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5 Things about the Substitutionary Work of Christ



For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; - 1 Cor. 15:3

1. What We Mean by Substitution

Almost anyone who is familiar with the Bible at all knows that it tells us of Christ's death and resurrection. Some even agree that Christ died for our sins. Fewer understand how deeply ingrained the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary death is in the Word of God. The doctrine of substitution can be seen as early as the Garden of Eden where God slew an innocent animal to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness (Genesis 3:21). Adam, his children, and subsequent generations offered sacrifices to God. The idea of substitution is inherent in every biblical sacrifice from the time of Adam, through the giving and practice of Moses' law (Exodus 29:41-42; 34:19; Numbers 29:2).

2. What We mean by the Substitutionary Work of Christ

The Bible teaches us that all of those substitutionary sacrifices discussed in the Old Testament pointed to the one true Sacrifice, the Lord Jesus, who was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). Those Old Testament sacrifices simply pointed to Christ. They were mere shadows of His coming crucifixion. The Bible says that it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Hebrews 10:1,4).

3. Why Christ's Substitution is Required by God

When the Bible says that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3) it is teaching us that we need a redeemer. We need someone to save us from the consequences of our sin (Romans 6:23). Christ took the penalty for our sin in His own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). He

died in our place before we were ever born (Romans 5:8). He made peace with God on our behalf and removed the separation that had come between us and God as a result of our sin (Ephesians 2:15-16.) We can enjoy this peace with God personally simply by accepting the work of Christ on our behalf in simple faith (Romans 5:1).

4. Why Substitution is Rejected by Men

There are many who call themselves Christian who deny this truth. They are quick to agree that Christ died for our sins and for the sins of the whole world, but that He did not die in our place, He did not take our personal sins upon Himself at the cross (see 1 Peter 2:24). They reject the idea that Christ died personally for us and that we must personally receive Him (John 3:16; 7:37). Sinful man inherently rejects the idea that he must humble himself and accept the sacrifice which Christ made for Him. Many false teachers have gone so far as to try to redefine the Greek word “for” in the numerous verses which speak of His death and sacrifice for us. They want it to say that He died “on our behalf” and not “in our place.” In this way, they can say Christ died for them without submitting to the fact that He died in their place.

5. How Substitution Can Change You Forever!

As lost sinners, we simply cannot pay for our own sins. Even if we could end up doing more good in our lives than bad (an impossibil-

ity) the good could never overcome the bad (James 2:10). We need the sacrifice of Christ.

As believers in Christ, this is one of the most comforting truths in the Bible because this sacrifice for Christ was once for all. Christ died, once for all, and His sacrifice perfects the believer forever once and for all! “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” Hebrews 10:14.

For Additional Consideration

Basic Resources: www.GodQuestions.org (Search for substitution)

Advanced Resources: This widely taught Bible truth has been hated and twisted by many down through the centuries. Find detailed answers for those struggling with this issue in good theology volumes. We recommend Lewis Sperry Chafer’s volume on Soteriology in his Systematic Theology.

Note: Every home should own a good systematic theology. Seek your pastor’s guidance. Unlike basic books on doctrine, theologies help us understand a little more about the discussions men have had over doctrine and the principles they have embraced in order to arrive at their conclusions (good or bad). Chafer’s Theology is far from perfect, but it will certainly stimulate the reader to pursue a deeper understanding of God’s Word, and it will provide a good defense of basic Dispensationalism. Can’t afford it? Get his one volume set on basic Bible doctrines.