

Rich Lusk
Sermon Follow-up
4/2/17, 4/9/17, 5/14/17
Mark 15

Historically, the church has recognized the cross of Christ has three essential dimensions:

1. The cross is a penal substitution, meaning Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment and curse we deserve, satisfying God's retributive justice and thus making propitiation.
2. The cross is Christ's great victory over sin and death, bringing about the downfall of the idolatrous principalities and powers and crushing Satan under foot.
3. The cross is a pattern, or example, in which we participate so that we die to sin and become more and more conformed to the image of the crucified Christ.

I addressed each of these dimensions in my last three sermons on Mark 15 (dated 4/2/17, 4/9/17, and 5/14/17). I dealt with the first dimension of the cross when I preached on Barabbas; clearly Jesus dies as Barabbas's substitute, allowing the guilty to go free as the Righteous suffers in his place. Penal substitution is the foundation of everything else the cross accomplished. Because of God's holiness and the nature of sin, God cannot simply grant forgiveness in as a kind of "presidential pardon"; sin must be punished and justice must be satisfied. In love, God provided a sacrifice, absorbing his own wrath and reconciling us to himself. I dealt with the second dimension when I preached on those who mocked Jesus; because their mockery is actually reversed, Jesus is not being defeated at the cross but winning the greatest triumph of all. This victory is the ultimate goal of the cross. Satan has been routed and the principalities and powers toppled. I dealt with the third dimension when I preached on Simon the Cyrenian; as Simon becomes the cross-bearer, following in the footsteps of Jesus, he shows that the cross is not only "for us," but also "in us," as we take up our cross each day and walk in the way of Jesus as his disciples. The ethic of the cross is the outflow of Christ's sacrificial action; the cross is not only an event for us and outside of us, but enters into us and transforms us, so we begin to live in and live out of the very sacrificial love that was on display in the cross.

At times, these three dimensions have pulled apart, and when that has happened, it has been to the great detriment of the church, jeopardizing if not altogether losing the gospel. Because we are in union with Christ, all of these dimensions of the cross go together and constitute our salvation. The three dimensions of the cross are summarized below.

1. Cross as Substitution:

Meaning: Jesus died in our place, under our curse, satisfying divine justice and propitiating divine wrath, so that we can be forgiven and accepted as righteous in union with the crucified one.

Key texts: Rom. 3:21ff; 1 John 2:2, 4:10

Shown in Mark 15: Barabbas

Key theologian: Anselm (author the classic work, *Cur Deus Homo*, which greatly influenced the Reformers)

Quote: Luther: "For how amazing it is that the Son of God becomes my servant, that He humbles Himself so, that He cumbered Himself with my misery and sin. . . . He says to me: 'You are no longer a sinner, but I am. I am your substitute. You have not sinned, but I have. The entire world is in sin. However, you are not in sin; but I am. All your sins are to rest on Me and not on you.' No one can comprehend this. In yonder life our eyes will feast forever on this love of God....All the prophets did foresee in Spirit that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, blasphemer, etc., that ever was or could be in all the world. For he, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world is not now an innocent person and without sins...but a sinner....Our most merciful Father...sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him...the sins of all men saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them. Here now comes the law and saith: I find him a sinner...therefore let him die upon the cross. And so he setteth upon him and killeth him. By this means the whole world is purged and cleansed from all sins...Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him, and say, 'Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours. You became what you were not, so that I might become what I was not.'"

Representative hymns: "Thy Works, Not Mine;" "In Christ Alone;" "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

2. Cross as Victory

Meaning: Christ on the cross defeated the world, the flesh, and the devil, freeing us from bondage to fear and death and making us sharers in his glorious triumph!

Key texts: Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-17

Shown in Mark 15: mockers unintentionally coronate Jesus as king; he is crucified at Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, indicating his cross fulfills Gen. 3:15 and he crushes Satan's head underfoot as he dies

Key theologian: Gustav Aulen (author of the work *Christus Victor*, which helped revive interest in the triumphant dimension of the cross)

Quote: Luther: "[Christ's] victory is a victory over the Law, sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell, and all evils; and this victory of his he has given to us. Even though these tyrants, our enemies, accuse us and terrify us, they cannot drive us into despair or condemn us. For Christ, whom God the Father raised from the dead, is Victor over them, and he is our righteousness....Christ has snatched us from the jaws of hell and made us free...Paul presented the law as a captive, 'bound hand and foot, shorn of all power, so that it cannot exert its tyranny, that is, accuse and

condemn'. When oppressed by guilt and fear of judgment, God's people have 'the courage to insult the law with a certain holy pride and to say: 'I am a sinner. If you can do anything against me, Law, go ahead and do it!' That is how far the law now is from frightening the believer'Only Christ takes away the law, kills my sin, destroys my death in his body, and in this way empties hell, judges the devil, crucifies him, and throws him down into hell. In other words, everything that once used to torment and oppress me Christ has set aside; he has disarmed it and made a public example of it triumphing over it in himself..."

Representative hymns: "Throned Upon the Awful Tree;" "Lift High the Cross"

3. Cross as Pattern

Meaning: The cross gives rise to an ethic, to a new way of life, in conformity with the pattern of Christ's sacrificial and self-giving death. The cross is our example and model; thus, we are to take up our crosses each day as we follow Jesus.

Key texts: Luke 9:23; Phil. 2:1-11; 1 Peter 2:21

Shown in Mark 15: Simon the Cyrenian

Key theologian: Abelard (known for the moral influence theory of the atonement, which focused on the cross as demonstration of divine love, providing a pattern and inspiring example of what true sacrifice looks like)

Quote: Stott: "There must be a renunciation of self. In order to follow Christ we must not only forsake isolated sins, but renounce the very principle of self-will which lies at the root of every act of sin. To follow Christ is to surrender to him the rights over our own lives. It is to abdicate the throne of our heart and do homage to him as our King. This renunciation of self is vividly described by Jesus in three phrases. It is to deny ourselves: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself.' The same verb is used of Peter's denial of the Lord in the courtyard of the high priest's palace. We are to disown ourselves as completely as Peter disowned Christ when he said 'I do not know the man.' Self-denial is not just giving up sweets and cigarettes, either for good or for a period of voluntary abstinence. For it is not to deny things to myself, but to deny myself to myself. It is to say no to self, and yes to Christ; to repudiate self and acknowledge Christ. The next phrase Jesus used is to take up the cross: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.' If we had lived in Palestine and seen a man carrying his cross, we should at once have recognized him as a convicted prisoner being led out to pay the supreme penalty. For Palestine was an occupied country, and this is what the Romans compelled their convicted criminals to do. So, writes Professor H.B. Swete in his commentary on Mark's Gospel, to take up the cross is 'to put oneself into the position of a condemned man on his way to execution.' In other words, the attitude to self which we are to adopt is that of crucifixion. Paul uses the same metaphor when he declares that 'those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh (i.e. their fallen nature) with its passions and desires.' In Luke's version of this saying of Christ the adverb daily is added. Every day the Christian is to die. Every day he renounces the sovereignty of his own will. Every day he renews his unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ."

Representative hymns: "Come Follow Me, the Savior Spake"

[Other aspects of the cross, such as reconciliation, revelation, restoration of creation/humanity, propitiation, healing, salvation, justification, sanctification, etc. are typically taken up under one or more of the categories given above. There is arguably a **fourth view** of the atonement, the **“cross as ransom” view**, based on texts like Mark 10:45, with passages like Exodus 21:30, 30:12, Numbers 35:31-32, Job 33:24, 49:7-8, 15, 69:18, Isaiah 35:10, 43:3, 51:11, Jeremiah 31:11, Hosea 13:14, etc. as background. The ransom view can probably be subsumed under the first two views of the atonement given above, but because it has been the source of a lot of confusion over the course of church history, it deserves separate mention. One question that obviously pops up is this: If Jesus’ death was a ransom, to whom was that ransom paid? God or Satan? Among some of the early church fathers, it was common to see us as victims of Satan’s attack, kidnapped by him when Adam fell into sin (cf. Mark 3:22-27). Jesus’ death was understood as a ransom payment to the devil to set us free – but with the twist that Jesus actually deceived Satan on the cross, luring him into his own downfall, as if the cross were some kind of cosmic mousetrap (Augustine) or baited fishhook (Gregory of Nyssa). Other church fathers argued that because of Adam’s sin, Satan had a just claim on us, so in making a ransom payment to the Satan, God was dealing with him justly (Job 1-2 were considered the model for Satan’s power over fallen humanity: he has the power to inflict all kinds of suffering on us).

Some elements of this seem to work biblically, but others are problematic. Why should God have to strike a bargain with Satan, even if Satan acquired legal rights to humanity in some sense when Adam fell? Why can’t God simply overpower Satan? How can God owe Satan (or any creature) anything since everything only exists because of his gracious gift? How can Satan have any claims or rights against God? Gregory of Nazianzus thought the ransom payment must be paid to God, not to Satan because Satan can never put God in his debt. But then why does God need to be paid off? How can God pay God? How does this? The cross is not some kind of bribe in which the Son pays the Father so he will love us. Indeed, the Father already loves us before the cross, and his love is the originating source of the incarnation and atonement (John 3:16). Nor does the Father need a ransom payment as if he holds us in bondage and the Son makes a payment to free us. This kind of anti-Trinitarianism must be utterly rejected. So what are we to make of the ransom language of Mark 10:45?

Clearly, Scripture presents us with some kind of ransom payment theology, or system of redemption, in which a price is paid to set free those who are in some kind of bondage or slavery. But how the mechanics of this work is not always clear. In the Torah, slaves are ransomed with gold and silver. But Isaiah 43 says the Lord gave Egypt as a ransom price for the Israelites in the exodus. The Psalmist ups the ante by telling us no man can ransom the life of another (49:7-8; the context mocks those who trust in wealth to ransom their lives), and so the psalmist cries out to God to ransom him from his enemies (69:18). The psalmist expects God to ransom his life from Sheol (49:15). Isaiah 53 uses language that suggests the Suffering Servant of the Lord offers himself as a ransom for Israel. Redemption (a concept closely related to ransom) through purchase shows up the exodus narrative, the Torah, the book of Ruth, Job’s cry for deliverance in Job 19 and Job’s need for a mediator who can plead his cause in Job 33, etc. In the NT, Mark 10:45 spells out that the ransom payment is Jesus himself, but does not get into a description of how the ransom works. Peter says we

have been ransomed not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). Blood redeems us because the life is in the blood (see Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews); when his blood is shed as a sacrifice, he becomes our ransom. But what else can we say?

It might help to consider what we are ransomed *from*. The OT emphasizes slavery and enemies/accusers, but ultimately we must be ransomed from death/Sheol. In the NT, the ransom is from the corrupt traditions (perhaps connected with abuse of Torah?) in 1 Peter. We are redeemed from lawlessness in Titus 2, from the curse of the law in Galatians 3, from sin in Hebrews 9, etc.

In the end, perhaps we should resist the urge to say more than Scripture when it comes to ransom/redemption language. It seems safest to say that God has paid his own price – in other words, God has settled his own account on our behalf and satisfied his own justice for our sakes – so now we are rescued from all our enemies, whether considered as demonic enemies, the law as an enemy (because it is the agent of curse, though holy and good in itself), corrupt traditions as enemies, sinful patterns of life as a kind of bondage, and so on, ultimately from death itself, the last enemy.]

Stott integrates the first and third aspects of the cross in Mark 15:

Every Christian is both a Simon of Cyrene and a Barabbas. Like Barabbas we escape the cross, for Christ died in our place. Like Simon of Cyrene we carry the cross, for he calls us to take it up and follow him (Mk 15:21).

Several texts tie all three of these aspects of the cross together. One that does this very well is Hebrews 2:14-20:

¹⁴Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood,
He Himself likewise shared in the same,

[the incarnation, Christ's unity with our humanity, the foundation of
Christ's work as Savior]

that through death He might destroy him who had the power of
death, that is, the devil,

[the victory of Christ over Satan on the cross – Christus Victor! –
means that death no long holds sway over us and thus we have
nothing to fear, for our greatest enemy has already been vanquished
and routed]

¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime
subject to bondage.

[the cross is transformative and participatory, freeing us from fear and from slavery to sin and death, thus enabling us to follow Christ's example when we face suffering and temptation, per 2:18]

¹⁶For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

[at the cross, Jesus made propitiation, which means our sins are now covered because he has turned aside and absorbed the divine wrath against our sin]

¹⁸For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Colossians 2:13-15 also integrates all of these aspects of the cross in one tidy textual package:

¹¹In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins^{le} of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him,

[this is participatory -- by faith and baptism, we participate in the death of Christ, which was the true circumcision, putting off the flesh to live a new kind of life in union with him]

having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

[this is substitutionary -- the cross brings about forgiveness, so that the bill we owed because of the debts of our sins, has now been cancelled, with "paid in full" stamped across it in the blood of Christ, all because Christ died in our place as our substitute]

¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

[this is victory -- Christ's death led to the humiliation of the demonic hosts that held people in bondage, so now their power over the human race is broken and Christ is triumphant as the conquering king]

Links:

Excellent overview of Calvin's multi-faceted atonement theology:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/calvins-multi-faceted-atonement>

On the various facets of the atonement see also:

<https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2014/04/17/the-multifaceted-diamond-of-christs-atonement-work/>

Excellent exploration of the various dimensions of the atonement relate:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-makes-a-full-atonement-full>

Wittmer writes:

The cross is aimed:

1. Downward, toward Satan: The early church emphasized this Christus Victor aspect of the cross, which said Jesus died to defeat Satan, who held the power of sin and death ([Colossians 2:15](#); [Hebrews 2:14-15](#); [1 John 3:8](#)).
2. Upward, toward God: Popularized by Anselm and Calvin, penal substitution explained that Jesus satisfied the Father's wrath by bearing our penalty in our place ([Romans 3:25-26](#); [Galatians 3:13](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [1 John 2:2](#); [4:10](#)).
3. Sideways, toward us: Abelard, a contemporary of Anselm, said the cross provides a moral influence by showing us how much God loves us ([1 John 3:16](#); [4:7-12](#); [Romans 5:8](#)). Socinians and liberal Christians said the cross is merely a human Jesus providing a moral example that inspires us to love and trust God. Though Socinians and liberals wrongly deny Jesus' deity, they rightly note that on the cross Jesus "suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you might follow in his steps" ([1 Peter 2:21](#)). The moral influence and example theory differ on whether the action on the cross is moving from God to us or from us to God, but they agree that its effect is on the human person rather than on God or the devil....
Ask informed evangelicals why Jesus died and they will likely respond with a paraphrase of [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). Jesus who knew no sin became sin for us, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This is an

excellent statement of penal substitution, but what is its larger purpose?
What does becoming God's righteousness lead to?

The answer is supplied by Christus Victor. God doesn't satisfy his wrath for its own sake—he could have chosen to leave his wrath unquenched and save no one—but for the sake of delivering us from hell. [Hebrews 2:14-15](#) explains that Jesus died to “destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

The primary reason Jesus died, the main goal of the cross and resurrection, was to defeat sin, death, and Satan. In our rightful zeal to defend the truth of penal substitution, we must remember to always place it into this larger picture. Penal substitution is the means to the end, not the end itself.

Good statement of Christus Victor in relationship to penal substitution:

<http://www.kylemcdanell.com/2015/11/michael-bird-on-christus-victor.html>

Bird writes:

Let's get Paul right here. Jesus' death is not *only* a transaction of my sin being placed into Jesus' account; there's much more to it. Jesus lets the powers do their worst to him, he takes the full brunt of sin, he drinks the dregs of judgment, and he allows death to hold him in its clutches. Then in the midst of a powerless death emerges a divine saving power to forgive, redeem, and renew. The festering cancer of sin has at last heard news of its cure. In the apex of death, life rises with healing in its wing. Satan's force is spent and his worst was no match for the best of the Son of God. The fatal wound of Jesus deals a fatal blow to death. The powers of this present darkness shiver as the looming tsunami of the kingdom of God draws ever nearer. The despots of the world live in denial as much as they live on borrowed time. This is Paul's atonement theology; this is the victory of God....

Thus, the Christus Victor view cannot stand alone. The victory of God in Jesus' death needs to be explained with some other mode of the atonement that shows how Jesus' death cancels sin, overcomes death, and vanquishes Satan. More likely, the victory of Jesus' death is achieved because his death is an atonement for sin, it is a substitutionary death, and it renders the devil's work of accusation as impotent (see Zech. 3:4; Rev. 12:10).

Some quotes and poetry:

John Stott:

Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us...

At the cross in holy love God through Christ paid the full penalty of our disobedience himself. He bore the judgment we deserve in order to bring us the forgiveness we do not deserve. On the cross divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled. God's holy love was 'satisfied'...

On the one hand, the cross is the God-given measure of the value of our true self, since Christ loved us and died for us. On the other hand, it is the God-given model for the denial of our false self, since we are to nail it to the cross and so put it to death. Or, more simply, standing before the cross we see simultaneously our worth and our unworthiness, since we perceive both the greatness of His love in dying, and the greatness of our sin in causing Him to die....

On the cross, by both demanding and bearing the penalty of sin, and so simultaneously punishing and overcoming evil, God displayed and demonstrated His holy love; the holy love of the cross should characterize our response to evil-doers today...

I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the One Nietzsche ridiculed as 'God on the cross'. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside His immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of His. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross which symbolizes divine suffering."

Dorothy Sayers:

It is curious that people who are filled with horrified indignation whenever a cat kills a sparrow can hear the story of the killing of God told Sunday after Sunday and not experience any shock at all.

Henri J. M. Nouwen:

Jesus went to Jerusalem to announce the Good News to the people of that city. And Jesus knew that he was going to put a choice before them: *Will you be my disciple, or will you be my executioner?* There is no middle ground

here. Jesus went to Jerusalem to put people in a situation where they had to say yes or no. That is the great drama of Jesus' passion: He had to wait upon how people were going to respond.

Thomas á Kempis:

In the cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from our enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross is joy of spirit, in the Cross is the height of virtue, in the Cross is perfection of sanctity. There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross.

John Stott:

There is wonderful power in the Cross of Christ. It has power to wake the dullest conscience and melt the hardest heart, to cleanse the unclean, to reconcile him who is afar off and restore him to fellowship with God, to redeem the prisoner from his bondage and lift the pauper from the dunghill, to break down the barriers which divide [people] from one another, to transform our wayward characters into the image of Christ and finally make us fit to stand in white robes before the throne of God.

Augustine:

He died, but he vanquished death; in himself, he put an end to what we feared; he took it upon himself, and he vanquished it; as a mighty hunter, he captured and slew the lion.
Where is death? Seek it in Christ, for it exists no longer; but it did exist, and now it is dead. O life, O death of death! Be of good heart; it will die in us also. What has taken place in our head will take place in his members; death will die in us also. But when? At the end of the world, at the resurrection of the dead in which we believe and concerning which we do not doubt.

Mother Teresa:

Confession [of sin] is nothing but humility in action . When there is a gap between me and Christ, when my love is divided, anything can come to fill the gap. Confession is a place where I allow Jesus to take away from me everything that divides, that destroys.

Blaise Pascal:

Truth is so obscured nowadays and lies so well established that unless we love the truth we shall never recognize it.

Henri Nouwen:

Jesus is God's way of making the impossible possible.

Miroslav Volf on the Trinity's love for sinners (this is one of my all-time favorite quotations):

When the Trinity turns toward the world, the Son and the Spirit become, in Irenaeus's beautiful image, the two arms of God by which humanity was made and taken into God's embrace. That same love that sustains nonself-enclosed identities in the Trinity seeks to make space in God for humanity. Humanity is, however, not just the other of God, but the beloved other who has become an enemy. When God sets out to embrace the enemy, the result is the cross. On the cross the dancing circle of self-giving and mutually indwelling divine persons opens up for the enemy; in the agony of the passion the movement stops for a brief moment and a fissure appears so that sinful humanity can join in (see Jn 17:21). We, the others we, the enemies are embraced by the divine persons who love us with the same love with which they love each other and therefore make space for us within their own eternal embrace.

The cross cannot be separated from the resurrection. Thus, some more quotes:

Karl Rahner:

Easter is not the celebration of a past event. The alleluia is not for what was; Easter proclaims a beginning which has already decided the remotest future. The Resurrection means that the beginning of glory has already started.

N. T. Wright:

Why did Christianity arise, and why did it take the shape it did? The early Christians themselves reply: We exist because of Jesus' resurrection. There is no evidence for a form of early Christianity in which the resurrection was not a central belief. Nor was this belief, as it were, bolted on to Christianity at the edge. It was the central driving force, informing the whole movement.

Frederick Buechner:

[T]here really is no story about the Resurrection in the New Testament. Except in the most fragmentary way, it is not described at all. There is no poetry about it. Instead, it is simply proclaimed as a fact. Christ is risen! In fact, the very existence of the New Testament itself proclaims it. Unless something very real indeed took place on that strange, confused morning, there would be no New Testament, no Church, no Christianity.

God's graciousness always exceeds our sinfulness.

John Calvin:

However many blessings we expect from God, His infinite liberality will always exceed all our wishes and our thoughts

Charles Spurgeon on hearing the gospel:

The hearing of the gospel involves the hearer in responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel. You may smile and think there is nothing very great in it. The damned in hell know. Oh, what would they give if they could hear the gospel now? If they could come back and entertain but the shadow of a hope that they might escape from the wrath to come? The saved in heaven estimate this privilege at a high rate, for, having obtained salvation through the preaching of this gospel, they can never cease to bless their God for calling them by his word of truth. O that you knew it! On your dying beds the listening to a gospel sermon will seem another thing than it seems now.

C. S. Lewis on the transforming love of God:

The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.

More quotes:

Daniel Migliore, in a lecture to one of his classes at Princeton Theological Seminary:

Jesus did not die in bed.

John R. W. Stott:

We live and die. Christ died and lived!

Jurgen Moltman:

The symbol of the cross in the church points to the God who was crucified not between two candles on an altar, but between two thieves in the place of the skull, where the outcasts belong, outside the gates of the city. It does

not invite thought but a change of mind. It is a symbol which therefore leads out of the church and out of religious longing into the fellowship of the oppressed and abandoned. On the other hand, it is a symbol which calls the oppressed and godless into the church and through the church into the fellowship of the crucified God.

G. A. Studdert Kennedy:

God, the God I love and worship,
reigns in sorrow on the Tree,
Broken, bleeding, but unconquered,
very God of God to me.

George Herbert:

Lord, Who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same
Decaying more and more
Till he became
Most poor:
With Thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day Thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.
My tender age in sorrow did begin;
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sin,
That I became
Most thin.
With Thee
Let me combine
And feel this day Thy victory;
For, if I imp my wing on Thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

More quotes:

Henri Nouwen:

For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair.

Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not How am I to find God? but How am I to let myself be found by him? The question is not How am I to know God? but How am I to let myself be known by God? And, finally, the question is not How am I to love God? but How am I to let myself be loved by God? God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home.

Peter Leithart:

Viewed as a whole . . . the Christian account of history is eschatological not only in the sense that it comes to a definitive and everlasting end, but in the sense that the end is a glorified beginning, not merely a return to origins. The Christian Bible moves not from garden lost to garden restored, but from garden to garden-city. God gives with interest.

Henri Nouwen:

How do we know about God's love, God's generosity, God's kindness, God's forgiveness? Through our parents, our friends, our teachers, our pastors, our spouses, our children they all reveal God to us. But as we come to know them, we realise that each of them can reveal only a little bit of God. God's love is greater than theirs; God's goodness is greater than theirs; God's beauty is greater than theirs. At first we may be disappointed in these people in our lives. For a while we thought that they would be able to give us all the love, goodness, and beauty we needed. But gradually we discover that they were all signposts on the way to God.

Dorothy Sayers:

The central dogma of the Incarnation is that by which its [that is, Christianity's] relevance stands or falls. If Christ were only man, then he is irrelevant to any thought about God; if he is only God, then he is entirely irrelevant to any experience of human life.

The outline of the official story, the tale of the time when God was the underdog and got beaten, when he submitted to the conditions he had laid down and became a man like the men he had made, and the men he had made broke him and killed him. This is the dogma we find so dull, this terrifying drama of which God is the victim and the hero.

If this is dull, then what, in Heaven's name, is worthy to be called exciting? The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore; on the contrary, they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified him 'meek and mild,' and recommended him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies....

For what it [that is, the Incarnation] means is this, among other things: that for whatever reason God chose to make man as he is limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death, he had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine. Whatever game He is playing with His creation, He has kept His own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When He was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile....

And here Christianity has its enormous advantage over every other religion in the world. It is the only religion that gives value to evil and suffering.

What do we find God 'doing about' this business of sin and evil?...God did not abolish the fact of evil; He transformed it. He did not stop the Crucifixion; He rose from the dead...

There are several classic works on the atonement, e.g., Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. The modern classic is probably Stott's *The Cross of Christ*. For a brilliant study of the atonement from a number of neglected angles, consult Peter Leithart's *Delivered From the Elements*, a brilliant and sweeping work unlike any other I have read. This book is a quirky and challenging deep dive into a biblical theology of the cross, using comparative religion studies, the OT sacrificial system, ecclesiology, and so on to develop a truly multi-faceted-but-integrated inter-disciplinary study of the atonement. A short but helpful study that argues we should the cross through the lenses of multiple metaphors/pictures is Stephen Holmes' *The Wondrous Cross*. Holmes shows Scripture tells the story of salvation in many ways, and we need them all. He argues that we need to tell story of the cross in a way that is worthy of God, and that meets the needs of real people in today's world. He also defends penal substitutionary atonement against its contemporary detractors, showing charges such as "divine child abuse" are quite absurd.