

The Satisfaction of Christ Studies in the Atonement 16. Its Results-Continued

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

The Satisfaction of Christ Studies in the Atonement 16. Its Results-Continued

Numerous and fearful have been the errors into which many have fallen when treating of the results of the perfect Satisfaction which Christ offered unto God on behalf of His people. Reconciliation has, on the one hand, been restricted to sinners throwing down the arms of their rebellion, whereas Scripture also plainly speaks of Christ's having "slain the enmity" of the Divine justice (Eph. 2:16); while on the other hand, some affirm that all (including the Devil himself) have been reconciled to God, when the Word declares there are many who shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9). The remission of sins which Christ actually obtained for all He represented, has been whittled down to a mere possibility of forgiveness, which may or may not be procured by men according as their wills shall determine. While so terribly has the glorious truth of redemption been perverted that thousands believe there are multitudes in Hell for whom Christ shed His precious blood as a ransom-price. May it please the Lord to use the preceding chapters to dissipate the fogs of heresy from the minds of many of our readers.

4. **RIGHTEOUSNESS** This is, perhaps, the most wonderful of all the "results" obtained by the arduous Work of our blessed Savior. Yet is it today, in most professing Christian circles, the least understood. If it be true that the blessed truths of reconciliation, remission and redemption have been grievously and grossly misrepresented by many who have posed as teachers sent from God, that which is now to be before us has been flatly denied, held up to ridicule, and branded as a serious error, by not a few of those who wished to be regarded as the champions of orthodoxy. It is indeed painful to find the writings of men who staunchly upheld the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, His virgin birth and substitutionary death, defiled by a vicious repudiation of the principal consequence of His atoning sacrifice. But Satan is subtle, and the higher the reputation of a man for soundness in the faith, the happier is the enemy to employ him in his awful work of opposing God. But today that inestimably blessed truth which we now desire to set before the reader (as the Lord is pleased to enable), is not so much denied, as it is ignored. That which is the crowning glory of the Gospel (Rom. 1:17), that by which God has supremely displayed His infinite wisdom (1 Cor. 2:7), that which should most of all render the Redeemer precious to His people (Ps. 71:14-16), and that which ought to be the chief object of the believer's joy (Isa. 61:10), is now left out of almost all so-called evangelical ministry. Even where Christ is presented as the sinner's only hope, and His blood as the only cleanser of sin, that which secures a title for Heaven, that which alone can render a sinner acceptable before the Judge of all the earth, that which is the ground upon which He pronounces the ungodly justified, is missing from the best preaching and writings of this

degenerate age. At best, only a half Gospel is being proclaimed, only the negative side of what Christ earned for His people is being set before them. Whether or not this criticism be too sweeping we leave the reader to decide after he has read the remainder of this chapter. A. Its Nature Following our usual custom, let us first show the connection between our present theme and that which was before us in our last chapter. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24): here we are shown the intimate relation which exists between the believer's righteousness and his redemption. To "justify" is the opposite of to "condemn": see Deuteronomy 25:1; Romans 8:33, 34; etc. Now to "condemn" a man is not to infuse evil into him, but is to pronounce him a transgressor. As the condemning of a man does not make him guilty, but simply announces that he is so, to "justify" man is not to make him good, nor to infuse goodness into him, but is to declare that he is "just." Justification is that formal sentence of the Divine Judge whereby He pronounces the one before Him righteous. The ground upon which God pronounces this sentence is the "redemption which is in Christ Jesus." As we showed in the last chapter, redemption is the consequence of a ransom-price having been paid. The ransom-price which the Lord Jesus offered unto the justice of God was that perfect Satisfaction which He gave to the Divine law, which consisted of the entire course of His virtuous and meritorious life, culminating in the laying down of His life at the Cross in obedience to His Father's command: John 10:18; 14:31. Christ, then, "magnified the law and made it honorable" (Isa. 42:21), by keeping it in heart and life, in thought and word and deed; and therefore God, in His character of Law-administrator, the Judge of all the earth, has imputed the Savior's obedience to all who believe on Him; and because they have that reckoned to their account, they are "justified," declared righteous in the High Court of heaven. The Christian is justified freely by God's "grace," because it was sovereign benignity which provided the Mediator and His ransom; yet that justification is not at the price of setting aside the claims of the law, but "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Thus, grace reigns not at the expense of righteousness, but "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). Old Testament prophecy not only announced that the Messiah and Mediator should "make reconciliation for iniquity," but also that He would "bring in everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24). The two were equally needed by us: the one to deliver from Hell, the other to entitle unto Heaven. The taking away of our sins was not sufficient. In this world offenders are sometimes pardoned, so as to be no longer liable to punishment, yet without being at the same time received into favor, admitted to fellowship, and placed in a position of honor and privilege. But not so is it when a believing sinner is justified "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus": he obtains not only pardon from God, but favor and acceptance; not only exemption from the penalty of sin, but a title to the reward of righteousness. Accordingly it is written, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace [favor] wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:1, 2). And again, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). Two things were required in order for our acceptance by God: the removal of our sins, the making us righteous in the sight of His law. Man was impotent to effect the one as much as the other. We were no more able to get rid of our guilt, than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. Equally powerless were we to render unto God that perfect obedience which His justice demands, and that because of the weakness ("without strength" Romans 5:6) of the flesh (Rom. 8:3). "Therefore by the deeds of the law (that is, our own performances) shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20). Hence, if ever we were to be saved, One must come here and meet both these needs on our behalf: not only suffer the penalty which our transgressions entailed, but also render to the law active and passive obedience so as to merit righteousness for us. It is of the utmost importance to understand the distinction between obeying the law and enduring punishment. The mere suffering its penalty can never bring in righteousness, as the damned in Hell shall discover to their eternal anguish.

Christ, in the room and stead of His people, lived here a life of complete obedience to every demand of that law which they were responsible to keep, and then, in His death, He paid the full and entire penalty of that law which they had broken; and in this way He wrought out a complete righteousness for His church. Thus the authority of the law was fully vindicated, and its breach was fully avenged. There is a double exchange of place: Christ took ours, and we are given His. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). There was therefore a two-fold identification: Christ was made one with us (Heb. 2:11, 14), we are made one with Him (Eph. 5:30). We had no righteousness of our own; now, as believers, we have received a perfect righteousness, by imputation, from Christ. "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 54:17). To affirm that the suffering of Christ was all that Divine justice required in order to redeem His people is blankly to deny the force and teaching of many Scriptures. For example, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). Just as light and heat are always united in the sun, so the righteousness of Christ's life and the efficacy of His death are conjoined in our justification. The blood of Christ ought never to be thought of as independent of or detached from His life of obedience: it was their united value which purchased our redemption. In their agency they were inseparable, though in our meditation, distinguishable. Christ yielded perfect obedience to the preceptive part of the law, and full satisfaction to its penal, on purpose that the merit of all might be made over to them who believe. This is the distinguishing glory of the Gospel: the blessed truth of free justification through the righteousness of Christ. Just as God transferred the guilt of His people to Christ, so does He transfer His obedience to them. Christ has not only made us accepted, but acceptable to God (Heb. 10:19) — accepted, because acceptable.

B. Its Necessity "The claims of God's holy government in relation to man were made known at Sinai. There He promulgated His law, a law whose claims cannot be remitted or lowered, because they are founded on His own essential and unchanging holiness. The great mandatory commandment of that law is, Thou shalt love God perfectly, and manifest that love in thought and action. Perfectly and always. The great prohibitory commandment is, Thou shalt not covet (Rom. 7:7) — that is, thou shalt not desire anything of evil, anything that is forbidden by God. "The law pronounced blessing and eternal life on any who should keep it; but it pronounced curse and judgment on all who should violate it even once, if only in thought. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them' (Gal. 3:10). From Mount Gerizim was pronounced the blessing; from Ebal, the curse. The law cannot remit or lower its claims; for its claims are founded on the essential and unchanging holiness of God. And the law having been promulgated, must be fulfilled: 'Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled' (Matthew 5:18). "The law demanded: 1. The absence of all willful transgression. 2. The absence of sins of ignorance. 3. Perfectness in the inner man. 4. Perfectness of developed character in unreserved and unremitting devotedness to God. But we naturally have none of these things. Instead of being without willful transgressions, and without sins of ignorance, in both we abound. Instead of perfectness in the inner man, unfathomable depths of corruption are therein. Instead of perfectness of character, the things that ought to be absent are present, and the things that ought to be present are absent. Instead of being unreservedly devoted to God, we are unreservedly devoted to ourselves. Such is our condition. And all this moral leprosy has come upon us as the result of the Fall. It is the result of Adam's first sin, for with him we had, by God's appointment, a legal oneness. He sinned, and his transgression brought upon him and upon us 'judgment unto condemnation': — one of the first and chief results of that judgment being the presence and dominance in us of indwelling sin, whereby all power of doing good is supplanted by the abiding presence of energetic evil. Who can tell the thrill of anguish and horror that must come on the soul, when, in eternity, it too late discovers the truth of these things? "We are

thus shut up into utter hopelessness. We find ourselves heirs of wrath, strong for evil, powerless for good. 'The law worketh wrath.' 'If there had been a law which could have given life.... But Scripture hath concluded all under sin' (Gal. 3:21, 22). The law can stir up the working of sin within us: it can work 'all manner of concupiscence' (Rom. 7); but it cannot deliver from those workings. 'The law entered that the offense might abound.' 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' It is the prerogative of God alone to determine, and by His law to make known unto us, what is, and what is not, sin. Man is full of sin, yet he knows it not. 'I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust (concupiscence, or desire) except the law had said, thou shalt not covet' (Rom. 7:7). In our flesh there is nothing but evil desire: 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,' and that evil desire is sin. Men refuse to acknowledge this. Willful disobedience is the only form of sin they recognize. "There never could have been any hope for such as we if God, in the infinitude of His grace, had not been pleased to declare that His holy courts admitted the principle of substitutionary service. For He announces that He has appointed for all 'who are of faith' a Surety or Sponsor, who, undertaking all their responsibilities is their alter ego, their other self, and accepted in their stead all that is needed to supply a valid and sure title of life and glory" (from Atonement Saveth, by B. W. Newton). Here then was the desperate need. The law could not abate its demand: flawless and continuous obedience. We have no ability to meet its demand: "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10), sounds the doom of the most punctilious moralist, equally as it does the most abandoned profligate. Therefore, if ever rebellious and guilty criminals were to be saved, it could only be by Another assuming their responsibilities and satisfying the law in their stead. This brings us to consider — C. Its Procurement "Atonement Saveth. The truth expressed by these words is the great keystone of our hopes for time and eternity. Atonement brings to all those who are under it (not salvability, but) salvation. All who are of the family of faith are under it. What then do we mean by Atonement? Atonement, or appeasement, is a priestly work of the Lord Jesus directed toward God, whereby, by one obligation, finished on the Cross, He has settled forever the claims of the Divine Government and procured for all His believing people, not only pardon, but acceptableness and rewardableness according to the value of His own meritorious obedience, which has been presented to God, and accepted by God for them... "The eternal Son voluntarily undertook to be the Sponsor of His people. Humbling Himself to be born of a woman and made under the law (that so He might fulfill the Law), He formally assumed the responsibilities of all the family of faith, engaging to do everything and to suffer everything that was necessary Godward, in order to deliver them from wrath and secure to them an inalienable title to life and glory. His appointment to this Suretyship was founded upon the Justice of God, which required that all sin must be punished; and it was founded also on the Love of God, which determined not only to deliver from wrath, but to bring also to His own bosom and into His glory, those who personally deserved wrath. It was necessary, therefore, that the Substitute should, in the stead of His people (even all who should believe), meet every requirement of God's law, which demanded perfectness of obedient service; and likewise that He should bear all the penalties appointed to Him as the Substitute, because of our disobedience; for we owe unto God a double debt — a debt of obedience, and because of failure in that, a debt of penal suffering. Both must be paid. The penalty must be borne; and the perfect obedience rendered, otherwise, there could be no Atonement, and, in consequence, no salvation" (B. W. Newton, from Atonement Saveth). The above quotation contains a succinct statement upon this important aspect of our theme. In seeking to amplify it a little, let us emphasize the fact that when the Beloved of the Father became Surety for us insolvent wretches, He made Himself subject to the whole law of God. Though its threatenings were set in terrible array, and though its commands peremptorily insisted on the very perfection of obedience, He asked for no mitigation of its severity, nor any abatement of its demands; but instead, with full but joyous submission to the Judge of all, He cried, "Lo, I come. . . I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:7,8) — yes,

"come" to pay the uttermost farthing of their debt, and to perform every jot and tittle of their duty. That perfect righteousness imputed to them, which is the ground upon which God justifies believing sinners, was inaugurated when God sent forth His son to be born under the law (Gal. 4:4); it was perpetuated throughout the whole course of the Savior's life, when He did always those things which pleased the Father (John 8:29); it was consummated when Immanuel bowed His blessed head and cried with triumphant voice, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Let us examine this in fuller detail. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:3, 4). The last clause quoted states the ultimate end God had in view (so far as His elect were concerned) in sending His Son here, namely, that "the righteousness of the law," its holy and just demands, should be fulfilled for us in the person of our Representative, so that in the accounting of God they had themselves fulfilled it. "Righteousness" is a judicial term, and refers not to a state of mind or disposition of heart, but instead, to a legal status before the tribunal of God. The "righteousness of the law" signifies the full answering of all the requirements of the law, coming up to a perfect conformity to it, and that, by doing all it enjoins. It is this alone which gives title to enjoy its reward, namely, life everlasting. This "righteousness of the law" was and is "fulfilled in us" as we were and are viewed in Christ, just as verse 1 affirms, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus!" Now in order for this "righteousness" to be wrought out for us by Christ it was necessary that He should, first, be "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). "Christ was holy and righteous not as a private person, not for Himself alone, but for us sinners and our justification"(R. Haldane). Yet at this point great caution needs to be exercised lest we sully the honor and glory of the Mediator. There have been those who most erroneously affirmed that when the Son of God became incarnate it was obligatory upon Him to fulfill the law, that as Man, this was His personal duty. Not so. Had that been the case, His obedience had been of such a character that its merit could not have been imputed to others, for He would merely have been paying His own creature-debt to the law. Such is horrible blasphemy, proceeding from an altogether inadequate and faulty view of our Lord's manhood. As this error is now so fearfully prevalent, even in circles where few would expect to find it, something further needs to be said in order to its refutation. The manhood of Christ never had an existence separate from the Godhead of the Son. When the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14), the second person of the adorable Trinity took into union with Himself an immaculate human nature, consisting of spirit and soul and body. We say "an immaculate human nature" for it was not a human person; instead, it was a Divine person who assumed that human nature. Carefully has the Holy Spirit guarded this very point in Luke 1:35, where it was said unto Mary, "...that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" — so denominated because that just as when a woman is united to a man in marriage she takes his name, so the humanity of the Savior being taken into union with the second person of the Trinity, is called "the Son of God." Thus, because the holy manhood of the Redeemer became a part of the person of the Lord of glory, He was not only exempted from the common condemnation of all other men (inherent sin as the result of the Fall), but He was not obligated to be in subjection to the law as all other men are. Let it be said with all possible emphasis that it was not as a private person, but as the public and official Representative of His people that the God-man was "made under the law." It was purely a voluntary act on His part, and in no sense compulsory. Therefore was His obedience infinitely meritorious, and capable of being imputed to His people. True, His being subject to the law and meeting its every requirement had been proposed to Him by the Father in the everlasting covenant, yet it must be expressly insisted upon that it was by His own free consent that those terms were accepted by Him. It was for the sake of His people, and not for Himself, that He became under the law. Even after He had become incarnate, the Savior explicitly declared, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28), and if

Lord of the Sabbath, therefore "Lord" of the whole law. The law had no claims upon Him. That obedience which He rendered to it was entirely voluntary, free, and on the behalf of and in the stead of His insolvent people. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient" (Philippians 2:8). Weigh well these momentous words, and stand in awe at the amazing phenomenon which they present. Who "humbled" Himself? None other than the Maker of heaven and earth. When did He "humble" Himself? First, when He left the glory of heaven and entered into the virgin's womb. Unparalleled stoop was this; unprecedented condescension was that. But more; having assumed human nature unto Himself, He "humbled" Himself still further, and "became obedient." Notice the active, rather than the passive voice: it is not "he was humbled," but "he humbled himself." It was an act of His own, a voluntary act, not a duty, compulsorily laid upon Him! He "became obedient." Why? To render to God and His law that perfect service which was required in order to our being (legally) "made righteous." But not until we rightly estimate the surpassing dignity and excellency of the Surety's person shall we be able to value aright the worth of His obedience. Think of whose obedience it is! "The obedience of CHRIST — obedience of Him who walketh in the circuit of the skies (Job 22:14), and all the kingdoms of the world are reputed as nothing before Him! The obedience of Him who doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth (Daniel 4:35). The obedience of Him who is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Rev. 1:8). Doubtless, such obedience must be deserving, of all that Grace and Glory which are, and will be communicated to His people, in every period of time and throughout all ages of eternity. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. No wonder that such obedience shall 'justify the ungodly' (Rom. 4:5); should make us poor fallen creatures righteous — perfectly righteous in the sight of God — without the concurrence of any good works or any holy duties of our own. "The infinitely most noble obedience of Jesus Christ. To this obedience I would have our thoughts continually directed. This surpasses the services of both angels and men, in all their various and wonderful orders. 'Tis true, compared with our duties, Abraham's obedience is like Saul's stature, who, from his shoulders upward, was higher than any of the people. But when the righteousness of Christ comes into view, it is somewhat like that magnificent Personage described in Revelation 10. Should such a sublime and majestic Being appear amidst an assembly of the most renowned monarchs of the world, how would their splendor be eclipsed, and all their grandeur dwindle into meanness! Before such an illustrious Potentate of heaven, who would take notice of Caesar, or bestow a look upon Alexander? So the righteousness of Christ, being the righteousness of Him who lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, the righteousness of Him who now sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; this righteousness, being in itself most consummately perfect, and unspeakably ennobled by the dignity of the Performer, all other kinds, degrees, or forms of righteousness, shrink before it into the littleness of pygmies, of worms, of mites. Could they speak, the language of each would be, 'Look not upon me for I am dim, yea, I am black. But look upon your Lord, for His works are marvelous, and He is glorious in His holiness'" (James Hervey, Vol. 4, 1750, A.D.). "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). As in Romans 8:3,4, here again we are informed concerning the great objective before the Son of God in coming into this world. Having been, by His own free consent, "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4) not only to undergo its penalty and bear its curse, but also to keep its precepts (which is the principal part of it), Christ Himself here announces that He came to "fulfill" it. But the enemies of the truth have struggled hard, though quite unsuccessfully, to evacuate the meaning of that important word. They have affirmed that this term "fulfill" simply means Christ "filled out," or brought to light the hidden depths of the law's meaning, and revealed its searching holiness. But let it be duly noted that Christ here spoke of both the "law" and the "prophets" — did He "fill out" them? No, He "fulfilled" them! Others say that Christ "fulfilled" the law in

that He expounded it, which is contradicted by the whole tenor of His ministry: see particularly John 1:17. No, "fulfill" is here to be taken in its strict and obvious sense: just as "he that loveth another has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8) means, he has met its requirements, he has kept its precepts. It is to be noted that Christ did not say, "Think not I am come to destroy the law and the prophets," but "the law or the prophets... but to fulfill." Two separate and distinct things were here predicated by Christ. Its obvious meaning was, the Old Testament, in all its parts and elements, referred to Himself and was accomplished by and in Himself. Thus, "the law" here stands for the whole Jewish law (including its types — the sacrifices of the law), though having primary reference to the moral law, as is unmistakably clear from the next twenty-seven verses. To obey its commands, to keep them in thought, word and deed, was the great end for which Christ became incarnate. This was man's duty, our duty; but we had failed to perform it, therefore did Christ come and discharge it for us. In Matthew 5:20-42 Christ's main purpose was not to teach His people "Christian ethics" (that we have in the Epistles), but to arouse the consciences of His legalistic hearers. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord expounded the law with the object of making men to see their need of a perfect righteousness (cf. Matthew 19:17), a righteousness which would fully meet the requirements of the thrice holy God, a righteousness in which His piercing eye could discern no flaw or blemish. It was ignorance of the law which was the real source of Phariseeism, for they claimed to fulfill it in the outward letter; therefore would Christ awaken their conscience by pressing its true inner import and exacting holy demands. It will be found that the "Sermon" perpetually returns to one main thought, applied with various modifications and peculiar terms; to awaken in men a sense of their depravity, to shut them up to the righteousness of God: see especially verses 28, 44! Matthew 5:20 is the sum and substance of all that follows to the end of that chapter. What then is the "righteousness" there spoken of? It is that justifying righteousness of God which fully meets the need of a divinely-convicted sinner. Its owning "for" plainly points back to verse 17. That "righteousness" which exceeded the punctilious outward performances of the scribes and Pharisees is what the incarnate Son of God, acting as the Surety of His people, vicariously wrought out for them, and which upon their believing, is imputed to them; so that the flawless obedience of Christ to the whole will of God is reckoned to their account in such a way that they are legally regarded as having perfectly fulfilled the law in their own persons. God did not recede from His rights, but enforced them. The law has been fulfilled, by our Sponsor, and the transcendent merits of "the just" (Acts 3:14) are transferred to each of those for whom He acted. This is the "best robe" with which the returning prodigal is clothed! This is the "Court-dress" which fits for the King's palace. Thus can every true Christian not only say, "the blood of Christ has cleansed me from all sin," but also "in the Lord have I righteousness" (Isa. 45:24). Hallelujah! Much more remains yet to be said, but we must leave it for the next chapter.

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/the-satisfaction-of-christ-studies-in-the-atonement-16-its-results-continued/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net