



DOCTRINE IN THE REAL WORLD

A Series of Articles written by EFCA West Pastors on How Our Statement of Faith Helps Us Navigate the Challenges of Everyday Life.

The Work of Christ by Steve Sammons

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

There is nothing more foundational to the gospel than the person and work of Jesus Christ. Throughout Church history attacks on the deity of Christ and on the work of Christ are the most common and vicious attacks since they are indeed at the heart of the gospel. In statement 4 on the person of Christ we state that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man. Certainly, the deity of Jesus Christ is well attested in the New Testament; in fact, in Hebrews 1.8 we have the Father addressing the Son as God. In verse 10 the Father addresses the Son as Lord. The existence of Jesus before he came to earth, his participation in creation, and the glory he shared with the Father is throughout the New Testament (John 1.1-5; 17.5; Philippians 2.6; Colossians 1.15-17, Hebrews 1.1-3; 1 John 5.20, and many others). Indeed, the person of Christ as the divine incarnate is well attested to in the New Testament.

This brings us to the work of Christ. When Jesus came to earth: what did he intend to accomplish? Did he intentionally come to die? or, was his death simply an example on how to overcome? Is his death and resurrection absolutely essential?

Certainly, when Jesus came to earth, he taught, he modeled, he trained the disciples, he had compassion, he healed, and many more things. However, he also came to die.

In Matthew 16.13 Jesus asks his disciples who the people are saying that he is. Then in verse 15 Jesus asks who they, his disciples, believe that he is. Peter responds with the classic statement: “you are the Christ, the son of the living God” (Mat. 16.16). Peter is clear on the who of Jesus. However, then in verse 16.21 Jesus begins to teach that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and be raised on the third day. This was such a mind-blowing concept that Peter begins to rebuke Jesus, which earns him his own severe rebuke.

It is important to note that Jesus is the one who foretells his death months before it happens. It wasn't an accident, it wasn't a last-minute idea, it wasn't: “oh my gosh how can we fix this that I am being rejected.” Jesus' death and

resurrection was clearly laid out and foretold by Jesus. In fact, Jesus repeats this in Matthew 17.23 and 20.19. Three times before the Passion week, Jesus clearly foretells his death and resurrection. He came to die. He had a cup of suffering which he had to partake of and clearly knew it yet willingly submitted to it (Mat. 20.22; 26.27, 39, 42.) In fact, both the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter state that this was the plan of God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1.4; 1 Peter 1.20).

Why did he die and pour out his blood? On account of our sin. Jesus died and resurrected make atonement for our sin.

As much as some people may not like it, there are over 20 references in the New Testament which refer to us being saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. I Peter 1.18-19 states: *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 ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* In Revelation 1.5 we read that this revelation is *...from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.* We have been freed from our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ.

I think some people find the cross offensive because we do not want to believe that we are that bad. We don't want to believe that we are so desperate that God himself had to leave the throne room of heaven and come to earth to die for us. But indeed, that is the case. There is no one who is righteous, not even one (Rom 3.10), we are all dead in our trespasses and sins and are by nature objects of God's wrath (Eph. 2.1-3). It is God's mercy expressed through Jesus Christ that saves us and makes us his objects of art (Eph. 2.4-10)

Jesus died on the cross in our place and is the only means of our salvation for at least three reasons: one, we couldn't do it; two, Jesus did it; third, Jesus is God's plan. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is the plan of God for our salvation. Rejecting Jesus is a rejection of God's plan for us.

We are called to respond in faith to Jesus Christ, trusting in him for our salvation.

We must be careful. Those who detract from the work of Christ on the cross inevitably do two things: one, they minimize the devastating impacts of human sin ('everyone sins', 'I am not worse than anyone else'); second, they elevate human effort—you have to be a part of their church, you have to work hard, you have to be a good person.

The reality is if we could have been good enough to get to God on our own, Jesus died for nothing. The apostle Paul makes this clear in Galatians 2.21.

We have two options: we can stand before God clothed in our own righteousness, or we can stand before God clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I figure my odds are much better with Jesus, how about you? Who are you trusting?

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