

VOTC – March 2017

3. A Full Payment by Christ

Hello dear listeners,

Today I'm excited to speak to you about the only way you and I can have hope for beyond this life. When we fell in Paradise, we fell out of favour with God; we broke fellowship with our Creator. And we thereby became sub-human. We became liable to eternal judgment. For God is a God of justice. He is true to his Word. He called for man to trust and obey him, otherwise man will be punished; he will have to provide a payment to cancel his debt.

Well, what does that *payment* need to look like? The payment has to be twofold. The first is the payment needed in order to be released from the kingdom of *Satan*. And it's the payment you're probably most familiar with: someone had to die to pay for sin. Someone has to bear the curse of God against sin. And the ultimate curse is death, as God threatened in Paradise. Yet a *second* payment is also required! Why? Well because man not only needs to be *rescued* from that kingdom of Satan, but he also needs to be given access once again to the kingdom of God. And the way for that to happen is by the *payment* of *obedience*, a righteous life. This is in order to fulfill the *obligation* God had given Adam and Eve in Paradise to obey his Word. So, a double payment is needed: bear the punishment and fulfill the obligation. In other words, and to flip them around, live a righteous life, and suffer God's anger that results in the curse of death.

Well then, could just any man make this payment? Pretty hard to do when every last person is a sinner whose debt continually increases. Psalm 130:3 says, "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" We cannot make the payment of an obedient life because we are disobedient. Yet at the same time, Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul who sins shall die."

So what do we do with all this? We ourselves *cannot* make the double payment for sin, yet we *have to*. In God's design, there was only one way out: through a *substitute*. This substitute had to both man and God. This leads us to the mystery of the gospel. We cannot understand how a person can be true man and true God at the same time. But this is what the Bible teaches was necessary.

Hebrews 2:17 speaks about this substitute. "He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The substitute had to be *like* us, to work *for* us. And he had to do his work in perfect obedience, to satisfy that one part of the payment.

There's more. Even if the substitute were a true, righteous man, that does not mean he would be able to bear the burden of God's wrath against sin. And that's what he had to do! So at the same time he had to be true God, so that with the help of his divine nature he could bear in his humanity God's wrath. It's just that serious. Payment to get anyone out of a hopeless situation could only be one by one who is both man and at the same time God.

Jesus Christ is the only one who satisfies this profile. As Son of God, he came in the flesh. He learned to crawl and walk as other children. He became tired and slept. He wept. He grew too weak to carry his own cross. He was a man of flesh and blood. He had to be. He could never have freed anyone from God's wrath if he had not been one of us.

He was also a righteous human. He was the high priest *without* sin! 1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." He perfectly followed all God's ordinances.

And without a doubt he was also true God. If he had been only a man, he would have been crushed under the weight of God's wrath against sin in a moment. God is infinite, in every

way—in his holiness, mercy, love, grace, and yes, also his holy wrath against sin. An infinite burden can only be lifted by an infinite being. And Christ did that. He carried away the burden. He made the double payment, by living a righteous life, and dying a brutal, God-forsaken death. That's why he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Because his Father, during those three hours of utter darkness, had forsaken him while pouring out his wrath against sin upon his Son.

And so we need to know that Christ made the full, twofold payment. Not only did he suffer and die as substitute, but he also lived as substitute. To say it differently, Christ, throughout his *whole* life, bore God's curse, especially on the cross, and throughout his whole life obeyed the law of God.

So the apostle Paul refers to Christ as the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). He came into the same world as the first Adam. And like the first Adam, he was required to live *by faith*. He had to *answer* God's love by loving him back. He, like the first Adam, was called to dedicate his life to the Lord. But where the first Adam fell, and all humanity along with him, the *second* Adam triumphed. He came to live an obedient life. But for this second Adam, in his obedient life, there needed to be suffering from beginning to end. For not only did he have to do what God had *required* of Adam and all humanity. But he also had to *atone* for the apostasy of Adam and all humanity. He had to pay, both in life and in death. And he did. He did what no other human being could do. As true God, he came to share in our humanity, in order to destroy the one who holds the power of death. He was the *one* creature, born of a woman, who could sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it. This is what it took for our salvation. God's eternal wrath had to be satisfied.

Dear listeners, we come to see in Christ what it means to be truly human. He is the image of the invisible God, Paul says in Colossians 1:15. And he reflected perfectly what God is like. He lived without sin. Christ was faithful, truthful, just like his faithful and truthful Father. And he went to the cross for the sins of the selfish, irritable, hostile, hateful. In Christ you and I get the perfect picture of what it means to be human. His entire life was a *sacrifice* of praise and devotion and love to God. Do you see the comfort there is here? In the first Adam, you and I and all humanity perished. But in the second Adam, there is hope eternal. If you believe in this last Adam, then you may be assured that your *entire life*, from sinful conception forward, was atoned for by the life and death of Jesus Christ. That means that our sinful life is hidden by his obedient, suffering life!

Dear listeners, we are never going to comprehend how Christ is true God and true man in one. But faith accepts also things that are too high for me. In faith, see him for who he really is. He became one of us, in every single way. Except for sin. There is life in this Messiah, who is the greatest gift of God. Tune in next time to hear how his life can overflow into your life. Thanks for listening!