

THE ATONEMENT

Heidelberg Catechism:

Q: *What is your only comfort in life and in death?*

A: *That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil.*

*Man seems to know, in his inmost nature, that he must bring a sacrifice if he would appear before God; and this is, by no means, an error on his part. However erroneous may be the form it takes, in its essence there is truth in it.*¹⁰
(Charles Spurgeon)

*The atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation.*¹¹ (Wayne Grudem)

*Historically understood, Christ's atonement gives hope to Christians in their sin and in their suffering. If we have any assurance of salvation, it is because of Christ's Atonement; if any joy, it flows from Christ's work on the Cross. The Atonement protects us from our native tendency to replace religion with morality and God's grace with legalism. Apart from Christ's atoning work, we would be forever guilty, ashamed, and condemned before God.*¹²
(Mark Dever)

The Cause of the Atonement¹³

1. The Love of God

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)

2. The Justice of God

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6-7)

¹⁰C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*. Vol. 46. "Priest & Victim" (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1900), 446.

¹¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 568.

¹²J.I. Packer and Mark Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 102.

¹³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 568.

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

... whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25-26)

Both the love and the justice of God were the ultimate cause of the atonement. It is not helpful for us to ask which is more important, however, because without the love of God, he never would have taken any steps to redeem us, yet without the justice of God, the specific requirement that Christ should earn our salvation by dying for our sins would not have been met. Both the love and justice of God were equally important.¹⁴ (Wayne Grudem)

The Necessity of the Atonement¹⁵

There are two great reasons why men do not see the necessity of the atonement; these are inadequate views of sin and inadequate views of God.¹⁶ (John Broadus)

The atonement was not absolutely necessary, but, as a "consequence" of God's decision to save some human beings, the atonement was absolutely necessary. This is sometimes called the "consequent absolute necessity" view of the atonement.¹⁷ (Wayne Grudem)

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, **if it be possible**, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26)

It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:21)

Therefore 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. (Hebrews 2:17)

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4)

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest

¹⁴Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 568.

¹⁵Ibid., 569.

¹⁶John Broadus, "Necessity of the Atonement", *The Reformed Reader*, accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.reformedreader.org/rbs/broadus/broadus10.htm>.

¹⁷Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 569.

enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26)

The Nature of the Atonement¹⁸

Q: What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace?

A: To keep the whole law for his people, and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

Jesus obeyed the Father in our place and perfectly met the demands of the law. And he suffered in our place, receiving in himself the penalty that God the Father would have visited upon us.¹⁹ (Wayne Grudem)

1. Active Obedience (Christ's obedience for us)

Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience to God in order earn righteousness for us.²⁰ (Wayne Grudem)

Christ's full obedience to all the prescriptions of the divine law...[making] available a perfect righteousness before the law that is imputed or reckoned to those who put their trust in him.²¹ (Robert L. Reymond)

... and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Philippians 3:9)

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

The Lord Christ fulfilled the whole law for us; He did not only undergo the penalty of it due unto our sins, but also yielded that perfect obedience which it did require... Christ's fulfilling of the law, in obedience unto its commands, is no less imputed unto us for our justification than His undergoing the penalty of it is.²² (John Owen)

2. Passive Obedience (Christ's sufferings for us)

Christ took on himself the sufferings necessary to pay the penalty of our sins.²³ (Wayne Grudem)

Christ's willing obedience in bearing all the sanctions imposed by that law against his people because of their transgression...[being] the ground of God's justification of sinners (Rom. 5:9), by which divine act they are pardoned..."²⁴ (Robert L. Reymond)

¹⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 570.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Robert Reymond, "Imputation of Christ's Righteousness," *Monergism.com*, accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.monergism.com/taxonomy/term/32410/all>.

²²John Owen, "Imputation of Christ's Righteousness," *Monergism.com*, accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.monergism.com/taxonomy/term/32410/all>.

²³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 571.

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:3-6)

Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.” (Matthew 26:38)

And they crucified him... (Mark 15:24)

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. (Hebrews 5:8)

What type of sufferings did Christ experience on the cross?²⁵

1. Physical pain and death
2. The pain of bearing sin
3. Abandonment
4. Bearing the wrath of God

Penal Substitutionary Atonement:

*As Jesus bore the guilt of the sins of our sins alone, God the Father, the mighty Creator, the Lord of the universe, poured out on Jesus the fury of his wrath: Jesus became the object of the intense hatred of sin and vengeance against sin that God had patiently stored up since the beginning of the world.*²⁶ (Wayne Grudem)

*The heart of the Gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.*²⁷ (Charles Spurgeon)

1. Substitution

*Substitution is a broad idea that applies whenever one person acts to supply another's need, or to discharge his obligation, so that the other no longer has to carry the load himself.*²⁸ (J. I. Packer)

... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

²⁴Robert Reymond, "Imputation of Christ's Righteousness"

²⁵Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 572-576.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 574-575.

²⁷Charles H. Spurgeon. *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*. Vol. 32. "The Heart of the Gospel" (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 385), 1886.

²⁸J. I. Packer and Mark Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, 69.

2. Penal

To add this 'qualifier' ...is to anchor the model of substitution...within the world of moral law, guilty conscience, and retributive justice. Thus is forged a conceptual instrument for conveying the thought that God remits our sins and accepts our persons into favor not because of any amends we have attempted, but because the penalty which was our due was diverted on to Christ.²⁹ (J.I. Packer)

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring...out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:10-11)

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:23-25)

Therefore 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. (Hebrews 2:17)

The notion which the phrase 'penal substitution' expresses is that Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory. To affirm penal substitution is to say that believers are in debt to Christ specifically for this, and that this is the mainspring of all their joy, peace and praise both now and for eternity.³⁰ (J. I. Packer)

Other views of the Atonement in contrast with Penal Substitution³¹

1. *The ransom to Satan theory:* the ransom that Christ paid to redeem us was paid to Satan
2. *The moral influence theory:* God did not require the payment of a penalty for sin, but Christ's death was a way for God to show how much he loved humanity by identifying with its suffering
3. *The example theory:* God did not require the payment of a penalty for sin, but Christ's death provides an example for us on how we ought to trust and obey the perfect will of God, even when it leads to death
4. *The governmental theory:* the purpose of Christ's death was God's demonstration of the fact that his Laws had been broken. He is the moral lawgiver, and the governor of the universe and there must be a penalty paid. Christ did not die in the place of sinners but merely to show that when God's laws are broken there must be punishment of some sort

²⁹J. I. Packer and Mark Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, 77.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 581-582.

Understanding the Atonement³²

1. We deserve to die as the *penalty* for sin.

To pay the penalty for our sins, Christ died as the perfect *sacrifice*.

2. We deserve to bear God's *wrath* against sin.

To remove us from the wrath of God we deserved, Christ died as a *propitiation* for our sins.

3. We are *separated* from God by our sins.

To overcome our separation from God, Christ provided *reconciliation* for us with God.

4. We are in *bondage* to sin and to the kingdom of Satan.

To release us from our bondage, Christ *redeemed* us from the ruling power of sin and Satan.

How can a right understanding of the atonement strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the atonement strengthen our missional activity?

³²Ibid., 579-580.

THE RESURRECTION

*Christianity stands or falls with the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The whole of New Testament faith and teaching orbits about the confession and conviction that the crucified Jesus is the Son of God established and vindicated as such “by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness.”*³³ (Paige Patterson)

Theological Significance of the Resurrection³⁴

1. Christ’s resurrection insures our regeneration.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

... even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:5-6)

*When Jesus rose from the dead he had a new quality of life, a “resurrection life” in a human body and human spirit that were perfectly suited for fellowship and obedience to God forever. In his resurrection, Jesus earned for us a new life just like his.*³⁵ (Wayne Grudem)

2. Christ’s resurrection insures our justification.

... who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (Romans 4:25)

*When the Father in essence said to Christ, “All the penalty for sins has been paid and I find you not guilty but righteous in my sight,” he was thereby making the declaration that would also apply to us once we trusted in Christ for salvation. In this way, Christ’s resurrection also gave final proof that he had earned our justification.*³⁶ (Wayne Grudem)

3. Christ’s resurrection insures that we will receive perfect resurrection bodies as well.

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. (1 Corinthians 6:14)

... knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. (2 Corinthians 4:14)

...but in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:12-28)

How can a right understanding of the resurrection strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the resurrection strengthen our missional activity?

³³ Paige Patterson, “The Work of Christ,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 590.

³⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 263-265.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 263-264.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 265.

THE ASCENSION³⁷

1. Christ ascended into Heaven.

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. (Luke 24:50-51)

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11)

2. Christ received glory and honor that had not been his before as the God-man.

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (John 17:5)

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. (Acts 2:33)

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. (Philippians 2:9)

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12)

3. Christ was seated at God's right hand (Christ's session)

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3)

... that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church. (Ephesians 1:20-21)

... who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. (1 Peter 3:22)

The purpose of this session at the right hand of the Father specifically relates to intercession in behalf of those who have inherited salvation.³⁸

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)

³⁷Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 617-619.

³⁸Paige Patterson, "The Work of Christ," 590.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

Christ presents Himself before God as our representative. His perfect manhood, His official character, and His finished work, plead for us before the throne of God. All that the Son of God as incarnate is, and all that He did on earth, He is, and did for us; so that God can regard us with all the favor which is due Him. His presence, therefore, is a perpetual and prevailing intercession with God in behalf of His people, and secures for them all the benefits of His redemption.³⁹ (Charles Hodge)

Theological Significance of the Ascension⁴⁰

1. Since we are united with Christ in every aspect of his work of redemption, Christ's going up into heaven foreshadows our future ascension into heaven with him.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

2. Jesus' ascension gives us assurance that our final home will be in heaven with him.

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:2-3)

3. Because of our union with Christ in his ascension, we are able to share now (in part) in Christ's authority over the universe, and we will later share in it more fully.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-6)

How can a right understanding of the ascension strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the ascension strengthen our missional activity?

³⁹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*. Volume 2 (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1872), 592.

⁴⁰Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 619-620.

*Our Lord Jesus is His people's representative. When He died for them, they had rest; when he rose again for them, they had liberty; when He sat down at His Father's right hand, they had favor, and honor, and dignity.*⁴¹

Charles H. Spurgeon

⁴¹Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*. Complete and unabridged; New modern edition. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), Evening April 21.