

Christ died for our sins
so that we might not die in them.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

This truth must be accepted or received by faith. Faith writes this truth on the heart not in the head. Romans 10:9 Believe in your heart

John Stott: a British Anglican pastor and theologian: wrote in "The Cross of Christ" wrote this brief poem. We may not know, What pains he had to bear; But we believe it was for us He suffered there.

But Christ's suffering has met up with a thousand questions among the most scholarly minds of the universe.

Hebrews 9:13-14, 22 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who... offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ... without shedding of blood is no remission.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* makes an atonement for the soul.

Exodus 12:13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt

Dr. Edersheim points out the difference in the Levitical sacrifice: "The common idea that the sacrifice symbolized the wrath of God and the punishment due to sin does not seem to accord with the statement of Old Testament Scripture." The atonement was satisfied in the shed blood not the sacrifice. May I respectfully add that animals sacrificed in the Old Testament were done so in a most humane fashion.

Why did Jesus have to suffer? Was His suffering because His sacrifice was propitiatory? Appeasing divine wrath.

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Hebrews 5:8 though Jesus was God's Son, he **learned** obedience from the things he **suffered**.

The ancient Greeks, especially in their tragic drama and philosophy, understood the relationship between **wisdom**, **suffering**, and **theatre**.

"Wisdom comes through suffering"

This idea is most famously expressed in **Aeschylus's Agamemnon** the chorus declares:

"Zeus, who guided men to think,
who has laid it down that wisdom comes alone through suffering."

(pathei mathos — "learning through suffering") - an interesting catchphrase. Do you believe it?

Why mention this?

History teaches us that our theology can be influenced by social conventions and the generally understood and accepted wisdom of the time. We live in a materialistic age—the Laodicean church age—and many churches have moved on from the Message of the Cross to promoting popular beliefs that support corporate growth even if not emphatically Biblical.

In like: This mantra **learning through suffering** could offer us a reason why Jesus had to suffer but is it Biblical?

For the Greeks, wisdom wasn't something you could acquire abstractly [academically] or by instruction alone — it required *experience*, and often painful experience [1 Bible word for knowledge]. This idea runs deep in Greek thought: it's about humility, the limits of human knowledge, and the way that suffering leads to insight. γνῶθι σαυτόν μηδὲν ἄγαν [Know thyself; nothing in excess]

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The Greeks further maintained that we could learn through the suffering of others. Movies provided the means of living in the moment of another's suffering and participating emotionally. The Classical Greek Playwrights called this intense **emotional engagement** — pity, fear, anguish — through the *actors* and *characters*.

According to **Aristotle**, in his *Poetics*, this emotional process — **catharsis** By watching the tragic hero suffer, we experience and process powerful emotions safely. Without having to endure the literal suffering of the hero. In this way, the **wisdom of suffering** is transmitted.

There **are strands of Christian thought** that resonate deeply with that Greek tragic insight: that **wisdom and transformation come through the suffering of another**, though no traditional *theory of atonement* uses *pathei mathos* explicitly,

1. The Moral Influence (or Exemplary) Theory

Peter Abelard (12th century), promoted the idea: Christ's suffering and death are not primarily a legal transaction (His punishment for our sin), but a **revelation** — a dramatic manifestation of God's love meant to *move and transform* the human heart. He believed that we "learn" through Christ's suffering what divine love truly is, and in seeing this love, we are drawn into repentance and imitation. We do not endure the agony ourselves, but by witnessing it, we *learn* the truth of divine compassion, humility, and forgiveness. In his day and his way he was trying to answer the question: why did Jesus have to suffer?

2. Irenaeus's Recapitulation Theory (2nd century).

Jesus recapitulated in Himself the long history of man's rebellion. Suffering was a **consequence** of bearing such a heavy burden. But Hebrews 2:10 says that for purposes of our redemption, it was necessary:

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“For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

“He became what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.” Irenaeus wrote, “For [Christ] did not merely bear the curse of the tree, but He became a curse for us... He summed up in Himself the whole human race from the beginning to the end.’

Jesus accepted the wages of sin so we would not pay it!

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangs on a tree:

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

This is Luther’s Wondrous Exchange. Luther wrote, that Christ became “Peter, the liar; Paul, the persecutor, David, the adulterer; Adam, the disobedient; the thief on the cross...” He became sin.

Christ’s suffering reveals the depth of our sin.

In Eastern theology, salvation is often described not as payment but as **healing** and **illumination** — restoring the image of God.

- **Jürgen Moltmann**, [**Reformed theologian** who was a professor of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen, Hope Theology] in *The Crucified God*, describes the Cross as a revelation of God’s solidarity [experience] with human pain, which *teaches* us what love is and reshapes our understanding of God.

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- **Hans Urs von Balthasar** [a Swiss theologian and Catholic priest who is considered one of the most important theologians of the 20th century] (heavily influenced by Greek tragedy) described the Passion as the ultimate divine drama — where humanity is taught, through witnessing the suffering of Christ, what God's self-giving love means.
- **Sharon Baker** [Associate Professor of Theology at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania] in her work, "Executing God: Rethinking Everything You've Been Taught about Salvation and the Cross" wrote: "My whole belief system came crashing down around me." "I wandered around in the rubble, kicking at the broken pieces of my absolute certainty ... one foundation survived...that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.. And upon that foundation", she wrote encouragingly, "I began to rebuild."
- **Dorothy Sayers**, the mystery writer, called the Biblical story of Christ "miraculous and unfathomable" admitting in her play "Man Born To Be King" that "When you understand this, you will understand all prophecy and all history."
 - Yet Jesus' death is more than understanding, it is transformative; Thanx to Him by faith we are new persons in Him and we do not need to conform to this age but have our minds transformed.
 - There is a real sense in which we cannot understand the depth of the Savior's agony in the Garden and on the Cross.
 - What He did, He did *for* us. There is no sense in which we participated in it. Jesus death was no movie!

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Why won't God tell us all there is to know about Calvary, especially why Jesus had to suffer so?

We know He did suffer.

- Matthew 26:39 "If it be possible"
- There is one name under heaven whereby we *must* be saved. Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other"
- Jesus said, I am the way, truth and life, no man comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

This required not just the shedding of His blood but the most cruel and inhumane form of punishment and suffering imaginable. One of my college instructors said in affect: He was near death from the beatings and He was totally exhaustion in the work. Perhaps, God's timing could have been that precise.

One, The plan of God is beyond our current level of intelligence and comprehension. Deuteronomy 29:29

Two, People tend to cease talking about what they have solved. But they continue to search and discuss matters still mysterious.

The Clay Mathematics Institute officially designated the title Millennium Problem for the seven unsolved mathematical problems,

In the Reformation period [16th century] the thought was advanced to interpret Christ's suffering [Passion] as a punishment for sin. Though the Greek words for punishment are not associated by New Testament writers with the Cross [for some very sound reasons], we have the Hebrew word "chastisement" in Isaiah 53:5.

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There is also sufficient legal language in the record to lead some scholars to explain our Lord's suffering as a punishment or propitiation or appeasement for our sins.

Romans 3:25 may be understood to say that God "appointed Christ as a *propitiation* through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins...." thus explaining the Old Testament idea of "atonement." Not every Christian denomination sees it this way.

Propitiation is read in some translations as "atonement" a word Grok tells us "likely coined by William Tyndale in his 1526 Bible translation to render Hebrew *kippur*." This is exciting news that all is not settled in our minds because our Salvation based in a suffering Jesus who shed His blood for us *is not intellectual opinion but knowledge written on the heart* [Jeremiah 31:34].

A scripture that were it a person would probably furtively walk past us almost unnoticed: we might sadly have no recollection reading it, Hebrews 7:22 "By so much was Jesus made a *surety* of a better testament." When I read this, even in the Greek, the wording seemed a bit clumsy and unusual and yet it is Bible!

The word surety is a good legal term meaning the person who will guarantee whatever it is we sign to or promise—and here it is in covenant with God because of His desire to reconcile with us. Thanx to Jesus and a Cross we are on a first name basis again.

But the word "was" is not the best because it is not broad enough. The Greek projects the idea "from now on..." and this explains why the writer called Him our mediator to which Paul agreed in 1 Timothy 2:5.

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I see God and us sitting at a conference table while we go over the terms of this new covenant [why this word? that's a precious study in itself]. But God seeks reconciliation and Jesus' death provided for it through His suffering, His shed blood, and His death and resurrection. But now God has to be concerned because His people didn't keep the Old One, though they signed to [Deuteronomy 27] and that's when Jesus speaks us and says, "Father, I'll guarantee it." and He became our mediator making intercession for us

Hebrews 7:25 "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The writer called Jesus "a High-priest forever after the order of Melchisedek. Verse 21 says The Lord [took an oath] and will not repent [regret].

Hebrews 8:6 now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

N. T. Wright wrote, "'I have often reflected on the strangeness of the task to which Paul devoted his life: telling pagans that there was a single creator God rather than a multiplicity of gods was bad enough, but adding that this God had made himself known in a crucified Jew, who had then been raised from the dead, was bound to cause hoots of derision, and, if Acts is to be believed, sometimes did. Yet Paul found that when he told his story, when he proclaimed that this Jesus was indeed the world's true Lord, people (to their great surprise, no doubt) found this announcement making itself at home in their minds and hearts, generating the belief that it was true, and transforming their lives with a strange new presence and power."

That's why He suffered and died!