

# THE BIG WORDS OF THE CROSS, 1

## Introduction

1. **Texts:** “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (**Romans 5:17**).
2. This morning we will look at just four of the Big Words of the Cross.

## I. ATONEMENT

1. Atonement, that is, **being made one with God**, is one of the great themes of the Bible—it is what separates Christianity from all the other religions.
2. Sin violates and eliminates holiness.
  1. Through sin man separated himself from a holy God.
  2. No sin can enter heaven.
  3. Every sin and every sinner will be punished—either at the cross or in hell.
  4. Can man in sin be saved? If so, how, when, and by whom?
3. John the Baptist was privileged to announce, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (**John 1:29, 36**).
  1. Jesus did not come to seek the saved, but to seek the lost (**Luke 19:10**).
  2. Calvary is the incredible revelation that God is a pardoning God so that atonement is God’s gift of love!
4. Obviously, atonement is beyond our comprehension and compensation.
5. There cannot be true fellowship with God without atonement.
  1. Jesus suffered the penalty that sin deserved.
  2. Therefore, sinners depend on the crucifixion.
  3. If sinners could have been saved another way, then God would have been a fiend to sacrifice His only Son.
  4. The accusers unknowingly spoke a profound truth: “He saved others; He cannot save Himself” (**Mark 15:31**; see **Luke 23:35**).
  5. Jesus has no peers and no rivals--He is the Lion of Judah (**Revelation 5:5**), but He is also the Lamb of God.
  6. We identify more easily with the Lion.
  7. However, victory came not by the Lion, but by the Lamb (**1 Peter 1:18, 19**).
  8. The great teaching about the Lamb is in Revelation. (See **Revelation 5:6, 12, 13; 6:16; 7:9, 10, 14; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4; 21:9; 22:1, 3**.)
  9. The saved are listed in the Lamb’s book of life (**Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 22:19**).
6. The word “atonement” means “to make amends, make things right, give satisfaction to a wronged person.”
  1. Atonement implies that “God is right” about our problem—sin.
  2. He is right about the solution—the cross.
  3. We must learn to believe and accept that Jesus died for each of us.

## II. Atonement and JUSTIFICATION

1. It has been said that Romans is the heart of the Scriptures and **Romans 3:20–26** is the heart of Romans: In this passage Paul used the phrase “. . . that He would be just and the justifier.”
  1. Atonement is built upon justice.
  2. The Bible uses “justification” and “righteousness” in basically the same way.
  3. Obviously, one cannot teach justification without justice.
  4. How can God justify the guilty?
  5. The sin penalty must be paid, and sin must be punished—the cross is where it took place.
2. Our culture stumbles over this truth (**1 Corinthians 1:22–25**).
  1. Man cannot see himself lost in sin.
  2. Some say, “God is too good to allow you to go to hell. . .”
  3. There is no justice without punishment.
  4. A holy God cannot allow sin to remain unpunished--God is just.
  5. What justice demanded, grace provided.
  6. What man could not do, God did in the Son of Man (Jesus).
3. Justice is the heart of biblical theology.
  1. Love cannot make sense apart from justice (holiness).
  2. Love and holiness always go together.
  3. God is a God of justice.
  4. Sin must be cleansed—not overlooked (**1 Corinthians 6:11**).
4. The incarnation of Jesus, in and of itself, could not save us.
  1. The perfect life & teachings of Christ could not save us, by themselves.
  2. There had to be blood: “. . . [A]nd without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (**Hebrews 9:22**).
  3. There had to be death: “. . . since a death has taken place” (**Hebrews 9:15–17**; see **2:9**; **Romans 5:10**; **Colossians 1:22**).
5. It was not love that nailed Jesus to the cross—it was justice.
  1. God is just, and is the justifier.
  2. God provided by grace what man could not do by meritorious works.
  3. This is why Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” when He died upon the cross.
  4. “He paid a debt He did not owe; I owed a debt I could not pay.”
  5. Jesus could either save Himself or save us so He gave Himself to save us.
  6. The Judge of man became the Savior of man (**John 5:22–27**).
6. Therefore, salvation begins and ends with justification.
  1. We have been justified.
  2. “Just-as-if-I’d never sinned” sounds better than it actually is.
  3. We have sinned, but God has forgiven us.

## III. Atonement and SUBSTITUTION

1. The middle cross at Calvary did not belong to Jesus; it belonged to you and me!
  1. His crucifixion was vicarious, representative, and substitutionary!
  2. Christ took a death that belongs to us; and when we come to Him and live in Him, we take a life that belongs to Him.
2. The Son of God became the Son of Man, so that the sons of men might become sons of God.
3. Can a person benefit from another’s suffering and sacrifice?
  1. Yes! Life itself is filled with the concept of substitution. (**Romans 5:5–10**; **Ephesians**

- 1:3–13; Philippians 3:7–10; Hebrews 2:9, 14–17; 7:25; 9:28; 10:10; 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:1, 2.)**
2. The sacrificial system of the OT with its “scapegoat” teaches us this profound truth.
  3. Beautiful **Isaiah 53** reveals the depth of substitution.
  4. Jesus was made to be sin for us.
  5. Never was there more injustice and justice than at the cross!
  4. How can the unrighteous be made righteous?
    1. Our righteousness is a “declared righteousness” (see **Romans 3:25, 26**; KJV; **Philippians 3:9; James 2:23**).
    2. No one can declare himself righteous (**Romans 3:9, 10, 20**).
    3. It is God who justifies (**Romans 8:33**), and He does this freely as a gift (**Romans 3:24**).
  5. God cannot overlook or dismiss sin.
    1. He took our sin upon Himself and sentenced Himself for it.
    2. God’s holiness was honored, our sin was punished, and those of us who have obeyed Him have been redeemed.
    3. God has declared the saved to be righteous so that it is “justified justification.”
  6. In this process God is not making bad people good or evil people holy.
    1. Christians are faithful—not perfect.
    2. We are tempted and sinful; we fall short (**Romans 3:9–12**).
    3. Christians still live on the earth, in time, and in the flesh (**Romans 7:18**).
    4. Christians are at war . . . with Satan, sin, and self.
    5. However, Christians who are walking in the Light are constantly cleansed through His blood (**1 John 1:7**).
    6. God pronounces Christians legally righteous, free from any liability to the broken law, because He Himself, in His Son, bore the penalty.
    7. We were baptized into Christ and put on Christ in this act (**Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:26, 27**).
    8. To be “declared righteous” changes not only our status, but also, gradually, changes our character and our conduct.
  7. There cannot be justification without atonement.
  8. Critics of Christianity abhor substitution because substitution magnifies sacrifice.
    1. Jesus cannot be reduced to a good teacher, a benefactor, or a mere person—He is our substitute and sacrifice.
    2. God is both the reconciler and the reconciled.
    3. In the Old Testament, God had to see the blood on the doorpost in order to save a family as Israel was preparing to leave Egypt (**Exodus 12:13**).
    4. Everyone rescued by God has thereby been purchased for God.
    5. Our bodies belong to God three times over—by creation, by redemption, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 6:19, 20**).
    6. The heart of **Isaiah 53** is sacrifice.
    7. Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (**Revelation 13:8**).

## IV. Atonement and ADOPTION

1. Let us change that and think about the Holy Spirit and His part in our adoption.
  1. To begin with, remember that we are born again of water and the Spirit when we become Christians (**John 3:3–7**).

2. Being led by the Spirit, we become sons of God. He is the Spirit of adoption.
3. He bears witness with our spirit (**Romans 8:14–18**).
4. This makes us “fellow heirs with Christ.”
5. God wants sons, not slaves.
6. Redemption makes adoption possible.
7. The child of God is promised that the Holy Spirit cries, “Abba! Father!” in his heart (**Galatians 4:4–7**).
2. By grace God predestined us for adoption by Jesus.
  1. God has accepted us in the Beloved, that is, in Jesus.
  2. Redemption comes through His blood.
  3. Upon obeying the gospel of salvation, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (**Ephesians 1:3–14**).
  4. “Now we are sons!” John said (**1 John 3:1, 2**).
  5. In this we see the Roman concept of freedom and sonship.
  6. To claim Christ is to claim acquittal.
  7. We are incapable of winning the battle of life alone.
  8. God does what we cannot do, so we can be what we dare not think that we can be.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Study the dictionary definitions of “atonement” and “justification.”
  1. What do these two words say about what Christ has done for us?
2. Consider the images of the Lion and the Lamb.
  1. How does each describe Jesus?
3. Explore the concept of “substitution.”
  1. Romans 5
  2. Ephesians 1
  3. Philippians 3
  4. Hebrews 2:9-17; 7:25; 9:28; 10:10; 12:1-2;
  5. 1 Peter 2:24;
  6. 1 John 2:1-2
4. Discuss the statement “Jesus was made to be sin—not a sinner.”
  1. Why was this necessary for our salvation?