

Efficacious Atonement - Part 4

Crucifixion

March 4, 2001 - Brett Baker

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

❖ The atonement of Christ was successful in accomplishing five things:

- Justification - Although previously found guilty, now declared righteous before the law.
- Propitiation - To appease God and turn aside His wrath.
- Redemption - The payment of a ransom to secure the freedom of those whom the Father gave to the Son.
- Crucifixion - To put to death on a cross.
- Reconciliation

❖ Introduction & Review

Keeping in mind the fact that the atonement of Jesus Christ consists of His death, burial and resurrection, we consider today the death that our Lord experienced and the obligatory death that those who are in Him must experience as well. As you will recall, it is essential that we remember all three events comprise the atonement. Jesus died according to the prophetic word of the Scriptures. His burial affirms or testifies to His death and finally His resurrection is the Father's declaration to the world that Jesus is in fact His begotten Son. Therefore we are assured that it was the Son of God who was actually put to death, and rose from the dead. Without each of these events we have no atonement.

In this series we have looked at the theological accomplishments that this atonement produced. First we considered that our justification gave us a new legal standing before the law. Second we saw how this atonement did not diminish the wrath of God but instead deflected His wrath for us, upon our Lord. Third, we considered the ransom (price) that was paid by His atonement to purchase us out of slavery to sin (as a kinsman-redeemer could do) and brought us into slavery to a new master, our Lord Jesus Christ.

❖ Crucifixion

Jesus Christ died by crucifixion once for all. 2 Corinthians 5:12-15; Hebrews 10:1-10

- .. Frequently it is said that God is not being fair with humanity by counting us as being covenantally associated with Adam. Because as Adam fell, so too then did all of his descendants which obviously includes all of humanity. It is thought that his actions thousands of years ago should not be counted against those of us who come later for we know that if we had been in the garden we certainly would have done a better job of obeying. This however, is utter foolishness because our father Adam represented us perfectly.
- .. We can see from these verses that Jesus' death was not the tragic end to a promising young life. Nor was it simply a man martyred for his political cause. On the contrary, we see that the death of *this* man, Jesus Christ, has implications for all of humanity. In the same way that the fall of Adam has implications of condemnation for all who are in him (that is, all humanity), so too the death of Christ produces blessing for those who are in Him (that is, those who believe by faith).

Christians are united with Jesus in His death. Romans 6:1-5; Galatians 2:20

- .. Our union with Adam comes through our birth. Interestingly though, our union with Christ begins by uniting us with Him in His death. It is very important for us to remember that Jesus did not die so that we could live; He died so that we could die with Him and God rose Him from the dead by means of resurrection so that we might now live in Him.
- .. The death of Christ did not provide for an alternative to our death but it did provide a different context or basis for our death. The death of Jesus Christ enabled us to die *in Him* rather than dying *in our sins*. But in either case, whether we die in our sins or we die in Him, there must be a death. Obviously, death in our sins leads to eternal condemnation and death in Him yields the security of everlasting life.
- .. We cannot desire to only be united with Christ in His resurrection and not also in His death. Clearly without an antecedent death, a resurrection would be impossible. Therefore, in order for us to be united with Christ in His everlasting life, we must first be united with Him in His death.

In what way have we died with Christ? Romans 6:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17; Galatians 5:16-26

- .. Before our regeneration we were dead to spiritual things and alive to sin. In fact, all that we knew was sin and it was impossible for us to do anything that would please God. Sin reigned in us through our flesh and we were helpless to

do anything contrary to our nature. In fact, the Scriptures teach that we were enslaved to sin and there was no ransom to be paid by us to purchase our freedom.

- .. But, when the Spirit of God goes forth and makes men alive, He is making them alive to Spiritual things because we were formerly dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2). The Spirit makes us alive and regenerates us by making us a new creation. However, the antecedent to this new birth is a death—the death of the sinful nature. When the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and we receive a new nature, one that is enslaved to righteousness, it comes only after our old nature is crucified.
- .. Remember the attributes of the sinful nature...it was in bondage to sin as a slave and it was utterly incapable of doing anything that pleases God (Romans 3:9-18). Additionally, the flesh ruled our lives and we obeyed its sinful lusts without the ability to demonstrate righteousness or repentance.
- .. Something that is critical for a study in this topic is learning the Greek words sarx and soma. There are at least seven different ways that the Greek word “sarx” is used in the Scriptures. Most frequently it refers to our carnality as humans (Gal. 2:16; Romans 9:3; 1 Cor 7:28) and not spirit beings. In many places it is used to refer simply to those who are humans and in many places it is used to refer to the desires to which we are enslaved prior to conversion (Romans 8:6-8; Gal. 5:19) It is this use of the word that is most commonly translated sinful nature in some modern translations.
- .. The word soma most frequently refers to a physical body of flesh and bones (2 Cor. 12:3) but also is used to refer to the Saints collectively when speaking of the corporate body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30). We see these two Greek words meaning many times very similar things and we must take great care to understand their usage from their context and understand obscure verses in light of the clear.

“The old man, as the Old Testament is so called with reference to the New; for he begins to be old, when he is by degrees destroyed by a commencing regeneration. But what he means is the whole nature which we bring from the womb, and which is so incapable of the kingdom of God, that it must so far die as we are renewed to real life. This old man, he says, is fastened to the cross of Christ, for by its power he is slain: and he expressly referred to the cross, that he might more distinctly show, that we cannot be otherwise put to death than by partaking of his death. For I do not agree with those who think that he used the word crucified, rather than dead, because he still lives, and is in some respects vigorous. It is indeed a correct sentiment, but not suitable to this passage. The body of sin, which he afterwards mentions, does not mean flesh and bones, but the corrupted mass; for man, left to his own nature, is a mass made up of sin.

He points out the end for which this destruction is effected, when he says, so that we may no longer serve sin. It hence follows, that as long as we are children of Adam, and nothing more than men, we are in bondage to sin, that we can do nothing else but sin; but that being grafted in Christ, we are delivered from this miserable thralldom; not that we immediately cease entirely to sin, but that we become at last victorious in the contest.”^[1]

If the sinful nature in our flesh is dead why then do Christians still sin? Romans 6:12; Romans 8:9-25; Galatians 5:16-26

- .. Paul admonishes us to not let sin dwell in our bodies (soma) because we should reckon our bodies dead to sin and alive to righteousness through the Spirit. The presence of sin in our lives is not dependant on the presence of the sinful nature. We cannot take theology from our lives we must understand our lives in the light of theology. Therefore, we cannot attribute all sin to the sinful nature. As Christians we have been given a new nature which makes it unnatural for us to sin now. But the presence of sin does not mean that somehow the sinful nature is revived only to torment us over and over.
- .. We sin now, not because we are in bondage to our sinful nature but because we allow our mortal body to have its way with various desires. Instead we should by means of the Spirit, put to death the deeds of our body which we were completely incapable of doing prior to our regeneration.

^[1]Calvin, John, *Calvin's Commentaries: Romans*, pp. 224-225