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A Denial of Christ's Substitutionary Death for Sins is a Direct Attack on Jesus Himself!

Within the past few weeks, a good brother of mine from Pennsylvania sent me a link to a You-Tube video made by a false teacher who says that Christ's death was not about satisfying God's wrath. He argued against the teaching that Jesus died in our place to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins. This false teaching (against Christ's substitutionary death as payment for sins) is starting to spread among the local Christian community in Pennsylvania.

Just yesterday, I read an article endorsed by a Christian friend here in Michigan. The author was expressing thoughts that are similar to the ones presented in that You-Tube video I watched several weeks ago. Clearly, the author of the article and the maker of that You-Tube video had been educated in theology, perhaps at some seminary (or should I say "cemetery"). They both seem to rely heavily on teachings of men from the past to shape their theological views (as opposed to the Bible itself). I also noticed that both of these men seemed to be **repulsed**¹ by the doctrine that Christ died as a substitute to take the punishment for our sins. Here is a statement from the article I read yesterday that indicates this:

The theory called Penal Substitution gets its name from the idea that God's anger burns so fiercely that he had to vent his wrath on Jesus as a substitute for humanity. Penal Substitution portrays God as a cruel and unforgiving monster, unable to love as a decent parent should, trapped in his own rules that force him to commit an unspeakable crime. It may be said that in such a view, it is really God who needs forgiveness. Essentially the theory changes John 3:16 to read, "for God so hated the world that he killed his only son."

I brought the author's statement to the attention of my Christian friend who endorsed the website on which the article is found. I told him that this article teaches antichrist heresy. I asked him his opinion. Here is my Christian friend's response:

I guess I haven't seen it as heretical. Particularly as the early church subscribed to ransom theory and substitution was/is newer.

It seems to me that my Christian friend, like so many other Christians, is also letting the teachings of men from the past shape his views rather than lean solely upon what the Bible teaches.

Before moving on, let me point out that his assumption about the early church completely ignores the clear teaching of the authors of the New Testament who led the early church in the beginning. This proves that the doctrine of substitutionary death as punishment for sins is NOT NEWER as my friend mistakenly believes. (Several examples of their statements are included at the bottom of this article which teach the substitutionary death of Christ as payment for sins.) I wonder why so many Christians feel the need to place so much weight on the teachings of men from the past rather than on the Scriptures themselves. I wonder how many Christians read their Bible through each year. It seems to me that if Christians spent more time reading and studying the Bible, they would be more able to recognize error whenever they see it.

The importance of our works of faith and how they do not conflict with the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary death for sins.

Now if you are familiar with my writings, you know that I teach that no person will be glorified just because he holds to a set of sound beliefs. Without works of faith (faithfulness), no man will be glorified. Recently, one Christian man expressed great concern that I was coming very close to preaching a "works-based" salvation. He was very passionate about the doctrine of justification by faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

One of my reasons for writing this article is to show that I fully share this man's passion for the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's work as the substitutionary sacrifice for sins! I wish all people shared his passion for this critical doctrine. From the Scriptures, we know that if a right standing with God could be earned through our attempts to keep the law, we would have no need for the Savior Jesus. Any teaching that suggests we can earn favor with God through our works of law is antichrist! No flesh can be justified as a result of doing "works of law." Apart from Christ's substitutionary death, all people are hopelessly condemned. Only those who trust in His work alone as the **propitiation**² receive remission of sins and eternal life. Everyone else will perish forever.

Notice how I underlined the words "earn" and "earned." This idea is conveyed in Paul's expression "works of law." (See my article ["Works of law vs. works of faith"](#) for more information about this.) Now, I do proclaim that without works of faith, there can be no salvation from God's wrath that is yet to come. But the key is what (and Who) is motivating and accomplishing the

¹ The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (I Corinthians 1:18).

² Christ's "propitiation" is that which fully satisfied God's demand for justice.

[Click this to go back to the free articles and media page.](#)

works. In **Romans 9:30 – 10:4**,³ Paul uses the mindset of the unregenerate Jew to show why works done in attempt to earn favor with God are not considered righteous by Him: *"Because it was not of faith but as though it were by works of law"* (9:32). The unregenerate Jews did not properly comprehend God's absolute righteousness. In their mind, God is less righteous than the Scriptures teach (10:3). In their mind, God can excuse the sins of "good people." They falsely assumed that they were good enough, better than most other people. They also falsely assumed that God can excuse their sins because their sins were not as extensive as most other people. They falsely assumed that they could establish their own righteousness before God (10:3). This is what I mean when I use the word "earn" favor with God (establish their own righteousness).

Any mindset that falsely assumes a person can earn favor with God through "works of law" automatically portrays God as less than absolute in His righteousness. Such a view distorts God's character by making Him out to be less than the holy God that He is. It also puts God in the position of a debtor. This mindset assumes that God owes salvation to the one who earns it by doing works of law. The only thing that people deserve (are owed) is wrath, not favor. Some unregenerate Jews (and Muslims for that matter) may have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge (10:2). Their knowledge is distorted because it fails to recognize that God cannot excuse a single sin, let alone millions of them. If and when a person's knowledge lines up with God's truth, he will cease attempting to earn favor with God. Instead, he will beat his breast and cry out, *"God be merciful to me a sinner."* (See Luke 18:9-14.)

The Jew should have known this by reading his scriptures. Paul pointed this out in Romans 4. It has always been the same. Justification is by faith, apart from "works of law." The Jew should have concluded this by reading about Abraham and David (and others). And now that the fulfillment of the law has come through Christ's perfect obedience, this case is forever closed. Besides the testimony of the law, the prophets and the writings, God has spoken loud and clear through His Son Jesus. When He had purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (See Hebrews 1:1-3.) As a result, let every man embrace the fact that Christ is the termination of the law approach to righteousness (10:4). Those who believe know this!

To attain to the resurrection of the dead, we must continue believing the gospel by trusting in the finished work of Christ alone as God's only Way. We must resist the many false teachings that undermine the gospel. And we must continue to confess with our mouth our allegiance to Christ alone. If we stop continuing in all these things, we are no longer believing the gospel. If that is the case, we must repent, or we will perish.

A few passages that teach the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary death as payment for sins:

Isaiah 53:4 - 54:1 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. ⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. ⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked -- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

John 10:11 & 15 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep..."¹⁵ "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

³ ³⁰What shall we say then? That Gentiles, those who did not earnestly strive for righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness of faith. ³¹But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not attain unto law of righteousness. ³²Why? Because it was not of faith but as though it were by works of law. They stumbled at the stumbling stone. ³³Just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And whoever believes upon Him will not be disappointed." **10** ¹Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation. ²For I bear them witness that they have zeal of God but not according to knowledge. ³For, not comprehending God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ is the termination of a law approach to righteousness for everyone who is believing (Romans 9:30-10:4)

[Click this to go back to the free articles and media page.](#)

John 11:49-52 ⁴⁹ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ "nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

Romans 4:24 - 5:1 It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Romans 5:6-9 ⁶ For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 23-24 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Galatians 1:3-4 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Galatians 2:20-21 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Ephesians 5:2 & 25 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Colossians 2:13-15 ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having remitted you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

Hebrews 2:9 – 10, 14, & 18 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings... ¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil...¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Hebrews 5:8-9 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

Hebrews 9:15-16, 28 For this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.... ²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Hebrews 10:10, 18-20 By that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.... ¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin. ¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

[Click this to go back to the free articles and media page.](#)

Also note, the production of lived righteousness was made possible because there is now no condemnation because Jesus died for us.

Romans 8:1-4 ¹There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, to those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ²For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For God *did* what the law was unable to do in that it was weak through the flesh. He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, (those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit).

There are many other passages that bear witness to substitutionary death for sin. The Passover in Egypt and animal sacrifices are types that teach substitutionary sacrifice. Also, there is the Genesis 22 story of Abraham and Isaac and the ram caught in a bush. Believers know that God has always been communicating to people about what He planned to do with His Son.