



Reinforcing Your Faith

Zoom Bible Study
led by Mary Lowman

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Reinforcing Your Faith – Session 6

The Beauty of the Atonement

Introduction

We have talked about and emphasized the importance of knowing and believing that the Bible is God's inspired Word to us. Everything depends on its truth. And last week we discussed the topic of hell. God would be less than good if we regard him as loving but not just. Thankfully God has a plan to deal with evil justly.

The Wrath of God

Romans 1:18:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Romans 2:5:

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

What do these verses tell you about God's wrath? How does it differ from the wrath of man?

"Simply put, without the wrath of God toward sin, heaven would be full of hell" (Childers pg. 218).

The Atonement

Progressive Christians want you to believe that Jesus was killed by an angry mob for "speaking truth to power." They say that Jesus didn't need to die, but he submitted himself to the will of the people.

Any attack on the Cross is an attack on the very core of what it means to be a Christian. So, let's review that once more.

Did Jesus need to die?

There are many passages in Scripture that make it clear that Jesus came down from Heaven, the God-Man, for one purpose: To die for our sins. And he did this voluntarily.

John 10:11, 14 – 15, 17 - 18:

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹⁴"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Jesus gave his life; it was not taken by a crazy mob. He had authority to lay it down or not.

1 Corinthians 15:3 – 5:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

This is called in theological terms *penal substitutionary atonement* and is the one doctrine most commonly rejected by progressive Christians. Here is the truth:

- **We humans are fallen creatures and sinners by nature.**
Ephesians 2:1 – 3: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.
- **Our sin separates us from God.**
Ephesians 2:12: *Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*
- **The consequence of our sin is death.**
Romans 5:12: *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—*
- **Jesus, God incarnate, died for our sins in our place as our substitute.**
Romans 3:23 – 25: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—
- **Jesus paid the price for our sins.**
Galatians 3:13: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”*
- **His sacrifice satisfied the wrath of God.**
Romans 3:24-25: *All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.*

Why do you think Satan tries to deconstruct the faith of people by attacking the purpose of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection?

Throughout the Old Testament we see the need for shed blood to pay for sins.

Leviticus 17:11:

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Hebrews 9:22:

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Peter affirmed that Jesus came to die for our sins:

Acts 2:23: *This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*

At the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread with the disciples and said, "This is my body, which is given for you." When he took the cup of wine, he said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:19 – 20) "Jesus was comparing what his death would accomplish with what the sacrificial death of animals accomplished in the old covenant. He was instituting the new covenant" (Childers pg. 223).

Later that same night he quoted from Isaiah 53:

Luke 22:37: *It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.'*

Clearly Jesus proclaimed that his death was a fulfillment of the prophecy about the Messiah that spoke of God laying the sins of us all upon him.

Isaiah 53:5-6: *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Reconstruction

Alisa writes: “Slowly and steadily, God began to rebuild my faith. The questions that had knocked the foundation out from under my beliefs—the ones I had never thought to ask, the ones I didn’t know existed—were not simply being answered. They were being dwarfed by substantial evidence and impenetrable logic so robust that I felt like a kid in a candy store—who had just found out that candy exists.... The process was not quick” (Childers pg. 227).

Some doctrines are more important for our salvation than others, but it’s still very important for us to know the doctrines of our faith which are given in Scripture.

The essential doctrines of our faith:

1. Human depravity
2. God’s unity
3. The necessity of grace
4. Christ’s deity
5. Christ humanity
6. Christ’s atoning death
7. Christ’s bodily resurrection
8. The necessity of faith

Other important doctrines

- The virgin birth
- The Trinity
- The Bible is inspired and inerrant as originally given

Beliefs that should not divide us:

- Speaking in tongues
- Women in ministry
- Cessation of the gifts of the Spirit
- How baptism is observed

Alisa’s Closing Thoughts

“Today my faith stands strong against the stormy waves of doubt that challenged the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible, and the truthfulness of Christianity. . . I see God’s providential hand orchestrating every situation, guiding every step” (Childers pg.235).

“The strength of evidence for the Christian worldview is so strong that one would have to willfully shut their eyes to it” (Childers pg. 236).

“The anguish of my soul was so profound because what I stood to lose was so substantial. If I believed Scripture was only a story ancient people told themselves about God, I would lose the living words of God... at the end of the day, progressive Christians are the ones who have everything to lose” (Childers pg. 239).

What would you lose if somehow you were totally convinced that the Bible was not true, that Jesus didn’t die for your sins and rise from the grave, and all you have trusted to be true is not? What would you lose?

“We don’t get to completely redefine who God is and how he works in the world and call it Christian. We don’t get to make the rules and do what is right in our own eyes and yet claim to be followers of Jesus. Our only option is to do it his way or not at all” (Childers pg. 240).

Have you made your decision to follow Jesus? And if so, could anything shake your faith?

What next step will you take in building your faith? What can you/will you do to be better prepared to defend your faith?

Childers, Alisa; *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*, Tyndale, 2020.