

The Wounds of Jesus

Above Politics and Parliaments, Part 5

1 Peter 2:24

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

On the cross, Jesus Christ bore the penalty for our sin, and out of gratitude and love, we have the privilege of serving him in joyful obedience.

Discussion Points:

1 Peter 2:24 is a one-verse summary of what Jesus accomplished for you at the cross.

- What did the suffering and death of Jesus do for you and make possible for you?
- How would you explain the necessity of the cross and what Jesus accomplished to a person who has never heard the gospel?

Jesus went to the cross as our willing substitute.

- What is true about Jesus that made Him the only possible sacrifice for our sins?
- Why is it impossible for you or any person to find forgiveness of sin apart from Jesus?

When Jesus died, he bore the accumulated debt of the sins of the whole world.

- What is the significance of that reality for those who believe the gospel? How should we view our own sin? How should we view the sins that are committed against us?
- When are you tempted to think that some sins are beyond forgiveness?
- Why was the sacrifice of Jesus necessary for the forgiveness of your sin? Why couldn't God simply forgive sin without there being a payment made?

In light of what Christ did for us on the cross, we have the opportunity to serve him in joyful obligation.

- What are some differences between serving God as a joyful obligation for what He did on the one hand, and trying to earn God's favor on the other hand?
- Why is it impossible for anyone to earn God's favor?

Discussion Guide cont.

Gospel Connection:

When Jesus dies on the cross, he bore the sins of the world. Believing the truth of the gospel, and placing your faith in God is the only means by which our sin's may be forgiven.

Practical Implications:

Think: Meditate on what Christ has done for you, and think about ways you can express your appreciation through obedience.

Pray: Express your gratitude and praise for Christ's sacrifice on your behalf and for to God saving you.

Respond: Who do you know that needs to hear the gospel? Look for an opportunity to share with that person this week.

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1 Peter 2:24

If you're a football fan, you've probably put some time into watching the recent NFL draft results.

There are a lot of rookies that will enter a training camp with the hopes of making the team.

A few years ago, the website of one of the teams presented a series of videos that followed the team's rookies from their first arrival at training camp and on through the preseason.

Rookies know that the team roster begins with 80 players who come to camp. After a few weeks the coaches cut the team down to 65 players. Then before the season actually begins all NFL teams are required to trim down to 53 players.

Of the 19 rookies who were invited to this one particular team's training camp, they knew only 7 of them would make the team.

One video showed part of the coach's first orientation speech to the rookie class. His challenge to them was – in a nutshell – and I quote – “Make me put you on the team.”

Make me put you on the team. In other words, play so well out here on the practice field that the coaches cannot imagine cutting you. Practice and play so that you make us put you on the team – you make it impossible to cut you from the final roster.”

When I read that, I couldn't help but think that I'd just read the perfect analogy to the religions of the world – and most people I meet on the street – they are convinced that making it to whatever their version of heaven is, is like making an NFL team.

And they assume that whoever God is, He's more than likely promoting the same speech to mankind that goes a lot like, “Listen, perform so well that you make me put you on the team –

live such a good life, do so many good deeds, that I could never imagine keeping you off the final roster of Heaven.”

The truth is, God isn't a coach . . . and even if He were, nobody would ever perform well enough that God just can't help but add them to His team.

The good news is that salvation isn't training camp either – forgiveness isn't earned by the best performers. If it were, that's what we would call, justification by works.

According to God's word, the gospel is just the opposite – it is justification by grace alone.

In other words, God saves us – not by our merit, but by His grace – freely offering us forgiveness and eternal life by grace through faith in the Person of Jesus Christ.ⁱ

It's as if Peter pulls off the highway for a verse or two and emphasizes the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

In fact, in *1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 24*, you have an entire volume of truth related to salvation and deliverance through the death of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As if to say, “Look, you can get so tied up in the politics of living here on earth that you can take for granted – or even miss entirely – the glorious truth of how to go to Heaven.

So, for our exposition and study today, let's pull off the highway with Peter and unpack *verse 24* together; and let me do it by giving you three phrases to serve as categorical headings.

1. The first phrase is willing substitution.

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross. He Himself is placed forward in the text for emphasis – He Himself – as if to

say, there isn't anybody else who could do this for us – and there isn't.

There isn't another man who can pay for your sins – in fact, he can't fully pay for his own. But Jesus did – Himself.

And He Himself bore our sins – Peter is reaching back into the Old Testament Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur – where once a year, the High Priest confessed the sins of the people over the head of an innocent goat – laying his hands on the head of that goat as if to signify the laying on the head of that goat the sins of the people – and it was then led away to wander and die alone in the wilderness – it symbolically bore the sins of the people in its body (*Leviticus 4*).ⁱⁱ

The word Peter used here points to that analogy and it means to *bear up* or *bear away*.ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus was the final sin-bearer.

You may be old enough in your understanding of scripture to know that Jesus also fulfilled the symbol of the innocent Lamb being killed on the Day of Passover.

The Jewish Passover celebration began in Egypt long ago where lambs were killed and their blood painted on the doorposts of the ancient Israelites slave quarters. And everyone who effectively hid behind the blood of the lamb was spared death to their household (*Exodus 12*).

Jesus, the innocent Lamb shed his blood – and everyone who hides in His death is spared judgement and separation from God.

But the emphasis here in this text, in Peter's mind, is tracing back to Yom Kippur and the Day of Atonement.

Typified by that innocent animal who carried the sins of the people away, Jesus Christ, the innocent One had laid upon Him the sins of the whole world (*1 John 2:2*) and He carried it away.

But it's worth noting that Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement – never solved anything permanently. The High Priest had to do it again the next year – and the next – and the next.

Atonement, in the Hebrew language, means “covering”, not canceling. So the leading away of a goat, or the sacrifice of a lamb could not permanently take away sin.

Every year, the sins of the people were recited and the same ritual followed. But the debt of sin simply mounted every higher, year after year; it was covered and carried forward in anticipation that one day the symbol would be replaced by the substance – the ritual of repeated atonement by the reality of permanent and final atonement.^{iv}

So now, Peter recalls, Christ is hanging on the cross. Think of it this way – on the cross, the accumulated debt of the sins of the whole world – from the very first sin – and then the accumulated sins of the whole world to the very last sin that will be committed in human history – all of it comes due at the cross – and the Lord Jesus ***bore it all in His body on the tree***.

But wait a second . . . how do we know that God has canceled it all and not just temporarily covered it all?

I'm glad you asked. Listen to this glorious verse as Paul writes to the Colossians; ***When you were dead in your transgressions . . . He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us . . . and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14)***.

Not temporarily canceled . . . not accumulating for later judgment – it was canceled, completely. The debt is paid in full!

Notice again how Peter writes, ***He bore our sins*** – Peter is speaking confessionally here – he's acknowledging his own sins.^v

Which would be encouraging to his readers who might have thought that Peter wasn't nearly as bad as they were.

But Peter includes himself as if to say, “He died for my sins too”.

But let me warn you – you won't go to heaven just because you believe Jesus died on the cross for sin. The devil believes that Jesus died on the cross – in fact, he was there.

There has to be a time in your life when you understand and admit in repentance, “Jesus died for *my* sins . . . Jesus died for *me* . . . Jesus took my *death* penalty . . . he paid the price for *my* crimes against the holiness of God.

You see, it isn’t until you admit that you’re the guilty sinner whose sins were placed upon Jesus on the cross, that you can personally experience forgiveness.

You have to personally join Peter in saying, “He bore *our* sins” . . . as if to say – that means, “*my* sins, too.”

Do you mean that when I place my faith in what Jesus did for me, every one of my sins is paid for – past, present and future?

Notice again, ***and He Himself bore our sins*** – note the plurality of that word which Peter uses to indicate the multitudes of sins committed.

As if to say, yes, Jesus paid the penalty for every imaginable sin – every kind of sin – every type of sin – every sordid sin – every acceptable sin – every forbidden sin – all your past sins; all your present sins and all your future sins – all of them were at one point in time – on the cross – placed on Jesus.

In fact, Peter uses the aorist tense for this verb *to carry* – *to bear away* – in other words, this was a definite act, not a repeated practice. It happened at a moment in time.^{vi} At Calvary.

Again, notice as Peter writes, ***And He Himself bore our sins in His body***.

This destroys the false teaching that Jesus only seemed to have a body – some were already teaching in the first century that Jesus wasn’t really a man with a real body that experienced real suffering and real death.

Peter puts that to rest here. In fact, this was the plan from eternity past. The writer of Hebrews describes God the Son taking on flesh, being born of a woman – and why? The writer answers, ***for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*** (remember beloved – they could only cover sin, not cancel sin permanently). ***Therefore, when He (Jesus) comes into the world, He says, Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body You***

have prepared for Me. (Hebrews 10:4-5) . . . Later in verse 10, we have been cleansed through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

By the way, not only was Jesus a real human being; and not only did Jesus have a real body, He was nailed to experience real suffering on a real cross.

Again notice, Peter writes, ***He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross.***

Literally, *on the wood* – this was Peter’s typical expression for the cross.^{vii} The wooden cross.

The spotlight of divine redemption focuses with more intensity at this moment than any other moment in all of human history.

All of humanity, from the shedding of the blood of those innocence animals in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve were clothed in that first, temporary atoning work of God on their behalf – from that point forward – everything of redemptive history pointed forward to the cross; and from the cross onward to this very day – everything of redemption points backward to that same cross.

Where Jesus had placed upon Him the sins of us all.

Peter again draws from the Old Testament – this time from Isaiah’s great prophecy of the suffering Savior – Isaiah records in ***chapter 53:5 He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities . . . verse 6. The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.***

There it is – there on the cross, our sin fell on Him.

I often illustrate this when I talk to others about the gospel by taking my Bible and asking them to imagine that the first page is their birth certificate and the last page is their death certificate. Now imagine if the palm of my outstretched hand represents Christ on the cross. According to the plan of the Triune God, at this moment, God the Father took my life of sin (the Bible) – from my first sin to my last sin – and caused it to fall on Jesus, who then paid the penalty for all of it.

Maybe you're wondering, look, why can't God just forgive the debt of our sin? I mean, if our Creator is capable of any kind of plan, couldn't He just move on with without any kind of payment?

Here's the problem: someone has to cover the damages – someone has to pay the just penalty for sin.

Jonathan Butler in his book, *The Pursuing God* gives a simple example or two, that I thought you'd find helpful as well.

He writes, let's say your neighbor crashes his car through your fence. When you discover the shambles and you say, "Look, don't worry about the fence – all is forgiven." But forgiving your neighbor doesn't restore the fence or do away with the bill to repair the fence; it simply means that you're willing to eat the cost.

Now consider a more complex example. During the U.S. housing crisis, shoddy banking practices and corporate corruption threw a sledgehammer into the global economy.

Can you simply forgive the corporations guilty for the crisis? Even if you said, "Don't worry about it – you're forgiven" – there's still a huge debt. What if Jesus were made the CEO of Bank of America and told all of the crooked employers and executives, "Listen, I forgive you all!" The debt still remains? In fact, Bank of America alone still owes people \$17 billion dollars.

And in the aftermath of the housing crisis, the banks were deemed "too big to fail," and the government forgave the debt, covering the most expensive bailout in human history.

Although the banking industry had caused massive damage, their debt was forgiven. But that doesn't mean the debt went away. Someone else covered it—in this case, you, the taxpaying American people – it was added to your national debt. You see, someone always, ultimately pays for the damages.

So why can't God just forgive the sin-debt? Well, that's exactly what He did at the Cross: God is indeed forgiving the debt—but He does it by passing the cost onto His Son. The Triune

God effectively eats the cost of your sin, and mine.

The author concludes, I misspoke earlier when I said the White House gave Wall Street the most expensive bailout in human history. Actually, the most expensive bailout of the most corrupt corporation, called Humanity Incorporated, took place when God took upon Himself the most outrageous debt-forgiveness plan the world has ever known.^{viii}

Now in the mind of Peter, there is something we ought to do about it!

Notice the middle of *verse 24b so that we might die to sin and live unto righteousness*.

Willing substitution ought to be followed on our part by

2. Here's the second phrase – joyful obligation.

Now don't miss this . . . we're not obligated in the sense that we'd better pay Jesus back, or else. Frankly, we never can.

You say, "But that doesn't seem right – surely God requires that we pay Him back, or it won't take; I mean if we can't pay people back when they do something for us, then we shouldn't benefit from what they've done for us, right?"

It occurred to me that next week is Mother's Day. Actually all week I've thought it was today. I got a gift for my wife; I texted our kids who are coming over for dinner today not to forget its Mother's day. Then yesterday I found out it's not until next week. I have never been so far ahead – this is great!

Okay, for the rest of you procrastinators, next week is Mother's Day. But no matter what you do, could you ever really pay your own mother back?

Could you possibly pay her back for nearly dying in order to deliver you? Do you really think taking out the trash will even the score? Can you pay her back for 9 months of pain and then 19 years of purgatory?

Can you pay her back for feeding you and clothing you and protecting you and potty training you (don't forget that one; that one alone is worth a million bucks) – you owe that one to your mother – trust me, your dad had little to do with it. All he did was point – “the bathroom is that way.”

Mom, this tribute is for you – you can *never* be paid back – and all of you say – Amen!

We are all recipients of many gifts and many sacrifices, smaller than that of Christ, and we could never begin to repay them . . . can you imagine trying to repay the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life through the crucifixion and death of your Savior?

Now Peter goes on to say, there is something you can do, though . . . we'll call it our joyful obligation.

The middle of *verse 24* – ***so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.***

So that we might die to sin. You could translate this more literally, *so that we, having parted with those sins.* So that we, *no longer related* to those sins.

The verb rendered ***might die*** occurs only here in the New Testament. Its root meaning is *to have no part in – to be separated from.*

Peter is looking back at the moment of our regeneration by means of trust in the cross-work of Christ – and at the moment of our conversion, the family relationship with sin ended – though we sin, we're no longer bound to it.

Though Satan still tempts us and deceives us and sometimes trips us up – he is no longer our landlord . . . he has no legal hold on us or right to us.

One Greek scholar pointed out that the dative construction leads us to understand Peter to be saying, “so that we, having no relation to the sins” now have a new relation – which is righteousness.^{ix}

Righteousness carries the nuance of a right relationship with God through regeneration.

So, to summarize all the tenses and nuances - Peter is effectively telling us that because of Christ's comprehensive payment for everything about us that is sinful, we now can daily choose

– instead of having a relationship with sinful living, we will have a relationship with righteous living – this is our joyful response and obligation to our redeeming, living Lord.

Simply put, we ought to live in such a way that we practically and experientially pursue this joyful obligation of a right relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy character because of everything He's done for us.

So there is this willing substitution . . . there is joyful obligation; third, there is a growing anticipation.

Peter adds this final clause – ***for by His wounds you were healed.***

The word Peter uses here for ***wounds*** is used as a general reference – a synonym for all the suffering and all the pain and all the agony that Jesus suffered as He died.^x

By His wounds you were healed.

This phrase has caused a lot of heartburn in the church over the years.

The healing Isaiah and Peter refer to here is spiritual, not physical. You might write in your margin the word, spiritually.

If Peter was teaching that the atonement brought believers to physical health, then you can imagine how many of his listeners to this letter being read in the first century church would have been immediately confused – simply because some of them were sick – all of them were aging and some among them were dying.

In fact, all of them would eventually grow ill and die from it. Nobody dies from good health.

Now there is the point to consider that the atonement ultimately brings every believer to heaven where a new body awaits them, without sickness and without pain and without disease and without death (***Revelation 21 & 22***). So there is a future fulfilment that brings both spiritual and physical healing.

But keep in mind, Jesus' atoning work immediately defeated sin and Satan and death and the grave.

But Christians still sin and Satan is still running around and death and the grave are in

our future, unless the Lord comes for us before we die.

At the cross, Christ died for our sins, but Christians still sin; Jesus conquered the grave, but Christians still die.

In the meantime, people and preachers who claim that Christians should never get sick because there is healing in the atonement – and they promise that healing should happen here and now if your faith is strong – well, they shouldn't stop so short; why not claim that Christians never physically die, because the atoning work of Christ also conquered the grave; why not claim that Christians never sin, because the atonement conquered sin?

Peter is delivering the gospel here – the news of Christ's death on the cross and payment for our sin – this is the good news of forgiveness, not health.^{xi}

Listen, your forgiveness will last a lot longer than your health. And that's because Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins, not to write a prescription for your sickness. He was made sin for us, not disease.^{xii}

In fact, just look back at the beginning of this verse – ***He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.***

His willing substitution leads us toward a joyful obligation toward holy living, undergirded with a growing sense of anticipation when our glorified bodies will be perfected and whole, just as our spirits have been made whole through Christ.

Yes, there is physical healing in the atonement, just as there is deliverance from sin and death in the atonement – but the fulfillment of all of that is something we still anticipate for the future.^{xiii}

And it is for us a growing anticipation.

By His wounds we were healed spiritually – and we anticipate being healed one day physically – permanently and perfectly.

In his recent book, John Dickson recalls speaking on the theme “The wounds of God” at a secular university.

After his speech, the moderator asked the audience for questions. Without delay a man in his mid-30's, a Muslim leader at the university, stood up and proceeded to tell the audience how preposterous was the claim that the Creator of the universe would be subjected to the forces of his own creation—that he would have to eat, sleep, use the bathroom, suffer aches and pains, let alone die on a cross after experiencing pain and suffering.

Dickson and the man went back and forth for about ten minutes during which the man insisted that the notion of God having wounds—whether physical or emotional—was illogical; he argued that the “Creator” could not possibly be caused pain by a lesser being; he said it was outright blasphemy, as stated in the Koran.

Dickson later wrote, I had no witty comeback; in the end, I simply thanked him for revealing to the audience the contrast between the Islamic conception of God and that described in the Bible. What the Muslim denounces as blasphemy the Christian holds as precious: God has wounds.^{xiv}

God has wounds. What an incredible gospel!

We would never make this up. The Creator has been crushed and bruised and beaten and scarred for us.

When the resurrected Lord appeared to His disciples, Thomas missed the meeting. And when they told him that Jesus had appeared to them he didn't believe them. Instead he said, ***“Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and [then] put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”***

Thomas demands empirical evidence. And Jesus stoops in humility to give it to him because the next time Jesus appears He invites Thomas to reach out and touch the nail prints in His hands and the scar from the spear in His side – revealing the shocking revelation that Jesus has kept His scars.

In fact, it is this atoning work on the cross that Christ wants us never to forget as the church – giving us this ongoing memorial service to remember His sacrifice and His death. When Israel is reconstituted in repentance during the Tribulation and then as they see the Lord descending, with us, to establish His kingdom, Zechariah the prophet highlights this very issue when he quotes the returning Messiah who says, **“They will look upon Me whom they pierced. (Zechariah 12:10).**

Imagine, our Savior has chosen to keep His wounds . . . and to display them throughout all of eternity; even though by His atoning work and divine grace He has chosen in Heaven one day, to wipe all our wounds away.

We will be reminded forever, every time we look at Jesus, we’ll be reminded – by His

wounds . . . by those wounds, we were . . . and are . . . forever . . . healed.

Sing:

*Alas and did my Savior bleed and did my
Sovereign die?*

*Would He devote that sacred head for such a
worm as I?*

*At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the
light,*

And the burden of my heart rolled away;

It was there by faith I received my sight,

And now I am happy all the day.

That sounds like a willing substitution . . . and a joyful obligation . . . and a growing anticipation.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 5/7/2017 by Stephen Davey.

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i Adapted from Craig Brian Larson, editor of PreachingToday.com; source: "Inside Rookie Minicamp" (pt. 1), July 6, 2010

ii John Phillips, Exploring The Epistles of Peter (Kregel, 2005), p. 126

iii Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 755

iv Adapted from Phillips, p. 126

v D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH, 1984), p. 187

vi Ibid

vii Ibid

viii *Joshua Ryan Butler, The Pursuing God (Thomas Nelson, 2016), p. 100*

ix Hiebert, 188

x John MacArthur, 1 Peter (Moody Publishers, 2004), p. 172

xi Ibid

xii Ibid

xiii Adapted from MacArthur, p. 173

xiv *John Dickson, If I Were God I'd End All Pain (Mathias Media, 2012), p. 66*