

Who Do You Say I Am? Part 2

Today we continue our sermon series, Who Do You Say I Am? This is the question Jesus asked of his disciples at Caesarea Philippi and it is the question the answer or answers to which we are exploring in this series.

Two weeks ago we looked at chapter 1 of John's gospel and answered with "We say you are the Son of the Living God." Today my answer to the question is: **You are the Savior of the world!** When we say he is the Savior, that in itself raises some questions. What does he save us from? How does he save us? Some would even ask, why would I need a savior?

The bible makes it plain to us that Jesus has come to save sinners. The Apostle Paul writes, "**Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.**" **1 Timothy 1:15** Beside Paul's admission, who else is a sinner? The bible makes that plain as well. "**There is no one righteous, not even one...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**" **Romans 3:10, 23** The prophet Isaiah said we were like sheep and all of us had gone astray. We are prone to wander, sinners by nature as well as by practice and behavior. We are by nature greedy, selfish, prone to lie, to sin. If you don't believe me, go to our nursery and look at those precious, innocent children. Listen and watch for a moment. "Mine!" I doubt anyone is saying "Yours!" "Did you take those from her?" "No!" We are by nature sinful and sinners need a savior.

What are we being saved from? We need saving from our worst self, our worst impulses. We need saving from our sin, our sinfulness, the consequences of our sins and the judgement that awaits sin and sinners. The bible says "The soul who sins shall die." Ezekiel 18:4. Paul writes, "The wages of sin is death." All sinners, and that's all of us, are under a death sentence, a death penalty because we are all trespassers and breakers of God's law. We face God's wrath against sin.

George Ladd in his *Theology of the New Testament* wrote, "Wrath is the judgment that falls upon sin in the moral order which God rules. Wrath is the divine reaction to sin." Wrath and judgment aren't God's anger at sin, they are a holy and just God's just and appropriate response to sin. Because of our sin, we are deserving of judgment, God's wrath. That means we need a savior, a deliverer. And God in his redeeming love and mercy, has provided a remedy for our sin and has offered salvation by sending his Son into the world to save us from our sins and save us from the penalty of God's judgment and wrath against sin.

Over the past 2,000 years the church has tried various ways to explain and describe the indescribable gift of salvation, but there is no one way to describe salvation and what Christ the Savior has done for us. Every attempt is inadequate, insufficient. It gives only a partial glimpse at one facet of salvation. With that said, let's take a glimpse. "Who do you say I am?" **You are Jesus, the perfect sacrifice that takes away our sins.**

The bible clearly provides this image of Jesus as the sacrifice, offered for our salvation. John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus declared, "**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**" **John 1:29** Paul writes, "**For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**" **1 Corinthians 5:7**

These verses suggest the imagery of the Old Testament sacrificial system with Jesus as the perfect and ultimate sacrifice. While there were grain offerings and liquid or drink offerings that were offered in worship, most were of animals that were ceremonially slaughtered. A living sacrifice was offered. The worshiper would come with the animal, lay his hand on its head and the animal would be killed. The priest would take the blood and pour it on one of the altars of God. In so doing, the sin and the sinner were said to be atoned for. Atonement means to cover. The sin and the sinner have been figuratively covered, atoned for, by the blood of the sacrifice.

The bible speaks of Jesus then as offering his blood, meaning his life, as the sacrifice for our sin. He becomes the lamb slain for us and his life, his blood becomes the atoning sacrifice that covers our sin. The bible declares we have been justified (freed from guilt) by his blood. "**Since we have now been justified by his blood...**" **Romans 5:9.** We have been redeemed by his blood, the sacrifice of his life. "**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin...**" **Ephesians 1:7** We have been brought near to God and into his kingdom, his life, by the sacrifice of Jesus. "**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.**" **Ephesians 2:13.** We have peace with God through his blood and the list could go on. The point is Jesus willingly became the sacrifice to atone for and forgive your sin and my sin. The perfect, sinless Son of God giving his blood, his life for us. The innocent died for the guilty. His blood covers both the sin and the sinner! That's who he is, the perfect sacrifice, but not only this, he is the substitute, taking our place. Who do you say I am?

You are Jesus, our perfect, sinless substitute. Theologians argue over how to explain what we call his vicarious or substitutionary death. (Vicarious means to take the place of

another, to suffer in their place.) The point is again we were condemned to die because the soul that sins must die. We are guilty and consequently, we're under a sentence of death, condemned, but Jesus comes to take our place and bear the full and just penalty for our sins.

God is holy, faithful, merciful and just. Because he is holy, he cannot excuse sin and wickedness. Because he is just, the punishment for sin must be carried out. Because he is faithful, that judgment will be carried out, but because he is merciful, he chooses to take the punishment in our place, for us. He suffers and dies in our place. Pastor Brian Zahnd wrote, "The cross is not what God inflicts upon Christ in order to forgive. The cross is what God endures in Christ as he forgives." He takes our place and bears our sin and our punishment!

Imagine a cosmic courtroom where charges against us have been read. "How do you plead?" We have no choice as we stand before the God of the universe, before whom nothing is secret, nothing can be hidden. With our head bowed we declare, "Guilty." The sentence is passed: death and eternal separation from God. But before the execution of this just judgment can be carried out, Jesus, the only perfect, innocent man and Son of God steps forward and takes our place. The full punishment, the full wrath of God against sin is laid upon him.

Isaiah spoke prophetically of this when he wrote, **"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."** **Isaiah 53:4-6** Our sin, our iniquity, was laid on him and then the punishment that we deserved for our sin was laid upon him as well.

The Apostle Paul speaks of Jesus our substitute when he writes, **"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** **2 Corinthians 5:21** In Colossians he says it this way, **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'."** **Colossians 3:13** Jesus became a curse for us so we could be redeemed from the curse. He took our place, our sin imputed to him in order that his righteousness, his right standing with God could be imputed to us.

I mentioned the image of the courtroom. Understand, it's not a mistrial that's been declared. Our attorney didn't find a loophole in the law. This wasn't a hung jury. The judge of

the universe declared you innocent, acquitted, righteous, not because of what you have done, but because of Jesus who spiritually and literally took your sin, your punishment, your place!

Paul writes in Romans 8 that God sent his own Son to be a sin offering and he says if we have trusted in Christ as our Savior and have been redeemed through his sacrifice, **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1** In legal terms, the case against us has been dismissed with prejudice. It’s over and done with and it won’t be brought against us again! We don’t have to live in fear of the wrath of God because we have been forgiven. Jesus the perfect, sinless substitute. What a Savior! But not only that...

Another view the bible gives us of our salvation is the idea of redemption and ransom. Who do you say I am? We say **You are Jesus, our willing Redeemer.**

Jesus said **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45** George Ladd in *Theology of the New Testament* indicates the words ransom and redeemed are grouped together. The words are used “of the price paid to redeem something that is in pawn, of the money paid to ransom prisoners of war, and of money paid to purchase the freedom of a slave.”

Paul refers to **“Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity” Titus 2:14.** He has paid the price to redeem and free us from iniquity and sin. In 1 Timothy, Paul speaks of Jesus as **“One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” 1 Timothy 2:5-6** Notice in both verses Jesus gave himself. He wasn’t coerced or forced. In John’s gospel Jesus said **“I lay down my life...no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” John 10:18** Jesus freely, willingly, gave his life for us as a ransom. What love!

A ransom was paid. A price for redemption was paid so we could be freed from slavery and bondage to sin, and Jesus freely paid that price with his own life! Peter declares, **“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” 1 Peter 1:18-19**

He paid the price for us. We are debtors without the ability to pay. Implied is the image of us as slaves on the auction block. Standing in shame, chained by sin, when Jesus steps forward and pays the ransom price, the price of redemption. He settles our account, pays the price in full with his own blood, his own life and with that redemption is the implication that we

now belong to him. No longer are we subject to the ravages of sin or the control of Satan. A change of ownership has occurred. Paul writes, **“You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

We are under new ownership but it means a new way of life. We have been ransomed, redeemed and set free, free from the curse of sin and death. We have a new life, a new destiny, free to live without the shackles and chains of sin. We’re no longer under the control of sin or Satan for whom the Son sets free is free indeed. We are free to choose, free to say no to addiction and sin and destructive choices. Free to live in Jesus, with Jesus, for Jesus.

“Who do you say I am?” Jesus asked. I say you are Savior, perfect sacrifice, sinless substitute, willing redeemer who freely paid the ransom to set us free. Finally, one more answer to the question “Who do you say I am?” **You are Jesus the Victor, triumphing over sin, death and the powers of hell.**

In his sacrifice, through his death and resurrection Jesus achieved for us victory and triumph over the powers of the enemy. John writes, **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” 1 John 3:8** Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work, to destroy the sin that spreads and works its destruction in our lives. He came to destroy the lawlessness that has been at work in us, the notion that our ways are superior to God’s ways. Through the victory Jesus secured for us, we can be free from sin and its’ destructive power. Instead of being controlled by sin, we are free to live in Christ.

Paul writes **“God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins...and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Colossians 2:13-15**

Jesus won the victory, triumphing over Satan, over his rights and the stolen authority the devil used to dominate my life and your life. If Jesus is your Savior, then the devil is defeated and Jesus rules and reigns in your life. Don’t allow the devil to trick you into submitting to him and his distorted plans for your life because you are more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ. He won the victory and if you are in Christ, you too are a victor! No longer a victim, but victor!

This is who he is. Savior, sacrifice, substitute, redeemer, the one who paid the debt we couldn’t pay, in full, the victor, the one who triumphs and who places me within his triumph. I get to stand in him, saved, redeemed, forgiven, complete, triumphant, victorious!

There is an old hymn we used to sing that says, “Years I spent in vanity and pride, caring not my Lord was crucified, knowing not it was for me he died on Calvary. Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan, oh the grace that brought it down to man; oh the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary. Mercy there was great and grace was free; pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary.”

A more recent writer declared, “This is amazing grace. This is unfailing love, that you would take my place, that you would bear my cross. You would lay down your life that I would be set free. Oh Jesus I sing for all that you’ve done for me.”

And before either of those writers, the elders in heaven sang another song. They fell down before the Lamb and John records what he heard and saw, **“They sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth.’ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang; ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.’ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them, singing: ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever.’” Revelation 5:9-13**

Who do you say I am? I say You are Savior and Lord and my All! You are worthy!!!