

SOTERIOLOGY (24)

No matter what we go through, Jesus Christ went through more. No matter how much we suffer, He willingly suffered more because of His great compassion. Psalm 103:13 says, "Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him." God's compassion is motivated by His true perspective of us.

Reason #3 - Christ suffered because of His anticipation .

Christ suffered many things in anticipation of Calvary. For example, when He was a baby, He had to be circumcised so that He could perfectly fulfill the O.T. Law, so that He could nail the Law to His work on the cross (Luke 2:21-39; Col. 2:11-14). There were times when Christ experienced terrible anguish in anticipating Calvary (Luke 22:39-46).

There is no question that the life of Christ was a life of much turmoil, trial and tragedy. No suffering of Jesus Christ was by coincidence or chance; it was all by divine design. Every bit of Christ's suffering was part of God's program and plan (John 19:10-11).

QUESTION #13 – What is meant by the theological concepts of active and passive obedience in regard to Jesus Christ?

1) Active obedience.

This refers to the fact that Jesus Christ obeyed all of God's laws and commands perfectly. He met every divine requirement and can legitimately and legally be classified from God's classification as infinitely perfect.

This means that Jesus Christ did no wrong ever and always did what was absolutely right.

2) Passive obedience.

This refers to the fact that Jesus Christ perfectly submitted to the plan of God and willingly endured all necessary suffering in His life and death.

Christ's entire life was one of perfect/continual obedience. He not only continually did no wrong, but He also continually endured all suffering which included His death on the cross.

There have been those who are confused on these two critical theological issues and, as a result, wind up with a faulty theology. For example, the circumcision of Jesus Christ would have shed His blood, but His blood shed at His circumcision would not save a soul. Only Christ's shed blood on the cross saves a soul.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer explains: "Jonathan Edwards declared that the blood of Christ's circumcision when He was eight days old was as efficacious as that which flowed from the thrust of the spear.

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The weakness of such a claim is exposed in the fact that the Word of God does not assign saving value to any obedience of the sufferings of Christ other than that connected with His death. The declaration that He became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross (Phil. 2:8) intimates that a particular obedience was exhibited, or one peculiar to its own purpose, in the cross. It is true that salvation for sinners depends upon Christ's passive obedience in His death sufferings and the offering of Himself without spot to God. Salvation is based on the blood of the cross and not on the blood of circumcision or even the blood which He sweat in the Garden. He provided no redemption, reconciliation, or propitiation when circumcised or baptized" (Vol. 3, pp. 42-43).

QUESTION #14 – How important are Christ's sufferings in His death?

Christ's death on the cross is the essence of biblical salvation. To be ignorant of or to misunderstand the significance of His sufferings on the cross is to miss the very substance of New Testament biblical salvation. The significance of the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross is seen in several passages of Scripture:

- 1) I Cor. 1:23 - The crucifixion of Christ was part of the apostolic message.
- 2) I Cor. 1:24 - The crucifixion of Christ was part of the wisdom of God.
- 3) Gal. 6:14 - The cross of Christ was the boast of Paul.
- 4) Rev. 5:9-11; 12-13 - The cross of Christ will be a supreme feature of eternity.

There is no question that the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross are paramount to true salvation. Dr. John Walvoord wrote: "The significance of Christ's suffering in death is essential to the integrity of Christian theology. If the meaning of the cross as revealed in Scripture is rejected, the whole structure of Christian doctrine falls" (*Abridged Theology*, Vol. 2, pg. 46).

When considering the sufferings of Christ on the cross, there are certain key theological distinctions that need to be made:

Distinction #1 - There is a distinction between the crucifixion and the cross .

We may understand the main distinction this way—the crucifixion is the greatest crime that man could ever commit, executing the Holy Son of God, whereas the cross is the greatest redemptive hope that God could ever provide.

Perhaps the religious group that is most confused on this theological point is the Church of Rome. As Dr. Chafer writes: "Rome is the supreme example of a religion based on the crime of the crucifixion, which, at the same time, is void of any conception of the glory of the cross. There was a tragedy in the crucifixion which none should minimize, but it (tragedy) is not the ground of redemption.

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God is not basing His immeasurable love-gift on the supreme crime of all crimes. He gave His only begotten Son to be His own provided sacrificial Lamb. Christ was God's Lamb—not Pilate's. God provided the redeeming blood—not Caiaphas" (Vol. 3, p. 48).

A good illustration of this misunderstanding of theology is seen in crucifixes which are visibly displayed in various places. The theology of the crucifix is very distorted, for it views the crucifixion as a great tragedy, but neglects to view it as a great divine triumph. If one cannot discern the difference between the crucifixion and the cross, one cannot properly understand biblical salvation.

One of the outstanding discussions on this issue was written by Dr. Henry C. Mabie. The quote is lengthy, but worthy:

"In observing the record of the execution of Jesus, a careful reader will notice the varied mental attitudes of the several types of people who stood before the cross. There are at least five classes of people whose attitudes were fundamentally the same: the common crowd, that "passed by wagging their heads"; the Jewish rulers who had connived the crucifixion; the railing malefactor who rejected Christ; the Roman soldiers, who knew no king but Caesar; and the half-superstitious beholders, who in the cry of "Eli, Eli" supposed Jesus to be calling for Elias. Each of these five classes appealed alike to Christ to demonstrate that He was really the Messiah by coming down from the cross and saving His life. The crowd said, 'Ha, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself and come down from the cross' (Mark 15:29). The rulers said, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save; let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe' (Mark 15:31-32). The malefactor said, 'Art not Thou the Christ? Save Thyself and us' (Luke 23:39). The superstitious said, 'Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take Him down' (Mark 15:36). Each of these, observe, in effect said to Jesus, 'Save Thyself.' These all saw chiefly the tragedy of the crucifixion, they supposed the cross in that sense to be finality in the life of Jesus. Unless Jesus should use His miraculous power to take Himself off the scaffold, supernaturally keep Himself alive, they would not have faith in Him; the demonstration to their minds would be complete that He was not what He claimed to be, the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world. Now, over against these five classes, there is a single shining exception, of one whose position radically differed from that of these types just noted, and he expresses himself differently: The dying penitent was the first and only one among all that spoke out at the execution of Jesus, who did not say, 'Save Thyself.' He did cry, 'Save Me.' And he said 'Jesus'; that is, he used the saving name, which discernment of who and what He really was. He and he alone saw there was something deeper transpiring than the crucifiers recognized; that Jesus really was allowing the sanctuary of His body to be taken down, in order that it might be rebuilt. He discerned that if Jesus would save others from the spiritual necessities of the case, He could not 'save Himself'; He must endure what sin would impose on Saviorhood; he saw that Jesus really was 'the King of Israel,' 'the Chosen of God,' 'the good Shepherd,' laying down His life for the sheep—so laying it down that 'He might take it again.'"

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This penitent was the first and only one at the crucifixion that saw a whole new kingdom lying beyond the impending death of Jesus, of which he might become a member. That kingdom, however, was to be built upon the divine side of what was going on. He saw at least in principle the coming resurrection and the glorious possibilities involved in it. Doubtless he was spiritually, preternaturally endowed with the insight of one on the borderland of the celestial world; and thus saw both sides of the crucifixion event, the basely human and the nobly divine. But he especially saw with great vividness the reality of the reconciliation, saw it from the heavenside, as God sees it—as we all should learn to see it, and he exclaimed in that model prayer, marked with its peculiar illumination, ‘Jesus, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom’ (Luke 23:42); a kingdom conditioned on what was now being borne by Christ. This man and this one only, so far as we know, of all that stood about the Christ on Calvary, apprehended the reconciliation, God’s—an act as both deliberate and permissive—the reconciliation as distinguished from man’s criminality in the crucifixion. There was probably not a disciple that stood there, not one of the women, not even the Savior’s own mother Mary, that would not, if possible, in their sheer inability to perceive what God was achieving, have prevented the completion of Christ’s purpose on the cross. As yet, none of these disciples understood as they did afterwards in the light of Pentecost—the cross of the redemption. This dying man so unfortunately stigmatized in the common epithet, as ‘the dying thief,’ is really the ideal penitent. He and he only, had the vision of the cross of reconciliation. He alone looked beyond the tragic horrors of the crucifying deed. He was absorbed with the larger reality, that Christ, despite man’s treatment of Him, was really bearing away the sin of the world, preparatory to a spiritual kingdom which lay beyond the climacteric of His dying hour. The penitent sought membership in that kingdom, a privilege of grace instantly assured by the reply of Jesus, ‘Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise’ (Luke 23:43)” (Cited from Chafer, Vol. 3, pp. 46-47).

It is a sad reality that most people, even to this day, only see the tragedy of the crucifixion and not the triumph of the cross. But those of a devout mind quickly see the difference between the crucifixion of Christ—the greatest of all crimes, and the cross of Christ—the greatest of all accomplishments.

Distinction #2 - There is a distinction between the evil motive for Christ’s death and the divine motive for Christ’s death.

Dr. Chafer observed, “As is to be expected, there is no point in human history where the divine sovereignty and the human responsibility...come into more vivid juxtaposition than they do in the crucifixion of Christ. On the divine side, Christ’s death was predetermined in such a way that God assumes all responsibility for it, nor could He share its achievement with another. It was His purpose from all eternity. It was foreshadowed in God-wrought types. All its details were predicted by Spirit-empowered prophets. ...On the human side, men were doing and saying precisely what was predicted of them, yet in such a way as that the responsibility fell alone upon them” (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

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When considering responsibility for Christ's death, there are two specific groups that are responsible: 1) The evil group; 2) The divine group. All-in-all there are at least eight specific persons named explicitly in Scripture who are held responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.

1) The evil group.

At least five persons or groups of people are specifically named as being responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. All who are named under this heading are held accountable by God for executing His only begotten Son.

A. Herod is responsible. Acts 4:27a

B. Pontius Pilate is responsible. Acts 4:27b

C. Nations are responsible. Acts 4:27c

There is no article in the original before the word "Gentiles" or "nations" which would seem to suggest that God does not hold one specific nation responsible for the execution of His Son, but He holds the character and quality of every non-Jewish nation responsible for the death of His Son.

D. Israel is responsible. Acts 4:27d; John 18:35

There is no question that God holds Israel responsible for the death of His Son. The truth is many of the troubles Israel has experienced are due to the rejection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14, 22-23; Luke 13:34-35).

E. Satan is responsible.

The execution of Jesus Christ, including the use of those who were involved, was clearly an evil work of Satan. This whole episode was clearly predicted in Eden (Gen. 3:15). One of the major objectives of Satan was to destroy Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:3-4). It is clearly revealed that as the crucifixion drew near, there was a major conflict taking place between Jesus Christ and Satan (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). What looked like a major accomplishment for Satan actually wound up being a major defeat against him and his forces (Col. 2:14-15).

When considering these five groups that God holds responsible for the death of His Son, it may be observed that three of the five already have their doom sealed in eternity: Herod and Pilate are already dead and Satan and his forces are already doomed. There is still hope for Gentiles and Jews. It is an absolutely amazing demonstration of grace, but God stands ready to completely clear Gentiles and Jews of the terrible crime they have committed against His Son if they will acknowledge their sin and believe on Him.

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2) The divine group.

Although the crucifixion was the greatest of all crimes committed by those who are evil, the cross was also the greatest of all accomplishments designed and completely controlled by those who are divine.

It is very clear from the Scriptures that the entire Godhead was involved in orchestrating the death of the Son of God. Although this theological reality can never be fully grasped by any finite mind, the Apostle Paul clearly knew the depth of the cross issue (Rom. 11:33) and prayed that we may be able to somewhat grasp it (Eph. 3:18-19).

When we consider all of the predictions of the death of Christ, including the very statements He would make while on the cross, we must admit God is sovereignly controlling this entire episode. God is pleased to take full responsibility for His Son's death and even though His motive is pure and not evil, He is completely responsible for these events.

As we study the Scriptures concerning the death of Christ, we may observe:

A. God the Father is responsible.

1. Gen. 22:8 - Notice who it is that provides the Lamb.
2. Psalm 22:1 - Notice who has forsaken Christ.
3. Psalm 22:15 - Notice who it is that brought the Son to His death.
4. Isaiah 53:10 - Notice who was responsible for crushing Christ.
5. John 1:29 - Notice whose Lamb it is that is going to be offered.
6. John 3:16 - Notice who it is that gave His only begotten Son.
7. Acts 2:23 - Notice whose predetermined plan it was to deliver Christ.
8. Acts 4:28 - Notice who determined what was to be done to Jesus Christ.
9. Rom. 8:32 - Notice who delivered up Christ as our sacrifice.
10. II Cor. 5:18-21 - Notice who reconciles the world by making Christ the sin-bearer.

Dr. Chafer accurately stated: "Human hands might inflict physical suffering and death as any victim would die, but only the hand of God could make Christ a sin offering, or could lay on Him the iniquity of others (II Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6)" (Vol. 3, p. 51).

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There is no question that the value of Christ's sufferings to God the Father is something far beyond any human computation. The death of the Son of God is of such infinite value to the Father that it actually solves the dilemma of God's grace versus God's justice. The sufferings of Christ on the cross make it possible for God to declare a sinner to be righteous in His sight. As Dr. Chafer observed: "That the one who is saved will not perish, but is in present possession of eternal life, that he is united to Christ to share His peace and glory; that he shall, when he sees his Savior, be like Him, could never accurately be appraised by men" (*Ibid.*, p. 51).

As great a mystery as this may be, the truth is God the Father was responsible for the sufferings and death of God the Son.

B. God the Son is responsible.

There are several passages that would illustrate and specifically declare that God the Son was directly responsible for His own death:

1. Gen. 22:1-10 - Notice the nonresistance and perfect conformity to the will of the father in Isaac, a sacrificial type of Christ.
2. Isaiah 53:7 - Notice the nonresistant, non-complaining attitude of the Lamb (Mark 14:60-61; Luke 23:9).
3. John 10:17-18 - Notice Christ's own statement about His own death.
4. Luke 23:46 - Notice Christ's total control over His own death.
5. Eph. 5:25 - Notice Christ gave Himself up for the Church.
6. Gal. 2:20 - Notice Christ delivered Himself up for the individual.
7. Titus 2:13-14 - Notice Christ gave Himself up for redemptive purposes.
8. Matt. 20:28 - Notice Christ gave Himself as a ransom payment.
9. I John 3:16 - Notice Jesus Christ laid down His life for us.

The fact that Jesus Christ laid down His own life is very important. Had God the Father mandated that God the Son must suffer and die contrary to His own will, a terrible and immoral action would have been committed. Theoretically, had not God the Son willingly laid down His own life, God the Father would have been responsible for murdering God the Son. Since the death penalty is only for those who have sinned, and since the Son of God never sinned, His death would have been the ultimate crime. Had not God the Son willingly agreed to His own death, a terrible act of brutal murder of one totally innocent would have been committed by God the Father.

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These passages make it very clear that the Son of God was in total agreement and in total cooperation with God the Father. He willingly offered Himself on our behalf. The writer of Hebrews really captures this point when he writes: “Then I said, ‘Behold I have come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God’” (Heb. 10:7).

God the Son was responsible for His own death. No human or angel could have ever dominated the Son of God contrary to His own will. His death was His own doing.

C. God the Spirit is responsible.

We may also conclude from statements of the Bible that God the Spirit was also part of the Holy Trinity that brought about the death of Christ:

1. Luke 1:35 - Notice it was the Holy Spirit that was responsible for getting the Son of God into the world.
2. Luke 2:25-35 - Notice it was the Holy Spirit who revealed the Christological program to Simeon, which included Christ’s suffering and death (v. 30).
3. Heb. 9:14 - Notice the Holy Spirit is intimately connected to Christ’s death.

All three Persons of the Godhead were responsible for Christ’s death on Calvary. Again we cite Dr. Chafer:

“In the greater work of redemption—specifically the sufferings and death of Christ—it is the Son who suffers and dies, but the Father gives the Son and the Son is offered by the Eternal Spirit. Here is revealed the deepest unified action and cooperation. The Son cries, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46), yet it is affirmed that it was the very God to whom He cried that was, at that precise moment, ‘in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself’ (II Cor. 5:19). To finite minds all this is paradoxical, yet it serves to emphasize anew the deeper truth that, though there are three Persons in the Godhead, there is but one essence. Neither the Father nor the Spirit become incarnate. The action of the Son was always according to the will of the Father and never more so than in His death (Phil. 2:8). All the Son wrought was in the power of the Spirit and never more perfectly than in His death. Objectively, not only did the Father give the Son (John 3:16), but He sent the Son (John 3:17), He loved the Son (John 3:35), He is glorified in the Son (John 14:13), and He glorified the Son (Acts 3:13); yet wholly consonant is this truth with a deeper reality, namely, that the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30; 14:9-11; 17:21). Thus in the larger revelation, which men may not comprehend, the triune God is the Savior of the world. Neglect of this aspect of truth has always resulted in notions respecting God which are injurious” (*Ibid.*, p. 53).

One of the passages that clearly demonstrate the human side of the crucifixion and the divine side of the cross is John 19:10-11. From Pilate’s perspective, the decision whether or not to execute Christ was completely his (v. 10). From Christ’s perspective, the decision to execute Jesus Christ was completely God’s (v. 11).

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There have been various interpretations of who is referred to by Christ by the words “authority...from above.” Some have suggested it refers to Judas (18:2), some say Caiaphas (18:28), some say the Jews (18:35a) and some say the chief priests (18:35b).

The truth is God is the One who turns leaders’ minds any way He wants (i.e. Proverbs 21:1). God was the One sovereignly working behind the scenes because the salvation of sinners demanded His Son’s death. Therefore, Pilate was functioning in a program far beyond what he ever realized. God had ordained this entire scene.

It is beneficial to understand something of the method of Christ’s death:

“Crucifixion was Eastern in origin. The Persians practiced it, and Alexander the Great seemed to have learned of it from them. Phoenicia, famed for its barbaric practices, frequently employed crucifixion. Rome apparently borrowed it from Carthage and perfected it as a means of capital punishment. After being sentenced, the condemned person was flogged with a leather whip loaded with metal or bone. He was then required to shoulder the cross beam and carry it to the place of execution. This beam was approximately six feet long and weighed about thirty pounds. This was affixed to the upright stake which was already in place at the execution site. Nails about seven inches long with a head (to keep the body from sliding off) were driven through the hands and feet of the victim. Sometimes ropes were also used to keep the body on the cross. The Romans had learned to push the feet upward when they nailed them to the cross so that the victim could lean on the nail and push himself upward momentarily in order to breathe easier. Death rarely came in less than thirty-six hours, though most people survived two or three days before they died. Insatiable thirst, pain from scourging, cramps, dizziness, public shame, and the horror of knowing what lay ahead before the release of death, all combined to make crucifixion a horrible means of dying.

This is what men did to our Lord. And God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He died to pay the penalty of sin, and He died for you and me” (*Basic Theology*, p. 284).

When pursuing a study of soteriology, there are at least three major areas of doctrinal information that must be systematized and analyzed:

Area #1 – The accomplishments of the soteriological work of Jesus Christ.

Under this field of theological study, things accomplished by Jesus Christ in His finished work on Calvary must be considered. Without the finished work of Christ, there is no salvation.

Area#2 – The appropriation of the soteriological work of Jesus Christ.

This is the study of the appropriation of the work of Jesus Christ to one who believes. This is an extremely important area of study that must not ever be overlooked.

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Area #3 – The application of the soteriological work of Jesus Christ.

This area of study emphasizes the practical ways in which salvation may be applied and worked out in the life. It focuses on the type of life that ought to be evidenced by one who is saved (Eph. 2:10).

When any one of these areas is neglected in a study of the doctrine of salvation, doctrinal distortions and confusion will be the result. For example, some fail to distinguish between the accomplishments of Christ and the appropriation of Christ's saving work. The result is a distorted view that concludes since Christ died for all, then all must be saved. Others fail to distinguish between the judicial appropriation of salvation and the practical application of it. As a result, some wind up distorted and confused believing some system of human works is necessary for being saved.

Each area of soteriology must be independently studied in order to form an accurate biblical picture of the true doctrine of salvation.

Dr. Chafer said that the true doctrine of salvation will focus on three areas: "...a foreordained Savior, a foreordained salvation, and a foreordained service" (Vol. 3, p. 54). Each of these areas must be studied and understood in this precious doctrine of salvation.

QUESTION #15 – What was accomplished by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ?

It is very clear from statements Christ Himself made that the cross was a key reason Christ came to this earth (John 10:17-18; 19:10-11). It is clear, then, that it is imperative that we study as precisely as possible the accomplishments of Christ on the cross.

Dr. Charles Ryrie gives a good illustration of the need for a systematic focus on the things accomplished by the death of Christ when he writes: "For example, it is proper and biblical to view the death of Christ as a great display of the love of God, or to see it as an example for us to be self-sacrificing (these are biblical truths, John 15:13; Rom. 5:8), but if these comprised the only meaning of the death of Christ, there would be no eternal value in it. It must provide a substitution and a payment for sin, or the example means relatively little" (*Basic Theology*, p. 286).

There at least 14 main accomplishments we would like to consider concerning the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.

Accomplishment #1 - Christ's sufferings and death were a substitute for sinners .

This means that Jesus Christ suffered and died as a substitute for us. He died in our place, in our stead and for our benefit. He bore the penalty for our sins that we, ourselves, otherwise would have had to have borne.

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Dr. Lewis Berkhof explains: “When man fell away from God, he as such owed God reparation (restituting compensation). But he could atone for his sin only by suffering eternally the penalty affixed to transgression. That is what God might have required in strict justice, and would have required, if He had not been actuated by love and compassion for the sinner. As a matter of fact, however, God appointed a vicar in Jesus Christ to take man’s place, and this vicar atoned for sin and obtained an eternal redemption for man” (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 375).

Mr. John Miles further states: “We believe in the substitutional view of Christ’s death. By this we mean that Christ took our place. He suffered the penalty for sin that rightly belonged to us. When He died on Calvary He was dying in our place to the end that we might be forgiven and blessed in Him” (John Miles, *Doctrine Notes*, p. 11).

Even though we shall see that some attempt to deny this precious doctrinal matter, there is absolutely no doubt that the Bible clearly supports and defends it:

(Defense #1) - Certain words testify of the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sufferings.

Two prepositions from the Greek language very clearly establish the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sufferings:

1) The preposition Anti (ἀντι).

The basic meaning of this preposition is instead of, in the place of and for. In other words, when this preposition is used, something takes the place of something else (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 40).

This particular preposition definitely shows up in the context of the sufferings of Jesus Christ:

A. Matt. 20:28 - “...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”

B. Mark 10:45 - “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

There is absolutely no doubt from N.T. usage that this preposition has the substitutionary concept in view:

a. Matt. 2:22 - “... in place of his father...”

b. Matt. 5:38 - “...An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

c. Luke 11:11 - “...a snake instead of a fish...”

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Dr. Charles Ryrie accurately observed: “Anti demands the interpretation that our Lord came to die in our place and as our substitute. It cannot be understood otherwise, and this, of course, was Christ’s own interpretation of the meaning of His sacrifice” (*Basic Theology*, p. 288).

Dr. Chafer gives helpful insight also when he writes: “In as definite a manner as language may be made to serve, this word (anti) means substitution—one taking the place of another” (Vol. 3, p. 56).

2) The preposition Huper (ὑπέρ).

The basic meaning of this preposition is instead of, on behalf of, for, plus for the benefit of, over, above and beyond. In other words, not only does this preposition imply substitution, but it also implies a substitution that is for the benefit of and beyond the thing the substitution is taking the place of (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 457).

This particular preposition, when connected to the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, not only implies that Christ died in the place of sinful men, but he died for their benefit as a substitute far beyond or above any other sacrifice that has ever been offered. The implications are humbling because not only is Christ taking the place of sinful man, and not only is He doing this for the benefit of sinful man, but He is also far beyond the value of sinful man and any other type of sacrifice that has ever been offered.

There are a plethora of passages that use this preposition in the context of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ:

- A. Luke 22:19-20 - “This is my body which is given for you...This cup which is poured out for you.”
- B. John 6:51 - “...the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is MY flesh.”
- C. John 15:13 - “Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”
- D. Rom. 5:6-8 - “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- E. Rom. 8:32 - “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all...”
- F. II Cor. 5:14-15 - “...one died for all, therefore all died: and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf .
- G. II Cor. 5:21 - “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf ...”

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H. Gal. 3:13 - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us...”

I. Eph. 5:2 - “...Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us...”

J. Eph. 5:25 - “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

K. Heb. 2:9 - “...He might taste death for everyone.”

L. I Peter 3:18 - “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God...”

From any honest, objective evaluation of the words and context surrounding the use of the preposition “for,” we must conclude that Jesus Christ was not only a substitute, but a substitute far beyond and above the sinful men for whom He was substituted. His substitutionary death was for the benefit of all sinners. He was the ultimate substitute, not only taking our place, but taking our place for our benefit.

These two important prepositions, put into writing by inspiration of God, clearly teach that Christ’s sufferings and death were a substitute for sinners.

(Defense #2) - The concept of vicarious suffering testifies of the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sufferings.

Although the term “vicar” or “vicarious” is not found in the Bible, the theological concept of it is most definitely found in the Bible, and is, in fact, an important concept concerning the substitutionary work that Christ accomplished through His sufferings and death.

The term “vicar” refers to some official agent who acts in the place of another. The term “vicarious” means that some official agent takes the place of another, by serving or acting as his substitute.

Dr. Chafer does an excellent job of discussing this when he writes:

“...the divine permission for a substitute to act for man in his relation to God is one of the most fundamental provisions of saving grace. As fallen man stands obligated to God as an offender—both in his federal head and in himself—against his Creator and against the divine government, he owes an obligation which he could never pay in time or eternity. Unless a vicar shall intervene there is no hope for any member of this fallen race. No sin-laden human being could be vicar for a fellow being. The vicar must be sinless as well as prepared to bear those immeasurable judgments which divine holiness must ever impose upon sin” (Vol. 3, p. 58).

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Because God has a character that is perfectly holy, His justice can never be altered, softened or modified in any way. Any rebellion, sin or trespass against God demands punishment. His pure justice cannot ever overlook the failure. But on the other hand, His pure love, grace and mercy desires to forgive, restore and maintain fellowship with the sinner. It is precisely at this point where the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ becomes so critical. Christ, in connection with the eternal plan of God, conceived, agreed upon and carried out by all three members of the Godhead, stepped into history as the ONLY substitute who could take the place of and bear the penalty of sinful men and meet all the divine demands of justice while still providing forgiveness, restoration and fellowship between God and sinful men.

From man's perspective, there are only two possible options for satisfying the payment for his sin, which the holy justice of God demands.

A. He must satisfy God's demands personally.

When a sinner chooses to reject Jesus Christ and refuses to rely totally on Christ to satisfy all righteous demands of God, he chooses to face God personally for his own sin. Such a decision will ALWAYS result in eternal damnation. In light of the fact that God Himself has provided a sacrifice for sinful men, it is quite evident that God is not about to accept any personal human attempt to atone for one's own sin.

B. He must satisfy God's demands vicariously.

When a sinner chooses to accept Jesus Christ by placing total faith in Him for salvation, he chooses to allow the official Son of God to completely represent him. He allows Christ to make the full payment to God for his sin, including the complete bearing of the penalty he deserves. Such a decision ALWAYS results in eternal salvation.

Personal satisfaction is the way of works. Vicarious satisfaction is the way of faith. Personal satisfaction represents all that man can do for himself. Vicarious satisfaction represents all that God has accomplished for man. Personal satisfaction is the way of eternal death. Vicarious satisfaction is the way of eternal life.

In order for a vicar to be able to act as an official representative for man and be totally acceptable to God, God must appoint Him. It is His holiness that has been violated, it is His wrath that needs to be appeased, it is only His grace, love and mercy that can save. Therefore, in order for a vicar to be able to accomplish all of this work, He must be appointed by God.

Obviously the one who God appointed is Jesus Christ! There is no other person who could vicariously meet all of the demands. Dr. Berkhof says, "...God appointed a vicar in Jesus Christ to take man's place and this vicar atoned for sin and obtained an eternal redemption for man" (*Systematic Theology*, p. 375).