

THE CRUCIFIXION



Part 3:
Crucifixion, Sin, and Evil -
The Crux of the Problem

OPENING DISCUSSIONS

- How do you define "sin?"
- How does the cross deal with sin?



DEFINING THE PROBLEM

- What is the problem to which the death and resurrection of Jesus is the solution?
- What is the ultimate intent of God for humans and for Creation?
- Addressing the wrong problem leads to the wrong answer!



THREE POPULAR WAYS OF MISDIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM

- The “popular” paradigm (Moralistic Therapeutic Deism)
- The “progressive” paradigm
- The “evangelical” paradigm



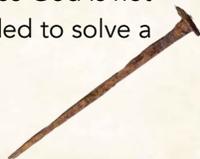
THE PROGRESSIVE PARADIGM

- The goal: “Human flourishing”
- The problem: Humans are not self-actualized and are in need of uplift. Social injustice impedes human progress
- The solution: Using Jesus (and many other moral teachers) as a moral example, humanity will get better and better



THE POPULAR PARADIGM

- The goal: To be happy and to feel good about oneself
- The problem: No problem, really. We’re good!
- The solution: Doesn’t require God, since God is not really involved in one’s life unless needed to solve a personal problem



"The category of sin has been displaced in our time by other categories such as disease, maladjustment, neurosis, deficiency, addiction."

- Fleming Rutledge



THE EVANGELICAL PARADIGM

- The goal: "Heaven" and eternal life in the future
- The problem: "Sin" (bad behavior deserving punishment)
- The solution: An angry God punishes our "sin" by taking it out on Jesus as a sacrificial human in our place



THE "WORKS CONTRACT"

- God told humans to keep a moral code; their continued life in the Garden of Eden depended on their keeping that code perfectly
- Failure would incur the punishment of death
- Humans failed to keep the moral code (made even more stringent in the Law)
- Humans were thus headed to hell rather than heaven



THE "WORKS CONTRACT"

- Finally, however, Jesus obeyed this moral code perfectly and, in his death, paid the penalty on behalf of the whole human race
- The overarching arrangement ("works contract") between God and humans remained the same, but Jesus did what was required
- Those who believe in Jesus benefit from his achievement and go to heaven; those who don't, don't.



"RIGHTEOUSNESS" IN THE WORKS CONTRACT

- Extracted from Romans 1-3
- *dikaioyne*
- The moral status we would have if only we had kept the works contract perfectly (which we didn't)
- The status we can have by faith because, despite our moral failure, Jesus has taken the punishment and so provided this "righteousness" as a gift.



THE PROBLEM WITH THE WORKS CONTRACT

- Is this really the relationship between humans and God that God intended?
- Is this the goal that reflects the actual meaning of Israel's Scriptures and the New Testament?
- The diagnosis of the human problem in the works contract is trivial compared to the real thing!



WHAT THE BIBLE OFFERS IS
NOT A "WORKS CONTRACT"
BUT A "COVENANT OF
VOCATION"

THE BIBLICAL
PARADIGM

- The goal: Renewed human vocation in the image of God within God's new creation
- The problem: Idolatry, leading to human slavery to Sin and Death and the brokenness of God's good Creation
- The solution: The Messiah, the representative of Israel, which was the representative of humanity, enters into the depth of the human condition to deliver humanity and Creation from slavery to Sin and Death so that their vocation can be renewed



THE GOAL: VOCATION

- Genesis 1:26-27 - God creates humans "in his image" with tasks to perform as part of the Creator's purpose for the Creation
- They are to reflect the Creator's wise stewardship into the world and reflect the praises of all creation back to its maker
- The first five days of Creation are a temple-building narrative; on the sixth day, God creates priests for his temple and, on the seventh day, God moves in!



THE HUMAN VOCATION: A "ROYAL PRIESTHOOD"

- We were created to live as worshipping stewards, "a royal priesthood" *within* God's good Creation, rather than as beings who, by moral perfection, qualify to leave earth and "go to heaven" instead
- Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6
- At the end of the Bible, God gives back to the redeemed the vocation they were given in the beginning!



THE PROBLEM: A FAILURE OF TRUE WORSHIP

- Genesis 2: Adam and Eve - the archetypal representatives of humanity
- Human beings, worshipping their Creator, were the key to the proper flourishing of the world
- Genesis 3 - A failure of worship - "You will be like God..." (v. 4)
- The humans gave their worship to that which is not God (Romans 1:18-25) - a failure of vocation



A REDEFINITION OF "SIN"

- *hamartia* - "missing the mark" - What is the mark? The image of God, a full human life of worship and stewardship
- Idolatry hands power and authority (and our worship) to non-divine forces that then enslave us
- "Sins" are the result of our enslavement to these "elemental forces"
- "Death" is the outworking of sin - the ultimate enslaving power (Romans 5:12)



“The reason we commit sins is because, to some extent at least, we are failing to worship the one true God and worshipping instead some feature or force within the created order.”

– N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began* (p. 102)



SIN AS SLAVERY

- Sin is a *verb* - something people perform or engage in, but...
- Sin is also a *dominion* under which humanity exists
- It is so inclusive that there is “no one righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10)
- Sin and Death have the character of universal forces from which no one escapes



“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

– Romans 6:16



"For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, *sold into slavery under sin*. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me..."

Romans 7:14-17



"Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

– John 8:34-35



"You're gonna have to serve somebody."

– Bob Dylan



CHALLENGING THE PARADIGMS

- Sin as slavery negates the idea of human progress - we cannot get there on our own
- Sin as slavery negates Moralistic Therapeutic Deism - we're not that "good."
- Sin as slavery negates the "works contract" - we can never obey the moral code perfectly



"ORIGINAL" SIN?

- Not genetically transmitted or a "disease" that we catch
- We are born into the condition of slavery and we cannot be set free without intervention from the outside
- We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners
- The tragedy is that many are slaves and don't know it.



SIN ON A MACRO LEVEL

- The problem with the "works contract" is that we only tend to think of Sin in individual terms
- But it is a condition that affects all human communities and systems
- The things we should be stewarding and have dominion over begin having dominion over us.



THREE INSIDIOUS EXAMPLES

- "Elemental Forces" of the Universe
 - Money
 - Sex
 - Power
- These are good servants, but terrible masters



"Americans are *slaves* of marketing and surfaces, which we *obey* by investing in them both literally and figuratively (worship). This leads to *death* (people go hungry as the wealthy pursue luxury). Though we fancy ourselves blessed with an array of personal choices, we are not free people, but *slaves to sin*."

- Fleming Rutledge



WE BECOME WHAT WE WORSHIP

- "As we worship, so we believe, and so we live." - Latin proverb
- What are some of the things we worship in our culture, and how are they indicative of our slavery to Sin?



THE DEPTH OF THE PROBLEM

- The forces of Sin, Evil, and Death seek our destruction, usually by our own hand
- Rather than living lives of vocation and purpose, we live in fear, like Adam and Eve after the Fall
- Despite its religiosity, humanity continues in ever increasing cycles of Godlessness - sometimes even in the name of "religion"
- Evil is not "out there" - it's "in here"



THE STARK REALITY UNDER SLAVERY TO SIN

- We are rendered helpless and powerless
- We are stripped of our true humanity
- We are reduced to the status of beasts, seeking to satisfy our deepest urges
- We are destined for death



SO WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

- "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."
- In Jesus, the Creator God gives himself over to the enemy—Sin, and to its greatest weapon—Death
- Jesus was crucified because no other form of execution would have been commensurate with the extremity of our status as slaves under Sin.
- In Jesus, God takes on our Godless state in order to set us free from Sin and Death - "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?"



“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...For our sake he made him to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

– 2 Corinthians 5:17-21



IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES

- The story of the Bible is the story of how the Creator God rescues his people from slavery to Sin and Death so that they might be renewed in his image and reengage their vocation as a royal priesthood
- The story of the Bible is the story of God’s covenant to bring this rescue plan to reality through Israel and through Israel’s ultimate representative and King



IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES

- When we give our worship and allegiance to the crucified King, we are released from slavery to Sin and Death—the powers he defeated on the cross and in the resurrection
- We begin to become the people we were created to be—both now and in the future



NEXT WEEK

- We will explore the Old Testament and the beginning of God's rescue plan that leads to the cross
- We will see how the Gospels understand Jesus' death and resurrection as the fulfillment of that plan



QUESTIONS?
