

## Systematic Theology Session 3

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### PART ONE

#### The Person and Work of Jesus Christ: Overview of Two Theories of Atonement

A contrast between Penal Substitution and Ontological/Medical Substitution

<i>Theory of Atonement</i>	<i>Penal Substitution</i>	<i>Ontological/Medical Substitution</i>
The framework is	Legal/Judicial	Ontological/Medical
Jesus saves us from	God	Evil
Human sin is primarily	Wrong actions	Wrong condition
God is like a	Judge	Surgeon
God's wrath is directed at	Our personhood	The corruption in our human nature, but not our personhood
God's love is directed at	Our personhood	Our personhood
Why is God's wrath directed that way?	Because we broke His Law	Because we have a corruption in us
Jesus dealt with human sin	At his death	Throughout his whole life, in himself
God's wrath went from...to...?	Father to Son (upon Jesus' personhood)	Jesus' two natures, to the corruption within the humanity (within Jesus' personhood)
The resurrection of Jesus is	Proof that God accepted Jesus' self-sacrifice; it has no direct effect on how atonement works	God making a new humanity in Jesus, to share with us
Jesus is the	Victim	Victor
God changes	Which divine attributes He relates to us with	Jesus' humanity, then ours
God accepts us based on	Jesus exhausting divine wrath	Us coming to Jesus to heal our humanity
Jesus paid a price by	Absorbing wrath God would have poured out on us	Struggling against temptation to overcome it
Jesus saves us from the consequences of	Our individual sins	The fall, which started to corrupt human nature
Who did Jesus die for?	The elect only (see below)	Every single person
Salvation looks like	Afterlife insurance	Participation in Jesus' life (mission life)
Our reconciliation with God is	In God's mind	In Jesus' physical body
Who is reconciled to whom?	God is reconciled to us	We are reconciled to God
Our motivation for obeying Jesus is	Psychological (debt-forgiveness, gratitude for Jesus' suffering)	Ontological (admiration for Jesus, recovery of my true self, new identity in union with Jesus)
At first glance, which world does God seem to care more about?	Next world	This world
The Person and Work of Jesus	Are divided	Are one in the same; the Person is the Work
Evangelism is	Saving souls	Caring for souls and bodies
Jesus addresses social injustice	In our sanctification (?)	At our conversion, right away, in us

**PART TWO**

**Scriptures: Penal Substitution and Medical-Ontological Substitution**

<i>Biblical Passage</i>	<i>Penal Substitution</i>	<i>Ontological/Medical Substitution</i>
God put pain into childbearing, husband-wife relationships, and gardening (Gen.3:16 – 19)	Extrinsic Retribution ( <i>tendency</i> ): God punishes us with pain for violating His law	Intrinsic Consequences: God withdrew from the garden (see below) so producing life is harder
God exiled humans from the Garden (Gen.3:20 – 24)	Retribution ( <i>tendency</i> ): God punishes us with death for violating His law	Prevention: God didn't want us to eat from the tree of life and make our sin immortal
God took human life in the Flood, at Sodom and Gomorrah, in Egypt, etc. as examples of...	Retribution ( <i>tendency</i> ): punishment of death for idolatry and violation of God's laws	Prevention: God protected the family of faith (e.g. Noah and family) to protect the lineage of Jesus, and preserved those souls until Jesus came to them (1 Pet.3:18 – 20; 4:6)
God gave 'an eye for an eye' to characterize Jewish Law as about	Retribution ( <i>tendency</i> ): proportional punishment; you take an eye, you lose an eye	Restoration: You injure another man's eye, you become his second eye
The Temple sacrifices symbolize	Retribution like in a courtroom verdict with death sentence	Purification like in a dialysis machine (Lev.10:24 – 26; 16:27; Jn.2)
Symbolically, the animals are	Substitutes for you	Vehicles to carry our impurity into God, and God's purity back to us
What matters in the sacrifices is...	They die	Who eats which (Lev.6 – 7), the priests carry sin into God through sin offerings (10:24 – 26; 16:27), and God gives back purified life
In Isaiah 53, the Servant suffers	Instead of Israel	With Israel, to suffer exile with them and make a way through it for them
At the cross, who judged what?	The Father judged the Son	The Son judged and condemned sin in his flesh (Rom.8:3), by the Spirit, for the Father (Jn.5:22 – 30), with the Father (Jn.16:32).
Who punished Jesus?	God the Father (or God), ultimately	We did, for exposing our human nature as corrupted
John 16:32 ('you will leave me alone, but I am not alone because the Father is with me') means...	?	Jesus never lost touch with God the Father, and the Father never turned against Him
Matthew 27:46 ('my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?') means	The Father forsook or turned against the Son, to punish the Son instead of us, and Jesus was crying out	Jesus was claiming to be like David, in his pre-enthronement period, as David was forsaken to the Gentiles while having the Spirit (Ps.22:24; cf. 51:11)
The Father-Son relation	Was broken, for our sake, so that the Son could take our punishment instead	Was maintained, for our sake, so that sinfulness could be undone through a human, with God's help

Jesus' death is a ransom, a payment to deliver us from	God's wrath, because God needed to satisfy His wrath	Human self-corruption, because God needed to undo human sin through a human
Jesus' bodily resurrection is	Proof that God accepted Jesus' death instead of us	Atoning, as God produced a new humanity free from sin in the risen Jesus (e.g. 1 Cor.15:17)
'Circumcise your heart' (Dt.10:16; Jer.4:4; Rom.2:28 – 29) is done by	The Spirit, after we receive Jesus	Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, in himself; then in us by the Spirit with our partnership
'Works' done without explicit faith in Jesus	( <i>tendency</i> ) Are a potential basis for pride and self-justification, and must be renounced; they are done 'against God'	Are evidence of God's prior work, can be distorted by pride, but can also dispose us to Jesus by affecting human nature positively
The Prophets wanted God to create new human heart (Gen.6:5 – 6; Dt.30:6, Ps.51:9 – 10; Jer.31:31 – 34, Ezk.36:26 – 27). So Jesus...	First absorbed God's anger against humanity to allow God's Spirit to come	First created that new heart in himself by the Spirit, by struggling against sin and defeating it at his death, so he can share himself with us by his Spirit.
Paul in Romans 3:25 says that Jesus was a <i>hilasterion</i> , which means...	'Propitiation': God satisfied His righteousness and justice on Jesus	'Mercy Seat': God consumed the sinfulness in Jesus to make him the place God meets us
Romans 3:25 ('to show His righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed') means...	God's righteousness is shown by His punishing Jesus for our sins. God passed over punishing the sins of Israel, and the sins of Gentiles, because He punished Jesus instead.	God's righteousness is shown at long last by the faithfulness of Jesus (Rom.3:22), as a human obedient to the Father, which fulfilled the covenant both from Israel's side and God's side
Hebrews 2:1 – 2 ('Every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty' under the Sinai covenant) means...	? How to reconcile Hebrews 2:1 – 2 with Romans 3:25?	God already re-enacted exile and death with Israel (e.g. Isa.40:1), reminding them they have the same problem as Adam and Eve
'The righteousness of God' (Rom.1:16 – 17) means...	God punishes sin	God is faithful to His covenant promise, to destroy and undo sin
Is the Holy Spirit necessary for our justification?	No; for our sanctification only, because the atonement happens between the Father and the Son	Yes, to join us with Jesus, the Justified One (Rom.4:25)
Our 'union with Christ' (Romans 6:1 – 11, etc.) is	The grounds for our sanctification; after Jesus takes our punishment, we can become one with him to grow spiritually	The grounds for both our justification and sanctification; 'union with Christ' is our participation in Jesus' new humanity by the Spirit
'Fire' is used to describe Hell because fire means...	Retributive Punishment: God punishes sin infinitely, even though people want to get out of Hell and be with Him	Restorative Demand: People choose to stay addicted to sin for eternity, while God refuses to feed their addiction and demands that they surrender to Him
We can talk about Hell in order to	Scare people about God's punishment in the afterlife	Scare people that their addiction to sin could become even worse

In Hell, who wants to be with whom?	We want to be with God, but God says no	God wants to be with us, and heal us, but we say no
God exchanges currencies. He first demands obedience. But he accepts suffering instead.	True. God is <i>satisfied</i> by Jesus' suffering (for believers) or human suffering in hell (for non-believers)	False. God is <i>never satisfied</i> by human suffering. He only accepts obedience, because only our obedience changes human nature

## Penal Substitution

### Some Questions:

1. Are there double accounting problems with God's wrath?
  - a. God already expressed His wrath in the Fall, through death (Genesis 3:16 – 19, Romans 5:12 – 21), so Jesus did not deflect the wrath of God from humanity in that sense.
  - b. God already expressed His wrath upon Israel, so did Jesus take that wrath again?
    - i. 'Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God. 'Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.' (Isaiah 40:1 – 2)
    - ii. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:2 – 3)
  - c. God expressed wrath on Christians, so Jesus did take only some of the divine wrath?
    - i. God took the lives of Ananias and Sapphira for lying (Acts 5:1 – 11)
    - ii. Christians died or got sick because they ate communion in an unworthy posture (1 Cor.11:29 – 30)
  - d. If God already expressed His wrath on Jesus for all, then what wrath will He pour out on those in hell? This is what leads many adherents of penal substitution directly into limited atonement, the view that God allotted some wrath to fall on Jesus and some wrath to fall on the damned.
2. Conceiving of God's wrath as directed against our personhood leads immediately to the question of limited/definite or unlimited/indefinite atonement
  - a. If Jesus exhausted all of God's wrath, then this means there is no wrath leftover for hell. Unlimited/indefinite atonement, in this system, infers universalism, which contradicts the following Scriptures: Isaiah 66:22 – 24; Matthew 25:31 – 46; Revelation 14:9 – 11; 20:10 – 15)
  - b. If Jesus exhausted God's wrath for only some, then this means that God does not love all. Limited/definite atonement requires God to not love all, which contradicts the following Scriptures: 'He himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world.' (1 John 2:2). 'False teachers were...denying the Master who bought them.' (2 Peter 2:1). 'The living God... is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.' (1 Timothy 4:10). 'For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.' (Titus 2:11) 'God our Savior...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' (1 Timothy 2:3 – 4) 'The Lord is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.' (2 Peter 3:9) 'Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked...rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?...For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies. Therefore, repent and live.' (Ezekiel 18:23, 32 – 33) Moreover, can God tell us to love our enemies (Mt.5:38 – 48) if He does not?
3. Does Penal Substitution require
  - a. Limited Atonement by the Son?<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Or, Limited Application by the Spirit?
  - c. Are these formulations Trinitarian? Is the character of God still fundamentally love?<sup>2</sup> Or is it now arbitrary?
4. Practical Implications
  - a. Evangelism: Can you say, 'God loves you?' to a non-Christian?

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<sup>1</sup> J.I. Packer notes that it does. '[John] Owen shows with great cogency that the three classes of texts alleged to prove that Christ died for persons who will not be saved (those saying that he died for 'the world,' for 'all,' and those thought to envisage the perishing of those for whom he died), cannot on sound principles of exegesis be held to teach any such thing; and, further, that the theological inferences by which universal redemption is supposed to be established are really quite fallacious...So far from magnifying the love and grace of God, this claim dishonors both it and him, for it reduces God's love to an impotent wish and turns the whole economy of 'saving' grace, so-called ('saving' is really a misnomer on this view), into a monumental divine failure. Also, so far from magnifying the merit and worth of Christ's death, it cheapens it, for it makes Christ die in vain. Lastly, so far from affording faith additional encouragement, it destroys the scriptural ground of assurance altogether, for it denies that the knowledge that Christ died for me (or did or does anything else for me) is a sufficient ground for inferring my eternal salvation; my salvation, on this view, depends not on what Christ did for me, but on what I subsequently do for myself...You cannot have it both ways: an atonement of universal extent is a depreciated atonement.' J.I. Packer, 'An Introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*', reprinted in Packer and Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), p.126.

<sup>2</sup> Significantly, Packer writes, 'They [i.e. Bunyan, Whitefield, Spurgeon, etc.] knew that the dimensions of divine love are not half understood till one realizes that God need not have chosen to save nor given his Son to die; nor need Christ have taken upon him vicarious damnation to redeem men; nor need he invite sinners indiscriminately to himself as he does, but that all God's gracious dealings spring entirely from his own free purpose.' *ibid*, p.135. If Packer is correct here, and God did not need to love, then God cannot be said to be love, fundamentally, on the level of His character. Love would be merely accidental to God. God's 'free purpose', then, would be to be unconstrained by any loving nature, which a Triune nature would require.

b. Social Justice: Can you say, 'God wants to heal and undo all human evil?'

Exercise: If Limited Atonement by the Son is true, then diagram God as having love for some vs. wrath for others

Exercise: If Limited Application by the Spirit is true, then diagram God as saving some vs. passively ignoring others

## Ontological/Medical Substitution

Exercise: Diagram God – Wrath and Love in Ontological/Medical Substitution Theory

Some Questions:

1. Does this align with Scripture?
  - a. Hebrews says the Temple sacrifices were to symbolically cleanse the Israelite, as God consumed sin symbolically and left the worshiper with a peace offering (Leviticus 6 – 7). The sacrifices were not to appease God, just as the body of Jesus is offered to cleanse human nature (Hebrews 9 – 10). See P.P. Waldenstrom's *Be Ye Reconciled to God*.
  - b. Conceptually, forgiveness can happen in two ways. Either (1) someone else can pay your debt, or (2) your identity could be changed (e.g. in a witness protection plan for those who defect from a criminal organization). The latter is the case in the New Testament. This is why Paul speaks of forgiveness in the context of our new identity in Christ. Colossians 1:14 ('the forgiveness of sins') stands in the context of Colossians 1:13 – 23 (he rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins). Similarly, Ephesians 1:6 is true because we are in Christ, according to Ephesians 1:3 – 14. It is not that our identity is changed because we are forgiven. Rather, we are forgiven because our identity has changed now that we are in Christ.
  - c. We share in Jesus' resurrection (Ephesians 1:15 – 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15; Romans 6:1 – 11; 8:1 – 11); Jesus' resurrection is not just a 'proof' that his death was accepted by God. In fact, Jesus' resurrection is necessary for our salvation. In the Old Testament prophetic hopes, to be resurrected was to be justified, and vice versa. Note Ezekiel 37: the resurrection of the dry bones represents people renewed by the new covenant in which God wrought an internal change in their nature (Ezk.36). Jesus is the Justified One. But the ontological (resurrection) is the foundational ground for the forensic implications (justification), not the other way round. 'He was raised for our justification' (Romans 4:25). Paul does not say that Jesus was crucified for our justification, even though that is true in a subsidiary sense. Rather, he is precise: Jesus' resurrection, and our sharing in Jesus' resurrection life by faith in him, is the grounding for our identity transformation, and hence our justification and forgiveness and also our sanctification and transformation.
  - d. Our motivation for obedience is never psychological (debt-forgiveness, thankfulness), but ontological (new identity in Christ, in Romans 6:1 – 11; 6:15 – 23; 8:5 – 17)
  - e. God has reconciled us to Himself, not the other way round (Colossians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:17 – 21); He is absolutely not reconciled to our sinfulness
  - f. John says Jesus took our sinful flesh (John 1:14) to purify it as a new Temple (John 1:35 – 51; 2:1 – 25), crucify the poisonous and corrupted part (3:14 – 15), and raise up a new humanity and offer his Spirit to us (3:1 – 21; 13:1 – 17:26)
  - g. Paul says the same ('born of a woman, born under Law' in Galatians 4:4; 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' in Romans 8:3), as he explains how God could 'adopt' us into Christ (especially Romans 5 – 8, Galatians 4 – 5, Ephesians 1 – 3)
  - h. Paul notes that the wrath of God is not against persons per se, but against the sinfulness in each of us (Romans 1:18), and that the purpose of Jesus is to offer a healing and transformation to them. Paul sees that ultimately the wrath of God (since it is directed against the corruption in our nature) *serves* the love of God (which upholds our personhood). The wrath of God *is part of* the love of God, since God condemned the sinful flesh of Jesus (Romans 6:6; 8:3), and now invites even hostile enemies to be transformed (Romans 12:17 – 21). God always works for the restoration of our original relationship with His Triune Being.
  - i. What is the meaning of fire in Scripture? God always uses fire first as cleansing and purifying. Then, fire becomes painful and tormenting for those who resist the cleansing. See: <http://www.newhumanityinstitute.org/resources.fire.htm>
2. Practical implications:
  - a. Evangelism: Can you say, 'God loves you?' to *any and every* non-Christian?
  - b. Social Justice: Can you say, 'God wants to heal and undo *all* human evil?'

- c. Hell: Can you say, 'Hell is not a prison system in which God pours out His leftover wrath. It is the love of God, which is burning away the corruption in people who refuse to let it go. Hell is the *love* of God!'

**More Resources:**

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor*

D.M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ*

Donald Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*

Christian D. Kettler, *The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation*

Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement*

Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation*

Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*

P.P. Waldenstrom, *Be Ye Reconciled to God*

Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*

Mako Nagasawa, The Meaning of Jesus' Death, <http://newhumanityinstitute.org/resources.atonement.htm>

Mako Nagasawa, *Evil and the Christian God*

Mako Nagasawa, *Human Dignity: Does Each Individual Matter?*

Mako Nagasawa, *Hell as the Love of God*