



THE ATONEMENT



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For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:22-24)

The Law

All men are born in guilt. We are all born with a sin nature and sin naturally.

through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation (Romans 5:18)

he who does not believe is condemned already (John 3:18)

he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

We are born "by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Eph 2:3) and so we find ourselves as under the guilt of the law. We are not told that we were born under guilt by nature, we received no letter or tract telling us we were born under the guilt of the law but when we read the Scriptures, then we understood. We are absolutely guilty before God.

This is our relation to the law. The law is holy, the commandment holy and just and good. But I am a sinner, sold under sin. I am utterly unable to keep the law though obedience to the law is required of me, yet I cannot even begin to obey. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (Rom 8:7)

The law has its strict demands for obedience and its strict requirements for those who are disobedient.

The Sin

The Unity

There is a unity among sin since it all flows from Adam's primal sin

Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation (Rom 5:18)

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners (Rom 5:19)

The unity of the sin is that it all flows from Adam's first sin. His first sin was my first sin. And our first sin was the same, we are all guilty of Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit. All of my sin flows from that first sin. It has it as a root. Your sin has Adam's sin as the root in your sin. Everything we do flows from that one sin. There is no sin of man that does not have Adam's first sin as the root. Therefore, there is a unity to our sin. Your sin and my sin have the same root. For by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners and continued in sin.

Separation from God

Sin is a turning away from God. God is good but sin is a setting of something else in the place of God and making a god of that thing. Our sin does not hurt God but rather it hurts ourselves, and continues the wrath of God upon us.

But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. (Pro 8:36)

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

Sin is therefore separation from God.

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid [his] face from you, that he will not hear. (Isa 59:2)

The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous. (Pro 15:29)

Our sin turns us away from God and separates us from Him. Sin offers a confusion to the mind of who or what is God and what our duty is before Him. Sin when we engage in it makes God seem small and far and when sin is engaged in too much the Lord disappears from view. It doesn't take much – we are easily prone to wander in this wild field. We sense in our minds that the Lord must be made quiet, that He must not be allowed to interfere. We make the separation ourselves between ourselves and God by our sin. The unbeliever is completely unable to distinguish the true God from the untrue. To him it even makes no difference because his sin has separated him from God –

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes. (Psalm 36:1)

This is the common situation that there is no fear of God before the eyes of the unbeliever. What does that mean? Where there is no fear, there is no obedience – where there is fear, there is obedience: “If ye will **fear** the LORD, and serve him, and **obey** his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God” (1 Samuel 12:14).

There is an infinity to our sin.

Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God. We count transgressions but we ought not to forget about the want of conformity for it is the far greater portion of our sin. For it is these sins of omission which really sink us. Even when I am talking with people on the streets, I sometimes need to bring this in, that there is a commandment which judges us more harshly than any other.

That is, we sin CONSTANTLY by NOT obeying the commandment, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment” (Mar 12:30). There is never a moment of the day when we love the Lord as we ought. Therefore there is never a moment when we obey the law as we ought. Even if we sit and do nothing we are not sinless because we are not loving the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. We fall so far short of that on a continuous basis that it absolutely condemns us.

There is therefore an infinity to our sin. We sin all the time. Between every two moments of our sinning, there is more sinning, and between every two closer moments, there is more sinning. There is never a moment when we are not sinning greatly before the Lord. Between any two times are an infinite number of times and we are guilty at every one. Our guilt is not of a few sins here or there but of the constant stream of guilt that proceeds from our not obeying the great commandment.

The one against whom we sin is infinite. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3). It is against the greatness of the Lord that we sin. It is against all His strength that we sin. It is against His might that we conduct ourselves in our sin. "*there is no searching of his understanding*" (Isa 40:28) expresses the greatness of the God against whom we sin. We conduct ourselves in a most unworthy manner before Him and in His presence and before His face we are sinful.

Therefore our sin has two kinds of infinity about it. There is the infinity of a continuous stream of sin ever divisible into finer and finer moments, an infinite stream of moments. And there is the One against whom we sin: infinite, eternal and unchangeable. His greatness is unsearchable and He is worthy of all honor and praise and yet it is against HIM that we sin.

The Sacrifice in the Old Testament

Five Types of Sacrifice

Burnt Offerings are presented in Lev 1. Here we have the whole creature offered to the Lord. It was to be without blemish. 'Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. (Lev 1:4) "Then the priest shall bring *it* all and burn *it* on the altar; *it is* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD." (Lev 1:13) The whole thing was burnt before the Lord: 'And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that [is] on the fire upon the altar; (Lev 1:12).

Grain Offerings are presented in Lev 2. We will skip this because there is no blood.

Peace Offerings are presented in Lev 3. The peace offering shall be without blemish. He shall lay his hand on the head of the creature. Verses 9 and 10 indicate that "its fat *and* the whole fat tail" shall be offered and "the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove;" (Lev 3:10). Here is a partial offering of certain parts of the animal. It was probably made after the other offerings on the same fire.

Sin Offerings consist of "a young bull without blemish" (Lev 4:3) and the person shall "lay his hand on the bull's head" (Lev 4:4). In this case, the whole bull shall be carried outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned. (Lev 4:12) "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD [in anything] which ought not to be done, and does any of them, (Lev 4:2) hence all such sins as spring from the weakness of flesh and blood, as distinguished from sins committed with a high (elevated) hand, or in haughty, defiant rebellion against God and His commandments.

Trespass Offerings These were presented for special sins, by which a person had contracted guilt. Three kinds of offences are mentioned in this section requiring trespass-offerings. First if a person touches any unclean thing and he is unaware of it, he also shall be unclean and guilty (Lev 5:2). And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these *matters*, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that *thing*; and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed. (Lev 5:5-6a) and also "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. "And he shall bring to

the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him regarding his ignorance in which he erred and did not know [it], and it shall be forgiven him. "It is a trespass offering; he has certainly trespassed against the LORD." (Lev 5:17-19)

These four sacrifices are somewhat confusing. When would a person offer one sacrifice vs another? Fortunately we don't need to worry about it too much because the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. But these worst of these four blood sacrifices were given as a type of Christ's death. Mostly they have the same common elements. From this set we can extract the following:

1. The beast must be without blemish.
2. The hands of the person are laid on the head of the creature.
3. The animal is killed. Its blood is sprinkled around the altar.
4. The wrath of God is turned away
5. The person goes absolutely free.

Whether the beast is taken outside the camp or not is an interesting question. Christ was taken without the camp:

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. (Heb 13:11-12)

The Day of Atonement

The two goats

The interesting thing that happens in the Day of Atonement is with the two goats. Lots are cast for the two goats that are brought before Aaron, the High Priest:

"Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. (Lev 16:8)

That is, the two goats are brought and Aaron casts lots for them, to decide one to be sent into the wilderness and the other for the offering before the Lord:

"And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it [as] a sin offering. "But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, [and] to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness. (Lev 16:9-10)

"The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Lev 16:22)

"The bull [for] the sin offering and the goat [for] the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy [Place], shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. (Lev 16:27)

This shows the nature of the atonement to be two-fold – there is the removing of our sins and the appeasing of God. There is expiation and propitiation. Expiation is the removal of our sins as represented

by the goat going into the wilderness carrying the sins of the people. The goat was taken and left far away from where people dwelt and it bears the iniquities of the people to an uninhabited land.

The second aspect of our sin situation is that God is displeased with us and his attitude toward us needs to be changed. It is the other goat which engages the Lord and changes His attitude. The goat is offered as a sin offering and burned outside the camp. It is the blood of the animal that covers the sin of the people.

The Necessity of Blood Sacrifice

'For the life of the flesh [is] in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it [is] the blood [that] makes atonement for the soul.' (Lev 17:11)

And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb 9:22)

It is blood sacrifice that is critical. There is no sacrifice without the shedding of blood.

For [it is] not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. (Heb 10:4)

But the blood of bulls and goats is really of no value to us. The prophet Micah presents the idea, what are we offering to the Lord? Thousands of rams? Ten thousand rivers of oil? The first born? None of those is adequate for our sin.

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Mic 6:7)

The question of all this is who should die for us? We look at the whole Old Testament system and we are led to notice the inadequacy of it. What is the blood of bulls and goats for the sin of mankind? How can their death count of any value for me, who are made in the image of God? The creatures are not created in God's image and therefore their death has no particular value. So, we look to a future sacrifice.

Psalm 22

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? (Ps 22:1)

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mat 27:46)

Here is the very heart of the gospel, the separation of the Father and the Son. That is the penalty of sin – separation from God and therefore that is what is born by Christ on the cross. The Lord is far from the wicked and Christ, though perfectly righteous, was wicked with our wickedness. He was separated from the Father as the primary penalty of sin.

Now the Father could not separate Himself from His Son, since He is equal with His Son, and they are infinite, eternal and unchangeable – together, identical. But the creature what was on the cross could have the Father turn His back upon Him and He could know what it means to be forsaken.

Isaiah 53

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Is 53:6)

But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isa 53:5)

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Isa 53:10)

This chapter is obviously about the crucifixion of the Lord. It is marvelous, marvelous chapter with some amazing verses but we don't have time to cover it.

The Death of Christ in the New Testament

The Imputation

Christ was perfectly righteous. This corresponds to the animal being without blemish.

The sins of men imputed to Christ. This corresponds to the hands being placed on the head of the sacrifice.

Christ bore the wrath of the Father for the sins of men. Here is the marvel and the glory of the atonement. Christ bore the wrath of the Father for the sins of other men,

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Here is the central truth of the gospel – that Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree. And we then are dealt with as perfectly righteous because Christ's death makes us that way. His death takes away all our guilt. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom 8:1). For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3).

The Penalty

The Full Penalty

in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen 2:17)

The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23)

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor 6:9-10)

The full penalty of the law involves eternal death, eternal separation from God. The death at the end of this life is not the final death. Adam might have thought that temporal death was the end but it had to become clear that there was another death. For both the seemingly righteous and the seemingly unrighteous die in this life and there is no difference among men.

The Scripture speaks of “their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched” (Is 66:24) and that is obviously beyond this life, into the next. Jesus warned of the future judgment:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: (Mar 9:43)

So, we understand that hell is an eternity separated from God, that is separated from all that is good.

The Idem (the Same) vs. the Tantundem (Just as Much)

Christ so took and bore our sins, and had them so laid upon him, as that he underwent the punishment due unto them, and that in our stead: therefore, he made satisfaction to the justice of God for them. But did Christ bear the same penalty that we are due? His death on the cross and the period of darkness especially was only three hours. The time that he complained about the forsakenness by God was perhaps only a moment. Those who will spend time in hell spend an eternity there. There is no end to their separation before God. How did Christ bear our sins on the cross in a few hours?

Now there is a false view of the Tantundem, here expressed by Richard Baxter:

But Christ having paid the Tantundem and not the Idem, the Value and not the strict debt, this satisfaction the Father might have chosen to accept, or to have discharged us upon Christ's Offerings : which yet because he freely doth, therefore is his gracious and properly called Pardon. [Baxter, Aphorisms of Justification]

This expresses the view that Christ's death did not pay for all our debt in just the same way as it is due because it is the gracious pardon of the Father which accepts the person. It is the pardon of God which makes the difference between the work of Christ and the complete atonement. This caused John Owen much grief, however, and caused him to write:

That the law was relaxed as to the person suffering, I positively assert; but as to the penalty itself, that is not mentioned. Of these two things alone, then, must be our inquiry: — 1. Whether Christ, in making satisfaction, underwent that penalty that was threatened to the offenders themselves? 2. Whether the penalty, though undergone by another, be not the idem of the obligation?

For instance, we have “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,” (Gal 3:13) which makes clear that we are wholly redeemed – not just partly redeemed – from the law. That is, Christ's death completely removes all of our guilt,

It was a full, valuable compensation, made to the justice of God, for all the sins of all those for whom he made satisfaction, by undergoing that same punishment which, by reason of the obligation that was upon them, they themselves were bound to undergo. When I say the same, I mean essentially the same in weight and pressure, though not in all accidents of duration and the like; for it was impossible that he should be detained by death. [Owen, Death of Death]

This seems good but it is the accident of duration that we are talking about wherein the death of Christ is not like our separation from the Father for all eternity. Christ's separation from the Father was for a short time and that is the main difference that we can see.

Though our punishment and suffering should have been eternal, because we could never out-satisfy; yet the sufferings of Christ, because of the dignity of the person, *God-man*, were perfectly satisfactory in a short time.

A Mediating Position

Here it may be queried whether the Lord Jesus Christ underwent the very self-same punishment that we should have undergone, or only that which did amount and was equivalent thereunto? To which I answer, that in different respects both may be affirmed. The punishment which Christ endured, if it be considered in its substance, kind, or nature, so it was the same with that the sinner himself would have undergone. But if it be considered with respect to certain circumstances, adjuncts, or accidents which attend that punishment, as inflicted upon the sinner, so it was but equivalent, and not the same. The punishment due to the sinner was death, the curse of the law, upon the breach of the first covenant. Now this Christ underwent, for "he was made a curse for us," Gal. 3:13. The adjuncts attending this death were the eternity of it, desperation going along with it, etc. These Christ was freed from, the dignity of his person supplying the former, the sanctity of his person securing him against the latter; therefore in reference unto these, and to some other things already mentioned, it was but the equivalent, not the identical sufferings. [Thomas Brooks. The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures (p. 96).]

The Condemnation

We conclude that Christ did bear the condemnation that was due to all of us. "The free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Rom 5:16). "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor 1:23). For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mar 10:45)

Without Blemish

but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1Pe 1:19)

"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed [Himself] to Him who judges righteously; (1Pe 2:22-23)

Expiation

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (Jhn 1:29) So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb 9:28). Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1Pe 2:24) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree: (Gal 3:13)

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (1Co 15:3) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Eph 1:7 KJV)

Propitiation

Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (Rom 3:25)

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Rom 4:25)

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world. (1Jo 2:2 KJV)

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (1Pe 3:18)

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. (Eph 5:2)

Conclusion

We believe that Christ died for our sins – the just for the unjust. What does it mean? It means that He, in those few hours on the cross, bore the entire wrath of God that was due for those sins. Here we have two marvels – that God allowed a Substitute and that our Substitute could bear the full wrath of God in a few hours for us.