

**Grace to You** :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### **Heaven's Perspective on the Cross: Substitute**

Scripture: Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24

Code: B130926

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*What was the point of Christ's death?*

Depending on whom you ask, you could receive a variety of confused and conflicting answers. Even within the church, many people are inclined to look at the life and death of Jesus through their own skewed perspective of what it means *to them*.

But in order to understand the full weight and meaning of Christ's death, it's important to understand what it means from heaven's perspective. What did the Lord's death on the cross accomplish in terms of God's eternal plan?

So far in this short series, we've seen that Christ's death was a sacrifice and a submission. Today we'll see that it was also a *substitute*.

The New Testament is rich with substitution language when it comes to Jesus' death. Hebrews 9:28 says He was "offered once to bear the sins of many." The apostle Peter described Christ's substitutionary death in his first epistle with these words: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul puts it bluntly, saying "One died for all."

Of course, all those passages borrow language from perhaps the most definitive text on the death of Christ—Isaiah 53. Often called the first gospel, Isaiah 53 goes into explicit detail about the Lord's substitutionary sacrifice, centuries before He was even born.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

In fact, verse 6 of Isaiah 53 couldn't be plainer about the substitutionary aspect of Jesus' death: "The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

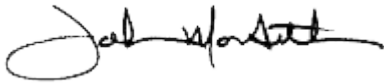
Theologians refer to Christ's death as a "penal substitute," an unfamiliar concept in our therapy-oriented society. Today legal punishment is rarely about making restitution for a crime. Most often, punishments are focused on vengeance for the victims or rehabilitation for the criminals—and about making us feel better in the aftermath. We've clouded the idea of fixed standards and penalties for breaking those standards.

But that's exactly how God's law works. His standards are fixed as a perfect expression of His holiness, and any violation of those standards demands a specific penalty—death. Paul referred to death as "the wages of sin" (Romans 6:23), and it's a telling way to describe it. Death isn't the result of a divine vendetta. Sin *earns* death. And all sin must be punished.

In fact, all sin *will* be punished. No sin goes unpunished—it can't. God's law demands a penalty. Without that penalty, His perfect law ceases to be perfect. Christ didn't erase or ameliorate the penalties of our sins. He paid them in full.

What's more, He paid those penalties in an astoundingly short time. In just three hours, Christ exhausted the wrath of God—wrath that would have been poured on us, individually, throughout eternity if not for His substitutionary death. He suffered an almost infinite punishment to satisfy God's law and purchase our forgiveness.

The penalty for our sins wasn't waived—it was poured out on Christ as He willingly took our place. His body was broken and His blood was shed on our behalf—"the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18)—as a perfect substitute.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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