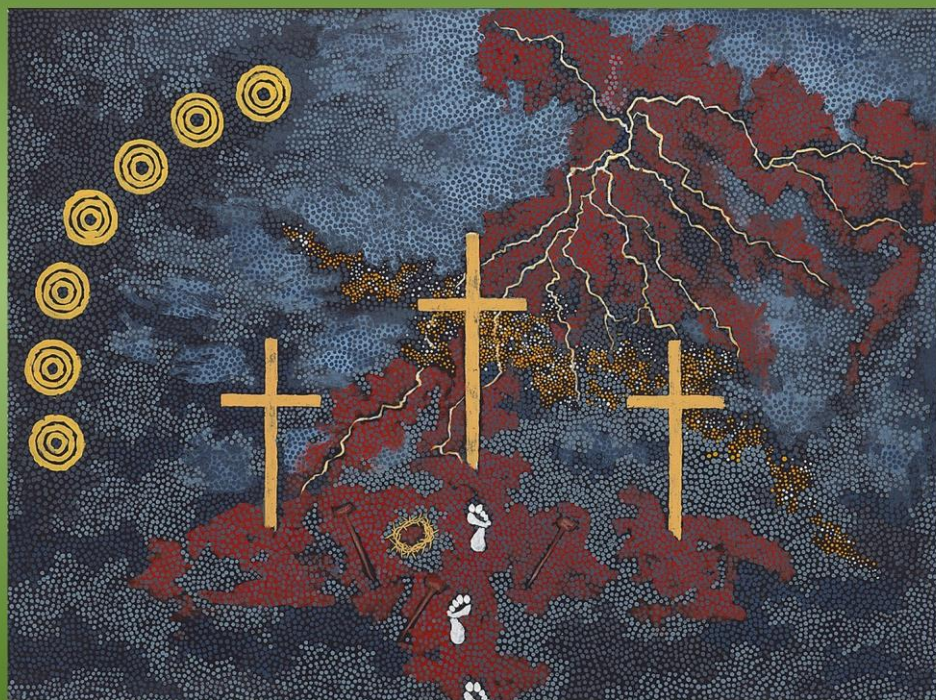


# **Achieving Atonement**

**Second Edition**



**Derek Thompson**

# **Achieving Atonement**

**Second Edition**

**By**

**Derek Philip Thompson**

“Achieving Atonement” Second Edition

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**Published** by the author, Derek Philip Thompson  
of Albion Park, NSW, Australia at Smashwords.

APA Reference:

Thompson, D. P. (2021). Achieving atonement (second  
edition). Publisher: Author

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**Illustrations** – for information see [Illustrations Index](#).

**ISBN** of ePub edition: 978-0-6483703-4-5

**ISBN** of PDF edition: 978-0-6483703-3-8

**ISBN** of hardback edition: 978-0-6483703-2-1

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## **Preface to the Second Edition**

A benefit of self-publishing a book is the ease of issuing a second edition and, in this case, the importance of the subject demands one's best. The gospel is the heart of Christianity and atonement is the heart of the gospel. Even though atonement theories are not essential to salvation, the saved theologian will want to enquire into how God is achieving atonement.

This edition has benefited from feedback I received on the first edition and I thank those who commented. I am pleased to say that the basic reasoning remains intact and I only needed to provide fuller explanations.

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## Preface

“Good Friday” is the title of the above painting by Australian Aboriginal artist Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. The phrase “Good Friday” refers to the day Christ died on the cross. When Christians speak of “the cross” they are referring to more than Christ’s violent death, they have in mind his triumphant resurrection and victory over evil. Of course, death and evil are still with us. But God has been fighting evil from time immemorial and will continue to the end of “the present evil age,” as Paul called it in [Gal 1:4](#). The Son of God entered human history in order to undertake the vital element of God’s plan of atonement. The question we will pursue here is, how is God achieving atonement and what role did Christ’s crucifixion play?

We will examine how God eradicates evil and yet saves people who are sinful. In recent decades, Christian theologians

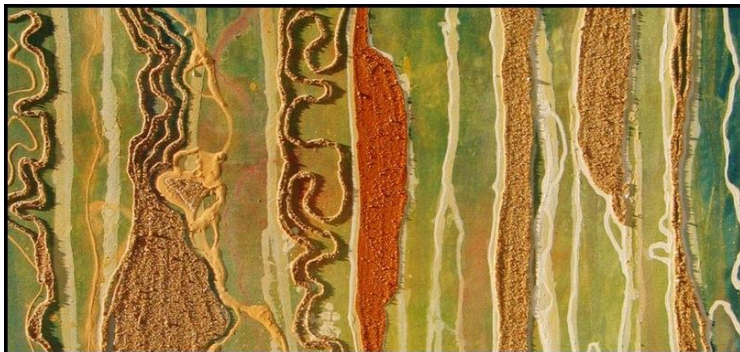
have been working to further the church's understanding of God's plan of salvation. But controversy and argument abound. So, I will sketch the current debate for those who have not been following it before and propose a solution that avoids the problems. God is reasonable, so a logical solution should exist.

The model of atonement advanced employs the biblical analogy of light shining in the darkness with Christ dispelling the murk of evil. Christ's light illuminates his people, eliminating the power, shame and guilt of sin. Matthew, in his gospel, described Christ's coming in terms of the dawning of light ([Matt 4:16-17](#)). John wrote, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" ([John 1:5](#)). This is analogous to overcoming evil with good ([Rom 12:21](#)) and suggests the name for this model as *Lumen Christi* (light of Christ). The aboriginal artwork at the start of each chapter is a reminder of the unpretentious beauty of the gospel. Christian theology should seek the elegant solution.

*Lumen Christi* builds on God's commitment to be God to his people. The model applies the discipline of critical reasoning to develop its logic. In addition, recent scholarly work on Paul's theology provides encouragement for a fresh interpretation of Scripture. I credit the Holy Spirit for contributing new insights on Scripture through my prayer journaling; not that I am claiming divine inspiration status for my writing. Any errors are mine. But the aim is to progress the study of atonement to the glory of God and praise of our Saviour.

Derek Thompson, B.E. (Elec.), Dip. Th.

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## 1. The Atonement Problem

Atonement is not so much a course of action, as an end, the goal God is seeking to achieve. God's ways are often said to be a mystery beyond human comprehension. I. H. Marshall (2008, p. 63) thought, "It is true that the concept of God the Son suffering and dying is paradoxical and incomprehensible." Although God's nature extends beyond our understanding, his actions in creation are open to investigation. If we insist God's work for atonement is a mystery, the search for truth is stymied.

Many Christians become defensive if anyone questions their understanding of the atonement, viewing such questioning as a challenge to the gospel itself. My aim is not to undermine any Christian's faith, but to strengthen faith. Christianity's central message is about salvation from death and reconciliation with God, but its own theologians disagree over its inner logic. Christians must explain how God is achieving atonement in order to proclaim the faith in a reasonable and coherent manner. Does not the search for truth lead to Jesus? He claimed to be the truth ([John 14:6](#)).



## What's in a Word?

Atonement is an English word dating from the early sixteenth century. At first, it meant at-one-ment, combining the verb at-one (pronounced “at-wun”) with “ment” to form a noun meaning unity by reconciliation. William Tyndale introduced the word into his English translation of the Bible of 1526. The use of the word was continued in the King James Authorised version of 1611.

Over time, the word atonement took on the theological meaning of reconciliation of a sinner with God won by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Vincent Brummer (1992, p. 435) used it in this sense when he wrote of the broken relationship between sinners and God: “The fundamental religious issue which we all have to face, therefore, is how this relationship can be restored. How can we attain ultimate bliss by being reconciled with God? Basically, this is the issue with which the doctrine of atonement has to deal.”

There are some differences in emphasis between the different segments of Christianity. The protestant churches emphasise salvation from condemnation, while Catholicism gives priority to redemption from slavery to sin. In the Byzantine (or Eastern Orthodox) tradition, the focus is on divine compassion rather than justice. They see humanity's fall into sin as a wound to be healed rather than guilt to be judged. In shame and honour-based cultures (such as Arabic and Asian), God out of his goodness deals with the relational problem. In the western worldview where guilt and innocence are preeminent, God in his righteousness deals with the legal problem. Both are important. Thus, for the term atonement to have ecumenical and missional value, it must straddle personal salvation because of the offence of sin, redemption from enslavement to sin, and healing the damage to humanity caused by sin.

Furthermore, the goal of atonement must include the following three things:

1. The removal of disease and suffering;
2. Resolving environmental issues that threaten humanity (such as climate change and declining ecologies);
3. Pacifying natural disasters from such things as storms and volcanic activity.

A full orb ed atonement theory embraces not only human salvation, redemption and healing but also the making good of all creation. God's work of atonement remedies the brokenness in creation seen in human moral failures, damaged people, and natural calamities.

### **Criteria for a good soteriology**

Alister McGrath (2007, p. 330) dislikes the phrase "atonement theory" and prefers to discuss atonement under the heading of soteriology (the study of salvation). He says "theories of atonement" is a cumbersome and unhelpful phrase. Changing the wording does not change the fact that theologians cannot agree how God is achieving atonement. So, I use the term "theory" to emphasise the provisional nature of atonement models and give the freedom to explore options.

Atonement theories must satisfy the following criteria.

1. Enhance the preaching of the gospel.
2. Accord with the full range of biblical teaching.
3. Be consistent with the moral attributes of God (God is love, good, gracious, holy, merciful, etc.).
4. Encourage the response of Christlike behaviour in Christians.

5. Be coherent, reasonable, and ethical. God does not like us insinuating he is unfair ([Ezek 18:29](#)).
6. Support ecumenism and include the truths found in the churches' historical atonement teaching.

Traditional atonement theories, as I will show, do not meet all the above criteria. For readers unfamiliar with the traditional theories and the criticisms scholars make of them, the next chapter provides an overview. I will give ample references for readers to follow up subjects of interest. Those conversant with the current debate can skim through to Chapter 3.

The church should proclaim its beliefs with clarity, and this especially applies to its beliefs about Christ's work on the cross. Denominational and theological dogmatism resists change, but some changes may be for the better. Non-Christians are quick to criticise any deficiencies in the church's teaching. The church should acknowledge the shortcomings of current theories and give itself permission to review afresh its interpretation of Scripture and how God gets right with sinners. This book sets out a model that aims to meet all the above-stated criteria. We will return to them to test *Lumen Christi* against them in Chapter 9.

## **Redemptive Violence**

A major problem atonement theories face is how to relate human redemption to the violence of the cross. God is not vindictive and does not use evil means for good ends ([Rom 3:8](#)). Good ends never justify evil means in God's sight even when we can find no alternative, such as in a so-called "just war". In such cases, humanity confirms its participation in a sinful world. For anyone, let alone God, to use the violence inflicted on Jesus for a worthy result is unethical. Even the high priest Caiaphas justified the death of Jesus as being for the protection of the nation against the Romans ([John 11:50](#)).

What are we to make of the Old Testament stories where God inflicted violence upon his enemies and even upon Israel, God's own people? When humanity separated itself from God, it brought upon itself the consequences, which sinful people perceive as God's judgement. The "punishment" for sin is self-inflicted because of humanity's sin. Sinners look for someone else to blame for their troubles. Many regard God as the higher power they need to appease. The prophets, in speaking on God's behalf to rebellious people, spoke in a language their hearers understood, employing terms such as the wrath of God, judgement and punishment. Such words fail to express God's heart of love. When Christ came, he taught people to relate to God as "father".

So, how are we to bring together Jesus' violent death on the cross and human salvation from sin? Could God require the violent death of Christ to save sinners from death? Is suffering required for redemption? The wages of sin is death, but why would another death reconcile people with God? Jesus expected his followers to know the answers to these questions. He scolded his disciples for not understanding the Scriptures saying, "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ([Luke 24:26](#)). Jesus implied there is a link between his suffering and his exaltation. But Jesus did not assert that the link between his crucifixion and his mission to redeem God's people is causal. It may be incidental, the two things occurring together without one causing the other.

The conviction that violence can be redemptive is commonplace. J. Denny Weaver (2001, p. 156) said, "The assumption that doing justice means meting out punishment – is virtually universal among North Americans and throughout much of the world."

Daniel M. Bell Jr (2009, p. 23) said, “the message that violence redeems is pervasive.” We see it in the war against terrorism, liberal gun laws, harsh prison sentences, death penalties and movies where the heroes use “good violence” to overcome those who use “bad violence.” Bell says even our language betrays the conviction that violence is redemptive, e.g. “war on drugs” and “battle with cancer.” The problem is not that people sometimes use violence to overcome atrocious violence. In our sinful world, it is sometimes necessary to use violence for the greater good. But for God to require violence for salvation would imply God is vindictive. Vindictive pagan gods call for revenge, retaliation and retribution for offences. An atonement theory attributing such an attitude to God would discredit the theory (rather than portray God as malicious).

Atonement theories that make Christ’s violent death integral to God’s plan of salvation are open to criticism on several fronts. It is not my intention here to examine these criticisms, just to inform the reader of the lack of agreement in Christendom regarding this central teaching. I list a few concerns below. Note: The Scripture reference in brackets after each reason is typical of those used to support the contention that violence is sometimes acceptable but, they represent a misuse of Scripture.

- a) Victims of violence might think passive acceptance is a virtue because Christ willingly suffered to save people from sin ([Matt 26:39](#)). Examples of this are women who endure domestic violence as their “cross to bear.”
- b) Christians may use “good violence” to obtain a desirable result because God’s anger at sin is deserved ([Matt 3:7](#)).
- c) God needs to use violence to avenge and overcome sin ([John 1:29](#)).

The concept of retribution is ambiguous. Cottingham (1979) and Walker (1999) identified many varieties of retribution theories. These include repayment of a debt, punishment as deserved, a penalty for an offence, the satisfaction of the victim, balancing the scales of fairness, and appeasing the wrath of God. Even if all these theories were moulded together, they would not justify redemptive violence by God.

Joachim Molander (2009, p. 195) argued for what he calls “atonement retributivism”. This, he says, does not justify punishment, but sees punishment as part of a conceptual puzzle where punishment operates alongside confession, penance, forgiveness and reconciliation. He wrote, “Pain and suffering can thus help the evil-doer to reach an insight into who he has become.” The problem with this argument is that the inflicting of retributive pain and suffering also gives an insight into the character of their instigator. With God, such “severe mercy” belies his grace and love.

Christopher Bennett (2002, p. 163) contended retribution can be positive. For example, it can be restorative for people alienated from society. Punishment can lead a person to repent of their moral guilt and reintegrate into the community. Bennett did not concede that retributive punishment can also have the opposite effect. The mere possibility of violence being redemptive does not warrant its general use by anyone, including God. Besides, for God on Judgement Day, the only positive effect of retribution is the destruction of evil.

Not every instance of anger is vindictive, nor all violence unjustified. Even though God has good reason to be angry with evil-doers, for God to require a blood sacrifice to save people is a very different matter. Lisa Cahill (2007, p. 428) pointed out, “Nowhere in the New Testament does forgiveness depend on punishment or retribution.” Indeed, the book of Hosea teaches the opposite.



Thomas Talbott (1993, p. 158) said because God is infinitely great, no amount of suffering can pay for humanity's offence against him. Talbott concluded, "Punishment is simply not the sort of thing that could pay for any offence; it is no equipoise at all for sin" (p. 160). "Punishment alone does nothing to make up for, or to cancel out, any crime" (p. 161). The argument that Christ's sacrifice was of infinite value does not explain why it should be regarded as a punishment for human sin or how it can nullify sin.

## **Atonement Theories and Redemptive Violence**

Many atonement theories accept redemptive violence. Hans Boersma (2005, p. 202) of the Reformed tradition asserted, "And is this not what traditional atonement theology – of whatever stripe – has always implied: that in the cross God uses violence for redemptive ends?" The claim, fighting evil is not colluding with evil, may sometimes be valid in human conflicts, but when applied to the atonement, it implicates God in using the cruel death of Christ to defeat evil. Many scholars criticise those theories which assume the Father approved of the crucifixion of the Son as being both immoral and unscriptural.

Atonement references in Scripture often employ metaphors (e.g. a sacrificial lamb). The metaphorical nature of religious language has been much debated by philosophers and theologians. Linguists Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 486) argued all language is metaphorical. They conjectured that metaphors are concepts in themselves. If so, we should be careful in interpreting atonement metaphors to uncover the intended meaning. This is not straightforward. Over time, these literary devices suffer the fate of becoming "dead metaphors" which no longer convey the original intent of the author.

Henri Blocher (2004, p. 632) observed, "The common charge levelled at the traditional view is that of unwarranted

literalism.” The purpose of atonement metaphors in Scripture is to illuminate meaning. But Robert Daly (2007, p. 36) said the over-logical application of atonement metaphors leads to bad theology, which leads to bad morality. For example, if one takes Paul’s metaphors of Jesus as being a redemption price or scapegoat for sin beyond their limits, they would appear to be buying favour from a restitution seeking God (Daly, 2007, p. 43). Daly added, he was not only referring to Christians in past ages. He cited present Christian support for wars that go beyond the just war theory, the prevalence of capital punishment, the belief that only unnecessary violence is wrong, and the desire of some Christians for God to dispense judgement upon non-believers. Daly said if Christians are to imitate God, it is important they do not see God as vindictive. Otherwise, they will be too ready to accept or inflict violence themselves (p. 37). God is good. So, atonement theories that assign unjust behaviour to God are flawed.

Lisa Cahill (2007, p. 424) wrote, “Roger Haight speaks for many when he expresses doubt about atonement theories that make salvation available through the cross, ‘indirectly make Jesus’ death something good,’ and engender a spirituality that is fascinated by suffering.” Mark McIntosh (2008, p. 99) asked, “is there an interpretation of Jesus’ death that sees its significance for salvation, but does not:

- 1) Isolate his death from the rest of what Christians believe,
- 2) Reduce the import of his death to a form of satisfaction for a divine demand, or
- 3) Legitimize passive suffering or violence as inherently necessary, praiseworthy, or divinely sanctioned?”

Theologians have suggested other atonement theories, but these do not meet with all of McIntosh’s requirements nor my six criteria. This has driven some to say the redemptive

violence of the cross is a mystery (Komonchak, 2005, p. 22). But, saying God's ways are a mystery as a defence for a flawed theory is unacceptable.

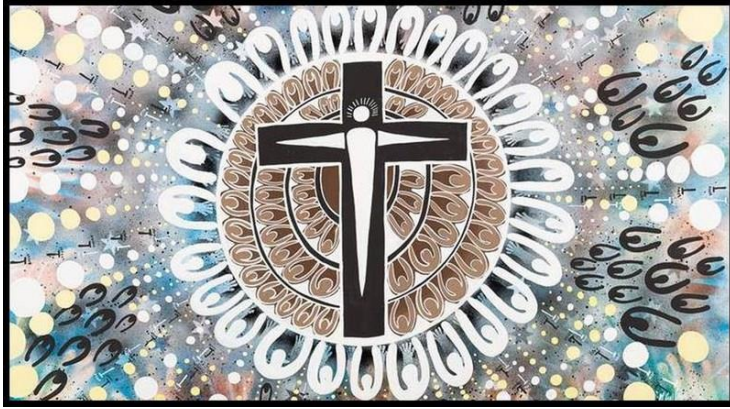
J. Denny Weaver (2001, p. 172) said theologians need to "construct theology that specifically reflects the nonviolence of its namesake, Jesus Christ." Can we understand Jesus' violent death as not being required by God for human salvation? Could Christ's crucifixion be both incidental and essential to salvation? If so, God the Father did not require a violent sacrifice, but for God to save humanity, Christ had to endure the crucifixion. This contention undergirds the *Lumen Christi* model expounded in Chapters 4 and 5.

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## 2. Atonement Theories

J. Denny Weaver (2001, p. 172) said, “If Christians are uncomfortable with Christianity as a violent religion, the first step is to recognise the extent to which formulas of classic theology have contributed to violence both overt and systemic.” This chapter follows Weaver’s advice in surveying the main atonement theories.

The categories of traditional atonement theories are as follows.

- 1) Christ the victor (Latin: *Christus Victor*).
- 2) Forensic models: Satisfaction and penal substitution.
- 3) Moral influence (or exemplary).
- 4) Multifaceted (or kaleidoscope) combinations of the other three.

There are many variations within these categories, but a broad-brush treatment of each category will highlight issues. We seek an atonement theory for a gospel with an act of violence at its centre consistent with a God worthy of worship.



## 1) Christus Victor

This theory (held by Origen, Augustine and Gustav Aluén) applies the battle metaphor given in the New Testament with **Christ the victor**. The spiritual warfare worldview of scripture is taken seriously. Christ defeats the devil, not by power, but by sacrifice. On the cross, Christ gave his life as a ransom for sin. Although some early theologians (e.g. Origen) thought God paid the ransom to the devil, most consider this as taking the ransom metaphor too far. The violent sacrificial death of Jesus is integral to this theory's soteriology. Christ was the bait in the trap that exposes the world's justice system as unjust and thereby nullifies Satan's authority.

Weaknesses in the *Christus Victor* theory include:

- a) Making the focus of the atonement a battle between God and Satan does not resolve human responsibility for sin. Humanity's proclivity to sin does not mean we can blame Satan for our sins. Neither does the theory provide any absolution for the guilt of sin. But those who hold this view would say God is able to forgive sin out of his gracious nature and that receiving such forgiveness induces human repentance. This fits with the Orthodox Churches' emphasis of God as our physician.
- b) In seeing victory in terms of a cosmic power struggle won by Christ on the cross, the theory does not explain the continuing presence of evil.
- c) Either portraying God as outsmarting Satan by deception or using Satan's self-deception to defeat him, involves God in the use of deceit to secure Christ's victory, which contradicts the goodness of God.

J. Denny Weaver (2001, p. 171) proposed a “Narrative *Christus Victor*” variation of this theory. He wrote Jesus’ “suffering is not something willed by nor needed by God.” Jesus passively submitted to death to complete his mission and demonstrate the non-violent reign of God. Thus, Weaver saw the crucifixion as a revelation. Christopher Marshall (2003, p. 89) disagreed with Weaver pointing to [Romans 3:25](#) which says of Christ, “whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed.” Marshall thought that “God’s active involvement in Jesus’ death is clearly asserted.” Colin Gunston added that Christ did not just reveal something of importance but achieved something of importance (McGrath, 2007, p. 328).

## 2) Forensic Models

Forensic models place sinners in a law court setting where the judge (God) declares the sinner righteous because of Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross. Yung Suk Kim (2019, p. 6) summarised the forensic theories of Christ’s sacrifice as follows. “He delivered sinners from the grip of the devil by paying the ransom (ransom theory). He was punished and died instead of sinners (penal-substitution theory). His sacrifice was a propitiation to allay God’s wrath (propitiation theory). His death was a cost needing to restore a broken relationship between God and humanity (expiation theory). His sinless sacrifice was a perfect means to satisfy God’s moral demands for humanity (satisfaction theory).”

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE) proposed Christ’s vicarious sufferings on the cross earned God’s **satisfaction** which is required because of human sin. His mediaeval thought-world demanded the maintenance and vindication of God’s honour. Although God’s glory is not diminished by

human sin, for humanity to reconcile with God it must make restitution for the honour it failed to bestow. The satisfaction theory sees the Scriptures about Christ dying to redeem sinners ([Isa 53:5](#); [Gal 3:13](#)) in this light. Still today, this interpretation helps people feel free from the guilt of disobeying God. The theory presents God relating to humanity on the basis of obedience. Anselm wanted to present an alternative to retributive punishment (Williams, 2014, p. 5). Modern critics say Anselm portrays God as an abusive father figure in God's treatment of Christ. The theory portrays a God who condemns people to eternal punishment unless he diverts his wrath towards his Son. Catholics respond that the focus is on Christ's sacrifice and not on the Father's demand for retribution. The satisfaction is of both the Father and the Son that the debt of humanity has been paid by a sacrifice of love.

The **penal substitution** theory is popular in evangelical circles ("Jesus paid the penalty for my sins"). It evolved from the satisfaction theory by seeing the violence of the cross in terms of a substitute punishment. It emphasises Christ's selfless sacrifice. Rohinton K. Mody (2008, p. 117) gave this definition: "Jesus Christ by his death on the cross exclusively bears the wrath of God and the retribution for sinful transgressions against God's law in the place of sinners." Its advocates try to stay loyal to their interpretation of those Scriptures linking salvation with Christ's death. These scholars reason God cannot forgive sin without punishment, for that would be to condone it (Morris, 1979, p. 415). Sin clashes with God's moral nature because God is holy and just (Packer, 2010, p. 9). It is because God is never self-contradictory that God's justice must be "satisfied" and he must deal with the problem of sin (Stott, 2006, p. 157). God imputes the guilt for human sin to Christ, who pays the penalty on the cross. This appears to conflict with Ezekiel Chapter 18 where God says, "the person who sins shall die" ([Ezek 18:20](#)) because the ways

of the Lord are fair. The reply that this does not apply to Christ because he was divine ignores Christ's human nature.

Robin Collins (2012, p. 185) began his criticism of the forensic theories with a parody of the "Parable of the Prodigal Son." In Collin's parody, the older son offers to take the younger son's punishment because the father refused to forgive and receive back the prodigal. Proponents of these theories would reply that God so loved the world he took on human form to deal with the breach of justice. However, in both the satisfaction and penal substitution theories, God uses violence to atone for sins (Collins, p. 186). This raises the question of how punishment could satisfy God's justice and reconcile sinners with God.

I. H. Howard Marshall (2005, p. 8) does not concede there is a problem with God's use of redemptive violence. Marshall argues God is justified in being angry at sin and in condemning sinners. He derives this from the essential attributes of God of holiness and love. Marshall says these attributes "find expression in both love towards creation and yet also judgement and wrath when that creation is spoilt by sin" (p. 7). He suggests that wrath is like "grace and mercy which are necessitated only when his creatures are in need caused by sin" (p. 6) and "Both qualities or actions are expressions of the fundamental justice and love of God" (p. 6).

Thomas Torrance (2009, p. 125) asked: "how can one die for another and do it justly?" Torrance sought an answer in the incarnation of the Word of God where "God steps personally from behind the law and is joined to mankind" (p. 127). Inbody (2002, p. 157) complained that this only replaces "divine child abuse" with "divine masochism". J. I. Packer (2010, p. 13) cautioned that we should not think of the members of the Trinity as separate individuals. Packer called the sacrifice of atonement "a 'wrath absorber' which quenches the judicial wrath of God." Henri Blocher (2004, p. 643) said, "Such crude

metaphors that redescribe divine wrath in terms suggestive of a physical *quantum*, of energy or matter, are devoid of explanatory power (*why* the alleged absorption or exhaustion?). They lack biblical warrant.” Packer’s argument does not explain why in this theory God required for redemption a substitute death as punishment. Emphasising Christ’s sacrificial love does not explain why God required the sacrifice in the first place.

The Old Testament sacrificial system appears to offer support for substitutionary atonement. Although ancient civilisations used blood sacrifice to appease the gods, Israel used it as an expression of faith. Daniel Bell (2009, p. 25) said: “Christ’s work on the cross is the divine refusal of blood sacrifice.” Bell thought modern scholars have misinterpreted Anselm and the apostle Paul. So, he proposed a re-interpretation of the satisfaction theory. Bell said Anselm and Paul if understood rightly, were not saying the cross is about appeasing the wrath of God, but the lengths God will go to bring humanity into relationship with God. Bell said Anselm does not see the Son of God as becoming human so there would be a suitable sacrifice for God to vent his wrath. Nor was it to meet the demands of the moral order, “but so that humanity might be restored to the place of honour that God had intended for it from the beginning ([2 Pet 1:4](#)).” Thus, Christ is our substitute, not in the sense of taking the penalty, but in offering God the faithfulness, love and obedience we could not. Interpreting Paul’s comments in [Rom 3:25](#) and [5:9](#) in the light of [Phil 2:5-8](#) makes it clear that God does not save us using violence, “but Jesus’ obedience and fidelity.” When Paul says “God is just” Paul means God is faithful to his promises and desire for communion with his people. Humanity perpetrated the violence of the cross, not God. Jesus fulfilled his mission of faithfully reaching out to humanity even when faced with human rejection in the form of the cross (Bell, 2009, p. 25).

Bell (2009, p. 26) was concerned that the logic of human sacrifice simply lets us “off the hook for our sin by deflecting the punishment for that sin onto someone else.” He said, “Christ’s work of atonement demands the rejection of blood sacrifice and the logic of redemptive violence.” Bell directed attention to [Ezek 18:32](#), which says God has no pleasure (satisfaction) in the death of anyone, and this would include his Son. Unfortunately, Bell’s return to Anselm’s satisfaction theory still has the ethical problem of portraying God as needing appeasement because of human sin which required Christ to be sacrificed on the cross. Where Anselm emphasised Christ’s obedience in the place of humanity’s disobedience, the Protestant Reformers emphasised Christ taking the punishment that humanity deserved and which entailed God imputing humanity’s sin to Christ on the cross. Either form of forensic theory implicates God in the perpetration of Christ’s crucifixion to satisfy God’s honour or justice. The only “satisfaction” a good and gracious God could receive through the crucifixion of his Son, would be in saving his people, but the forensic theories direct the satisfaction in a God-ward direction.

Furthermore, the forensic theories give no purpose to Christ’s resurrection with regard to atonement. For them, the resurrection merely confirms the satisfaction of divine justice (the debt has been paid). But when Paul said Christ “was raised for our justification” ([Romans 4:25](#)) it appears he intends more than what the forensic theories assert. Justification by faith is discussed in Chapter 7.

Proclaiming a gospel from a law court setting does not have traction in cultures that emphasise shame and honour which, it can be argued, is the relational emphasis of Scripture.



### 3) Christ as Moral Influence

Both the life and death of Jesus taken together are a **moral influence** for discipleship. Peter Abelard (1079-1142 CE) devised this theory because he found the *Christus Victor* and satisfaction theories to be morally offensive. The moral influence theory was popular with liberal theologians. James Gregg (1917, p. 205) reasoned, “If you hold that all evil-doing must be rewarded by the infliction of a supposedly appropriate amount of suffering, without regard either to the past or to the future, then you may be able to believe that God is just in requiring the crucifixion of his innocent Son as an expiation of the sin of the world.”

Abelard taught that Christ upheld the moral order of the universe by submitting to crucifixion. The theory emphasises the endurance of suffering. Jesus proved his love for his friends to the extent of dying for them ([John 15:13](#); [Rom 5:8](#)) and gives Christians an example to follow ([1 Pet 2:21](#)).

The theory has several shortcomings. It does not explain the resurrection or why crucifixion was necessary as a sacrifice. Although the theory calls for a human response, it does not show how Christ’s death overcomes human bondage to sin.

The moral influence theory replaces the concern of the substitution theories for God’s honour and justice with a concern for the moral order of creation. Gregg (1917, p. 208) pointed out, “Since God’s love, like the wisest and truest human love that we know, is strong and firm and utterly uncompromising toward evil, we can understand that his forgiveness does not remove the natural penalties of sin.” But God, in his goodness, would want to do more than influence people to be virtuous; he would want to do more than pardon an offence; he would want to save them from all the consequences of sin.

Christ's incarnation brought God's kingdom into this world which guaranteed conflict ending in violence (Inbody, 2002, p. 158). Violence permeates the culture of a sinful world. Gregg concluded (1917, p. 208) "the distinctive meaning of the cross is that God's love was and is ever ready even to suffer on our behalf, that we may be drawn back to Him." In encouraging people to follow Christ's example, this theory inadvertently sanctions a life of submission to abuse.

#### 4) Multifaceted Approaches

Christians who find truth in each of the traditional atonement theories have tried to combine these into one **multifaceted** theory. Many evangelicals see salvation as complex and say although penal substitution is a helpful, even the pre-eminent theory, it needs enhancement with other atonement metaphors (Morris, 1979, p. 415).

For example, Bruce Reichenbach (1998, p. 551) wanted to add a "healing through suffering" motif to the traditional theories. Dennis Kuhns (2003, p. 3) suggested the collected insights from each theory would give a superior understanding of the atonement. Kuhns added that Christian participation in the cross is essential for sanctification where such works are not meritorious for salvation (p. 11).

Joel Green (2006, pp. 157-185) categorised atonement theories into those that focus on atonement as a sacrifice and those focusing on atonement as a revelation. Green proposed that a kaleidoscope view of God's saving work does better justice to the varied images of the biblical narrative.

Daniel Migliore (2004, pp. 182-187) suggested using John Calvin's doctrine of the three offices of Christ, prophet, priest, and king, to combine the three traditional atonement theories. Christ as a prophet, teaches on the kingdom of God (moral influence), Christ the priest offers himself as the perfect

sacrifice on behalf of sinners (satisfaction), and Christ the king, rules the world, despite its recalcitrant evil (*Christus Victor*).

The weakness of all these combined approaches is that they do not give answers to the problems of the component theories. They are not mutually corrective as Migliore surmised (2004, p. 186), but create more difficulties because of the conflicts between disparate theories. For instance, Abelard proposed the moral influence theory because he found the other theories to be immoral. Multifaceted models that include the Father using violence against the Son do not portray God as being good in every way. But God is good and a multifaceted model must affirm this.

## **The Valid Concerns of Traditional Theories**

Soteriology has to embrace the following valid and scriptural concerns of the traditional atonement theories, but in a new theological framework.

- 1) Christ was victorious over Satan but also reconciled sinners to a holy God without using deceit.
- 2) Jesus acted as a substitute for sinful humanity in giving God the Father a sinless human he can bless. God upheld his honour and justice by restoring his children to communion and righteousness, without requiring violence.
- 3) The cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love, and an influence for transformation, but is more than a powerful example.
- 4) A multifaceted model keeps the truths found in the constituent theories while acknowledging and avoiding the limitations and errors of each.

The statements of faith of many churches include one or more of these theories but ignore their faults. Pastors do not

want to confuse their flocks by raising theological problems. Within the wider church, the adherence by denominations to diverse atonement theories contributes to disunity. People looking on from outside the faith may well think the Christian message is of dubious logic and portrays a vengeful God.

The challenge to the church in declaring Christ as Lord and Saviour is to proclaim God as both holy and merciful. Unlike pagan gods, Christ does not seek revenge on sinners. The church as the body of Christ must present God's atoning work in a way that honours God and unifies differing church traditions.

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### 3. God's Vision for Atonement

The model presented in the following chapters takes a different approach to the atonement to that of earlier models. So, this chapter establishes the foundation for a new theory before presenting its logic in the next.

#### The Central Problem

When devising a model to explain the atonement, we first need to be clear about the problem we are trying to solve. For example, if our concern is with human rebellion against God, the solution will centre on restoring order. If the main issue is a broken relationship, the question is how to reconcile the parties. Likewise, for God's honour and rule of justice to be reinstated. A subjective atonement model looks at changing the individual to be right with God. Additionally, there is the evil that manifests in nature whether or not it stems from human malpractice. God would desire to eliminate natural disasters. Each of these approaches applies its distinctive premises as though they describe the real problem. The differences may appear unimportant, but for an argument to be sound, both the argument and the premises must be valid. So, what are the correct premises?

Thomas Talbott (1993, p. 168) said, “If we suppose that God’s moral nature is simple, we must also admit that his justice requires exactly the same thing his love requires: the absolute destruction of sin.” And we could add “the removal of evil in creation.” Since in sinning, humanity colludes with evil, sinful actions are an attack on God even when another human is the immediate victim. Sin entails such things as disobedience to God, flouting justice, broken fellowship, disrespect for the Creator, lack of care for the environment, and a need for personal renewal. Humanity does not harm God by sinning, but itself.

The basic problem then is how God can both save sinful people and abolish evil from creation. *Christus Victor* has Jesus defeating Satan on the cross, but in this theory, Jesus did not eliminate evil. Similarly, the satisfaction theory centres on the lack of due respect given to the person of God but leaves the other effects of evil intact. Likewise, penal substitution focuses on justice but fails to engage with other issues. Moral influence prioritises making humans Christlike but neglects other consequences of evil. One reason atheists continue to raise the so-called problem of evil is because of the failure of traditional atonement theories to offer a thorough response.

## **The Central Truth**

For Martin Luther, soteriology, and in particular justification by grace through faith, was the centre of theology. Other reformers, such as John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, gave priority to the sovereignty of God. But God’s intention in creation was to make a people for himself. As such, the covenant of God, “I will be your God and you will be my people”, is a fitting central truth for atonement theology. Larry Shelton (2004, p. 21) said: “Perhaps the most central theological integrating motif of Scripture is the concept of covenant.” The covenant expresses God’s vision for his people.

The central message of Christianity is the gospel, which is primarily good news for God in accomplishing his vision. But, the gospel is also good news to humanity. God honours his promise to be God to his people by overcoming evil and restoring creation. If God's covenant is central, then law (penal substitution), power (*Christus Victor*), and exemplar (moral influence) are insufficient. Christ is more than a victor, substitute, example, teacher, mediator, or even saviour. He is God to his people and a God who loves his children.

Scripture claims Christians are citizens of God's kingdom ([Eph 2:19](#); [Phil 3:20](#)). Prabo Mihindukulasuriya (2014, p. 197) contended, "Scriptures do provide us with a consistent narrative, with its own coherent logic, of how the death of Christ brings about God's acknowledged rule, which accomplishes his redemption and judgement upon his creation." Furthermore, "A kingdom perspective of the atonement is able to hold together the many emphases that models of atonement attempt to convey. It shows how the covenantal expectations of the Hebrew Scriptures are fulfilled in Christ, indicating the significance of his life and ministry, as well as his death and resurrection, and links seamlessly the themes of the kingdom of God and the cross. Through it we see how the messages of personal salvation and cosmic renewal cohere." (p. 213).

Paul wrote in [Romans 14:17](#) that "... the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit gives Christians pledges or samples of these things in the present evil age. God will ultimately renew the world ([Rev 21:1](#)) and remove all evil. For a model of atonement to be comprehensive, it must explain more than Satan's defeat or how God effects justice. A wide-ranging theory must encompass all of the following: the Son of God's incarnation, Christ's life of obedience, Christ's death,

resurrection and ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and God's renewal of the earth.

## **The Objective and Subjective Dichotomy**

Paul Fiddes (2007, p. 2) drew attention to the duality between the objective event of Christ's crucifixion and the subjective response of faith. Fiddes' view of salvation was as transformation "*to* divinization, and *from* sin." He thought it impossible to integrate fully the subjective and objective facets of Christ's atoning work (p. 4). He claimed that, apart from the moral influence theory, traditional atonement theories start at the objective end of the spectrum and add a subjective appendix (the response of faith). The trend in recent times has been to move the focus from the historical fact of the cross towards the personal response. Fiddes saw a tension between the Jesus of history and the Christian's faith in Jesus.

However, such things as God's response to Jesus' death and the changed lives of Christians, are also objective facts. Stephen Williams (2014, p. 6) said "there is an objectivity, in fact, a deep objectivity, in Abelard's view of the atonement. In the death of Jesus Christ, a new age is inaugurated – the age of the Spirit – and the death of Christ is the channel of entry for the Spirit into the world ..."

It can also be said that Jesus' death on the cross occurred because of Jesus' subjective response of obedience to God. There are multiple responses involved in salvation: (1) the individual Christian to Christ, (2) Jesus to both God the Father and his followers, and (3) of God the Father to Christians and to Jesus. The physical and spiritual aspects of Christ's death on the cross are intimately entwined.

Larry Shelton (2008, p. 28) proposed that a way around the subjective/objective dichotomy is to base atonement theory in the covenant of God: "The covenant view of the participation

of the believer by faith-union with Jesus Christ in the work of sacrifice (Romans 6:1-14) retains both the subjective and objective, the expiatory and the propitiatory emphases, as well as the necessity and centrality of the Resurrection.” God upheld his covenant by sending Jesus to mediate the new covenant in his blood ([Luke 22:20](#)). In this way, the subjective and objective aspects of the atonement both rest in Jesus. Although traditional theories acknowledge Christ’s mediatorial role, they try to make atonement orbit around another focal point. Placing such things as God’s honour, human obedience, justice or law at the centre of soteriology puts the theory off balance and unable to sustain a consistent theology.

## **The Covenant of God**

The Covenant of God is contrasted in Scripture with the illusory covenant of works whereby people try to justify themselves before God by their good works. This false covenant should not be confused with the Old Covenant, which was the phase of God’s Covenant prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Evil anywhere in creation is offensive to God. Offences are not limited to sin. Human suffering and death from disease and natural disasters are abhorrent to God, too. Evil is easy for God to eliminate. God could withdraw support for the existence of anything contaminated by evil. But that would entail God in destroying everything and starting again. God wants to save people. [The covenant](#), “I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” is an expression of God’s desire for atonement. This is why Michael J. Gorman (2011, p. 26) thought it remarkable that no covenant model of the atonement exists. Although Gorman argued for a covenant model, he refrained from attempting a complete account. He explained, “I do not find preoccupation with the details of the ‘how’—the

‘mechanics’—to be particularly helpful or biblical, but that is not the same as recognizing no efficient cause.” (p. 68).

Despite Gorman’s reticence, the *Lumen Christi* model is an attempt to present the omitted reasoning with God’s covenant as the driver of atonement. The mechanism of atonement was a mystery before the incarnation of the Son of God ([Eph 1:9](#); [3:5](#); [Col 1:25-26](#)) who came as Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of God’s people, the mystery revealed. Jesus as God in human form ([Phil 2:7](#)) was qualified to act as a mediator of salvation between God and humanity. Thomas Torrance (2009, p. 287) wrote, “As the incarnation is the meeting of man and God in man’s place, so the ascension is the meeting of man and God in God’s place.” Christ’s mediatorial role is essential to atonement. God displayed his love for the world through Christ who “humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross” ([Phil 2:8](#)). Jesus exemplified the eternal virtues of sacrifice and humility that God rewards: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.” ([1 Pet 5:6](#)). How Christ saves people involves a range of issues.

## Core Issues

A good soteriology not only adheres to the criteria given in Chapter 1 but, in order to be all-embracing, must at least engage with the following subject areas.

- a) Human responsibility for sin.
- b) Forgiveness and reconciliation.
- c) Justice and punishment.
- d) Sacrifice and atonement.
- e) Righteousness.
- f) Goodness, mercy and holiness.

g) Evil in nature and the angelic realm.

Each of these core issues is discussed below. The *Lumen Christi* model will be evaluated against this list in Chapter 9.

## **a) Human Responsibility and Sin**

God intends human beings to be free ([Gal 5:13](#)), so it follows that God does not object to humans using free will. But just as Jesus said of his miracles that he only did what he saw the Father doing ([John 5:19](#), 30; 8:28; 12:49; 15:5-7), Christians, too, can receive guidance from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Sins occur when the independent actions of people are in opposition to, or in rebellion against, God. The prime targets of those actions are mostly other people. Underneath the sinful actions, is the misbelief that people can determine what is good without deference to God.

Darlene Weaver (2003, p. 48) argued that the basic cause of sinful actions and bad attitudes is humanity's alienation from the life of God ([Eph 4:18](#)). Weaver said, "Sin is self-estrangement from God and its reflection in moral evil against oneself, others, and the world." Everybody is born into a world estranged from God. Subsequent actions only continue the revolt against God. The apostle Paul said, "But the Scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin," ([Gal 3:22](#)). Even children of Christian parents have a sinful human nature. This is because sin is a spiritual state or stance of separation from each other and God.

An objection to the doctrine of original sin is that it is unfair to a person who dies in infancy. But the birth of humans in a sinful world does not imply everyone is unsaved at birth. Salvation is a gift to those with faith in God ([Mark 11:22](#)). Jesus' comments on little children imply that infants have faith in God ([Matt 19:14](#); [Mark 10:14-15](#); [Luke 18:16](#)). Therefore, a newborn child is a sinner "saved" by Jesus in the same way

adults are. Obviously, a baby cannot articulate its faith, but faith is not mere intellectual assent to a creed. Jesus knows those who believe in him.

When God breathes life into a newborn person, the spirit enters a body in a creation estranged from its Creator. But there is now reason why a newborn infant cannot have faith in God. William Wordsworth expressed this idea poetically in his “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.”

“But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home” (lines 64 and 65).

The temptations of a world alienated from God entice people to abandon their childhood faith. Jesus saves through faith, not through learned knowledge or the will of the flesh ([John 1:12-13](#)) or good works. This same reasoning applies to those born with a mental impairment, including those with a debilitated conscience. Troy W. Martin’s response to Gorman’s article on the covenant of God raised this problem but added, “All the other theories of the atonement, however, also fail to address the modern psychological view of a human without a conscience at all or with a severely deficient one.” (Gorman, 2011, p. 64).

Culpable sin is a breach of covenant. To break faith with God is analogous to breaking a marriage engagement. The betrothed person rejects God when falling from faith and thereafter continues to do so, even in those actions thought of as good or morally neutral (e.g. breathing). This is as Paul said in another context, “... whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” ([Rom 14:23c](#)). Sin causes a rift between humanity and the one who upholds its life, resulting in death ([Rom 6:23](#)). People see death as God’s judgement, but God wants to free them from sin and raise them from death ([Rom 8:2](#)).



Regarding human responsibility for sin, one may suspect the biblical account of God's over-riding Pharaoh's free will and hardening his heart ([Exod 4:21](#); [7:3](#); [14:4](#), [17](#)) implies that human free will always acts within God's sovereign will. But, if everything people do is within God's will, God would be ultimately responsible for evil. Besides, isolated instances of God over-ruling human free will do not prove that God normally acts this way. There would be no reason for God to get angry at sin. God's strengthening of Pharaoh's resolve against God's people, which Pharaoh himself chose, is not an evil act. Pharaoh's harshness towards the Israelites was the reason God intervened to liberate his people.

The free will argument is consistent with the revealed nature of God as love ([1 John 4:8](#)). If anyone is free, it is God, and God created humanity in his own image to freely love each other and God. Love requires the freedom of both parties to do otherwise. God cannot coerce his creatures to love him.

## **b) Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

Atonement includes the restoration of humanity's relationship with God and this is consistent with Christ's emphasis on love and forgiveness. Jesus taught people to forgive others as God forgives them ([Matt 6:14](#); [18:21-22](#)). During his ministry leading to the cross, Jesus said he had "authority on earth to forgive sins" ([Matt 9:6](#)). So, Jesus' death was not the unique instrumental cause of forgiveness. John wrote, "your sins are forgiven on account of his name" ([1 John 2:12b](#)), not on account of his death.

Forgiveness occurs when a person responds to another's offence in love instead of resentment. God is willing to forgive human sin. The personal nature of forgiveness means that a mere legal pardon is inadequate. On the other hand, while forgiveness is essential for salvation, it is not the only requirement. Divine forgiveness does not make sinners

guiltless ([Exod 34:6-7](#)). Nor did Jesus' crucifixion, by itself, bring about human salvation. The crucifixion was one event in Jesus' lifetime. Everything people do is significant. Every step Christians take in their life's journey is a step on the road to heaven. The journey may pass through unimportant places, horrible places, or be a triumphant procession. Jesus, from his birth to his death and beyond, committed himself to God's strategy for atonement. The Son of God's incarnation, Jesus' ministry on earth, his death, resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit were all significant milestones in God's plan of salvation. An example of an apparently minor action was Jesus' decision to go up to Jerusalem where events would conspire to bring about his crucifixion. Even the minor details of Jesus' life were significant in his obedience to the Father's plan to save people ([Luke 18:31](#)).

The writer of Hebrews, in discussing atonement, does not mention the resurrection of Jesus, but that does not mean he thought the resurrection has no significance for salvation. Neither does the Apostle Paul, in his letters, give priority to Jesus' resurrection over his faithfulness in submitting to crucifixion (Kim, 2019, p. 57). As we have seen, every aspect of Jesus' life has importance. The atonement does not hinge solely upon Christ's death on the cross. The enemies of Christ in killing him unwittingly acted to thwart God's plan of salvation. In so doing, humanity added to its myriad sins against God, its most heinous sin. Did Christ's death achieve anything? Yes, but it did not do everything. For instance, it did not remove evil.

Jesus once remarked in passing that people are evil ([Matt 7:11](#)). Sin even taints the life of a faithful saint. Sin separates the human race from God. T. F. Torrance (2009, p. 111) conjectured this separation from God is a "merciful act of God by which he holds himself at a distance from fallen men and women", withholding judgement because "his immediate

presence which, apart from actual atonement, could only mean the destruction of humanity.” So, for reconciliation between God and humanity, atonement for sin is needed.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are different, but related, actions. Anthony Bash (2011, p. 145) said, “If we forgive, we forswear our right to justice: we do not thereby *receive* justice but choose to *forgo* it.” Even if the victim forgives the offender, they may not reconcile with each other. For example, victims of assault may not want to befriend their attackers. The damage done by sin might preclude this. Scripture enjoins forgiveness but does not demand an ongoing harmonious relationship between the disputants.

Unlike people, God seeks to both forgive and reconcile with his people. But in common with human relationships, God’s forgiveness does not mean God ignores sin. If we miss this distinction we might assume God’s forgiveness of sinners, even repentant sinners, implies God is reconciled with them. In setting out the detailed logic of atonement, it is necessary to include both God’s forgiveness of sinners and how God reconciles with them.

### **c) Justice and Punishment**

The prophet Micah made it clear that God requires justice amongst his people: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” ([Micah 6:8](#)). God’s redemption of sinners must not only establish justice but also be just in itself. But does justice require punishment? Did God punish Christ in our place or was it that Christ endured the punishment for sin that we deserved? How could Jesus’ death satisfy justice?

The penal substitution theory sees Jesus taking the punishment for the sins of the entire world as a fitting means of

salvation. It is said God imputed the guilt for past, present and future human sin to Christ who was without sin. But how can punishment bring about justice? A just situation is one free of sin. Human society controls sin by using punishment as a deterrent. Don McLellan (2005, p. 10) pointed out “justice cannot undo the offence ... and very often takes no thought of its ramifications on innocent people connected to those it punishes.” The families of imprisoned offenders are unintentionally punished. Although McLellan saw justice as inadequate to deal with offences (p. 10), he conjectured justice would be meaningless without punishment, and so he continued with the substitutionary atonement theory (p. 15).

God’s atonement restores justice and saves his people, but this does not necessitate retributive punishment. Atonement brings about reconciliation. The destruction of the wicked removes evil, but it does not bring about atonement for believers. James Merrick (2006, p. 300) took issue with McLellan’s view that justice requires punishment saying “Of course, one might reply that there is a disjunct between human forgiveness and divine. For instance, Stott: ‘The analogy between our forgiveness and God’s is far from being exact’ because God is the creator and we are mere humans. Or Michael Horton: ‘God cannot simply forgive the way we are enjoined, because unlike us, he is not simply violated personally..., but God’s moral character that establishes and upholds the moral order of the cosmos must be sustained.’ Yet both Horton and Stott affirm that God commands humans to be and do only that which is true of himself. By arguing that human forgiveness is not analogous to divine, they undercut this position.” Merrick’s quotations are from (Stott, 2006, p. 104) and (Horton, 2005, p. 190).

Justification by faith is a doctrine in need of a theology of atonement to mesh with. Theologians have given much attention to justification in recent years, partly because of

concerns with the traditional atonement theories, but without reaching a consensus. N. T. Wright (2009, p. 70) claimed the terms “justification” and “righteousness” come from a law court setting. This ties in with the penal substitution approach. But this reading is not the only possibility.

Alister McGrath (2005, p. 22) sees “justification” and “righteousness” as grounded in the Old Testament idea of rightness or rectitude. As such, justification means correcting a relationship. So, in atonement, God seeks a right relationship, not payback justice.

Wiard Popkes (2005, p. 139) probed the meaning of justification in Paul’s letters to the Romans and Galatians and concluded, “Both texts interpret ‘justification’ in terms of personal relationship.” This is because “Meeting God/Christ is a personal encounter, effecting a new personal relationship.” (p. 139). The advantage of seeing justice secured by righting the wrong of a broken relationship is that it breaks the nexus between atonement and violence. Even God cannot justify anyone by the use of brutality.

Paul Leer-Salvesen (2009, p. 175), concerned that forgiveness may not dispense justice to victims, wrote, “A theology of reconciliation which consists only of forgiveness, and no longer moral anger and judgement, is a theology which has betrayed the victims.” Societies set up judicial systems as substitutes for God’s authority. These systems use punishment for “behaviour control and justice” (Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006, p. 451). Penal substitution applies a human approach to justice to the atonement. But this only pertains to people-to-people relationships, not people-to-God relationships. People may not desire reconciliation with each other, but this is God’s aim. God cannot reconcile with anyone by punishing them, or by Christ taking the punishment in their place. Even though the sacrifice of Jesus engenders thankfulness, the Father’s punishment would not draw us to him.

Of course, idealised and earthly concepts of fairness do not regulate how God acts. The Lord is holy, and he sets the benchmark for righteousness. Humanity does not get a vote. God provided the Old Testament laws through Moses to restrain wrongdoing in Israel ([Gal 3:24](#)). He is the source of peace and justice in a rebellious world.

Thomas Talbott (1993, p. 161) asked, “What sort of thing would satisfy justice to the full in the event that one should do something morally wrong? The answer, it seems to me, is obvious: If one could somehow make amends for the wrong action, that is, undo any harm done, repair any damage, in a way that would make up for, or cancel out, the bad consequences of the action (in one’s own life as well as in the life of others), one would then satisfy justice to the full. ... But justice requires not only that a criminal’s unfair advantage be erased; in many cases, it also requires a victim’s unfair disadvantage be erased” (p. 162). Talbott noted that prison populations are skewed to the disadvantaged. Human judicial systems are far from perfect. Talbott said, “Perfect justice requires reconciliation and restoration”, that is, “full atonement for sin” (p. 163). God’s justice pertains more to love than order. Punishment cannot deliver perfect justice. But what of those not willing to submit to God?

Jesus said people have a choice of two paths, one leading to destruction, the other to life ([Matt 7:13](#)). A deathbed conversion suffices to inherit everlasting life, but is this fair? Christ’s parable of the labourers in the vineyard ([Matt 20:1-16](#)) portrays this implication of divine grace for saved evildoers. As for the unrepentant, their sin ultimately destroys them. The Almighty does not appear to apply degrees of punishment. If God has no scale of penalties commensurate with sinful behaviour, the sinner finds little motivation to avoid evil. Is it reasonable to destroy all unbelievers regardless of how slight or heinous their sin? But the source of such objections is Satan.

Clinging to any trespass, no matter how small, betrays the intention to side with evil over against God. And rejecting Christ is to reject one's Saviour.

#### **d) Sacrifice and Atonement**

John the Baptist described Jesus as the "Lamb of God" ([John 1:29](#)). This is an allusion to the lamb provided by God to Abraham to sacrifice instead of his son, Isaac ([Gen 22:13](#)). Christians need to discern the metaphorical use of this phrase in order to avoid a heathen view of sacrifice. Animal and human sacrifice in pagan religions sought to deal with wrongdoing and control violence. But in the Old Testament, sacrifice expressed repentance and faith, albeit in the sometimes-barbaric rituals of an ancient near eastern society. God has to stoop to interact with ignoble human culture.

Before Christ came, God accepted animals and grain as offerings of faith. In giving sacrifices to the Almighty, the Israelites acknowledged their livelihood depended on him. The giving of the best of the produce expressed the worshipper's belief that these are gifts from God and that the supplicant's life is in God's hands.

The Levitical sacrificial sin offering only applied to inadvertent sins ([Lev 4:1-2](#); [Num 15:22-29](#)). For deliberate wilful sins, besides a sacrifice, the sinner made restitution ([Lev 6:1-7](#)) otherwise Israel expelled them ([Num 15:30-31](#)) or, in the case of violating the Sabbath, the people stoned the offender to death ([Num 15:32-36](#)). God's forgiveness of sin involved a death ([Heb 9:22](#)) as an offering of repentance and thanksgiving ([Ps 50:23](#)). The blood of bulls and goats alone did nothing to erase sin ([Isa 1:11](#) & [Heb 10:4](#)).

Israel's ritual sacrifices symbolically and prophetically portrayed Christ's violent death as part of God's resolve for atonement. Not that God endorsed or required the violence.

The death of a sacrificed animal did not symbolise the transference of the worshipper's punishment. God did not punish an animal. At most, the animal's death represented the death the worshipper deserved. Christ's sacrificial death displayed God's mercy towards sinners in accepting the pain of their rejection of Christ. God did not demand a blood sacrifice for atonement. Human and demonic sin conspired to execute Jesus. Thus, God's enemies brought the crucifixion into the realm of atonement and the cross became a symbol of both humanity's shame and God's grace. God, in his grace, refrained from immediate judgement in order to save everyone who believes in Christ.

### **e) Righteousness**

The substitution theory speaks of righteousness as a property that God transfers to the sinner. But righteousness has another meaning. Larry Shelton (2008, p. 13) said, "The believer's righteousness consists of his or her being in the right covenant relationship with God, and therefore, is not an attribute of the believer that can be isolated from God. But through the work of the Holy Spirit, the believer is linked with Christ through faith in the saving initiative of God's righteousness ([1 Cor 6:11](#)).” If righteousness is not a quality people possess in themselves, but an aspect of a relationship, then it pertains to communion with God.

The prosperity gospel feeds on the belief that righteousness is a status God gives the believer who then has to walk in obedience to receive his blessings. But Christians do not need to strive to earn blessings from God. Prosperity theology makes God's blessings, or his approval, conditional on obedience. This is like the Galatian heresy that required Gentile believers to obey the laws of Moses. Legalism expects God to respond with favour to works of self-righteousness. Righteousness found in communion with God avoids this error. Jesus, himself,



was loved by his Father regardless of his obedience to the laws of God. The ups and downs of Jesus' life did not correlate with his righteousness. Jesus was always righteous, even when on the cross.

Having a right relationship with one's Maker is a reward in itself. Similarly, purity, right living and love of others are their own rewards. God's "rewards" are his means of blessing his children. Christ's saving work on earth resulted from his righteousness. His resurrection and ascension were not rewards for his good works. The Son of God has authority over life and creation. Jesus said, "I lay down my life in order to take it up again" ([John 10:17](#)). This is why Christ could give eternal life to the instant people joined with him by faith ([John 6:47](#)). The Father "rewards", honours, vindicates and blesses his Son by raising those he died to save. Christ shares the righteous communion he has with his Father with those in communion with him.

### **f) Goodness, mercy and holiness.**

Counterbalancing the mercy, compassion and grace of God against the holiness, righteousness and justice of God implies conflict amongst God's attributes. It is as if God wants to be merciful but cannot do so because he must satisfy his holiness. For God to forgive human sin and accept sinners into heaven, would be to condone sin. Yet Jesus claimed authority to forgive sins on earth and did so ([Mark 2:5](#)). The church proclaims a gracious message of "come to Jesus just as you are." But to add "this invitation is only possible because Christ satisfied God's demand for blood", depicts a pagan deity unworthy of worship.

The holiness of God signifies he is sinless and will not uphold an evil creation's existence forever. Likewise, God the Father cannot have communion with unrepentant sinners. Neither will God sustain the lives of humans as sinners forever.

God is patient with sinful humanity but God will one day remove evil from creation ([Rev 21:4](#)).

God has prepared a way to save sinners. The incarnation of the Son of God enabled God to forgive and befriend sinners without ignoring sin. For example, Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again” ([John 8:11](#)). Nor did Jesus sin himself, or impart immortality to sinful human nature. Jesus said, “You must be born from above” ([John 3:5-7](#)) because our carnal nature cannot inherit eternal life. God the Father acted in holy righteousness when he raised Jesus from the dead. The Father honours Christ’s intercession for his follower’s salvation ([Heb 7:25](#)). Atonement theories must leave both God’s mercy and holiness intact. One is not subservient to the other.

### **g) Evil in Nature and the Angelic Realm**

John Cowburn distinguished two problems of evil. Cowburn (1979, p. vii), explained: “on one side I shall put troubles that are no one’s fault, and on the other side I shall put moral evil and the troubles, including the physical disorders, that follow from it.” The second category of evil includes what the Bible calls sin. But diseases and natural disasters are evil too because they are an affront to God in harming his people. Admittedly, much evil is a mixture of both types. For instance, human sin can contribute to the death of a person from disease due to sinful delays in research into finding a cure (p. 93).

What Cowburn passed over was the devil and the forces of evil in the unseen spiritual realm (p. 73). The scriptural worldview is marked by a spiritual warfare between God’s Kingdom and the kingdom of darkness. The fallen angels oppose God’s will and are capable of influencing people and nature in destructive ways. Modern western worldviews

exclude the supernatural and consequently the problem of evil becomes a dilemma (Boyd, 1997, p. 43).

Cowburn (1979, p. 93), influenced by a fellow Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, tried to combine Augustinian theology with its fall from grace view, and Teilhardian theory which sees the world evolving upwards. Cowburn applied Augustinianism to moral sins and Teilhardianism to nature. As such, he saw the remedy for moral evil is repentance and forgiveness, and for evils in nature, increasing knowledge (e.g. to predict earthquakes and find cures for diseases). But even the combination fails as an atonement model in not giving prominence to, or explanation of the place of, the cross of Christ.

The Son of God came into the world to fight and resolve all types of evil. Forensic models focus on human sin, but God also wants to restore the physical world. The problems resulting from environmental mishaps occur because God's will is resisted by creation. Although God is omnipresent and immanent in creation, he maintains an ontological distance to prevent his holy presence destroying sinful humanity. This is not to suggest a deistic understanding of God as abandoning creation to its own devices. The Father cares about his children's hardships resulting from sin, injury and sickness. This is evidenced by Jesus' compassion seen in exorcisms and healing miracles. Peter implied the basis of the Christian healing ministry is in the atonement when he said, "by his wounds you have been healed" ([1 Pet 2:24](#)). The Bible promises a new heaven and new earth free of indiscriminate events of disorder ([Rev 21:1](#)). God aims to wipe out evils of any and every kind, including those arising from causes in nature and supernature. Atonement theories must explain how the Creator removes the blights from creation while saving sinners and not as an afterthought.

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## 4. Atonement Logic

Many have sought to explain the atonement using the familiar ground of Scripture and systematic theology, which form a natural basis for preaching. But, the diversity of biblical interpretations and theologies have led to disagreements and disunity in the church. This calls for a fresh approach. So, here I apply the discipline of critical thinking to Scripture. If this sounds too rationalistic, I hasten to add these things are done with prayer and help from the Holy Spirit. I present reasoning as a description of what God is doing, not as a proof for a theory. Critical reasoning is a tool to help us avoid logical errors. Scripture itself affirms that the wisdom from above is reasonable, or “willing to yield” ([James 3:17](#)).

This chapter explores the process for achieving atonement using logical formula, which may be too mathematical for some people. Don’t worry, the next chapter will set out the *Lumen Christi* model in less analytical terms. Later chapters look at how this model aligns with Scripture and how it engages with other theological concepts.

God aims to eliminate evil from creation and restore his glory in the world. The multifaceted character of creation is damaged in every part because of sin. and each part needs atonement. Six prominent facets of creation in need of repair are:

- i) Human society – God repairs damaged interpersonal relationships;
- ii) Religion – God restores communion with humanity;
- iii) Moral order – God establishes righteousness and justice;
- iv) Liberty – God frees people from slavery to sin;
- v) Spirituality – God makes people holy;
- vi) Cosmos – God restores peace to humanity, nature and the supernatural realm.

There are other aspects of creation damaged by sin, but an atonement model covering the above list is a good start. *Lumen Christi* is a multifaceted model, but not one that simply combines the traditional theories. Since Christ's atoning work involves everything God made, we find the atonement logic for each part is interrelated. The order of the above list does not represent logical priority or historical sequence. God's plan for atonement, however, unfolds across the historical phases of God's covenant, which I will discuss towards the end of this chapter.

Expression (1) below brings together the above six facets of creation involved in atonement. We could add others (the "if" operator does not exclude other possibilities, but requires those listed, to be met).



**Atonement → C • C<sub>B</sub> • J<sub>H</sub> • L<sub>B</sub> • R<sub>B</sub> • W ..... (1)**

Where → = if

**C** = **C**ommunion between people

• = and

**C<sub>B</sub>** = **C**ommunion of **B**elievers with God

**J<sub>H</sub>** = **J**ustice for **H**umanity

**L<sub>B</sub>** = **L**iberty for **B**elievers

**R<sub>B</sub>** = **R**ighteous **B**elievers

**W** = the **W**orld renewed

This chapter applies the nomenclature of critical reasoning in a series of logic statements for each of the six elements in Expression (1) in order to establish a rigorous atonement logic.

## Definitions

Before proceeding, a few definitions are in order. Some theological terms have multiple meanings. Even terms found in Scripture bear different connotations depending on the context. In this chapter, the following definitions apply. The terms might be used differently elsewhere.

**Communion** refers to relationships marked by unity in purpose and actions and characterised by love and faith. Communion here does not refer specifically to the Eucharist.

**Culpable sin** refers to deliberate sinful actions of a person with free will to do otherwise.

**Evil** is that which would negate God.

**Holy** means being set apart for God. God, himself, is holy in that he is set apart from all that is not God.

**Faith** is a positive spiritual and social connection between persons, including between a human and Christ and between a human and God. Faith gives rise to attitudes of trust and loyalty.

**Forgiveness** means to waive a debt, or let go of resentment. The elements needed for forgiveness are an offence, the offender, the victim, the public, and God. It is not essential for the offender to repent, be punished, or reconcile with the victim for forgiveness to occur. The victim of an offence may include people from the immediate victim's community.

**Liberty, or freedom from sin**, refers to the release from slavery to sin, which is the inability to do otherwise.

**Original sin** is a theological term used here for the state of people procreated by sinful parents and who, because of their sin, cannot commune with God apart from atonement.

**Reconciliation** refers to the restored communion of estranged parties.

**Righteousness** means, according to the context, the attribute of a holy God or the state of one of God's people who is acceptable to, and in right relationship with, God.

**Salvation from sin** consists in receiving eternal life, freedom from sin, communion with God and the hope of righteousness, bodily resurrection and a restored world to inhabit. Salvation results from the atonement.

**Sin** is any action of a created being who takes part in evil. Sins are primarily against God but also disrupt human relationships.

**The unforgivable sin** is a culpable sin against the Holy Spirit whereby a person refuses to relate to God and chooses not to place their faith in God. As it says in [2 Tim 2:12](#) of Christ Jesus, “if we deny him, he will also deny us” (see also [Luke 12:9](#)). This does not mean unbelievers cannot return to faith in God and have their sins forgiven. Salvation is only available through Christ ([Acts 4:12](#)).

### **(i) Repairing interpersonal relationships**

There is a pressing need to repair human relationships damaged by sin. Consider two people whose relationship has broken down because one party offended the other. For the pair to reconcile three things must occur:

- (1) an apology by the offender (which may include restitution for any losses incurred by the victim),
- (2) forgiveness by the aggrieved person,
- (3) and both parties must want to reconcile.

Expression (2) below restates these actions for restoring estranged relationships in the nomenclature of logical reasoning.

$$\mathbf{C} \rightarrow (\mathbf{F}_v \bullet \mathbf{D}_v) \bullet (\mathbf{T}_o \bullet \mathbf{D}_o) \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

where

**C** = Communion between people

**→** = if

**F<sub>v</sub>** = Forgiveness of the offender by the victim

**•** = and

**D** = Desire for reconciliation; **v** = victim's; **o** = offender's

**T<sub>o</sub>** = Repentance (Turn to believe in victim) by the offender

In a real-life situation, both parties might be offenders and victims in different ways.

Expression (2) has scriptural support. Jesus commanded people to forgive those who trespass against them ([Matt 6:14-15](#); [Mark 11:25](#)). In a sinful world, reconciliation may not be advisable in every case. Sometimes the victim has no desire for reconciliation (**D<sub>v</sub>**), for instance, in a case of rape by a stranger or in ongoing domestic violence. [Proverbs 19:19](#) advises, “A violent tempered person will pay the penalty; if you effect a rescue, you will only have to do it again.” Although Jesus commanded his disciples to forgive their offenders ([Matt 18:21-22](#)) reconciliation is desirable ([Matt 18:15](#)) but not essential.

[Proverbs 19:11](#) says “Those with good sense are slow to anger, and it is their glory to overlook an offence.” But agreeing to forgive-and-forget is not the same as restoring friendship. Forgiveness by the offended party does not overlook or diminish the offence. For reconciliation to occur the offender must acknowledge and repent of the wrongdoing, having compassion for their humanity (**T<sub>o</sub>**). As Desmond and

Mpho Tutu (2014, p. 173) in their book on forgiveness observed, “There can be no reconciliation without responsibility.” Reconciliation does not entail the setting aside of the penalty for the offence under the law. And repentance may involve the offender in making restitution to the victim.

The desire for our own inner peace and harmony with other people are strong motives for forgiveness. Apart from the aforementioned special cases, forgiveness and repentance imply a desire for peaceful reconciliation (**D**). Scripture encourages this. [Psalm 34:14](#) says, “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” and [Hebrews 12:14a](#), “Pursue peace with everyone.”

The moral influence theory looks to the example of Christ to encourage believers to emulate Christ’s forgiveness of sinners but the *Lumen Christi* model affords more than mere influence in that the indwelling Holy Spirit empowers transformation in believers’ lives. The complete repair of interpersonal relationships will be available in heaven where there are no sinful inclinations to withhold forgiveness, no self-condemnation by the guilty party, and love is the dominant concern of everyone.

## **(ii) Restoring Communion with God**

Expression (2) does not apply to humanity’s relationship with God because the Almighty sustains creation and cannot uphold evil ([1 Cor 8:6](#)). Nor is God a victim of human wrongdoing as people are victims. People cannot harm God who is maintaining their existence. Instead, humans become victims of their own sins when they separate themselves from God.

The Old Testament teaches that God forgives because he is merciful ([Dan 9:9](#)) but this does not mean God is reconciled

with sinners. Neither did Christ's forgiving of people's sin amount to God saving them. God cannot ignore sin.

The logic statement for human communion with God needs to give due respect for God's holiness by adding "righteousness" (**R**) into the expression. God judges sin righteously and individuals must be righteous to enjoy friendship with a holy God. Expression (2) is modified for communion with God as follows.

$$\mathbf{C_B} \rightarrow \{(\mathbf{F_G} \bullet \mathbf{D_G}) \bullet \mathbf{R_G}\} \bullet \{(\mathbf{T_B} \bullet \mathbf{D_B}) \bullet \mathbf{R_B}\} \dots\dots (3)$$

where

**C<sub>B</sub>** = Communion of **B**elievers with God

**F<sub>G</sub>** = Forgiveness by **G**od (mercy)

**D<sub>G</sub>** = **G**od's **D**esire for reconciliation (love)

**R<sub>G</sub>** = **G**od's **R**ighteousness (holiness)

**T<sub>B</sub>** = Repentance (**T**urn to God in faith) by the **B**eliever

**D<sub>B</sub>** = **B**eliever's **D**esire for reconciliation

**R<sub>B</sub>** = **R**ighteous **B**elievers

Expression (3) makes clear that **C<sub>B</sub>** is **not** forthcoming because humanity is not righteous. There is no **R<sub>B</sub>** because of human sin. God must deal with humanity's sin before people can have communion with God.

Regarding forgiveness, Anne C. Minas (1975. p. 138) contended, "Only a human being can forgive - a divine being cannot." She reasoned from a philosophical point of view that it would be logically absurd for God to forgive sin (p. 150). Minas argued that humans might forgive a morally wrong

action because they reassess their estimation of the action or gain further facts or apply mitigating circumstances or condone an offence. But God would never need to do such things (pp. 139-141). In a human judicial system, a higher authority can offer clemency for an offence without changing the judgement or can overturn a lower court's decision. But this would not apply to God. Besides, clemency is not an application of mercy, but reassessing the appropriateness of the punishment (p. 141). For God to forgive some and not others would be unjust. As for repentance, God could foresee this. If the purpose of judgement is to get the offender to change his actions, this cannot apply to the final judgement (p. 143).

Anthony Bash thought Minas wrong to apply human forgiveness to God. Bash (2011, p. 139) wrote, "Minas therefore makes a serious methodological and semantic error. She uses the word 'forgiveness' as denoted in the *OED* (as I said, this refers to person-to-person forgiveness) *with reference to God* and fails to recognise that the word would be differently denoted if it were properly describing God's forgiveness."

Scripture teaches that God can forgive sins. [Psalm 32:5](#) says, "Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

Minas has created this apparent logical conflict by using "forgiveness" to include or imply "reconciliation." The problem for God is not forgiveness, for he is merciful, but his being reconciled with sinners. The trinitarian and gracious God acted through the incarnated Son of God to do what was otherwise impossible. Minas did not envision God as a Trinity determined to save his people and the Son of God as being prepared to take on human form. As J. B. Phillips would say, "Your God is too small."

Even with repentance from sin (**T<sub>B</sub>**) and desire for a right relationship with God (**D<sub>B</sub>**) expressed by faith in God, no-one can reconcile with God by the logic of Expression (3). But because God is merciful and forgiving (**F<sub>G</sub>**), has covenanted with his people (**D<sub>G</sub>**), and is holy (**R<sub>G</sub>**), God has found another way of attaining communion with believers (**C<sub>B</sub>**). God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” ([1 Timothy 2:4](#)).

The mediatorial role of Christ needs to be explored. Christ’s communion in the Trinity applied to Expression (3) gives Expression (4).

$$\mathbf{C_T} \rightarrow \{(\mathbf{F_G} \bullet \mathbf{D_G}) \bullet \mathbf{R_G}\} \bullet \{(\mathbf{T_X} \bullet \mathbf{D_X}) \bullet \mathbf{R_X}\} \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

where

**C<sub>T</sub>** = Communion within the **T**rinity

**F<sub>G</sub>** = Forgiveness by **G**od

**D<sub>G</sub>** = **G**od’s **D**esire for reconciliation

**R<sub>G</sub>** = **R**ighteousness of **G**od

**T<sub>X</sub>** = **C**hrist **T**urning to God on humanity’s behalf

(“Father, forgive them” Lk 23:34)

**D<sub>X</sub>** = **C**hrist’s **D**esire to be in communion with God

(“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” Lk 23:46)

**R<sub>X</sub>** = **R**ighteousness of **C**hrist

Christ could acknowledge human sin (**T<sub>X</sub>**) on our behalf because of his humanity. The writer of Hebrews said of Christ, “Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” ([Heb 7:25](#)) which implies Jesus’ prayer



for the Father's forgiveness of humanity continues to be his prayer to this day.

The Son of God did not break communion with God by his incarnation into a sinful world or because of the offence to God of Christ's crucifixion. Even though Expression (3) fails for sinners, Expression (4) succeeds for Christ who never sinned (**R<sub>x</sub>**).

Peter said of Jesus, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." ([1 Pet 2:24](#)). The penal substitution theory interprets this to mean that God imputed the guilt and punishment for humanity's sins, to Christ on the cross. But Peter here said no more than Jesus endured human sin against him for their salvation.

Scripture verifies all the terms in Expression (4) are valid.

**F<sub>G</sub>** ([Ps 32:5](#))

**D<sub>G</sub>** ([Isa 45:22](#); [John 3:17](#))

**R<sub>G</sub>** ([Rom 3:21-22](#))

**T<sub>x</sub>** ([Luke 23:34](#))

**D<sub>x</sub>** ([Luke 23:46](#); [Rom 5:10](#))

**R<sub>x</sub>** ([2 Pet 1:1](#))

So, **C<sub>T</sub>** is valid ..... (i)

This means that the offence against God of human sin did not disrupt communion between Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Conclusion (i) accords with Jesus' teaching that, "The Father and I are one" ([John 10:30](#)) and "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf." ([John 15:26](#)).

Now applying Expression (2) for communion to the reconciled relationship between Christ and repentant people gives Expression (5).

$$\mathbf{C_X} \rightarrow (\mathbf{F_X} \bullet \mathbf{D_X}) \bullet (\mathbf{T_B} \bullet \mathbf{D_B}) \dots\dots\dots (5)$$

where

**C<sub>X</sub>** = Communion between **Christ** and his followers

**F<sub>X</sub>** = Forgiveness by **Christ**

**D<sub>X</sub>** = **Christ's** Desire for communion with his followers

**T<sub>B</sub>** = Repentance (**T**urn to God in faith) by the **B**eliever

**D<sub>B</sub>** = **B**eliever's **D**esire for reconciliation

Christ could, and did, forgive sins (**F<sub>X</sub>**). Jesus said, “. . . the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . .” ([Matt 9:6](#)). Desmond and Mpho Tutu (2014, p. 3) proposed two truths based on people’s shared humanity: “there is nothing that cannot be forgiven, and there is no one undeserving of forgiveness.” This was Jesus’ attitude even when confronted with crucifixion. Jesus did not have a victim mentality but overcame the sin done against him. Note, the “unforgivable sin” of [Matt 12:31-32](#) is where **T<sub>B</sub>** and **D<sub>B</sub>** are absent due to an unbeliever’s rejection of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, instead of responding to the penitent in vengeance, responds in mercy. As James put it, “mercy triumphs over judgement” ([Jas 2:13b](#)). Jesus welcomes believers into communion with him (**D<sub>X</sub>**). Both the Holy Spirit and Christ invite everyone to eternal life. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift” ([Rev 22:17](#)).

Christ gave the Eucharist as an ongoing reminder that he gave his life for his disciples ([1 Cor 11:26](#)). Christians can have communion with Christ because of their shared humanity. Expression (5) describes a believer's successful communion with Christ, where Expression (3) failed to depict any viable reconciliation with God. The Creator-creature relationship operates on a different plane to that between humans. But Christ bridges this gap and overcomes the problem of sin.

Jesus replied to wrongdoing, not in kind, but in mercy. Peter learned from Jesus that "love covers a multitude of sins" ([1 Pet 4:8b](#)).

From Expression (5):

**F<sub>X</sub> • D<sub>X</sub>** ([Matt 9:6](#); [Rev 22:17](#))

**T<sub>B</sub> • D<sub>B</sub>** (the Christian response)

So, **C<sub>X</sub>** ..... (ii)

Conclusion (ii) accords with Jesus' reason to sacrifice himself for his friends: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." ([John 15:13](#)).

The church's communion with Christ (**C<sub>X</sub>**) and Christ's communion in the Godhead (**C<sub>T</sub>**) makes possible human communion with the Godhead (**C<sub>B</sub>**) in Christ. This is supported by such Scriptures as [John 14:6 & 9](#); [17:21-22](#); [Rom 5:1-2](#), & [11](#). Expression (6) depicts this in logical terms.

$$C_B \rightarrow C_X \bullet C_T \dots\dots\dots (6)$$

where

**C<sub>B</sub>** = Communion of **B**elievers with God

**C<sub>X</sub>** = Communion between **C**hrist and his followers

**C<sub>T</sub>** = Communion within the **T**rinity

Through faith in Christ, people can enjoy the communion with God that was unavailable through Expression (3).

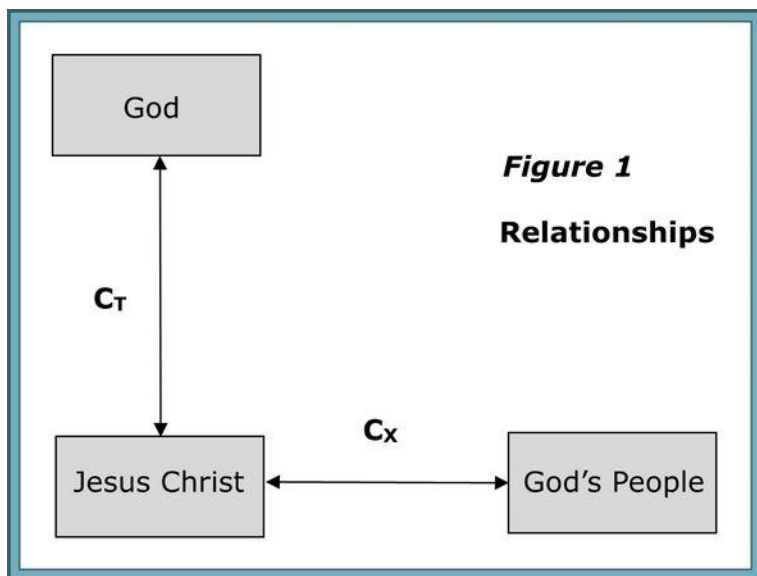
From Expression (6):

**C<sub>T</sub>** (from Conclusion (i))

**C<sub>X</sub>** (from Conclusion (ii))

So, **C<sub>B</sub>** ..... (iii)

Figure 1 illustrates how the horizontal relationship of faith in Christ makes no contribution to the vertical relationship between Christ and God the Father. God does not save people because of anything they do, whether holding to an orthodox belief system or their repenting of sin. People are saved because of Jesus' sacrifice for them.



Ian McFarland said there should be “careful distinction between the ‘horizontal’ relationships among creatures and the ‘vertical’ relationship between creatures and God ... God and human beings always operate on separate planes.” (McFarland, 2001, p. 84). Figure 1 conforms to McFarland’s contention that “a theologically plausible account of the atonement needs to preserve the distinction between Creator and creature” (McFarland, 2001, p. 85). Human righteousness understood as a right relationship with God does not contribute to human salvation. On the other hand, Christ’s righteousness is essential for both his, and human, communion with God.

Christ imparts eternal life to the people of faith in communion with him. As Paul wrote, “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” ([Rom 5:10-11](#)).

The logic for communion and justice operate in different, though related, dimensions of sin. The reasoning above focuses on how God restores communion between himself and Christ's followers and the next section discusses justice. These aspects of the atonement apply to the present age, under the new covenant. Michael Gorman (2011, p. 42) said, "Although the word 'covenant' does not appear in John 13–17, it is clear that Jesus is assembling a community of committed and loyal friends ([John 15:13–15](#)) who will be the core group of a new covenant community that embodies his divine mission after his death. He is saying to them, in effect, 'We (Father, Son, and Spirit) will be your God, and you will be our people'."

### **(iii) Establishing Justice**

The purpose of justice is to restore the moral balance or equilibrium in creation. God's desire for peace and order for his creatures impels justice. The measure of justice is not seen on the scales that weigh in the balance good and evil because evil has no substantive reality of its own. Evil is but a denial of a good God. Darkness is merely an absence of light. As John Cowburn (1979, p. 13) put it, "Light and dark may at first appear to be two opposing forces, but in truth light is energy and darkness is nothing. Similarly, good and evil may seem to be two opposite forces, locked in an eternal conflict, as the Manicheans believed; but goodness is being and evil is the lack of being."

Of course, evil beings wield power, albeit stolen power. The forces of evil (Satan, demons, evil spirits, and sinful human nature) continue to oppose God during the present age. The world applies a system of punitive justice expressed as follows.

$$\mathbf{J} \rightarrow \mathbf{O} \cdot \mathbf{P} \dots\dots\dots (7)$$

where

**J** = **J**ustice for community, victim and offender

**O** = **O**ffence

**P** = **P**unishment of the offender

Expression (7) does not accomplish justice for God because punishment does not wipe out sin. Charles Hefling (2013, p. 27) commented on the difference between punitive and restorative justice: “The distinction, roughly stated, is that punitive justice is concerned with what may be done to evildoers and restorative justice with what can be done about evil. Taken in this latter sense, justice as a divine attribute has its supreme embodiment in Christ’s acceptance of the cross. So and not otherwise is good brought out of evil—not even by God.” Just as the light of Christ displaces the darkness of evil, the darkness (offence) of sin is countered by an act of goodness. Expression (7) needs modification to show how God brings about restorative justice in response to human sin.

$$\mathbf{J}_H \rightarrow \mathbf{O}_H \cdot \mathbf{G} \dots\dots\dots (8)$$

where

**J<sub>H</sub>** = **J**ustice for **H**umanity

**O<sub>H</sub>** = **O**ffence of **H**uman sin against God

**G** = the **G**ood that negates the evil of sin

However, Expression (8) does not bring about justice either because sin taints everything people do. So, any good deeds people do to justify themselves are not effective in negating the bad deeds.

Offences against God do not harm the Almighty. God's sovereignty, glory, honour and holiness remain intact. This does not imply God is unconcerned at humanity's rebellion. When people sin against God, they harm other people and themselves. God's compassion for humanity's helplessness motivates him to establish justice. God sent his Son and applied the principle of Expression (8) to Christ as shown in Expression (9).

$$\mathbf{J_x \rightarrow O_x \bullet E_x \dots\dots\dots (9)}$$

where

**J<sub>x</sub>** = Justice for **Christ**

**O<sub>x</sub>** = Humanity's **Offence** (sin) against **Christ**

**E<sub>x</sub>** = God's **Exaltation** of **Christ**

The crucifixion of Christ was mankind's worst sin. Yet Christ sided with humanity in allowing the offence of the cross (**O<sub>x</sub>**) to occur in preference to calling on God to rescue him. Jesus said to Peter who wanted to fight those who came to arrest Jesus, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" ([Matt 26:53](#)). Presumably, the army of angels would have come to bring judgement on humanity. But instead, Jesus followed the Father's way of dealing with evil. As Paul said, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" ([Rom 12:21](#)). Overcoming evil with good is not a principle introduced by the New Testament (e.g. [1 Pet 3:9](#)). The Old



Testament, too, encourages this virtue through such stories as Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers ([Gen 50:20](#)), David’s response to King Saul when Saul sought to kill him (1 Sam 24), God’s restoration of Job ([Job 42:10](#)), in [Psalm 34:14](#) and in the stories of Daniel’s friends in the fiery furnace and himself in the lions’ den (Daniel 3 and 6 respectively).

Jesus’ only part in the offence of the cross was as the victim, the sacrificial lamb. This “offence of the cross” differs from Paul’s use of the phrase towards unbelieving Jews in [Gal 5:11](#). God both overcame humanity’s rebellion and vindicated Christ by his resurrection and exaltation (**Ex**). Paul wrote, “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” ([Phil 2:9-11](#)). God exalted Christ to the highest place and thereby prevailed over the immense offences of the human race. Jesus never sinned. He obeyed God to the extent of sacrificing himself for humanity because of his firm belief his Father would prevent the triumph of evil, hence Expression (10).

$$\mathbf{Ex} \leftrightarrow \sim \mathbf{Ox} \dots\dots\dots (10)$$

where

**Ex** = God's **Ex**altation of **Christ**

$\leftrightarrow$  = If and only if

$\sim \mathbf{Ox}$  = **O**ffence of **H**uman sin negated

Jesus' exaltation (**E<sub>x</sub>**), as evidenced by his resurrection from death and ascension to the right hand of God, confirms God's acknowledgement of the righteousness of Christ and negates the evil done to him (**O<sub>x</sub>**). Christ's resurrection was the work of all three persons of the Godhead ([John 2:19-22](#); [Rom 8:11](#); [Gal 1:1](#); [Eph 1:20](#)). *Lumen Christi*, unlike some other theories, entails no disharmony in the Godhead. The God-man Jesus Christ obeyed his Father's plan to the end, maintaining communion with the Father and saving God's people. God's exaltation of Christ overcame the offence of humanity's sin against God and gave justice to Christ.

From Expression (10):

~**O<sub>x</sub>** ([Rom 12:21](#))

**E<sub>x</sub>** ([Matt 23:12](#); [Jas 4:10](#); [1 Pet 5:6](#))

So, (from Expression (9)) **J<sub>x</sub>** ..... (iv)

Now since Jesus and the Father are one ([John 10:30](#)), any sins against one are also against the other so God secures justice for human sin if Jesus receives justice.

**J<sub>H</sub> → J<sub>x</sub> ..... (11)**

where

**J<sub>H</sub> = Justice for Humanity**

**J<sub>x</sub> = Justice for Christ**

Since Jesus is both human and divine, he is a mediator between God and humanity. Justice for Christ entails justice for humanity.

From Expression (11):

**J<sub>X</sub>** from Conclusion (iv)

So, **J<sub>H</sub>** ..... (v)

Christ justifies humanity regardless of its inability to offer God spotless good works required by Expression (8). God does not use dubious means to produce good ends ([Rom 3:8](#)). Nor did God permit Christ's crucifixion in order that good would result, for this would also be immoral. The only fitting response to evil by a holy and omnipotent God is to eliminate it. Christ was in communion with God the Father throughout his life, including during the crucifixion. God negated the evil of the cross with the greater good of Christ's exaltation. This is a crucial distinction between the *Lumen Christi* model and the substitution theories. Christ shares his glory with his followers: "The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one" ([John 17:22](#)).

#### **(iv) Restoring Freedom from Slavery to Sin**

There are many things that can constrain people. Even the Son of God in taking on human form became a slave to the human condition but without submitting to sin ([Phil 2:7](#)). Sinful humans, however, need freedom from alienation (restored to communion), from guilt and maltreatment (receive justice), and from defilement (made righteous). Jesus said "everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" ([John 8:34](#)). So, the devil, too, is a slave to sin. In creating beings with free will, God conceded to their using it, including in opposition to God's will. Martin Luther recognised the propensity to do evil as the bondage of the will.

Expression (12) shows three ways slaves in the ancient world could attain their liberty.

$$\mathbf{L} \rightarrow \mathbf{U} \vee \mathbf{A} \vee \mathbf{N} \dots\dots\dots (12)$$

where

**L** = Liberty (or freedom) for slaves

**U** = Unshackled by the owner (manumission)

$\vee$  = or

**A** = Acquire slave, pay ransom price to owner

**N** = Nullify the slave owner's power and  
release the slaves

However, such liberty is not available in the case of slavery to sin through an owner's kindness, or a ransom payment or a display of power. These stretch the analogy with slavery beyond its limits. None of the three factors of Expression (12) applies.

First, a master who might release the slave (**U**) is missing. Sin is being personified as a slave driver. Satan does not really own people. If we can speak of ownership at all, both humanity and the angels are "owned" by God. Note that the deceptive term "demon possessed" is better translated as "demonised" meaning oppressed. Self-deception is not something to blame on someone else. Sinners cannot free themselves from their own sin.

The second item, payment of a ransom (**A**), does not pertain to slavery to sin. This would take the metaphor too far. When

Jesus taught, “just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” ([Matt 20:28](#)) he meant that true liberty is service. Following Christ entails serving others to the extent of taking up one’s cross ([Matt 16:24](#)).

The final term in Expression (12) also does not apply to sin enslavement, because there is no taskmaster to defeat (N). As explained, Satan is not the slave owner. Demons do not possess people but they can oppress them. Jesus, when he was on earth, cast out demons to demonstrate the coming of God’s Kingdom. He gave the analogy, “Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered.” ([Matt 12:29](#)). Similarly, when God set Israel free from Egypt he used displays of power. God demanded Pharaoh to “Let my people go.” But the Egyptians were external slave drivers. What of slavery from within? No amount of force can release the captive of sin. Human sin is self-induced. Although Jesus acted as Deliverer by casting out demons, freedom from our own sin is not from an external owner.

Slavery to sin has to do with the captivity of the sinner’s will. Seeking to free oneself from sin through legalistic obedience to the law is a deception of the kingdom of darkness. By contrast, the kingdom of light reveals the truth that sets people free.

God does not violate the free will he gave to humans. Just as a human parent would not say they own their child, God does not dominate his people, but loves them as children. All people, Christians and non-Christians, in their sinful human natures, continue to sin until they die. God knows that humans cannot obey his laws in order to gain his approval. Christ sets people free from the sinful striving to justify themselves. When Jesus said, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free

indeed” ([John 8:36](#)), he was talking to the Jews about freedom from Pharisaism (legalism).

Similarly, Paul confronted legalism in the churches of Galatia. He affirmed “... the Lord Jesus Christ ... gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” ([Gal 1:3-4](#)). Paul called the Galatian Christians foolish for not living in freedom from trying to win God’s approval ([Gal 3:1](#) & [5:1](#)).

Expression (12) can be reformulated to express the liberty we have in the Kingdom of God as opposed to slavery to legalism, which enslaves people in three ways:

1. Legalists want to earn salvation.
2. Legalists try to prove their faith by doing good works.
3. Legalists prefer to live by rules.

While it is true that the word legalism does not occur in the Bible, the concept does. Daniel Fuller (1980, p. 87) contended that when Paul spoke about “the law” in a disparaging way, he was speaking of “legalism”. Fuller pointed out that Greek has no separate word group to denote legalism. So, when Paul wrote that Christ redeemed believers from the curse of the law, Paul meant Christians do not have to obey the law to save themselves ([Gal 3:13](#)). The burden of legalism is a curse. Similarly, when Paul said “the power of sin is the law” ([1 Cor 15:56](#)), he referred to the legalistic use of the law. Martin Luther argued in “The Bondage of the Will”, people who are sinful cannot do otherwise, their slavery to sin means they are not free to act righteously. Luther (1957, p. 99) wrote, “God has no time for the practitioners of self-righteousness, for they are hypocrites.” Christians do not have to prove their faith to themselves or anyone else by doing works of the law. But faith and works of faith do not function independently ([Gal 5:6](#); [Jas 2:18](#)). As for living by rules, believers experience freedom

through the guidance of the Holy Spirit [2 Cor 3:17](#)). Therefore, we can modify Expression (12) to apply to liberty from legalism in each of these three areas as shown in Expression (13).

$$\mathbf{L_B} \rightarrow \mathbf{J_H} \bullet \mathbf{S_B} \bullet \mathbf{HS} \dots\dots\dots (13)$$

Where

$\mathbf{L_B}$  = Liberty for **B**elievers

$\mathbf{J_H}$  = **J**ustice for **H**umanity

$\mathbf{S_B}$  = **S**anctification of **B**elievers  
empowered by the Holy Spirit

$\mathbf{HS}$  = The **H**oly **S**pirit dwelling with God's people

From Expression (13):

$\mathbf{J_H}$  from Conclusion (v)

$\mathbf{S_B}$  ([1 Cor 6:11](#))

$\mathbf{HS}$  ([1 Cor 2:10](#), [Gal 5:18](#) & [25](#))

So,  $\mathbf{L_B}$  ..... (vii)

God did not need to defeat the devil to release people from slavery to sin as the *Christus Victor* theory proposes. When Jesus cast out demons from people they were set free from the suffering caused but they still remained sinners. Christ did not have to fight any battle in heavenly places to defeat Satan and his cronies. A word of command from the Almighty is enough to destroy any enemy. Demons had to come out at the command of Jesus. But legalism deceives the heart. Paul wrote of unbelievers, "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and

hardness of heart.” ([Eph 4:18](#)). Paul proclaimed the answer to the legalism problem. He said, “by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.” ([Acts 13:39](#)).

**(v) Restoring Holiness**

God commands everyone to be holy as he is holy because evil is the negation of God, which God cannot possibly ignore. His holiness would consume any evil person entering his presence ([Exod 33:5](#)). But the Lord cares for humanity and does not want people harmed by their own sacrilege. Instead, the Lord seeks to heal their shattered spirituality.

God restores holiness in accordance with a template he gave to Moses. Under the Old Covenant, God dwelt among the Israelites ([Exod 29:45](#)) and required them to obey his laws. But Scripture is emphatic that humanity is unrighteous ([Ps 143:2](#); [Ecc 7:20](#); [Rom 3:10](#); [Gal 3:11](#)). The method for restoring Israel’s holiness is symbolised in the rituals of clean and unclean food, animals, acts, things and persons (e.g. [Lev 10:10](#)). The ceremonial ways to purify uncleanness are analogous to the means to be made holy. Expression (14) depicts the ceremonial methodology.

**$I_H \rightarrow Dw \bullet P_U \dots\dots\dots (14)$**

where

**$I_H$**  = **I**srael, God’s people, made **H**oly

**$Dw$**  = God **Dw**ells in the midst of his people

**$P_U$**  = **P**urification of God’s people from **U**ncleanness



No-one is righteous (continually clean), before God. Therefore, God gave Israel rituals of washing and sacrifice to prepare them for the coming of Christ who went beyond ceremonial uncleanness and “made purification for sins” ([Heb 1:3](#)). John the Baptist said he baptised people with water for the forgiveness of sins ([Mark 1:4](#)), but John prophesied that Jesus came to baptise people with the Holy Spirit ([Mark 1:8](#)). Christ sent the Spirit to dwell with believers and wash them clean by the word of God ([Eph 5:25-27](#)).

The New Covenant arrangement follows the pattern of Expression (14) except God’s presence amongst Israel changes from a formal location in the holy of holies in the tabernacle/temple to the hearts of believers and the removal of ceremonial uncleanness changes to the washing away of sin by Christ to set apart his followers for himself.

$$\mathbf{H_B} \rightarrow \mathbf{H_S} \bullet \mathbf{P_B} \dots\dots\dots (15)$$

where

**H<sub>B</sub>** = Believers made Holy

**H<sub>S</sub>** = The Holy Spirit dwelling with Believers

**P<sub>B</sub>** = Purification of Believers from sin by Christ

From Expression (15):

**H<sub>S</sub>** ([Mark 1:8](#), [1 Cor 3:16](#))

**P<sub>B</sub>** ([Heb 1:3](#), [Eph 5:25-27](#))

So, **H<sub>B</sub>** ..... (vi)

God does not merely impute holiness to believers but dwells with them. The Holy Spirit’s presence with Christians is their

holiness. This satisfies God that Christ's disciples are not rebels bent on destruction. God is glorious and does not seek his own honour, but seeks to save the lost. Note that the logic here for restoring holiness is limited to one facet of atonement and does not apply independently of other aspects. Atonement is not one dimensional and any attempt to make it so fails from other perspectives.

## **(vi) Renewing the World**

Human and demonic sin has corrupted the world. When humanity fell into sin, it had ramifications for the environment which God created to support life. Isaiah observed, "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant" ([Isa 24:5](#)). The ways of Satan supplanted the ways of the Father. As the Apostle John affirmed, "We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one" ([1 John 5:19](#)). Even though Christ promised to raise his followers from death with a resurrection body, they will need a renewed earth to inhabit, one that is free of evil influences. Personal salvation does not exhaust Christ's work of atonement. Believers need a safe place to live.

Renewal of the world entails God in transforming or destroying everything and starting over. Although God could possibly renew the entire universe in an instant without destroying it first, in logical terms, the new replaces the old.

$$\mathbf{W} \rightarrow \mathbf{W}_1 \bullet \mathbf{W}_2 \dots\dots\dots (16)$$

Where

**W** = the **W**orld renewed

**W<sub>1</sub>** = the present fallen world destroyed

**W<sub>2</sub>** = the future perfect world created

God does not enforce Expression (16) because of God's covenant with his people. Instead, the Father fulfils his covenant through the Son. This is the reason Jesus instructed his disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" ([Mark 16:15b](#)). The good news is "God so loved the world that he gave his only son" ([John 3:16](#)). The Lord does not limit his love to the world of human society. God's Kingdom of love permeates all creation, the physical universe and the heavenly realm.

Christ came as humanity's champion in sinless conformity with God's will. As a result, God the Father exalted Christ as Lord over creation (**E<sub>x</sub>**). From this position, Christ shall administer judgement and destroy evil (**J<sub>x</sub>**). This entails destroying the present evil world (**W<sub>1</sub>**). The Apostle Paul said, "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now" ([Rom 8:21-22](#)).

$$\mathbf{W_1} \rightarrow \mathbf{E_X} \bullet \mathbf{J_X} \bullet \mathbf{C_B} \dots\dots\dots (17)$$

Where

**W<sub>1</sub>** = the present fallen world destroyed

**E<sub>X</sub>** = God's **E**xaltation of **C**hrist

**J<sub>X</sub>** = **J**ustice for **C**hrist

**C<sub>B</sub>** = **C**ommunion of **B**elievers with God

(salvation in Christ)

From Expression (17):

**E<sub>X</sub>** ([Matt 23:12](#); [Jas 4:10](#); [1 Pet 5:6](#))

**J<sub>X</sub>** from Conclusion (iv)

**C<sub>B</sub>** ([John 3:16](#)) and from Conclusion (iii)

So, **W<sub>1</sub>** ..... (viii).

John's vision of the end times included the restoring of creation: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." ([Rev 21:1](#)).

$$\mathbf{W}_2 \rightarrow \mathbf{E}_X \bullet \mathbf{HS} \bullet \mathbf{B}_R \dots\dots\dots (18)$$

Where

**W<sub>2</sub>** = the future perfect world created

**E<sub>X</sub>** = God's **Ex**altation of **Christ**

**HS** = The **H**oly **S**pirit dwelling with God's people

**B<sub>R</sub>** = **B**elievers future bodily **R**esurrection

From Expression (18):

**E<sub>X</sub>** ([Matt 23:12](#); [Jas 4:10](#); [1 Pet 5:6](#))

**HS** ([Mark 1:8](#))

**B<sub>R</sub>** ([1 Cor 15:35-58](#))

So, **W<sub>2</sub>** ..... (ix).

Christ will make a new world (**W<sub>2</sub>**) and bodily raise God's people (**B<sub>R</sub>**) who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (**HS**) and fit to live in a holy world.

From Expression (16):

**W<sub>1</sub>** from Conclusion (viii).

**W<sub>2</sub>** from Conclusion (ix).

So **W** ..... (x).

God achieves conclusion (x) from Expression (16) without destroying believers because of the atoning work of Christ. Humanity's top priority in atonement is survival, but God in atonement completely removes evil from creation and sustains his beloved people. While this plan unfolds the world is subject to the attacks of the demonic realm. The natural disasters,

diseases and irrational evil acts are not the will of God and are to be opposed by his church.

The *Lumen Christi* model includes the atonement of the physical world in contrast to the traditional theories that focus on human salvation and sanctification. The psalmist sang: “The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” ([Psalm 24:1](#)). Just as God restores human relationships, attains justice, and raises people to life, God will restore peace to the earth. Although this world will pass away ([2 Peter 3:10](#)), Christians should not be lax stewards of the world, but embrace God’s desire for its restoration.

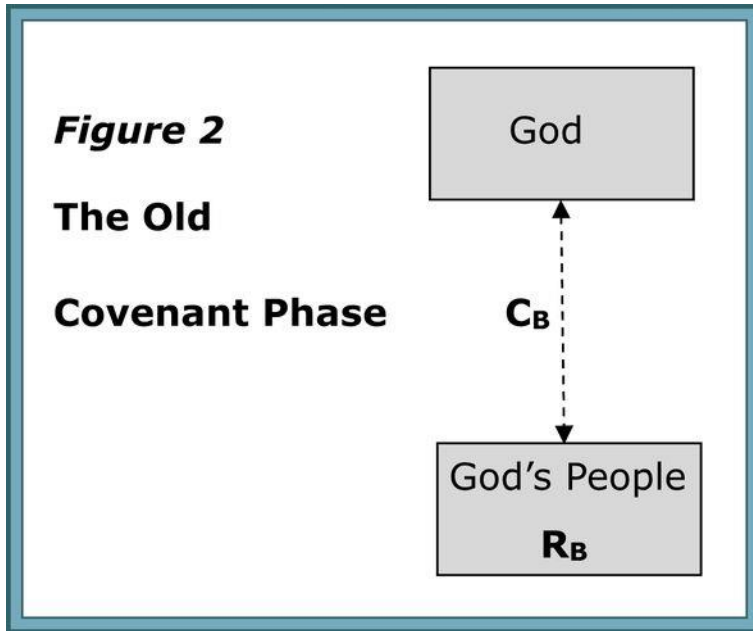
## Atonement Phases

God’s covenant applies across history and into the future. The death of Christ divides it into the so-called old and new covenant periods. In the book of Jeremiah, the LORD prophesied the coming new covenant era and reiterated the words of the covenant: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” ([Jer 31:33](#)). Still to come is the future consummation phase of atonement – when Christ returns.

Under the old covenant, God’s relationship with humanity depended upon the future outworking of God’s plan for atonement. Salvation in Israel required faith in God but the faithful did not receive the Holy Spirit. The writer of [Hebrews 11:39-40](#) said of the old covenant heroes of the faith, “Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.” The old covenant ended with Jesus’ death as signified by the tearing of the curtain in the temple (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; [Luke 23:45](#)). The curtain separated

the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt, from the part of the temple where the priests conducted the sacrifices. God no longer dwells among God's people in this way.

Figure 2 shows the diagram of the old covenant phase.



As per Expression (3), communion of believers with God (**C<sub>B</sub>**) depended on God dealing with the problem of sin, but because of God's promise, the people of Israel trusted God to save them. Christ's righteousness and faithfulness are as reliable as the character of God. So, in anticipation of the Messiah's coming, God could reckon righteousness to Abraham ([Gen 15:6](#)) and those who followed in his faith. The Old Testament, especially Psalms (e.g. [Ps 1:5-6](#)) and Proverbs (e.g. [Prov 10:16](#)), refers to the people of God as "the righteous". Righteous believers (**R<sub>B</sub>**), before Christ came, sought to obey God's laws and took part in the ritual sacrifices. God judges the righteous ([Eccl 3:17](#)) and because of their faith

and Jesus' sacrifice, they are without sin in heaven ([Heb 12:22-24](#)).

Under the new covenant, Jesus is at the right hand of God and the Holy Spirit inhabits God's people. Figure 3 depicts the new covenant phase of God's plan for atonement.

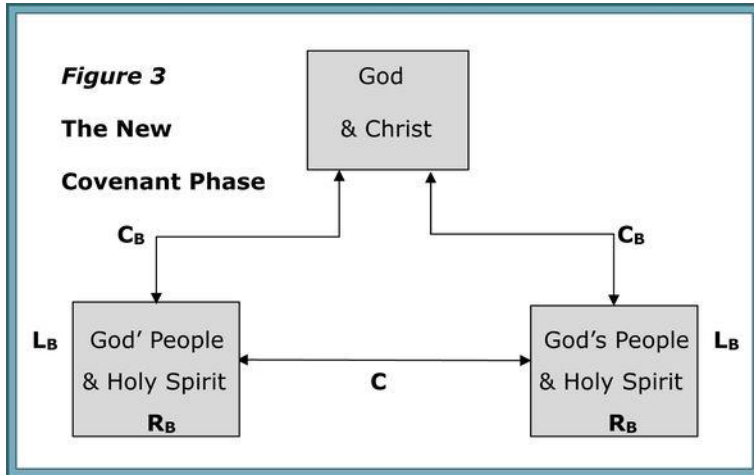


Figure 3 shows that God's people relate to each other in mutual communion (C) and enjoy communion with God through Christ (C<sub>B</sub>). Believers are right with God (R<sub>B</sub>) and are free in the Spirit (L<sub>B</sub>). Unity with, and among, God's people is essential to atonement. Indeed, the mark of this covenant community is love, as taught in Jesus' New Commandment.

In Figure 1 we noted that keeping the Godward and human dimensions separate safeguarded the gospel of grace. But Figure 3 highlights the place of communion, love and unity. Michael Gorman (2011, p. 43) observed, "There is no cleansing without discipleship, no vertical relationship without horizontal relationships, no atonement without ethics." The *Lumen Christi* model connects the two dimensions through the Spirit of Christ who lives with believers. Steve Holmes (2007, p. 100) wrote, "An account of the vertical dimension of



reconciliation must have consequences for the horizontal dimension of reconciliation; if it does not, that is sufficient evidence that it is false.”

People enter the new covenant through faith in Christ. Alan Spence (2004, p. 417) thought that mediation is normative for all the traditional atonement models. In the *Lumen Christi* model too, the Son of God mediates every facet of the atonement including the period before his incarnation. This only occurs because of God’s steadfast love, which can be otherwise expressed as God’s resolve to fulfil his covenant.

The new covenant includes the consummation phase of God’s covenant. So, the diagram for the consummation phase is similar to Figure 3 except with evil eradicated from creation. Spiritual warfare will be no more. Sin will no longer hamper relationships between people. When Christ renews the world and raises believers as Spirit-filled, righteous people in loving relationships with God and one another, people will enjoy freedom in perfect communion. The devil’s temptation to sin was based on the lie that that free will requires freedom to do otherwise, which needs to be followed in order to free. This is, in fact, slavery to sin. A righteous and free person does not have any desire for sin.

Righteousness is not just reckoned to Christians but is God’s crowning work in them. Ian McFarland (2001, p. 90) said, “Jesus’ death is not the end of the work of atonement. God’s speaking the Word in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth achieves its goal only as human beings respond in the power of the Spirit.”

God gives foretastes of the consummation phase in the form of such things as sinners overcoming habitual sins, miracles over nature, and healing of sickness. Both the Old and New Testaments mention numerous examples. Throughout church history, God has responded to believers’ prayers with miracles

of healing, release from oppression, deliverance and transformed lives. God gives these miracles as signs, or tokens, of the age to come to encourage and build faith on earth. Christians use the spiritual gifts with praise and gratitude for the successes but without criticising God when a miracle is not forthcoming. The Lord's Prayer reminds us that God's will is not always done on earth as it is in heaven. If God acts in judgement, humanity can take it as a warning of the ultimate consequence of sin.

## **Universalism**

Christian universalists hold that God will save all people by the end of the consummation phase. This means that people who have not come to faith prior to their death or Jesus' second coming, will repent and believe in Jesus after their departure from this world. Advocates point to the goodness of God and the extent of Jesus' sacrifice as reasons to think that God would not fail to win everyone. However, the elimination of all evil is necessary for atonement, and this would include those who side with God's enemies. There is insufficient reason to assume those who reject God in this life will turn to God in faith afterwards. The fear of death, even the second death, is quite a different thing to faith.

As to the goodness of God, the destruction of those who reject God's Son is by no means an obstacle. The notion that Jesus' sacrifice would be a failure if it did not save absolutely everyone is flawed because everyone who believes in God gets saved. These are the people Jesus died to save. This does not necessarily imply a Calvinistic view of predestination and election, since adoption into God's family may result from a freely chosen faith in Christ. Universalism, then, cannot be indisputably proven from Scripture and atonement theories should avoid dependence on such doctrines.

## The Lumen Christi Model as a Well-Crafted Argument

The foregoing atonement reasoning for six facets of a fallen world can be presented as a “well-crafted” argument that presents the logical features in explicit form.

### Premises

1. **God is** love, good, holy, just and fair.
2. God created human and angelic beings with **free will** to live in loving relationships.
3. **Human and angelic sin** fractures relationships with God and results in loss of eternal life. Every facet of creation, our intended home, is defiled by evil.

### Sub-conclusion 1

4. So, **the Problem for God** is: How to remove evil from every part of creation but save his people. Premises 1 and 2 motivate God to achieve atonement. (1, 2, 3)

### Premises

5. God delays the destruction of evil and sent his Son in human form.
6. Christ lived a sinless life, resisting Satan's temptations to turn aside from his mission.

### Sub-conclusion 2

7. So, Satan used the cross to tempt Christ to abandon God's plan and avoid death. Crucifixion was Satan's doing, not God's. (5, 6)

### Premises

8. Relationships between people, including those with Christ, do not of necessity support sin, unlike the relationship between humans and God the Father, who maintains human existence.

9. God raised Christ from the dead in order to overcome the evil done to him during his life on earth by the application of the good of resurrection and exaltation.
10. God's "rewards" showered upon Christ included the resurrection of those for whom Christ had given his life.

### **Sub-conclusion 3**

11. So, friendship with Jesus ensures eternal life. Our salvation is Christ's reward. (8, 9, 10)

### **Premises**

12. God sends the Spirit of Christ to dwell with believers as a Helper and for assurance of their resurrection.
13. Christ will return to complete God's work of atonement by destroying all evil from the world. He will come with those who have already died and transform those of his followers who are still alive on earth.

### **Conclusion**

14. So, God is achieving atonement of all creation through Christ. (12, 13)

### **Notes.**

- a. Christ's death on the cross was necessary to save sinners, but by itself, did not achieve atonement.
- b. Christ's resurrection and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit commenced the next phase in God's plan for atonement, known as "the New Covenant".
- c. In the same way that light shines in the darkness (Jn 1:5), the Son of God's incarnation dispelled the darkness in the world (Jn 8:12). God overcomes evil with good (Rom 12:21).

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## 5. The *Lumen Christi* Theory

The previous chapter's depiction of atonement logic looks like a solution to a maths problem. So, as one might expect, theologians do not often use this tool. However, informal logic, to use the name for the study of reasoned arguments, helps verify the reasoning, which is sorely needed in soteriology. But since critical reasoning is unfamiliar to many people, this chapter will replace the logic expressions of the previous chapter with a plain English account of the model but without repeating the incidental details.

### The Problem of Evil

The need for atonement has come about because of evil. The problem of evil from God's perspective is not the philosophers' abstract problem of evil (how can God be both good and omnipotent and allow suffering and evil in the world). To God, the problem is how to save humanity before he eliminates evil.

Besides, as Gregory Boyd has pointed out, the classical-philosophical tradition renders the problem of evil in a way that is unsolvable (Boyd, 1997. p. 43). The responsibility for evil acts rests with the human or demonic perpetrators. Yet the philosophers criticise God for his patient endurance of these acts of evil while he saves his children ([2 Pet 3:9](#)). The notion that God is meticulously controlling every detail of what happens in creation does not necessarily follow from the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in spite of the many worship songs and hymns to the contrary. It flies in the face of the goodness of God in ordaining freedom to created beings.

God's problem with evil motivates his plan for atonement, not God's sovereignty or honour or justice, none of which were ever in doubt. Nor was Christ's obedience to the Father's will in any doubt even though as events turned out, Jesus had to submit to crucifixion.

## **Achieving Atonement**

Atonement is an ongoing work of God. Jesus did not complete it 2,000 years ago on the cross. J. I. Packer (1974, p. 43) said of the penal substitution model, "according to this model, the cross achieved – and achieves" the salvation of God's people. But how could Christ's death save anyone? The world is far from perfect and even God's people on earth are still sinful although, hopefully, improving in their Christlikeness. Christians believe Jesus has forgiven their sins and given them eternal life and they look forward to a physical resurrection to righteousness after they leave this world. Atonement is a work in progress but God's involvement guarantees the success of the outcome. So, how does God do this? What is the mechanism of atonement? Or are there many mechanisms?

## The Covenant of God

God proclaimed an everlasting covenant with all people who would receive it. The covenant of God goes back to the time of Adam ([Hos 6:7](#)), which implies the covenant expresses God's intention in creation. When the Lord established his covenant with Noah ([Gen 6:18](#)), God applied the covenant he made from the beginning. The promise never to flood the earth again resulted from God's covenant. Nor should Christians reduce God's over-arching covenant to a compilation of the promises to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. God's covenant is behind all of his promises and is the driving force for atonement. But to be clear, Scripture uses the word "covenant" metaphorically and not as a literal legal contract or pledge.

God promised to be God to his people. This commitment to humanity impels God to save them from sin and death. Atonement entails more than giving mortals eternal life. It also includes giving them new bodies after they die, bringing them into the community of God's people and renewing the planet as a safe place to live. We speak of earthquakes and natural disasters as "acts of God", but evil is never an act of God. The kingdom of darkness blames God for its actions. From a human point of view, we may see catastrophes as "judgements of God" because of the guilt of human sin. The future end-time judgement of the Lord will remove all evil and sin as part of his work of atonement.

God created people with their own free will to freely flow with the Spirit. Even so, their choices and fall into sin was predictable, especially to an omniscient being. Note that prediction is different from determinism. In spite of human sin, God acted through Christ to reconcile all things ([Col 1:20](#)). God removes the sins of his people to fulfil his covenant ([Rom 11:27](#)). The Son of God entered creation by taking human form ([Phil 2:7](#)). Jesus prophesied that he would die to save many – those who believe in him ([Mark 10:45](#)). Eternal



life is an attribute of Christ because of his divinity and righteousness. Eternal life is the gift of Jesus received by those who believe in him. “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life” ([John 6:47](#)). Since Jesus said this before his execution, it suggests Jesus’ violent death on the cross was not a prerequisite for salvation.

## How Atonement Works

Evil pervades, not just human behaviour, but the cosmos, every dimension of God’s creation – the physical, social, spiritual, psychological, political, and more. Climate change, hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanoes evidence the disorder in nature. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for God’s will to be done on earth because God’s will is often not done ([Matt 6:10](#)). These prayers are not restricted to the fallout from human behavioural sins but include the tragedies of a world gone astray. Prayers for God to remove evil are not always successful in a rebellious world. Sin has reigned in death ever since Adam and Eve ([Rom 5:21](#)). Jesus, however, is a sinless human being who has access to God. The Proverb, “By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for” ([Prov 16:6a](#)), applies to Christ. He mediates atonement in every facet of creation. God uses different and appropriate means to accomplish atonement in each dimension of creation. Consequently, atonement is multifaceted, but not a kaleidoscope of inconsistent theories. Christ atones for each and every facet of creation; here are six.

1. Human society – Christ repairs damaged interpersonal relationships;
2. Religion – Christ restores communion with God;
3. Moral order – Christ establishes righteousness and justice;
4. Liberty – Christ frees us from slavery to sin;
5. Spirituality – Christ restores holiness;

## 6. Physical creation – Christ will renew the world.

There are other facets, such as political leadership, aesthetics and economics, but the above six suffice to show that Christ meets humanity's diverse needs. Satan's kingdom is at war with God's kingdom in regards to all of these facets of creation. The claims that Satan is the ruler of the world and that humanity is enslaved to him are enemy propaganda. Jesus was not moved by the devil's lies and temptations.

The Son of God took on human form to save humanity. But God's presence in the world threatened the powers of darkness because God aims to destroy all evil. Jesus' humanity presented the devil with an opportunity to thwart God's plan. Satan may have reasoned that God, because of his covenant, would not destroy his people, and if Christ failed in saving them, Satan could continue to rule the world.

The devil fought for his kingdom of darkness and attacked Jesus throughout his life on earth. Herod tried to kill Jesus as a baby (Matt 2:7-18) and Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness at the start of his ministry ([Matt 4:1-11](#)). If Jesus succumbed to the trials and temptations of Satan, he would have departed from God's plan, with dire implications for humanity. Satan did not need to entice Jesus to immorality. The devil only needed to get Jesus to deviate from God's path to atonement. The next chapter discusses the temptations of Christ in more detail.

In the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest, Jesus committed himself in prayer to doing the Father's will ([Matt 26:39](#)). This does not imply God desired his Son's crucifixion. Such a conclusion would not be in keeping with what Jesus taught about God's character. Jesus knew from Scripture that God revealed his will in the words of the covenant. The Godhead from the beginning planned to create a people to be in communion with their God.

Satan used the fear of death, and not just any death, crucifixion. God the Father did not seek Christ's death on the cross. Jesus' own disciples tried to fight to prevent his arrest. Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" ([Matt 26:52b](#)). Then Jesus said, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" ([Matt 26:53](#)). This does not sound like someone forsaken by God. The ultimate source of those temptations was the devil. In all likelihood, Satan mocked Jesus with "Even your disciples do not understand and have deserted you." The Jews, God's own people rejected their Messiah. Satan, no doubt, reminded Jesus that Scripture says "anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse" ([Deut 21:23b](#)). The devil, the Prince of Darkness, displayed his power on earth by bringing darkness over the land.

God did not require Jesus' crucifixion for reconciliation with his people. The crucifixion was Satan's desperate final attempt to get Jesus to abandon his mission to save God's people. If Satan and his followers had left Jesus alone, God would have saved humanity without the cross. Jesus would probably have amassed a huge following, died of old age, rose from the dead and sent the Holy Spirit to live in God's people. Of course, no one, including God, expected Satan to allow that to happen, hence the Old Testament prophecies predicted a grizzly end for the Messiah (Ps 22, [Isa 53:5](#)).

Christ saw his enemies' opposition as the "power of darkness" ([Luke 22:53](#)). When Jesus quoted [Ps 22:1](#) from the cross, he drew comfort from Psalm 22 which affirms God will stand by his covenant people: "For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him" ([Ps 22:24](#)). Isaiah prophesied the Messiah's suffering as "a perversion of justice" ([Isa 53:8](#)). The Father neither turned away from the Son on the cross nor

used a perversion of justice, as the penal substitution theory proposes.

Satan did his worst but failed to coerce Jesus into either sinning or withdrawing from the course. The devil did not gain a victory in Christ's death, "But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" ([Acts 2:24](#)). And God will also raise all of Jesus' followers so that Jesus will have a kingdom that lasts forever ([Matt 25:34](#); [Luke 1:33](#); [Rev 1:5b-6](#)). It is no surprise that the early church emphasised the contest between the powers of darkness and Christ.

The vertical and horizontal components of salvation act independently of each other. Christ's vertical relationship with his Father allows God to relate to a sinless human. God exalted Christ as a response to the evil done against Christ throughout his life including his crucifixion.

Christ's horizontal relationship with his followers is the plane of forgiveness and faith. People enter communion with God through a relationship with Jesus. Sinners need to receive Christ's forgiveness. Jesus came preaching "repent, and believe in the good news." ([Mark 1:15](#)). Repent here means to turn from unbelief (not from sin). If humanity could turn from sin, it would not need a saviour. Christians eschew sin because they are saved. Christ's willingness to forgive does not of itself result in salvation. Nor does the believer's faith in Jesus play any role in meriting salvation, which is a gift of God ([Eph 2:8-9](#)). So, neither forgiveness of human sin, nor friendship with Jesus, by themselves reconcile humanity with God. This is because sin makes people abhorrent to a holy Lord. Something more had to happen.

God the Father exalted Jesus to the place of authority over God's kingdom. God gave this good reward to overcome the evil done to Jesus on earth. Christ's resurrection and exaltation

were instrumental in saving God's people. Jesus died for sinners. God would not allow Jesus' death to pass and not give him what he sacrificed his life to win. Humanity's salvation might be thought of as a fringe benefit of Christ's exaltation. When Christians say God saves them by his grace, the grace is of all the members of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For God so loved the world he refrained from preventing the wicked from testing Jesus to the point of death. The Son of God gave himself to set people free of sin. The Holy Spirit dwells with God's people, making them holy.

Each of the following six facets of creation needs repair.

## **1. Interpersonal Relationships**

War, crime, quarrels and fights are symptomatic of the breakdown in interpersonal relationships. The thrust of Jesus' teaching is to love one another, so atonement for sin must quell antagonism between people. Jesus encouraged his disciples to restore friendship through repentance and forgiveness. Sinful people are not always inclined to do this. But in the New Covenant, or church age, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit as a helper. Christians seek to live by faith in Christ for their forgiveness, to love one another in the communion of God's kingdom, and have the hope of salvation ([1 Thess 5:8-9](#)). They possess eternal life now even though they continue to endure sin, attacks from the enemy and the inexplicable natural calamities. Life is not perfect for Christ's followers just because the Spirit is with them. God sent his Son to save believers not give them an easy life. Although hardships continue, the Spirit's presence assures Christians of ultimate atonement.

## **2. The Relationship with God**

The Son of God condescended to live in this world under the same conditions as humanity. We humans are susceptible to

the vagaries of nature, attacks from the demonic realm, the sin of others and the temptations to personal sin. For Jesus, participating in the human condition led to his death on the cross. God is not continually intervening in the everyday sin of the world, but he will not allow evil to prevail over good. As Paul wrote, “all things work together for good for those who love God” ([Rom 8:28](#)) implying that God will not let suffering have the last word. The Son overcame evil with good as does the Father and the Holy Spirit. God defied humanity’s sin against Christ by raising him from the dead. When God raises believers from the dead so they are in heaven with Jesus, God does not raise their sinful natures or allow unrighteousness into his presence. God raises Christians righteous. “For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” ([Rom 5:19](#)).

### **3. Justice**

Jesus paid for human sin with his life. This is a rhetorical way of speaking but, for Jesus, crucifixion was real and brutal. The devil does not fight fair and is quite prepared to use violence. But, God defeated Satan, not by might nor by power, but by God’s Spirit ([Zech 4:6](#)). God did not pay Satan with the life of Jesus. Neither did God purchase the liberty of Christians from Satan. God set them free from slavery to sin to serve in God’s kingdom as the context of [Mark 10:44-45](#) makes clear: “and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” From a human perspective, God’s exaltation of Christ appears as a reward for his lifetime of obedience. However, Christ’s exaltation to glory was not a reward for services rendered, but returning to his rightful place. The reward, was those he had died for. Just as God does not intend humans to win his favour by good works, Jesus did not need to either. Salvation for humanity is a free gift.

Christ remained faithful and obedient to God and his people, laying down his life and taking it up again for them ([John 2:19-22](#)). Jesus saved his disciples, those who placed their faith in him, and gave them eternal life. The Father grants his Son's prayer to save his followers, for it was the Father's desire too. The Father raised Jesus from the dead ([Gal 1:1](#)) and exalted him to his right hand in heaven. The Holy Spirit was also involved in Jesus' resurrection ([Rom 8:11](#)) and presides over God's kingdom on earth through the lives of God's people. This glorious Trinitarian act of goodness nullifies the evil done to Jesus and, because of Jesus' forgiveness of people's sins, salvation comes to the world. Christ's light overcame the darkness of evil by his holy presence in the world. The Spirit of Christ continues to shine in God's kingdom throughout the earth.

"Justification" is the reason we give for doing something and, when referred to atonement, it is the reason we obtain justice, the justice of the kingdom of God. Such justification is by faith alone. Justice in God's kingdom motivates good works as James alluded, but neither faith nor good works causes salvation ([Jas 2:14](#)). So when Paul says Jesus "was raised for our justification" ([Rom 4:23-25](#)) he is saying the resurrection of Jesus brings people of faith into God's kingdom of justice. The final ground of salvation is not found in the cross, an evil act perpetrated by men and Satan, but in the grace of God seen in Christ, a light shining in the darkness.

#### **4. Freedom from Legalism**

Humanity in its sin, replaced trust in God with trust in self. People decide how they will live and they do so by using rules. Even if the rules came from God in the form of biblical laws, using those laws independently of God is where the Pharisees went astray. Hence the name "Pharisaism" is a by-word for religious legalism. Separated from God, sinners appeal to laws

to justify their own actions and judge the actions of others. The apostle Paul said the sting of death is the law ([1 Cor 15:54-56](#)). Paul was referring to legalism, the law of death in the kingdom of darkness, which mimics the law of the Spirit of life in the kingdom of light. Paul said, “You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ” ([Gal 5:4a](#)).

Nevertheless, moral laws are useful for regulating behaviour in a secular world. Ethicists have proposed many systems of ethics, including deontology (the study of duty), consequentialism and virtue ethics. Scripture provides support for all these systems but there are also counterexamples. Joseph Fletcher (1966, p. 17) distinguished three approaches to ethical decision making: legalism, antinomianism, and situationism. Fletcher argued for situation ethics which applies the love commandment as a principle for ethical decision making (p. 31). As a principle applied in a particular situation, love is not a law. However, the decision maker retains the right to decide the most loving action in the circumstances and to choose the expected outcome. By so doing, people use a principle as a law to decide their course of action. So, replacing laws with principles does not avoid the sin of legalism.

Human wisdom is imperfect. In humility, people should admit their shortcomings and seek God’s wisdom. If they restrict their search for the good to the above-mentioned ethical systems and focus on the quality of their deeds (deontology), the expected outcomes of their actions (consequentialism), or how their characters are influenced (virtue ethics), they will fall short of righteousness. God has set the Christian free from the limitations of these ethical theories and given them the Holy Spirit as a guide. Christ has set his disciples free from legalism.

- (1) The legalist wants to earn salvation but sinners cannot earn salvation. Christ has won salvation for believers.



- (2) Legalists try to prove their faith by doing good works. A Christian's faith is in Jesus who knows who belongs to him.
- (3) Legalists prefer to live by rules. Christ taught his followers to live by faith in him and to follow the guidance and counsel of the Holy Spirit.

## 5. Restoring Holiness

Humans, as created beings, derive holiness from God. But humanity lost its holy status because of sin. God, in his goodness and grace, is determined to restore believers as a holy nation ([1 Pet 2:9](#)). The reality of fallen creation with its disregard of God, broken relationships and the physical environment's indifference to its occupants is plain for anyone to see, not to mention the devil's behind the scenes attacks against humanity. Secular society, however, is not concerned at the loss of holiness. Those who feel the spiritual emptiness in their lives may still avoid God by turning to other religions.

The coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of sinful people empowers change and gives them a foretaste of holiness. God's command to "be holy as I am holy" is similar to Jesus' command to the sick, "be healed". Holiness is a gift, and just as people do not experience complete health in this life, neither does the Holy Spirit's presence supplant all their sin. But God is working to restore his people to holiness. The Spirit did not come to believers until after Jesus Christ ascended to his throne in heaven where he mediates holiness and righteousness to his people through prayer. Meanwhile, the Spirit of Christ living with Christians sets them apart as holy to God. Believers do not need unwavering strength of faith or perfect obedience to maintain their salvation status. The Christian's assurance rests in God whose faith never wavers.

The Holy Spirit purifies the sinner by the washing of the word making them holy in God's sight ([Eph 5:26](#)). D. M. Lloyd-Jones (1974, p. 156) commenting on Eph 5:26, said humanity needs atonement not only for the guilt and power of sin but also the pollution of sin. The ritual of the baptism of new Christians applies the Old Testament ceremonial washing away of uncleanness to signify the new status of the believer as holy to the Lord. Thus, baptism symbolises the washing away of the guilt, power and pollution of sin (p. 159). The "washing of the word" refers to Scripture as applied by the Spirit of Christ (who is called "the Word of God" by John) to convict of, and save believers from, sins and sanctify them from depravity to sin (p. 163-166).

God is restoring more than the holiness of his own people. He wants everything to be holy, including the physical world ([Zech 14:20](#)).

## **6. Renewing the World**

Atonement theories tend to focus on humanity and neglect God's defeat of Satan and renewal of the cosmos. What is curious about this is that apologists appeal to the wonders of creation as evidence for a Designer of the universe. Yet, the universe is indifferent and sometimes hostile to its occupants. Nature does not always display the kindness of God as people might expect. So, atonement models must show how Christ restores every facet of creation, including the renewal of the earth.

Scripture teaches that the Son of God created everything. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." ([John 1:1-3a](#)). This implies that the recreation of the world will also be the work of the Son of God who, at the appointed time, will eradicate all evil. It is Christ

who saves God's people from sin, renews the universe and gives believers resurrection bodies to live on a renewed earth.

Christ does not go about his work by sheer power but applies his authority to conduct justice in God's kingdom. When Jesus ministered on earth he went about proclaiming the kingdom of God had come. The Father gave the Son authority over his kingdom. Jesus has authority to make far-reaching changes to creation. He can forgive sins and impart eternal life. Christ sent the Spirit to live in the hearts of believers and he will establish his kingdom on a renewed earth.

## Summary

The *Lumen Christi* atonement model describes how God removes the many and varied effects of sin. The following two tables summarise the six facets of creation surveyed above.

**Table 1.**

<b>Atonement achieves:</b>	<b>(a) Reconciliation</b>	<b>(b) Communion</b>	<b>(c) Righteousness</b>
<b>The results of sin:</b>	<b>Broken relationships.</b>	<b>Rebellion, pride</b>	<b>Idolatry</b>
<b>Presenting problems:</b>	<b>Selfishness, broken relationships</b>	<b>Self-centeredness, alienation</b>	<b>Disobedience, guilt, immorality, condemnation</b>
<b>Solution:</b>	<b>loving relationships</b>	<b>Communion with God, adoption into God's family</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
<b>OT Ritual:</b>	<b>Well-being or fellowship (Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-35).</b>	<b>Day of Atonement celebration of reconciliation with God.</b>	<b>Sacrifices and washing to purify the people of sin.</b>
<b>Christ mediates:</b>	<b>Fellowship.</b>	<b>Forgiveness and unity.</b>	<b>Resurrection.</b>
<b>Christ's role:</b>	<b>Friend, Counsellor.</b>	<b>Advocate, Priest.</b>	<b>Lord and Judge.</b>
<b>Human response:</b>	<b>Love others.</b>	<b>Trust in Jesus, humility.</b>	<b>Obedience, self-sacrifice.</b>

**Table 2.**

<b>Atonement achieves:</b>	<b>(d) Liberty</b>	<b>(e) Holiness</b>	<b>(f) Peace</b>
<b>The results of sin:</b>	Depravity, self-centredness.	Idolatry.	Fear, abuse of creation, death.
<b>Presenting problems:</b>	Enslaved to sin, addiction.	Disobedience guilt, immorality, condemnation.	Natural disasters, physical & mental suffering.
<b>Solution:</b>	Freedom, the law that is written on the heart, flow with the Holy Spirit.	Indwelling Holy Spirit.	A new heaven and earth, eternal life, healing, a sound mind, peace with nature.
<b>OT Ritual:</b>	Passover sacrifice celebrates freedom from slavery.	Sacrifices and washing to purify the people of sin.  Present your bodies ... holy (Rom 12:1).	Peace offering (Lev 7:11–21).
<b>Christ mediates:</b>	The Spirit of freedom.	The coming of the Holy Spirit.	Assurance (Ps 27:1).
<b>Christ's role:</b>	Deliverer.	Redeemer.	Creator.
<b>Human response:</b>	Kingdom ministry, serve others.	Worship.	Stewards of the world.

## Mystery

Although some contend that the ways of God are a mystery and searching for a mechanism for atonement is futile, the *Lumen Christi* model describes, even if only to a limited degree, God's actions to reconcile with creation. Since evil

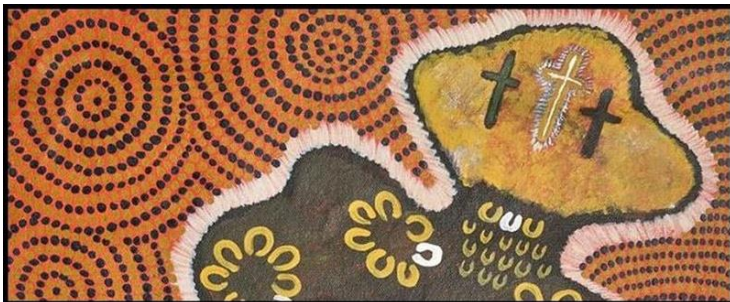
stains every detail of reality, reparation is an immense task. The pursuit of understanding involves theology in the complexities of atonement. But, drawing closer to God gives believers a greater appreciation of what God is doing. This is similar to the angels around God's throne who cry day and night without ceasing "Holy, holy, holy" (Rev 4:6-8) as they behold more of God's glory. Christians perceive Christ's glory shining in the darkness. Even if humanity can never fully grasp God's reconciling work because of its immensity, in seeking to do so we are privileged to see something of his glory.

Therefore, *Lumen Christi* attempts to describe in part God's work of atonement. The boundless love and power of God acting through Christ to overcome evil with goodness everywhere in creation and reconcile the world with its Creator is a glorious mystery to explore ([Col 2:2](#)).

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## 6. The Atonement in Scripture

Scriptural terms such as the covenant of God, sin, faith, forgiveness and salvation are open to a range of interpretations. Often, the way such terms are applied reflects the interpreter's own theological bias. The various versions of the Bible follow the preference of the translators, and this includes their beliefs about the atonement. This chapter examines scriptural words and passages relating to the atonement. The next chapter will build on this and discuss associated doctrines.

The biblical authors used many figures of speech in describing the manifold character of creation and its damaged state (e.g. freedom/slavery, covenant/lawbreaker, and garden/wilderness). Regarding atonement, Henri Blocher (2004, p. 645) said, "The burden of the several metaphors of Scripture and of its other teachings is indeed that God was pleased to bring about, through Christ's work, the *fullness* of atonement—all conceivable aspects of the undoing of evil and association with the divine life—such a fullness that, in him, we are filled to the full ([Col 1:19–20](#); [2:9](#)).” One such metaphor is the image of God.



## The Image of God and the Covenant of God

Biblical scholars interpret God's creation of humankind in his own image and likeness ([Gen 1:27](#)) in a number of ways. For some, it means God made humans rational and intelligent, for others (2) God gave humanity dominion over the world, and others (3) people are relational.

The first of the three views, takes the phrase "image of God" as a substantive portrayal of God as the archetype for human attributes. But God transcends every detail of creation. God's attributes are not mere analogies of human traits. The relationships between Creator and creatures are unlike relationships between people. The Creator sustains the creature's existence. This is why, since God is holy and does not countenance evil, sin destroys humanity's relationship with God.

The second view sees humanity's rightful place as God's representative (image) who rules over the earth. Satan usurped this position when Adam sinned. However, Paul uses the phrase for both a sinful man ([1 Cor 11:7](#)) and Christ ([2 Cor 4:4](#)) but the context of neither refers to dominion.

The third meaning is that God made people for a life in a relationship with each other and God. The poetic wording and symbolism of the early chapters of Genesis suggest the phrase "made in the image of God" is a metaphor. Its meaning is similar to the "children of God" metaphor ([John 1:12](#); [Rom 8:14](#); [9:25-26](#)). Luke calls Adam "the son of God" in the genealogy list of Jesus ([Luke 3:38](#)). [Gen 5:3](#) applies this same likeness and image vocabulary in this sense for the kinship of Adam and Seth. If this reasoning is correct, the image of God metaphor applied to humanity is a prototype statement of the covenant of God, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people". This phrase used many times in Scripture ([see Scripture references](#)), speaks of the steadfast love of the Lord

for his children. It is significant that Scripture never uses the phrase “covenant relationship.” This would use the legal term “covenant” literally instead of as a metaphor for relationship. Peter echoes this language when he refers to Christians as “God’s own people” ([1 Pet 2:9](#)). Larry Shelton (2004, p. 34) concluded, “The covenant story is thus the framework in which all biblical metaphors of salvation function.”

## Sin and Death

Salvation is from sin and death. Scripture variously portrays sin as disobedience to God’s law ([1 John 3:4](#)), unfaithfulness to God ([Rom 14:23](#); [Heb 11:6](#)), and rejecting the word of God ([Acts 13:46](#)). Augustine (2009, p. 207) saw the root of sin as pride. Feminist theologian, Valerie Saiving (2009, p. 290), suggested that the root of sin is the self’s attempt to overcome anxiety. Saiving (2009, p. 300) argued that pride is more of a male sin, whereas women tend more towards self-abnegation, both stemming from anxiety at the human condition. Sin has ramifications for the whole of creation ([Rom 8:22](#)).

Sin damages all relationships but in the case of the divine-human relationship, it alienates humanity from the source of life, resulting in death. God introduced himself to Moses as “I am who I am” ([Exod 3:14](#)). This might refer to God’s self-existence and having life in himself ([John 5:26](#)). The Genesis creation story depicts God planting two trees in the Garden of Eden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ([Gen 2:9](#)). The trees represented respectively, human access to life and access to the knowledge of what it is to be sinful. Adam and Eve did not lose their mortal life on the day they sinned, as God had warned ([Gen 2:17](#)), but they lost eternal life. Paul talks this way in [Col 2:13](#) where he said Christians were “dead in trespasses” but “God made you alive ... when he forgave us all our trespasses.”

As discussed in Chapter 1, retribution cannot restore life or reconcile people with God, and God cannot overlook sin. But God's covenant involves God in restoring the world and uniting with his people forever.

## River of Life

Jesus revealed his understanding of eternal life when he prayed, "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" ([John 17:3](#)). Eternal life is something other than everlasting life ([John 6:51](#)). The quality of eternal life is one of abundance ([John 10:10](#)). It is a life indwelt by the Holy Spirit ([John 14:16](#)). Paul wrote, "But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" ([Rom 8:10](#)). So, God imparts eternal life to his people because Jesus sacrificed his life for them. And the exalted Lord Christ sends them his Spirit of righteousness and the promise of physical resurrection.

God created humans as individuals living in community. Unlike the Creator-creature relationship, people do not uphold each other's existence, but their relationships can be life-affirming. Social Network Analysis, a branch of sociology, has found that social connections between persons act as channels, conduits or bridges that convey information and influence between people (Kadushin, 2004, p. 31). These are social channels, but since humans are also spiritual beings, they also convey spiritual influence. These social connections may entail conveying material substance but even if this is not the case, the social and spiritual influence imparted is real. Things such as advice, encouragement, forgiveness and trust, conduct 'life' to others. Relationships of faith between people create conduits of "faith working through love" ([Gal 5:6b](#)). In a similar way, the book of Proverbs uses the tree of life image to refer to life-affirming personal relationships ([Prov 3:18](#); [11:30](#); [13:12](#) &

[15:4](#)). Also, the book of Revelations describes faith in Christ as a tree of life ([Rev 2:7](#); [22:2](#), [14](#) & [19](#)) and uses the image of the river of life ([Rev 22:1-2](#)). Faith is a spiritual faculty, a means of receiving or imparting blessing. Another metaphor for faith is the eyes of the heart ([Matt 6:22-23](#); [Eph 1:18](#)). Through faith we receive the light of Christ. We are not saved by faith but through faith. Salvation is not the result of a transaction, a deal or contract with God.

Unlike the communion that exists between the members of the Godhead, human relationships do not share a common essence and people are not self-existent. Human beings can engage with the good in others while not approving their sin because they do not maintain anyone's existence. People, regardless of sin, can befriend one another. The Old Testament calls only one person, Abraham, the friend of God ([Isa41:8](#) & [2 Chr 20:7](#)) because of his faith ([Jas 2:23](#)). But in the New Testament, Jesus often called people "friend," even when they were betraying him ([Matt 26:50](#); [Luke 5:20](#); [12:14](#); [John 11:11](#)). Jesus can forgive and befriend sinners because he shares in their humanity. Sinners stay clear of God the Father because of his holiness. Christ does not overlook or condone offences when he forgives them. After all, when anyone forgives another they indirectly assign blame to them. By the same token, a sinner seeking forgiveness is admitting guilt. Forgiveness and the admission of wrongdoing are both essential for reconciliation between people, and also for reconciliation between people and Jesus, and thereby, with God. These relational elements form a conduit of faith through which flows the love of God, "the only thing that counts" ([Gal 5:6b](#)). Through faith, we come to know Jesus, or rather are known by Jesus, and God graciously grants freedom and eternal life to Christians ([Gal 4:9](#)).

## Salvation

Paul variously referred to death as “the wages of sin” ([Rom 6:23a](#)), God’s judgement ([Rom 5:16-17](#)) and punishment for disobeying the gospel ([2 Thess 1:9](#)). But God’s concern about the death of people was the reason his Son came to save and restore eternal life to his people ([John 3:16](#) & [36](#); [5:21](#)). Theological considerations of justice, spiritual warfare, and freedom from sin are additional to God’s work of salvation.

The incarnation of the Son of God provided a sinless “image of God” to humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who God declared to be his beloved son ([Matt 3:17](#)). God’s strategy for salvation hinged on Christ being both Son of God and Son of Man, so he could be the mediator of a new relationship (the new covenant) between God and humanity ([1 Tim 2:5](#); [Heb 8:6](#); [9:15](#); [12:22-24](#)). Jesus was without sin from birth by virtue of his incarnation (as opposed to procreation). He remained faithful throughout his life, withstanding every trial and temptation to commit sin. Jesus’ resurrection and ascension allows him to continue mediating for human salvation. The Christian’s relationship with Christ is the basis for the hope of physical resurrection ([John 11:25](#)). Christ identified himself as “the life” ([John 14:6](#)) because he imparts eternal life to the faithful ([John 3:36](#)). His resurrection assures us of our own resurrection ([Rom 6:5](#)). Resurrection signals the end of the sinful human nature because Christians will be righteous when they stand before God. This is why Paul wrote, “For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.” ([Gal 5:5](#)).

So, sin is not a hopeless condition from which a holy God cannot save his people. God does not demand a ritual sacrifice to appease his anger or to bring about justice. God is patient in the face of humanity’s sin and God’s long-suffering culminated in his Son coming into the world (see Jesus’ Parable of the Tenants in Mark 12:1-11).

Jesus called for repentance and faith. Anthony Bash (2011, p. 138) noted, “to seek forgiveness without confession, repentance and restitution is an oxymoron in the Hebrew Scriptures and in Jesus’ day.” Confession, repentance, restitution, trust and obedience establish relationships with Jesus where the love of God is experienced, faith is reborn and sins wiped out. “Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out” ([Acts 3:19](#)).

## Redemption

A slave can be redeemed by payment of a ransom. If Christ’s sacrifice of his life was a ransom payment, in what sense was Christ a substitute and what was the reason for the sacrifice? Steve Chalke (2008) wrote, “The spectrum of complementary metaphors used by the writers of the New Testament, in their attempt to express the truth of the atonement, includes a clear substitutionary (though, I contest, not a ‘penal’ substitutionary) element (‘The Son of Man [came] ... to give his life as a ransom for many,’ [Matt 20:28](#)), along with numerous others ...” (p. 37).

When the author of [Ps 49:7](#) says, “Truly, no ransom avails for one’s life, there is no price one can give to God for it.” he is thinking of ransom in terms of a payment of money. But, he then speaks metaphorically in [Ps 49:15](#), “But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.” The ransom that Jesus spoke of in [Matt 20:28](#) was from slavery to sin and the inevitability of death. The payment was not part of a transaction, but as the reason for his sacrifice.

If God transferred the guilt for the sins of the world to Jesus, as the penal substitution theory portrays, then God the Father must reject God the Son and Christ must have experienced both physical death (on the cross) and the second death ([Rev 21:8](#)), perishing because of human sin ([John 10:28](#)). This second death did not occur. Jesus’ divinity entails his not being

susceptible to the destruction of the second death. Since the penal substitute must undergo the full punishment for sin, this is another point of failure for the theory. *Lumen Christi* avoids these problems by changing the object of substitution. So, in reply to this section's opening question: Christ acted as a substitute for God's people by being the sinless and faithful Son of God who overcame evil with righteousness and goodness on humanity's behalf, as their redeemer and champion.

## The Suffering Servant

Karen Jobes (2005, p. 51) informed us that "we can thank Peter alone for the familiar Christian tradition that identifies Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53 (see [Pet 2:24](#))."

Forensic substitution theories appeal for support to the suffering servant passage. But Jobes says that Peter was writing to encourage persecuted Christians, "Peter reminds his readers that Jesus' unjust suffering did not mean that God had abandoned him, to the contrary, unjust suffering was God's mysterious way to accomplish the redemption of humanity." (Jobes, 2005, p. 197).

Furthermore, Robin Collins (2012, p. 188) considered that [Isa 53:5](#) conflicts with penal substitution if the Hebrew word *muwcar* for chastening, discipline or correction is not translated as "punishment" because if the purpose was correction it is not retributive. This accords with the modern English translation of the Septuagint (LXX) which says for Is 53:5 "But he was wounded because of our acts of lawlessness and has been weakened because of our sins; upon him was the discipline of our peace; by his bruise we were healed." (Pietersma & Wright, 2007, p. 865).

Herbert Leupold (1968, pp. 228-220) in his commentary on Isaiah admits, "Though the word used in almost every other case bears the thought of corrective suffering, i.e.,

‘Chastisement,’ we hold with those who take the word in the sense of ‘punishment’ (Strafe), because otherwise the sin-bearer himself would stand in need of correction.” This is a case of allowing one’s theology to dictate Scripture translation.

Collins says if *muwcar* is translated as chastisement, the chastisement of Christ resulted from his bearing the consequences of the world’s sin. Hence, Isaiah 53:5 goes on to say, “the punishment ‘made us whole’ (and that his bruises ‘healed us’), not that it satisfied some divine demand that sin be punished; hence arguably this passage is actually in conflict with penal theory.” (Collins, 2012, p. 188). Jesus bore our sins in the sense of embracing the human condition in a sinful world to the extent of submitting to his unjust crucifixion. Peter was writing to Christians who were themselves being persecuted unjustly for their faith. Jobe (2005, p, 199) pointed out “Isa 41:8-11 LXX identifies the nation of Israel as Yahweh’s Suffering Servant” and “This is congenial to Peter’s insight into the nature of unjust Christian suffering as that of a kind with Christ’s suffering.”

Isaiah had already prophesied that God will blot out sins for his own sake without requiring a substitute ([Isa 43:25](#)) which implies that Isaiah would not agree with the penal substitution interpretation of his suffering servant prophesy.

## **Faith and Grace**

Maurice Blondel quoted Newman as saying, “To have faith is to enter in a practical way into the invisible world, to realize the presence of God, to wait for his visit, to deliver oneself over to him, to abandon oneself into his hands.” (Blondel, 1987, pp. 161-192). Jesus had such a faith in God for he abandoned his fate to his Father (Médaille, 1960, p. 8).

The faithful self-sacrifice of Jesus met with the Father’s approval (the sin of crucifying the Son of God met with no



such approval). Christ's sacrifice evoked God's response of exalting Christ, of raising him from the dead, receiving him into heaven, and appointing him Lord of God's kingdom. God's grace is on display in the passion narrative. Sinful humanity does not deserve salvation, even as a reward given to Christ. God does not condone sin. As Moses wrote, "The LORD is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children to the third and the fourth generation" ([Num 14:18](#)).

Jesus did not lose his eternal life as did the first Adam when he sinned. Christ is alive and he lives as the peacemaker between God and those who place their faith in him. God the Father found in Jesus the "one person who acts justly and seeks truth so that I may pardon" my people ([Jer 5:1b](#)).

## **The Temptation of Christ**

Satan used the crucifixion to tempt Jesus to exploit his relationship with God the Father in order to avoid suffering and death. The devil tried to coerce Jesus into calling on God to save him and leave sinners without a saviour. Alternatively, Jesus could side with Satan who would give him his kingdom.

Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 give the story of Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness at the start of his ministry. Since only Jesus and Satan were present in the wilderness, Jesus must have related this experience to his disciples. Jesus likely used the story in his exhortations to resist temptations. Satan failed in the wilderness and withdrew until an opportune time ([Luke 4:13](#)). Christ's crucifixion presented Satan with that opportunity to tempt Christ away from his mission. Jesus knew that his enemies wanted to kill him and he spoke publicly of his forthcoming execution ([Mark 8:31](#)). When Peter rebuked Jesus for saying the Jewish leadership were going to reject and kill him, Jesus recognised the

temptation as coming from Satan ([Mark 8:33](#)). Jesus knew that Satan had assured Eve in the Garden of Eden that she would not die ([Gen 3:4](#)).

Andrew Schmutzer (2008, p. 18) analysed Matthew's description of Jesus' temptation as to its Old Testament background and commented, "Jesus obedience during His desert testing (Matt. 4:1-11) was perfected during His final testing starting in Gethsemane ([Matt 26:39](#))." The author of Hebrews said Jesus "was tested by what he suffered" ([Heb 2:18](#)) referring to Christ's final days.

Just as Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, the devil tempted Christ in the wilderness. Luke's Gospel has the second and third wilderness temptations in the reverse order to Matthew. This is not significant since Luke also states the devil tempted Jesus over the whole forty days ([Luke 4:2](#)) and not only on the last day. Although neither Luke nor Matthew explicitly links the wilderness temptations of Christ with the temptations at his arrest and crucifixion, the parallels are clear. Jesus knew of the enemy's schemes, for at the last supper he said "... Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat" ([Luke 22:31](#)). As Jesus went to the Mount of Olives with his disciples: "On reaching the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.'" ([Luke 22:40](#) & 46 (NIV)). Now we will examine the three categories of temptation used by Satan.

## **1. Life**

In the first wilderness temptation, Satan wanted Jesus to impose on his relationship with God in his own interests. "The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.'" ([Matt 4:3](#)). Satan recognised Jesus as the Son of God and did not so much question Jesus' identity, as point out that it implied Jesus could work miracles. But the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to

fast and pray for 40 days, and completing this assignment was a matter of obedience. Every detail in life is significant and Christ remained obedient throughout his earthly life. He had to endure in faith until the end ([Matt 10:22b](#)).

At Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Simon Peter wielded a sword to defend him. Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" ([Matt 26:53](#)). Jesus was prepared for this enticement. He had taught his disciples: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." ([Matt 16:24-25](#)). But Jesus' disciples had not grasped this teaching.

The temptations continued. Herod wanted Jesus to perform a sign for him ([Luke 23:8](#)). When "the King of the Jews" hung on the cross the passers-by echoed Satan saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" ([Matt 27:40](#)). The chief priest, scribes and elders said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him." ([Matt 27:42](#)). Even a criminal being crucified with Jesus joined in by saying "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ([Luke 23:39](#)).

Jesus recognised the devil's voice behind these temptations for when Peter protested at Jesus' prophecy of being killed at the hands of the religious leaders ([Matt 16:21-23](#)), Jesus replied to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" ([Matt 16:23](#)). Just as Jesus refused to turn stones into bread to satisfy his physical hunger, he would not exploit his equality with God to save himself ([Phil 2:6](#)). God has power over human life. He can give, take away and restore.

Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice in order to remain obedient to the point of death ([Phil 2:8](#)). When Satan tested Job, God would not allow the devil to kill Job ([Job 2:6](#)), but with Jesus, the stakes were higher. Satan fought for his life, and Jesus fought for the lives of God's people, but he did not fight in the same way. Schmutzer (2008, p. 33) referenced William LaSor as saying, "the garden of Gethsemane was 'the greatest temptation He ever faced: the temptation to save Himself. But He knew that if He saved Himself, He could never save others'."

## 2. Identity

In the second wilderness temptation, Satan questioned Jesus' identity by suggesting Jesus jump from the top of the temple trusting God to save him ([Matt 4:5-6](#)). To the devil's mind, God's protection confirms divine status. Satan even quoted Scripture to sound more convincing. But Jesus understood Scripture. He replied, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ([Matt 4:7](#)).

The enemy tempted Jesus along similar lines on the cross when the chief priests and scribes said, "Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." ([Mark 15:32](#)). "One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!'" ([Luke 23:39](#)). "The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!'" ([Luke 23:36-37](#)). Jesus declined to reply to the taunts and remained firm in refusing a display of power to meet the demands of his enemies.

### 3. Mission

#### (The Darkness that Came Upon the Land)

The devil's third temptation, to gain the world in return for worshipping Satan ([Matt 4:8-9](#)), offered Jesus success in his mission of saving the lost and doing so without suffering or risk of failure. But for Jesus, good ends do not justify evil means. Besides, the devil is a liar and Christ put no credence in his offers ([John 8:44](#)).

With Jesus helplessly nailed to the cross, Satan demonstrated his power and caused darkness to come over the whole land: "From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon." ([Matt 27:45](#), see also Mark 15:33 and [Luke 23:44](#)). In the gospels, darkness is characteristic of the devil's realm (e.g. [Matt 4:16](#); 6:23; 8:12; 22:13; Luke 1:79; 11:34-36; 22:53; [John 1:5](#); 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46). Conversely, John called Christ "the light of the world" ([John 8:12](#)). Of course, light and darkness are used metaphorically and the Old Testament even speaks of God as hidden in darkness and thick clouds ([Ps 18:11](#)). God is a spirit and his holiness makes him unapproachable by sinners, which can be expressed by light or darkness according to the context. The darkness at the crucifixion was not descriptive of God's holiness but was a subterfuge of Satan to arouse fear and awe at his power and tempt Jesus to abandon his intended mission.

Traditional atonement theories assume the darkness that came over the land signified God turning away from his Son because he bore humanity's sin. Whether a solar eclipse or some other physical phenomenon caused the daytime blackout is immaterial. Integral to the penal substitution theory is the teaching that atonement could only be achieved if Jesus was rejected by God on the cross. The theory presumes darkness implies God's judgement. Even the feminist theologian Kathryn Tanner (2004, p. 36) who was critical of the traditional

theories said, “The cross is the final act of divine humiliation, or the inter-Trinitarian act whereby the second person of the Trinity is abandoned by the first.”

However, scripture does not say the darkness implied God rejected his son. The text surrounding the statement in all three Gospels offers no explanation. Matthew and Mark follow the mention of the darkness by the cry of Jesus, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But this provides no conclusive proof of a break in fellowship between Jesus and God.

No doubt Satan used the darkness to make Jesus think God had turned against him. This deception added strength to the devil’s temptation for Jesus to take up his offer. Hence, Jesus response of quoting the first line of Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ([Ps 22:1](#); [Matt 27:46](#); Mark 5:34) is a reference to the whole of Psalm 22. It is inconceivable that Christ would ask God such a question. Moreover, Jesus addressed God as “Father” whenever he prayed (e.g. as in [Mt 26:39](#), which is rendered by the even more familiar “Abba, Father” in the parallel passage in Mk 14:36), so here Jesus is not praying to God but declaring Ps 22 back at Satan.

Ps 22 expresses faith in defiance of suffering and death: “To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him” ([Ps 22:29](#)). This is because “... dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations” ([Ps 22:28](#)). The psalm is a denial of the penal substitution theory’s contention that God turned his face away from his Son. [Psalm 22:24](#) says “For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.” Scripture says of God, “he will not fail you or forsake you” ([Deut 31:6b](#) & [8b](#); similarly [1 Kgs 6:13](#); [Isa 41:17](#); [42:16](#);

[Neh 9:31](#)), so Jesus would expect his followers to take his quotation in that light.

Furthermore, if God would forsake his Son, Christians could not be certain God would not forsake them. The argument that God forsook Jesus to save humanity is not sufficient. If God's nature is such that he could forsake the Son of God for any reason, he might forsake his human children for some other reason.

Christ rejected the devil's offer. The Son of God did not come to save Satan's kingdom.

## **The Curse of the Cross**

Paul wrote, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'." ([Gal 3:13](#)). Those who teach God punished Jesus in the place of Christians look to this verse for support. F. F. Bruce (1982, p. 164) said because the Roman soldiers hung Jesus' body on a tree: "the circumstances of his death brought him unavoidably under that curse." Bruce admits Paul does not answer the question "By who was Christ cursed?" but suggested that the Jews would not accept Jesus as the Messiah because he died under a divine curse (p.166).

The context in Paul's letter to the Galatians is the argument "all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.'" ([Gal 3:10](#)). The curse is not God being vindictive, but descriptive of humanity's failure. Paul is saying those who approach the law in a self-righteous way, thinking they can justify themselves before God by their own works, are under a curse because they cannot obey God's law in every respect. The legalists' attempt to justify themselves before God only adds another layer of sin.

Jesus did not live under such a curse since he obeyed the Holy Spirit's leading and did not seek to justify himself. Those who judged Jesus as guilty of blasphemy called him "accursed". [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) says of the bodies of those executed and hung on a tree, "his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you for possession." When the Sanhedrin found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, they wanted the death penalty authorised by Scripture ([Lev 24:16](#)).

It was men who condemned Jesus as guilty, not God. They saw Christ as "cursed" because the Romans executed him and displayed his body on the cross, fulfilling the literal reading of Deuteronomy 21:23. God would not curse a sinless man. Sinful humanity did this to Jesus. But the light of Christ overcame the darkness of human sin.

## **Strike the Shepherd**

The NRSV and many other translations of [Matt 26:31](#) insert the words "I will" before "strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." However, "I will" is not in the original Greek nor is it in the Old Testament prophecy Matthew quoted, [Zech 13:7](#). In Zechariah, the sword that strikes the shepherd represents the power of this world. It would be exceptional for Jesus to speak of his Father striking him. Even [Isa 53:4](#) states that it is the Jews who accounted the Messiah as stricken by God, not God himself. The claim in [Isa 53:6](#) "the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" is, therefore, the opinion of his executioners. Jesus' crucifixion was a miscarriage of justice, not the work of God ([Isa 53:8](#)). The *Lumen Christi* model views humanity as violently persecuting the good shepherd, not a device of the Father to satisfy a need for retributive punishment.



## Was Christ's crucifixion the will of God?

[Isaiah 53:10](#) in the NRSV appears to prophesy that the crucifixion was God's will. This accords with Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane that he would submit to death if it was the will of God ([Matthew 26:39](#)). But to take the Isaiah reading in such a literal way runs into a problem in the next statement about Jesus' days being prolonged, when they were obviously cut short. The Jews take the verse as referring to Israel. The penal substitution theory requires the verse to imply God was behind the crucifixion. Such an interpretation is not in keeping with other scriptures about the goodness of God and claiming that innocent people must not be punished ([Deut 24:16](#); [Jer 31:29-30](#); [Ezek 18:20](#)).

What God willed was the atonement. The crucifixion was the scheme of Satan. This is an example of prophetic compression where God's permissive will is compressed with Satan's will. Christ gave himself as a sacrifice in order to save humanity from perishing in sin. The Greek Septuagint (LXX), which was used by the apostles, renders Isaiah 53:10 as "And the Lord desires to cleanse him from his blow. If you offer for sin, your soul shall see a long-lived offspring," (Pietersma & Wright, 2007, p. 866) that is to say it pleased the Father to heal Jesus of his wounds inflicted by humans.

## It is Finished

The last words of Jesus according to John, who was present at the crucifixion, were "It is finished" ([John 19:30](#)). What was finished? His life? Jesus was in no position to elaborate. Luke complicates matters by giving in his gospel Jesus' final utterance as "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" ([Luke 23:46](#)). [Matthew 27:46](#) and [Mark 15:34](#) record Jesus exclamation from the cross: "'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'". Of course, Jesus endured crucifixion long enough to

make several statements and the gospel writers do not claim to provide an exhaustive record.

Wesley Carr (1992, p. 128) commented on John's version, "The writer may imply that Jesus claims that he has done all that was asked of him: 'I have done everything'. But more likely he wants us to think of God as the achiever: 'All that God intended has been completed'. If so, there may be a connection with the versions of Jesus' cry in Mark and Matthew. Both quote the beginning of Psalm 22. But that psalm ends: 'They shall tell to a people yet unborn, that this was the Lord's doing' ([Psalm 22:31](#)). Maybe Mark and Matthew, like John, also wished to emphasize that Jesus had completed his work."

The *Lumen Christi* model portrays God as the achiever but does not view God's mission for atonement as being finished when Jesus died. Evil remained in the world and Christ continues to save the lost. He will return to complete his work. But the cross marks a crucial milestone in the divine plan.

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## 7. Atonement Theology

The *Lumen Christi* model uses some theological terms in different ways to traditional theories. For example, the word “substitute” is used to refer to Christ as a second “Adam” ([1 Cor 15:45](#)) who is righteous and not as someone for God to punish in humanity’s place. Since the atonement influences every area of systematic theology, changes to atonement theology have far-reaching effects. This is one reason theologians are reluctant to surrender entrenched ideas. But the pursuit of truth requires a constant reassessment of the church’s doctrines.

*Lumen Christi*’s multi-dimensional view of sin sees salvation as forming a people in communion with God, a people who hope for a resurrection to a righteous life in a perfect world. God repairs the damage done to every facet of creation. Since atonement is an ongoing work of God, theological terms may apply differently in each of its phases: before Christ came, the present church age, and in a renewed

cosmos following Christ's return. Another issue is where words conflate into terms with their own meaning (e.g. "justification by faith" and "saved by grace through faith"). The aim in this chapter is to clarify some of these matters.

## **Punishment**

The problem of redemptive violence in atonement theories was raised in Chapter 1. Over against this, Joakim Molander (2009, p. 108) contended, "punishment is not an act of vengeance, but of grace." Molander said society's punishment of the wrongdoer reinstates him within the law. Atonement retributivism thus places punishment in a moral framework whereby "the point of punishment was no longer to serve justice but to serve crime prevention. Punishment, traditionally regarded as a form of penance as an act of atonement" has become a deterrent, a discipline, and a means of transformation (p. 190). This view tries to present punishment as a gracious act of correction. But, God does not seek to control behaviour by manipulating a person's free will. God refuses to use such methods. Besides, there is no positive result for a victim of eternal punishment.

Regarding eternal punishment, Edward William Fudge (2000, p. 204) put the case for conditionalism, which says God will annihilate the unrepentant on Judgement Day. Fudge pointed out that the traditional view of God's wrath requiring unending punishment does not square with the fact that Jesus did not undergo such punishment himself. Yet the penal substitution theory says Jesus submitted to sinful humanity's punishment.

Robin Collins (2012, p. 192) said: "The retributive theory of punishment is a key pillar of the penal theory." But he raised the problem of how suffering in hell could be retributive and, since Christ died for everyone, what is the purpose of everlasting suffering? Therefore, Collins thought limited

atonement is the only reasonable solution, but this defies Scriptures such as [John 1:29](#) and [Isa 53:6](#). So, Collins suggested (2012, p. 195) a participatory understanding of the atonement which emphasises the believer's unity with Christ as the way forward. *Lumen Christi* embraces this proposal but, in order to remove all evil from creation, the unrepentant must be destroyed. This is the second death which is a consequence of sin rather than retributive punishment for sin. Terms like "the punishment of eternal destruction" ([2 Thess 1:9](#)), "the wrath of God" ([Rom 5:9](#)) and "the wages of sin is death" ([Rom 6:23](#)), are descriptive of the outcome in human terms. It was not the divine intention to create people for destruction, nor is punishment redemptive. Note that the use of the word "consequence" should not be taken to imply *Lumen Christi* is consequentialist, which says "the end justifies the means." Even the salvation of the world would not justify the crucifixion of an innocent person.

## Justification by Faith

The Apostle Paul is the only writer in the Bible to use the phrase "Justification by faith" ([Rom 3:28](#); [4:25](#); [5:1](#), [16](#), [18](#), [21](#); [2 Cor 3:9](#); [Gal 2:16](#), [21](#); [3:11](#), [24](#)). Although James comes close ([Jas 2:24](#)) but appears to teach the opposite. James' sought to correct any false impressions that Christians need not concern themselves with doing good works because salvation is by faith alone ([Jas 2:14-26](#)). This is not faith but presumption. Christians are not building Satan's kingdom. Paul would agree since he wrote to the churches of Galatia: "the only thing that counts is faith working through love." ([Gal 5:6b](#)). Love for others motivates doing good works for them.

Alister McGrath (2005, p. 24) commented in his history of the doctrine that theologians interpret justification by faith in many ways, which is not surprising since they cannot even agree on what is the centre of Paul's thought. For example,

Calvin Roetzel (2005, p. 31) following Ernst Käsemann, said Paul did not centre on individual salvation as many maintain, but “the issue is if the church is sharing in God’s reconciling work and the ministry of righteousness.”

No particular atonement theory lays claim to the doctrine because the gift of justification is needed for atonement. McGrath (2005, p. 413) pointed out that “the doctrine of justification is of major importance in creating the fissures which opened up within the western church during the sixteenth century, and in maintaining that division subsequently.” Church unity is a strong motivation to resolve differences over this doctrine.

The theological problem is exacerbated by the lack of perspicuity in scripture. Where Paul used passive case, e.g. in [Rom 3:28](#): “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” it is not clear who does the justifying, God or the person of faith. We presume Paul expected his readers to understand it is God.

Yung Suk Kim (2019, p. 3) suggests that most translations have been influenced by the forensic view of salvation (p. 6). Where most translations of the aforementioned Bible passages have “faith in Jesus” some, such as the Common English Bible, have “faith of Jesus”. Kim points out this changes justification “by faith” from being “once and for all” to God justifying the one who “has the faith of Jesus”. Although Kim agrees that salvation is through faith, he understands it as living by the faith of Jesus, saying “In [Rom 3:26](#), he [Paul] nails justification language by relating to Christ’s faith: ‘God justifies the one who has *the faith of Jesus*.’” (p. 3). So, Kim opts for a participation atonement theory.

My view of such translation ambiguities is that if the author in the original language did not differentiate between alternative meanings in English, then the original author did



not see any reason to guard against the alternatives. In English, theologians take the translation that suites their theology. It would be more faithful to the original to accept all the alternatives as possibilities. A multifaceted atonement model is, in my view, more faithful to Scripture.

The Protestant Reformers denied that sinners play any part in their own salvation and adopted a doctrine where God imputes, bestows, or reckons righteousness to believers because of their faith (appealing to Scriptures such as [Rom 4:5](#)). Catholics, on the other hand, emphasised the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit to make believers righteous and to motivate them to do the works of faith. These opposing perspectives lean towards one of two extremes: either God chooses who he will save or humans contribute to their own salvation.

The *Lumen Christi* model responds to this impasse by not assigning any component of the horizontal Christ-human relationship to the vertical relationship of Jesus with his Father. In the horizontal plane, people have faith in Jesus who forgives them. The horizontal relationship is so secure that Jesus gives his followers eternal life ([John 4:14](#)) and the Holy Spirit. Salvation is won in the vertical plane: Christ is faithful to God who exalts him and gives him the people for whom he died. They will be raised to righteousness and their sins blotted out.

The phrase “justification by faith” brings together these two dimensions: sinners made right with God (“justified by his grace” [Rom 3:24](#) and [Titus 3:7](#)) and sinners believing in Christ (“through faith in Jesus Christ” [Rom 3:22](#) and [Gal 2:16; 3:22](#)). Thus, Paul writes to the Ephesians “For by grace you have been saved through faith” ([Eph 2:8](#)).

The mediatorial role of Christ is pivotal to *Lumen Christi*. McGrath (1984, p. 225) observed, “Scripture does indicate that the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness are

the two necessary, albeit distinct, elements of justification.” So, human salvation is a gift the Father gives to Christ because of his faithfulness and righteousness. The goodness of believers does not aid in their salvation before, or after, their conversion. Christ’s righteousness and faithfulness are the instrumental cause of human salvation. The sinner’s faith in God builds a friendship with the Saviour.

Reading onwards from Rom 5:1 reveals that the goal of justification by faith is the sharing in the glory of God: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God” ([Rom 5:1-2](#)). Believers possess this hope through Christ. Neither a Christian’s faith nor works contribute to the outcome. Conversely, a Christian’s sins do not disqualify him or her from salvation.

Kathryn Tanner (1999, p. 513) warned about juxtaposing mercy and justice and to see them as complimentary relational terms supporting God’s covenant. Tanner wrote, “To *justify* someone is to restore that person to his or her proper or rightful place within the relationship, and thereby it involves the restoration or reconstitution of the relationship itself. *Justice* is that way of life, that body of ordinances or directives, set down by Yahweh, by which Israel is to exhibit its faithfulness to the covenant” (p. 514). God’s faithfulness to his covenant causes him to save his people. The covenant is not a legal contract or a two-sided agreement. “I will be your God and you shall be my people” is the believers’ assurance of salvation. God promises, using the metaphor of a covenant, to justify sinners in a relationship with him.

Words such as justification, condemnation and punishment coming from a law court setting, are not intended for a literal legal application in theology. The phrase “justification by

faith” was not intended to describe the believer’s legal standing before God. When Jesus told the parable of the workers in the vineyard, he was teaching the disciples how to live in God’s kingdom. In the same way, Paul used the phrase “justification by faith” to teach how Christians live in God’s kingdom. Salvation means believers are made alive in the spirit, or freed from the flesh, so by faith they do justice and show kindness to others ([Mic 6:8](#)). [Habakkuk 2:4](#) uses the phrase “the righteous live by their faith” in this way.

Daniel Fuller (1980, p. xi) said he turned away from the covenant theology taught by Luther and Calvin because he saw no antithesis between gospel and law. Fuller said God intended the Israelites to receive and obey the Mosaic law out of faith and not as a work to earn God’s approval. Critics of Fuller replied that Luther and Calvin also taught this because of human inability to obey the law. Fuller (1980, p. xi) wrote that he “concluded that the ‘law of faith’ in [Romans 3:27](#) is not the principle of justification by faith alone, as Charles Hodge and other covenant theologians affirm, but that it is the very Mosaic law itself.”

Tom Wright (2009, p. 108) warned of “an old caricature ... in which God has an initial plan about saving people (the law), but finds that nobody can make it that way, so devises an easier one (faith) instead.” God gave his people the law, whether the external Mosaic law or the internal law of the Spirit, for guidance, not salvation.

Since God is still working out atonement, justification is not merely a past event. McGrath (2005, p. 23) writes, “within the Pauline corpus, justification has future, as well as past, reference ([Romans 2:13](#); [8:33](#); [Galatians 5:4–5](#)), and appears to relate to both the beginning of the Christian life and its final consummation.” When Christians place their faith in Jesus and follow him, they die to sin ([Matt 10:38](#); [16:24](#)). After physical death, the Christian goes to heaven, but they do not take their

perishable sinful nature with them ([1 Cor 15:42](#)). When a good God raises a believer from the dead, he does not resurrect the sinful nature. The only reason God raises anyone to life at all is that of Christ's sacrifice for them. God raises his people imperishable ([1 Cor 15:52](#); [1 Peter 1:3-4](#)).

## The Righteousness of God

As for justification by faith, translation alternatives play a role in theological considerations. Alister McGrath (2005, p. 27), following J. Reumann, sets out four different interpretations of the phrase, "the righteousness of God" used by Paul ([Rom 1:17](#); [3:21-22](#); [2 Cor 5:21](#)):

1. An objective genitive: 'a righteousness which is valid before God' (Luther).
2. A subjective genitive: 'righteousness as an attribute or quality of God' (Käsemann).
3. A genitive of authorship: 'a righteousness that goes forth from God' (Bultmann).
4. A genitive of origin: 'humanity's righteous status which is the result of God's action of justifying' (C. E. B. Cranfield).

The righteousness of God in [Rom 1:17](#) and [3:21-22](#) refers to the ethical character of God, but in [2 Cor 5:21](#), Paul appears to be speaking about believers' right relationships with God: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The chiasmic structure of the verse in Greek has resulted in most English translations rendering *hamartia* as "sin" instead of "sin offering" which according to Wright would be the more exact translation (Wright, 1993. pp. 205-206). If correct, the NLT rendering would be preferable: "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." This would appear to be

a more logical translation since a person could be an offering for sin but not be sin itself. Paul in [1 Cor 1:30](#) said Christ became the righteousness of the believers in Corinth. The righteousness of Jesus, the second Adam, made him a “life-giving spirit” ([1 Cor 15:45](#)). So, in [2 Cor 5:21](#) Paul wrote of the righteousness of God as resulting from the obedience of Christ to save God’s covenant people.

## Human Righteousness

Paul spoke of two types of human righteousness: “. . . not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.” ([Phil 3:9](#)). Self-righteousness comes from the sinful nature, “the flesh”, but the righteousness from God proceeds from communion with God and the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue the righteousness of God ([1 Tim 6:11](#); [2 Tim 2:22](#)).

The lives of Christians on earth display both types of righteousness. Peter said Christ has set Christians free from sins so “we might live for righteousness” ([1 Pet 2:24](#)). But Peter looked forward to a time when there would only be a devout righteousness when he wrote: “But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.” ([2 Pet 3:13](#)).

Likewise, the Apostle Paul said, “we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness” ([Gal 5:5](#)) implying Christians will not have righteousness in themselves until the future. Nevertheless, Paul encouraged Christians to lead good lives in the meantime with the help of the Holy Spirit. He wrote to the Ephesians, “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” ([Eph 4:22-24](#)). Paul looked

forward to God ruling in righteousness: “From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” ([2 Tim 4:8](#)).

Human works of righteousness have no bearing on salvation. Paul said of Christ, “he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” ([Titus 3:5](#)). The Spirit bears witness to the righteousness of Christ. Jesus stated, “And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer;” ([John 16:8-11](#)).

In the same way that God raised Jesus from the dead, God will raise Christians ([1 Cor 15:20](#)). Sinful flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God ([1 Cor 15:50](#)) but the redeemed human spirit can. So, God leaves the sinful nature behind to perish and raises the spirits of Christians with a sinless incorruptible body in unbroken communion with God.

## **Righteousness as Covenant Faithfulness**

The covenant of God is foundational to atonement. God is righteous and faithful to his covenant. People are not. E. P. Sanders said, “Righteousness is thus defined as behaviour or attitudes which are consistent with being the historical covenant people of God.” (McGrath, 2005, p. 28). Humanity’s unfaithfulness to the covenant is seen in unrighteous behaviour. God’s faithfulness to the covenant gives rise to his plan of salvation.

Kathryn Tanner reasoned that God’s righteousness is his faithfulness to his covenant and his determination to save

sinners. Tanner wrote, “if *righteousness* is faithfulness to covenant relations, it can be expressed appropriately in acts of mercy. ... Yahweh does not break relations with them as they deserve - Yahweh is merciful. But in being merciful in this way, Yahweh remains righteous in the sense of faithful to the covenant, faithful to God’s own intent to be the God of Israel” (Tanner, 1999, p. 515). Tanner quotes Ps 89:29-36 to support her argument.

N. T. Wright (1999, p 205) translates [2 Cor 5:21](#) as “for our sake God made Christ, who did not know sin, to be a sin-offering for us, *so that in him we might become God’s covenant-faithfulness.*” Wright sees the righteousness of God that Paul is discussing here, to be the covenantal faithfulness of God seen in the “Christ-shaped ministry of Paul, reaching out with the offer of reconciliation to all who hear his bold preaching.” (p. 205).

But Michael Bird (2004, p. 265) in discussing imputed righteousness, reasoned, “the idea of righteousness as covenant faithfulness is problematic. If faith is reckoned as righteousness (and righteousness = faithfulness to the covenant), it means that faith is reckoned as faithfulness. But that amounts to a tautology.” In the *Lumen Christi* model, neither humanity’s righteousness nor faithfulness are factors in winning salvation. Christ’s righteousness and faithfulness win the salvation of those who follow him. God reckoned Abraham’s faith as righteousness ([Gen 15:6](#)), but Scripture does not say this righteousness helped to earn his salvation.

## Imputed Righteousness

Michael Bird (2004, p. 253) noted: “For some authors a denial of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as the sole grounds of justification amounts to a virtual denial of the gospel itself and an attack on the Reformation.” Even so, imputed righteousness is a contested doctrine.

N. T. Wright said of [2 Cor 5:21](#), “The verse has traditionally been read as a somewhat detached statement of atonement theology: we are sinners; God is righteous, but in Christ what Luther called a ‘wondrous exchange’ takes place, in which Christ takes our sin, and we receive his ‘righteousness’. And the difficulty with this, despite its being enshrined in a good many hymns and liturgies, as well as in popular devotion, is (a) that once again Paul never actually says this anywhere else; (b) that here it is God’s righteousness, not Christ’s, that “we” apparently “become”; (c) that there seems to be no good reason why he suddenly inserts this statement into a discussion whose thrust is quite different, namely, a consideration of the paradoxical apostolic ministry in which Christ is portrayed in and through the humiliating weakness of the apostle (4:7-6:13); and (d) the verse, read in this way, seems to fall off the end of the preceding argument, so much so that some commentators have suggested that the real break in the thought comes not between 5:21 and 6:1 but between 5:19 and 5:20.” (Wright, 1993, p. 205).

Mark Garcia (2009, p. 421) sounded a word of warning about the word imputation: “it is important to observe that ‘to reckon’ and ‘to transfer’ are not identical. To ‘reckon’ is akin to the understanding of imputation commended here for it communicates a verbal or linguistic action, something which works naturally with understanding justification as a judicial declaration. As such, ‘to reckon’ suggests attribution and to ‘impute’ is understood in those terms. To ‘transfer’, however, immediately suggests something quite different.”

The *Lumen Christi* model can use the established language of divine exchange while avoiding the problems of penal substitution. The Father gave his Son to save his people. Christ mediates between a righteous God and the sinners he saved. Scripture refers to Jesus’ sacrifice as being for sinners ([Rom 5:8](#)), not for those made or reckoned as righteous. God



does not transfer righteousness to sinners. God saves (meaning makes right) and reconciles with everyone of faith in Christ. The Son of God joined himself to humanity even with its consequence of human mortality. This is why Scripture can say Jesus died because of sins (e.g. [Heb 10:12](#)).

Jesus bore humanity's punishment for sin in the sense he died as all humans do because of humanity's sin. Suppose that Satan and humanity had not conspired to crucify Jesus, and Jesus died of old age. But this would mean that Christ still would have borne the "punishment" for humanity's sin. However, Satan would not allow Jesus to go unchallenged. At the crucifixion, the devil was fighting for his life and humanity was asserting itself in sin.

Faith in Jesus unites people with him and his righteousness. His right relationship with God, becomes the Christian's inheritance. Humanity's sin is plain to see, but the Holy Spirit encourages Christians to show righteousness to the world. Jesus taught his followers to receive a prophet (believe his message) and God would give them a prophet's reward (righteousness) ([Matt 10:41](#)). Righteousness, itself, is a reward. Just so, when Jesus died for human sins out of love for God's people, God rewarded him ([Matt 5:12](#); [Luke 6:35](#)) by exalting him to the highest place ([Phil 2:9](#)). And for the people of faith in Jesus (which is the work that God requires of humans ([John 6:29](#))), Christ at his second coming will reward them with righteousness and entry into the new Jerusalem ([Rev 22:12-14](#)). Christians, like all people, die because of sin, but God raises them to righteousness. This is the reason God reckons believers as righteous while in the flesh. God does not merely impute righteousness, he raises his people to righteousness. The imputation of righteousness is not instrumental in salvation but rather, flows from it. The substitution theories have it the wrong way around when they say God saves people by imputing righteousness to them.

Christ's Spirit dwelling in Christians is their righteousness saving them from the sin in the flesh ([Rom 8:10](#)).

## Expiation and Propitiation

Expiation and propitiation are prominent terms in the penal substitution theory. Expiation refers to the removal of guilt for sin and is not a prominent word in Scripture but occurs in the book of Numbers: "You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it." ([Num 35:33](#)). Larry Shelton (2004, p. 30) in discussing the Old Testament sacrifices said, "By definition, the expiation of sin does not involve a penalty. The focus is on the saving aspects of the ritual."

Propitiation refers to averting God's anger. Leon Morris (Morris, 1979, p. 226) wrote, "The wrath of God is real." But this takes as literal what Paul calls a human way of talking: "But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)" ([Rom 3:5](#)). Humanity experiences God's wrath and righteous judgement upon sin because humanity is evil ([Matt 7:11](#)). The "wrath of God" describes the human experience of God's opposition to sin and is not an outburst of righteous indignation. It is an anthropomorphism expressing the incompatibility of evil with God. The love and goodness of God are a threat to evil, and humanity is evil.

Shelton (2004, p. 30) portrayed expiation and propitiation within a covenantal framework: "The action of God is always to restore the covenant relationship. It is sinful humanity who must be turned back toward God, to be propitiated. 'Expiation,' the removal of the sin that alienates from the covenant relationship, is what the sacrificial system is intended to accomplish, so long as the sinner accompanies the sacrifice with the spirit of repentance, humility, and an attitude of

obedience toward God.” It would be better if Shelton had not used the phrase “covenant relationship” for covenant stood metaphorically for a relationship as discussed in Chapter 6.

In the *Lumen Christi* model, God removes guilt and shame by destroying the associated evil. Future resurrection to a righteousness free from sin, guilt and shame is the assured hope of God’s people. The love of God is the dominant motif of the *Lumen Christi* model. God is not angry with his people. However, he will destroy the evil in them ([1 Cor 3:15](#)) and the wicked will perish (experience God’s wrath). The kingdom of God in the future will be God’s people living in righteousness on a renewed earth to the glory of God.

## Salvation

Salvation is an ambiguous concept covering such things as reconciliation with God, freedom from sin, and getting to heaven. Since everyone eventually dies, salvation does not refer to escaping death, but Scripture speaks of a second death. This is the final judgement where God destroys evil. Often in Scripture, when the issue of salvation is mentioned it refers to avoiding condemnation on Judgement Day. So, when Jesus spoke of two gates, one that leads to destruction, and the other that leads to life ([Matt 7:13-14](#)), he spoke of humanity’s final destination.

Jesus asserted: “whoever believes has eternal life” ([John 6:47](#)), and he said this before his own sacrificial death. There is no need to argue that God saved people of faith prior to Jesus’ death because he foresaw Jesus’ payment for sin on the cross and allowed the benefits in anticipation. The Son of God had authority on earth to impart eternal life even though he was yet to complete his mission to save believers from the final judgement. Jesus remained faithful until the end of his life on earth, and God exalted him to lordship over all things and welcomed him into heaven, where Jesus’ presence is an

intercession for his followers' salvation ([Rom 8:34](#); [Phil 2:8](#); [Heb 7:25](#)). The Father grants Jesus' prayers ([Mark 11:23](#)). Therefore, believers are confident of future salvation and can refer to their present status as "saved", even though they do this in hope ([Rom 8:24](#)). Christians can say with Paul, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" ([Rom 8:1](#)).

## **Assurance of Salvation**

Michael Eaton (1995, pp. 3-4) drew attention to the theological problem presented by assurance of salvation. What Eaton calls Developed Calvinism, undermines Calvinism's "once saved always saved" teaching by allowing doubt as to whether an individual's salvation was genuine in the first place. The theological alternative is conditional perseverance which gives no certainty of the permanence of salvation. So, if Christians err on the side of introspection of their faith, they are unsure whether Jesus died for them. If they err on the side of a hope grounded in perseverance in the faith, they will have no certainty they will persevere.

Eaton proposed separating salvation from rewards in heaven so that Jesus can save someone but they still might lose their rewards (or inheritance) in the afterlife. By doing this, Eaton loosened the link between justification by faith and sanctification. But the appeal to the sinful nature's self-centred desire for rewards is hardly faithful to the way of Christ. Is there another solution?

What if Christian assurance is seen as resting in Christ who wins salvation for his followers? Jesus is a friend like no other, for even if believers fail Jesus, he will not fail them. Christ knows human weaknesses. Jesus did not reject Peter for betraying him. Nor will Jesus turn from any of his disciples. Christians, therefore, neither perform good works to earn salvation nor to be sure of salvation but rejoicing in their

salvation. It is not the doctrine of predestination that drives the “once saved always saved” maxim, but the steadfast faithfulness of God. Predestination in Scripture refers to God making people with a *destiny* of purpose and fulfilment. Denying Jesus under duress (no matter how light) is not an unforgivable sin. No one can steal a Christian’s salvation so that the Holy Spirit leaves them. The only sin that God does not forgive is when a person themselves rejects the Holy Spirit.

When people repent and believe in Christ, they receive God’s mercy, but the sinful nature denies God’s grace. Human attempts to live in accordance with God’s will provide no certainty of salvation. Instead, Christians rely on Christ as their Saviour throughout their lives for he never sinned and he is faithful. The Son of God remains in the Father’s love always, even when Christ was on the cross. The horizontal relationship between the believer and Christ provides the assurance that the vertical relationship of Christ with God will justify us before God.

## **Sanctification**

When God sanctifies a Christian, he sets them apart for holy service. Many theologians approach sanctification as a process of Christian growth in righteousness and Christlikeness. But if sanctification were a process, Christians could see their good works as progress in their own righteousness. Good works are evidence of a transformed life, but improvement in behaviour does not contribute to salvation or sanctification. Jesus taught his disciples to know a tree by its fruit (Matt 7:15-20) to help them identify false prophets. He did not encourage good works to earn salvation or to produce sanctification. As McGrath (2005, p. 29) said of Paul’s epistles, “Paul appears to regard good works as evidential, rather than instrumental.”

The atoning work of Christ includes sanctification. A Christian’s standard of behaviour is not a factor in their

salvation but evidences it. But, contrariwise, the sins of Christians do not evidence their apostasy or atonement's failure. The regenerating work of the Spirit re-establishes the created order. John said, "but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." ([1 John 1:7-8](#)). The Holy Spirit leads Christians in righteousness and the avoidance of sin and empowers them to do the works of God. Sanctification is God's bestowal of freedom from sin to pursue righteousness. Christ's sacrifice redeemed God's people from slavery to sin. God sends the Holy Spirit to people who believe in Christ ([Eph 1:13](#)) to deliver them from evil. The Holy Spirit helps the sanctified believer become more Christlike in behaviour.

Christ's sacrifice left a pattern for God's people to follow, but not a pattern of subservience. Jesus' sacrifice resulted in the coming of the Holy Spirit, also called "the Spirit of Christ" ([Rom 8:9](#); [1 Pet 1:11](#)) and "the Spirit of the Lord" who exudes freedom ([2 Cor 3:17](#)). The indwelling and empowering Holy Spirit equips Christians for living as citizens of God's kingdom.

## **Divine Passibility**

Thomas Weinandy, in his book "Does God suffer?" (2000), argued for God's impassibility regarding human sin. Scripture does provide support for this thesis: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" ([Heb 13:8](#)); "there is no variation or shadow due to change" ([Jas 1:17b](#)); God revealed his name to Moses as "I am who I am" ([Exod 3:14](#)) indicating his unchanging nature.

In recent times, theologians have disputed the traditional view because of a pastoral concern to present a God who feels human suffering. Scriptures depicting God as displaying

emotion are plentiful (e.g. [Ps 74:1](#); [Hosea 11:8-9](#)). In favour of passibility, Jürgen Moltmann argued that God the Father suffered the pain of abandoning the Son on the cross because of God's passionate love for evildoers and their victims (Moltmann, 2002, p. 131). I have already disputed the assumption that God abandoned his Son on the cross. Weinandy (2002, p. 10) said, "The compassion of God is seen then not in his suffering in solidarity with humankind, but in his ability to alleviate the cause of human suffering-sin."

Even if human actions do not change God, human perception of God does change, especially when human behaviour is sinful. God's steadfast love is like a spotlight. Believers in God's light enjoy the warmth of God's love. But outside of the beam is darkness, felt as God's anger. When people sin against one another, they act outside God's will. Human sin is a stain on creation. People are quick to blame God for the suffering they endure. The secular world fails to see the many manifestations of God's love. The Bible portrays God as getting angry at sin, but if sinners repent, God repents of taking offence and does not act in judgement. Biblical scholars often point out that God repents more than anyone else in the Old Testament. Weinandy (2002, p. 10) wrote, "human beings are able to know in faith or even experience the various facets of God's fully actualized love in accordance with their personal situation. In sin, they experience God's love as a rebuke and admonishment. In repentance, they experience God's love as compassion and forgiveness."

Richard Bauckham argued for divine passibility based on the Chalcedonian understanding of the incarnation. Bauckham (2014, p. 58) wrote, "God in his eternal being cannot be thirsty or fear death or suffer the mockery of tormentors, but in Jesus he really does suffer precisely those things."

Taking an opposing position, Steven Duby (2015, p. 294) proposed that Christ's mediatorial role in atonement upholds

the doctrine of divine impassibility. Duby wrote, “the direct suffering of God the Son on the cross is critical to the doctrine of penal substitution” (p. 286). Duby saw a break in fellowship between the Father and the Son during his crucifixion as support for penal substitution. However, the *Lumen Christi* model proposes no such disruption of fellowship, and therefore, does not enter the debate for or against divine impassibility on this ground. The incarnation of Christ, rather than his death, has a more direct bearing on the divine passibility debate. Philosophers of religion will need to establish their doctrines on grounds other than the atonement.

Whatever the view on passibility, all agree God is love, which is foundational to *Lumen Christi*. God covenanted with his people to affirm the constancy of his love for them. God said of David, “but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.” ([Ps 89:33-34](#)). Psalms often display a reliance on God’s steadfast love and mercy in spite of the sins of the psalmist (e.g. [Ps 40:11-12](#)). King David sang, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities” ([Ps 103:8-10](#)). David does not describe God as a judge intent on serving justice by punishing every sin. Of course, atonement models should not rely on a single passage of Scripture such as this nor, for that matter, the law court analogy of Paul in Romans.

## **The Theology of the Lumen Christi Model**

Atonement is the goal of God’s plan to overcome the problems of evil and suffering. God does not employ atonement logistics to right wrongs by violent punishment or to defeat the devil, but to bring about righteousness and peace.



Forensic atonement theories narrowly focus on obtaining justice for moral sin. The satisfaction theory is concerned with the disrespect on the part of created beings towards God as if they could harm God. *Christus Victor* centres on the conflict between Christ and the devil. Satan, a created being, is not a threat to God. The moral influence theory's concern for sinners to become righteous in this world is another misplaced focal point. God's concerns are to eradicate evil and save his people. Yet God's problem with evil is not central to traditional atonement theories. It should be.

The *Lumen Christi* model declares that the light of Christ overcomes the darkness, saves the children of light, and redeems them from unrighteousness. Christ's death on the cross was a necessary but incidental part of God's work of atonement. Jesus' life mission from his incarnation through being "handed over to death for our trespasses and ... raised for our justification" ([Rom 4:25](#)), and through to his return in judgement is to fulfil the Father's will. Jesus could have called upon his Father to send an army of angels to rescue him, but Jesus declined to exploit his divinity and instead, placed his faith in God.

Christians are privileged to live in God's kingdom of love by virtue of their relationship with the Lord of the kingdom. Righteousness is not a virtue of an individual in isolation but as a member of God's family relating to the Father and his children. Paul said, "In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God." ([Rom 7:4](#)). Jesus is "the firstborn within a large family" ([Rom 8:29](#)) for whom his presence at the right hand of God is an intercession ([Rom 8:34](#)).

God raised Jesus to life, not just for Jesus' sake, but also for those Jesus sacrificed his life to save. "And he died for all, so

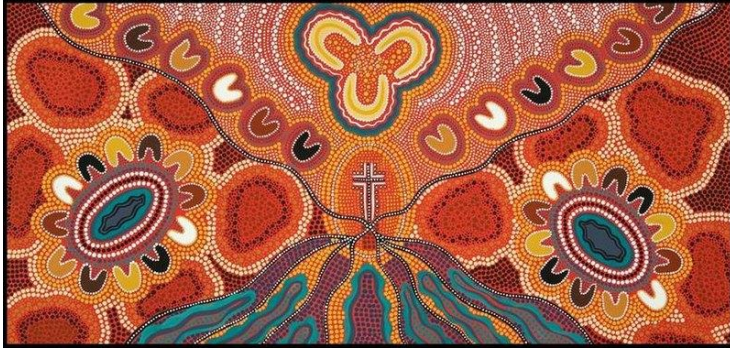
that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” ([2 Cor 5:15](#)). God has not yet revealed the full extent of his opposition to iniquity. The “wrath of God” refers to the final judgement. Christians turn to the Father to serve him “and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming” ([1 Thess 1:10](#)). Punishment only establishes justice in the sense of removing the evildoer, not by reconciling anyone. God vindicated Christ to bring about justice and save sinners. Christ’s exaltation implicates everyone who honours him ([Phil 2:9](#)). God will exalt believers who humble themselves in Christ as citizens of his kingdom ([Jas 4:10](#); [1 Pet 5:6](#)). The core of atonement may be expressed by the metaphor of the light of Christ shining in the darkness, eliminating all iniquity ([1 John 1:7-8](#)). Atonement is achieved by the Father through Christ. Our salvation is Christ’s reward for his faithfulness to God.

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## 8. Jesus' Love Message

What has Jesus' love message got to do with the atonement? Quite a lot. It is critical in fact. This can be seen by looking at how it impacted Len Evans, a Presbyterian minister from Niles, Ohio, who became an international conference speaker in the 1970s sharing his newfound awareness of Jesus' love message. Evans (1978, p. 135) taught: "The Bible declares Jesus to be the 'the wisdom of God'! If He has given one commandment, is it not then logical that this commandment contains the secret of the universe, the sufficient rule for renewal of our hearts and our lives and our fellowships?" Evans alleged that churches emphasise the vertical relationship with God at the expense of the horizontal relationships between people. He asserted that by loving others in obedience to Jesus' second great commandment, people love God and fulfil the first commandment. God does not seek anything from us for himself and does not seek sacrifice, but mercy, which is the expression of love for others ([Matt 9:13](#)).

Although an engaging speaker, Evan's message did not gain scholarly acceptance. One reason was that he appeared to give priority to the second commandment over the first. Even

though Evans emphasised the horizontal, he intended Christians to keep together the two great commandments.

Qingping Liu (2007, p. 683) argued that Jesus' first and second commandments are in conflict if a person's neighbour is not a Christian and does not love God. In such a case, Liu said the first commandment would take priority over the second commandment because a Christian could not love an enemy of God. On the one hand, Jesus taught his followers to love their enemies ([Matt 5:44](#)), but on the other, Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword and that even next of kin would be divided because of him ([Matt 10:34-39](#)). Qingping Liu said, "In light of the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, not loving God is the greatest of sins and has to be sternly punished by God's justice, because it involves a voluntary turning away from God and disobeying of the first great commandment (see [Mark 16:16](#); [John 8:24](#); see also Aquinas 1952, 559-60)." (Liu, 2007, p. 683). Here Liu overlooks that in Christianity, salvation is by grace and not by one's own efforts, even if those efforts are professing love for God. The two Scripture passages quoted by Liu are not about love, but about salvation through faith. Love is a fruit of the Spirit ([Gal 5:22](#)). Jesus gave the analogy of a branch drawing life from the vine and producing fruit. The fruit is evidence that a person's faith is in Christ ([John 15:10](#)). Jesus said "a tree is known by its fruit" ([Luke 6:43](#)). A works-based view of Christianity is common, whether the works are obedience to laws, acceptance of certain dogma, or pharisaic professions of love or faith.

Humanity, living in a fallen world, twisted the teaching of Jesus and opposes the two great commandments against each other. We need to resist the temptation to give priority to the first commandment and make the second contingent on circumstances and subject to human inclinations. As Craig Bubeck (2013, p. 55) said, "The gospel is all about God's love,

our inability to love (sin), and God's sacrificial remedy (Love incarnate)." So, Len Evans had reason to complain that the horizontal thrust of Jesus' second commandment was being laid aside using the priority of the first commandment as an excuse.

Since God is love, love is defined by God and not the other way around ([1 John 4:16](#)). God does not want his agape love to be returned but to be passed on to others. This is how we show that we love God who we cannot see ([1 John 4:19-21](#)).

## **Love and Atonement**

A more pertinent issue for us was Evan's attempt to ground his theology of the love commandment in the atonement. The love message does not find fertile ground to thrive in the penal substitution theory, the dominant theory in evangelical churches.

Steve Chalke (2008,p. 40) raised this issue more recently commenting: "If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus' own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil." Chalke warned that the penal substitution theory undermines Jesus' love message and therefore weakens the preaching of the gospel itself. At the very least, the penal substitution theory is a hindrance to the church's preaching of the atonement. An atonement theory that portrays God as unloving in any way fails to support the love commandment and, therefore, the gospel.

Evans argued that the Son came to set people free from sin, which he understood to be both their separation from God and separation between people. He said the subject of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is the unity of the body of Christ and how God sent his Son to reunite his people ([Eph 1:3-10](#)). Evans

interpreted Paul in [Eph 2:13-14](#) to mean Christ's blood brings people together, as well as to God. In loving others, Christians encounter the power of the cross in human relationships on a daily basis. The power is seen, for example, when love conquers malice. Evans appeared to be moving towards a subjective atonement model when he said, "This atoning love was not exhausted at Calvary but it was set free in the energy of His Spirit to our generation through us." (Evans, 1978, pp. 130-131). The problem for Evans was that he needed a viable and acceptable atonement model as a foundation for his message.

The *Lumen Christi* model is more amenable to the love commandment of Jesus because the model is grounded in God's covenant and steadfast love ([Ps 106:45](#)). The subjective responses in Christ and his followers of faith, hope and love engendered by God's covenant, result in the objective actions of sacrifice and service. God is love ([1 John 4:16](#)), and he is good. Len Evans (1978, p. 78) said in quoting [1 John 1:7](#), "I am persuaded that 'light' is the correspondent analogy for 'love'." So, Evans would have found more fertile ground for the love message in the *Lumen Christi* atonement model. Indeed, [Rom 12:21](#) which is a key verse in *Lumen Christi*, features in Evan's "Love List" of Scripture passages supporting the love commandment (Evans, 1978, pp. 137-142).

The Father openly declared his love for the Son at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration and there is no reason to suggest this ever changed. Love is not even conditional on obedience. This is seen in examples of human sin where relatives of imprisoned criminals continue to love, visit and support the offender in spite of their crimes. Likewise, God the Father would not have stopped loving God the Son for a moment, even if Jesus was in some way associated with human sin.

The Son shared the Father's vision to save humanity. The crucifixion was the work of humanity, and no one should



suggest that God was responsible for its violence. Peter told the crowd assembled on the day of Pentecost that they were to blame for Jesus' crucifixion ([Acts 2:23](#)). God did not need the crucifixion of Jesus to save his people. The enemy contrived the circumstances to coerce Jesus into either exploiting his relationship with his Father or else endure the shame and agony of execution. Jesus sacrificed himself because he loved people and trusted his Father to redeem them. God showed restraint in allowing this injustice to pass because of his love for the world. The Father's love for the Son impelled him to overcome the evil of the crucifixion by raising and exalting Jesus. Thus, the cross displays God's love for both his Son and humanity.

But it was more than a display. The message about the cross is the power of God to those who are being saved ([1 Cor 1:18](#)). Light shines in the darkness and good overcomes evil, but punishment does not overcome sin. The wages of sin is still death. The Father's love for Jesus and his followers caused him to respond to the sin against Christ by exalting him to the highest place from where Jesus prays to God to save his friends. God's covenant of love drives the *Lumen Christi* model. The people of the covenant are citizens of God's kingdom, a kingdom characterised by God's attributes of grace and love.

The apostle John understood the passion of Christ as an expression of love. In [1 John 3:16](#) he said, "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another." John's conclusion that Christians ought to live the same way implies self-sacrifice in itself does not pay for sins. Jesus' life of obedience revealed to the world that God is love. Christ gave himself as an atoning sacrifice because of love ([1 John 4:10](#)), not retribution.

Believers living by Jesus' love message provide compelling evidence of the gospel's power to transform lives and build relationships. If the mark of a Christian is love ([John 13:34-35](#))

as taught by church discipleship courses, no part of Christian theology, including that of the atonement, should diminish this truth. Faith in Jesus brings people into God's kingdom, and the sanctified life of love for others characterises life in God's kingdom. Participation in Christ by faith does not of itself get one saved. It is a precondition for salvation, which is by grace alone, through Christ alone. The purpose of salvation is to restore relationships, both horizontal and vertical.

Len Evans showed that Jesus' love message is pervasive in Scripture. He knew it should be supported by atonement theology but he did not find that support. As Bubeck (2013, p. 54) wrote of atonement, "It's not so much a matter of appeasing an angry God as restoring within us the capacity to love." The *Lumen Christi* model is grounded in the love message of Jesus where light overcoming darkness ([John 1:5](#)) corresponds to love overcoming a multitude of sins ([1 Pet 4:8](#)).

## **The Love and the Wrath of God**

There is a reluctance amongst some Christians to wholeheartedly embrace Jesus' love message because they are unwilling to let go of an overly literal interpretation of the wrath of God in Scripture. But the Lord would not want his children to relate to him through fear.

Tony Lane (2001, pp. 138-139), contrariwise, thought the church in the west has a sentimental idea of the love of God and is quiet regarding God's wrath, which he considers rightly coheres with the empirical reality of a world full of suffering. Love and wrath are often thought of as opposites, but Lane proposed the opposite of love is indifference (p. 159). So, he conjectured that God's wrath is an aspect of God's love. But, it is inconceivable that God would destroy people out of his love for them.

The agape love of God is selfless. Len Evans maintained that the opposite of agape love is not hatred or indifference, but selfishness. Of course, human selfishness may result in hatred and violence. Wrath as an emotion is only attributed to God from the perspective of a sinful person. God is love by nature. “God’s wrath” is the experience of sinful humanity when evil disrupts and damages a creation intended as God’s home with his family.

We should not pit the attributes of God against each other. God’s holiness and love are not opposed to one another or part of a hierarchy of attributes. Although God’s holiness keeps human sinfulness at a distance, God’s love reaches out to save sinners. So, the love of God, and hence the love commandment, is indeed germane to the atonement. The traditional atonement theories are all deficient in not giving priority to the love of God.

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## 9. Debrief

### The Core Issues Revisited

Now we return to the key issues of atonement listed in Chapter 3 and compare them to the *Lumen Christi* model.

#### a) Human responsibility for sin.

Responsibility implies the freedom to choose to do otherwise. Sin occurs because of humanity's failure to trust in God. Christ, who will one day judge the world, holds human beings responsible for their sins. But being guilty of sin does not bar one from forgiveness and sinners are free to repent and believe in Jesus. By the grace of God, they are also free from the burden of trying to win God's approval.

#### b) Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

Christ's forgiveness operates on a different plane to God's reconciling action. Jesus forgave sins prior to his death on the cross as well as subsequently. But God's holiness illuminates and eliminates the darkness of any evil that comes into his

presence. Forgiveness, by itself, is insufficient to save sinners from destruction. But Christ, as mediator, reconciles his friends with God.

**c) Justice and Punishment.**

Good overcoming evil enacts justice in God's kingdom. People die because of sin, but God raises Christians to righteousness. Paul says in [Romans 1:32](#) that the godless deserve to die. Even if Paul was putting his opponents view, most Christians believe this. The punishment for, or consequence of, sin is death ([Prov 1:18](#)) and ultimately, separation from God. Scripture speaks of two deaths ([Rev 2:11](#)). Christians raised from death to righteousness need not fear the second death.

**d) Sacrifice.**

The Son of God's incarnation into human form was, itself, a sacrifice. The Son emptied himself of his divine powers and humbled himself, becoming obedient to God the Father ([Phil 2:7-8](#)). Christ's crucifixion was the lowest ebb in the sinful world's rebellion against the Son of God. Jesus responded by submitting to crucifixion instead of calling upon his Father to send twelve legions of angels to rescue him. This was indeed a great sacrifice.

**e) Righteousness.**

Righteousness is an eagerly awaited characteristic of citizens of God's kingdom. Christians in this world, even though they are sinful, are God's representatives whose guilt and shame has been dealt with. After death, God gives Christians a spiritual body of righteousness and they live in heaven without sin. At the final judgement, Jesus gives them a new physical body to live in righteousness on the renewed earth.

**f) God's goodness and mercy have equal priority with his**

## **holiness and majesty.**

Justice and mercy are not opposing attributes of God. God's love for his people requires justice for them. The holiness of God will not allow evil to persist in his creation forever. God's compassion at humanity's predicament motivates him to restore holiness to them. Christians will eventually enjoy an abundant life free from sin, guilt and shame. By this means, God establishes justice and peace.

## **g) Evil in nature and in the angelic realm.**

In the fullness of time, God's patience with the evil infecting his creation will come to an end and Christ will return to eradicate evil. The Spirit's presence with his people ensures their ultimate well-being. Christ's exaltation included the authority to restore creation as a fitting place for God's people to inhabit. The renewed world will be immersed in God and, therefore, free from fallen angels, natural disasters and suffering.

## **Meeting the Criteria**

The *Lumen Christi* model meets the criteria given in Chapter 1 for a good atonement theory. Here is a brief review of the requirements.

### **1. Does this explanation enhance the preaching of the gospel?**

*Lumen Christi* lends itself to preaching with no need to explain difficult concepts such as "imputation" or "expiation". The model can be used in both western and eastern cultures. The logical expressions used in Chapter 4 might cause concern that this approach is too academic to be useful in proclaiming the gospel. But a sermon from this model does not proclaim the tools of critical reasoning. The mechanics of the model remain in the background. Christ saves those who believe in him, not those who excel in critical reasoning.

Jesus instructed his disciples to proclaim the good news that the kingdom of God is near ([Matt 10:7](#)). Atonement theories are vital to Christian teaching. God's goodness and grace shine through the story of his reconciliation with sinners who place their faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel is more than a story or a message. It proclaims the power of the Holy Spirit to reconcile people to God. The indwelling Spirit makes communion between fellow believers integral to life in Christ. Christianity applies the love message of Jesus to all human relationships. The new covenant in his blood celebrates the love commandment.

## **2. Does the model accord with the full range of Bible teaching?**

The *Lumen Christi* model finds support from Scripture. It encompasses such biblical imagery as sacrifice, the offering of self in love, the fight against evil, and forgiveness for sins as displayed in Jesus' life and in his death on the cross. The model explains Christ's use of Old Testament concepts in his teaching. Self-sacrifice as the giving of one's best, which in an ancient agricultural society meant the best of one's flock or crop. The important difference between Cain and Abel's sacrifices was Abel gave his best. God did not want an animal's blood or someone's violent death. The Old Testament sacrificial system foreshadowed God's overcoming evil with good through Christ's sacrifice.

## **3. Is it consistent with the good, gracious, holy and merciful nature of God?**

Atonement models should not cast any aspersions on the goodness of God. Sinners bring "punishment" upon themselves, where punishment is the inevitable result of sin. God is under no obligation to save anyone, but he would not have gone ahead with creation unless he had a vision for what



it should be like. This vision is expressed in the covenant of God that undergirds the atonement.

God is the Lord. He is good, and he is holy. *Lumen Christi* supports these and does not suggest that God accepts evil or indulges in any activity that is vindictive or arises from insecurity. Saying God is not answerable to anyone and does not have to comply with his own commands makes out that God's laws are arbitrary. God's law is an expression of his character. Furthermore, the plan of salvation involves all three persons of the Godhead without playing off one against another.

#### **4. Does it encourage Christ-like behaviour in Christians?**

*Lumen Christi* stresses the relationship between Christ and his followers for, through Christ's forgiveness and their response of repentance and faith, people enjoy communion with God. The guiding principle for Christian behaviour is Christ's teaching of the love commandment but not understood as an external rule to decide how to live (as in situation ethics). Instead, the indwelling Holy Spirit guides the Christian. Unlike the Pharisaic insistence of obedience to the letter of the law, Jesus acts in love and mercy for people.

Christians are free to enjoy following Christ without the burden of trying to prove they are God's people. Sanctification is freedom in the Spirit and not a process people endure as if God is dealing with them. The aim of sanctification is not to become righteous, appease God or earn forgiveness, but to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in unleashing God's love in the world. God's people can live in the freedom of the Spirit ([2 Cor 3:17](#)).

#### **5. Is the model coherent, reasonable, and ethical?**

*Lumen Christi* includes the truths found in the traditional theories but links them into a coherent logical framework. At

the cross, Jesus won the victory over Satan, sacrificed his life for sinners and displayed the love of God. The atonement logic set out in Chapter 4 displays the reasonableness of this central Christian doctrine and avoids the moral difficulties of the traditional theories. Faith is not merely the acceptance of certain doctrines, but a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as a friend.

## **6. Does it support ecumenism and include the truths found in the churches' historical atonement teaching?**

The *Lumen Christi* model is ecumenical. Evangelicals will welcome the model's reliance on Scripture while Progressive Christians will appreciate the concern with ethics and reasonableness. This model can help promote unity in a Christendom divided by systematic theologies. The atonement is at the centre of systematic theology. Each of the atonement traditions has developed its own systematic theologies supporting the misconceptions of their soteriology. As a result, each denomination questions the authenticity of the others. The *Lumen Christi* model calls the traditional theories into question and seeks to unite the church by embracing the truth in each tradition. If the traditional atonement theories do not satisfy all the criteria listed here, why not re-evaluate them? The church needs a better alternative.

The proposed model does not reject the valid concerns and truths of the traditional theories. It does not see people as contributing to their salvation. Even a believer's faith only yields communion with Christ. It is Christ who saves them. The Holy Spirit's transformative role in the life of the Christian is a gift of Christ for his people. Christ, through his righteousness, establishes justice by overcoming the evil in this world.

*Lumen Christi* employs the Catholic Church's teaching that God imparts righteousness to the believer, except it locates

righteousness in the Holy Spirit. Total holiness for mortals awaits the resurrection.

The model retains the Reformed churches' pivotal doctrine of justification by faith, but with a new direction.

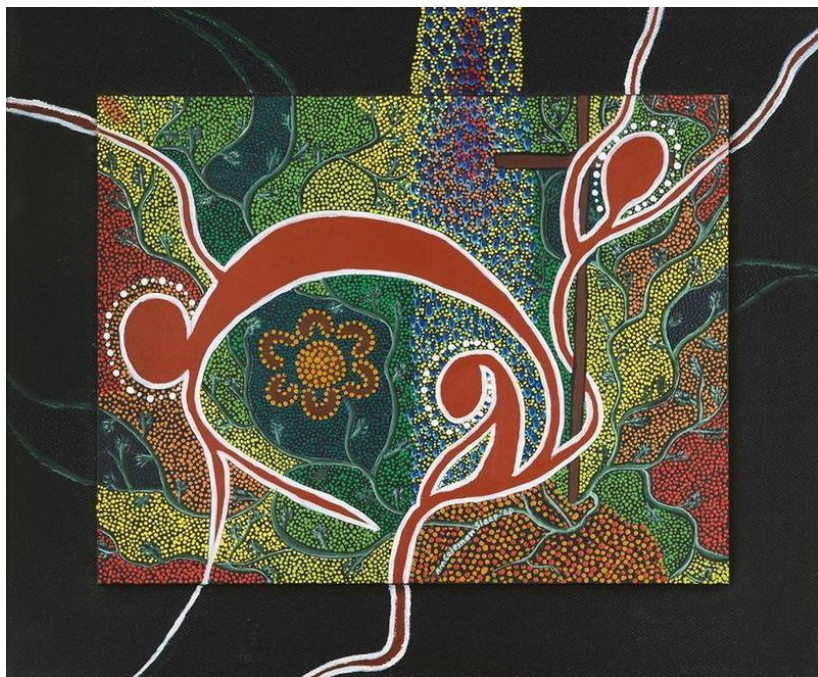
Those Protestant churches working towards bringing God's kingdom into the world will appreciate the model's broadening of atonement to include the repair of all the damage done to the world by sin.

The Orthodox Church's teaching about the Christian's goal of union with God resonates with this model's hope of sharing in the glory of Christ ([1 Pet 5:1](#)). Christians participate in the glory of God through Christ: "For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([2 Thess 2:14](#)).

The model recognises Charismatic/Pentecostal churches' concern that the Holy Spirit empowers the life of the church and individuals.

Ecumenism is not optional for the church. Theologians need to be mindful of how their work impacts on church unity.

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## 10. Summation

The *Lumen Christi* model, meets my criteria for an acceptable atonement theory, engages with all the key issues and avoids the objections to the traditional theories. Its understanding of how Jesus' death on the cross relates to salvation affirms God's goodness and sovereignty.

### **Distinctive Features.**

*Lumen Christi* is a multifaceted model which, unlike other such approaches, does not combine discordant theories. Instead, it applies a range of scriptural principles to their respective situations. This makes it difficult to come up with a concise description covering the model's many features.

However, a problem with the historical theories is their being too simplistic to encompass the complexities of the atonement. So, where the traditional theories focus on defeating Satan, or appeasing God's honour, or obtaining justice or transforming lives, *Lumen Christi* aims at achieving atonement in every aspect of a creation damaged by evil. The light of Christ dispels darkness, attracts sinners to the Saviour, and reveals the children of God. The model's distinctive features are summarised as follows.

1. The covenant of God (I will be their God and they shall be my people) is a metaphor for the relationship with God that conveys the love, goodness and sovereignty of God and drives the atonement.
2. God repairs every part of creation damaged by sin including:
  - Alienation of creation and people from God;
  - Damaged interpersonal relationships;
  - Unrighteousness and injustice;
  - Lost holiness;
  - Human slavery to sin;
  - Environmental damage.
3. God proceeds towards his goal of atonement through the Old Covenant, New Covenant and consummation phases of God's plan.
4. Justice, in God's hands, is restorative rather than punitive (as humanity uses punishment) and includes both justification and sanctification.
5. Good overcomes or displaces evil as light dispels darkness and love overcomes sins. God the Father exalted Christ and saves the people Christ sacrificed

his life for in order to overcome the evil of the cross and the sins of believers.

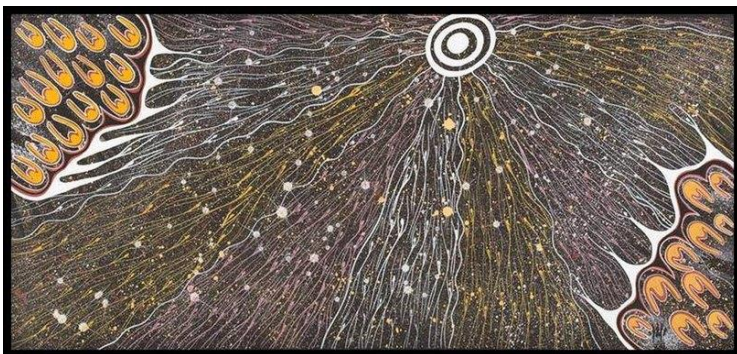
6. God the Father did not turn against Jesus on the cross. There was no break in communion.
7. Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and return are all significant events in God's project of achieving atonement.
8. Christ's forgiveness of sinners does not of itself imply God's reconciliation with sinners. God raises to righteousness those sinners who are in communion with Christ.
9. Christ's mediatorial role in salvation signifies that sinners do not contribute to their salvation.

## Conclusion

Although it seems to me that *Lumen Christi* is a sound model, the certainty of proof is elusive. But regardless of whether the church finds the proposed model convincing, I hope it will at least contribute to advancing soteriology. Churches cling to the traditional theories despite their well-known flaws because of the lack of a coherent alternative. Therefore, I submit the *Lumen Christi* model to the church for consideration as a viable option and ask the church's theologians to continue its development.

**The End**

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## Appendix:

### Preaching the Gospel

Most church members will not notice if church preaching adopts the *Lumen Christi* model. They may experience relief from emotional manipulation and guilt from thinking they added to Christ's sufferings. God is achieving atonement because of his reconciling love. God does not desire a violent sacrifice. Below are two examples of my preaching from the *Lumen Christi* perspective. The first one is an evangelistic talk and the second a Palm Sunday address. The Bible references anchor the talk in Scripture but are not intended to be read aloud. I hope my attempts at humour are not too off-putting.

### Know Who You Are

#### (Bible Reading: John 14:1-7)

Hello, I'm Derek Thompson. My talk's title is "Know who you are." It is important to know who you are. If you don't remember who you are, you can't introduce yourself. But knowing who you are is more than choosing the right name tag to wear. Names can have significant meanings. My surname,

Thompson, suggests that my family heritage is Jewish descending from a son of Thomas. So, I take it, I'm related to the Apostle Thomas. Please don't be envious if you aren't related to someone in the Bible. My great, great, great uncle Thomas features prominently in this talk.

If I told you I am well acquainted with someone, you would expect me to know the person's name. Moses asked God his name so he could tell Israel who had sent him. A voice from a burning bush replied, "I am who I am" ([Exod 3:14](#)). Theologians, looking for a deep meaning, say this means that God is the self-existent one. While true enough for God, he once said to me "You are who you are." Now I'm certainly not self-existent. I depend on God, the Government, my family, and many others, but God was saying he made me with a unique personality. He was telling me to stop looking at the lives of other people and trying to copy them. God has made each one of us unique. Our individuality is important. Only you can be you. You are who you are.

Since us humans are so valuable, well some of us are, our identity is in danger of being stolen. Identity theft is not just a problem for our bank accounts. [John 10:10](#) says, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life. And have it abundantly." Identity theft can be a matter of life and death because independence from God is separation from our source of life. God says he will not allow evil to blight his creation forever. One day, Jesus will return to destroy evil and that will include people who reject his efforts at saving them. So, the devil steals our identities and we need to get them back.

Christians identify with Christ for salvation. The Apostle Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" ([Gal 2:20](#)). Paul was not saying he no longer had his own



unique personality, but for salvation he depended on Christ. How does a relationship with Christ save us?

A demonised man once said to Jesus, “I know who you are, the Holy One of God” ([Luke 4:34](#)). Jesus knew who he was and didn’t need a demon to tell him. On the night Judas betrayed him, Jesus prepared his disciples for the ordeal to come. Jesus told them he would go on ahead of them to prepare a place for them in heaven. It was then that my great, great, great uncle Thomas asked where Jesus was going so he could follow. Sounds a reasonable question to me. Jesus’ reply pointed Thomas to who Jesus is as the answer to where he was going. [John 14:6-7](#) says,

Jesus said to him [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

In verse 6, Jesus says three things about himself:

- [1] he is the way,
- [2] the truth, and
- [3] the life.

Jesus said these imply: “No one comes to the Father except through me.” And then Jesus claimed equality with God the Father – if you know me, you know the Father (see also [Phil 2:6](#)).

Thomas was the first person to grasp the implication of Jesus’ resurrection when he worshipped Jesus saying “**My Lord and my God!**” ([John 20:28](#)). So, what did Thomas understand from pondering Jesus’ reply to him that caused him to make this discovery? And note, Jesus accepted his worship. John also agreed that Jesus is God, since he included this in his gospel. Peter was present and heard Thomas’s exclamation. He accepted it as true, for he wrote in 2 Peter 1:1 “To those who

have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of **our God and Saviour** Jesus Christ.”

Jesus taught in ways that required his listeners to grapple with spiritual truths. His parables are a good example. Thomas, by this time, was trained to look for the spiritual meaning in Jesus’ teaching. Let’s follow the thought process of Thomas as he meditated on what Jesus meant when he said he is the way, and the truth, and the life.

## 1. The Way

What did Jesus mean by calling himself “the way?” Calling a person “the way” sounds odd. You wouldn’t confuse a person with a direction sign. Jesus didn’t say, “walk this way if you want to be right with God.” Obedience to God’s law does not get sinners saved.

How is Jesus the way to anywhere? Does our faith in Jesus get us to heaven? Wouldn’t that mean our faith is the way? [Eph 2:8](#) says God saves us *by grace through* faith, not *by* faith.

Our faith does not save us. Nothing *we do* saves us. Neither what we say, nor what we do, makes us right with God. Our sound doctrine does not save us. God doesn’t inspect our brains to make sure our memory holds all the essential doctrines. We aren’t saved *by* our faith, our ideas, my good looks, or your good works, no matter how self-sacrificing they are; not our repentance or humility or confession of sin or prayer of commitment. Nothing about us, or what we do, saves us. Someone praying over you at church does not save you. Have I hammered this point enough? Sinners cannot make themselves right with God. Does that sound too extreme? Am I really saying we have no part in our salvation? That is exactly what I am saying. However, the friends we keep is our business. Jesus can save us. We can’t save ourselves, but Jesus came to save us.

In our everyday lives, we sometimes get let down. The doctors can't always heal us. In the end, we all die. We might not receive justice during this life. Friends and even relatives turn away from us. Such failures make us reluctant to place our lives in another person's hands, even when that person is God in the form of Jesus. Jesus lived in this evil world and knows very well what it's like. He persevered sinless to the end of his life even withstanding the temptations to come down from the cross and prove who he was, and still is.

Jesus won the victory over evil by defeating it with good. Paul taught that you overcome evil with good ([Rom 12:21](#)). Jesus is a man of integrity. The light of the world, as Jesus called himself ([John 8:12](#)), overcame the darkness of this present age. God raised Jesus up and exalted him to the highest place guaranteeing the salvation of everyone Jesus died for. God will raise from the dead, everyone who is a friend of Jesus. Not only that, he will raise them up in *righteousness*. God wouldn't raise you up as a sinner, would he? No. When God raises you to new life, it will be a life without sin, you will be pure you, one of a kind, it's no wonder the angels celebrate when someone repents and believes the gospel ([Luke 15:10](#)).

Of course, Christians don't get all the benefits of salvation immediately after signing up. Disease and suffering are still hazards. We continue to sin. But we can enjoy many of the blessings of atonement today. God often heals the sick, frees people from addictions, and transforms lives. And *every* Christian has the hope of resurrection to wholeness and righteousness. God will even renew the Earth and end natural disasters.

Christ is the assurance of our salvation because he has won it for us. We don't congratulate ourselves for eating food each day to stay alive. Jesus called himself the bread of life (John 6:32-51). We feed on him by faith but *he* is the one who

saves us. Jesus is the light of the world. He calls everyone out of darkness into his marvellous light ([1 Pet 2:9](#)).

Placing one's faith in Jesus is a smart move. But salvation is not something God gives you in return for your faith. Your salvation is God's gift to Jesus.

People cannot get right with God through a one-time historical event, even Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus, himself, is the way to God because he came to save us. He was obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross, to save God's people. When Moses and Elijah met with Jesus on the mount of his transfiguration, they encouraged him to complete the course (Matt 17:1-8 and Mark 9:2-8). The salvation of the righteous Israelites who lived prior to Christ depended upon *Jesus'* faithfulness.

## 2. The Truth

Now let's look at Jesus' second claim, "I am... the truth". Identifying as "the truth" sounds as strange as calling yourself "the way." "What is truth" and "who is truth" are very different questions. If truth is a person, you can relate to him, go to lunch and have a chat. But, if truth is not personal, it becomes a reasoning tool, a weapon or a principle to win arguments. Dogmatic people, such as the Pharisees, think they have a corner on truth. Truth is not a possession or, a mere idea that conforms to reality, as the dictionary defines it. A human, let alone a sinner, can never understand reality as God does. And sin corrupts everything, including our understanding of truth. That is why truth is so elusive to us. We need to find truth in Jesus.

When Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" ([John 18:38](#)), truth was standing right in front of him, but Pilate was spiritually dead. Jesus could not give Pilate an answer he would accept. As Jesus said to his disciples regarding his

parables ([Matt 13:15](#)), those who resist God become ever more blind and deaf of spirit. They make themselves incapable of receiving Jesus, who wants to save them. The human spirit apprehends truth, not our intellect. Jesus is the truth. It is only as we relate to Jesus that we escape pride and self-delusion. This is why Jesus taught in the beatitudes that the humble will inherit the earth and live in God's kingdom.

Jesus commanded us to love one another and leave up to God the judgement of who is acceptable before God. Determining who is saved and who is not is beyond us. Our sin deceives us. But Jesus brings fire and division upon earth ([Luke 12:49-51](#)). Judgement is Jesus' work. He knows his friends and he told them they are free from the burden of determining right and wrong, blame and guilt, and who you will forgive and who you will condemn. The Holy Spirit, who Paul calls the "Spirit of Christ" (e.g. [Rom 8:9](#)), has come to lead God's people in truth ([John 16:13](#)).

### 3. The Life

Jesus' third claim is that he is "the life". When we are enjoying ourselves, we say "this is the life!" But sometimes life isn't pleasant. Even Christ went through difficult times. Knowing you have God's approval gives us hope in hard times. God encouraged Jesus at the start of his ministry, saying "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." ([Matt 3:17](#)). Again, on the mountain of Jesus' transfiguration, God encouraged him saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved" ([Matt 17:5](#)). Jesus was strengthened by God. The Father's affirmation motivated Jesus throughout his ministry, a ministry that culminated in the sacrifice of his life. Knowing God loves us, empowers a life of sacrificial service. As Paul said, "If God is for us, who is against us?" ([Rom 8:31b](#)). Even death could not hold Jesus or, because of Jesus, hold us down.

Thomas witnessed Jesus raising people from the dead. Only a week before the Last Supper, Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb. When Jesus determined to go to Lazarus, who lived at Bethany near Jerusalem, Thomas realised the risk of the authorities arresting Jesus. Thomas said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” ([John 11:16](#)). Thomas witnessed Lazarus’ resurrection and was committed to following Jesus.

So why did Thomas doubt that Jesus, himself, had risen from the dead? Well, no one had raised themselves from the dead before. Thomas might have thought the disciples only met Jesus’ ghost in the upper room? So, he wanted to touch Jesus’ body and wounds to be sure it was Jesus in the flesh, and that he was raised physically ([John 20:25](#)). Jesus claimed to have power to lay down his life and take it up again ([John 10:17-18](#)), but this put Jesus on a higher level than any of the prophets. Since all life originates from God, it meant that Jesus has life in himself. People don’t uphold their own existence. So, Jesus’ resurrection implied his divinity ([Rom 1:4](#)). The Sanhedrin convicted Jesus of blasphemy, but God vindicated him. For a good Jew like Thomas, who believed that the Lord is one and there is no other god ([Isa 45:21-22](#)), this was difficult to accept.

A week after his resurrection, Jesus appeared in the upper room to his disciples, and Thomas was with them this time. Jesus “said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’” ([John 20:27](#)). For, Thomas this proved that Jesus is God in human form, to use the phrase of Paul in [Phil 2:7](#).

People cannot survive in alienation from God, because God upholds all life. Christ is God come in the flesh. But Christ’s divinity did not make crucifixion any easier for him to endure. Sure, he knew he could take back his life afterwards. But Jesus was also human. The devil used fear and terror tactics to coerce Jesus to avoid the cross. The darkness that filled the land

during the crucifixion was a device of the devil. It was not God turning his back on his Son as some have suggested. When Jesus quoted the first line of Ps 22 saying “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” ([Ps 22:1](#)), he was referencing the whole Psalm. Jesus took the devil’s insinuation and through it back in his face because [Ps 22:24](#) affirms of God “he did not hide his face from me”.

The devil tempted Jesus to exploit his divinity in order to escape crucifixion. But Jesus already rejected that path at the start of his ministry when the devil tempted him in the wilderness. As the Apostle John said of Christ, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” ([John 1:5](#)). The light of the world, which is the love of God, revealed the devil’s lies and the sins of those putting him to death.

Our mortal lives are plagued by the prospect of death. But Christ gave us the hope of life everlasting. Jesus is the resurrection and the life ([John 11:25](#)). Jesus said he is the life because he is the source of all life, he gives eternal life to all who believe in him. If you want to live life to the full and for your life to be everlasting, for your life to rise above mediocrity and mortality, find that life in Jesus.

## **The Only Way**

Jesus could have added more things to the list of the way, the truth and the life. Why? Because sin has affected, or rather, infected, every part of creation. Jesus could have added that he is justice, restorer of the world, healer of sickness, our daily bread, the door, and so on, but his time was short. Jesus came to atone for sin. He restored communion with God; exposed the delusion of sin and restored truth. He overcame death and promised resurrection to his followers.

Jesus concluded by saying, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” Today, that doesn’t sound very tolerant. In our multi-cultural, multi-faith society, tolerance is an asset in getting along with one another. But tolerance of people and respecting their right to their own beliefs is different from accepting their beliefs as true. Jesus is saying that other ways are false. Trying to be tolerant of poison can lead to death. So, proclaiming the truth is not intolerant or arrogant but a duty of care. God wants people to hear the truth. Of course, we should be respectful of others when telling them the good news about Jesus.

Here is some more good news: Jesus said, “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” ([John 8:36](#)). Jesus frees us from many things, but here Jesus is talking to the Pharisees. They needed to be free of dogmatism and legalism. These are sins that place too high a value on our own thoughts and actions. Thinking we are better than others is itself a sin. We can’t even justify ourselves before God, so our attitude to others should be one of respect. We are all in the same boat. But tolerance has its limits. Look at it from God’s point of view. Would you like to be tolerated? God wants our love. Don’t you want to be accepted, not just tolerated?

If your name is written in Jesus’ address book, which the Bible calls the Lamb’s book of life ([Rev 21:27](#)), God will save you. How do we get our name in Jesus’ address book? The resurrection and the exaltation of Jesus prove God’s acceptance of Jesus’ sacrifice for us. So certain is this acceptance that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to live with Christians while we are still sinners living in a sinful world. Once we get to know the Spirit of Christ, we do not have to doubt God’s existence or that we aren’t saved. We can relate to the Holy Spirit every day. Jesus has saved us. We know our names are in his address book.



God does not seek vengeance on anyone because of their sins, but he wants to reconcile with sinners. God is love and God is good. He does not want the death of anyone ([Ezek 18:32](#)) and that includes his Son. Jesus was put to death by his enemies. God intervened and rose Jesus from the dead and exalted him, giving Jesus the name above all names ([Phil 2:9](#)). The truth that Paul declared, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” ([Rom 12:21](#)) was applied by God when he overcame the wickedness of Christ’s crucifixion with the good of raising Jesus to glory. The Father gave the Son authority over his kingdom and rewarded him with everyone Jesus died to save.

Jesus said to Thomas, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” Jesus spoke this to his disciples. He did not intend them to use this statement to judge other people. Jesus does not encourage dogmatism or intolerance but asks his disciples to reach out to others in love. There is no other way, or truth, or life, and no other God. For Thomas, Jesus’ resurrection confirmed who Jesus is. John must have agreed because he has included this story in his gospel. Peter was present, and he also agreed with Thomas because he wrote in [2 Pet 1:1](#) that Jesus is our “God and Saviour”.

## **Do You Know Who You Are?**

Now let’s return to the question: “Do you know who you are?” No-one I know claims to be perfect. Everyone admits to being sinful. Christians like to add, they are sinners saved by Jesus. We are all heading towards destruction unless Jesus rescues us. God loves us, he doesn’t want anyone to be destroyed. The Son of God came into the world to save people. Jesus wants to be your friend. He forgives you. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” ([Matt 11:28](#)). You can be right with God.

St Paul confirmed in the Bible that Jesus is God in human form. So, the first Christmas was indeed a momentous occasion, the Son of God became one of us. Why would the Son of God take on human form? His incarnation was permanent, not just for 30 years. Jesus today is still God in human form living in heaven. God's love endures forever. The Bible puts it this way: "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end" ([Lam 3:22](#)). God said in his covenant that he will always be God to you. He will never fail you.

**God couldn't possibly love you any more than he already does.** When God said that to me, I thought, "Is that biblical?" The Holy Spirit rolled his eyes and said "[John 3:16](#)". "God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." God couldn't possibly love you any more than that. He gave his only Son. Did you know that each of us is God's favourite? There is only one of you. You are one of a kind. You are God's favourite you.

Don't confuse God having favourites with favouritism, which is being unfair to those not favoured. We don't compete against each other to win God's favour. John, in his Gospel, refers to himself as the disciple who Jesus loved (John 13:23; [21:20](#)). We might suspect John of thinking too highly of himself as being Jesus' special friend as if Jesus loved John more than the others. But no, Jesus makes everyone feel like that. We are all important to him. You are unique. Jesus greatly values you. We can all say we are a disciple who Jesus loves.

Jesus said he is the way, the truth, the life, and the Saviour of God's people. No one is self-sufficient before God. We all depend on the Son of God, for our very existence. The Father saves everyone who believes in Jesus because Jesus sacrificed his life for them, and the Father will not allow his Son's sacrifice to be in vain. Why would anyone want to turn away

from such a good and gracious God and stay on a path leading to destruction? In our pride, we fancy we can live apart from God and we choose to go our own way. But Jesus said the meek enjoy living in God's presence. The proud have their day, but they will not blemish God's creation forever.

*You* can be a friend of Christ or a stranger to him. The Bible calls Christians citizens of God's kingdom. Christians are dual citizens. The Holy Spirit dwells with Christ's friends. So, we represent Christ on earth and we invite everyone to join us in the kingdom of God. The Father knows who are the friends of his Son. God knows and loves each one of the citizens of his kingdom. God calls his people "the apple of his eye" ([Deut 32:10](#); [Zech 2:8](#)).

Do you know who you are? Those who accept the delusion of independence risk missing friendship with God. The gospel is not only about our future destination. God cares about us now. He takes our individuality and makes it shine *in Christ*, not apart from him. Jesus wants you as a friend. Introduce yourself to him. God has a destiny of purpose and fulfilment for you. Walk in it. Know who you are, a person loved by God, the person God has destined you to be.

James said, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" ([Jas 4:8a](#)). God is not withholding your destiny from you. That is the lie of the devil. This world may have been unkind to you but God is never unkind to his children. God is good and he is good towards you. If anyone asks you who you are, you can say like John, "I am loved by God," it is true. Let us draw near to him now in prayer.

## **Prayer of Engagement with God**

Heavenly Father, hear our prayer. We come to you in repentance of our sins, in awe of who you are, Almighty God, and we come in gratitude that you would send your Son for us.

Forgive us, Jesus. Grant us your salvation. We want to be friends with you, our Creator and our Redeemer. Thank you for loving us so much that you would give your life on the cross for us. We commit ourselves to you as our Lord and Saviour.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and all your people so that we might proclaim in word and deeds your mighty acts in calling us out of darkness into your marvellous light ([1 Pet 2:9](#)). **Amen.**

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## Scripture Index

### References to the Covenant of God in Scripture

Gen 17:7-9; Ex 6:7, 19:5, 29:45-46; Lev 26:12; Ps 48:14;  
Ps 95:7; Isa 51:16; 59:21; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1 &  
33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 34:30-31; 36:26-28; 37:23 & 27;  
Hosea 2:23; Zech 2:11; 8:8; 13:9b; John 20:17; 2 Cor 6:16 &  
18; Heb 8:10; 1 Pet 2:10; Rev 21:3 & 7.

### [Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 6](#).

### Genesis 1:27

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God  
he created them; male and female he created them.

### [Chapter 6](#).

**Genesis 2:9**

Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**Chapter 6.****Genesis 2:17**

“... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

**Chapter 6.****Genesis 3:4**

But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; ...”

**Chapter 6.****Genesis 5:3**

When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

**Chapter 6.**

**Genesis 6:18**

But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

**[Chapter 5.](#)**

**Genesis 15:6**

And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

**[Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 7.](#)**

**Genesis 22:13**

And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

**[Chapter 3.](#)**

**Genesis 50:20**

Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.

**[Chapter 4.](#)**

**Exodus 3:14**

God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you’.”

[Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Appendix.](#)

**Exodus 4:21**

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ...”

[Chapter 3](#)

**Exodus 7:3**

But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

[Chapter 3.](#)

**Exodus 14:4**

I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

[Chapter 3.](#)



**Exodus 14:17**

Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers.

**Chapter 3.****Exodus 29:45**

I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God.

**Chapter 4.****Exodus 33:5**

For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, and I will decide what to do to you.’”

**Chapter 4.****Exodus 34:6-7**

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

**Chapter 3.**

### **Leviticus 4:1-2**

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, saying: When anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them:

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Leviticus 6:4-5**

when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you, or the lost thing that you found, or anything else about which you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner when you realize your guilt.

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Leviticus 10:10**

You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;

### **Chapter 4.**

### **Leviticus 24:16**

One who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death.

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Numbers 14:18**

The LORD is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children to the third and the fourth generation

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Numbers 15:22**

But if you unintentionally fail to observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses—

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Numbers 15:30-31**

But whoever acts high-handedly, whether a native or an alien, affronts the LORD, and shall be cut off from among the people. Because of having despised the word of the LORD and broken his commandment, such a person shall be utterly cut off and bear the guilt.

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Numbers 15:36**

The whole congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Numbers 35:33**

You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

### **Chapter 7.**

### **Deuteronomy 21:23**

his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you for possession.

### **Chapter 5, Chapter 6.**

### **Deuteronomy 24:16**

Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Deuteronomy 31:6**

“... Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”

### **Chapter 6.**

**Deuteronomy 31:8**

“... It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

**Chapter 6.****Deuteronomy 32:9-10**

the LORD’s own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share. He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him as the apple of his eye.

**Appendix.****1 Kings 6:13**

“I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.”

**Chapter 6.****2 Chronicles 20:7**

Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham?

**Chapter 6.**

**Nehemiah 9:31**

Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

**Chapter 6.****Job 2:6**

The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.”

**Chapter 6.****Job 42:10**

And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

**Chapter 4.****Psalm 1:5-6**

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

**Chapter 4.**

**Psalm 18:11**

He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick clouds dark with water.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Psalm 22:1**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

[Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Appendix.](#)

**Psalm 22:24**

For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

[Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Appendix.](#)

**Psalm 22:28**

For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Psalm 22:29**

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Psalm 22:30-31**

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

**Chapter 6****Psalm 24:1**

The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;

**Chapter 4.****Psalm 27:1**

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

**Chapter 5.****Psalm 32:5**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

**Chapter 4 (from Expression 3),****Chapter 4 (from Expression 4).**



**Psalm 34:14**

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 2\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 9\).](#)

**Psalm 40:11-12**

Do not, O LORD, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever. For evils have encompassed me without number; my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me.

[Chapter 7.](#)

**Psalm 49:7**

Truly, no ransom avails for one's life, there is no price one can give to God for it.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Psalm 49:15**

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Psalm 50:23**

Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honour me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God.

**Chapter 3.****Psalm 74:1**

O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?

**Chapter 7.****Psalm 89:33-34**

but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

**Chapter 7.****Psalm 103:8-10**

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

**Chapter 7.**

**Psalm 106:45**

For their sake he remembered his covenant, and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

**Chapter 8.****Psalm 143:2**

Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.

**Chapter 4.****Proverbs 1:18**

yet they lie in wait—to kill themselves! and set an ambush—for their own lives!

**Chapter 9.****Proverbs 3:18**

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

**Chapter 6.****Proverbs 10:16**

The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.

**Chapter 4.**

**Proverbs 11:30**

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but violence takes lives away.

**Chapter 6.**

**Proverbs 13:12**

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

**Chapter 6.**

**Proverbs 15:4**

A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

**Chapter 6.**

**Proverbs 16:6**

By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil.

**Chapter 5**

**Proverbs 19:11**

Those with good sense are slow to anger, and it is their glory to overlook an offence.

**Chapter 4.**

**Proverbs 19:19**

A violent tempered person will pay the penalty; if you effect a rescue, you will only have to do it again.

**Chapter 4.****Ecclesiastes 3:17**

I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work.

**Chapter 4.****Ecclesiastes 7:20**

Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning.

**Chapter 4.****Isaiah 1:11**

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

**Chapter 3.**

**Isaiah 24:5**

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.

**Chapter 4.****Isaiah 41:8**

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

**Chapter6.****Isaiah 41:17**

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

**Chapter 6.****Isaiah 42:16**

I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.

**Chapter 6.**

**Isaiah 43:25**

I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

**[Chapter 6.](#)**

**Isaiah 45:21-22**

Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is no one besides me.

Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

**[Chapter 4, Appendix.](#)**

**Isaiah 53:4**

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

**[Chapter 6.](#)**

**Isaiah 53:5**

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

**[Chapter 2, Chapter 5, Chapter 6.](#)**

**Isaiah 53:6**

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[Chapter 6](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**Isaiah 53:8**

By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

[Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#).

**Isaiah 53:10**

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

[Chapter 6](#)

**Jeremiah 5:1**

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look around and take note! Search its squares and see if you can find one person who acts justly and seeks truth— so that I may pardon Jerusalem.

[Chapter 6](#).



### **Jeremiah 31:29-30**

In those days they shall no longer say: "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Jeremiah 31:33**

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

### **Chapter 4.**

### **Lamentations 3:22**

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;

### **Appendix.**

### **Ezekiel 18:20**

The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own.

### **Chapter 2, Chapter 6.**

**Ezekiel 18:29**

Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

**Chapter 1.****Ezekiel 18:32**

For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

**Chapter 2, Appendix.****Daniel 9:9**

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him,

**Chapter 4.****Hosea 6:7**

But at [like] Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

**Chapter 5.****Hosea 11:8-9**

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I

will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal,  
the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

### **Chapter 7.**

#### **Micah 6:8**

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the  
LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

### **Chapter 3, Chapter 7.**

#### **Habakkuk 2:4**

Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the  
righteous live by their faith.

### **Chapter 7.**

#### **Zechariah 2:8**

For thus said the LORD of hosts (after his glory sent me)  
regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who  
touches you touches the apple of my eye.

### **Appendix.**

#### **Zechariah 4:6**

He said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:  
Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD  
of hosts. ...”

### **Chapter 5.**

**Zechariah 13:7**

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate,” says the LORD of hosts. Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.

**Chapter 6.****Zechariah 14:20**

On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the LORD.” And the cooking pots in the house of the LORD shall be as holy as the bowls in front of the altar;

**Chapter 5.****Matthew 3:7**

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ...”

**Chapter 1.****Matthew 3:17**

And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

**Chapter 6, Appendix.**

**Matthew 4:1-2**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. [see below for following verses]

[Chapter 5, Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 4:3**

The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 4:5-6**

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 4:7**

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 4:8-9**

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he

said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

### **Chapter 6.**

#### **Matthew 4:16-17**

“the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

### **Preface, Chapter 6.**

#### **Matthew 5:12**

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **Chapter 7.**

#### **Matthew 5:44**

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

### **Chapter 8.**

#### **Matthew 6:10**

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

### **Chapter 5.**

**Matthew 6:14-15**

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 4](#).

**Matthew 6:22-23**

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

[Chapter 6](#).

**Matthew 7:11**

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**Matthew 7:13-14**

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**Matthew 9:6**

“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.”

[Chapter 3, Chapter 4 \(from Expression 5\),  
Chapter 4 \(from Conclusion ii\).](#)

**Matthew 9:13**

“... Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

[Chapter 8.](#)

**Matthew 10:7**

As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’

[Chapter 9.](#)

**Matthew 10:22**

and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

[Chapter 6.](#)



**Matthew 10:38**

and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

**Chapter 7.****Matthew 10:41**

Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous;

**Chapter 7.****Matthew 11:28**

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ...”

**Appendix.****Matthew 12:29**

Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered.

**Chapter 4.****Matthew 12:31-32**

Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will

be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

#### **Chapter 4.**

#### **Matthew 13:15**

For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn— and I would heal them.'

#### **Appendix**

#### **Matthew 16:23**

But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

#### **Chapter 6.**

#### **Matthew 16:24**

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ..."

#### **Chapter 4, Chapter 6, Chapter 7.**

#### **Matthew 17:5**

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is

my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

### **Appendix.**

#### **Matthew 18:15**

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.”

### **Chapter 4.**

#### **Matthew 18:21-22**

Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

### **Chapter 3, Chapter 4.**

#### **Matthew 19:14**

but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Matthew 20:15**

‘... Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

[Chapter 3.](#)

### **Matthew 20:28 (see also Mark 10:45)**

“... just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

[Chapter 4, Chapter 6.](#)

### **Matthew 23:12**

All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 10\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Conclusion viii\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Conclusion ix\).](#)

### **Matthew 25:34**

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ...’

[Chapter 5.](#)

**Matthew 26:31**

Then Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ ...”

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 26:39**

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”

[Chapter 1, Chapter 5, Chapter 6 \(Temptation\),](#)  
[Chapter 6 \(3. Mission\), Chapter 6 \(the will of God\).](#)

**Matthew 26:50**

Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you are here to do.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 26:52-53**

Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ...”

[Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6.](#)

**Matthew 27:40**

and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

**Chapter 6.****Matthew 27:42**

“He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. ...”

**Chapter 6.****Matthew 27:45**

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

**Chapter 6.****Matthew 27:46 (and Mark 15:34)**

And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

**Chapter 6. Chapter6(it is finished)**

**Mark 1:4**

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**[Chapter 4.](#)**

**Mark 1:8**

“I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

**[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 14\).](#)**

**[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 15\).](#)**

**[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 18\).](#)**

**Mark 1:15**

and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

**[Chapter 5.](#)**

**Mark 2:5**

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

**[Chapter 3.](#)**

### **Mark 8:31**

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Mark 8:33**

But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Mark 10:14-15**

But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Mark 10:44-45 (see also Matt 20:28)**

“... and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

### **Chapter 5 (The Covenant of God),**

### **Chapter 5 (Justice).**



**Mark 11:22-23**

Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.”

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**Mark 11:25**

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

[Chapter 4](#).

**Mark 12:1-11**

[Chapter 6](#).

**Mark 15:32**

“... Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

[Chapter 6](#).

### **Mark 15:34 (and Matt 27:46)**

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Mark 16:15-16**

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptised will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ..."

### **Chapter 4, Chapter 8.**

### **Luke 1:33**

"... He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

### **Chapter 5.**

### **Luke 3:38**

son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

### **Chapter 6.**

**Luke 4:2**

where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

**Chapter 6.****Luke 4:13**

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**Chapter 6.****Luke 4:34**

“Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

**Appendix.****Luke 5:20**

When he saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”

**Chapter 6.**

**Luke 6:35**

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

**Chapter 7.****Luke 6:43**

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ...”

**Chapter 8.****Luke 12:9**

but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.

**Chapter 4.****Luke 12:14**

But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?”

**Chapter 6.**

### **Luke 12:49-51**

“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!”

### **Appendix**

### **Luke 15:10**

“... Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

### **Appendix.**

### **Luke 18:16**

But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

### **Chapter 3.**

### **Luke 18:31**

Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.”

### **Chapter 3.**

**Luke 22:20**

And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

**Chapter 3.****Luke 22:31**

“Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, ...”

**Chapter 6.****Luke 22:40 (NRSV)**

When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

**Chapter 6****Luke 22:53**

“When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

**Chapter 5.**

### **Luke 23:8**

When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign.

### **[Chapter 6.](#)**

### **Luke 23:34**

[Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”] And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

### **[Chapter 4.](#)**

### **Luke 23:36-37**

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”

### **[Chapter 6.](#)**

### **Luke 23:39**

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

### **[Chapter 6 \(1. Life\), Chapter 6 \(2. Identity\).](#)**

### **Luke 23:44**

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon,

### **[Chapter 6.](#)**

**Luke 23:45**

while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

**[Chapter 4.](#)**

**Luke 23:46**

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

**[Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 6.](#)**

**Luke 24:26**

"Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

**[Chapter 1.](#)**

**John 1:1-3a**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

**[Chapter 5.](#)**



**John 1:5**

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

[Preface](#), [Chapter 6](#), [Chapter 8](#), [Appendix](#).

**John 1:12-13**

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 6](#).

**John 1:29**

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

[Chapter 1](#), [Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**John 2:19-22**

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

[Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 5](#).

**John 3:5-7**

Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’”

[Chapter 3.](#)

**John 3:16**

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 16\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 17\), Chapter 6,](#)

[Appendix.](#)

**John 3:17**

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

[Chapter 4.](#)

**John 3:36**

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**John 4:14**

“...but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

**Chapter 7.****John 5:19**

Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. ...”

**Chapter 3.****John 5:21**

Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.

**Chapter 6.****John 5:26**

For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself;

**Chapter 6.****John 6:29**

Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

**Chapter 7.**

**John 6:47**

Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.

[Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Chapter 7.](#)

**John 6:51**

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

[Chapter 6.](#)

**John 8:10-11**

Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

[Chapter 3.](#)

**John 8:12**

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

[Chapter 6, Appendix.](#)

**John 8:24**

“... I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.”

**[Chapter 8](#)****John 8:34**

Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ...”

**[Chapter 4](#)****John 8:36**

So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

**[Chapter 4, Appendix.](#)****John 8:44**

You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

**[Chapter 6](#)****John 10:10**

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

**[Chapter 6, Appendix.](#)**

**John 10:17-18**

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

[Chapter 3, Appendix.](#)

**John 10:28**

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**John 10:30**

“The Father and I are one.”

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 4\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 10\).](#)

**John 11:11**

After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.”

[Chapter 6.](#)

### **John 11:16**

Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

### **Appendix.**

### **John 11:25**

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ..."

### **Chapter 6, Appendix.**

### **John 11:49-50**

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

### **Chapter 1**

### **John 13:34-35**

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

### **Chapter 8.**

### **John 14:6-7, 9**

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me,

you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ... “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

[Chapter 1, Chapter 4, Chapter 6, Appendix.](#)

### **John 14:16**

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

[Chapter 6.](#)

### **John 15:10**

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

[Chapter 8.](#)

### **John 15:13-15**

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

[Chapter 2, Chapter 4 \(from Expression 5\),  
Chapter 4 \(Relationships\).](#)



**John 15:26**

“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ...”

**Chapter 4.****John 16:8-11**

And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

**Chapter 7.****John 16:13**

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

**Appendix****John 17:3**

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

**Chapter 6.**

**John 17:21-22**

that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,

[Chapter 4 \(Expression 6\), Chapter 4 \(Justice\).](#)

**John 18:38**

Pilate asked him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no case against him.”

[Appendix](#)

**John 19:30**

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

[Chapter 6](#)

**John 21:20**

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”

[Appendix](#)

**John 20:25**

So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

**[Appendix.](#)**

**John 20:27-28**

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

**[Appendix \(vs 28\), \[Appendix \\(vs 27\\)\]\(#\)](#)**

**Acts 2:23**

this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.

**[Chapter 8.](#)**

**Acts 2:24**

But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

**[Chapter 5.](#)**

**Acts 3:19**

Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out

**Chapter 6.****Acts 4:12**

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

**Chapter 4.****Acts 13:39**

by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

**Chapter 4.****Acts 13:46**

Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles. ...”

**Chapter 6.**

**Romans 1:4**

and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

**[Appendix.](#)**

**Romans 1:17**

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

**[Chapter 7.](#)**

**Romans 1:32**

They know God’s decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

**[Chapter 9.](#)**

**Romans 2:13**

For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

**[Chapter 7.](#)**

### **Romans 3:5**

But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

#### **[Chapter 7.](#)**

### **Romans 3:10**

as it is written: “There is no one who is righteous, not even one; ...”

#### **[Chapter 4.](#)**

### **Romans 3:21-22**

But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction,

#### **[Chapter 4, Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith\),](#) [Chapter7 \(Righteousness of God\).](#)**

### **Romans 3:24-25**

they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed;

#### **[Chapter 2 \(Section 1\), Chapter 2 \(Section 2\),](#) [Chapter 7.](#)**

**Romans 3:26**

it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

[NRSV footnote: Or “who has the faith of Jesus”]

**[Chapter 7](#)**

**Romans 3:27**

Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith.

**[Chapter 7.](#)**

**Romans 3:28**

For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

**[Chapter 7, Chapter 7 \(Justification by faith, 4th paragraph\).](#)**

**Romans 4:5**

But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

**[Chapter 7.](#)**

### **Romans 4:23-25**

Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

[Chapter 2, Chapter 5,](#)  
[Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith\),](#)  
[Chapter 7 \(\*Lumen Christi\*\).](#)

### **Romans 5:1-2**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God

[Chapter 4, Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith 1st](#)  
[paragraph\), Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith](#)  
[paragraph 10\).](#)

### **Romans 5:8-11**

But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord



Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[Chapter 2 \(Rom 5:9\), Chapter 2 \(Rom 5:8\),](#)  
[Chapter 4 \(Rom 5:10, Exp 4\),](#)  
[Chapter 4 \(Rom 5:11, Exp 6\), Chapter 4 Rom 5:10-](#)  
[11, Fig 1\), Chapter 7 \(Rom 5:9\), Chapter 7 \(Rom 5:8\).](#)

### **Romans 5:16-21**

16 And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. 17 If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19 For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Chapter 5 \(Rom 5:19\), Chapter 5 \(Rom 5:21\),](#)  
[Chapter 6, Chapter 7.](#)

## **Romans 6:1-14**

### **[Chapter 3.](#)**

## **Romans 6:5**

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

### **[Chapter 6.](#)**

## **Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **[Chapter 3,](#) [Chapter 6,](#) [Chapter 7.](#)**

## **Romans 7:4**

In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

### **[Chapter 7.](#)**

## **Romans 8:1**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

### **[Chapter 7.](#)**

### **Romans 8:2**

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

[Chapter 3.](#)

### **Romans 3:8**

And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved!

[Chapter 1, Chapter 4](#)

### **Romans 8:9-11**

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

[Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6,](#)

[Chapter 7 \(Imputed Righteousness\),](#)

[Chapter 7 \(Sanctification\), Appendix.](#)

### **Romans 8:14**

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Romans 8:21-24**

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?

[Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 6](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**Romans 8:28-29**

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.

[Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 7](#).

**Romans 8:31**

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

[Appendix](#).

### **Romans 8:33-34**

Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

[Chapter 7 \(Justification\), Chapter 7 \(Salvation\),  
Chapter 7 \(\*Lumen Christi\*\).](#)

### **Romans 9:25-26**

As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved'." "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they shall be called children of the living God."

[Chapter 6.](#)

### **Romans 11:27**

"And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

[Chapter 5.](#)

### **Romans 12:21**

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

[Preface, Chapter 4 \(from Expression 9\),  
Chapter 4 \(from Expression 10\), Chapter 8,  
Appendix \(The Way\), Appendix \(The Only Way\).](#)

**Romans 14:17**

For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[Chapter 3.](#)

**Romans 14:23**

But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

[Chapter 3, Chapter 6.](#)

**1 Corinthians 1:18**

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

[Chapter 8.](#)

**1 Corinthians 1:30**

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

[Chapter 7.](#)

**1 Corinthians 2:10**

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

[Chapter 4](#)

### **1 Corinthians 3:15-16**

If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

[Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 7](#).

### **1 Corinthians 6:11**

And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 4](#).

### **1 Corinthians 8:6**

yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

[Chapter 4](#).

### **1 Corinthians 11:7**

For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man.

[Chapter 6](#).

### **1 Corinthians 11:26**

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

#### **Chapter 4.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:20**

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

#### **Chapter 7.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:35-36**

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

#### **Chapter 4.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:42**

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.

#### **Chapter 7.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:45**

Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

#### **Chapter 7 (Introduction),**

#### **Chapter 7 (Righteousness of God).**



### **1 Corinthians 15:50**

What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

#### **Chapter 7.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:52**

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

#### **Chapter 7.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:54-56**

When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

#### **Chapter 4, Chapter 5.**

### **2 Corinthians 3:9**

For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory!

#### **Chapter 7.**

## **2 Corinthians 3:17**

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

[Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 7](#), [Chapter 9](#).

## **2 Corinthians 4:4**

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

[Chapter 6](#).

## **2 Corinthians 5:15**

And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

[Chapter 7](#).

## **2 Corinthians 5:21**

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[Chapter 7 \(The Righteousness of God\)](#),

[Chapter 7 \(The Righteousness of God final](#)

[paragraph\)](#), [Chapter 7 \(Covenant Faithfulness\)](#),

[Chapter 7 \(Imputed Righteousness\)](#).

### **Galatians 1:1**

Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

[Chapter 4, Chapter 5.](#)

### **Galatians 1:3-4**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

[Preface, Chapter 4.](#)

### **Galatians 2:16**

yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

[Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith\),](#)

[Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith 9th paragraph\).](#)

### **Galatians 2:20**

and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

[Appendix](#)

### **Galatians 2:21**

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

[Chapter 7.](#)

### **Galatians 3:1**

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified!

[Chapter 4.](#)

### **Galatians 3:10-11**

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

[Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 6,](#) [Chapter 7.](#)

### **Galatians 3:13**

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—

[Chapter 2,](#) [Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 6.](#)

**Galatians 3:22**

But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

[Chapter 3, Chapter 7](#)

**Galatians 3:24**

Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith.

[Chapter 3, Chapter 7.](#)

**Galatians 4:9**

Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again?

[Chapter 6](#)

**Galatians 5:1**

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

[Chapter 4.](#)

### **Galatians 5:4-6**

You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

[Chapter 4 \(Freedom\), Chapter 5,](#)  
[Chapter 6 \(Conduits of Life\),](#)  
[Chapter 6 \(Conduits of Life\) last paragraph,](#)  
[Chapter 6 \(Salvation\), Chapter 7 \(Justification by](#)  
[Faith\), Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith final](#)  
[paragraph\), Chapter 7 \(Human Righteousness\).](#)

### **Galatians 5:11**

But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offence of the cross has been removed.

[Chapter 4.](#)

### **Galatians 5:13**

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

[Chapter 3.](#)

### **Galatians 5:18**

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

[Chapter 4.](#)

### **Galatians 5:22-23**

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

[Chapter 8.](#)

### **Galatians 5:25**

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

[Chapter 4.](#)

### **Ephesians 1:9-10**

he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

[Chapter 3,](#) [Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 8.](#)

### **Ephesians 1:13**

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;

[Chapter 7.](#)

**Ephesians 1:18**

so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,

[Chapter 6.](#)

**Ephesians 1:20**

God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

[Chapter 4.](#)

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

[Chapter 5, Chapter 7, Appendix.](#)

**Ephesians 2:13-14**

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

[Chapter 8.](#)



### **Ephesians 2:19**

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

### **[Chapter 3.](#)**

### **Ephesians 3:5**

In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:

### **[Chapter 3.](#)**

### **Ephesians 4:18**

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.

### **[Chapter 3,](#) [Chapter 4.](#)**

### **Ephesians 4:22-24**

You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

### **[Chapter 7.](#)**

### **Ephesians 5:25-27**

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 14\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 15\), Chapter 5.](#)

### **Philippians 2:5-11**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4 \(Justice\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(Liberty\), Chapter 5,](#)

[Chapter 6 \(Temptations\),](#)

[Chapter 7 \(Imputed Righteousness\),](#)

[Chapter 7 \(Salvation\), Chapter 7 \(\*Lumen Christi\*\),](#)

[Chapter 9, Appendix \(equality with God\),](#)

[Appendix \(The Life\), Appendix \(The Only Way\).](#)

**Philippians 3:9**

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

**[Chapter 7.](#)****Philippians 3:20**

But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**[Chapter 3](#)****Colossians 1:19-20**

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

**[Chapter 5,](#) [Chapter 6.](#)****Colossians 1:25-26**

I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints.

**[Chapter 3.](#)**

**Colossians 2:2**

I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself,

**Chapter 5.****Colossians 2:9**

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

**Chapter 6.****Colossians 2:13**

And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses,

**Chapter 6 (Sin and Death).****1 Thessalonians 1:10**

and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

**Chapter 7.**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:8-9**

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

#### **[Chapter 5.](#)**

### **2 Thessalonians 1:9**

These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

#### **[Chapter 6,](#) [Chapter 7.](#)**

### **2 Thessalonians 2:14**

For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **[Chapter 9.](#)**

### **1 Timothy 2:4-5**

who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human,

#### **[Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 6.](#)**

### **1 Timothy 6:11**

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.

#### **Chapter 7.**

### **2 Timothy 2:11-13**

The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

#### **Chapter 4.**

### **2 Timothy 2:22**

Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

#### **Chapter 7.**

### **2 Timothy 4:8**

From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

#### **Chapter 7.**

**Titus 3:5-7**

he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[Chapter 7 \(Justification by Faith\),](#)

[Chapter 7 \(Human Righteousness\).](#)

**Hebrews 1:3**

He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 14\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 15\).](#)

**Hebrews 2:18**

Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

[Chapter 6.](#)

### **Hebrews 7:25**

Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

[Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 7](#).

### **Hebrews 8:6**

But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises.

[Chapter 6](#).

### **Hebrews 9:15**

For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

[Chapter 6](#).

### **Hebrews 9:22**

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

[Chapter 3](#).



**Hebrews 10:4**

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

**Chapter 3.****Hebrews 10:12**

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,”

**Chapter 7.****Hebrews 11:39-40**

Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

**Chapter 4.****Hebrews 11:6**

And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

**Chapter 6.****Hebrews 12:14**

Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

**Chapter 4.**

**Hebrews 12:22-24**

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

**[Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 6](#).**

**Hebrews 13:8**

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

**[Chapter 7](#).**

**James 1:17**

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

**[Chapter 7](#).**

**James 2:13**

For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

**[Chapter 4](#).**

**James 2:14**

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

[Chapter 5, Chapter 7 \(Jas 2:14-26\).](#)

**James 2:18**

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

[Chapter 4.](#)

**James 2:23**

Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God.

[Chapter 6.](#)

**James 2:24**

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

[Chapter 7.](#)

**James 3:17 (NASB)**

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, \*reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

\* Or *willing to yield*

**Chapter 4**

**James 4:8**

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

**Appendix.**

**James 4:10**

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

**Chapter 4 (from Expression 10),**

**Chapter 4 (from Expression 17),**

**Chapter 4 (from Expression 18), Chapter 7.**

**1 Peter 1:3-4**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

**Chapter 7.**

### **1 Peter 1:11**

inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory.

[Chapter 7.](#)

### **1 Peter 2:9**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

[Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Appendix \(The Way\),](#)  
[Appendix \(Prayer\).](#)

### **1 Peter 2:21**

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

[Chapter 2.](#)

### **1 Peter 2:24**

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

[Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 6, Chapter 7.](#)

### **1 Peter 3:9**

Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.

[Chapter 4.](#)

### **1 Peter 4:8**

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.

[Chapter 4,](#) [Chapter 8.](#)

### **1 Peter 5:1**

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you

[Chapter 9.](#)

### **1 Peter 5:6**

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.

[Chapter 3 \(The Covenant of God\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 9\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 17\),](#)

[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 18\),](#) [Chapter 7.](#)

## **2 Peter 1:1**

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ:

### **Chapter 4, Appendix.**

## **2 Peter 1:4**

Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.

### **Chapter 2.**

## **2 Peter 3:9**

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

### **Chapter 5.**

## **2 Peter 3:10**

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

### **Chapter 4.**

## **2 Peter 3:13**

But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

### **[Chapter 7.](#)**

## **1 John 1:7-8**

but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

### **[Chapter 7 \(Sanctification\), Chapter 7 \(\*Lumen Christi\*\), Chapter 8.](#)**

## **1 John 2:12**

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name.

### **[Chapter 3.](#)**

## **1 John 3:4**

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

### **[Chapter 6.](#)**



### **1 John 3:16**

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

### **[Chapter 8.](#)**

### **1 John 4:8-10**

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

### **[Chapter 3,](#) [Chapter 8.](#)**

### **1 John 4:16**

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

### **[Chapter 8,](#) [Chapter 8 \(Atonement\).](#)**

### **1 John 4:19-21**

We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

### **[Chapter 8](#)**

### **1 John 5:19**

We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one.

### **Chapter 4.**

### **Revelation 1:5b-6**

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### **Chapter 5.**

### **Revelation 2:7**

Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

### **Chapter 6.**

### **Revelation 2:11**

Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

### **Chapter 9.**

### **Revelation 21:1-4**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

[Chapter 3 \(The Central Truth\),](#)

[Chapter 3 \(Goodness, mercy and holiness\),](#)

[Chapter 3 \(Evil in Nature\), Chapter 4.](#)

### **Revelation 21:8**

"... But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death."

[Chapter 6.](#)

### **Revelation 21:27**

But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[Appendix.](#)

### **Revelation 22:1-2**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

### **[Chapter 6.](#)**

### **Revelation 22:12-14**

“See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

### **[Chapter 6, Chapter 7.](#)**

### **Revelation 22:17**

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

### **[Chapter 4 \(from Expression 5\),](#)**

### **[Chapter 4 \(from Conclusion ii\)](#)**

**Revelation 22:19**

if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

**[Chapter 6.](#)**

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## Index of Illustrations

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- Preface to Second Edition.** “Creation – Moon and Stars” by Liz Pinner, OMGS p. 64.
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## About the Author

Derek Philip Thompson was born in Hammersmith, England in 1950 and in 1957 his family immigrated to Australia. He grew up and went to school in Penrith, NSW. After studying electrical engineering at Sydney University, he worked for 34 years with NSW Public Works as an electrical engineer and project manager. It was in 1974 that he became a Christian and married Margaret. They have two daughters. After taking early retirement in 2009, Derek completed a Diploma in Theology at Charles Sturt University. Since 2005 Derek has been involved in a regional ecumenical church organisation called *Five Islands Christian Ministries* and in 2020 helped to plant Albion Park Community Church, as its Associate Pastor.

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