

ATONEMENT: TRUE & FALSE

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(A section from the booklet "The Vicarious Atonement of Christ")

WHAT IS AN ATONEMENT

The concept of the atonement is that something can be done through which punishment can be dispensed with. Atonement is that which adequately substitutes the penalty of the law; an alternative, replacement, or substitute for the punishment of sin. Since the purpose of punishment is Law enforcement, and must declare the value of the law, that which substitutes the punishment of sin must equally uphold the Law and declare the value of the violated Law. The atonement must fulfill the purpose of punishment by enforcing the law, declaring the value of the law, and thereby upholding God's government, protecting the community from lawlessness and sin. Punishments are designed for law enforcement, laws are designed for public interest, and therefore for an atonement to substitute punishment, the atonement must enforce the law and protect the public interest. God cannot set aside His Laws without setting aside His Wisdom and Benevolence, so if God is going to set aside our punishment, He must substitute our punishment with an atonement to uphold and enforce His Laws, to vindicate the violated Law and declare its value.

God must publicly demonstrate that He enforces His Laws, to uphold His Government, in order to promote obedience and discourage rebellion. And when His Laws are violated and broken, He demonstrates this through the punishment of hell fire or through an atonement of blood shed, thereby vindicating His broken Laws and enforcing their authority.

The Bible represents blood shed as the atonement by which the punishment of hell fire can be avoided, remitted, or set aside (Heb 9:22). Jesus offered His own blood as an offering to God (Heb. 9:14). The high price of Christ's blood (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Cor. 7:23) just as equally upholds the Law and declares its value as the punishment of hell fire would have. The shedding of Christ's blood declares the righteousness and justice of God so that God can remit the penalty of our sins (Rom. 3:25-26). God will let our sins go unpunished if they are atoned for by blood shed. God can be just in setting aside our punishment because atonement has substituted our punishment.

The Law of God requires either an atonement of blood or the punishment of hell (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). Sinners need blood shed to "make amends for the harm that he hath done" (Lev. 5:16), so that once a "trespass offering" has been made, his trespass can be "forgiven him" (Lev. 5:10). The shedding of blood is the substitute for the punishment of hell. The punishment that sinners deserve is eternal hell fire (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thes. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 1:7) but once blood shed has been offered on behalf of our sins, God can forgive us our sins instead of punish our sins, because they've been atoned for. Sins must be punished in hell or atoned for by blood. Once they are atoned for, they can be

forgiven, that is, the penalty that they deserve can be set aside, dispensed with, or remitted.

The sin of mankind has broken the very heart of God (Gen. 6:5-6; Eze. 6:9) because God never wanted man to sin. Hell was not made for man (Matt. 25:41). So God sought for a way to salvage His fallen creation, to restore and redeem the world that He loves so deeply and dearly. So out of love God sent His own beloved Son (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8) in the hopes that men might hear Him (Matt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Mk. 12:6; Lk. 9:36; Lk. 20:13), but many rejected the light and chose the darkness (Jn. 1:10-11, 3:19) and instead of hearing the Son they brutally killed Him (Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14-15). But the death of His most precious Son, on behalf of our sin, is an adequate substitute for the penalty that we deserve, the penalty of eternal hell fire.

Through Christ's obedience of shedding His blood (Php. 2:8) as an alternative, replacement, supplement, or substitute for our punishment of "eternal destruction (2 Thes. 1:9) which is the "second death" (Rev. 21:8) which is the wages of sin (Rom. 2:8), the free gift of reconciliation can now be offered to all men (Rom 5:18). Because Christ has shed His blood on behalf of our sins (Heb. 10:12), our punishment of hell fire can be remitted or set aside (Heb. 9:22), our debt of eternal hell can be pardoned instead of paid (Matt. 6:12; Matt. 18:27; Lk. 7:42), and we can have an eternal relationship with God which is eternal life (Jn. 17:3). When blood shed substitutes the penalty of hell, sins can be forgiven instead of punished (Acts 5:31; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), God's wrath can pass over instead of being poured out (Ex. 12:13; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Remember, forgiveness of sin is when the penalty of sin is dispensed with (2 Chron. 32:26; Num. 16:46-48; Ps. 78:38; Micah 7:18-19; Jonah 3:9-10). The blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins, so that our penalty can be set aside and our sins can be let go as if they had not been committed (Matt. 26:28; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 1:77; Lk. 3:3; Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:43; Rom. 3:25). Because Christ bore our sins, that is, because Christ died for our sins, God can remand our punishment instead of demand our punishment, men can be justified or forgiven (Isa. 53: 11; Rom. 4:6-9) which means they can be pardoned of their past and treated as if they were righteous. The suffering of Christ on the cross substitutes the eternal suffering sinners deserve in hell. Because of Christ, "mercy rejoices against judgment" (Jas 2:13) because mercy is when retributive judgment is set aside, when crimes are pardoned.

The atonement allows God to be "just" (Rom. 3:26; 1 Jn. 1:9) and also to "forgive us our sins (1 Jn. 1:9) at the same time. The design of the atonement is to "declare His righteousness" (Rom. 3:25-26), so that He could grant "the remission of sins that are past" (Rom. 3:25), "to declare His righteousness" so "that he might be just" in forgiving our sins or justifying those who believe in Christ (Rom. 3:26).

So the atonement reconciles both the justice of God and the mercy of God (Ps. 85:10). The atonement publicly declares God's righteousness (Rom. 3:25-26) while also publicly declaring His love (Rom. 5:8). That is why the atonement needed to be public (Lk. 12:32). The atonement upholds God's justice because blood shed substitutes our

punishment of hell fire. And the atonement allows for mercy and forgiveness because the penalty of our sin can be set aside when sinners turn from their sin and trust Jesus Christ. The atonement upholds public justice by declaring God's righteousness, thereby allowing God to be merciful to us by setting aside retributive justice. Because the atonement satisfies or propitiates public justice, which was the very purpose of our punishment in the first place, retributive justice or our punishment can be set aside or remitted.

The atonement consisted in the wounding and bruising of Christ (Isa. 53:5), in the agony of His soul (Isa. 53:10-12; Matt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34) and in the shedding of His blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). The normal cause of death in crucifixion is suffocation. But if Jesus died of suffocation, He could not have cried out before His death (Lk. 23:46). Medical science affirms that the intense suffering and extreme agony that Christ endured resulted in the heart of the Savior literally rupturing, so Jesus actually died of a broken heart (Jn. 19:34). Crucifixion usually takes days, which is why men were surprised Jesus had died so soon (Mk. 15:43-44; Jn. 19:33). It is this unimaginable suffering and horrific death of the Lord which is an adequate substitute for the eternal torment of hell.

There is a moral transformation brought about by the atonement. A revelation of the suffering of Christ should subdue our hearts and bring us to complete surrender unto God (Rom. 2:4), repenting out of a motive of love not selfishness (1 Jn. 4:19). God is drawing all men through the atonement (Jn. 12:32), because it is His loving kindness which draws us (Jer. 31:3; Rom. 2:4). Transformation, liberation, or regeneration is through spiritual revelation, when men obey the gospel of Jesus Christ from the heart (Jn. 6:45, 63; 8:32; 15:3; 17:17; Rom. 2:8; 6:17; Acts 9:4-6; 1 Cor. 4:15; Tit. 2:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:2-3; 2:20; Jas. 1:18, 21-22). That is why we must publicly preach Christ (Acts 5:42, 9:20, 17:3; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 2:12, 4:5; Eph. 3:8; Php. 1:15-16), why we must publicly preach the truth of the kingdom of God (Lk. 4:43, 9:2, 9:60; Acts 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 28:31), why we see Paul publicly reasoning with men (Acts 19:8; Acts 19:9), particularly reasoning about the Christ (Acts 28:23). Men are in the bondage of deception (Lk. 2:18; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:26) so they need liberation through the preaching of the truth (Jn. 8:32; Lk. 2:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-25). The atonement is designed to deliver us from a life of sinning, to turn sinners into saints (Jn. 1:29; Acts 3:26; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 5:25-27; Col 1:21-23; Titus 2:11-12; Heb. 9:26, 10:10; 1 Jn. 1:7, 3:5), since Jesus is a Savior from sin (Matt. 1:21). Christ died so "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:4) Christ died "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). Christians are saved unto obedience (1 Pet. 1:2) and unto good works (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14).

And there is a spiritual transformation brought about by the atonement. Through our own sin we have become dead in our sins, that is, we became relationally dead to God (Isa. 59:2; Lk. 15:24; Rom. 5:12, 5:14, 7:9, 7:11; Col. 2:13), but now the atonement allows us to be reconciled unto God and enter into a loving relationship with Him (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:21), and we can become filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49; Acts 2:4).

When men turn from their sins and trust in Christ, God will set aside their punishment “for Christ’s sake” (Eph. 4:32), Christ’s suffering will be credited to our account (sort of speak) as if these sufferings were our own, so we will not have to eternally suffer for our sin in hell. Our punishment of hell can be done away with because an atonement of blood has been shed for our sins. Our sins have been atoned for by the price of His blood (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).

The blood of Christ cleanses us (1 Jn. 1:7), washes us (Rev. 1:5, 7:14), purges us (Heb. 9:22), reconciles us (2 Cor. 5:18; Heb. 2:17), brings justification (Rom. 5:9), brings forgiveness (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), brings remission (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:22), brings peace (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20;), brings redemption (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12), redeemed us (Gal. 3:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9), ransomed us (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6), buys us (1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:1) and saves us from God’s wrath (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thes. 1:10). Christ is our atonement (Rom. 5:11) our salvation (Ps. 27:1; Col. 3:4) our propitiation (Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 1 Jn. 4:10) our righteousness (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30). God casts away our sins (Isa. 38:17; Micah 7:19) and remembers them no more (Heb. 8:12, 10:17). Jesus Christ is the absolutely only way to God (Jn. 14:6), there is no other name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12), through Him we obtain salvation (1 Thes. 5:9; 2 Thes. 2:10). The cost of our salvation, the price of our deliverance, the ransom of our souls, was the high price of Christ’s most valuable and precious blood.

Christ died for all men (Jn. 1:29, 3:16; Rom. 5:15; Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:10; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:22) because all men have chosen to become sinners (Isa. 52:3, 53:6). There is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11, 2 Pet. 1:17), God wants everyone to repent and be saved (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Pet. 3:9). The atonement makes salvation *possible* and *available* to all men, it is a gift that God offers to all to accept and receive (Jn. 1:20; Lk. 14:16-24; Rom 5:18) through a decision (2 Cor. 5:20) to repent and believe, though many reject God’s offer (Lk. 14:16-24) and resist His grace (Gen. 6:30; Lk. 7:30; Acts 7:51). God is trying to save all men (Jn. 3:16, 6:44-45, 12:32; 16:8; Acts 17:30-31, 2 Pet. 3:9). God gives light to all men (Jn. 1:9), God is convicting all men (Jn. 16:8), God is drawing all men (Jn. 6:44-45, 12:32), God is calling all men (Acts 17:30), but many reject God’s gracious invitation (Lk. 7:30; 14:16-24; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

While God grants amnesty, clemency, or pardon through Christ’s blood for our past sins (Rom. 3:25; 2 Pet. 1:9), He does not grant immunity or impunity for future sins (Matt. 18:25-35; Rom. 18:13; Heb. 10:26-31; Jude 1:4). Future sins would need to be forsaken (Lk. 13:3; Jam. 5:19-20) and forgiveness through Christ’s blood would need to be sought for if future sins occur (Matt. 6:12; 1 Jn. 1:9), since you cannot be forgiven of what you haven’t committed, you cannot be forgiven of what you are not guilty of. If we were “forgiven” of all future sins at conversion, this would be a license to sin (Jude 1:4) and we would never have to ask God for forgiveness again. The atonement is designed to make the forgiveness of forsaken sins, past sins, possible. Forgiveness is always conditional upon repentance. Forgiveness is never automatic or unconditional and certainly never granted to the impenitent or unbelieving.

The atonement, which declares God's righteousness, is a supplement, replacement, or alternative for our punishment, allows God to set aside our punishment and thereby grant the remission of sins, upon condition that we repent, believe, and ultimately persevere unto the end. The atonement pardons our past by bringing the remission of sins and the atonement purifies our present by bringing us to repentance unto obedience. The atonement both saves us from God's wrath and it saves us from our sinning! The blood of Christ brings both purification and pardon.

Now that the atonement has been made, God is begging man to be reconciled unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:20) God is anxiously longing for men to repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ so that He can forgive them and enter into a loving relationship with them.

WHAT AN ATONEMENT IS NOT

1. The atonement was not a satisfaction to any vindictiveness in God's person, or gratification to a sadistic nature in God. The Father was pleased and was satisfied through the atonement, but not in a sadistic or vindictive way.

It should be remembered that the purpose of punishment is not for any sadistic pleasure or for any vindictive satisfaction in the punisher (Eze 18:32; 33:11). Punishment is governmental not personal. The purpose of punishment is law enforcement, to uphold the laws, to enforce the laws, and to declare their value (Ecc. 8:11; Dan. 6:14-16; Ester 1:16-22). Punishment is to uphold the Government and thereby protect the public, not to satisfy any personal vindictive revenge. Punishment is a governmental necessity.

For an atonement to adequately substitute the punishment, it must equally uphold the laws and declare the value of the violated law just as equally as the punishment would. That is why the blood of Jesus Christ is an adequate substitute for the eternal punishment of sinners in hell, because of the sinless purity of His character and because of the dignity of His person. Therefore the price of Christ's blood is more valuable than the price sinners owed; the price of His blood far out weights the price of our debt. The price of Christ's blood is a substance to the payment of our debt, the cross of Calvary is a substitute for the eternal sentence of hell, and the suffering of Christ is substituted for the suffering that sinners deserve.

Just as God does not take any sadistic pleasure or vindictive satisfaction in punishment (Eze 18:32; 33:11), neither is the Godhead gratified or satisfied in any personal vindictive or sadistic sense when it comes to the atonement (Ps. 51:16-17; Heb 10:6; 10:8). The way that wicked men treated His Son did not itself please God (Mk. 12:6-9; Lk. 20:13-16; 1 Thes. 2:15). The satisfaction (Isa. 53:11) and the pleasure (Isa. 53:10) which God the Father has in the atonement is not sadistic or personal vindictiveness, but rather this satisfaction and pleasure is because God delights in His justice, rejoicing that His Laws are being enforced and upheld (which Laws were designed to promote the well-being of all) as well as rejoicing and delighting that mercy and pardon can now be granted to rebels and criminals who have violated His moral Law.

This is the reason for the satisfaction and pleasure God the Father had in the suffering of the Son (Isa. 53:10-11).

2. The atonement is not the exact and literal punishment that we deserve; blood shed is not the exact and literal payment of our debt. Nowhere in the Bible is it said that Jesus took the eternal punishment that we deserve, or paid the eternal debt that we owed, but the Bible says everywhere that the Savior suffered for our sins (Luke 9:22; 17:25; Acts 3:18; 26:23; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). The atonement is a substitute for the punishment that we deserve; the atonement is a substitute for the debt that we owe. If Christ were to literally serve our prison sentence, He would have had to suffer in hell for all of eternity.

This is a dialog I had with a friend:

“What is the punishment that we deserve for our sin?”

“Hell.”

“Did Jesus suffer in eternal hell?”

“No.”

“So did Jesus take our punishment?”

“That’s a good question.”

The atonement consisted in wounding and bruising (Isa. 53:5), the agony of His soul (Isa. 53:10-12; Matt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34) and the shedding of His blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). But our punishment was eternal torment in hell fire (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thes. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:9, 3:7; Jude 1:7). The suffering of Christ was a substitute for the punishment of our sin, the atonement of Calvary is a substitute for the torments of hell. This substitution is four fold: Christ is a substitute for sinners, the cross is a substitute for hell fire, Calvary is a substitute for the lake of fire, and six hours is a substitute for eternity.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment..." (Matt. 25:46). "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction..." (2 Thes. 1:9). "Everlasting" means perpetual and without end. Our punishment was eternal. Christ suffered for six hours. Therefore Jesus did not take our exact and literal punishment. The suffering of Jesus was a substitute for our punishment. If Jesus took our exact and literal punishment, it would have been an "everlasting punishment". An eternal debt can never be paid; it is eternally unsatisfied because it is eternal. An eternal prison sentence never ends because it is eternal. Sinners will not be released from hell because their debt is eternal, their debt cannot be paid because their debt is eternally unsatisfied. The suffering of the atonement was a substitute for the suffering of our punishment, the price of His blood was a substitute for the payment of our debt. Christ suffered for six hours for our sins so that we don't have to be punished all eternity for our sins. The cross of Calvary substitutes the fires of hell.

Retributive justice would not be satisfied by punishing the innocent for the sins of the guilty. Retributive justice strictly requires the punishment of the guilty (Eze. 18:4; 18:20). But the atonement upholds public justice; the suffering of the innocent can substitute the punishment of the guilty, so that the atonement makes an adequate

satisfaction for sin, a satisfaction to public justice, not retributive justice. Public justice is the reason for retributive justice, so when atonement is made that fulfills the reason of retributive justice, retributive justice can be set aside.

Christ did in fact drink a cup of suffering (Matt. 20:22, 26:42; Jn. 18:11), He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). This cup could not be the cup of God's wrath (Ps. 11:6; Isa. 51:17, 51:22) since the cup of God's wrath was still full after the atonement (Rev. 14:10, 16:19), and because the disciples of Jesus would drink the same cup Jesus drank (Matt. 20:22-23; Mk. 10:38-39). But both Jesus and His disciples drank from a cup of suffering on behalf of others, they drank a cup of death. Jesus shed his blood in atonement for the whole world, and his disciples shed their blood in martyrdom to spread the gospel to the whole world.

So let it be understood that Christ did not pay our debt or serve our sentence, but Christ died to substitute the payment of our debt, Christ died to substitute the sentence we deserve. Blood shed is the price which substitutes the payment of our debt. The cross of Calvary substitutes our eternal sentence in the lake of fire. If Jesus were to literally pay our debt, take our punishment, or serve our sentence, Jesus would have had to suffer for all of eternity. But Jesus didn't suffer for all of eternity. Therefore Jesus didn't literally pay our debt, take our punishment, or serve our sentence.

A theologian named Anselm invented the "Retributive Satisfaction Theory" of the atonement about 1,000 years ago. This doctrine is only about 1,000 years. And there are very serious problems with the view that the atonement is our exact and literal punishment, as opposed to the atonement being a substitute for our penalty. The problems of the retributive satisfaction view must not go unnoticed or unmentioned.

A. One logical conclusion of Christ taking our punishment, or the retributive satisfaction view, would be universalism, limited atonement, or double punishment. If Christ paid the debt of all, nobody has a debt to pay, if Christ satisfied God's wrath for everyone, God has wrath left over for no one (Universalism). But if some will have to pay their debt, Christ must not have paid their debt, if some will still face God's wrath, Jesus must not have satisfied God's wrath for them (Limited Atonement). Or, if Christ paid the debt of all, but not all will be saved, God punishes the same sins twice (double punishment). The double punishment view makes no sense. If justice has been satisfied, justice can demand no more. A "double punishment" is a contradiction in terms. And the Bible says that Jesus died for all (Isa. 1:18, 45:22, 53:6, 55:1; Eze. 18:30-32; Matt. 23:37; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 2:10-11; Jn. 1:29, 3:16-17; Rom. 2:11; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:2; Rev. 3:20), because God wants everyone to be saved (Eze. 33:11; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 22:17), yet we know that not all will be saved (Gen. 6:5-8; Isa. 53:1; Matt. 7:13, 21:10; Lk. 13:23-24, 23:21; Jn. 5:40, 6:60, 6:67, 7:7, 16:33; Acts 8:1, 14:22; 1 Cor. 4:13). Therefore the atonement was not the eternal punishment that we deserve. The atonement was not the eternal payment of our eternal debt.

B. Another logical conclusion of the retributive view is what is known as “Once Saved, Always Saved.” If our debt has been paid, there is no debt left for us to pay. If our sentence has been served, there is no sentence for us to serve. We would be eternally secure without any fear of falling into condemnation no matter how much or how often we sin and openly rebel against God. The “Once Saved, Always Saved” doctrine is damnable heresy, it is utterly false (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4-5).

This antinomian eternal security is contrary to the entire Bible which repeatedly and abundantly teaches the doctrine of probation or conditional security for believers (Eze. 3:20-21, 18:18-31, 33:12-20; Matt. 6:14-15, 10:22, 24:13, 24:48-51, 25:1-13; Mk. 4:16-19, 13:13; Jn. 6:66, 15:6; Acts 1:25, 11:23, 13:43, 14:22; Rom. 8:13, 11:20-23; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:9-10, 9:27, 10:5-13; 15:1-2; Gal. 5:4-9, 5:19-21, 6:7-9; Col. 1:21-23; 1 Thes. 3:5, 3:8; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 1:5-6; 1:18-20, 3:6, 4:1, 4:16, 5:15; 2 Tim. 2:12, 4:9-10; Heb. 2:1, 2:3, 3:6, 3:8-15, 3:18-19, 4:1, 4:11, 4:14, 6:1, 6:8, 6:11-12, 6:15, 10:23, 10:26-31, 10:35-39, 12:14-15, 12:25; Jas. 1:13-16, 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 1:9, 2:20-22, 3:17; Rev. 2:4-7, 2:10-11, 2:17, 2:25-26, 3:2-5, 3:10-12, 3:16, 3:19, 3:20, 21:8, 22:15).

We have the example of the unforgiving servant who was forgiven of his unpaid debt, but then later had his debt reinstated because of his immoral conduct (Matt. 18:23-35). This parable clearly shows how the Lord can graciously pardon an individual and then later execute the punishment that they deserve. We also see the example of the Apostle Judas. Jesus told Judas that He was shedding His blood for him (Lk. 22:14-20), and previously told Judas that His name was written in the Lambs book of life (Lk. 10:20). But then later, after having his name written in Heaven, we see that Judas became a devil (Jn. 6:70), and therefore it would have been better for him to have never been born (Mk. 14:21). Judas fell from his Apostleship by his transgression (Acts 1:25) and his name was blotted out of the book of life (Ex. 23:33; Rev. 3:5). So we can see that the atonement does not automatically or unconditionally save anyone. Many of those for whom Christ died will ultimately perish for their sin because they choose to continue in their sin (Heb. 10:26-31) instead of sinning no more. It's possible to deny the Lord that bought us and thereby fall into condemnation (2 Pet. 2:1). The wrath of God is impartial (Deut. 10:17; Col. 3:26; 2 Pet. 1:17), so anyone who willingly and knowingly sins is under condemnation (Rom. 1:18, 2:6-11) because God must uphold and enforce His Laws as long as He is loving and caring, as long as He hates sin because He's benevolent.

C. Another logical problem with the retributive satisfaction view is that there is no grace, mercy, forgiveness, remission, or pardon in it at all. If God punishes all sin, God forgives no sin. If God executes all penalties, God remits no penalties. If God requires payment for all debts, God pardons no debts. But the Bible says that God does forgive our actual sin (Matt. 9:6; Mk. 2:10; Lk. 5:24; Acts 5:31, 13:38, 26:18; Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14; 1 Jn. 1:9), God does remit our actual deserved penalties (Matt. 26:28; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 1:77, 3:3, 24:47; Acts 2:38, 10:43; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:22, Heb. 10:18), God does pardon our actual debts (Matt. 6:12, 18:27; Lk. 7:42, 11:4). But to say that the atonement was the punishment of our sin, that the atonement was the penalty of our sin, or that it was the payment of our debt, is to take forgiveness, remission, and pardon completely out of the gospel.

The scripture Hebrews 9:22, for example, would make absolutely no sense at all if the nature of the atonement was our punishment. It tells us that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. That is, when there is an offering of blood, God can remit the penalty of our sins. But if the retributive view were correct, Hebrews 9:22 would be saying, “Without executing the punishment of sin, the punishment of sin cannot be set aside”. This is such a contradiction that no further reasoning or explanation is even necessary, the contradiction is plain enough.

The scriptures explicitly say that Jesus Christ died so that God could grant us forgiveness, remission, or pardon (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). The atonement of blood makes it possible for God to graciously pardon our crimes and set aside our punishment, thus forgiving our actual sins and pardoning our actual debt.

D. Another problem with the retributive satisfaction view is that it makes salvation by justice, the payment of a debt, rather than by grace, the pardon of a debt. If God releases us from obligation to pay our debt because someone else has paid our debt, this releasing is on the grounds of justice rather than grace. There is no grace in releasing someone from obligation to pay a debt that has already been paid. Justice requires such a release. Grace and mercy is when God pardons our unpaid debt, when God releases us from paying our eternal debt of hell. And it is only because Christ has shed His blood as a substitute for our punishment, thus declaring the righteousness of God and the value of the violated Law, is God able pardon us of our eternal debt without abrogating His Laws or destroying His Government.

E. Another issue with the retributive satisfaction view is that it presents a very confused view of the penalty of the Law. They reason that since Jesus took our punishment, yet Jesus didn't go to hell, therefore hell is not our punishment.

Some who hold to this view have represented physical death as the penalty of the Law. But if this were true there are some serious problems. First, it would mean that all men could simply physically die and go to Heaven and therefore Christ was not necessary. Second, it would mean that Christ did not really save us from the penalty of the Law because both sinners and Christians will physically die one day. Third, it would mean that our sins are punished twice because Christ physically died and we physically die.

Others have represented spiritual separation from God as the penalty of our sin. But sinners are already spiritually separated from God (Isa. 59:2, Rom. 7:9, Col. 2:13). And sinners want to be separated from God because they hate God. Punishment is supposed to be something that is dreaded, something that men will want to avoid. But sinners intentionally and purposely run away from God!

In essence, this group says that “physical death is the punishment of sin, spiritual death is the punishment of sin, but eternal death in hell is merely the consequence of sin.”

But this is entirely backwards. Physical death is the consequence of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:22; 1 Cor. 15:21-22), spiritual death (no relationship, spiritual separation) is the consequence of our own sin (Isa. 59:2, Rom. 7:9, Col. 2:13), while eternal death or hell fire is the eternal punishment of sin (Matt. 2:46; 2 Thes. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 1:7; Rev. 21:8).

F. Another objection to the retributive satisfaction view is that it gives a distorted view of justice. It represents justice as being satisfied with the punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty, when strict justice requires that only the guilty be punished (Eze. 18:4; 18:20). This view overlooks the very reason for retributive justice (letter of the Law), which reason is public justice (spirit of the Law). This view gives no satisfactory answer as to why the exact and literal punishment needed to be executed, as to why God is not capable of forgiving our sin, pardoning our debt, and remitting the penalty.

G. Another objection to the retributive satisfaction view is that it gives a distorted image of the Father. After hearing a sermon on the atonement as a new convert, the individual that I attended Church with that day said to me afterwards, "The picture that I had in my mind was that of a family. A young child made a mistake and the Father became very angry that he was going to beat the child. But just as the Father was about to beat the child, the older brother stepped in and said, 'no Father, beat me instead'."

Even as a new convert I knew that this view of the Father, Son, and sinner was not at all accurate. It represented the Father as if He were just so angry, without any self-control or grace that He just absolutely had to beat someone; he just absolutely had to take out His rage and anger on either the innocent or the guilty. And this scenario is some how passed off as justice? And what a distorted and twisted view of our gracious and merciful Father!

It must be understood that the Father was just as loving and forgiving as the Son was. It was the grace and love of the Father which sent the Son in the first place (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8)! The problems that needed to be overcome in the exercise of forgiveness were obstacles for the government of God, not hindrances rooted in the person of God.

H. Another problem with the retributive satisfaction view is that it poses great difficulty in preaching the gospel. Preaching to sinners would amount to this, "You have a debt to pay for your sin, but Jesus Christ has paid your debt, but if you don't come to Jesus Christ you will have to pay your own debt." Warning sinners (the world or the elect) to flee from the wrath that is to come would be nonsense if Jesus Christ has entirely satisfied the wrath of God. There would then be no such thing as wrath that is to come upon them.

I. Another problem with the retributive satisfaction view is that if it were a matter of debt, merely a commercial transaction, there is no necessity for preaching since the debt would be paid whether the debtor hears about it or not, whether they believe it or not. And there is absolutely no reason why repentance and faith are necessary conditions at all, since the debt is paid whether they believe or not, and whether they repent or

not. But the Bible says that a person must repent or perish (Lk. 3:13) and that men must believe in order to be saved (Jn. 3:16-18). And there is an absolute necessity for public proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of souls (Rom. 10:13-15). But if it were just a matter of debt, a commercial transaction, repentance and faith cannot be conditions of salvation and preaching the gospel has no necessity.

J. And lastly, a problem with the retributive satisfaction view is that those for whom Christ died (the world or the elect) would have been saved for the past two thousand years. If their debt was paid two thousand years ago, it follows that they haven't had a debt for the past two thousand years. If God's wrath was satisfied for them two thousand years ago, they have not been under God's wrath for the past two thousand years. Yet the Bible says, prior to conversion, we were in fact under God's wrath (Jn. 3:36; Lk. 13:3; Rom. 1:18, 2:5; Eph. 2:3).

This also gives us a serious problem in regards to preaching the gospel and the conversion of souls. When we preach the gospel we are warning sinners that they are in fact under the wrath of God, while at the same time that Jesus Christ has shed His blood for them. And in order to be converted we ourselves needed to recognize that we were under the wrath of God. But if God's wrath was satisfied two thousand years ago, we were very mistaken when we thought of ourselves as under God's wrath. But if we were not under the wrath of God, we didn't really flee from the wrath that is to come (Matt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7).

If the retributive satisfaction view were true, warning sinners to flee from God's wrath would be absurd, and fleeing from the wrath of God would be impossible. The logical conclusion of this perspective is that preaching the gospel is pointless and conversion is impossible, since without recognizing that we were under God's wrath, it would be impossible for us to be converted.

In essence, Jesus Christ did not take our exact and literal punishment. The blood of Jesus Christ is a governmental substitute for the punishment that we deserve, which allows God to set aside our punishment by forgiving our sin or pardoning our debt. The Law required either our punishment of eternal hell for or a blood atonement of pure blood. And once a blood offering is made which sustains and supports the Government of God, which declares the value of the violated Law and thereby vindicating it, and which publicly declares the righteousness of God, mercy and grace can be extended to sinners by setting aside their eternal punishment, by pardoning their rebellious selfish crimes against God and humanity.

3. Jesus did not literally become a sinner on the cross nor did Jesus literally become guilty of our sin. Certain theologians have claimed that Jesus literally became a sinner when He hung on the cross, or that Jesus literally become guilty of our sin. But when the Bible says that He who knew no sin "became sin" for us (2 Cor. 5:21) it simply means that He became our "sin offering" (Isa. 53:10). And when it says that Christ bore our sins (Isa. 53:12; 1 Pet. 2:24), this is language meant to signify that the atonement takes care of our sin, that the atonement is made on behalf of our sin (Gal. 1:4; 1 Jn. 2:2;

1 Jn. 4:10). Jesus bore our sins in that Jesus was offered for our sins (Heb. 9:28). To say that Jesus bore our sins, and that Jesus suffered and died for (on behalf of) our sins is to say the same thing. To bear someone's sin means that you suffer for the sins of another (Lam. 5:7). Just as the scapegoat did not literally become a sinner and the scapegoat did not literally become guilty, nor did the scapegoat take the punishment of the people, neither did Christ who is our scapegoat. But the scapegoat bore the sins of the people in that it was offered on behalf of the sins of the people (Lev. 16:9-10). Jesus died for our sins, He was offered for our sins, but He did not become guilty of our sins. Jesus was a spotless sacrifice, not a sinful sacrifice. Because we are told that if the offering "hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer, for it shall not be acceptable for you" (Lev. 22:20).

Therefore the actual moral condition of Christ at his death was sinless and pure, not sinful and defiled. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, the he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (1 Pet. 3:18). The moral character of Jesus never changed; He is always the same (Heb. 13:8). He was a perfect sinless offering (Heb. 4:15) without spot or blemish (1 Pet. 1:19) because "he offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). Jesus was always morally perfect, especially during the crucifixion (Isa. 53:7, 53:9; Lk. 23:9; Jn. 19:9; Acts 8:32-33; 1 Pet. 2:22-23). When Jesus hung on the cross, God saw him as the sinless offering not as a sinful person, but as a spotless Lamb that was being slaughtered for the sins of the people. Christ was the sinless Lamb of God who offered Himself for the sins of the people. This is what it means that he became sin (sin offering) for us, and that Christ bore the sins of the whole world.

It was the world that esteemed Jesus as a sinner (Isa. 53:3-4, 53:9, 53:12; Heb. 12:2-3), who numbered Him with the transgressors (Mk. 15:28-32; Lk. 22:37). It was the world that considered Jesus to be a sinner. But God viewed Jesus exactly as He was, as a spotless sin offering being made for the sin of the world. If Jesus was not morally sinless at His death, His offering would not have been acceptable unto God; His blood atonement would not be an adequate substitute for the punishment of hell because it would have lost its purity and value.

Jesus was forsaken of God (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34) only in the sense that the Father gave the Son over into the hands of wicked men to be crucified (Matt. 17:22, 26:35; Mk. 14:41; Acts 2:23), when He lifted up the protection He previously had over the Son (Matt. 4:6; Lk. 4:11; Jn. 7:30, 10:31, 10:39). The Son was forsaken by the Father only in that the Father was "far from helping" or delivering the Son (Ps. 22:1). Pilate had no power over Jesus except what the Father gave to Him (Jn. 19:11). It was wicked men who crucified Jesus (Mk. 12:7, 27:35; Mk. 15:24-25; Lk. 20:14-15, 23:33, 24:20; Jn. 19:18, 23; Acts 2:23, 2:36, 4:10; 1 Thes. 2:14-15). The Apostle Creed says that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate". That is because it was Pilate who "delivered" Jesus to be "crucified" (Matt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 24:7; Jn. 19:16). In this same way the Father can be said to be the one who bruised the Son (Isa. 53:10), in the sense that the Father gave the Son over as an offering, lifting up the protection that He once had over the Son, delivering His Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. The Father bruised the Son in the sense that He made "his soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:10).

4. The atonement is not limited in its intention or purpose. Christ died for all men (Jn. 1:29, 3:16; Rom. 5:15; Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:10; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:22) because all men have chosen to become sinners (Isa. 53:6). There is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11, 2 Pet. 1:17), God wants everyone to repent and be saved (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Pet. 3:9). The atonement makes salvation *possible* and *available* to all men, it is a gift that God offers to all to accept and receive (Jn. 1:20; Lk. 14:16-24; Rom 5:18) through a decision (2 Cor. 5:20) to repent and believe, though many reject God's offer (Lk. 14:16-24) and resist His grace (Gen. 6:30; Lk. 7:30; Acts 7:51). God is trying to save all men (Jn. 3:16, 6:44-45, 12:32; 16:8; Acts 17:30-31, 2 Pet. 3:9). God gives light to all men (Jn. 1:9), God is convicting all men (Jn. 16:8), God is drawing all men (Jn. 6:44-45, 12:32), God is calling all men (Acts 17:30), but many reject God's gracious invitation (Lk. 7:30; 14:16-24; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17). The atonement makes salvation automatic and unconditional for none. Rather, the atonement makes salvation available and possible for all.

5. The atonement was not necessitated by foreknowledge or unavoidable because of prophecy. Prophecies are not merely God knowing all of the future intuitively from all of eternity, leaving God without the ability to plan the future or change the future, making the future nothing more than eternal certainties without any open possibilities for God or man. Prophecies are many times God foretelling what He Himself will deliberately bring to pass (Isa. 42:13-16, 46:10-11, 48:3; Acts 27:23-25), including the prophecies of the coming Messiah (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 9:6; 53:6; Acts 2:23, 4:28). Jesus voluntarily laid down his life of his own free will (Jn. 10:11, 10:18, 15:13). Because of free will His future was open with alternative possibilities (Mk. 14:36), He could have avoided the cross by praying for twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53), but made the deliberate choice not to do so (Matt. 26:42; Lk. 22:42). Though the atonement was a preparatory plan before creation (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:20), preparing for the possible fall, and it was settled that this plan would be accomplished once the fall of man occurred at creation (Rev. 13:8), it was still an act of God's grace and mercy, of His own free will, not necessitated or unavoidable. So it was not foreknowledge that forced Jesus to the cross. It was not prophecy that caused Jesus to go the cross. It was the voluntary and gracious love of God which brought Jesus to the cross to die for our sins (Jn. 3:16, 10:11; Rom. 5:8). This is a wonderful and glorious truth!