

# Substitution: In my place condemned he stood

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[ 0 : 00 ] And again, if you have your Bibles open, we will be in that section of 1 Peter chapter 2 that Steve read for us. We are beginning a new series called Gospel Truths and Gospel Culture.

And we're beginning with a theme of substitution. To borrow that line from Man of Sorrows, In my place condemned he, the Lord Jesus, stood.

And so why this series on Gospel Truth and Gospel Culture? Well, let me begin by thinking about the largest diamond ever discovered in the world. Perhaps you know its name. It's the Cullinan diamond.

It weighed in at some 3,106 carats. Discovered in a mine in South Africa in 1905. Since 1907 has been part of the Crown Jewels.

If you ever want to see it, you can go to the Tower of London. If you ever want to touch it, you will not be allowed to. It's far too precious. But the wonderful thing about diamonds, so I'm told. I've never experienced this.

[ 1 : 04 ] But as you turn the diamond, you see its many facets. You see it refracting the light. However you turn it, you're going to see fresh glimpses of beauty. And so with that in our minds, let's think about the Gospel.

Why are we doing a series on the Gospel and the culture that the Gospel produces? Because it's always good for us as the people of God to slow down and examine the good news at the heart of our faith, the person at the heart of our faith, the Lord Jesus, to let his beauty shine in our lives.

There are, for a church in every age and generation, at least two dangers in this regard. One, we can assume the Gospel, in which case we will probably very quickly lose the Gospel.

We can use Gospel speak without necessarily knowing what it is that we're talking about. So it's good for us to slow down so that we together understand the wonderful reality that is the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus.

But the other danger for us is that there can be a disconnection between the truth that we believe and the lives that we live.

[ 2 : 23 ] There can be a great difference between what we affirm statements of faith with the way that we share our lives together.

And so I want us to take time for the next few months to think about the Gospel and to see how that should shape our culture, our life, our family life together as a church.

I didn't necessarily plan this, but during my sabbatical, that was definitely where God led me. Most of my thinking was about how should the people of God and our life together look different because we believe Jesus is Lord.

So our aim every time that we meet is that as Christians, we would delight again and again in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. And for those of us who are here who are not Christians, that you would be drawn to the Lord Jesus as you come to discover what God in Jesus has done.

and that these Gospel truths would more and more shape how we share life together. That there would be a Gospel culture in our church.

[ 3 : 31 ] And for us to do that, let's go right to the heart of the Gospel. Let's think together about substitution. And our approach today is going to see this great theme largely through the eyes of Peter, the disciple.

So Peter wrote this letter, but it was also Peter who provided the content for Mark's Gospel. So we'll dip into Mark's Gospel a little bit to get a sense of how Peter understands substitution.

Our little section, I think, gave us an insight into why Peter is writing his letter. New followers of Jesus are now facing pressure from Rome.

They're facing opposition. And so what Peter does time and again is he brings to them, here is what God has done for you in Jesus. Here is the good news that has saved you so that, in the case of this little section we just read, that as those believers are united to Christ by faith, they would then follow his example and be ready to suffer for the sake of the Lord God.

So we're going to be in this section, 18 to 25, and I hope it will help us answer three questions. Three simple questions. One, what is substitution? Two, who is the substitute? And three, why do we call substitution good news?

[ 4 : 48 ] So first, what is substitution? And I think at this stage it would be helpful to clarify because I imagine most of us if we hear the word substitute, perhaps we will think in terms of sport.

One player goes off, another player comes on. Or we might think of the classroom. A teacher is unavailable and so there is a substitute who is brought in.

Or maybe you're just thinking of your online supermarket shop. Your product was not available so a substitute product is provided. Now that gets to part of the image but not the whole image.

It's not simply one person taking the place of another. In the Bible, substitution is the idea of one person taking the place of another, bearing their pain and saving the other from that pain.

So perhaps in modern day it might be a better image for us to think about a bodyguard jumping in front of a politician or a president to protect them from a bullet.

[ 5 : 50 ] Perhaps a parent giving their life to save a child from drowning. Those noble acts of loving self, giving sacrifice that we hear about. Well the idea in Peter's mind as he thinks about substitution is drawn from the Old Testament.

And that system of sacrifices given by God always intended to point to something greater. To point to the reality that in God's perfect timing he would send his own son Jesus to be our substitute to die as a sacrifice so that you and I by trusting in him might know salvation.

So we can see this if you look at your Bibles in for example verse 24 Peter speaks of Jesus and he says he himself bore our sins in his body.

A sacrifice language. We can also see it in the quotations from Isaiah 53. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth by his wounds you have been healed.

We can also see it in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 18. For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed but with the precious blood of Christ.

[ 7 : 13 ] When Peter thinks about Jesus the substitute he thinks of that sacrificial work fulfilled by Jesus. So let's think about that together. So every time an Old Testament worshipper went to the temple with a guilt offering or a sin offering a few things would happen.

They would bring an animal with them and that animal would then they would then lay their hand on the heads of the animal to say my guilt and my sin is now being transferred and then that animal would be killed and the blood would then be sprinkled.

And so the message in the temple was clear. That substitute dies for my sin their blood covers my guilt so I can be in the presence of a holy God.

Perhaps we can go since we're going in the book of Exodus in the evenings we can think about the Passover event when God's people Israel were slaves in Egypt and God announced that his judgment was going to pass right through the nation of Egypt.

But in his mercy he said to his people there is a way for this judgment to pass over you and what was that way? They had to take a spotless animal and they had to kill it and they had to sprinkle the blood on the doorpost that they lived in and then the judgment would pass over.

[ 8 : 38 ] Why? Because a substitute has taken their place. And so every Old Testament worshipper understood this but then remarkably in Isaiah 53 God reveals there would be a still greater substitute.

It was never God's intention that an animal could be a proper substitute for a person. So Isaiah 53 God reveals that a man would come the servant of the Lord would come the God man would come and he would be the substitute.

And so we need to see that from beginning to end the message of the Christian faith is not Jesus is my example. Now sometimes where people go wrong they think well Jesus gives me a moral code and he gives me a set of rules and if I try really hard that's what Christianity is about.

No it's not Jesus is my example. Christianity is Jesus is my substitute. I will never understand the Christian faith and its good news until we understand that.

Now let's think of it another way. another way to think about substitution. Substitution in the Bible is presented as the answer to humanity's greatest problem.

[ 10 : 00 ] So naturally maybe especially as we watch the news we check our social media feeds we perhaps typically think our biggest problems lie outside of us.

And there are many aren't they and they are real. The cost of living crisis environmental disasters global conflicts violence on our streets the ongoing impact of pandemic.

So we typically think that the big problems are outside of us and the solutions again by nature we think the solutions are within. They're within us. We have the ability we have the resources we can fix these things we can find the answers.

And what the Bible does is the Bible humbles us because it shows it's the other way around. Because the Bible says time and time again the biggest problem lies inside of us.

It's the problem of our sin before God. It's our rebellion against Him. It's our law breaking. That's the problem. It's the guilt that we have in the eyes of a holy God. It's the fact that by nature because of our sin we stand separate from God.

[ 11 : 08 ] We are enemies of God and we are heading for a lost eternity in hell. That's the biggest problem we all face.

And the solution wonderfully the solution doesn't lie inside of us it lies outside of us in God giving His Son Jesus to save and to forgive and to bring peace.

So the Bible is clear and Peter is clear the heart of the problem is the problem of our human hearts and the sin that lies within. And it's so important for us to recognize these two realities if we are to understand why substitution is good news.

It's important we understand first that we are more guilty and sinful than we realize and secondly that God is more holy and righteous than we realize.

by way of a picture and by way of confession from time to time I find myself digging in the garden sometimes weeding sometimes planting but often maybe some of you can relate to this I find myself quite lazy when it comes time to come back inside forget to take the shoes off can't be bothered to clean my hands and what's the result?

[ 12 : 26 ] you find those telltale muddy footprints all through the kitchen you find the towel that's covered in dirt and grime there are smudges everywhere mud sticks mud affects everything and it's a picture of our own sin and we need to understand that our thoughts our words our actions our motives before a holy God are not pure and perfect and then because God is holy and God is righteous he cannot simply sweep our sin under the rug he cannot turn a blind eye to him he can't say never mind you'll do better next time because if God doesn't care about sin if God does not act righteously then he ceases to be who he is the Bible says he is a holy God he is a just God so he cannot be unjust so then the question becomes how can God be true to himself how can he be both just and loving how can he justly deal with sin and how can he love people like us who are sinners the answer is wonderful the answer is by

God himself providing a perfect substitute by the son of God coming to receive the judgment that we deserve so that sinners might receive pardon that's the heart of the gospel that's the heart of the good news so that's what substitution is next let's think about who is this substitute so we sang in my place condemned he stood so let's think together who is he this one who stood condemned in the place of sinners and again this answer though we may be familiar with it should truly amaze us it's also a way to help us with the question is it fair so sometimes the question is that is it fair that one person should pay for the sins of another and hopefully as we think about who is the substitute we'll go some way to answering that so who is the substitute according to

Peter well look at verse 21 we're given a title there to this you were called because Christ suffered for you Christ is the one in verse 24 he himself bore our sins so let's think who is this Christ that's a title that we find from the Old Testament God's promised king the one who would be anointed given a special role this role to be king and saviour and it's this king this perfect one who is loaded up with sin condemned at the cross and so remember we said at the beginning that Mark's gospel records Peter's testimony to the life of Jesus and when you read in Mark's gospel you discover so much of Peter telling us about the identity of Jesus so verse 1 chapter 1 verse 1 it's the good news his gospel is the good news about Jesus

Christ the son of God so who is this Christ he is none other than the eternal son of God the one who became truly human to be the king and the saviour the world was waiting for and you go through the gospel Mark really divides his testimony into two the first eight chapters are revealing the glory of Christ so we see his amazing miracles here's the one who heals the sick and stills the storm and even raises the dead he is the one with incredible authority Jesus says that he has the authority to forgive sins that he's lord of the sabbath the people are amazed that we never heard teaching like this before and so the first eight chapters he cries astonished by the glory of Jesus in his actions and in his words but then chapters nine to sixteen there's a turn and it's revealed that this same glorious king has come to be the suffering servant spoken of in Isaiah 53 this wonderful king sent by God to be our saviour will die the death of a criminal back to first Peter and three truths about who is the substitute first of all in verse 22 and 23 we discover that

Jesus is a sinless substitute so it begins there he committed no sin all of the actions of Jesus are righteous and holy and good he goes on no deceit was found in his mouth Jesus spoke truth every word that came from his mouth was righteous verse 23 when they hurled their insults at him he did not retaliate when he suffered he made no threats his responses were always perfect and righteous even under the most intense suffering end of verse 23 instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly Jesus in all of his motives desires to do the will of his father his obedience is perfect and complete maybe you find yourself reading the old testament and ask yourself why is there the big emphasis on these animals that are sacrificed having to be pure the answer is because they're representing a perfect pure and holy savior so Jesus is holy and Jesus is sinless because he is the son of God we also discover that Jesus is the sin bearing substitute verse 24 can be described in terms of a great exchange so what happens there he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness there on the cross Jesus becomes sin with our sin so that we might become righteous with his righteousness Peter uses an interesting phrase in verse 24 in the newer version of the NIV it doesn't necessarily pick it up when it says he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross literally he bore our sins in his body on the tree and so again maybe you have the question why is he talking about the cross as being like a tree it's because Peter knows his old testament and he knows in the old testament that everyone who hung on a tree was recognized to be under the curse of

[ 19 : 46 ] God and so Peter deliberately uses this language to show to you and to me that Jesus the perfect sinless son of God was willing to go under God's curse so that you and I might know God's blessing what we discover happening at the cross is that Jesus experiences holy anger against sin from his father so that his people those who trust in him never will third thing to notice about who our substitute is he is a reconciling substitute look at verse 25 for you are like sheep going astray but now you have returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls the image in Isaiah 53 God's people straying into sin the Lord lays the iniquity on him the image of the straying sheep that by nature left to ourselves we are as people separated from God we are in danger we are facing death in our sin but Jesus comes as the good shepherd the good shepherd of Luke chapter 15 who searches for lost sheep in his love and grace who joyfully brings them home to his father he's the good shepherd who in John chapter 10 declares that he knows his sheep and he loves his sheep and he'll lay down his life for his sheep so it's through the cross of Jesus and it's through the work of Jesus the substitute that you and I as spiritual strays as spiritual runaways can be brought home because Jesus in his own body takes the sin and guilt that we deserve he pays the price we should pay and he does that so that we might be called home if we will receive him as Lord and savior the Bible's remarkable message is it's none other than the God man who bore the sins and took the place and faced the judgment for his people Romans 5 verse 8 God demonstrates his love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ this Christ died for us maybe we find ourselves wrestling with this reality Peter who wrote our letter he definitely wrestled with this reality he couldn't see any way that the cross could be Jesus' destiny or Jesus' mission or good news Jesus if you're the king why would you suffer in humiliation but after the resurrection then Peter understands and then substitution becomes the heart of the gospel that he loves and proclaims let me ask you today can you say and believe and rest your hope on this reality he himself bore my sins in his body on the tree so that

I might die to sins and live for righteousness if that's your reality praise god and if not ask for the faith to believe it here is the one who is totally god and totally man hanging in the place of sinners and that reality actually gives the answer to the question is the cross fair can someone pay for the sin of another perhaps we've had that question before and when we think about it in terms of human justice so if we were in a human law court and a judge decided to punish an innocent person instead of a guilty one what would we call that we'd call it injustice wouldn't we but in God's law court by God's design what do we call it when the innocent dies in place of the guilty we call it a miracle of grace we call it the gospel but maybe you ask how can this be and it's because of the identity of Jesus because Jesus is fully

God he is the lawmaker who gives himself for lawbreakers and so we understand in the gospel that substitution and grace are part of God's eternal law court there is a principle of justice and mercy written in eternity that we see at the cross as we close why is substitution good news it's not always good news in a world of sports nobody really enjoys being substituted unless they absolutely have to be you can guarantee if you watch football for a season you will inevitably see at least one grown man having a tantrum having been substituted in our natural pride nobody wants to need a substitute the cultural air that we breathe tells us to achieve and to perform yet substitution is God's way and it's a precious way when we see it in the right way so let's close briefly with three ways it's good news for us all in some ways restating where we've been it's good news when we think about justice when we think about the justice of God since God is holy and we are sinners there is a price that must be paid the bible says the wages of sin is death so there are two options for each one of us either Jesus pays for our sin at the cross or we pay for our sin for all eternity in hell it's our choice and when we understand that then the gospel is good news because Jesus was willing to take our hell so that we don't have to the gospel says Jesus bore sin took death satisfied the demands of holy justice so that when our faith is in Jesus we can know forgiveness and we can have assurance we can look at the cross and say the verdict is already in so it's good news when we think about justice it's good news when we think about salvation do you know that saving grace is unique to

Christianity every other religion every other world view operates based on natural pride and says either I don't need a savior or I can save myself but the reality is that we can never match God's standards and that has never been God's way Mark remember Mark records Peter's view on the life of Jesus Mark records a wonderful detail at the cross of Christ so remember Jesus dies outside of the city but Mark records that as Jesus dies something happens within the city in the temple the curtain is torn in two that barrier separating the holy God from sinful people has been torn in two the message is clear the way back to God is open through Jesus and what he's just done in dying on the cross Jesus on the cross declared it is finished God's plan of salvation has been completed all that we bring is our need and our trust in him and lastly substitution is really good news when we think about the love of God because the message of the cross speaks powerfully of the love of

God remember Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his love and while we were still sinners Christ died for us it speaks of a loving father who gives his son it speaks of a loving son who willingly gives his life so that any of us by trusting Christ as savior might receive eternally J.I.

[ 28 : 23 ] Packer a theologian said the measure of love is how much it gives and the measure of the love of God is the gift of his only son to be made man and to die for sins and so to become the one mediator who can bring us to God this week I came across a story from just after the end of the American Civil War there was a farmer in Tennessee who was observed kneeling at a grave and he was asked is this the grave of your son and the man explained no I was due to go to war but I have a wife and I have seven young children and so the day before I was supposed to go my neighbor's son came and he took my place and he died there and so the man was then asked what is it that you're writing on the tombstone and this Tennessee farmer wrote he died for me love and worship in the

Christian life springs from knowing this reality to be true in our lives the son of God loved me and gave himself for me that's why substitution is the very heart of the gospel let's pray and give thanks Lord our God we thank you that woven throughout the whole Bible is this testimony to your eternal people by sending your perfect sinless son to be the substitute that we need to take our place to take our sin to take the penalty sin deserves so that by your grace and by faith in him we might be forgiven and we might be welcomed into your family we might have peace with you we might have hope in life and death may you give to all of us a growing appreciation of the message of substitution that it would fill us with worship and fill us with a sense of grateful joy we pray in

Jesus name Amen now later