**What Is The Gospel? (Andy Acreman, TCF)**

**Week 2 – Recognising Jesus’ Death and Resurrection**

***Romans 3:24-26 NIV.*** *…and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25] God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood-to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished- [26] he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

***Romans 3:24-26 ESV.*** *…and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

**Today, I will cover the following points:**

1. **Paying a Ransom – how?**
2. **What is Propitiation or a ‘sacrifice of atonement’?**
3. **How was the Blood of Christ effective?**
4. **How was God able to combine justice with love?**
5. **Paying a Ransom**

*V24. … and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

* Redemption means buying back or ‘ransoming’ someone who has been kidnapped or is a prisoner or a slave - in order to set them free. The kidnapper or slave owner must be paid so that the ownership of the slave is transferred to someone else – who can then choose to free them.
* Mankind has become the slave of sin and of the devil. This imprisonment came about as a result of God’s judgment on us, as a result of our sins. He symbolically ejected us from the Garden of Eden and into the devil’s world! If we ever want to return, then God must be placated or compensated, with some kind of price to be paid on our behalf.
* The scriptures acknowledge this difficulty: *Psalm 49:7-9 NIV. No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them- [8] the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough- [9] so that they should live on forever and not see decay.*
* If a family member of yours was kidnapped or sold into slavery, how would you raise the funds to pay their ransom? Bank loan? Crowd funding? Rich benefactor? We certainly have no resources of our own. We would have to receive the money as a free gift in some way.
* By God’s grace, Jesus has provided us with the price of the ransom. *He* is worth it. He said it Himself: M*ark 10:45 NIV. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

1. **What is Propitiation?**

*[25] God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood-to be received by faith.* **OR…**

*[25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*

* The word **‘Propitiation’** is also translated *‘sacrifice of atonement’.* It is also the name for the gold cover on top of the ark of the Covenant in the temple – called a *‘mercy seat’.* **‘Propitiation’** has the meaning of deflecting wrath and judgment that would otherwise be directed at the worshiper. This word is rich in Old Testament symbolism and in legal terminology too.
* So where did this ‘wrath’ come from? How about: *Romans 1:18 NIV. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness…* **All** the first 2 ½ chapters of Romans are about the wrath and judgment of God.
* We are talking about God’s righteous anger against all sin and all sinners. It is *not* an emotion, not some kind of ‘out of control’ backlash, but rather the due punishment from a righteous God who is Judge of the whole earth. It is measured, considered, targeted, full of holy fire, and completely necessary. God does not have a choice, or He would be denying his own nature.
* It is due to fall on every unredeemed sinner: *John 3:36 NIV. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.*
* Even Jesus has this nature within him: *Revelation 6:16 NIV. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!*
* This is God’s righteous anger against both sin and sinners. Sin is not some kind of separate ‘baggage’ that we carry, it is/was an integral part of our nature. So if sin gets punished, *we* have to get punished at the same time.
* If you were in an aircraft and a heat-seeking missile was aimed at you, what could the pilot do? Deflect it with Anti-Missile Flares. [Picture]
* If you were caught in a gigantic forest fire, where could you go to be safe? Where the fire had burned out already. [Picture]
* These pictures graphically illustrate the meaning of ‘Propitiation’. It is a way of hiding from or deflecting the wrath of God from you onto someone else!
* *1 John 4:10 NIV. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice / propitiation for our sins.*
* Notice that God the **Father** provided the sacrifice. It wasn’t that Jesus ‘twisted his arm’. The Father *wanted* to set us free and to forgive us. *“God so loved the world that He GAVE His only Son…”.*

**How was the Blood of Christ Effective?**

* Look back at Exodus 12:21-23 NIV.*Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. [22] Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. [23] When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.*
* Then in Leviticus 16:15-16 NIV. *"He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. [16] In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.*
* Blood represents a life laid down in death. It is proof that death has occurred. Blood means ‘a sacrificial death’.
* When John the Baptist said of Jesus: *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”,* he was identifying the true sacrifice that God was providing.
* 2000 years ago, at Passover time, the lambs that had been bred in Bethlehem were herded through the Sheep Gate into Jerusalem. At the same time, the Lamb of God, born in Bethlehem, was riding on a donkey through that same gate.
* He was crucified and his blood was shed as evidence that he was giving his life to pay the ransom for sinners. *“The wages of sin is death” –* so Jesus had to pay with his life! This was punishment from Almighty God – Jesus on the receiving end of the wrath of God for *our* sins, not His. Called *substitutionary atonement.*
* Imagine if a junior member of our Café staff had a fit of anger and smashed up a dozen or so cups and saucers; they could *atone* for this by apologising, by sweeping up the mess, and by paying for replacement crockery. But if they had really gone wild and had completely destroyed everything in the Café - thousands of pounds of equipment – they would *not* be able to atone for it. Imagine then, if a complete stranger came in, took pity on them, and offered to clear up their mess and to fund all the replacement items, *that* would be *substitutionary atonement.*
* *2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV. God made him who had* ***no*** *sin to* ***be*** *sin for us, so that in him we might* ***become*** *the righteousness of God.* *Substitutionary atonement.* It was Him **INSTEAD** of us. The great *‘Instead’!*
* Punishment of eternal death followed by physical death (Psalm 22:1-2 ESV. *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? [2] O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest’.*) Eternal death is separation from God. This was the opposite way round from mankind’s destiny of physical death *followed* by eternal death. This is why Jesus Himself asked if there was a different solution!
* These punishments were *finite.* Three hours of total separation from God the Father, being given over to the realm of Satan. Three hours without hope. The Eternal One, without hope – in Hell. *After* the three hours of darkness on the cross, Jesus declared: *“It is finished!” (‘Tetelestai’ = at the bottom of a bill: “paid in full”).* Only *then* did he experience physical death. Then in three days he was resurrected. *Revelation 1:18 NIV. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*
* He became sin – in Himself … 2 Corinthians 5:21… so that we become Christlike
* He became a pariah: separated from God and from us… *Psalm 22:6-7,11 NIV. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. [7] All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads... [11] Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.*
* **Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12. 750 years B.C.** *Vv 4-6 NIV. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. [5] But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. [6] We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
* Important point: **Only by FAITH in His shed blood do we gain the benefits of it. Only through FAITH does He become OUR Propitiation.**

* **Warning:** Let’s be biblical on what the Blood of Christ does for us – it *does not* protect us from Satan or from the forces of darkness. Let’s avoid invoking the Blood as a form of Christian ‘magic’ or superstition. It’s *not* a talisman to ward off evil spirits! The Blood of Christ does just one thing: it protects us from the judgment and wrath of a Holy God and enables us to gain entrance to the presence of God and the full benefits of the New Covenant. The Blood deals with God the Righteous Judge, *not* with the devil. It changes God’s actions towards us, not Satan’s. We have full protection *in any case* under the New Covenant.
* Even Revelation 12:11 does not mean what many Christians *think* it does! It simply deals with the accusations of Satan, by pointing him to our new-found righteousness obtained through faith in the Blood of Christ. As we declare our testimony of faith in Christ, all accusations must melt away.

**How was God able to Combine Justice with Love?**

* God had a problem – in fact, potentially *two* problems! His justice demanded that He must pour out his wrath upon those who had committed sins, both in the past and in the future. But, in His mercy and grace, He had promised to save those who trusted in Him. How could *both* aims be accomplished simultaneously? The atonement sacrifice of Christ accomplished this…
* *V25b. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-* …because he had intentionally ‘passed over’ or ‘overlooked’ historical sins – he had swept them under the carpet for a while! These sins were *not* exactly *dealt with*, they were just *not punished.* On hold. God exercised self-restraint.

* These were sins committed before Calvary, under the *Old Covenant.* See also Hebrews 9:15. God exercised patience and withheld the punishment, but eventually the price had to be paid! Since the blood of animals could not take away sins – but just covered them for a while - the blood of Jesus had to do this. The saints of old, like Abraham and David, looked forward to the sacrifice that God himself would supply (Genesis 22:8 ESV. *Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.").*
* So God has now publicly dealt with all the *past* sins that he overlooked and failed to punish – demonstrating his justice at the same time, since he punished Christ on the cross for all those past sins.
* But then, there was a second problem: how was God going to deal with sins committed *after* Christ’s death and resurrection? O*ur* sins?
* *Romans 3:26 NIV. …He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*
* Being ‘justified’ means more than being ‘forgiven’; it means ‘being declared righteous’ – exactly like Jesus is. Our sins have been paid for and removed – as far as the East is from the West – and we have been given the same acceptance to God the Father that Jesus has.
* So, again, the atoning death of Jesus has purchased forgiveness for *all* believers since the date of the crucifixion and the resurrection. At the cross, God was declaring publicly – for all time – his eternal justice *and* his eternal love. He is both JUST and the JUSTIFIER of those who have faith in Jesus.

**In Summary…**

* **God, by His grace, has ransomed us from all sin’s punishments and harms.**
* **Jesus was the atoning sacrifice who deflected the wrath of God from us.**
* **By dying, Jesus took our place and our punishment – his shed blood proved that the price had been fully paid. It requires us to receive this by Faith.**
* **God was able to satisfy both his justice and his love towards us.**

**Children’s Hymn: Mrs C. F. Alexander (1847)**

***1. There is a green hill far away,  
Outside a ci­ty wall,  
Where the dear Lord was cru­ci­fied,  
Who died to save us all.***

***2. We may not know, we can­not tell,  
What pains He had to bear;  
But we be­lieve it was for us  
He hung and suf­fered there.***

***3. He died that we might be for­giv’n,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to Heav’n,  
Saved by His pre­cious blood.***

***4. There was no oth­er good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He on­ly could un­lock the gate  
Of Hea­ven and let us in.***

***5. O dear­ly, dear­ly has He loved,  
And we must love Him, too,  
And trust in His re­deem­ing blood,  
And try His works to do.***