEY POINT: What is the end of all salvation? What's the purpose?

To glorify himself – immeasurable in power and splendour.

To conquer the rebellion – Satan, sin, death, and hell.

To make his dwelling among mortals – a Bridegroom for a bride, a new humanity, glorifying the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

At Golgotha, he is glorified – a Cross as a throne.

At Golgotha, the rebellion is conquered – by love and sacrifice.

At Golgotha, he dwells with mortals – in all their sin, so that they might become new humanity.

AND SO – the old world dies in the night.

It goes on about its business like normal.

BUT – little does it know that a new world will come with the dawn, with all its power and might, stepping forth to the rescue of the old!

Earth and heaven breathes in... and waits for the exhale.