

The Satisfaction of Christ Studies in the Atonement 14. Its Results-Continued

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Transcript

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At the beginning of our last chapter we pointed out that the principle results secured by the Satisfaction which Christ offered unto God, may be summed up in these four words: reconciliation, remission, redemption and righteousness. It is indeed remarkable, and calls for our profoundest admiration, that God caused each of them to be shadowed forth on this earth-plane at the very time of our Lord's passion. Just as the nature of that unparalleled transaction which was taking place in the unseen between the Judge of all the earth and the Mediator was outwardly adumbrated in all the details of Christ's "trial" before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate, so also were the leading effects secured by that transaction illustrated in concrete and visible form. A wonderful field of study, which has been entered by scarcely any, is here opened for our reverent exploration. Perhaps the few hints now dropped will be sufficient to bestir some to prayerfully investigate it. Reconciliation is the bringing together again of two parties who have been alienated. Christ has, by His Satisfaction, reunited the Governor of the, universe unto His sinning people. Strikingly was this adumbrated by what we read in Luke 23: 10, 11, "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves." Why has the Holy Spirit recorded this detail? Is it nothing more than a mere historical allusion? Of what interest to us is the relation which existed between Pilate and Herod? Why introduce this statement in verse 12 right after what is said in verse 11? For what reason does the Spirit emphasize "the same day"? The spiritually-minded should have no difficulty in supplying answers to these questions. It was God causing the glorious consequence of Christ's death to be tangibly imaged before the eyes of men. Remission is the cancellation of guilt. Christ has, by His Satisfaction, propitiated the offended justice of God. He has made complete amends to the law for every injury which the sins of His people had wrought. He has, by His sacrifice, perfectly healed the breach which our transgressions had made. Christ has repaid all the wrongs which the iniquities of His people had done to the manifestative holiness of God: "I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm 69:4). In the light of this fact read what is recorded in Luke 22:50, 51, "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. He touched his ear and healed him." What a picture of Christ, on the very eve of His death, neutralizing the damage which His erring people had done! Redemption is the liberating of sin's captives. Christ has, by His Satisfaction, emancipated those who were slaves of sin, the helpless serfs of Satan. He has delivered from prison those who were bound. He has brought from death

unto life those who were cast in the sepulcher by Adam's transgression. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12). From that dreadful state Christ has freed His people. God caused this too to be adumbrated in connection with Calvary, for in Matthew 27: 50-52 we read, "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose." Righteousness is that which qualifies the saint to stand in the presence of the thrice holy God. It is that which fits him for the Court of Heaven. As we read in Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Such a righteousness cannot be wrought out by man, therefore was it secured for His people by the perfect obedience of Christ. This is the "best robe" of Luke 15:22, namely, the righteousness of Christ imputed. This also was shadowed forth on earth at the time our Savior died. The soldiers took His garments. Among them was His coat, "without seam, woven from the top throughout" — emblem of the flawless unity of His life, lived out by power from above. That perfect robe became the property of one whose wicked acts were instrumental in crucifying the Lord of glory (John 19:23, 24). O my readers, what a truly marvelous book is the Bible! Having previously considered the first of the four consequences of Christ's Satisfaction, Reconciliation, let us now turn to — 2. REMISSION That reconciliation and remission of sins are closely connected is clear from 2 Corinthians 5:19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." That which was the ground of reconciliation is equally the ground of pardon. Necessarily so. Reconciliation implies in its very nature a release from the punishment of sin: on God's part it is the laying aside of His anger, and that was possible only because our sins were put away; on our part, of laying aside enmity and disobedience, which is possible only by an utter renunciation of sin. Again; the fruit of reconciliation is fellowship, and that is only promoted by the remission of sins, for two cannot walk together except they be agreed. In taking up this most blessed subject of remission, let us consider — A. Its Nature Remission is the sovereign prerogative of God as Judge, whereby He acquits the believing sinner from all liability to suffer punishment as a satisfaction to His law, and that on account of the Satisfaction of Christ, applied by the Spirit and appropriated through repentance and faith. Remission is God's declining to deal with His people according as justice required for their sins, and that because He has received full compensation for them from Christ in their stead. Because the Divine Creditor has received full payment from their Surety, the debtors are discharged. Thus, remission of sins is a cancellation of their guilt, a legal discharge, a removal of obligation to suffer the wrath of God. It is the verdict of the Lawgiver; a sentence of "not guilty." The Greek word for remission, "aphesis," signifies "a sending away." It is translated "deliverance" and "liberty" in Luke 4:18, and "forgiveness" in Acts 13:38; Ephesians 1:7, etc. Thus remission of sins means that God refuses to charge them to the account of him who truly believes in Christ. It is a deliverance from the curse of the law, which holds us fast under its death-sentence until Divine grace revokes it. It is the privative or negative side of justification, whereby the sinner who flees to Christ for refuge is delivered from every claim which Divine justice had upon him. This is clear from Romans 4, where the apostle is expounding the truth of justification before God, and, after citing the case of Abraham, he appeals to the language of David in further proof: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (vv. 7, 8). There are other expressions used in the New Testament of equivalent import. Thus, "When he had by himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3). The word "purged" is here used in a sacrificial way, and refers to the removal of them from before the face of the Judge: cf. Psalm 51:7 and its context. Again, in Hebrews 10:10 we read, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," and cf. 13:12. Here, too,

"sanctified" is used in a sacrificial sense. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). By contracting guilt, the sinner is defiled, and becomes unclean in the sight of an holy God; but when his guilt is removed, he is said to be "cleansed." It is important to note that 1 John 1:7 has no reference whatever to the purifying of the unholy nature which still remains within the believer: this is quite clear from the next verse. No, it predicates the taking off of the guilt of sin and our obligation unto wrath. Sin is the whole cause of God's displeasure against us, and that which makes us odious in His sight. Therefore when we are freed from sin by faith's appropriation of the death of Christ, we are said to be "cleansed." The same term was used in connection with Israel's annual day of atonement: "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30). Most certainly that does not and cannot mean that any internal purification was effected in their souls through Aaron's offering. Three things are to be considered, and sharply distinguished, in connection with sin. First, its fault. This consists of a criminal action, a failing to render unto God that which is due Him, a transgression of His law. Now this is not taken away by the blood of Christ, nor, in the nature of the case, could it be. That which is done, cannot be undone. The sins we have committed, cannot be uncommitted. But though our sins as faulty and criminal actions are not annihilated, they are — blessed be God! — "passed over" (Rom. 3:25, margin) and "passed by" (Micah 7:18) as the ground of guilt. That is to say, God no longer imputes them to the believer. Second, its guilt. This is the condemnation of the law. Sin is "sin" simply because the law of God forbids it; when committed, it entails "guilt" because the law must punish it. Guilt is the law binding its transgressor to suffer its righteous penalty. Now remission does not mean that the offender is made intrinsically innocent, for having committed offenses he is still an offender. God never reposes a sinner to be in himself one who never omitted a duty or committed a transgression. Thus, guilt is not a quality, but a relation and obligation to punishment which the law has made the sinner's due, but which relation and obligation ceases when his sins are remitted. Third, its punishment. When the believing sinner is pardoned neither his criminal actions themselves are destroyed, nor his personal desert of punishment removed, but because of Christ's sacrifice he is discharged from all obligation to punishment. Sin is no longer imputed unto condemnation. Nay more, the offender is dealt with (not "regarded") before the tribunal of the Divine Judge as if he were pure from all sin. He still deserves (in himself) to be accursed, but the penitent and broken-hearted culprit is accepted unto pardon and exempted from eternal punishment. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Neither the root nor the being of sin is removed from the believer when God pronounces sentence of forgiveness upon him. It is simply the guilt or obligation to punishment which is remitted; it is the revoking of the law's sentence against the sinner. He is legally discharged. And this because God is "not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). This expression "not imputing" means that God is not laying them to the charge of His people, not reckoning them to their account. It is a metaphor taken from commercial transactions. Sin is a debt: Matthew 6:12. God is yet going to call sinners to account (Rom. 14: 12), and charge their debt upon them: Matthew 25:19. Yes, people may now be gay and careless, but a day of reckoning lies ahead of them. But in that day of accounts, God will not impute the trespasses of them who are reconciled to Him by Christ — "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "Condemnation" here means the damnatory sentence of the law. It is not a question of our hearts not condemning us (1 John 3:21), nor of us finding nothing within which is worthy of condemnation; instead it is the far more blessed fact that God Himself condemns not the one who has trusted in Christ to the saving of his soul. Because, by faith, they are in Christ, having fled to Him for refuge (Heb. 6:18), they shall never be adjudged guilty, nor shall a sentence of eternal death be passed

upon them, for sins being remitted (guilt removed), no ground remains for it. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). B. Its Ground As the moral Governor of His universe, it becomes God's justice to deal with sin according to its deserts. Thus He spared not the angels that sinned, but "cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness" (2 Pet. 2:4). Now all of God's elect are sinners: they were so in Adam, they have been and are so in themselves. How then shall Divine justice deal with them? Shall it ignore their sins and acquit them from punishment? Where then would be that inflexible righteousness which banished our first parents from Eden? What would become of God's own declaration that He "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7)? On the other hand, if they receive their due reward and are punished, how shall grace be shown them? On what ground are their sins remitted? Not on the basis of a belated reformation, for that would be no atonement for their past crimes. Not because of their repentance, for if sins could be pardoned at so cheap a rate then was there no need for Christ to die. "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18). Condemnation is a word of tremendous import, and the better we understand it, the more shall we appreciate the wondrous grace which has delivered us from its power. In the halls of a human court the sentence "condemned to death" falls with a dreadful knell upon the ear of a convicted murderer, and fills the spectators with sadness and horror. But in the Court of Divine Justice it is vested with a meaning and content infinitely more solemn and awe-inspiring. And to that Court every member of Adam's fallen race is cited. "Conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity" each one enters this world under condemnation — an indicted criminal, a rebel manacled. How then is it possible for anyone to escape the execution of the dread sentence? There was only one way, and that was by the removal from us of that which called forth the sentence. That which entailed and demanded the sentence of the curse was the guilt which was inseparable from our sins. Let the guilt be removed and there could be no condemnation. But how could guilt be "removed"? Only by its being legally transferred to another. Divine holiness could not ignore it, but Divine grace could and did transfer it. As we are told, "The Lord hath laid on him [the Surety and Substitute of His people] the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). The punishment due His Church was visited upon its Sponsor. Christ, by virtue of His federal union with His people, which of His own accord He entered into, was dealt with by Divine wrath as though He had personally been the transgressor. God charged upon Christ and imputed unto Him all the sins of His elect, and proceeded against Him accordingly. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The "therefore" here is an inspired and infallible inference drawn from the whole of the apostle's preceding discussion. Because Christ has been "set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25), because He was "delivered [to justice] for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25), because by "the obedience of One, many [saints of all ages] are made righteous," legally constituted so (Rom. 5:19), because they have "judicially," "died to sin" (Rom. 6:2), and "died" to the condemning power of the law (Rom. 7:4), there is therefore no condemnation resting upon them. This is further opened in Romans 8:3: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." That which was the cause of condemnation is now condemned. The "no condemnation" of verse 1 is explained by the "condemned" of verse 3. Both must not be condemned: if sin itself be judged, punished, the believing sinner shall not be. How marvelous are the ways of God! As death was destroyed by death, the death of Christ, so sin by sin. By the greatest sin that was ever committed — the murder of the Son of God — sin itself was put away. By God's imputing the trespasses of His people unto their Surety, Christ was condemned so that they might be acquitted. Christ first took our guilt upon Him, and then He bore its punishment, for guilt is obligation unto punishment. This is the very nature of suretyship: he takes the debt of another upon himself, and upon the debtor's insufficiency, becomes liable to payment thereof. By Christ's offering up of Himself in the stead of believers, all their sins were expiated.

In consequence thereof we are able to triumphantly exclaim, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33). Just as Romans 8:1 is explained in 8:3, so 2 Corinthians 5:19 is amplified in 5:21. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And why? Because "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The non-imputation of sin to the believer is not only a consequent result of Christ's sacrifice, but was the cause of His death. Trespasses are not imputed to the members of His body, because they were imputed to the Head. "He," that is God the Mediator, "made him sin," legally constituted Him so, in accordance with the mutual agreement between them in the everlasting covenant. "Made him sin" means, appointed Him as the great Sinbearer, officially liable to wrath. Christ was "made sin for us" by the reckoning of our guilt to His account, not in mere semblance, but in dread reality. Because of this, Divine Justice took satisfaction from Him; because of this He died "the Just for the unjust." Throughout His life and His death, the Lord Jesus was repaying all that injury which the sins of His people had done unto the manifestative justice of God. Therefore God now remits the sins of His believing people because He has received a vicarious but full satisfaction for them from the person of their Surety. Through Christ we are delivered from the wrath to come. Necessarily so, for an accepted Sacrifice obtained (not merely "made possible"), purchased, the remission of sins. Vividly and blessedly was this typified in Leviticus 5:5, 6, 10, "When he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing: and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned. . . and the priest shall make an atonement for him, concerning his sin. . . and it shall be forgiven him." So Christ's blood was shed "for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). To this great and grand truth all the prophets bore witness (Acts 10:43). In Christ every claim of the law against the believer has been perfectly met. Thus grace reigns not at the expense of righteousness, but "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). Hallelujah! C. Its Scope "Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). Whose sins? Believers'. Which sins? Not a few of them, not the majority of them, but every one which was on the docket against them. "Having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:13). Christ came here to "finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. 9:24). Rightly did James Wells say, "There is no mischief that sin hath done which He hath not repaired; there is no debt that sin has incurred that He has not paid; there is no foe under which sin has brought us that He hath not conquered; there is no fiery wrath which sin hath lighted up which He hath not quenched; there is no curse which sin hath entailed that He hath not borne: there is no mountain that sin hath rolled in upon us which He has not overturned; there is no distance between us and God which He has not filled up." "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isa. 38:17) — as we turn our backs upon anything which we do not wish to behold. All our sins have been removed from the judicial eyes of God. God Himself declares that He "will not remember thy sins" (Isa. 43:25). Here our sins are likened unto a debt which has been cancelled; an act of oblivion has been passed upon them. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isa. 44:22). Just as a dark cloud empties itself upon the earth and then melts away under the rays of the sun, so our sins have been dried up by Divine mercy, following the storm of judgment which was poured out at the Cross. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. . . and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18, 19) — as the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea. God lays not aside our sins gently, but flings them away with violence, as things which He cannot endure the sight of, and which He is resolved never to take note of any more. Observe, "into the depths of the sea." Things cast into the depths of the ocean never appear again! Rivers may be turned and dried, but who could lave out the ocean? So

Christ hath appeared "To put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). Hallelujah! D. Its Application This brings us to the most difficult aspect of our subject. When were the Christian's sins put away? This question is capable of more than one answer, according as it is viewed from different standpoints. Vicariously his sins were remitted when his Surety was raised from the dead. At His birth Christ assumed the full burden of His people's liabilities and responsibilities and He was not released from the same until God delivered Him from the grave. But personally we are not forgiven till we believe. We need to distinguish sharply between the results secured by Christ's death for God's elect, and their being, individually, made partakers of those effects. Christ purchased and procured a right unto our receiving forgiveness, but we do not enter into the enjoyment of this blessing until our faith is placed in Him. This may be illustrated by a young man who has been left an estate, but who cannot enter into possession of the same until he is thirty. Prior to that age he has a legal title to it, but he is not permitted to receive his inheritance: cf. Galatians 4:1-7. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"(1 John 1:7). The blood of Christ needs to be considered three ways: as shed, as pleaded, as sprinkled. As shed. This was necessary by way of satisfaction and merit, to obtain for us God's pardon of our sins, for "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). It is pleaded by Christ in heaven. This is the very basis of His intercession. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place" (Heb. 9:12), and its merits He continually presents to the Father. It is also to be pleaded by us when we beg any blessing, especially the pardon of our sins: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). But it is not enough that His blood be shed and pleaded, it must be actually sprinkled or applied to our conscience: "The blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:24). We must also distinguish between the general pardon received the moment we believed, and the specific forgiveness which we stand in need of repeatedly. To say that there is no need for Christians to pray for forgiveness because all their sins were atoned for at the Cross, betrays great confusion of thought and flatly contradicts Scripture. As well might an Israelite have argued against the offering of the daily lamb, because all his iniquities were remitted on the annual day of atonement (Lev. 16:21). So far as the Satisfaction of Christ has been offered once for all and is eternally valid before God, it allows of no repetition or addition. But considering forgiveness as the act of God as the moral Governor of the world, it is continuous unto the same persons. In the nature of the case sin cannot be formally pardoned before it is committed. As we daily commit trespasses, we are to daily ask for their forgiveness: Matthew 6:11, 12 — note the "And" at the beginning of verse 12! "Sins to come cannot be properly said to be pardoned, for till they are committed we are not guilty of them. This would not be so much a pardon as an indulgence and license to sin. . . Thus a man once converted could no otherwise than frivolously pray 'Forgive us our sin.' It would take away care of avoiding sin to come, and repentance for what is past. Daily sins displease God, and deserve death" (T. Manton, vol. 22, p. 52). At conversion we receive the Divine forgiveness of all our past sins (2 Pet. 1:9) but forgiveness of present sins must be sued for daily. Keep short accounts with God, Christian reader! Constantly plead the promise of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." E. Its Requirements First, turning from sin unto God: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). God will not remit the guilt while a man's heart remains in love with sin and he continues in the practice of it; if He did, He would compromise His holiness and encourage us in evil doing. "Christ died not to reconcile God to our sins, or to pardon our sins while we remain in them, but to bring us back again to the service and enjoyment of God" (T. Manton). The prodigal must leave the far country ere he can turn his face toward the Father's house. Second, repentance: "Repent

therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). Repentance toward God signifies a willingness to return to the duty, love and obedience which we owe Him as our Creator, and from whence we have fallen by our folly and sin. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31): as we must distinguish between God's viewing His elect in the purpose of His grace and in the sentence of His law, so we must between Christ's, having purchased pardon and His now dispensing it according to the laws of His mediatorial kingdom. Third, faith. The price of our forgiveness was paid when Christ died, but our actual admission into and possession of the privilege is not ours until we are planted into Him by a living faith. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43): cf. 13:38, 39; 26:18. "By faith alone we obtain and receive the forgiveness of sin; for notwithstanding any antecedent act of God concerning us in and for Christ, we do not actually receive a soul-freeing discharge until we believe" (John Owen). Faith is as necessary in an instrumental way as Christ's satisfaction was in a meritorious way. Faith is the link of connection between the blessings purchased by Christ and the soul's enjoyment of them. Faith is that which appropriates the benefits of Christ unto itself. What are the marks, or true evidences, of a pardoned man? First, genuine affection for God and Christ: "her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (Luke 7:47): the latter was the effect of the former. Second, a reverential awe for God: "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4): a pardoned soul will no longer rush heedlessly into sin. Third, a spirit without guile (Ps. 32:2), that is, a heart that is sincere in seeking the glory of God and desires to please Him in all things — cf. Ephesians 6:24. Where God pardons, He places His law in the heart (Heb. 8:10-12). Fourth, mourning for sin: where the heart is unbroken and unmelted, the condemnation of God rests upon it: cf. Luke 7:38. Fifth, the power of indwelling sin is broken: "He will subdue our iniquity, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19): God never does the one without the other — justification and sanctification are inseparable. Sixth, praise and thanksgiving unto God: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Ps. 103:2, 3). Seventh, a genuine spirit of forgiveness toward those who wrong us: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4).

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