

Essentials of Christianity (pt 23)
8/8/2010

Introduction _____

Blessings to you all on this Lords day. In our study of the essentials of Christianity, we will be reviewing most of the major parts of the subject of soteriology--**the doctrine of salvation.**

This list includes the following:

Election/Predestination
Atonement
Grace
Faith
Regeneration
Justification
Sanctification
Adoption
Propitiation
Forgiveness
Repentance
The Believers Security
Glorification

Today we'll begin our time together by discussing the **atonement.**

The Atonement

While the atonement is a fundamental principle in salvation throughout the Bible, the word itself is found primarily in the OT; with only one occurrence in the NT.

^{KJV} Romans 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

The definition of **atonement** is *to cover over, so as not to be seen*.¹

The Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 was a day when sacrifices were offered to provide cleansing for the Tabernacle, the Levites and the rest of the people Israel.

Essentially, the sacrificial substitute (the animals) had the effect of covering the guilt of the real criminal (the offerer), and to make their sin invisible to the eyes of God. When this was done a transgressor was at rest.²

Turn to Leviticus 17:11 to see a summary of the Lords commandments about the sacrifices.

^{NAU} Leviticus 17:11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

The NT teaching on this, obviously, is that Jesus Christ is the last and final sacrifice that was offered up once and for all, to atone for the sins of those who receive Christ.

There you have atonement in nutshell.

Let's break it down to the essential aspects of the atonement.

1. The Atonement is Substitutionary (vicarious). It is rendered by the Lord Jesus for His people, not merely for their benefit, but in their place.

¹ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Ambassador Emerald Intl., 2002).

² Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*.

2. The Atonement is Objective. That is, it makes its primary impression on God to whom it is offered (I'll elaborate on that in a moment).

3. The Atonement is Necessary. God has decreed it as the only way whereby He could be **just** and yet **save** sinners.

^{KJV} Romans 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Thus, the necessity of the atonement is based on God's nature and God's will. By nature He is holy and must punish sin; by His gracious will He has decreed salvation for those who receive Christ. Christ's work of atonement is the only way to execute that gracious purpose.

^{NAU} John 3:14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

These last two aspects of atonement are essential in the field of apologetics. We won't the time to fully develop this in an in depth way; suffice to say that there are many distorted views of the atonement, and I would like to just point out **ONE**.

One that has had *some* popularity in Christian history; and most recently in charismatic groups like the Word-faith movement.

This view is called the **Ransom to Satan Theory**

This theory was developed by Origen (a.d. 185–254), and it advocated that Satan held people captive as a victor in war. This theory,

advocated that because Satan held people captive, a ransom had to be paid, not to God, but to Satan.³

No one will deny that Satan exercises a real dominion in the world. Satan is called the god of this world (2Cor 4:4), and the ruler of the world (Joh 14:30).

Satan's dominion is, however, a usurped dominion. He stole it. He maintains it by accusation, by deception, by enslavement to sin, by the fear of death and by the power of death.

God does not owe Satan a ransom. God owes him nothing, and neither do we.

Christ destroyed Satan's dominion not by paying a ransom to him, but by fulfilling the law of God, thus appeasing the wrath of God toward man.

It was God's holiness, not Satan, that was offended at the fall, and payment had to be made to God to avert His wrath.⁴

The cross was a judgment *of* Satan, not a ransom *to* Satan.

The ransom theory is not only popular amongst certain charismatics, but was also put forth in the Chronicles of Narnia movie.

I'm unsure whether C.S. Lewis actually espoused this view, but that certainly was the way the atonement was presented when the lion was offered up to the witch as a ransom.

³ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

⁴ D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

Here's the gist of the atonement: turn to,

NAU 2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

NAU 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Grace

The next thing we're going to cover is **grace**. **Turn to Ephesians 2:8.**

A text book definition of grace is

Favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person deserves.⁵

This is where **Ephesians 2:8** comes in: **read**

NAU Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

The kind of grace we're speaking about here is to be distinguished from what is known as "**common grace**." Common grace is that grace which is shown to everyone in the world, regardless of their standing with God.

It is the gracious disposition of God toward humanity in spite of the bad things they do. This kind of grace is expressed in the words of Jesus in Luke 6:35.

⁵ Herbert Sr Lockyer, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986).

NAU Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

God permits even God-haters, murderers, liars and extortioners to receive the benefits of his blessings.

NAU Psalm 104:14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth,

¹⁵ And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart.

And everyone on planet earth receives this in some measure.

But the grace that we're referring to in this category is a particular kind of grace, which is revealed and given in the person and work of Jesus Christ: who was the embodiment of grace.

The grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ is applied to human beings for their salvation by the HOLY SPIRIT, who is called "the Spirit of grace" (Heb 10:29). The Spirit is the One who binds Christ to His people so that they receive forgiveness and newness of life, as well as every spiritual gift or grace (Eph 4:7).⁶

NAU Acts 15:11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Grace rules out all human merit. It requires only faith in the Savior. Any intermixture of human merit violates grace. God's grace thus provides not only salvation but safety and preservation for the one saved, despite his imperfections.

Grace perfects forever the saved one in the sight of God because of the saved one's position "in Christ." Grace bestows Christ's merit and

⁶Lockyer, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

Christ's standing forever (Rom 5:1-2; 8:1; Col 2:9-10); "for in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete." Grace thus obviates⁷ any obligation to gain merit, and the law as a merit system is no longer applicable to a believer, since he is no longer "under law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14).

The problem of a holy life is met in the gospel of grace by the fact that the saved one has an entirely new position in grace instead of in Adam. And being baptized "into Christ," he is "dead to sin, but alive to God." Knowledge *of* and faith *in* this glorious in-Christ position (6:11) is the key that makes it actual in the believer's everyday experience.

Rewards for faithfulness and practical holiness of life are to be dispensed, but this is a truth not to be confused with an unforfeitable and unmerited salvation.⁸

^{NAU} Galatians 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Many years ago Keith Green wrote a song called "Grace by which I stand."

Lord, the feelings are not the same,
I guess I'm older, I guess I've changed.
And how I wish it had been explained, that as you're growing you must remember,
That nothing lasts, except the grace of God, by which I stand.

Lord, I remember that special way,
I vowed to serve you, when it was brand new.
But like Peter, I can't even watch and pray, one hour with you,
And I bet, I could deny you too.
But nothing lasts, except the grace of God, by which I stand, in Jesus.

⁷ Prevents

⁸ Merrill f Unger and R.K. Harrison, *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois., 1988).

Faith

Next, let's talk about **faith**. **Let's turn to Romans 1:16-17.**

NAU Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

The word faith generally means a belief in something; the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true.

The word is used in Scripture (1) most frequently in a subjective sense, denoting a moral and spiritual quality of individuals, by virtue of which men are held in relations of confidence in God and fidelity to Him; and

(2) in an objective sense, meaning the body of truth, moral and religious, which God has revealed-which men believe.⁹

Turn to Rom 10:17: read

NAU Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Faith is not simply the assent of the intellect to revealed truth; it is the practical submission to the guidance and control of such truth. "The demons also believe, and shudder."

Historical faith is the apprehension of and assent to certain statements which are regarded as facts of history.¹⁰

Turn to Romans 4:18-21: read

⁹ Lockyer, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

¹⁰ M. G. M.A. Easton, D.D., *Easton Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, 1897 ASCII Edition* (Ellis Enterprises, Inc. Public Domain, 1988).

^{NAU} Romans 4:18 *In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."*

¹⁹ *Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;*

²⁰ *yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,*

²¹ *and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.*

Here we have one of the best places in Scripture to see the nature of saving faith. Paul gives the example of Abraham, who believed the promise of God despite enormous empirical data, as it were, to the contrary.

You remember, God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have this son and, though they became old and were unable to parent children, yet with respect to the promise of God, we are told *"they did not waiver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith giving glory to God, believing that what God had promised that he was able also to do, therefore, it was reckoned to them as righteousness."*

Clearly faith, then, is a focus upon the promise of God, the surety of his word. Is there intellectual belief? Of course. We know what the promise is, the promise of the gospel. The promise is that, by faith in Christ, we may be saved of our sins, knowing that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and was buried, that Christ was raised according to the Scriptures and appeared.

To know the facts of the gospel is essential, but it more. It is a convicted belief, a passionate embrace of that truth that we hold on to. It involves our affections, not just our minds, and it puts our wills into

action. We trust Christ, not other things. We look to Christ, not other things. We believe God's ways are right, not the ways that we have been living previously. Faith involves the mind, the emotions or affections and the will. ¹¹

Turn to Hebrews 11:1

^{NAU} Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

It is important to notice that Heb 11:1 is no exception to the rule that "faith" normally means "reliance," "trust." Here "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence (or "convincing proof") of things not seen." This is sometimes interpreted as if faith, in the writer's view, were, so to speak, a faculty of second sight, a mysterious intuition into the spiritual world. But the chapter amply shows that the faith illustrated (e.g. by Abraham, Moses, Rahab), was simply reliance upon a God known to be trustworthy. Such reliance enabled the believer to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.

True faith accomplishes everything God meant for it to accomplish in our lives, as demonstrated by the last verses of Hebrews 11

Turn to Hebrews 11:33-40

^{NAU} Hebrews 11:33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

¹¹ Ware

³⁶ *and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.*

³⁷ *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated*

³⁸ *(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.*

³⁹ *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,*

⁴⁰ *because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.*

One last comment:

In conclusion, we call the Christian's attention, for his Scriptural studies, to the central place of faith in Christianity, and its significance. As being, in its true idea, a reliance as simple as possible upon the word, power, love, of Another, it is precisely that which, on man's side, adjusts him to the living and merciful presence and action of a trusted God. In its nature, not by any mere arbitrary arrangement, it is his one possible receptive attitude, that in which he brings nothing, so that he may receive all. Thus "faith" is our side of union with Christ. And thus it is our means of possessing all His benefits, pardon, justification, purification, life, peace, glory.¹²

¹² James Orr, M.A., *THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939).