

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-11-11 PM NOTES
"BORN TO BE THE MEDIATOR"
1 TIMOTHY 2:5-6
#1 in Series, "Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary"

1 Timothy 2:5-6 is "the key, not merely to the New Testament, but to the whole Bible, for they crystallize into a phrase the sum and substance of its message."
—J. I. Packer

I. The Crisis (v. 5)

Job 9:2b (NASB) "... but how can a man be in the right before God?"

Job 9:12 (NKJV) "If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'"

Job 9:32-35 (NKJV) "³² For *He is* not a man, as I *am*, *that* I may answer Him, *and that* we should go to court together. ³³ Nor is there any **mediator** between us, *who* may lay his hand on us both. ³⁴ Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not let dread of Him terrify me. ³⁵ *Then* I would speak and not fear Him, but it is not so with me."

"Men are opposed to God in their sin, and God is opposed to man in His holiness."

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A. The Holiness of God

Habakkuk 1:13a (NKJV) "*You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness."

B. The Sinfulness of Man

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Ezekiel 18:4b (NKJV) "... The soul who sins shall die."

II. The Cure for the Crisis

Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV) "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

A. The Ability of Christ

B. The Accomplishment of Christ

Mediator—a "go-between" who stands between two parties who are at odds and unites the parties.

Job 9:33 (NKJV) "Nor is there any mediator between us, *who* may lay his hand on us both."

III. The Cost for the Cure (v. 6)

A. The Ransom

B. The Recipient of the Ransom

Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV) “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

Hebrews 9:14 (NKJV) “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NASB) “¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

“The glory of the gospel is this: the one from whom we need to be saved is the one who has saved us.”

—R. C. Sproul

“Divine love triumphed over divine wrath by divine self-sacrifice.”

—John Stott

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There is perhaps no better time in the whole year than Christmas to share the gospel with people who do not know Christ. There is an openness around Christmas that we don't find any other time in the year. I believe that Pastors miss a golden opportunity when they focus on only on the birth of Christ instead of focusing on who He was and why He came. The birth of Christ was a means to a great end. No one was or is saved by Christ's birth. We should focus on the fact that the **cross**, not the **manger** is the center of Christianity. At Christmas, in our personal witness, in Sunday School lessons, and in messages from the pulpit we must connect Bethlehem (where He was born) to Calvary (where he made atonement for our sins). Today we are beginning a series that will continue around Christmas time until I die or retire (the Lord willing). The title is “Connecting Bethlehem (where He was born) to Calvary”. Here are some messages we will be looking at during the Christmas season for the next several years (unless God leads differently): “Jesus Was Born to Take the Wrath of God for Us”, “Jesus Was Born to Bring Us to God”, “Jesus Was Born to Become Our Righteousness”, “Jesus Was Born to Take Away Our Condemnation”, “Jesus Was Born to Give Us Access to the Holiest Place”, “Jesus Was Born to Free Us from the Slavery of Sin”, “Jesus Was Born to Free Us from the Fear of Death”, “Jesus Was Born to Secure Our Resurrection from the Dead”, and many more. Do you see what I mean by connecting Bethlehem to Calvary? No one is saved by Jesus' birth. Those who are saved are saved because He bore our sins and suffered the wrath those sins deserved on the cross at Calvary.

Today, we are focusing on one of the most important passages in the Bible when it comes to the person and work of Christ. Bible scholar J. I. Packer said that 1 Timothy 2:5-6 are “the key, not merely to the New Testament, but to the whole Bible, for they crystallize into a phrase the sum and substance of its message” [Quoted in C. J. MaHaney, “Christ, Our Mediator”, P42]. Let's look at Christ, our mediator.

I. The Crisis (V5)

The fact that Christ is our **mediator** presupposes that there is a problem. Perhaps the problem is best summarized in the Old Testament book of Job. Job is going through unimaginable suffering. In chapter 9 we hear a cry of despair from Job. He says in *Job 9:2b (NASB)* “...But how can a man be in the right before God?” He proceeds to talk about the power and the awesomeness and the sovereignty of God, and then he says in *Job 9:12 (NKJV)* “If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'" Then, he summarizes the problem in *Job 9:32-35 (NKJV)* ³² "For *He is* not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. ³³ Nor is there any **mediator** between us, *who* may lay his hand on us both. ³⁴ Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not let dread of Him terrify me. ³⁵ Then I would speak and not fear Him, but it is not so with me." Job saw the need of a mediator. Since Job knew of no mediator, you can see the despair coming through this passage. Let's make sure that we understand the problem. J. I. Packer summarized the crisis that necessitates a mediator when he said, “Men are opposed to God in their sin, and God is opposed to man in His holiness”.

A. The Holiness of God

The very essence of the nature of God is absolute holiness. Every other attribute of God is in a sense included in His holiness. His love is a holy love. His wrath is a holy wrath. His mercy is a holy mercy. The meaning of the word “holy” is somewhat difficult to grasp. Perhaps the words “transcendent” and “separate” best describe what the Bible means by holiness when it is applied to God. The word “transcendent” means to rise above something. God is above and superior to and separate from His creation. I have noticed something disturbing in some otherwise good and biblically accurate contemporary songs. One song that has some excellent and Scriptural words regrettably says, “You are the air I breathe”. No, He created the air I breathe, but He is transcendent, holy, and above the air I breathe. To equate God with His creation is the false religion of Pantheism (“pan” = all; “Theos” = God).

Not only is God transcendent, he is separate from His creation, and He is especially separate from His creatures' sin. **Habakkuk 1:13a (NKJV)** "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness..." To be holy is to be pure and separate from sin. God's holiness is of such magnitude that in heaven when we see the angels worshipping Him, they are not crying out "Love, love, love"; they are not even crying out, "Mercy, mercy, mercy". They are crying out "Holy, holy, holy". Because God is perfectly and completely holy, He is transcendent with regard His creation and He has a hatred for sin and cannot even look upon sin and must judge sin with its only appropriate punishment – death.

B. The Sinfulness of Man

Here is the crisis. A holy God could never just ignore man's sin. If He did, He would be unjust. There is an old saying that when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. God's holiness and justice demands that God's wrath be poured out on man's sin.

I am not sure that the depth of the sinfulness of mankind has ever been comprehended by a mortal man. Sin is so prevalent and so offensive to a holy God that there are multiple words in the Scripture that are translated "sin". One word means rebellion. Sin is an all out rebellion against the will of God. We may call it making a bad decision, or a mistake, but in reality sin is rebellion. Another word for sin means lawlessness. Sin is when we disregard God's laws and go our own way. Another word for sin is to miss the mark. Our mark is holiness which is the essence of His glory, but the Bible says in **Romans 3:23 (NKJV)** "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory [holiness] of God". Yet another word for sin is translated "iniquity". It means deviation from or the perversion and twisting of standards. It is the twisting of the Scriptures, nearly always to justify something we are doing or want to do. Because God so hates sin (all sin; sin of every type), the punishment is death – separation from God. **Ezekiel 18:4b (NKJV)** "...The soul who sins shall die." It does not say that "the soul who sins will feel bad". It does not say "will have it rough". It says "DIE". Sin is **deadly serious** to God. Sin is rebellion against a holy, holy, holy God. The soul who sins will die.

When we begin to see the depths of sin in humanity and the offence that sin is to a holy God, then the greatest mystery in the universe is not why suffering exists. The greatest mystery in the universe is why God would show mercy on and choose to save anyone. Until you get a glimpse of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, you will never be amazed and eternally grateful for the love, grace, and mercy of God.

From a human perspective, there is a crisis. How can a holy God and sinful man ever be reconciled without God being unjust?

II. The Cure for the Crisis

If there was ever going to be a provision to solve this crisis, God would have to be the one to take the initiative because man, after sin came in, was spiritually dead. **Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)** "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins". Remember that sin brings death and a dead man can do nothing about anything. If anything was to be done, God had to mount a rescue mission. God's provision for our rescue was and is a person – the Lord Jesus Christ, the baby born in Bethlehem's manger!

A. The Ability of Christ

To rescue us, Christ had to be **willing**, but that wasn't enough. He also had to be **able**. Several years ago in many of the newspapers was the story of a Grandmother taking care of her little two year old granddaughter. The little girl fell into a swimming pool and even though the grandmother didn't know how to swim, she went in after her in an attempt to rescue her. Tragically, they both drowned. The grandmother was willing, but she was not able. Philippians 2:5-7 tells us that Jesus, knowing what it would cost, was willing to empty Himself and come to a cross to rescue us. But being willing was not enough. He had to be able. Being able meant that He who was God had to become man because only man could be a substitute for man. Jesus then was uniquely qualified to be our Savior because He alone was fully God and fully man.

B. The Accomplishment of Christ

Most people in America know **how** Jesus died. They have seen the movie, “The Passion of the Christ”. What they don’t know is **why** He died – what was accomplished. The key is in that word, “Mediator” (Read Verse 5). **A mediator is a “go between” who stands between two parties who are at odds and unites the parties.** “Mediator” is from a word meaning “middle”. A mediator is one who comes into the middle between two estranged parties. Since there is only one God, there is only one mediator. This mediator answers the cry of Job’s heart in **Job 9:33 (NKJV)** “Nor is there any mediator between us, *who* may lay his hand on us both.” Jesus, being God knows what it is to be perfectly holy, and what it is to be man, but without sin. He alone can lay His hand on both God and man and be the mediator. He alone can bring about reconciliation. When we think about a mediator, we sometimes get the picture from the business world when there is a conflict between labor and management. I majored in Economics in college and I remember taking a course in labor economics where we studied how to mediate when there was a conflict between labor and management. The professor was a nationally known mediator. In the typical labor management conflict, each side feeling wronged by the other makes compromises and concessions with the help of a neutral party (mediator) to come to some kind of a mutual agreement that neither is totally satisfied with but both can live with. That picture is nothing at all like the kind of mediation needed between holy God and sinful man. The only similarity is that you have two parties in opposition. In this situation, only God has been offended. He is without fault and without blame, and He will not compromise His holiness or His justice. Man is totally guilty and in reality was not even seeking to be reconciled. It is God who had to take all of the initiative. Only when there is conviction by the Holy Spirit is there a longing in man to be reconciled.

There is a crisis and the only cure for the crisis is Christ.

III. The Cost for the Cure (V6)

The cost for the cure was so high we cannot even begin to comprehend what it cost God.

A. The Ransom

Verse six calls the price that Jesus paid a “ransom”. The word “ransom” is in the Greek, “antilutron”. “Lutron” is the normal word for the redemption price of a slave. It was the price to purchase a slave with the intention of setting him free. The prefix “anti” speaks of substitution and means “instead of”. It means that Jesus Christ did not just pay the ransom price; He was the ransom price! He gave Himself in our place as our substitute to free us, to redeem us from the slave market of sin. Notice the sufficiency of this ransom. It was “for all”. That describes the sufficiency of His payment. Jesus shed blood (the ransom price) was sufficient to pay for every sin ever committed and to free every sinner ever born. We know that while it was sufficient, not every sin or every sinner will be ransomed (set free). In other words we do not believe in universalism (every one will eventually be saved). We could say that the ransom price was **unlimited in its sufficiency**, but **limited in its application** to those who believe. The cost of Jesus being our mediator, the One who could bring us to God, was His giving of His own life – the shedding of His blood.

B. The Recipient of the Ransom

Just as there can be confusion when we apply the meaning of mediator in the business world to Christ being our mediator, even so there can be confusion when we apply the commonly held meaning of ransom in our culture to the payment that Jesus made on the cross. It is not like a ransom paid to a kidnapper to free the kidnapped person. That would have the ransom price being paid to Satan and would put Satan in a place of sovereignty and have Jesus dying to propitiate or satisfy the devil. That is a road we can quickly see that we don’t want to go down. It was a theory held by some in the early church that was wisely discarded. Christ shed His blood to defeat the Devil, not to pay him off! The focus here is not on who gets the payment, but it is on the fact that He gave Himself as the payment. If we are pressed to answer the question, “To whom was the payment given”, the answer is to God! **Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV)** “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice **to God** for a sweet-smelling aroma.” **Hebrews 9:14 (NKJV)** “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot **to God**, cleanse your conscience from dead works

to serve the living God?” Our sin is against God. He is the one who must be propitiated (satisfied). It is true that sin put us in slavery to Satan, but when Jesus died, Satan didn’t receive a ransom payment; he was defeated! **Hebrews 2:14-15 (NASB)** “¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” R. C. Sproul said, “The glory of the gospel is this: The One from whom we need to be saved is the one who saved us.” John Stott put it this way, “Divine love triumphed over divine wrath by divine self-sacrifice” [Both quoted in Mahaney, P 43].

This testimony of God’s love was given in exactly the right time. Galatians 4:4 calls it the “fullness of time”. At Christmas we celebrate that the mediator came at just the right time to bear testimony of the love of God in that what we could not do by keeping the law, Romans 8:3 says that God did it for us by sending His Son to die for us. That death was a ransom for our sins.

CONCLUSION

The baby whose birth we celebrate at this time of the year was the eternal God who became man. After 33 years of living a sinless life, fully keeping the written law of God, He shed His blood on a rugged cross taking upon Himself the wrath of God as our substitute and a ransom for our sin. As God and man, He alone could lay His hand on God and on us and reconcile us as the one mediator between God and man. (2778)