

Penal and Medical Substitution: Comparison of Biblical Texts and Ministry Issues

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PART ONE: Overview of Two Theories of Atonement

A contrast between Penal Substitution and Medical-Ontological Substitution

<i>Theory of Atonement</i>	<i>Penal Substitution</i>	<i>Medical/Ontological Substitution</i>
God initiates atonement because He is motivated by	Love	Love
Must God punish every sinful action?	Yes	No
Jesus paid a price by	Absorbing wrath that God would have poured out on us	Taking on a fallen human nature, struggling against temptation to overcome it, dying to defeat the fallenness in his humanity
God is a Judge like a...	Western, Latin judge who rewards and punishes merit/demerit, and then is satisfied	Hebrew judge (restorative) who demands that the offender participate in repairing the harm caused (because we damaged ourselves and our relations)
God judges like a...	Western, Latin judge (Punitive Satisfaction) who must inflict pain, a death sentence, upon lawbreakers to satisfy himself	Surgeon who cuts away sin from us, like in Jewish circumcision, and calls for our participation in His judgment
The framework is	Legal/Judicial, then the Spirit can be involved in us to heal, transform	Medical/Ontological all the way through, by our participation
Jesus saves us from	God	Evil
God accepts us based on	Jesus exhausting divine wrath	Us coming to Jesus to heal our humanity
Salvation looks like	Afterlife insurance	Participation in Jesus' life (mission life)
At first glance, which world does God seem to care more about?	Next world	This world

PART TWO: God and Humanity, Before the Sinai Covenant

<i>Biblical Passage</i>	<i>Penal Substitution</i>	<i>Medical/Ontological Substitution</i>
Once human beings were fallen, they could do nothing about their human nature.	True. Human nature remained uniformly static, and sinful. The emphasis here is on sinful <i>actions</i> , not <i>human nature</i> . Once human nature became fallen, it was inevitable that people sinned in actions or thoughts in some way. All that matters now is what we do, say, and think that offends God.	False. They could soften or harden their own hearts, and their human hearts were 'tablets' that they could write upon, either for good or ill (e.g. Prov.1:23; 3:3, 8; 6:21; 7:1 – 3). Israel focused on <i>desires</i> (e.g. Ps.37:4). Despite being fallen, Israel discovered that their choices further shaped their human nature towards God or against Him.
God put pain into childbearing, husband-wife relationships, and gardening (Gen.3:16 – 19) because...	(<i>tendency to answer</i>) Extrinsic Punitive Satisfaction: 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) as...	(<i>tendency to answer</i>) Punitive Satisfaction: 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	(<i>tendency to answer</i>) Punitive	Prevention: God protected the family of

Flood, at Sodom and Gomorrah, in Egypt, etc. as examples of...	Satisfaction: punishment of death for idolatry and violation of God's laws	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)
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PART THREE: God and Israel, From Mount Sinai to Jesus

<i>Practical point: When my Jewish non-Christian friend asks, 'Why did God need an Israel? Why not just jump right to Jesus?' then I have to say...</i>	<i>God needed to demonstrate His need and His right to punish sinners to His satisfaction, in a preliminary sense</i>	<i>God needed human partners (because He always works with human partners) to begin the struggle against their own fallenness (Rom.8:3; Dt.10:16), diagnose the condition of fallenness for all (Rom.7:14 – 25), document it, and hope for the cure in the Messiah.</i>
God gave 'an eye for an eye' (Ex.21:18 – 19) to characterize Jewish Law as being about	(<i>tendency to answer</i>) Punitive Satisfaction: proportional punishment; you take an eye, you lose an eye. This prepares us to understand <i>infinite</i> punishment by divine justice, because infinite punishment <i>is proportional</i> to an infinite offense.	Restoration: You injure another man's eye, you become his second eye. This prepares us to understand our responsibility to heal our damaged humanity.
God allowed Israel to be conquered by other nations to express...	Punitive Satisfaction: Israel offended God's justice, so God inflicted pain on them, using other nations.	Revelation: Which 'lord' were they choosing? Israel chose to obey Assyria, Babylon, etc., so God allowed them to go backward (e.g. 'to Egypt') to reveal their own choice to them (e.g. Isa.19 – 20). This was a 'just consequence' (Heb.2:1 – 2).
But God says Israel suffered more than they deserved, and even more than God intended (Isa.40:1 – 2; Zech.1:15).	? But they still deserved it, somehow. And it gave God reason to punish the Babylonians, etc.	Exactly. Because the amount of pain Israel suffered was not actually a set part of God's intention; it was a chaotic and evil human element based on human free will.
Why did God motivate Old Testament Israel to want the Messiah, the Spirit, and heart change without much discussion about the afterlife, or even hell?	There is some teaching on the resurrection and hell in the later Jewish literature: Isaiah 66:15 – 24; Daniel 12:1 – 2. And Israel may have believed more than what was written.	Because God was developing the Israelites to want His blessing for themselves and the whole world, even in Isaiah and Daniel, where God redeems Gentiles, too. He did not want the Israelites to be selfish about individual eternal survival. Why would Jewish Christians go out on world mission if that were their motivation?
Why do the apostles not do evangelism using penal substitution in Acts? Especially with Jewish audiences?	? When they mention Jesus' death on a cross (Acts 2:23; 5:30; 10:39), they do so as plain history, but they do not interpret it as a penal substitution. Perhaps it was assumed? Or, perhaps they were still in progress on what had happened and how to articulate it?	Because they appealed to different motivations. They stressed Jesus' victory over death to fulfill prophecy (Acts 2:24 – 36; 5:30 – 32; 10:40 – 43), because Israelites hoped for resurrection (victory over sin), prophecy fulfillment (rational consistency), and the Spirit (deeper experience of God). The motivations they cultivated in evangelism are the same motivations they

		built upon in discipleship. They did not cultivate 'survival' motivations.
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PART FOUR: God, Israel, and the Sacrificial System

The Temple sacrifices symbolized...	Punitive Satisfaction: God killed animals instead of people, in order to satisfy His sense of wrath and outrage at the unholiness and brokenness of people.	Purification like in a dialysis machine (Lev.10:24 – 26; 16:27; Jn.2). Moses went up Sinai and God purified him, making his face shine when he made the covenant (Ex.34:29 – 35). Moses's vertical ascent up Mount Sinai (Ex.25:40), was repeated by the high priest going horizontally into the holy of holies to renew the covenant annually. So the sacrifices were for purification.
Symbolically, the animals were	Substitutes for Israelites. You should suffer death. But God killed the animals instead of people.	Vehicles to carry human impurity into God, and God's purity (uncorrupted life-blood) back to Israel.
In the sin offerings (Lev.4 – 5), God was pleased (4:31) when the kidney, liver, and intestinal fat were separated and burned (4:8 – 10) because...	The animal died instead of the human. Which organs were burned doesn't matter, ultimately.	The human reenacted cleansing of self, the removal of waste, toxin, and impurity. The death of the animal by itself was just a means to an end: separation of the impurity.
The priests made 'atonement' for the people <i>by eating the animals' flesh</i> (Lev.6 – 7; 10:24 – 26). Eating the flesh was atoning because...	?	The priests carried impurity into God symbolically in an annual cycle, as God gave back purified life (blood)
<i>Practical point: In the sacrificial system, God was blood_____</i>	<i>Bloodthirsty</i>	<i>A Blood Donor</i>
Isaiah says the Servant will be a sin offering (Isa.53:10) because...	He will die instead of Israel.	He will die in order to burn away the waste/toxins within his humanity, for us.

PART FIVE: The Father-Son-Spirit Relationship

<i>Practical point: Can we threaten people that God will abandon them, too? Should we?</i>	<i>Yes and Yes.</i>	<i>No and No.</i>
At the cross, who judged what?	The Father judged the Son.	The Son judged and condemned sin in his flesh (Rom.8:3), with the Father (Jn.16:32; 5:22 – 30), by the Spirit.

The Father-Son relation was...	Broken, for our sake, so that the Son could take our punishment instead.	Maintained, for our sake, so that the Son as human could judge and undo sinfulness, by the Spirit, and for the Father. The Son <i>reflected</i> the Father in every sense.
'For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son' (John 5:22) means...	The Father judged the Son.	The Son judges all things for the Father, and <i>the Father judges no one, including the Son</i> (Jn.5:22 – 30).
'You will leave me alone [at the cross], but I am not alone because the Father is with me' (John 16:32; 14:9 – 11; 8:28 – 29) means...	?	Jesus never lost touch with God the Father, and the Father never turned against Him (Jn.16:32), because the Father was in him, and he in the Father.
'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46; Ps.22:1) means...	Jesus was forsaken <i>by the Father</i> . The Father forsook or turned against the Son, to punish the Son instead of us, and Jesus was crying out.	Jesus was forsaken <i>to the Gentiles</i> . On his way to enthronement, Jesus retold David's pre-enthronement story, as David was forsaken <i>to the Gentiles</i> while still having the Spirit and knowing God's face (Ps.22:9 – 11, 24; cf. Ps.51:11).
What was the Holy Spirit doing while Jesus was on the cross, and died?	?	The Spirit was doing in Jesus what the Spirit wants to do in us: putting to death the corruption of sin (Jn.17:19). The Spirit is the/a bond of love between Father and Son and is never broken.
Is the Holy Spirit necessary for the cross to 'work'?	No. The atonement happened between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is for our response and sanctification only.	Yes, to join us with Jesus, the Justified One (Rom.4:25), and to empower the same repentance, faithfulness, and obedience in us.
Does God the Father view us and know us in the same way the Son and Spirit do?	No. The Father and Spirit seem mentally divided. The Spirit knows our weaknesses and our current sins (Rom.8:26 – 27). But the Father views us 'through the lens' of Christ in order to see us as 'legally innocent.'	Yes. The Trinity is united in God's knowing of us, in our current condition. There is no separate perception the Father has.

PART SIX: The Theology of Paul

<i>Practical point: God first demands partnership-obedience. But He accepts your infinite suffering instead.</i>	<i>True. God is satisfied by Jesus' suffering (for believers) or human suffering in hell (for non-believers)</i>	<i>False. God is never satisfied by human suffering. He only accepts partnership-obedience and openness to Him, because that's the only way we can change our human nature.</i>
<i>Practical point: Is God satisfied to inflict pain on you instead of you receiving healing through your</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

<i>partnership-obedience and trust? Is God ultimately indifferent?</i>		
Paul in Romans 1 – 3 describes types of people who are in sin. His reason for doing that is...	Proving that everyone deserves God's wrath: They 'are worthy of death' (1:32). They are 'storing up wrath for themselves in the day of wrath and revelation' (2:5 – 11).	Proving that everyone is already experiencing God's wrath: Proving that everyone is increasingly corrupting themselves through: moral and emotional corruption (1:21 – 32); self-deception and judgmentalism with a conflicted conscience (2:1 – 16); if you're Jewish, failure to uphold the Sinai covenant, by not becoming circumcised of heart (2:17 – 3:8). See Ephesians 4:17 – 19.
'We have fallen short of the glory of God' (Rom.3:23) means...	A legal <i>violation</i> : We did not live a morally perfect life and/or we did not give proper credit to God.	A fallen <i>condition</i> (ontology), not being circumcised of heart. The phrase 'have fallen short' (<i>hysterountai</i>) is translated 'having been empty' (<i>hysterēsantos</i>) in John 2:3, for example. We are empty of God's glory.
Paul says that Jesus was a <i>hilasterion</i> (Rom.3:25), which means...	'Propitiation': God satisfied, exhausted His punitive righteousness and retributive justice on Jesus	'Mercy Seat': God consumed the sinfulness in Jesus' humanity to make him the shining pillar of light and fire in whom God meets us (why two angels were by Jesus' tomb in John 20:12, like the two angels on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant)
'Justification' (Rom.4:25) means...	The Father sees me as innocent and perfect. God the Father imputed the retributive punishment for our sins onto Christ, and views us as innocent, since he has no wrath leftover for us, and now imputes the 'moral righteousness' of Christ onto us.	God accepts my apology and cooperation; I am in progress. God declares that we are 'in the right,' by being part of his covenant people in Christ, because we have apologized and repented for what we did with our fallen human nature, and are committed to restoring ourselves and creation with Jesus and the Spirit.
'We are saved by his life' (Rom.5:10) means...	A shorthand for, 'We are saved by his death.'	We are saved from our own self-corruption and resistance to God, by Jesus' faithful life.
'Reconciliation' (Rom.5:6 – 10; 2 Cor.5:21) means...	God reconciled Himself to you, through Jesus' enduring what we deserved.	God reconciled you and the world to Himself in Jesus' faithful obedience. We were enemies of God. God was not our enemy.
Jesus put to death 'the old self' (Rom.6:6) means...	? Perhaps our old selves, when we die with him.	Jesus put to death the fallenness in his human nature, and completely condemning sin in the flesh, by never sinning (Rom.8:3), so we can participate in him (Rom.8:4 – 11). If Jesus did not first put to death 'the old self' he assumed from his incarnation, then how can we participate in him, if he did not participate in that very thing with us?

<p>Does Sanctification absolutely depend on Justification, and come after Justification?</p> <p>Do non-Christians need to experience Justification before they experience Sanctification?</p>	<p>Yes. All 'works' done without explicit trust in Christ are the basis for pride and self-justification (Eph.2:8 – 10; Rom.3:27; 9:32). They must be renounced. They are done 'against God' because of a self-sufficient attitude.</p>	<p>No. God is always working in every person to draw them to Jesus. And someone might have to get sober long enough to think about Jesus. God's prior work in the person <i>might</i> be distorted by pride, but might also dispose us to Jesus by affecting human nature positively.</p> <p>Sanctification exists before, during, and after Justification, because Sanctification was built into being made in the image of God, which we still are, even though we damage ourselves by sin. Non-Christian spouses married to Christians, and their children, can be sanctified in a limited sense (1 Cor.7:12 – 14). And, Sanctification even existed before the Fall and before Jesus, because the Sabbath was sanctified (Gen.2:1 – 3).</p>
<p><i>Practical point: So to properly motivate people in their sanctification, we need to motivate them by their desire to...</i></p> <p><i>What motivations are the most trustworthy to build in people?</i></p>	<p><i>Survive (fear of rejection, guilt, anxiety) and desire to be assured of survival.</i></p> <p><i>(1) Their sense of guilt. (2) God's need to punish every sinful act infinitely, because divine holiness is infinite and infinitely offended. (3) God punished Jesus instead of us and satisfied His need to punish. (4) God grants us 'forgiveness' based on receiving sufficient suffering instead of obedience.</i></p>	<p><i>Share and participate in God's love, goodness, justice, beauty, truth.</i></p> <p><i>(1) Their original identity as 'made in the image of God.' (2) God's need to purify us, to burn/cut away sin from us, with our partnership, out of His love. (3) Jesus is the perfect human partner to God and perfected his humanity by the Spirit. (4) God grants us 'forgiveness' when we are united with Jesus by the Spirit, and our identity is changed.</i></p>
<p>Then why does Paul motivate people using identity obligation via 'union with Christ' (e.g. Rom.6:1 – 11), not debt-obligation or gratitude?</p>	<p>?</p>	<p>Because people have to come to Jesus because they want him to change them. And Jesus can change us because he participated in our fallen humanity, so we might participate in his healed humanity.</p>
<p>'The wages of sin is death' (Rom.6:23) means...</p>	<p><i>God pays wages of death, when we sin.</i></p>	<p><i>Sin personified pays wages of death, when we obey it. Paul contrasts serving Christ vs. serving sin (Rom.6:15 – 23). Christ freely gives life as a gift when/as we serve him, vs. sin pays us death when we serve it.</i></p>
<p>Jesus 'became a curse for us' (Gal.3:13) means...</p>	<p>Jesus absorbed the curse of the retributive wrath of God.</p>	<p>Jesus became incarnate into fallen human nature ('born of woman' in Gal.4:4 means 'unclean' in Job 25:4), which was cursed. Israel's exile experience was a curse ('born under the Law' in Gal.4:4; Dt.11:26; 21:22 – 23; 28:18). Israel had the same cursed human nature and exile as the rest of us. Jesus participated in it to make a way through it for us.</p>
<p>Jesus 'became sin' (2</p>	<p>Jesus became alienated from God the</p>	<p>Jesus became incarnate into fallen human</p>

Cor.5:21) means...	Father while on the cross, and suffered the retributive wrath of God.	nature (2 Cor.5:16). 'Sin' links to 'sinful flesh' in Rom.8:3. All the 'he became' statements refer to his incarnation: 'he became poor' (2 Cor.8:9); 'he became flesh' (Jn.1:14; 3:5; Rom.7); 'he became man/servant' (Phil.2:7 – 80; 'he became a curse' (Gal.3:13).
Jesus' death was a 'ransom' (Mt.20:28), a payment to deliver us from...	(1) God's wrath, because God needed to satisfy His need to inflict suffering in exchange for disobedience (retributive and punitive justice). (2) Satan, because Satan had legal authority over us, given to him by Adam and Eve, and behind them, God. (3) Death, because death was the consequence God imposed on sin. Therefore, since #2 and #3 have God in the background, Jesus ultimately ransomed us from God.	(1) Human fallenness, because God needed to undo human sin through a human. (2) Satan, because we are vulnerable to Satan because of our fallen humanity. (3) Death, because we would be trapped by death had not Jesus rose from death.
<i>Practical point: Does Jesus' bodily resurrection matter in the atonement?</i>	<i>No. It was proof that God accepted Jesus' death instead of us, but it's not part of the atonement itself.</i>	<i>Yes. God produced a new human nature free from sin in the risen Jesus (e.g. 1 Cor.15:17), for us to participate in.</i>
'If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins' (1 Cor.15:17) means...	A shorthand for 'If Christ has not been crucified, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins'	That Jesus' resurrection is part of the atonement, which is about God changing human nature, not satisfying God's need to punish

PART SEVEN: God, Human Nature, and Eternity

<i>Practical point: We can talk about Hell in order to scare people...</i>	<i>About God's punishment in the afterlife is coming, and God's need to punish them will be infinite</i>	<i>That their addiction to sin could become even worse. They can further damage their own human nature through their own choices to resist Jesus.</i>
'Fire' in Scripture always first communicates	God's desire to punish and take vengeance: God punishes sin infinitely, even though people want mercy	God's desire to purify us of sin: as the fiery sword (Gen.3:24), the fiery pillar (Gen.15:17), the fiery bush (Ex.3:2), the fiery pillar (Ex.14), the fiery mountain (Ex.19:18) resulting in Moses' purified face (Ex.34:29 – 35), Jesus' full transfiguration and resurrection, and the fiery anointing of Pentecost (Acts 2).
'Fire' is used to describe Hell because fire means...	Retributive Threat	Restorative Demand: Jesus is now the fiery sword who burns/cuts something from us as he brings us back to the garden (Rev.1). If people refuse to let Jesus purify them, then they will stay addicted to sin for eternity. God refuses to feed their addiction. He still demands that they surrender to Him.

		Fire continues to indicate God's desire to separate clean from unclean, like circumcision did, and the burning of the waste organs of the sin-offering.
<i>Practical point: Is there a sense of urgency for conversion to Christ?</i>	<i>Yes, because you could die tonight and God will send you to hell</i>	<i>Yes, because dealing with your addiction to sin right now is easier than dealing with it later.</i>
Which is scarier: God or sin?	God. 'It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb.10:31).	Sin. Addicts can get to a point where they consistently reject the help they need, and the people who can best help them. God is only terrifying if we 'go on sinning willfully' (Heb.10:26) and turn away from Jesus' purification (Heb.1:3), because 'our God is a consuming fire' (Heb.10:27; 12:29).
In Hell, will God be angry at people?	Yes, because people have offended His infinite holiness, rejected Jesus and must bear the infinite punishment apart from Jesus, so God must keep people alive only to inflict pain on them.	Yes, in the sense that people have damaged themselves, and they are also the objects of God's love. Anger is an expression of love.
<i>Practical point: In Hell, who wants to be with whom?</i>	<i>We want to be with God, but God says no.</i>	<i>God wants to be with us, but we say no. God demands that people surrender so He can heal us, but their hearts are so completely hardened that they cannot.</i>
<i>Practical point: So God, in Hell, is like...</i>	<i>A prison guard and torturer, where people want to get out and get on His good side, but God keeps them in, and keeps them just alive enough to keep inflicting pain on them</i>	<i>An addiction counselor, calling people who have become eternally addicted to sin, to still receive treatment.</i>
Will God be sad? What does this mean? 'I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies' (Ezekiel 18:32), and God 'desires all men to be saved' (1 Timothy 2:4)	God is only sad in this life. When Jesus returns, God <i>will</i> take pleasure in the death of those who die, and <i>will not</i> desire that the lost be saved.	God will grieve (e.g. Eph.4:30), when people damage themselves so much that God's love becomes hell for them.