

The Atonement (Pt. 2)

Tom Pennington, February 25, 2018



CHRISTOLOGY
The Atonement

I. The Necessity of the Atonement

1. It was not absolutely necessary to the character of God to save anyone at all.
2. Once God had determined to save a people for his Son, the death of Jesus Christ became absolutely necessary.



II. The Cause of the Atonement

A. His own Character

1. His Justice
2. His love
3. His gracious will in electing sinners to salvation

B. His own Glory



A. False Theories of the Atonement

1. Ransom to Satan
2. The Recapitulation Theory
3. The Satisfaction (or Commercial) Theory
4. The Moral Influence Theory
5. The Example Theory
6. The Governmental Theory



B. The Biblical Doctrine

- Wayne House: “Christ’s death was a vicarious (substitutionary) sacrifice that satisfied the demands of God’s justice upon sin, paying the penalty of man’s sin, bringing forgiveness, imputing righteousness, and reconciling man to God.”
- Alan Cairns: “the satisfaction of divine justice by the Lord Jesus Christ in His active and passive obedience (i.e., His life and death), which procures for His people a perfect salvation.”



Christ's Atonement Consists of...

1) Christ's obedience

- Active obedience
- His 33 years of righteous living

2) Christ's sufferings

- Passive obedience
- His suffering and dying for our sins



The Nature of His Suffering:

1) Penal

- Relating to punishment for breaking the law
- Having to do with God's law



Penal

Man's Standing before God

1. Deserving of immediate punishment and undeserving of God's goodness
2. A slave to sin and under the curse of the Law.
3. At war with God.
4. Under God's wrath
5. Without personal righteousness

God's Provision at the Cross

1. Common Grace
2. Redemption – release from the bondage of sin and curse of the Law.
3. Reconciliation – “the removal of the enmity between God and the sinner, and the establishment of a new relationship of peace and friendship between them.”
4. Propitiation – the appeasement or satisfaction of God's just wrath against sinners by means of an atoning sacrifice.
5. Justification – the establishment of a sinner in a righteous standing before God.



Penal

- John 11:50-51- it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation.
- Rom. 5:8-9 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
- Tit. 2:14 - who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.
- 1 Pet. 3:18 - Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;



The Nature of His Suffering:

2) Substitutionary or Vicarious

- Substitution = "the act of taking the place of another"
- Vicarious = "endured by one person substituting for another"
- Charles Hodge: "According to this doctrine the work of Christ is a real satisfaction, of infinite inherent merit, to the vindictory justice of God; so that He saves his people by doing for them, and in their stead, what they were unable to do for themselves, satisfying the demands of the law in their behalf, and bearing its penalty in their stead; whereby they are reconciled to God, receive the Holy Ghost, and are made partakers of the life of Christ to their present sanctification and eternal salvation."



A Brief Defense of Substitution

- a) The nature of the Old Testament sacrificial system pictured the work of Christ as substitutionary.
- Lev. 1:4 - 'He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.'
 - Lev. 16:20-22 - "When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 21 "Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."
 - Lev. 17:11 - 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'



A Brief Defense of Substitution

- b) Many passages describe the transfer of human guilt for the violation of God's law to Christ.
- Is. 53:6 - All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.
 - Is. 53:12 - He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.
 - John 1:29 - "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
 - 2 Cor. 5:21 - He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - Gal. 3:13 - Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.
 - Heb. 9:28 - Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time.
 - 1 Pet. 2:24 - He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.



A Brief Defense of Substitution

c) The use of the Greek prepositions *huper* and *anti* in connection with the work of Christ.

- ***huper***

- “For the benefit of” or “instead of”
- In many passages “for the benefit of” makes no sense:
 - E.g., 1 Cor. 15:3 - I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
- In some it must mean “instead of or in the place of”
 - E.g., 2 Cor. 5:20-21
- Rom. 5:6-8; 8:32; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 2:9; Gal. 3:13; John 11:50; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15, 20-21; 1 Tim. 2:6



A Brief Defense of Substitution

c) The use of the Greek prepositions *huper* and *anti* in connection with the work of Christ.

- ***anti***

- Only means “instead of” or “in the place of”
- Matt. 2:22 - when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.
- Matt. 5:38 - You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'
- Matt. 20:28 - the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
- Mark 10:45 - "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."



Recommended Resources on... “The Extent of the Atonement”

- *Biblical Doctrine* - John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue
- *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her* - Ed. David Gibson & Jonathan Gibson
- *The Death of Death In the Death of Christ* - John Owen



IV. The Extent of the Atonement

- The Two Orthodox Views Agree...
 - 1) Not everyone will be saved.
 - 2) A free offer of the gospel can be made to every person who has ever lived.
 - 3) There are universal aspects of the atonement.
 - 4) Christ's substitutionary death is sufficient to save all men who have or ever will inhabit this planet.



IV. The Extent of the Atonement

- Three Views...

- 1) He died in the place of every sinner to provide an actual salvation for every person.

- Universalism

- E.g., Rob Bell, the neo-liberal, in *Love Wins*.



IV. The Extent of the Atonement

- Three Views...

2) He died in the place of every sinner and provided a potential salvation for every person.

- Cf. 1 Tim. 2:6 - [He] gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.
- Cf. 1 John 2:2 - He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those* of the whole world.



IV. The Extent of the Atonement

- Three Views...

3) He offered His life as a propitiation to the Father to satisfy God's wrath for a specific group of people.

- Limited atonement, definite atonement, or particular redemption



Limited or Unlimited?

- There are clearly unlimited aspects to the death of Christ.
 - E.g., common grace (Rom. 3:24-25)
 - E.g., the universal offer of the gospel (Rev. 22:17)
- But for whom did Christ die—in the mind of God?
- What was the divine design of the atonement?
- What did the death of Christ actually accomplish?
- For whom did He substitute?



Arguments for Limited Atonement

- a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.



a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

i) Scripture speaks generally of an eternal, Trinitarian plan of salvation...

- Eph. 3:11 - *This was* in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,
- 2 Tim. 1:9 - who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,
- Acts 2:23 - this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.
- Acts 4:27-28 - "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.



a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

ii) Scripture speaks of Jesus obeying the Father's will to accomplish that plan.

- John 10:18 - "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."
- Heb. 10:7 - "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'"
- John 17:4 - "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.
- Phil. 2:8 - Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.



a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

iii) The Father promises to reward the Son once He completed His assigned work.

- Ps. 2:7-8 - "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'⁸ 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.



a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

iii) The Father promises to reward the Son once He completed His assigned work.

- Is. 53:10-12 - The LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.



a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

iii) The Father promises to reward the Son once He completed His assigned work.

- Phil. 2:9-11 - For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



a) It is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

iv) As part of the eternal plan, the Father chose specific individuals whom He gave to the Son and on whose behalf the Son was to accomplish redemption.

- Eph. 1:4 - He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.
- John 6:37-40
- John 10:14-15, 29
- John 17:1-3, 6, 9, 24



Arguments for Limited Atonement

b) Many passages speak of Jesus' offering Himself for a specific group.



Jesus Died for a Specific Group

- Matt. 1:21 - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
- Mark 10:45 – "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
- Eph. 5:25 - Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
- Acts 20:28 - "Shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
- 2 Cor. 5:19-21



Arguments for Limited Atonement

- c) Those passages used to argue against limited atonement do not prove the point.
- i) “Christ died for all.”
- 2 Cor. 5:14-15
 - 1 Tim. 2:3-6
 - 1 Tim. 4:10 - It is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.
 - 2 Pet. 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.



Arguments for Limited Atonement

c) Those passages used to argue against limited atonement do not prove the point.

ii) “Christ died for the world.”

- John 3:16
- John 1:29
- 1 John 2:2 - and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.
- 2 Cor. 5:19



Arguments for Limited Atonement

d) Only a definite atonement is consistent with divine election.

- John 17:9 - "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;
- 2 Tim. 1:8-10

e) Only a definite atonement is consistent with the biblical concept of substitution.

