

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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ATONEMENT

Andy Baker

I will forever remember my brother and God’s servant, Chuck Horner, sitting in my Bible class. I, being a “green” Bible student, was talking about the Day of Atonement. Brother Horner raised his eyes with a twinkle and told me, “Brother Andy, you’re saying it wrong....” I thought “ah-TOHN-ment” was the correct pronunciation. He said, “it is in fact ‘AT...ONE...ment.’” I have never forgotten that, nor have I ceased in my preaching and teaching from saying it both ways.

The word atonement is used 99 times in the Bible. Tellingly, it is only ever used in the Old Testament. The closest relative in the New Testament is the word “propitiation” used only a handful of times (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:1, 4:10). By far and away, the book that uses the word most is Leviticus (45x out of 99 in the New King James Version). As an observation, in a book like Leviticus describing how a sinful man can approach a holy God, it is wonderful that the word “at-one-ment” is used at all. The word itself means, “to purge; to make reconciliation; to pacify.” As to meaning, atonement is overwhelmingly used in its various Old Testament contexts as “covering over” something; specifically and almost exclusively, it covers over sin. Look at four fascinating facets of atonement:

It involves perfection. The requirements of God in the sacrifices of the Old Testament involved very strict standards, usually having the caveat, “without blemish” (Ex. 12:5, 29:1; Lev. 1:3, 10, 3:1 etc.). The looking for the perfect sacrifice would be done because of the requirement of God for atonement.

It involves sacrifice. Atonement could never happen except for the willingness of the individual to give something that would cost something (cf. 2 Sam. 24:24). It did no good towards atonement if the individual had a sheep or bull which was perfect if it was not sacrificed. In order for

there to be atonement, something must die as an offering (Lev. 1:3).

It involves acceptance. God’s Old Law mediators, the priests, would be the first in line to evaluate the offering and make sure it was according to the standards of God before the sacrifice would take place and it would be accepted by God (Lev. 1:4). God is the One who ultimately gives His approval for an acceptable offering (cf. Mal. 1:8).

It involves satisfaction. God in His righteousness must punish sin and must judge the guilty. Yet, when God accepts the sacrifice, “at-one-ment” happened in the Old Covenant

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

MARCH 2023

THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Atonement ANDY BAKER	1
Justification CODY WESTBROOK.....	2
Redemption RANDY ROBINSON.....	3
Propitiation JOEY DAVIS.....	4
Reconciliation RICHARD D. MELSON.....	5
Forgiveness MICHAEL LIGHT.....	6

JUSTIFICATION

Cody Westbrook

It may be called, perhaps, the “Divine dilemma.” Jehovah is absolute in His holiness and therefore can have nothing to do with sin (Hab. 1:13). Sin, in fact, stands as a barrier between God and man (Isa. 59:1-2). It is a violation of God’s law (1 John 3:4) and, because God is absolute in His justice as well as His holiness, He must punish it (Rom. 3:23). And yet, this is not His desire. He “is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). He “desires all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4) so that “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:18). But how can this be? How can a holy God forgive sinful humanity while staying consistent with His nature? The answer lies within the Bible’s word, justification.

The words “Justified” and “Justification” belong to the same family of Greek terms as the words “Righteous” and “Righteousness.” The term is primarily legal in nature. In classical Greek it “relate[s] to the law court and the act of acquitting or vindicating someone. It has to do with the innocence or virtue of a person. But more broadly it has to do with the norm of any relationship.”¹ The idea would be to “set right” or “hold or deem right.”² In the New Testament the word is most often used in the sense of being declared “free from all charges.”³ Consider passages such as Romans 3:20, 24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, and 9. Justification, then, is the legal standing that results from the process of being justified.⁴ When one violates God’s law he stands before the Judge of all the Earth (Gen. 18:25) guilty as a condemned criminal (cf. Rom. 3:19). The Judge may then justify him, or declare him to be righteous, or acquitted from all

charges set against him. The sinner no longer has to endure the penalty due him for his transgression. The process is commonly described as being declared “just-if-I’d-never-sinned.”

Justification is the key point of the book of Romans, in which Paul not only defines the concept but also explain how it is made possible. Justification is not something that can be accessed on humanity’s terms. Romans 3:19-20 says,

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, for by the law is knowledge of sin.

The Jewish mentality was that right standing before God could be attained by the flesh. That is, by law keeping⁵, observing traditions, circumcision, physical connection to Abraham, and many other forms of “dotting the I’s and crossing the T’s,” Paul made clear that such was not the case. No amount of human ingenuity can trigger the process of justification. Rather, right standing before God is “through faith in Jesus Christ” (Rom. 3:22) as we are “justified freely by His grace” (Rom. 3:24). God has a system, or process, by which He declares men to be right, and that is the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). God’s righteousness (Rom. 1:16; 3:22) has to do with the way that God makes men right as opposed to any system, or process, invented in the mind of man. The gospel is designed to produce an obedient faith within man as it is proclaimed (Rom. 1:5; 10:17). Man then responds in faithful obedience (Rom. 3:28; 4:5; 6:1-11) at which point God declares him to be justified (just-if-I’d-never-sinned). This is made possible by His grace. Jehovah was not indebted to save, He chose to do so and thus offered the plan and terms of pardon to humanity. Those who

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Justification,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988) 1252.

² Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 429.

³ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 249.

⁴ Wayne Jackson, *Justified by Faith*, Christiancourier.com.

⁵ This is not meant to imply that are under no law or that law unimportant today (cf. Gal. 6:2).

suggested that justification is earned or that man is required to do nothing whatsoever, gravely err.

Another term that should be considered alongside justification is propitiation. Romans 3:24-26 teaches that we are “justified freely by His grace” through Christ “whom God has set forth to be a propitiation...” “that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Consider again the dilemma with which this discussion began. God’s character demands that transgression be punished, and yet He desires not to punish but to pardon—to declare humanity, the spiritual criminal, to be free from all charges. But how can the Judge declare the criminal to be free from all charges and continue to be a just? Imagine one who committed a grave crime against you being acquitted. Any judge who would do such a thing we would rightly describe as unjust because transgression demands punishment (Rom. 6:23)! Propitiation is the answer. The term means “wrath appeaser.” Jesus stood in our place and absorbed the penalty for our sins. Jehovah can pardon us from the penalty of sin because Jesus endured it on our behalf. Thus God can justify while still being just.

The process and result of justification can well be seen in Romans 5:1-2. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Justification is that act by which God declares man to be right, acquitted from all charges. That declaration occurs when man responds “by faith”—that is not approaching God on man’s terms, but on God’s, and responding to His terms obediently. The result is a peaceful, harmonious relationship with God. The enmity which existed because of sin has been done away. Therefore, we stand, having gained access into “this grace”—the ability to be right with God—and we rejoice. Thank God for the ability to stand before Him “just-if-I’d-never-sinned.”

CW

REDEMPTION

Randy Robinson

The late, great Curtis Cates once described redemption as “the center and circumference of the Bible.” Indeed the entire Bible revolves around what we often refer to as the “scheme of redemption.” While the English word,

“scheme,” often denotes something nefarious, it is simply synonymous with the word “plan.”

When the first man and woman sinned in the Garden of Eden by eating the forbidden fruit, God gave them a glimpse into His plan for redemption (Gen. 3:15). However, subsequent Bible passages inform us that God had formulated this plan even before Creation (Eph. 1:3-7; Rev. 13:8).

The English word “redemption” and its root word “redeem” are from a Latin word meaning to “buy back.” This writer is old enough to remember taking empty soda bottles to the grocery store where they could be redeemed for money or a discount on more soda. The same concept applies if one were to take a possession to a pawn shop for money. The pawn broker gives the customer a certain amount of money for the item and the customer has a certain amount of time to redeem or buy back the item for the amount that he received plus the interest that has accrued. If he fails to do so in the allotted time, the pawnbroker becomes the owner of the possession and can sell it for whatever he wishes.

In the Old Testament, the concept of redemption was applied to land that was lost. If land was lost to cover a debt, there was a provision in the Old Testament whereby the original owner could redeem or buy back the land or a “kinsman redeemer” could also purchase the land. Boaz is perhaps the most prominent Old Testament example of the “kinsman redeemer,” who redeemed the land that Naomi had sold and also married Ruth in conjunction with the Levirate marriage law (Ruth 4:1-12).

God required redemption for the firstborn. He claimed the firstborn of man and beast. In exchange for the firstborn, God claimed the Levites for His service (Num. 3:45). When the firstborn outnumbered the Levites by 273, those remaining had to pay five shekels to the priesthood, Aaron and his sons, for their redemption (v. 47).

According to Vine’s, the Hebrew words *padah* and *gaal*, are “both used of deliverance from adverse circumstances: *padah* of deliverance from adversity itself [and] *gaal* of deliverance from oppression and violence.” Both words also speak of deliverance from captivity as well as from death.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “redemption” is *lutrow* (and other forms of it), and is used to convey redemption in both a physical and spiritual sense. Most first century Jews believed the Messiah’s objective was to liberate or redeem them from Roman oppression (Luke 24:21). However, Jesus plainly told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), indicating this redemption was of a spiritual nature as confirmed by Paul

when he reminded Titus that Jesus, “gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity” (Tit. 2:14).

We may compare this spiritual redemption of all of mankind with the physical redemption of the fledgling nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In both cases, we see that something of value was lost. The family of Jacob went to Egypt where, at first, they enjoyed favor as a result of the high esteem that Pharaoh held Jacob’s son, Joseph. However, over time as this family experienced amazing growth, the Egyptians came to fear them and eventually a new Pharaoh assumed the throne who had no regard for the contributions that Joseph and his family had made to the Egyptian economy (Ex. 1:8), and they moved to enslave them. Hundreds of years before this, the first couple, Adam and Eve, fell from grace in the Garden of Eden through disobedience and their innocence and perfect fellowship with God was lost (Gen. 3:1-24). Next, we see also that there was a price that had to be paid. For Israel, God required a year-old unblemished lamb to be slain and eaten and its blood sprinkled on their doorposts (Ex. 12:1-13). Peter wrote that the price of our spiritual redemption was “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Finally, we note that there is a power to be overcome. For Israel, it was the mighty nation of Egypt, whom God humbled through a series of plagues, culminating with the devastating death of all of the firstborn (Ex. 12:29-30). Our redemption was sealed when Christ arose from the grave on the third day after His crucifixion, crushing the head of the devil (cf. Gen. 3:15). The Hebrews writer declared that Christ, “through death...might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14-15). Praise God for our marvelous redemption!

CW



PROPITIATION

Joey Davis

Every precious soul enters this world innocent of sin. Sin is the violation of God’s Will by those who are capable of understanding (1 John 3:4). The words of Ezekiel to the king of Tyre ring true, “you were all perfect in our ways from the day we were created, till iniquity was found in you” (Eze. 28:15). Isaiah spoke of a period of innocence, “For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good...” (Isa. 7:16). There is a period in our lives when our sense of free moral agency is not fully developed and expressible without impunity. Tragically, at an age of accountability for sin, we all indulge. Paul wrote, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). This pivotal moment facilitates our downward spiral into sin. This change in our state and relationship with God is pivotal because the “wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Isaiah said, “...your iniquities have separated you from your God” (Isa. 59:1-2). This means that we orchestrate our own spiritual death through our sins. Therefore, we are on the docket to appear in the eternal courtroom of God our righteous judge (2 Cor. 5:10) who shows no favoritism (Rom. 2:11), never disregards justice, portrays no moral ambiguity, and by His very nature must ensure that the consequence of sin is satisfied. No lawyer, not even God Himself, could change our guilty verdict. Ezekiel reported, “The soul who sins shall die” (Eze. 18:4).

If we understand this universal predicament, then we are closer to understanding propitiation. There appear to be six verses in the New Testament where a form of this word (*hilaskomai*) is used; four of these reveal Jesus Christ is our propitiation (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10; Luke 18:13; Heb. 9:5). The general idea of propitiation is “atonement” or “the initiative taken by God to effect removal of impediments to a relationship with God’s self” (BDAG). Notice, it is the initiative of God to counteract the consequences of our sins without violating His own righteous and just nature. How did God do this? Consider Romans 3:21-26:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and

on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In 1929, E.A. Elam wrote regarding 1 John 2:2, “Propitiation has the force of satisfaction of the sinner’s penalty. Hence, the death of Christ paid the penalty for man’s sin...Man receives the benefit of this upon terms of the Gospel.” This word also appears in Hebrews 9:4 and is translated as “mercy seat.” The mercy seat atop the ark of the covenant was the place where atonement for sin was made under the Law of Moses (Lev. 16). In a sense, Jesus serves as our mercy seat, our place of atonement. God allows a way back through what Jesus did to propitiate for our sins. This really highlights the force of John 14:6, Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Finally, a form of this word is used in the temple scene where juxtaposed with the self-righteous Pharisee; the contrite tax collector “standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” (Luke 18:13). Similarly, when we come to grips with our sins and cry out for God’s mercy, we are not asking God to ignore our sin or to pretend that we did not do anything wrong. Instead, we are acknowledging our irreversible, self-created predicament, and we are asking God to apply the blood of His Son to our situation so that we may come into His favor and not experience what we deserve. In our willingness to submit to Jesus Christ and to obey His Gospel, God honors that plea. In the very simplest terms, that is propitiation.

CW

RECONCILIATION

Richard D. Melson

The term about which I have been assigned to write is reconciliation. This is a wonderful word in the Scriptures—full of rich meaning and value. The term

is used when there is a breach in the relationship between two men as in Matthew 5:24, or a husband and wife as used in 1 Corinthians 7:11, regarding which Wayne Jackson comments: “If one finds it absolutely imperative to become separated from a spouse (where no sexual infidelity has been involved), he should either remain in a separated state, or else be “reconciled to his mate (1 Cor. 7:11).”¹ Thus, reconciliation is the process of restoring what was broken or bringing into harmony, unity or agreement what has been alienated.

This term is an important word in God’s plan of redemption. Reconciliation is the subject of four New Testament passages (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:11ff; Col. 1:19ff). Reconciliation applies to the doing away of an enmity, it implies the parties involved were enemies. It is sin which creates the breach in the relationship of God and man (Isa. 59:1-2), man becomes the enemy of God through sin. One cannot study reconciliation and not consider the term “enemy” because reconciliation is concerned with what Jehovah does for those who are hostile toward Him (Rom. 5:8) and what Jehovah does for all creation in and through Christ (Eph. 1:11, 22-23).

The Greek term from which “reconciliation” is derived is defined by Thayer as: “an exchange, of the business of money-changers, exchanging equivalent values, adjustment of a difference, reconciliation of favor; In the NT of the restoration of the favor of God to sinners that repent and put their trust in the expiatory death of Christ.”² Thus, reconciliation involves a change of condition as that all basis of the enmity is removed and a complete basis of fellowship is created. It is Jehovah who provides the means of restoring harmony between God and man. Man does not have the ability to initiate reconciliation. Wayne Jackson also writes: “Reconciliation involves bringing together formerly estranged parties. That reconciliation also is confirmed by Christ’s life (i.e., his resurrection [cf. 4:25]) and his ongoing intercession (Heb. 7:25). For this beneficence we rejoice.”³

Reconciliation as a theological construct results in peace with God (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20); access to God’s presence (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12 cf. Col. 1:22) joy, assurance and fellowship. Seeing that a proper relationship with Jehovah is at the center of all divine religion, reconciliation, which makes access and fellowship possible should be considered as central to biblical Christianity. One cannot properly study God’s scheme of redemption without

1 Wayne Jackson, *Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy* (Stockton: Courier Publications., 2002), 147.

2 Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 333.

3 Wayne Jackson, *A New Testament Commentary* (Stockton: Courier Publications., 2012), 274.

an understanding of the concept of reconciliation.

It is almighty Jehovah, who, because of His wonderful love has instituted His plan of reconciliation. His plan involved the death of his Son (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:22), the shedding of the blood of Jesus (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20). Jesus the perfect Lamb of God paid the price for sin (John 1:29; Heb 2:9). Therefore, all men are urged to accept Heaven's offer of reconciliation, which is made known through the gospel message (2 Cor. 5:18-19). The command "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20), suggests that the sinner has the power to receive, if he only will (cf. John 5:40; Rev. 22:17). Reconciliation is begun at the point of the believing penitent sinner being baptized into the body of Christ (Eph. 2:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Eph. 5:26).

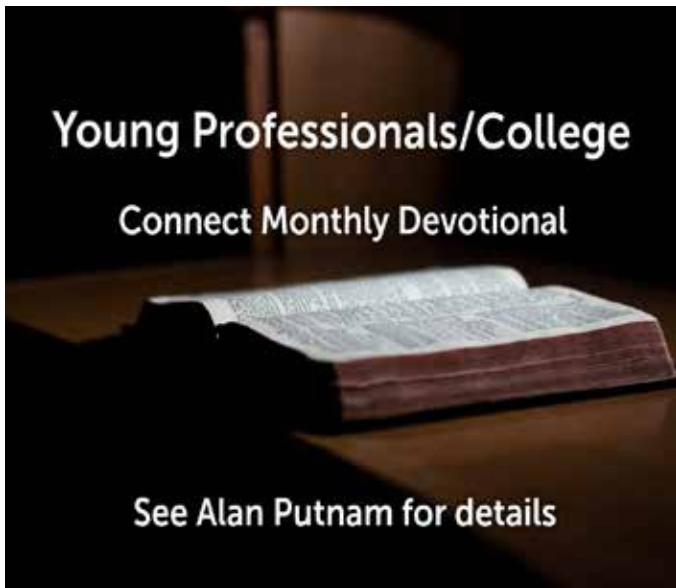
CW

the immediate context, remote context and over all biblical context. Even the individual words of scripture themselves can reveal much truth. The word we will highlight in this article is "forgiveness."

In essence, the entire Bible is about God's plan and desire to forgive all men of all their sins. All men have a universal problem – sin. Romans 3:10 states, "As it is written, there is none righteous no, not one." Again, in verse twenty three of the same chapter, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Immediately following the fall of Adam and Eve, God made the first prophecy about the One He would send to take away (forgive) the sins of men (Gen. 3:15). Our songbooks are filled with songs about being forgiven. The joy we feel upon knowing we have been made right with God is life changing. The relief of having all the guilt of all our sins removed is one of the great benefits of being a Christian.

But what does the word "forgiveness" actually mean? The Greek word used most often in the New Testament translated "forgiveness," is *aphesis*. The basic definition is: "to send away from," dismiss, set free," to "discharge, setting free, hence remission of debt or punishment." In Acts 5:31 we read, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Since the work of Christ culminates in the forgiveness of all our sins we should know what the Bible says we must do to receive this forgiveness.

First, we must turn to the correct source that reveals how to be forgiven. Romans 10:17 states, "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." The word of God, the Bible, is the only inspired volume on the earth (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:21). Second, the logical and proper response to reading the Bible is to develop faith in the Christ based on the evidence. To be forgiven of our sins we must have faith in Christ (John 3:16; 8:24). Plenty of people read or have read, the scriptures. But if they do not have faith they cannot gain forgiveness. Third, the need for us to repent (change one's mind and purpose (sorrow and remorse are also involved in the process). Acts 17:30 teaches us that, "all men everywhere must repent" (a universal requirement). Jesus explicitly teaches that we cannot be saved if we do not repent (Luke 13:3). Fourth, we are also taught to confess (Rom. 10:9, 10). Paul spoke of this good profession to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12, in context of laying hold on eternal life. Fifth, we must be born again (John 3:3-5) baptized for remission (forgiveness) of sin (Acts 2:38). This action washes away our sins (Acts 22:16) puts us into Christ (Gal. 3:26,27) and into the church which was purchased by His blood (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 20:28). At this point we are forgiven of all our past sins (Rom. 6:3-6).



FORGIVENESS

Michael Light

The more we read and study the Bible the more we should be impressed with it. There are many different teaching methods employed; narratives of the lives of men and women (some presented as examples of correct living; others as how not to live); direct statements – "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" instructions; parables, poetry and prophetic material. Texts can be studied in a host of ways;

The old man is put to death and we rise from the watery grave to walk in newness of life – a having been forgiven creature.

Finally, the Bible teaches us how to walk, live and remain in this forgiven state the rest of our lives. Basically, from Romans through Revelation we are taught how to live, worship, serve in the church and even how to die faithfully in the Lord. First John 1:7-10 will suffice as a text showing the “walking in the light” (living in and with Jesus) principle. Christians have the greatest life one can experience on the earth (John 10:10). And the forgiveness that is ours is one of the primary reasons for this. May God helps us appreciate and rejoice in the forgiveness we have through Christ and His sacrifice.

CW

busy with the blood of animals in continually making atonement for the sins of the people AND his own sins (Heb. 5:1-4). The system was weak because it depended on the work of men who were subject to frailty and corruption (cf. 1 Sam. 2:13-14; 2:27-29).

Here is the beauty: Atonement under the New Covenant is permanent because it was not dependent upon the work of any fallible man to offer or to mediate (Heb. 5:1-5). Our atonement is based on the work of the One who is perfect (Heb. 4:14-16). Our atonement is based on the sacrifice of the One who is the Lamb without blemish (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Our atonement is based on the acceptance of His sacrifice by God (John 19:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 1:3). Our atonement is based on the satisfaction of God’s wrath that He provided (1 John 2:1). Thanks be to God for the wonderful perfect sacrifice of Jesus that God has accepted! Praise God for AT-ONE-ment through Jesus.

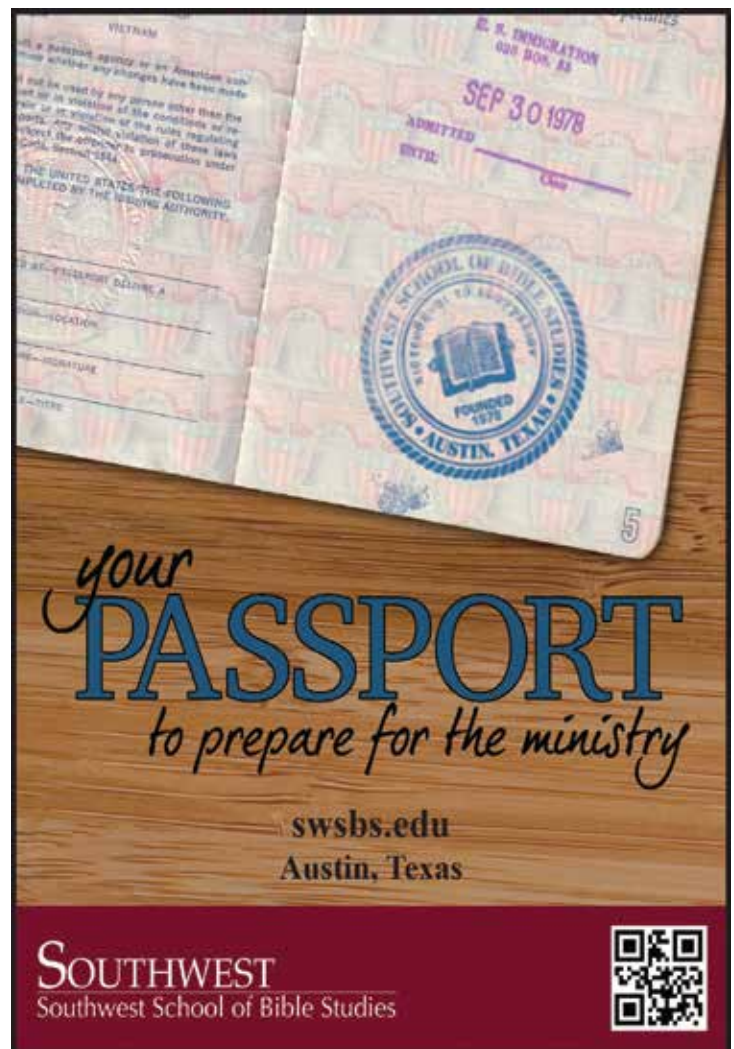
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(Lev. 1:4). What God, in essence, says is, “I’ve accepted the payment for your sins and transgressions. My wrath is satisfied. You and I are good.” The desire of God to bless does not negate God’s holy nature against sin. His wrath must be satisfied not because He is evil, but because sin is evil (2 Chron. 30:8; Rom. 1:18).

Looking at these four qualities under the Levitical system, it is important to realize atonement was made, but under an imperfect system. In fact, as time went on, men would neglect the quality and quantity of the offerings for atonement to be made. (The Levitical priesthood were perpetually





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From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd
Director SWSBS

We are well past the halfway mark of the third quarter of the 2022-2023 school year. There are nine students in the second year plowing forward to the goal. Twelve students in the first year class have settled into the grueling pace of school.

One of our first year students, Shelby Polk, suffered serious health complications this quarter. We believe she is on the mend, but not without great effort.

Shelby is a bright young sister who came to us after four years of college. She is a delight to have in class. Her work is always completed on time with a smile on her face. As for time missed in class, she has joined us "virtually" when possible. Homework has been sent to instructors via email. While there is much we could point to that is not to our liking concerning technology, these are examples of how it can be used for good.

As always, faculty and students continue to be thankful for the support we receive to do the work at hand. Our daily chapel service is not held without God being thanked for supporters.

One more note: Southwest's Annual "Arise" was a success if we were to assess it by the numbers and comments. More people attended our workshop this year than over the past six years. More SWSBS Alumni attended than ever, and expressions of confidence in the school were encouraging. If the reader has not attended one of our workshops, We encourage you to plan for 2024.

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