

THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT

FOR THE REMISSION OF THE PENALTY OF THE LAW

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“Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins” Heb. 9:22

What if we were forgiven without atonement? What are the dangers involved in a Ruler forgiving without a substitutionary atonement? What would happen, or what would the moral universe think, if God simply forgave us by His grace and mercy without requiring that the blood atonement substitutes our eternal punishment?

The answer to this question will determine our understanding of the necessity of the atonement. Our answer will determine what we think about the reason for the atonement.

Some represent the atonement as if it needed to satisfy the wrath of God, that it needed to sort of cool Him off or calm Him down, as if God was personally bloody thirsty or had an appetite for death that needed appeasement. And that if there was no atonement, God would not be merciful or loving, but only vengeful and wrathful until His bloody appetite had been appeased. But I cannot buy this view because God was clearly merciful before the atonement, as we saw with Nineveh, and God was clearly loving before the atonement which is why He gave the atonement in the first place, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son." So the atonement was not necessary to change the feelings of God, or to change God at all.

Others represent the atonement as needing to satisfy the demands of the law. The wages of sin is death, therefore somebody had to die. But who is this "somebody" who had to die? Was it anybody or a real somebody? The penalty of the law strictly required "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." So the law (or the penalty of the law), did not require the death of just anybody, it required the death of the sinner. But we see with the atonement, the innocent died (Lamb without spot or blemish), while the guilty lives (the sinner). So the atonement could not have been a satisfaction of the penalty of the law, since the soul that sinned did not die.

Others say that Jesus needed to suffer our punishment because the nature of God is just. So if God forgave us without executing our punishment on somebody, He would not be just. But retributive justice requires the death of the guilty, not the death of the innocent. Besides, our punishment was eternity in hell, not six hours on a cross. It is obvious that the blood atonement of Christ is a substitute for the eternal punishment of sinners. His death was not the penalty of the law, but was a substitute for the penalty of the law. Christ died for the remission of sins, and the remission of sins is when God remits the penalty of eternal hell. If Jesus took our punishment, there is no remission of sins, there is no real mercy or forgiveness.

So what would have happened if God forgave us without atonement?

1. The universe would have received the impression that the law was wrong. If the law is not worth upholding and supporting, then it must be wrong.
2. The universe would have received the impression that the law is not important. If disobedience is not being punished, or no atonement is offered on behalf of disobedience, then certainly the law is not that important.
3. The universe would have received the impression that the penalty was too severe. If man violates the law, and God does not inflict the penalty, and no atonement is made on behalf of the violation, then certainly the impression is given that the penalty was too severe. If it were not too severe, God would have inflicted it. But since God repealed it, He must have believed that He was wrong in instituting it to begin with.
4. The universe would have received the impression that obedience to the law is not necessary. If God just let's you get away with violating His law, and does not require a bloody sacrifice to atone for your violations, then certainly it doesn't matter whether you obey or disobey the law. You could be righteous or unrighteous, moral or immoral, it doesn't matter because the law is not valuable.
5. The universe would receive the impression that God does not care about His own law. If God's law is violated, and He just simply forgives us, then certainly He does not value His own law. If He does not uphold the authority, honor, and influence of His law, then certainly He doesn't care about His own law, it must not be valuable to Him.
6. The universe would receive the impression that God was insincere in His threatenings. If God said that the soul that sinneth will die, yet reverses this without an atonement which reveals His value of the law, then certainly He must have been insincere in issuing the threat in the first place. He must never really plan on upholding and supporting His law.
7. The universe would receive the impression that God does not punish sin. If God just let's violations go, without an atonement, then he must not value His law and in consequence He must not ever care to support His law. So you can violate the law with impunity, since God does not care about His law enough to do anything about it.

In summary, the honor, influence, and authority of His law would be entirely destroyed if He forgave without a substitutionary atonement. If God does not punish sinners with eternal hell, or receive a bloody sacrifice on their behalf, then the entire universe of moral beings would believe that they can just sin all they want and get away with it, because God doesn't care and is not sincere, and therefore His entire moral government would fall apart.

So why was the atonement necessary? Why did the bloody sacrifice of the innocent need to substitute the eternal punishment of the guilty?

1. To demonstrate that the law was right. If violations require either eternal punishment or a bloody atonement, then certainly the law was right and should not have been violated.
2. To demonstrate that the law was important. If violations require either eternal punishment or a bloody sacrifice, then certainly the law was important.
3. To demonstrate that the penalty was not too severe. If the forgiveness of man required the blood of the sinless Son of God, then certainly the eternal punishment of sinners was not too severe. The value of the blood in the atonement demonstrates that the eternal punishment of sinners was not and could not be too severe, if such a severe measure needed to be taken to forgive man.
4. To demonstrate that obedience was and is in fact necessary. If such a severe requirement was necessary for the forgiveness of man's violations of God's moral law, then certainly obedience to the law must be a necessity in the government of God.
5. To demonstrate that God does care about His law. How much does God value His law, if He only forgives upon condition of the sinless offering of His Son? He must value His law immensely!
6. To demonstrate that God was sincere in His threatenings. Surely God intends to uphold the honor, authority, and influence of His law if He sent His Son to die for our sins. It must be a great mercy and grace that God turns from His wrath and sets aside our punishment, which He intended to inflict in order to support the honor, authority, and influence of His law.
7. To demonstrate that God will punish sin. If God only forgave mankind upon condition of the sacrifice of His own Son, how sure will be the punishment of all angels who might choose to disobey, or how sure will the punishment be of those who despise the mercy of God.

Jesus Christ, by substituting His suffering with our eternal punishment, demonstrated before man, angels, and all moral beings, that the law was right, that the law was important, that the penalty was not too severe, that obedience is a necessity, that the Father cares about His law, that God was sincere in His threatening, that God will not tolerate sin and disobedience.

The honor, authority, and influence of the law, over angels, men, and other moral beings would have been completely destroyed if God simply forgave us by His grace without the blood atonement of Jesus Christ.