

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **HOW JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR SINS TO BE FORGIVEN AND FOR US TO BE MADE RIGHTEOUS IN GOD'S EYES**

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* *John 3:16 (NKJV)*

*<sup>5</sup>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.* *Philippians 2:5-8 (RSV)*

*<sup>30</sup>"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. <sup>31</sup>"He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Saviour, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* *Acts 5:30-31 (NASB)*

*<sup>6</sup>While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man--though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. <sup>8</sup>But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.* *Romans 5:6-8 (RSV)*

*<sup>22</sup>To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: <sup>23</sup>that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."* *Acts 26:22-23 (RSV)*

*<sup>21</sup>And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him,* *Colossians 1:21-22 (RSV)*

We now come to the crux of the matter. That is how Jesus' death on the cross solved the problem of sin and made it possible for us to avoid Hell, judgment and the Lake of Fire. In this chapter we shall give a brief overview of what the cross was about and what Jesus achieved for us by His death.

#### **Jesus was 'qualified' to be our Saviour because He is God and because He was sinless**

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived on the earth as a man for about 33-34 years. He was probably born in the year 4 BC - our calendar is slightly out of line. During His life He never committed any sin whatsoever. He was entirely innocent. This was because He had a sinless nature. He had been conceived within Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore He had not inherited the sinful nature that you and I have inherited from our first ancestor, Adam. Because Jesus had no sinful nature, and because He was also the Son of God, (at the same time as being a man), He was able to live His whole life entirely without sin.

At the end of His time on this earth, He went to Jerusalem on the very day that the prophet Daniel had prophesied. There, on what we now call Palm Sunday, He formally and publicly presented Himself to the Jewish people as Israel's long awaited Messiah. But, tragically for them, the majority of the

Jewish people rejected Him. Many of them did so even though they already knew perfectly well that He really was their Messiah.

The Jewish High Priest and those around him were especially well aware that Jesus was the Messiah. They had followed Him around for three and a half years to investigate His miracles and had seen them happen right in front of them. They rejected Jesus because He criticised them and the way they put their man-made traditions ahead of what the Bible says. It was not because they thought He was a fake. They knew He was genuine.

Then, as a result of a conspiracy by some of the leading Jewish officials, working together with the Roman authorities, men contrived to have Jesus falsely accused. He was put on trial and falsely convicted. He was then unjustly sentenced by the Romans to crucifixion. This was the Roman method of execution for those who were not Roman citizens. It was a slow and very cruel way to kill somebody. The word crucifixion is where we get the word '*excruciating*' from because it was so painful.

### **A brief overview of the crucifixion - what it was and how it worked in simple terms**

Jesus was nailed onto a wooden cross with long nails through His wrists and heel bones. This was done after He had been flogged with a whip and had a 'crown' of long sharp thorns pressed into His head. This was done to cause pain, but also to mock Him for claiming to be the King of Israel. He died on the cross in the most appalling and drawn out agony. But it was all part of God the Father's own plan. Therefore the crucifixion and death of Jesus was not a failure or a diversion from God's plan. It was the plan. Everything happened exactly as God had intended so that we could be saved by Jesus' death:

*<sup>25</sup>And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"*  
*Luke 24:25-26 (NASB)*

*this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*  
*Acts 2:23 (NASB)*

The key to understanding what happened on the cross is to realise that as Jesus suffered and died He was voluntarily taking upon Himself the punishment that was rightfully due to you, me, and everybody else as a result of our sin. God the Father viewed Him, while He was on the cross, as carrying on His own shoulders the guilt and blame of all the sin of the world. It was put on Him so that it did not have to be laid on us. In fact, our sin was *transferred* to Jesus. Thus, one man, Jesus Christ, was able to take upon Himself the punishment for the sin of the whole world:

*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit;*  
*1 Peter 3:18 (RSV)*

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,*  
*1 Corinthians 15:3 (RSV)*

The reason it was possible for Jesus to take our sins upon Himself and be punished for them instead of us was that He Himself was entirely sinless. He had no sins of His own to be punished for. If Jesus had been a sinner Himself, even to the slightest extent, then His death on the cross would have been what He deserved for His own sin. It would have been the rightful result of a sinful life. Yet, because He was entirely perfect and sinless, His death could not validly be a punishment for His own sin, because He had none. It was possible, therefore, for God to treat His suffering and death on the cross

as being endured on behalf of us, i.e. in our place. It was a '*substitutionary*' punishment, just like the animals that were sacrificed in the Temple, as we saw in chapter nine.

***He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.***  
***1 Peter 2:24 (RSV)***

A technical word for this transfer of blame to Jesus is that He was punished '*vicariously*'. This comes from a Latin word which means '*in place of*'. So, Jesus was punished in our place. It is a little bit like the legal concept of '*vicarious liability*', where an employer is considered to be to blame for the negligence of his employees. So, if an employee injures someone in the course of their employment, then his employer is considered to be to blame for it in the eyes of the law, even where he had nothing to do with it. The employer then has to pay the damages, even if he himself did nothing wrong.

### **The bravery Jesus showed in going to the cross**

In enduring what He went through, Jesus was extraordinarily heroic. He is the bravest man who ever lived. We tend to overlook the outstanding courage and endurance that He showed. It was at a level far higher than that shown even by those who win medals like the Victoria Cross. For such people their act of bravery is usually very quick. It is all over in seconds or minutes. However what Jesus had to face up to and endure was slow and sustained.

Moreover, He had always known, throughout all eternity, that one day He had to face this cruel and humiliating death. The knowledge of what lay ahead must have weighed on Him through all of eternity past. Can you imagine how it must have been for Jesus for all those long ages of time to know that, one day, He was going to have to suffer and die for us and have all our sin transferred onto Him? That thought must have appalled Him. It must have been like an eternal "*Garden of Gethsemane*" experience as He anticipated what lay ahead of Him.

Remember also that Jesus was infinitely more powerful than His executioners. He could have stopped the crucifixion at any moment simply by using His own power. Or He could have commanded the angels to remove Him from the cross. Therefore He could have ended His own ordeal at any time, but He resisted the temptation to do so. Instead He bravely endured it all to the bitter end. Many people have endured terrible ordeals that they were powerless to stop. However, what made Jesus' suffering unique was that He had the power all along to stop it, but never chose to do so. Who else but Him could show such restraint? He endured it all because He knew it had to be done that way. There was no other way to save us:

***<sup>53</sup>"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup>"How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"***  
***Matthew 26:53-54 (NASB)***

### **The events leading up to the crucifixion**

Jesus was very afraid and full of dread on the night before His arrest and trial, as He faced what lay ahead of Him the next day. But He bravely carried on with it. Reflect on the passage below and try to imagine the intensity of His emotional anguish on that final lonely night before His crucifixion, as the long awaited time of suffering drew near. None of the apostles were sensitive enough to realise how alone and afraid He felt. He wanted them to sit up with Him and keep Him company as He waited for His ordeal to begin. He was in such turmoil He could not sleep. In fact His stress was so intense that the Bible says He actually sweat blood. That would have been due to small blood vessels under His skin bursting due to the pressure and fear He was experiencing:

*And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.* *Luke 22:44 (RSV)*

However, the disciples were insensitive and did not realise how He felt. Therefore they all just went to sleep. Therefore Jesus had to sit up on His own, waiting for His arrest, with nobody to comfort or encourage Him:

*<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup>He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." <sup>39</sup>Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." <sup>40</sup>Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. <sup>41</sup>"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

*Matthew 26:36-41 (NIV)*

Jesus felt horrified by what lay ahead of Him, on the cross, and especially at the prospect of having all the sin of the world transferred on to Him. He therefore prayed three times to God the Father. In fact, He was so desperate He was pleading with God the Father to find some other way to save us, which would not involve Him dying on the cross. But each time the Father said no and Jesus accepted that answer. He knew that there was no alternative. Jesus then went ahead with it all for our sake:

*<sup>42</sup>He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." <sup>43</sup>When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup>So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.*

*Matthew 26:42-44 (NIV)*

Consider, how it must also have broken God the Father's heart to have to say no three times when Jesus was praying in such a distraught manner. We will never fully realise how much it cost God the Father to refuse Jesus' prayer repeatedly in this way. God the Father did all of that to Jesus, and to Himself, for our sake. We need to be truly grateful for the Father's part in the crucifixion, because what He suffered must have been terrible.

Finally the time came for Jesus to be arrested. Even in that He had to experience the pain of being betrayed by Judas, one of His own followers:

*<sup>45</sup>Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup>Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" <sup>47</sup>While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. <sup>48</sup>Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."*

*Matthew 26:45-48 (NIV)*

On top of that betrayal, Jesus also suffered the pain of having Peter, one of His three closest friends, deny that he even knew Him. Jesus told Peter in advance that this would happen:

*<sup>31</sup>"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, <sup>32</sup>but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." <sup>33</sup>And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." <sup>34</sup>He*

said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me."  
*Luke 22:31-34 (RSV)*

This was fulfilled within a matter of hours:

<sup>54</sup>Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. Peter followed at a distance;<sup>55</sup>and when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. <sup>56</sup>Then a maid, seeing him as he sat in the light and gazing at him, said, "This man also was with him." <sup>57</sup>But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." <sup>58</sup>And a little later some one else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." <sup>59</sup>And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." <sup>60</sup>But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. <sup>61</sup>And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." <sup>62</sup>And he went out and wept bitterly.  
*Luke 22:54-62 (RSV)*

### **The extent of the suffering Jesus endured for us**

Consider now this lengthy passage from Mark's gospel, together with some short extracts from the other gospels. These show the sequence of events from Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate which led to Him being sentenced to death and then to the execution being carried out. See how cruelly He was treated, especially by the Romans, and how many different things were done to him:

<sup>11</sup>Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." <sup>12</sup>But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. <sup>13</sup>Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" <sup>14</sup>But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge; so that the governor wondered greatly.  
*Matthew 27:11-14 (RSV)*

<sup>26</sup>And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyre'ne, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. <sup>27</sup>And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. <sup>28</sup>But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."  
*Luke 23:26-28 (RSV)*

<sup>12</sup>"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

<sup>13</sup>"Crucify him!" they shouted.

<sup>14</sup>"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

<sup>15</sup>Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

<sup>16</sup>The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. <sup>17</sup>They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. <sup>18</sup>And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup>Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. <sup>20</sup>And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

<sup>21</sup>A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. <sup>22</sup>They brought Jesus to the place

called Golgotha (which means *The Place of the Skull*). <sup>23</sup>Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup>And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

<sup>25</sup> It was the third hour when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>The written notice of the charge against him read: *THE KING OF THE JEWS*. <sup>27</sup>They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup>Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup>come down from the cross and save yourself!"

<sup>31</sup>In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! <sup>32</sup>Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

<sup>33</sup> At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup>And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

<sup>35</sup> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." <sup>36</sup>One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

<sup>37</sup>With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

*Mark 15:12-39 (NIV)*

<sup>23</sup>When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; <sup>24</sup>so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfil the scripture, "They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

*John 19:23-24 (RSV)*

Try to reflect on how much Jesus suffered and in so many different ways in the passages above. It would also be helpful for you to look up the full parallel accounts of the crucifixion in Matthew chapters 26-27, Luke chapters 22-23 and John chapters 18-20. Jesus suffered many different forms of pain and anguish. It included mental, emotional, physical and spiritual agony. These various sufferings were deliberately directed towards Jesus by God the Father. The wrath, or anger, of God was being poured out on Him so that He could suffer in our place, instead of us. He took the full blast of God's anger at the sin of the world so that it did not have to be directed at us.

The pain and injury He endured also left Him so physically mutilated that He was unrecognisable, just as the prophet Isaiah had prophesied. In fact He no longer even looked human, because He had been so butchered by His executioners. His whole body was a mass of wounds:

*Just as there were many who were appalled at him his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness*

*Isaiah 52:14 (NIV)*

## **The shame and humiliation that Jesus also endured**

Moreover, Jesus' humiliation was added to by the fact that the Roman Soldiers took away all of His clothes. Few people realise that when Jesus was upon the cross He was entirely naked. Passers-by were jeering and laughing at Him. Imagine the shame and degradation that that must have caused Him. He even had to suffer the brutality and indignity of having His beard pulled out of His face. That would have caused great mutilation and disfigurement in itself. In addition, great damage was done to His back and legs by being scourged or flogged with a whip made of many cords tied together. Each of those cords had sharp pieces of metal or bone attached to them to tear open the flesh. In addition to all of that, the passers-by actually spat on Him, directly into His face:

*I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.*  
*Isaiah 50:6 (NASB)*

*Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him,*  
*Matthew 26:67 (RSV)*

## **The Prophet Isaiah's amazing prophecy which sets out many of the details of Jesus' crucifixion**

One of the most extraordinary things in the Bible is the fact that what Jesus did on the cross was prophesied in fine detail by Isaiah eight centuries before it happened. We have just seen two such prophecies above. Isaiah carries on and gives a long description of the further things which the Messiah must suffer on behalf of His people. It is amazingly accurate and detailed. That is because God put the words into Isaiah's mind. Please read these further passages, written about 800 years BC. Note the many other specific things Isaiah foretold, all of which happened, exactly as was prophesied. All of these verses are speaking about Jesus. See how many details you can identify:

<sup>13</sup>*See, my servant will act wisely;  
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.*  
<sup>14</sup>*Just as there were many who were appalled at him –  
his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being  
and his form marred beyond human likeness –*  
<sup>15</sup>*so he will sprinkle many nations,  
and kings will shut their mouths because of him.  
For what they were not told, they will see,  
and what they have not heard, they will understand.*

<sup>1</sup>*Who has believed our message?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*  
<sup>2</sup>*For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And like a root out of parched ground;  
He has no stately form or majesty  
That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.*

<sup>3</sup>*He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.  
Like one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

<sup>4</sup>*Surely he took up our infirmities  
and carried our sorrows,*

*yet we considered him stricken by God,  
smitten by him, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup>We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.*

*<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.*

*<sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment he was taken away.  
And who can speak of his descendants?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.*

*<sup>9</sup>He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

*<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.*

*<sup>11</sup>After the suffering of his soul,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.*

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.  
For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.*

*Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 (NIV)*

When Jewish people hear Isaiah 53 read out, they often imagine it is from the New Testament. They know it is talking about Jesus, but they often do not realise it is actually from their own Hebrew Scriptures, which we call the Old Testament. It is speaking about their own Messiah, but most of them have not yet recognised Him. One day all of Israel will recognise Jesus and accept Him as their Messiah:



**King David's 'Messianic psalms' which give further details (1000 years beforehand) about what Jesus would experience on the cross**

Just as we have seen with the long prophecy by Isaiah, much of the information we have about what Jesus had to suffer on the cross is actually set out in the Old Testament rather than the New Testament. For example, consider Psalm 22. This was written by King David (a physical ancestor of Jesus). In this psalm, although David is speaking, for most of the time he is actually speaking on behalf of Jesus, the future Messiah. David is setting out what Jesus would think and feel while on the cross. It is a long psalm so we will not look at all of it, but here are some of the most relevant parts. They reveal a lot of useful and poignant facts about what Jesus experienced during his crucifixion:

***Psalm 22 (NIV)***

***<sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?***

***<sup>2</sup>My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.***

In verses 1-2 King David reveals the anguish Jesus felt on the cross about being abandoned by God. This occurred when God the Father and the Holy Spirit withdrew from Him and rejected Him while He was carrying the guilt of the sin of the whole world.

Then in verses 6-8 David goes on to express the pain Jesus felt at being despised, mocked and insulted by those around Him as He hung on the cross. They jeered at Him, telling Him to get God to rescue Him, even as He was dying to save them:

***<sup>6</sup>But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.***

***<sup>7</sup>All who see me mock me;  
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.***

***<sup>8</sup>"He trusts in the LORD," they say,  
"let the LORD rescue him.***

***Let him deliver him,  
since he delights in him."***

In verses 12-13, David expresses what Jesus experienced as He was surrounded by jeering, snarling enemies. This refers to both human beings and demons, i.e. all of those who were gnashing their teeth at Him in hatred and contempt. Note that the "*bulls of Bashan*" referred to here are demons. While Jesus was dying on the cross, demons were surrounding Him.

The demons believed they had defeated Him and prevented Him from becoming the Messiah, Saviour and King of Israel. That is why they were rejoicing, jeering and roaring at Him. But in fact, He was outwitting them and triumphing over them. Even though Jesus knew the truth, the hatred and mockery of His enemies, especially that of the demons, must have been intensely degrading for Him. He could see them clearly, all around Him:

***<sup>12</sup>Many bulls surround me;  
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.***

***<sup>13</sup>Roaring lions that tear their prey  
open their mouths wide against me.***

Then, in verses 14-15 David refers to Jesus' physical suffering and to the agonising movements He had to endure. He had to struggle to lift Himself up to be able to breathe, because His hands and feet had been nailed to the cross. He was also twisted and contorted. It also refers to the extreme thirst He felt. He had lost vast amounts of blood and had had nothing to drink, despite the hot sun.

*<sup>14</sup>I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart has turned to wax;  
it has melted within me.*

*<sup>15</sup>My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;  
you lay me in the dust of death.*

Finally, verses 16-18, deal with two of the most well known features of Jesus' crucifixion. They refer to how His hands and feet were pierced by nails and also how the Roman Soldiers divided His clothes among them and cast lots to decide who should have his robe. Isn't it astonishing that facts as accurate and specific as these were written about Jesus 1000 years before His crucifixion?

*<sup>16</sup>Dogs surround me,  
a pack of villains encircles me;  
they pierce my hands and my feet.*

*<sup>17</sup>All my bones are on display;  
people stare and gloat over me.*

*<sup>18</sup>They divide my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.*

Now let us also consider psalm 69. This is another 'Messianic psalm' in which King David reveals more of the thoughts and experiences that Jesus was going to have on the cross:

### **Psalm 69 (NIV)**

Verses 1-4 refer to Jesus feeling overwhelmed on the cross by the sheer hatred and contempt of those surrounding Him. As we know from Psalm 22, those were both humans and demons.

*<sup>1</sup>Save me, O God,  
for the waters have come up to my neck.*

*<sup>2</sup>I sink in the miry depths,  
where there is no foothold.  
I have come into the deep waters;  
the floods engulf me.*

*<sup>3</sup>I am worn out calling for help;  
my throat is parched.  
My eyes fail,  
looking for my God.*

*<sup>4</sup>Those who hate me without reason  
outnumber the hairs of my head;  
many are my enemies without cause,  
those who seek to destroy me.  
I am forced to restore  
what I did not steal.*

Next, in verses 7-9, we get a glimpse at how Jesus felt at enduring scorn for our sake and at His feeling of shame. He was rejected and misunderstood even by His own immediate family. We know from the gospels that even His own brothers did not (at that point) believe in Him or understand Him:

*<sup>7</sup>For I endure scorn for your sake,  
and shame covers my face.*

*<sup>8</sup>I am a foreigner to my own family,  
a stranger to my own mother's children;*

*<sup>9</sup>for zeal for your house consumes me,  
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.*

Verses 19-21 reveal more about the scorn, disgrace and shame Jesus experienced, which broke His heart. Finally it even specifies that He would be given vinegar to drink. This detail was literally and exactly fulfilled on the cross. He was handed a sponge soaked in vinegar by those who had heard Him saying "*I thirst*":

*<sup>19</sup>You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;  
all my enemies are before you.*

*<sup>20</sup>Scorn has broken my heart  
and has left me helpless;  
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,  
for comforters, but I found none.*

*<sup>21</sup>They put gall in my food  
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.*

It is impossible to include all the facts and details of the crucifixion in this book. But it is helpful to look at the prophecies about Jesus from the Old Testament and to cross reference them with the accounts of the crucifixion in the four gospels. The exactness of the literal fulfilment of each of these prophecies is amazing.

### **The burden and guilt of our sin was placed on Jesus**

In addition to having to suffer physical pain on the cross, Jesus also had to suffer something far worse. All the sin of the world was, for a time, heaped on to Him. While that was happening, God the Father and The Holy Spirit withdrew from Him. He was required to bear the burden of the sin of the world entirely alone. While all of that sin was upon Him, God the Father and The Holy Spirit needed to show their utter unwillingness to be associated with our sin or to be tainted by it.

Jesus had never sinned or been guilty of anything throughout His eternal existence. Therefore it must have felt horrific to be directly associated with sin and to have the sin, transgression and iniquity of all the world heaped on to Him and treated as if it was His own. In fact, as He hung on the cross and the guilt of all of it was put upon Him, God the Father and the Holy Spirit viewed Jesus as if He actually *was* sin. We are told that he was made "*to be sin*":

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*  
*2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)*

God the Father and the Holy Spirit regarded Jesus as being so closely identified with our sin, and so covered by it, that they actually viewed Him as though He *was sin itself* in bodily form. In the eyes of God, He became sin personified and was defined by sin. He was also polluted and desecrated by it in a way that appalled Him.

### **It was also necessary for Jesus to be rejected and abandoned by God the Father and the Holy Spirit**

For a time, while the sin of the whole world was pressing down upon Him, God the Father and the Holy Spirit had to separate themselves from Jesus. He was therefore left entirely on His own, just like the scapegoat that we referred to in Chapter 9. Even His Father and the Holy Spirit rejected Him during those hours. This was the time when Jesus reached the very lowest depths of His degradation, rejection and shame. He was, by this stage, totally forsaken, even by God. Notice what Jesus says from the cross about this feeling of abandonment. He says the words from Psalm 22 which King David had prophesied that He would say:

*<sup>33</sup>At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup>And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* *Mark 15:33-34 (NIV)*

It is impossible for us to overstate the significance of this abandonment. Jesus suffered indescribably through being rejected by and separated from His Father and The Holy Spirit. It had never happened before. He had been together with them in perfect harmony for all eternity past. The emotional pain of this sudden rejection and isolation, combined with the disgust and revulsion He felt at the sin of the world pressing down upon Him, probably caused Jesus more suffering than the crucifixion itself.

### **As well as His physical, mental and spiritual suffering, Jesus also had to die for us**

When all these forms of suffering had been completed, it was time for Jesus to die. His death was essential. It had to go that far. He had to die, as well as suffer, in order to pay the full penalty for our sin. We are told this many times, but perhaps the verses which express the point most directly are in John's gospel. God caused Caiaphas, the wicked High Priest, who hated Jesus, to prophesy, (without realising it), that Jesus had to die for the nation (of Israel) and also for all of us:

*<sup>45</sup>Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. <sup>46</sup>But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup>Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. <sup>48</sup>If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."*

*<sup>49</sup>Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup>You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." <sup>51</sup>He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, <sup>52</sup>and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. <sup>53</sup>So from that day on they plotted to take his life.* *John 11:45-53 (NIV)*

## **Who actually killed Jesus?**

Many blame the Jewish people for putting Jesus to death. That is unfair and inaccurate. The Jews did not do it. The Romans were more to blame, but even they weren't really responsible for it and did not bring it about. They were not even capable of doing so. As for who it was who put Jesus to death, it was primarily God the Father, not the Romans or the Jewish authorities. It was He who punished Jesus in our place to pay for our sins. God the Father deliberately offered Him up for our sake, just as Abraham was told to offer up his son, Isaac.

That said, Jesus' death came, in the end, when He gave up His own spirit. He did so because His mission was complete. He had finished the job that His Father had asked Him to do. He had paid the full penalty for the sin of the world.

*<sup>28</sup>Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." <sup>29</sup>A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. <sup>30</sup>When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:28-30 (NIV)*

## **Jesus decided the moment of His own death**

It was Jesus Himself who decided the moment of His own death. No human being killed Him. Indeed, nobody was capable of killing Jesus. Nobody could take His life from Him by force. He laid it down freely, of His own choice, just as Isaac had been willing to do:

*"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.  
John 10:11 (NASB)*

*<sup>17</sup>"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. <sup>18</sup>"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." John 10:17-18 (NASB)*

## **The punishment of Jesus in our place makes it possible for God to forgive our sin**

We have seen in chapter 9 how the repeated sacrifices of animals in the Temple provided a temporary cover for the sins of the people. However, Jesus' death made it possible for our sin to be fully and permanently forgiven. It could therefore be completely cancelled, removed and disposed of. This solution was achieved once and for all:

*<sup>24</sup>For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. <sup>25</sup>Nor did he enter Heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. <sup>26</sup>Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Hebrews 9:24-26 (NIV)*

The death of Jesus on our behalf paid our debt to God. That enabled God the Father to cancel the "certificate of debt" because all of our sins had been dealt with by Jesus on the cross:

*<sup>13</sup>When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, <sup>14</sup>having cancelled out the*

***certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***  
***Colossians 2:13-14 (NASB)***

Note that last phrase, "*having nailed it to the cross*". This is a reference to the practice in those days when a man was crucified. The executioner would write on a piece of wood the crime or unpaid debt for which the man was being put to death. This served to warn all those passing by about what might happen to them if they were to get involved in the same crime or debt. The point is that on the cross of Jesus no such note was nailed, because He had no crime or debt. The Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, was well aware of that fact. Therefore he gave orders for the soldiers to nail a sign above Jesus' head which simply said "*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*". No crime was referred to.

So, what apostle Paul means in the above passage from Colossians, is that it is as if God the Father had nailed *our* certificate of debt to the cross. It was the debt we owed to Him because of our sin. That is the debt that is nailed to Jesus' cross. That would correspond exactly to how executions were done in those days. It illustrates very clearly how God saw Jesus as paying our debt for us, thus enabling us to be forgiven. The way the prophet Isaiah puts it is that our sins are washed away and we are made as white as snow:

***"Come now, and let us reason together,"***  
***Says the LORD,***  
***"Though your sins are as scarlet,***  
***They will be as white as snow;***  
***Though they are red like crimson,***  
***They will be like wool.***  
***Isaiah 1:18 (NASB)***

This washing away or cancelling out and forgiving of our sin is possible solely because the guilt of it was placed on Jesus' shoulders. He received all our punishment. Therefore, if we repent and believe, God no longer needs to punish us, because Jesus has taken that punishment in our place, as our substitute:

***Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***  
***Romans 8:1 (NASB)***

**How can Jesus pay our penalty by dying in our place? How does it work, legally and practically?**

Perhaps it will help to give an analogy to try and show the way Jesus paid our penalty. Think of an extremely wealthy man, such as Bill Gates. Imagine he was to stand outside a court with a cheque book or debit card and offer to pay the fines of any person fined in that court, provided they wanted him to do so and asked him to do it. Thus, as people came out with fines of one amount or another, Bill Gates could write out a cheque to pay each fine, whether it be high or low. His bank account would be more than big enough to pay for the fines of all the people who asked him to do so.

It was a little bit like that when Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. He was infinitely holy and sinless and yet He died a brutal death. That created an infinite capacity for Him to pay for your sin and mine. It is almost as if Jesus, through His infinitely unjust death, acquired an infinite 'bank account'. He can then use that to pay the 'fines' of people like you and me. Mathematically that would be correct. One man with an infinite bank account could pay the fines owed by any number of people.

Another way to understand the idea of Jesus dying in our place is to think of a Judge. One day there appears before him a man whom he knows, someone he went to school with, who is now facing a

criminal prosecution. Imagine the dilemma that the Judge faces. He has his own professional duty, or code of conduct, which requires him to fully carry out the due process of the law. He has to make sure that the prosecution is conducted properly and that it arrives at a proper verdict. Then, if guilt is found, it is his duty to impose an appropriate sentence. If he failed to do so, he would be doing wrong and acting improperly, which he would never be willing to do.

Imagine though that the Judge does not want to pass sentence on his old friend but would rather show mercy towards him. You see then the conflict between his sense of justice and the need to do his duty professionally, but on the other hand his heart's desire is to show mercy. He wishes to spare his friend from the full blast of the law, but he is not willing to break the law in doing so. What could the Judge do to get around this dilemma?

He could resolve it by finding his friend guilty and sentencing him to the full penalty. But then, having done so, he could take out his own cheque book and write out a cheque himself for the full amount of the fine that he has just imposed on his friend. By doing that, he has fully honoured his duty to his office and to the law. He has not compromised himself or broken the law in any way. Yet, the judge has found a way to redirect the severity of the criminal law away from his friend and towards himself. He takes its full penalty upon himself. Then his friend can be spared from its impact.

Likewise, Jesus found a way to ensure that the full penalty for the breaking of God's Law came to be paid by Himself. Thus there was no compromise or breaking of the Law. But at the same time, God's mercy could fully come into operation, because Jesus redirected all of the severity of the Law towards Himself, rather than letting it fall on us.

**What Jesus did on the cross looks like foolishness to proud and worldly people. It only makes sense to the humble and lowly**

To proud, selfish and worldly people who do not believe in Jesus, what happened on the cross seems foolish. God has deliberately made it that way so that Christianity can only make any sense to humble and lowly people. Proud or worldly people who are "*wise in their own eyes*" will never be able to understand what Jesus did on the cross and why it was essential. Yet a child can understand it easily:

*<sup>18</sup>For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate. <sup>20</sup>Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

*<sup>21</sup>For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (NIV)*

No single word can adequately sum up all that Jesus achieved on the cross. But '*atonement*' is the word which probably comes closest to it. The suffering and death of Jesus involved a complicated series of transfers and transactions, during which many things were happening. We shall now begin to examine this process of the atonement in closer detail and break it down into its component parts. Then we will see more clearly what was happening and the many different ways in which Jesus' death benefited us.

## **The 'atonement'**

*And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* *Romans 5:11 (KJV)*

We could define this word, 'atonement', as the overall process by which Jesus Christ, through His sinless life and His unjust sacrificial death on our behalf, made our entire salvation possible. The word 'atonement' therefore includes many shades of meaning and different aspects of what Jesus did for us. Before we go into closer detail about the atonement, let's look at some passages from the writings of Moses which refer to this concept. We will look at how, in the Old Testament, the priests used to sacrifice lambs, bulls and goats to 'cover for' the sins of the people.

The death of the animal that was sacrificed, and the shedding of its blood in particular, made it possible for God to overlook the sins of the people for the time being. The blood of these animals did not, in itself, have the power to save those people and take away their sins. But, when accompanied by repentance and faith in God, it was effective to cover the sins of the people temporarily, pending the coming of Jesus. It was His death on our behalf which really did deal with sin.

*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*  
*Hebrews 10:4 (NASB)*

The shedding of these animals' blood was also an illustration. It set the pattern for what Jesus would later do. Let's look at what Moses told the priests to do in sacrificing animals to 'atone' for the sins of the people:

*<sup>36</sup>"Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. <sup>37</sup>"For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, and whatever touches the altar shall be holy.* *Exodus 29:36-37 (NASB)*

*<sup>15</sup>"Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slain before the LORD. <sup>16</sup>"Then the anointed priest is to bring some of the blood of the bull to the tent of meeting; <sup>17</sup>and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil. <sup>18</sup>"He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before the LORD in the tent of meeting; and all the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the doorway of the tent of meeting.* *Leviticus 4:15-18 (NASB)*

*<sup>20</sup>"He shall also do with the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; thus he shall do with it So the priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven.* *Leviticus 4:20 (NASB)*

### **Why is blood so significant?**

When apostle Paul is speaking to the church leaders in Ephesus he refers to how God 'obtained' the church, i.e. saved it and brought it into existence, "with the blood of His own Son". Paul puts emphasis on the blood:

*Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.* *Acts 20:28 (RSV)*



But why does blood matter? Why does God ask us to focus on the blood of Jesus and why was the blood of the sacrificed animals so important? The answer is that to God, blood represents life. Indeed, the Bible says that the life of every creature is contained within its blood:

***For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.***

***Leviticus 17:11 (RSV)***

For us to be forgiven and to avoid God's punishment for our sin, somebody has to lay down their lives in our place. The laying down of that life is represented by the shedding of blood. So, Jesus' death is essential for us to be saved. That death also had to involve the shedding of His own blood for us. The blood of Jesus has real power to save us. If He had not shed His blood for us, there could be no forgiveness:

***And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

***Hebrews 9:22 (NASB)***

In the Old Testament, there could be no forgiveness unless the sacrificed animals shed their blood. But they were really only a temporary symbol or illustration which pointed towards the blood that really counts. That is the blood of Jesus, without which none of us can be saved.

The laying down of Jesus' life on our behalf was essential for our salvation. Moreover, His death had to involve the shedding of His blood. His execution could not have been done by some other means, such as hanging, which would not have involved the shedding of His blood.

These passages above from Exodus and Leviticus tell the Jewish people how to get their sins temporarily dealt with or 'covered for', by the death of lambs, goats and bulls. They also point forward to the completely effective and permanent sacrifice of Jesus. That was how our sin problem was to be dealt with once and for all. The passages above relate to the daily sacrifices in the part of the Temple known as 'the Holy Place'. However, the most well known reference to the word atonement is within the phrase '*the Day of Atonement*' or '*Yom Kippur*'. This is the most important day of all the Jewish feast days.

### **Yom Kippur - the Day of Atonement**

This feast, 'the Day of Atonement', came only once a year. On this special day, and only on this day, the Jewish High Priest was allowed to go into the very most holy part of the Temple, the Holy of Holies. Once in there he would take some of the blood of a lamb which had been sacrificed and sprinkle it on what was called the 'mercy seat'. This was to 'cover for' the sins of the Jewish people for another year.

The actions of the High Priest on the day of atonement were yet another illustration or 'type' or what Jesus would later do for us. However, even this could not fully take sins away; it could only temporarily cover them, for one year, not permanently:

***"Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD."***

***Exodus 30:10 (NASB)***

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament refers to this very important concept of the Day of Atonement and the sacrifice made by the Jewish High Priest. It illustrates and explains what Jesus Christ did on our behalf:

*<sup>24</sup>For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. <sup>25</sup>Nor did he enter Heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. <sup>26</sup>Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.*  
*Hebrews 9:24-26 (NIV)*

This is quite a complex passage but, basically, it explains that what Jesus did when He died for us on the cross was similar to what the Jewish High Priest did each year in sacrificing animals to cover for the sins of the people. The crucial difference was that Jesus' sacrifice of Himself and the shedding of His own blood was a perfect and permanent sacrifice.

What had gone on before in the Temple was only a shadow or forerunner of what He would later do. Whereas the sacrifice of the animals in the Jewish Temple had to be done over and over again, the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, only had to be done once. That was enough to save all people, however many, and wherever and whenever they live:

*<sup>10</sup>By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. <sup>11</sup>Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; <sup>12</sup>but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,*  
*Hebrews 10:10-12 (NASB)*

In doing what He did, Jesus was playing the part of both the High Priest and the sacrificed lamb. He was the one making the offering and He was also the offering itself. Whereas the High Priest made an offering of a lamb and sacrificed it, Jesus offered Himself. So, having offered the perfect sacrifice of Himself, and having been raised from the dead, Jesus' task was done. He will never need to die for us again. Instead, He was able to sit down in the place of honour at the right hand of God the Father, because His task of paying for our sins was complete.

**Justification – this means being deemed to be as righteous as Jesus and having all his righteousness transferred to us or imputed to us**

All the aspects of the atonement that we have looked at so far have been to do with forgiving our sins, taking guilt *away from us* and *preventing* God's judgment happening to us. Justification, is different. It relates to *receiving* righteousness from Jesus and having it *added to us*. This aspect of what Jesus achieved for us on the cross means that it became possible for God the Father to see us as having all the righteousness of Jesus added to us or given to us as a free gift. This has a very positive dimension to it. It raises our status, and adds something to us that we had not got:

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*  
*2 Corinthians 5:21 (RSV)*

In other words, we have seen earlier that Jesus' death on our behalf made it possible for our sins to be taken from us and placed on Him so that we could be forgiven. That was essential, but it still wasn't enough. It merely cancels out our sin but does not, in itself, make us righteous. It would be like taking away all the wrong answers from an examination script, but there are still no correct answers on it. Thus it prevents marks being lost, but no marks have been gained.

The key to understanding the concept of justification is to realise that God wants to achieve far more than simply to forgive us and make us sinless. Being declared not guilty, or made sinless, is not quite enough. God also wants us to be *made as righteous as Jesus*. That cannot be achieved solely by us

having our sins taken away and forgiven. That by itself would make us innocent and sinless, but it would not make us righteous. We therefore need to have righteousness added to us as well as having our sins taken away.

So, the process of being justified means being '*made just*'. That has exactly the same meaning as being '*made righteous*'. It means that all of Jesus' righteousness, which He earned by His perfect life and His complete obedience to the Law of Moses, is credited to us. It is as if we had earned it for ourselves. It is as if we had perfectly obeyed the Law of Moses ourselves. We gain this justification or transfer of righteousness by having faith in Jesus and putting our trust in Him:

***<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
<sup>2</sup>Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2 (RSV)***

Here is an analogy to help explain the difference between having our sins washed away and being made righteous or justified. Imagine a man owes ten million pounds to another man and that the second man then forgives him the entire debt. Now the first man is no longer in debt. Previously he was hopelessly bankrupt and unable to pay his debts. But now he has no debts at all. However, he is still not rich. He merely has no debts. But if the second man was to then give him ten million pounds and add that to his bank account, he would now be wealthy as well as having no debts.

So, cancelling the debt corresponds to God forgiving our sins and washing them away, but adding ten million pounds to the bank account corresponds to being made righteous by having Jesus' righteousness transferred to us. The only flaw in the analogy is that Jesus' righteousness is *infinite* rather than limited to a particular figure like ten million pounds.

Let us consider another analogy which may be helpful in showing the distinction between having our sins forgiven and being made righteous. Imagine yourself dressed in filthy, torn, worn-out clothes. If a wealthy man was to offer to give to you his own expensive, brand-new clothes and to take away from you your filthy rags, then it would operate as follows:

- a) the *taking away*, or taking off, of your filthy old clothes would correspond to forgiveness. It is the *removal* of what is horrible, ugly and dirty. It means that you no longer have the sin and guilt that you had.
- b) the *putting on* of the rich man's new, expensive, clean clothes would correspond to justification. It is righteousness being *added to you* so that you have something which you did not previously have.

So, merely to remove your filthy old garments would mean you were no longer dirtily dressed, but you would not yet be well dressed. You would merely be naked, with no garments at all, either good or bad. But the adding or putting on of the expensive new clothing represents receiving Jesus' righteousness. The Bible speaks of this as putting on the '*robe of righteousness*':

***I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels Isaiah 61:10 (RSV)***

That is a picture or illustration of what Jesus does when He makes us righteous. He gives us His own 'robe of righteousness' and allows us to wear His clothes as if we were Him. Therefore, justification, (being made righteous) is perhaps the most positive and glorious part of the whole atonement. It means that we are not only forgiven and made clean, but also made righteous and perfect, just as Jesus was perfect. We are allowed to share in His perfection, as if we were equally perfect:

***and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,  
Hebrews 5:9 (RSV)***

We are therefore able to be raised up to a vastly higher level and made to *be* righteous by having all the righteousness of Jesus legally *transferred* to us, or '*imputed*' to us. So, whereas the sin of one man, Adam, caused the whole world to inherit his sin nature, the righteous actions of Jesus made it possible for us all to be made righteous. That enables us to inherit all the blessings that come from His perfectly righteous life:

***<sup>17</sup>For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. <sup>19</sup>For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.***

***Romans 5:17-19 (NIV)***

To use yet another analogy, in a legal context, the transfer of Jesus' righteousness to us is similar to the concept in land law, or conveyancing, of having jointly owned freehold property. Usually, when a husband and wife buy a house they choose to be registered at the Land Registry as '*joint tenants*'. That means that each of them owns the whole of the property simultaneously. So, if a man owns a house and, on marriage, wishes to make his wife a joint owner, he could transfer to her a joint interest in the house. That would not reduce his own ownership. He would still own all of it while, at the same time, she also owns all of it.

It is a little like that with Jesus' righteousness. It is infinite and fully belongs to Him, but, at the same time, He chooses to share it all with us. So, He transfers to us the '*joint ownership*' of all His righteousness, not just some of it. Therefore God is legitimately able to view us as if we were just as righteous as Jesus. That transferred righteousness is given as a gift to anybody who becomes a genuine Christian.

That imputed or transferred righteousness isn't *earned* by us. It is given to us as a *free gift* because of our faith in Jesus. In the same way, God chose to regard Abraham as being righteous because of the genuineness of his faith, not his good deeds. God '*credited*' Abraham with righteousness simply because he believed and trusted God:

***<sup>6</sup>Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.***

***Galatians 3:6-7 (NASB)***

***<sup>20</sup>yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup>and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.***

***Romans 4:20-21 (NASB)***

Therefore, in the same way, righteousness is '*reckoned to*' or '*credited to*' all those who believe in Jesus and put their faith in Him:

***<sup>22</sup>Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness. <sup>23</sup>Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, <sup>24</sup>but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup>He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.***

***Romans 4:22-25 (NASB)***

So, we can say that our sins are forgiven on the basis of faith. But we can also say that it is equally by faith that we are credited with all of Jesus' righteousness:

***Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Romans 5:1 (NASB)***

Please refer to chapter 12 for a fuller explanation of the fact that we are saved by God's grace in response to our faith in Jesus, not as a result of doing good deeds.

Because we are justified we are saved from the wrath of God:

***Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.  
Romans 5:9 (NASB)***

So, having had our sins fully forgiven, and having had all of Jesus' righteousness transferred to us, we are viewed by God as if we were the same as Jesus in terms of both innocence and righteousness. That means that nobody can charge us with any crime or convict us of anything. We are made both fully innocent and fully righteous:

***<sup>33</sup>Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup>who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.  
Romans 8:33-34 (NASB)***

### **A brief summary of six of the main aspects of what Jesus achieved for us through His atoning death on the cross**

It is right and proper to refer to Jesus as having 'died for us' or 'saved us'. Those are valid short-hand phrases which sum up what He did for us. However, it is also right to say that when Jesus died on the cross many different things were also being achieved, all at the same time. He saved us in many different senses and there are various different ways of viewing it and explaining it. These overlap to some degree, but they are also distinct and separate points. Therefore it would be helpful for us to differentiate them and understand each of them more fully.

There are so many benefits that come from Jesus' death for us that we cannot look at them all in Book One. However, as a foretaste of the extra things that we shall begin to explore in later books in this series, we could say that what Jesus achieved for us on the cross can be broken down into six key areas or aspects. Taken together, we tend to refer to these six aspects combined as '*the atonement*'. Let's list them and briefly define them:

1. **Jesus dying in our place as a substitute** - (vicariously) This means that Jesus takes our place and receives our punishment so that our sins can be forgiven and the penalty avoided (The technical expression for this is '*penal substitution*'). This is the main thing we have focused on in chapter ten.
2. **The turning away of God's wrath by the offering Jesus made** - The offering of Jesus as a sacrifice appeased God and turned His anger away from us. Therefore God no longer needed to pour out His anger on us. (The technical word for this is '*propitiation*').
3. **Redemption** - This means being bought back, rescued, or liberated by the payment Jesus made. He paid the necessary 'purchase price' to obtain our freedom from slavery to various things. This is a vast subject and we will look into it in a lot of depth in later books in this series. But, in very brief terms, we could break '*redemption*' down into the following achievements:

**a) Jesus sets us free from slavery to sin.**

We inherited our sinful nature from our first ancestor, Adam. It causes us to sin continually. But Jesus gives us a new nature which does not have to sin. Then those two natures, the old and the new, live within us, alongside each other and they are at war with each other. We then gradually have to learn to obey the wishes of our new nature, rather than our old sinful nature. That takes time, but it is possible for our new nature to steadily gain the upper hand, more and more of the time.

**b) Jesus sets us free from slavery to Satan, who is the ruler of this world.**

Adam used to be the ruler of this world, but when he sinned he handed his authority and rulership over to Satan. Thus, every non-Christian is under the rulership and authority of Satan. However, when Jesus died and rose again, all authority was transferred back to Him and away from Satan. That is one of the ways that Jesus defeated and disarmed Satan for us.

It means that when we become a Christian we are transferred out from under Satan's authority and put under Jesus' authority instead. We move from Satan's kingdom of darkness into Jesus' Kingdom. This has all sorts of important implications, which we will examine in later books in this series.

- 4) **Jesus' operating as our 'Passover Lamb'** – This is as in the book of Exodus, when the Israelites were in Egypt. So God's judgment can '*pass over*' us and not affect us. It is just as the Israelite families avoided God's judgment when the angel of death passed over their homes and killed every first-born in Egypt.
- 5) **Justification** - This is the mirror image of point one, where Jesus took our place and had our sin put onto Him as our substitute. *Justification* means we, likewise, take Jesus' place. That then allows us to be deemed to be righteous, or credited with His righteousness. We receive this justification by having Jesus' own perfect righteousness transferred to us, as if it was our own. It is as if we stand in His shoes and share His status.
- 6) **Reconciliation** - This means being reconciled with God the Father so that we no longer have to be alienated, estranged or separated from Him, due to our sinfulness. Because our sin can now be removed and forgiven, and because we can receive Jesus' righteousness instead, God no longer needs to separate Himself from us. That then means that we can be reconciled with God and, spend eternity with Him, instead of being sent to the Lake of Fire.

It may sound surprising that what was achieved by Jesus' death on the cross is capable of being looked at in so many different ways and that so many different benefits come from it. It is, perhaps, a little like studying a huge building such as Buckingham Palace. It is one overall structure and can be spoken of as one building. Yet, it can also be looked at from many different angles, so that all sorts of different aspects come into view.

Thus when you look at Buckingham Palace from the front it is correct to say that you are seeing the Palace. However, if you look at it from the left-hand side, or right-hand side, or from the rear, you will see different or additional features, but it's still Buckingham Palace. Then if you looked at it from a helicopter hovering above the roof you would see other features and make even more discoveries about it. Yet, all the time, it is the same Palace that you are examining, albeit from different angles.

Likewise, with Jesus' death on the cross we shall see in later books in this series that we can focus on and emphasise, one by one, a series of different achievements and blessings. All of them flow from

the death and resurrection of Jesus. They are all closely connected and they overlap to some degree. Yet they are also distinct and separate points and they benefit us in different ways.

**The anguish that God the Father and the Holy Spirit also endured as they had to watch Jesus suffer and die without intervening to stop it.**

It would be wrong to finish this chapter on what Jesus suffered on our behalf on the cross without referring in more detail to what God the Father and the Holy Spirit also suffered for our sake. We rightly focus on the heroic feat of endurance, courage and unselfishness that Jesus displayed when He died on the cross for us. However, consider for a moment what torment God the Father and the Holy Spirit were also going through as they watched Jesus suffering and being tortured, abused, and ridiculed.

Try to imagine yourself for a moment as a parent, wife or sibling of a person you love very deeply who is being put to death. Imagine however, that you knew that it was necessary for them to give up their life, to save the lives of a much larger group of people.

Picture yourself, therefore, looking on as your own son, brother or husband is dying on behalf of the people of your town or nation. Perhaps it could be in Nazi occupied France in World War Two and he is being tortured to death by the Gestapo. They could be trying to get him to reveal vital information and/or the names of his fellow agents in the French Resistance.

However, he is refusing to do so, for the sake of his comrades, and for the sake of the wider war-effort. Let's imagine that if he reveals what the Gestapo want to know then his own life will be spared, but possibly hundreds of his comrades will die. They too have families. Moreover, perhaps the very success or failure of the Allied invasion of Normandy is at stake.

If you were that young man's father, brother or wife can you imagine the mental and emotional anguish you would be going through? What if the torture was being done nearby, so that you could hear his screams? It would be indescribably harrowing for you. But let's take it further.

What if you yourself also had the secret information or knew the names of the people that the Gestapo wanted? What if you knew that you could go forward yourself, in private, and hand over the very facts or names that he is withholding? By doing so you could, by your own actions, prevent his death and end his suffering.

Would you go to the Gestapo and hand over the secret information? Or, would you be capable of restraining yourself and doing nothing? Would you stand aside and allow your own son, brother or husband to die in order to save the lives of the others and to safeguard the Normandy invasion? Isn't that similar in some ways to the agonising dilemma which God the Father and the Holy Spirit faced? They both knew that there was no other way for us to be saved except through Jesus giving His life on the cross.

But they both also knew that, just like Jesus, they had the power to stop the crucifixion. Like Him, they could have sent 12 legions of angels to deal with the Roman soldiers. They could have stopped the torment at any moment, both for Jesus and for themselves. But they didn't. They exercised infinite self-control and endured the slow ordeal of watching Jesus die without ever intervening.

We rightly praise and thank Jesus for His courage and restraint in not putting a stop to His own suffering by removing Himself from the cross. But how many of us have ever even considered what God the Father and the Holy Spirit also did for us and the equivalent restraint they showed as they watched and suffered in silence as He was being crucified?

Moreover, we have seen how Jesus cried out on the cross when God the Father and the Holy Spirit separated themselves from Him and forsook Him while our sin was upon Him. That abandonment and separation was what, in the end, broke Jesus' heart, probably more than any other thing He suffered.

But doesn't it follow that it must have felt very similar for God the Father and the Holy Spirit? They too had to endure being separated from the Son of God, just as He had to endure being separated from them. None of us can really grasp how terrible that was for each of them too, and how grieved they must have felt about it.

### **Even so, it was Jesus alone who saved us**

The suffering and anguish of God the Father and the Holy Spirit were harrowing, but it was not redemptive as Jesus' suffering was. What they endured did not save us. Jesus was the only One being sacrificed to pay for our sin. It was Jesus alone who paid our penalty, not the Father or the Holy Spirit.

But, even so, we still owe them a huge debt of gratitude, not for saving us as such, but for co-operating and holding themselves back from intervening while Jesus was suffering for us. So, it is very right and proper that we should also give heartfelt thanks to God the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, for what they endured, as well as thanking Jesus for dying for us.

Moreover, in case you ever doubt God's love and concern for you, as multitudes of people do, remember what God the Father personally was willing to go through when He allowed the crucifixion to continue in order to bring about your salvation. Then realise that if He was willing to do all that, He can certainly also be trusted to care for all your other needs:

***He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?***  
***Romans 8:32 (RSV)***