



Is Good Friday  
Actually Good?

Rethinking God's Salvation  
and Jesus' Crucifixion

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"But God proved  
his love for us  
in that while we  
were still  
sinners, Christ  
died for us."  
Romans 5:8

What is it to be a sinner?

How does Christ dying deal with that  
problem?



Metaphors: how they work  
...and what happens when  
you mix them

I once was lost but now am found  
'Twas blind, but now I see

# Theories of the Atonement

1. **Cristus Victor:** God does the work for us
2. **Substitution:** Humanity in Christ does the work in place of us
3. **Moral Exemplar:** Humans learn from Christ to do the work

# 1. Cristus Victor

(God does the work for us)

- **The Battle or POW Metaphor:** Sin is an enemy or captivity, and the cross is the victory over it
- **Bible:** "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive." Ephesians 4
- **Church History:** "for to his doom is sure..."  
MLuther, A Mighty Fortress

## 2. Substitution

(Humanity in Christ does the work in place of us)

A. Ransom

B. Satisfaction

C. Penal



## 2A. RANSOM

- **The financial metaphor:** sin is a debt, and the cross is its payment
- **Bible:** "gave his life as a ransom for many."  
Mark 10:45. "You shall take the atonement money from the Israelites . . . before the Lord it will be a reminder to the Israelites of the ransom given for your lives." Exodus 30:16
- **Church History:** "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe." Elvina Hall.

## 2B. Satisfaction

- **The Feudal metaphor:** Sin is our refusal to honor God, and the cross restores ("satisfies") the right order of honor between us and God
- **Bible:** And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him" Colossians 1:21-22.
- **Church History:** Anselm of Canterbury

## 2C. Penal Substitution

- **The legal metaphor:** sin is a crime, and the cross is Jesus taking on the punishment in our place
- **Bible:** "He was wounded for our transgressions."  
Isaiah 53
- **Church History:** "Mine, mine was the transgression, But Thine the deadly pain." O Sacred Head Now Wounded (Bernard of Clairvaux, James Alexander)

### 3. Moral Exemplar

- **Pedagogical metaphor:** sin is forgetting the love we were made to express, and the cross is Jesus teaching us how again.
- **Bible:** "...he loved them to the end"  
John 13, "Go and do likewise" Luke 10.
- **Church History:** Abelard

# A few observations

- There are even more metaphors (blind/seeing, lost/finding, sick/healed, dead/alive)
- The metaphors for sin correlate to a metaphors for the work of the cross
- All involve "sacrifice"

# Sacrifice



God gives himself  
to us, and invites  
us to give  
ourselves to God

"Present yourselves as a living  
sacrifice..." Romans 12

# The Two Sacrifices of the Cross



(So the cross is neither about God doing something outside of us, or about our internal work of doing something for God.. but both!)

Salvation is only "healing" if we  
receive the surgeon's intervention  
and follow post-op instructions



# What if each theory involves the Two Sacrifices?

## - **Cristus Victor**

- Christ overcomes sin, now we can fight evil (deception, injustice, hate) in a battle he has won

## - **Ransom (Substitution)**

- Christ pays off our debt, now we can forgive the debts of others (like the servant in the parable)

## - **Satisfaction (Substitution)**

- Christ has given honor to the Father, now we can meditate on/praise the Father's honor ("Our Father, who art in heaven...")

## - **Penal Substitution**

- Christ has taken on our penalty, now we can practice gratitude

## - **Moral Exemplar**

- Christ has become our teacher, now we can experiment with new works of love