

The Apostles Creed – Week 4

~ Suffered, Crucified, Died, Buried, Descended ~

Recap

We are in week 4 of our series in The Apostles' Creed **titled** "*The Foundation of Our Hope...*"

And each week **I've been zealous to remind us** that we called it that, **NOT because** we believe **the Creed** is the foundation of our Hope – but because the **message** of the Creed is!

Creeds are NOT Scripture – Creeds point us toward Scripture and they remind us that ***the bible's teaching must be systematized if you & I are to make sense of what it says!***

That's why the Church has historically loved & confessed biblical Creeds for 2,000 years – because **in order for us** to understand the Bible and what it says – ***the bible's teaching must be systematized!***

Christ

Now.. **LAST TIME** we spoke – I mentioned there are kind of **2 categories of thought** that theology has classically used when speaking about Christ – So we think about:

- The **Person** of Christ
- And **the Works** of Jesus

Who Jesus is – & what He has done...

And so this week we're going to go **further into the works of Jesus** as we consider this phrase:

Jesus Christ suffered, hung, died, buried, & descended!

And so **that's the phrase – that's the truth** that we're gonna be **sinking our teeth into** this morning...

Introduction

“You shall measure the height of His love... by the depths of His grief...”

These words are the insightful attempt of 19th century pastor Charles Spurgeon, who was trying to communicate the fact that the height of **God's love** can only be measured by the **depths of God's Grief...**

The boundless grief He experienced when he hung on a tree 2,000 years ago:

You shall measure the height of His love for us... by measuring the depths of His grief...”

This morning friends we come **to the part of the Creed** that has caused **no small controversy** in the Church!

The doctrine we're about to see this morning **is one of the most gloriously beautiful yet highly debated** topics in all of Christian history!

It is the topic that theologians have called:

Penal Substitutionary Atonement X2

This is the biblical doctrine that God the Father has **poured out His wrath** upon the Son, **in order** that He (the legal substitute) takes our **place** – bears our **guilt** – & becomes our **curse!**

Penal Substitutionary Atonement!

Our sin righteously demands the **just judgment** of God's holy law – and God's law will not allow our sin to go unpunished!

God's law demands payment for our crimes!

And so **the only solution** to our sin is a **Legal Substitute** dying in our place for our sins!

Penal Substitutionary Atonement!

That is what the authors of the creed are saying in this line:

*“Jesus Christ Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, & buried,
He descended into hell!*

33 years Glossed-over

And **without so much as** the blink of an eye (friends) the authors of the Creed have **glossed over** 33 years of Jesus' life...

Did you see that?!?!

From **womb to tomb**...that's how quickly the Apostles' Creed covers the ministry of Christ...

Why would the authors simply leave out the ministry of Christ?!?!

Where did the life of Christ go in the Creed?!?!

Well I think the answer to that is that the authors knew:

The main thing about Jesus' life... was Jesus' death! X2

The main point of the Gospels is:

THE GOSPEL!

There is nothing more central to the message of the bible, than the message of the cross...

And the authors knew this – they knew the necessity of substitutionary atonement and so they straight to the heart of the Gospel – Penal Substitutionary Atonement!

Main Point

And so **it is with this in mind** that we come to our passage in Mark chapter 15 and **the main point** that I want us to see here today:

Jesus Christ endured our eternal hell so we could enjoy His endless heaven

Outline

And were gonna see this in 2 points:

The **Sufferings** of Christ (16-20)

&

The **Crucifixion, Death & Burial** of Christ (33-47)

Mark 15

We begin now with point number 1 – *The sufferings of Christ* – Have a look at verse 1:

“As soon as it was morning, having held a meeting with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin, the chief priests tied Jesus up, led Him away, and handed Him over to Pilate...”

Verse 15:

*And Pilate wanting to satisfy the crowd he released Barabbas to them; and **after having Jesus flogged**, he handed Him over to be crucified.*

Opening Gambit

Just as we saw last week that the **birth of Jesus** takes place in history & in time – so too now the **death of Jesus Christ** takes place in history **& in time!**

Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate

But why Pontius Pilate?

Why his name?!?!

Well besides the fact that he was the ruling Governor of the day... he reminds us that the Gospel is not an idea, but a reality...

In the words of Ben Myers:

*The confession centres upon a name, **and lest we begin** to think that the name of Jesus is just a theoretical concept, the Creed now adds a second person's name: Jesus the one who suffered under Pontius Pilate...*

Friends Pilate is there to remind us that God has acted at a particular moment in history...

That's the first reason this man is in the Creed!

Jesus & Barabbas

But secondly his name is there **to remind us about all of the horrific beatings** that Christ endured **prior to the cross!**

It was necessary for the Christ to suffer physically because sin has both **physical & spiritual** consequences!

And so the suffering of Christ is both physical & spiritual!

And the physical is going to point toward the spiritual!

First the physical – Verse 15:

“After having Jesus flogged – Pilate handed Him over to be crucified...”

The suffering of Christ

See every year **it was the tradition** of the Roman governor to release **one Hebrew prisoner** from Roman custody during the Jewish Passover Feast – this liberation was seen to be a **goodwill gesture** and a kind of peace offering to the Jewish people – **in order to let them know** that Rome honours the Jewish nation & respects the Jewish religion.

And so normally **the Roman governor would release** one Jewish man who had committed **relatively minor crimes** that were not worthy of public execution!

But this year, Pilate decides to do something **different...**

In order to dissuade the crowds from killing Jesus – he chooses **the worst criminal** he has! And the worst criminal that year?!?!

A notorious murderer by the name of Barabbas...

Now **Barabbas was notorious** in every sense of the word – His villainy & crimes were both **detestable** and **known** throughout the Roman Empire!

Mark's refers to him as an *insurrectionist* in verse 7 – John describes him as a thieving crook in John chapter 18 – & Luke records him as a murderer...

If he were alive today – Barabbas would be “*a known a Terrorist!*”

That's the kind of man Barabbas was!

He was **bloody** – he was **brutal** – he was **vicious** – & he was **vile!**

And he deserved to die **the worst death** – death by Roman crucifixion!

The sinfulness of man's heart

And so surely the Jewish leaders **were NOT going to anger Rome** by releasing a genuine threat to the Empire right?!?!?

Surely **they wouldn't dishonour God** by withholding justice from this murderous thief right?!?!?

Wrong!

As **we have seen so often** friends – sin has a **very real** way of **blinding** the human heart – and **inverting biblical justice...**

PSA Illustrated

Verse 13:

Again they shouted, “Crucify Him!”¹⁴ But Pilate said to them, “Why? What has he done wrong?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!” And Pilate, wanting to satisfy the crowd, handed Him over to be crucified!

Phil Johnson says:

*“Here then is a **vivid, living illustration** of the principle of penal substitutionary atonement. Christ **literally died** in Barabbas’ place – on a cross meant for Barabbas – taking the punishment Barabbas actually deserved – while Barabbas himself went free...*

Now that **doesn’t** mean that Barabbas had true & saving faith – but **what it does mean is that** in a **true & literal** sense – **he could actually say** “*Jesus Christ died for [my] sins – He died on my cross!*”

No doubt this was intentional on the part of the Gospel writers to communicate the fact – that when you & I place our faith in Jesus Christ – **in a very real way** He takes **our place** – He bears **our curse** – He dies **our death** – for **our sins!**

Penal Substitutionary Atonement!

Flagellum Beating

And then in Verse 15 – Mark describes what the Authors of the Creed are getting at when they regard the **physical sufferings** of Christ – that He was beaten & bruised **for our iniquities** – verse 15:

*Pilate released Barabbas to them – **having Him flogged** (or scourged)...*

Scourging

Now according to Roman tradition, those who were to be scourged **were to be tied to an upright post** and stripped down naked **in order to expose** the sensitive parts of their backs...

After which the Roman executioner (known as the Lictor) would grab his *flagellum* – **a specially designed Roman whip**, primarily fashioned **to accomplish only one thing** & one thing only:

Ripping the skin **right off** of the victim’s back!

Made from specially designed leather – the *flagellum* had small pieces of **bone & metal** attached to the very ends so that when the lictor whipped his victims – **the jagged pieces of bone** would claw into their backs...

In fact the Church father Eusebius tells the story of Christian martyrs who:

*“Were torn apart **through a Roman scourge** by having the deep-seated veins ripped from their backs, so that the hidden contents of the body, the bowels, and the organs were exposed to the human eye...”*

They were **experts** friends...experts at human torture!

So much so that the prophet Isaiah could say of Jesus:

His appearance was so disfigured (it was so mangled) that He did not look like a man, His form was beyond appearance that He did not resemble a human...(Isaiah 52:14)

Praetorium Hall

And so after Jesus was subjected to this public scourge – Mark informs us **that He was taken** to the Praetorium Hall (or as the CSB puts it “*The Governor’s residence*”)...

And it was there that they called *the whole company of men* –that is 1/10th of a Roman legion – or about **600 Roman soldiers!**

600 men had their fun with this one prisoner!

In fact history has informed us – that many of the Roman soldiers who carried out these public beatings, did this **so often** that they **actually became bored!**

And so **to keep themselves entertained** – and to stop themselves from becoming bored – **they would often** turn these scourges into a public spectacle of drama – a kind of Roman play for their own sick sanity & entertainment!

Dressing their victims up & mocking them in the process!

And that's **what we see happening here** in verse 17:

“So they dressed Him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on Him. And they began to salute Him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They were hitting Him on the head with a stick and spitting upon Him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying homage to Him...”

This whole thing was designed to **publicly humiliate** the Person & Work of Christ...

Mocked as **Prophet** – Mocked as **Priest** – Mocked as **King!**

Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate – **both** the public **shaming** & the public **humiliation that our sins deserve!**

But He's **still NOT done!**

Simon of Cyrene

After this **Mark informs us** that they **compelled** a certain man by the name of **Simon of Cyrene** to bear the weight **of the cross of Christ!**

And the language that is used of **compulsion** here in verse 21 was used of animals being coerced, **to go ahead to their slaughter!**

Simon is **coerced like an animal being** led to the slaughter, to carry the cross of **the lamb of God** to the place of His public execution!

And the point that is made here, was that the **physical suffering of Christ** was **so horrendous** – it was **so bad** that He **could NOT even bear** the weight of His own **cross!**

No doubt this was **intentional** on the part of Mark – **to point out the irony** that the One who declared for others to take up their cross – could **NOT even bear** His own!

As R.C. Sproul has rightly said:

“The very first person in history to take up a cross & follow Christ was Simon Of Cyrene!”

And he was NOT even a disciple of Christ!

This whole thing stinks of public shame!

And **so after this** they brought Him to the place called Gol-gotha (which means *place of the Skull*) – in Latin this is called “*calvaria...*”

A medical term referring to **the top part of a human skull!**

So **in both Latin & Aramaic** this location was **primarily known for its death & repulsion!**

And it was here at **this very location** that the Roman Soldiers would accomplish the second phase of the Apostles’ Creed:

Crucified, Dead, & Buried

Have a look at verse 24:

“Then they crucified Him and divided His clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get. ²⁵ Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified Him...”

Lack of detail

Now... As I was reading that, did you any notice **anything interesting** about the description that Mark gives here?!?!

Did you notice **something strange** about the way that he **leaves out** the **intricate details** of the cross – Did you notice that?!?!

What is the reason that the cross of Christ is so **un-detailed** in it's description?!?!

What is the reason **for the lack of description** here in Mark's Gospel? – in fact all of the Gospel writers leave out the detail!

What does that mean?!?!

Evening News

Well on one level – the recipients of Mark's Gospel would have been **VERY FAMILIAR** with the idea of crucifixion!

See it was customary for a **condemned prisoner** to be led to His crucifixion sight by means of the **longest possible route** through the city – making it clear **to the greatest number of people** that insurrection toward the Roman Empire is futile!

They would have known all of the gruesome details that a Roman crucifixion would entail!

More than Physical

But on the other hand – Mark leaves this detail out because he has another purpose in mind!

Another purpose in writing this account!

He wasn't interested in describing the **physical** suffering of Christ... because **the physical suffering** was **NOT** the main point!

Mark is interested in the **spiritual** suffering – The **theological** suffering – the **biblical** suffering – what all of the physical pointed toward!

Namely the wrath of a holy God!

There is something more than just **mere physical pain** going on at the crucifixion friends!

Something more than just Jesus dying on a Roman cross!

Divine Displeasure

And that's what Mark is describing for us here in verse 33:

“When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

Spurgeon says there was **midnight at midday!** X2

There is darkness in the land!

And in his book written on the Apostles' Creed – Mark Johnston gives us a helpful reminder of what is going here on in these verses – he says this:

*When Jesus was put to death on a Roman cross, all the Jews had seen Him as accursed – it **wasn't just that** chaos, or confusion, or disorder went on that day; **something more** was filling the air...”*

He says:

*“Here...at the scene of Gol-gotha...the **smell of Divine Displeasure** begun to fill the air!”*

And that's what we see in verse 34 – Divine displeasure was filling **the air at Calvary's hill!**

And the divine displeasure of the wrath of God is seen **most clearly** in 2 main things that Mark points out!

2 things **in the text** that tell us of this Divine Displeasure!

Darkness

Firstly:

The sweeping darkness X2

*“When it was noon, **darkness came over the whole land** until three in the afternoon...”*

This is what John MacArthur calls:

God visiting Calvary

See throughout the Scripture friends **God uses darkness** as a means & method of communicating His holy **fury & wrath** against sin!

Darkness in Egypt

We think for instance of Pharaoh in the book of Exodus:

Darkness covered the whole land of Egypt for three days. And for three days no one could see anyone else or move about. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places they lived.

Amos

In the book of Amos Chapter 8 – the prophet describes an eerie darkness that can only come **as a result** of the Holy Wrath of God:

“And on that day,” declares the Lord; “I will make the sun go down at noon, and [I will] darken the earth in broad daylight...”

Isaiah

And just listen!

Listen to the language of Isaiah here, in chapter 13 verse 9 – listen to this description of the terrifying nature of God:

*“Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation **and to destroy its sinners from it.**¹⁰ For the stars of the heavens will not give their light; & **the sun will be dark** at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.¹¹ & I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity...”*

Wrath upon the Son

Friends, darkness was a **sign of divine judgement...**

And it would seem to me that **this is at the heart** of what’s going on here – Jesus is bearing our sin!

God is visiting Calvary with the judgement & wrath that our sins deserve!

And as He hangs there on that tree – **there is a terrifying darkness** looming upon the face of the earth!

John MacArthur says it like this:

*“The darkness of Calvary **did not represent** the absence of God, but His holy and terrifying presence...as it pleased the Lord to bruise Him...”*

No Good Reasons

See I want you to notice friends – this **divine judgement** comes **at the height of the day!**

Think about it – the darkness that comes... comes at a **time & place** when **you & I** are least likely to expect it!

And because **we know** this was Passover – and because **we know** the geographical location – and because **we know this is probably** happening around spring – there are no good reasons for this darkness!

There are **NO NATURAL REASONS** for this event!

There is absolutely **NO EXPLANATION SCIENTIFICALLY** that can account for this event!

And so **it's almost as if this darkness** comes at a **particular time & a particular place** so that **NO ONE would miss the point!**

No one would conclude that this is a natural event – but a supernatural event!

So that no one would interpret the darkness for something else!

Wrath upon Christ

And so **what is the point** that is being made here by Mark?!?!

What is the theological significance of this divine darkness that is occurring in the land?!?!

Well it's very easy friends!

The divine judgment **of the wrath of God** was falling upon sins at the cross!

And Jesus was bearing that wrath!

And **WE KNOW** that it was falling upon Christ because of what Mark tells us in verse 34!

Forsaken by God

Verse 34 – and the **second sign** of divine displeasure:

“At three [in the afternoon] Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

Now Jesus makes 7 statements on the cross – 7 things that Jesus says and Mark records **just one of them!**

Now I think he does this because Mark wants to bring us to the heart of the Gospel!

He wants to bring us to the main thing the Gospel says!

That Jesus was **wholly forsaken** by God Himself, & exposed to the **full force & fury** of His holy Wrath!

In fact in his commentary on this verse William L. Lane writes the following statement – he says this:

*“Jesus’ cry of dereliction is the inevitable sequel to the horror He faced in Gethsemane – [this cry] must be understood from the perspective **of the holy wrath of God** and the character of sin, which separates us from His presence...”*

Brothers & sisters – **Sin separates us from God!**

Sin is the very **source & substance** of all that **God hates** – and the very **opposite** to all that **God is!**

Did you catch that?!?!?

Sin is the very **source & substance** of all that **God hates** – and the very **opposite in nature** to all that **God is!**

God is Holy – and He cannot look upon sin!

And Jesus was forsaken by God His Father **because of our sin!**

Christ **became sin for us!** So that God Himself turns His face away...

Galatians 3:13:

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law **by becoming a curse** for us—as it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...”*

2nd Corinthians 5:21:

*For He made Him, Who knew no sin, **to be sin for us** so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God!*

This was **the main point** of the cross!

This was the very reason Christ came to die!

This is the heart of the Gospel – the source of our hope!

Jesus Christ was accursed for us!

Not A Split

Now let me say this because this is really important!

This abandonment by God the Father, was NOT one of essence or nature...

There is no rupture in the eternal nature or Oneness of God!

The Trinity is **NOT** being divided here!

Rather as our sin is laid upon Jesus – God the Son died according to His human nature in our place!

There is no enmity between Father & Son here friends – but rather Christ **as our substitute** feels the separation, the distance that sin creates...which signifies that He really did take on the Personal wrath of God!

This is a **simultaneous picture** of the **wrath** of God:

God withdrawing His goodness while at the same time pouring out His wrath!

And that is what we see happening here!

And if you wouldn't mind me getting too theological for just a few more minutes – let me explain to you the process of redemption that is taking place here...

Propitiation & Expiation

The debt that needed to be paid – was being paid by Christ in 2 distinct ways:

1. Propitiation

&

2. Expiation

But what do these terms mean?!?!

Propitiation

Well **Propitiation** is the glorious idea that God's wrath is fully satisfied, because Jesus Himself was a sufficient payment for our sins – Isaiah 53:10:

It pleased the Lord to crush the Son!

Jesus is crushed – God's wrath is appeased: **Propitiation!**

There is no more wrath to be paid for our sin!

Expiation

But then secondly **expiation!**

Expiation is the glorious idea that our sins are **fully & finally** removed **from us** and **placed solely upon** the sinless Son of God at the cross – Isaiah 53:6:

*The LORD has laid upon Him **the iniquity of us all!***

And see those 2 realities friends – **Propitiation & Expiation** are what makes the Gospel Good News!

These 2 things are the very **source & substance** of the cross of Christ!

They stand at the very **heart & centre** of Calvary's hill...

You take these away – you don't have a Gospel!

Without these 2 realities there is no salvation from our sins – no forgiveness for our sins!

We need substitution – we need propitiation – we need expiation!

We need the **wrath of God to fall upon the Son** because **without this wrath** the Gospel is NOT good!

God's wrath is **what makes the Gospel** Good friends!

Because **without the bad News – the Good News – becomes no News! X2**

We need the wrath of God to make sense of the cross!

We need this wrath on the backdrop of Christ's cry...

Guenter Rutenborn

Shortly after the close of World War II, a man in Germany by the name of Guenter Rutenborn wrote a play...

It was originally performed in Berlin, and the crowds of people flocked throughout all Europe to come out & to see this play...

On one level it was an exceedingly disturbing experience – its purpose was to answer the question:

Who was responsible for the Holocaust....

The tone is set in the very first scene as actors made clear that **they were not the ones** responsible...

The house wife for example, she was just trying to make ends meet with a few meagre food stamps that had been given to her...

And the business man, he wasn't responsible; he was just trying to faithfully meet steal quotas for necessary living...

Even the S.S trooper denies any responsibility – he was just following orders & and the commands of his superior officers...

Any blame **therefore must be....** Higher up!

But **what makes this scene** such an **eerie thing** dear friends – was that **in this opening phase – all of the actors** actually walked among the audience of the crowd!

And as the walked they begun to ask the people directly:

Did you know about it?

Did you hear about it?

Were you aware of what was going on?

You could feel the anxiety of these people as these actors walked through the audience asking these questions...

And again, at first all of the actors respond the exact same way:

“I didn’t know what was going on – hadn’t a clue – no idea...”

The second time around however things began to change:

“Well yes, said the housewife I...I... I heard that something may have been going on...”

And the business man in the steel industry he acknowledged that:

“Yes he did know something about train schedules and that there were these certain trains that were always given priority...”

Person after person – story after story – more and more people began to admit **that they knew something** of what was taking place!!!

And ultimately, until finally it’s agreed that ALL OF THEM KNEW – ALL OF THEM WERE AWARE – that they were all in on it **but even at this point** they still said to themselves:

“The blame is higher up; the blame is higher up; the blame is higher up!”

Until finally they all conclude that the blame is to be laid at the feet of God Himself!

God if He really is the one who is **really in charge** and if the holocaust could happen on this planet then **it must be God’s fault!**

So they decide to put God on trial...and God is found to be guilty!

And then someone asks the question:

“What will be the punishment?”

Until one man finally says:

“Let Him be a Jew!”

And then another man suggests:

“I lost a son in the war, let Him lose a Son”

And a third actor responds:

“let Him die an agonizing death as a criminal on the cross...”

Guenter Rutenborn **you see was a Lutheran Pastor** – who was communicating the message that **God bore a debt on the cross** – but **not because He was guilty** – but **because we were!**

Because we are guilty!

Guilty of sin – guilty of treason – guilty of sedition!

And **the only solution therefore** is the fury of God being directed toward Christ in our place!

If you take away His wrath you take away the cross!

The cross cannot make sense without the wrath of God!

Jesus Died & Was Buried

For the wages of sin is death – Romans 6:23!

All those who commit sin **must die from that sin...** because God is holy and He **must punish sin!**

But here's the thing friends!!!

Christ never sinned once!!!

He never once committed sin in His life – because Jesus Christ was sinless!

And so **if Jesus never sinned** – but **Jesus still died** – then Jesus **really paid** for the wrath of God against sin!

It makes sense right!

The wages of sin is death – Jesus never sinned – but Jesus really died – so Jesus bore the wrath!

He died & was buried for our sins!

That's what the authors of the Creed are getting at when they say:

He died & He was buried!

His death and His burial **was the result** that the payment for sin was really made!

He **really died** – He **was really buried**, He **really** took the wrath!

There is nothing more real – nothing more serious than a grave side service in a cemetery!

And that's what we see happening here in verses 37 to 47:

“Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Verse 42:

When it was already evening, because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath), Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who was himself looking forward to the kingdom of God, came and boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had already died. When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph. After he bought some linen cloth, Joseph took him down and wrapped him in the linen. Then he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock and rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb..."

He descended to Hell

He **really died** – He **was really buried**, because He **really** took the full weight & wrath of God!

And **this** (dear friends) is **pre-eminently seen** in the **final clause** of **today's Creed**:

He descended into hell

Today is the day we find out **Rhoi's understanding** of what this phrase actually means... and so here's my 2 minute summary of this line...

Given the **physical torture**:

- The beatings
- The whippings
- The scourging
- The spitting
- The mocking
- The pain
- The anguish

Given the **spiritual suffering**:

- The Abandonment!
- The wrath!
- The darkness!
- The fury!
- The separation!
- The grief!

Given all of these things! – The **mental** – The **physical** – The **spiritual**!

What word would you use to describe that event?

What phrase could we **come up with** that would justify the absolute agonies of the cross?!?!

Any takers?!?

Hell... Hell is **the only reasonable word** that can describe the agonies of the cross!

Hell is the most accurate way of describing to us the events that took place at *Golgotha*...

Listen to Mark Johnston again on the Creed – he said:

The blessed One, who for all eternity had known nothing but the highest heaven of intimacy with God, plumbed the deepest depths of the anguish of hell on the cross...

*The intensity of what that meant is distilled into the words that pierced the darkness when He cried out: “My God My God, why have you forsaken me... this, was **nothing less** than the drama of the **[final]** Day of Judgement being*

played out in human history to show where sin ultimately leads....Christ's cry of abandonment is the preview to the final and eternal alienation of hell & separation from God!"

He was the mediator

And so although He did NOT descend to the **physical, literal** location of hell – He **did descend** to the **depths** of hell!

The full weight & wrath of God was poured out upon the Son which is **literally describing the essence of HELL!**

Hell is the full weight & wrath of God poured out upon the sinner **without a mediator** in your place – Jesus did NOT have a mediator in His place when He died:

He was the Mediator!

He was the absorber – He was the sacrifice...

And so I think Calvin is spot on when he says that the entire section of the Creed – **from Pontius Pilate to crucified, dead, & buried is a sufficient summation** that can only be described in one distinct word:

HELL!

He went to Hell **on the cross!**

He endured Hell **on the cross!**

He descended to Hell **on the cross!**

In order for Christ to take the curse He needed to be accursed for us!

Conclusion

And so brothers and sisters (in the words of John Robert Stott):

*“God does **NOT** love us because Christ died for us – Christ died for us because God loved us!”*

And there are some in the church today, who would deny this love by trying to come up with a method of **explaining away** the judgement of God & Penal Substitutionary Atonement – **DO NOT BE DECEIVED!**

Without the wrath of God – we do not have a Gospel!

The cross no longer makes sense – and all you have is atonement theories that do **NOT** change human hearts...

Do not be deceived friends!!! Penal Substitutionary Atonement **is the heart of the Gospel!**

You take that away – & you do not have the Gospel!

And as I have said (from this pulpit) **over and over again** – you **don't get to define God!**

You don't get to define God and the parameters of which the atonement is set!

God defines God and **our opinions about Him don't matter!**

Because **once our sin** is imputed to Jesus – **He becomes the virtual incarnation of evil itself...**

To such an extent that the Father turned His back on the Son **while at the same time** His fury raged against Him!

His consummate scream of lowliness was **the object scream of the damned!** The scream of abandonment! The scream of hell!

It's one thing to be abandoned by people friends...but to have God Himself turn His back on you **is something beyond the most terrifying thing** in this world – it's the very experience of hell itself... and it's what Jesus endured on the cross for our sins!

His cry on the cross stands as a sobering realities **to all those** who think that keeping God at a distance in this life is a choice worth making!

Unless you come under Christ and under His substitutionary protection, you too will face the full weight & fury of the wrath of God!

Jesus Christ endured our eternal hell, so we could enjoy His endless heaven!

Come to Jesus, come to the cross, and receive the amazing grace of Penal Substitutionary Atonement...

Jesus Christ becoming our legal substitute in order to take the wrath of God!

This is the picture – this is the message – this is the Gospel:

“You shall measure the height of His love... by measuring the depths of His grief...”

Let's pray.

The Apostles Creed – Week 4

Discussion Questions

Main Point: *Jesus Christ endured our eternal hell so we could enjoy His endless heaven*

Read The Apostles' Creed Together

Q1. Why would the authors of the Creed go straight from Jesus' birth to Jesus' death? – Is there anything you would want to add/include in this section of the Creed?

Q2.. Why did Pontius Pilate's name make it into the Creed?

Read Mark 15:1-47 (Entire Chapter)

Q3. (Read Mark 15:6-7; John 18:39-40; Luke 23:18-19). What do we know about Barabbas? – If the Jews knew that Barabbas was an evil man, why would they choose to release him over Jesus? **(Read Mark 12:1-10; Luke 4:16-28; John 1:11).** – What does this tell us about the human heart? **(Read Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23)**

Q4. List all of the ways the account of Jesus & Barabbas point toward the Gospel? – Do the physical sufferings of Christ have any theological significance? – Do they point us toward anything?

Q5. (Read Mark 14:65; 15:16-20; Luke 23). In what ways is Jesus mocked?

Q6. Why do you think Mark's description of the Crucifixion was so scarce of detail? – Is there a purpose in doing this?

Q7. (Read Mark 15:33). All 3 synoptic Gospels mention darkness covering the land – How does Scripture normally talk about darkness over the land – **(Read Exodus 10:21-22; Amos 8:9; Isaiah 13:9-11)?** – If darkness is a sign of divine judgement, where do you think this judgement was falling when Jesus was crucified? – How do we know the judgement was falling on Christ? **(Read verse 34).**

Q8. Why is God's judgement described in terms of abandonment? **(Read Micah 3:4; Isaiah 59:2).**

Q9. (Read Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 27:26). Why was it necessary for Jesus to die on a cross? – Could Jesus have accomplished salvation by dying in some other way? **(Read Hebrews 9:22; 10:4; Read also the Heidelberg Catechism Question & Answer 37-39).**

Q10. In your own words give a brief description of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA)? – What 2 things does Jesus accomplish on the cross? **(Read Isaiah 53:10; 6; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).** – Advocates who are against PSA often refer to it as "*Divine Child Abuse*", how would you respond to such a claim? **(Read Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45)** – What do we lose if we take PSA away from the atonement?

Application Questions

Q1. How has this week's sermon encouraged you to share the Gospel?

Q2. How has this week's sermon encouraged you in your gratitude toward God?

Q3. How has this week's sermon encouraged you in your holiness?

Q4. How has this week's sermon helped you in your personal suffering?

Q5. How would you explain PSA to a non-Christian?

Q6. How would you explain PSA to a child?