

Doctrine of the Atonement

The Plight of Man

1. The word atonement refers to the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings.
2. Through God's atoning grace and forgiveness, individuals are reinstated to a relationship of at-one-ment with God, in spite of sin.
3. The reason why atonement is needed is because of the imputation of Adam's sin and personal sin.
 - **The imputation of Adam's sin.** *Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*
 - **Personal sin.** *Colossians 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*
4. No person is worthy of relationship with a Holy God (Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:23).
 - *Ecclesiastes 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*
 - *Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*
5. Since individuals are helpless to correct a state of natural depravity and can do nothing to hide sin from God, every person stands condemned by sin.
 - *Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*
 - *Hebrews 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*
 - *Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*
6. It is human nature (our sinfulness) and God's nature (His holy wrath against sin) which makes us "enemies".
 - *Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

The Power of God

7. Atonement is God's gracious response to the helplessness of His chosen people.
8. In the Old Testament economy the form of atonement came through the sacrificial system whereby the death, or "*blood*" of the animal was accepted by God as a substitute for the death which the sinner deserved.
 - *Ezekiel 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*
 - *Leviticus 17:11 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".*
9. The Law required that the sacrificial victims must be free from defect, and buying them always involved some cost to the sinner.
10. But an animal's death did not automatically make people right with God in some simple, mechanical way.
11. The hostility between God and man because of sin is a personal matter. God for His part personally gave the means of atonement in the sacrificial system; men and women for their part personally are expected to recognize the seriousness of their sin (Lev 16:29-30; Mic 6:6-8).
 - *Leviticus 16:29-30 And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: 30 For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.*
 - *Micah 6:6-8 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*
12. They must also identify themselves personally with the victim that dies: "*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).
13. In the Old Testament, God Himself brought about atonement by graciously providing the appointed sacrifices.

14. The priests represented Him in the atonement ritual, and the sinner received the benefits of being reconciled to God in forgiveness and harmony.
15. Although Old Testament believers were truly forgiven and received genuine atonement through animal sacrifice, the New Testament clearly states that during the Old Testament period God's justice was not served: *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"* (Heb 10:4).
16. Atonement was possible *"because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed"* (Rom 3:25).
17. However, God's justice was served in the death of Jesus Christ as a substitute who *"not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption"* (Heb 9:12). *"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant"* (Heb 9:15).

The Provision for a Response to the Grace of God

18. The Lord Jesus came according to God's will (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20) *"to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45).
19. Though God *"laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa 53:6; also 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13), yet Christ *"has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God"* (Eph 5:2), so that those who believe in Him (Rom 3:22) might receive atonement and *"be saved from [God's] wrath"* (Rom 5:9) through *"the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Peter 1:19).
20. No believer who truly understands the awesome holiness of God's wrath and the terrible hopelessness that comes from personal sin can fail to be overwhelmed by the deep love of Jesus for each of us, and the wonder of God's gracious gift of eternal atonement through Christ.
21. Through Jesus, God will present us *"faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy"* (Jude 24).