

Hi guys!

Welcome to the companion for this week's podcast!

Last week we discussed what the plan and motivation for this series were, and we reviewed the 4 things we're looking at throughout the next few weeks, which were:

- How Jesus saved us
- What Jesus saved us *from*
- What Jesus saved us *for*
- Why Jesus saved us

In today's session we're looking at *how* Jesus saved us.

This might get a little technical in places, so hang in there, because this is an important part of our belief system as Christians!



To remind you all, we're trying to wrestle with the idea that God might not judge or condemn anyone, rather everyone has the chance at eternal life even after death, regardless of their choices in their life. This idea that everyone can be saved, regardless of their faith in Christ, is called universalism. Usually, this doctrine is driven by the societally-prized idea of inclusivity.

To be clear, whilst this idea of universalism and inclusivity has become more popular in recent years, this is not a foundational Christian doctrine. That means, most Christians do not believe this.

So why is it that more and more people are beginning to believe it? I want to try and be even-handed here, so what we're going to look at for the rest of this episode is not me saying 'and here's why it's categorically wrong', these are just some logical issues as I see them. You are free to believe whatever you have come to logically accept as true, and it's up to you to put this up against scripture to verify it's truth, prayerfully and humbly.

But let's move on...

The primary focus seems to be the over-emphasis of God's all-loving nature, over and above any of the other attributes of God. The reasoning goes that an all-loving God would neither want nor allow someone to suffer, certainly not eternally in Hell, because that would not be loving. That's not the whole teaching, but it's the basis of it.

I must admit, if you were someone who did not have a robust understanding of all of God's attributes, you might well find this line of thinking logical and attractive! It certainly is comforting for a lot of people, I'm sure, to think that they and their loved ones would not suffer an eternal torment in Hell.

So, what is the issue with thinking like this, then?

I think firstly, I'll state now that we aren't dealing with the idea of Hell or eternal torment today – that will be done later.

Secondly, we need to ensure we have the correct understanding of God! Yes, He is all-loving, but He is also morally-perfect, perfectly just, and the righteous perfect judge. Additionally, being all-loving doesn't necessarily mean you just want nice things for everyone! It also means you want the *best* for everyone, which as we've discussed is very different, and is very different to what the world thinks is best. With that said, it's also important to note that we can't logically codify everything about God because we aren't an eternal, timeless, omniscient, omnipotent, morally-perfect, self-sufficient being. There will always be some things we need to take on faith.

So, on the subject of the incompatibility of an all-loving God and the existence of Hell, I don't personally see the issue. I think William Lane Craig said it best when he said *"far from being incompatible with a good God, Hell is actually a manifestation of God's goodness!"*

Which you can watch here:



That might sound weird, but here's what I mean – God is absolute justice, He is perfectly just. If God were to simply ignore or excuse sin, He wouldn't be just and that wouldn't be good.

Think about how important this element of justice is! When we consider evil things, it brings us *huge* solace to think that, even if they evade justice in this world, then justice in the next is guaranteed!

Consider the Nazis who devised and implemented the holocaust! The scientists experimenting on pregnant women and infants, gassing and murdering men, women and children, lining up Jews to shoot in the head and drag into a mass grave, taking their gold teeth and jewellery as perks of the job... Not every single person involved in this was brought to justice. Some were even hired by the American government, I believe, through project paperclip! Doesn't it bring us hope and peace that there was perfect justice awaiting them after death?

It's important to note, I am not talking about *vengeance*. This would not be a part of God's perfect goodness and justice – we're talking about Justice. A penalty given for a wrong-doing which is commensurate to the wrong-doing.

So, in response to the question 'how can an all-loving God send people to Hell?' we might ask 'well, how can a perfectly just God send all people to Heaven?'

This means that in response to the question 'how can an all-loving God send people to Hell?' we can quite easily respond 'because of God's perfect justice'. The question then becomes 'how can a perfectly just God send anyone to Heaven?!'

Maybe that doesn't resonate with you but for me, personally, that's actually a tougher question to answer! Perhaps it's because my earliest teaching from sermons when I first got saved came from more reformed thinkers and teachers (your John Pipers and Mark Driscolls), I don't struggle at all with the idea of Hell or more accurately a final punishment. I find Heaven more perplexing!

The only answer I can come to is Jesus. Like I always say, it's all about Jesus!

It's *only* in the perfect love and sacrifice by Jesus that we find any explanation for why an all-loving and perfectly just and good God would put such sinful fallen people into eternal paradise with Him!

This brings us to our next element – *how* exactly did Jesus save us?

If we consider ourselves as the Bible does, we are sinful fallen people who routinely and by our own God-given free will turn from God at any opportunity.

What needed to occur to secure our salvation?

Let's look at the Biblical idea of sin and how absolution, or forgiveness, has occurred.

Throughout the Bible, particularly the OT, God equates sin with blood (Leviticus 17:11). We see this in the NT in Romans, when Paul explains the transactional nature of sin, he says "*the wage for sin is death*" (that's Romans 6:23). As I say, throughout the Bible blood is used as the symbol of this death.

In the OT we see the judgement of God on the unrepentant and unrighteous Egyptians. The call goes out to the people – God's angel of death is coming to deliver retribution for the sins of our captors. So, the Israelites slaughtered a lamb and daubed its blood on their doorposts to alert God's angel of death to pass over them – blood is the symbol of being right with God and the staying of judgement – the wage of sin. Also, lambs are pure and white, unblemished, like Christ – this is why he is the Lamb of God.

Additionally, in the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur two goats, unblemished and white, were taken and one of them slaughtered. The blood of one was sprinkled on the other, and the Israelites would confess their sins onto this goat, which would then be taken to the holy of holies in the tent. This goat would then be let loose to signify our sins being taken away – hence the term scapegoat. Once again, blood is important in imputing sins to another and being able to be brought to God.

All of this is symbolising what Jesus would do for us, through the shedding of His blood, on the cross. Earlier I said we should always try to justify our beliefs on what scripture teaches – I can be wrong, Greg can be wrong, William Lane Craig can be wrong, Mark Driscoll can be wrong, but the Bible can't be, so let's do that. Jesus' blood stays the judgement of God and covers us (Ephesians 1:7), because of His sinless purity as the lamb of God (2 Corinthians 5:21), upon whom our sins are imputed (Hebrews 9:28) and taken away (1 Peter 2:24), so that we can be sanctified and worthy of being in the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-22). Now, we could quite happily leave it there and have what St. Anselm called the satisfactory theory of atonement. If you want to do that, that's totally fine! That's what the majority of Christians, I believe, actually do, intellectually.

However, if you want to go deeper, let me offer more theory.

So, with all that in mind, what actually happened to Jesus on the cross?

As we see above, there's an interesting idea put forward in 2 Corinthians 5:21 when Paul says "*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

Paul is saying that Jesus *became* sin. This has led to a reformed teaching called imputation of sins, that is, Jesus actually took on our sins as if He had Himself committed them. The theology of imputation is not one that is completely accepted, I just bring it up to give you some options for your own thinking and discovery!

At the very least, we can look at the legal understanding of 'imputation' to get a better understanding of what may have happened!

So, imagine if someone were to drive your car with your permission and they got into a wreck – whilst they did the thing that was wrong, crashing into someone else, it would be *you* that is held liable as if you had done it. The same thing holds true for people not wearing seatbelts in your car when you're driving – as the driver of the car, you're considered to be responsible for all that goes on within it, so if a passenger rides without a seatbelt, despite it being totally their choice and you having no real way to control them and stop them, you would get the punishment rather than them as if you had not worn a seatbelt.

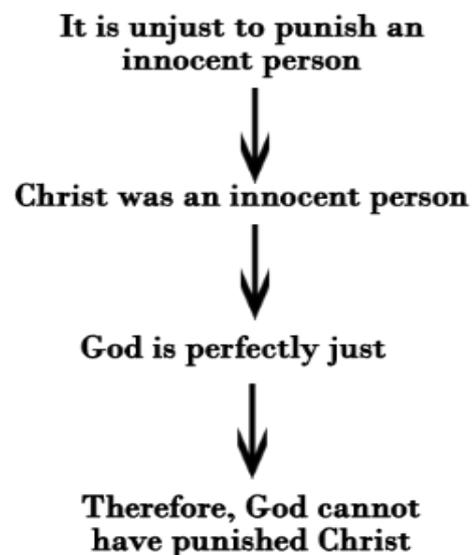
Do you see how this works? (If not, [here's a short article on Reasonable Faith](#) explaining it)...

You might then say that this seems un-just! This isn't uncommon, don't worry.

It's sometimes argued that Jesus dying for our sins isn't really truly fair to exempt us from our sin – in the terms of law, generally speaking someone else, who is innocent, can't be tried for someone who is guilty as if they were guilty (although we now know this isn't always the case, due to something called vicarious liability or imputation).

It makes God's punishment of Jesus immoral and unjust, violating one of God's core characteristics.

Here is how this is formulated:



Let's look over this quickly.

Firstly, here are some things to consider on premise (1):

Was Christ punished, or did he suffer?

You see, it could be argued that God gave himself as Jesus to suffer the withdrawal of himself in our place. Jesus was not necessarily *punished*, he suffered what would have been our punishment. This is moot, however, if we take on the previously mentioned legal understanding of vicarious liability.

Secondly, on premise (2):

We have the doctrine of 'imputation of sins' (a reformed teaching) – Jesus had our sins imputed onto him and he became guilty.

We also have the legal precedent of 'vicarious liability', in which a non-guilty party in a position of authority can be tried in the place of, or in addition to, the guilty party (an

employer being also prosecuted for the wrongdoing of an employee is another example here).

Finally, it's important to note that sacrificing Himself to lovingly cover the sins of billions is still consistent with God's nature (self-sacrificially giving His own life to fulfil the demands of His own justice).

For further information, you can go to this video of the atonement being discussed, from Capturing Christianity:



I would recommend listening to the podcast again if you're uncertain at this point, because when you listen twice you learn twice as much, repetition is very important for learning. Again, just to point this out – I've presented several variations of atonement theories. It's up to *you* to decide which you believe to be true, check it against the scripture, listen to people more intelligent than me, and discuss it with others and God to come to a decision. I just want to present the data as I see and know it.

So, with that in mind, here is our scripture of the week! We're back at 2 Corinthians 5:21 – *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Why is this our scripture?

That should be obvious, hopefully.

I want us to meditate on this scripture this week. Wrestle with it! What does it mean He became our sin? How can someone *be* sin? Does it just mean He paid the price or that He became guilty?

Those are our questions of the week also, so that's all wrapped up in a nice neat little bow.

So, that's all for today!

Next week, we will be looking at what Jesus saved us *from*.

As always guys, don't be afraid to get into the youth whatsapp chat and let us know how you are, what you're up to and what you're thinking. Get your prayer requests ready for Thursday and get involved in our Bible study! And you can grab us on Instagram @chawnyouth.

Speak to you next week!