

GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION — GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2020

“For what I received I passed onto you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures....” I Corinthians 15: 3 (NIV)

Down through the years and centuries, one of the basic truths of all Christian churches has been a core teaching of Good Friday— “Christ died for our sins.” But— what does this mean? Over those same years, Christians and Christian leaders and thinkers have had several different explanations of what that means, “Christ died for our sins.” To give you something to consider over this Good Friday— Easter weekend, when you may be shut in more than usual because of the current Pandemic, consider these different understandings of that phrase.

“The death of Christ is a catalyst to reform society, to change the behavior of individuals and people as a whole, into more loving, forgiving persons, more concerned about their fellow human beings, influenced by the example of Christ’s life, teaching, and death.” This view of Christ’s death for us is often called the Moral Influence theory, and makes a good argument that the willingness Jesus Christ had for dying on the Cross should profoundly re–shape the way we treat other human beings, for the better.

One of the oldest, and therefore closest in time to the writing of the New Testament, is the Ransom theory. Origen, a Christian historian and theologian of the 3rd century, was perhaps the first to explain this theory of Christian belief. A recent writer sums it up: “Essentially, this theory claimed that Adam and Eve sold humanity over to the Devil at the time of the Fall’ hence, justice required that God pay the Devil a ransom, for the Devil did not realize that Christ could not be held in the bonds of death.” ¹

A very classic, and widely agreed upon view for many Christian thinkers and denominations, is the Christus Victor theory of the Atonement of Christ. “In this theory, Jesus Christ dies in order to defeat the powers of evil (such as sin, death, and the devil) in order to free mankind from their bondage.” ² This is what the apostle Paul was saying in I Corinthians 15: 24– 26, as he concludes *“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”* Of

course, the apostle was thinking about not only the death of Christ on the Cross, but of his Resurrection, also.

There have been several other Bible based theories of what it means that “Christ died for our sins,” but ponder these ideas today and in your prayers. Remember that whatever your exact understanding might be, the everlasting truth is that “Christ died for our (and that includes YOU) sins.” Remember to pray for our health professionals in our country, and around the world, as they put themselves in harm’s way to combat this COVID– 19 virus and it’s deadly effect for many. The doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other hospital workers are the real heroes in our world today. Pray for God to bless them and their loved ones, and to keep them strong and healthy. We are praying for your and your loved ones, also. May God bless you all this Easter weekend.

P.S.: If you are curious about these different views about Christ’s death for us, read the short article referenced below. You might want to look up the references that he suggests, if you like reading ancient Christian theologians like Athanasius, Origen, and Anselm of Canterbury.

1 “7 Theories of the Atonement Summarized,” by Stephen D. Morrison (Internet article by an established, published author).

2 Idid.