



# Did God Kill Jesus

*Instead of Killing Us?*

*Does the Penal  
Substitutionary Atonement  
Theory Satisfy God's  
Justice?*

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*Discovering the light of the character of God which  
shines out of darkness in the face of Jesus Christ  
(2 Corinthians 4:6)*

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Unless otherwise indicated, all words in brackets [ ] within Bible verses and commentaries are supplied by the author.

## ***Who Killed Jesus?***

Here's how John Piper, founder of *desiringgod.org*, explains the death of Jesus:

"One of my friends who used to be a pastor in Illinois was preaching to a group of prisoners in a state prison during Holy Week several years ago. At one point in his message, he paused and asked the men if they knew who killed Jesus. Some said the soldiers did. Some said the Jews did. Some said Pilate. After there was silence, my friend said simply, '**His Father killed him.**' ... Just as Abraham lifted the knife over the chest of his son Isaac, but then spared his son because there was a ram in the thicket, so **God the Father lifted his knife over the chest of his own Son, Jesus** — but did not spare him, because he was the ram; he was the substitute." (John Piper, *Who Killed Jesus? Desiringgod.org*)

The doctrine that God killed His Son instead of killing us is called "penal substitutionary atonement." Here's how *Wikipedia* defines it:

"The penal substitution theory teaches that Jesus suffered the penalty for mankind's sins. Penal substitution derives from the idea that divine forgiveness must satisfy divine justice, that is, that **God is not willing or able to simply forgive sin without first requiring a satisfaction for it.**"

Here's how it's defined by another Christian website *gotquestions.org*:

"In the simplest possible terms, the biblical doctrine of penal substitution holds that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross takes the place of the punishment we ought to suffer for our sins. **As a result, God's justice is satisfied, and those who accept Christ can be forgiven and reconciled to God.** The word penal means 'related to punishment for offenses,' and substitution means 'the act of a person taking the place of another.' So, **penal substitution is the act of a person taking the punishment for someone else's offenses** ... Penal substitution is clearly taught by the Bible."

Penal substitutionary atonement teaches that God is angry at mankind for breaking His rules, and as a punishment, *He* demands the death of the transgressor. This is where Jesus, our elder Brother, steps in and bears the death blow from God, thus instead of killing us, God kills His Son, letting us go free. It is believed that this is the only way God could forgive mankind because "God is not willing or able to simply forgive sin without first requiring a satisfaction for it" thus, after "God's justice is satisfied", only "those who accept Christ can be forgiven and reconciled to God."

Co-founder of *desiringgod.org*, Jon Bloom, further explains Christ's mission:

"... Jesus was executed on a cross. He was counted as among the worst offenders. His death was real, and it was really terrible. **He was an object of wrath.** But not just of Roman and Jewish wrath ... **Jesus was primarily the object of his Father's wrath — the most just, righteous, and terrible wrath there is.** And he became that object willingly, even when his every human impulse longed for escape (Mark 14:36). It's the very reason he came ... **Jesus, our Propitiator, absorbed the Father's wrath against our sin and satisfied it in full,** so that 'whoever believes in him should not perish' but instead enjoy the Father's favor forever (John 3:16) ... Who would have ever dreamed a Roman cross, one of the worst, ... most fearsome devices of torture ever devised, would become a symbol of the greatest love ever expressed? For 'God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' and **saved us 'from the wrath of God'** (Romans 5:8–9)." (Jon Bloom, *The Wrath of God Was Satisfied*, *desiringgod.org*)

Is it just me, or are any of you having a hard time "desiring God" after reading such statements? This sounds more like a domestic violence situation rather than the everlasting gospel – an abusive father is furious at his youngest child, but the older brother steps in and not only protects the child from their father's wrath, but absorbs it himself.

Is this the true gospel? If so, what does this say about our Father in heaven? Did Christ really come to this earth and die to protect and save us from our heavenly Father? Is God up in heaven saying, "I don't care who I kill as long as someone dies for breaking My rules!"?



Is this really how a loving God executes His wrath and justice? After all, Psalm 7:11 does say, "God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day." Attempting to explain this, Norbert Link, at [eternalgod.org](http://eternalgod.org), writes:

**"God's righteous indignation is directed at rebellious mankind who refuse to obey God and to repent of their evil and wicked deeds.** This world will soon wake up to the fact that God CAN BE VERY ANGRY—and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). **Those who permanently and rebelliously refuse to submit to God, even though they know better, will pay the price.**" (Norbert Link, *Psalm 7:11, God is Angry at the Wicked Every Day*, [eternalgod.org](http://eternalgod.org))

Unfortunately, the comments you just read are echoed from many pulpits saying that one day soon God will snap and wipe everyone off the planet who refuse to accept Jesus as their atoning sacrifice. So, with

this understanding, God is now saying, "If you don't accept that I killed Jesus instead of you, I will go ahead and carry out My original plan to kill you!" Thus, the gift of the substitutionary death of Christ is withdrawn by God and not applied to the sinner's account. Theology like this can only lead men and women into attempts to obey God based on fear, not love.

However, correctly understanding how and why Christ died will help us understand how and why the lost die in the end. But in order to do this, we must first understand how God's justice and wrath truly operate.

## ***What is God's Justice?***

To begin our study, let us look at the meaning of justice. The traditional penal view is that God's justice demands the penalty of death and eternal separation from God. It can only be satisfied if the guilty person pays that penalty or if someone else pays on his behalf. Either way, someone needs to die. In this view, justice is retributive. Here is how *gotquestions.org* defines God's justice:

"We cannot begin to understand God's justice unless we first understand sin. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4) and iniquity (Daniel 9:4-5; Micah 2:1; James 3:6). It embodies everything contrary to God's holy nature and is offensive to Him. Thus, **sin is a crime against God, and justice demands a penalty of death and separation from Him for it** (Romans 1:18-32; 2:5; 3:23). But God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to pay that penalty for us (Romans 5:8-11; 6:23) and made salvation available to all who believe in His name (John 1:12; 3:15-17; 20:31)."

So, according to mainstream Christianity, it wasn't until Jesus died to satisfy God's justice that forgiveness and salvation was made available to all those who believe in Jesus. It seems God was holding a grudge until He got what He demanded because sin "is offensive to Him."

However, a correct understanding of justice depends upon a correct view of God's law. The common view is that God's laws are a set of rules that, when broken, require God to constantly be *actively imposing* punishments in order to maintain justice. According to this view, for example, God actively decides and even invents what diseases to give people. The biblical view, however, is that God's laws are the design protocols upon which life operates which are meant to protect and benefit us – they are based on cause and effect, and in this scenario, diseases are manifestations of the disorder in our bodies from breaking God's laws. Thus, the laws are given for our good, and the devastation from breaking them doesn't come from God, as many people think, but from Him *allowing the effects* of sin:

*"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God [be awe-inspired by Him], to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today **for your good.**"*  
(Deuteronomy 10:12,13)

God's law (תּוֹרָה; *torah*) simply means *instructions*. His commandments and statutes are the instructions He has given us to show us how to live and are based on selfless-love for others (Romans 13:8,10). God gives us the freedom to walk outside the boundaries of His law and instead of reaping *imposed punishments* by God, we reap the *natural consequences* of disobedience. According to Scripture, God's justice is not about retribution for breaking His law; God's justice is concerned with restoring us back into harmony with God and His law.

"In discussions of God's character, it is often said that 'God is love *but* He is also just.' That saying is found nowhere in the Bible. It does say that God is love and it does say that God is just (Deut 32:4, Isa 45:21). However, combining them with the 'but' puts the two in opposition. It suggests the idea that God is love but if you cross Him, watch out – He will change His attitude towards you and show His



just side. As I said, the Bible does say God is just, but every use of just or justice reflects a loving action. It will say to show justice to the poor, to widows or the old. **Never does it reflect the idea of retribution as many suggest** ... God's justice in the Traditional Legal Model and the thinking of most Christians is all about payment for sin. Someone has to pay the penalty. You do the crime, you do the time. Such a view diminishes God's mercy and forgiveness; it makes Him subject to justice itself which must be satisfied. **According to the Biblical Healing Model, God's justice is doing the right thing according to the law of love which is to restore to a right state, to heal and to save.** Justice, if it is truly done in love, is first seeking the good of others, it is not about keeping track of wrongs in order to even the score. **Justice is restorative but, if it is not able to restore, it simply releases the offender to the inevitable results of sin which is death.**" (Ray Foucher, *Justice, characterofgod.org*, February 7, 2018)



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*"God's justice involves setting things right, not punishment. God's justice involves compassionate intervention in the world against all injustice, with a special attention to those who are being abused. God's justice is something in which we're taking part as we make things right in the world."*

*~ Louis Johnson ~*

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A few examples of God's justice:

**1. "Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy." (Psalm 82:3)**

Can you see how God's justice is not about seeking retribution, but doing what is right – defending the poor, fatherless, and afflicted?

2. In Psalm 146, God “executes justice for the oppressed” which is defined by Him “keeping His promises forever”; “giving food to the hungry”; “freeing prisoners” (those held captive in sin); “opening the eyes of the blind” (both physically and spiritually); “lifting up those who are weighed down”; “protecting the foreigners” among His people; and “caring for the orphans and widows.” In Ezekiel 45:9, we read:

3. *“Thus says the Lord God: ‘Enough, O princes of Israel! **Remove violence and plundering**, execute justice and righteousness, and stop dispossessing My people,’ says the Lord God.”*

Here God is pleading with the corrupt leaders to begin executing “justice and righteousness” by treating His people right.

Here's how it reads in the *New Living Translation*:

*“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough, you princes of Israel! **Stop your violence and oppression and do what is just and right.** Quit robbing and cheating My people out of their land. Stop expelling them from their homes, says the Sovereign LORD.”*

This also reveals that God's justice is never about executing violence on anyone!

4. *“**Justice** and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: **mercy** and truth shall go before thy face.” (Psalm 89:14; King James Version)*

This verse uses Hebraic parallelism where two words or phrases explain each other. In this case, biblical “justice” is defined by “mercy” and “judgment” is defined by “truth.” Thus God's justice is to always show mercy (רַחֲמִים; *cheded*), which literally means: “lovingkindness in condescending to the needs of His creatures.”

5. *“The LORD is known by the **justice** He brings; the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.” (Psalm 9:16; Berean Standard Bible)*

Here again we see that God's justice isn't executed by violence on anyone, but is defined by giving the persistent sinner over to their own destructive choices – resulting in inherent consequences, not imposed punishments.

But what about God's wrath? Jesus suffered God's wrath when God killed Him instead of us, and if anyone rejects that sacrifice they will have to suffer God's wrath upon them ..... right?

## ***What is God's Wrath?***

Here's what *Christianity.com* says:

"There are a number of words in both the Old and New Testaments that are translated as wrath. These words are also frequently translated as anger. Most generally they refer to God's response to human disobedience. But the words are also used in relation to a negative human response to other people. **There is really no good way to soften 'the wrath of God' to mean anything other than an angry response on God's part to human disobedience ...** Romans 2:5 offers a good perspective on just what God's wrath is, 'But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed.' His wrath appears to be synonymous with his righteous judgment. God's wrath is not angry retribution against those who have offended God. Rather it is his righteous judgment against those who do evil. God is righteous. And he will judge us according to His righteous standard. **God's wrath against sinners is nothing more than giving them what they deserve.**"

At *desiringgod.com*, Joseph Scheumann writes:

"God's wrath is to be feared because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). **God's wrath is to be feared**

**because we are justly condemned sinners apart from Christ** (Romans 5:1). God's wrath is to be feared because he is powerful enough to do what he promises (Jeremiah 32:17). God's wrath is to be feared because God promises eternal punishment apart from Christ (Matthew 25:46) ... God is love, and God does all things for his glory (1 John 4:8; Romans 11:36). He loves his glory above all (and that is a good thing!). Therefore, God rules the world in such a way that brings himself maximum glory. This means that God must act justly and judge sin (i.e. respond with wrath), otherwise God would not be God ... **God's wrath is satisfied in Christ.** Here we have the ultimate good news: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1 Timothy 1:15). Because of Christ, God can rightly call sinners justified (Romans 3:26). **In saving us from his own wrath,** God has done what we could not do, and he has done what we didn't deserve."

That last highlighted comment – “In saving us from his own wrath” – reminds me of a meme that is common among atheists, mocking Christianity, which says the following:



**Jesus:** “Knock, knock!”

**People:** “Who’s there?”

**Jesus:** “It’s Jesus, let Me in.”

**People:** “Why?”

**Jesus:** “So I can save you.”

**People:** “From what?”

**Jesus:** “From what I am going to do to you if you do not let Me in!”

The truth is, God's wrath is never about lashing out to cause harm to others. God's wrath is not about “giving them what they deserve”, as if God is killing them, but tearfully and reluctantly giving them over to

the natural consequences of their choices. God always honors man's freedom of choice and does that by allowing people to have their desires.

One thing to remember is that we are NOT to fear God's wrath "because we are justly condemned sinners." The belief that we are "justly condemned" suggests that it is God who is doing the condemning, but scripture tells us exactly who has been condemning humanity from the beginning:

*"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called **the Devil and Satan**, who deceives the whole world ... Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.**'" (Revelation 12:9,10)*

Satan is clearly the condemning accuser, Paul says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Why? Is it because Jesus satisfied God's wrath and now God has changed His mind and taken away condemnation? No. It is because "in Christ" we realize that God has never condemned us in the first place.

It is most important here to define God's wrath (anger). Taking into consideration that our ways are not His ways (Isaiah 55:8,9), we must submit to the fact that God's wrath is going to be completely opposite to our way of revealing wrath and anger.

In James 1:20, it says, "for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." This clearly shows man's way of wrath is nowhere near the righteousness of God because, ever since Adam's sin, humanity falls short of the glory (character) of God (Romans 3:23). The *International Standard Version* says it this way: "For human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." Again, human anger is much different than God's anger.

The Hebrew word for God's anger is אַף (*aph*) which is the same root word for His "longsuffering" (*anaph*) toward sinful humanity. It means an intense heavy breathing (grief) through the nostrils. To further show this, let us look at how Jesus expressed anger, remembering that He is "the brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3).

*"And He [Jesus] entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they [the Pharisees] watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him [of breaking their own rigid requirements]. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. **And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts,** He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him."* (Mark 3:1-6)



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*God's anger is His  
intense grieving knowing  
He will have to give the  
unconverted man over to  
that which he selfishly  
desires.*

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This is an encounter Jesus had with the Pharisees. Their added restrictions prohibited healing on the Sabbath day. Jesus, reading their hearts, "looked around at them with **anger**." What kind of anger did Jesus have? The kind that is described as "being **grieved** by the hardness of their hearts." Jesus was experiencing grief, or deep sadness, at the lack of love and sympathy demonstrated by these pitiless religious leaders for the man with the withered hand.

The Sabbath is meant for rest, and this is just what Jesus intended to give this poor man. Please note that Jesus' anger was not expressed by killing off His enemies — the Pharisees. Jesus plainly asked, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?" Notice the parallelism:

- Do good = save life      Does God or His Son ever
- Do evil = to kill      do anything that is evil?

In Exodus 4:10–13, Moses was fearful of going before Pharaoh alone and requested a spokesperson. How did God respond?

*"So **the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses**, and He said: 'Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.'" (Exodus 4:14,15)*

How did God express His anger here? Did He strike Moses and cause Him any harm? No. Although God was grieved at Moses' lack of faith, He gave Moses what he wanted – someone else to speak for him. Paul also describes God's wrath in this way:

*"For **the wrath of God is revealed from heaven** against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18)*

How is the wrath of God revealed? Paul continues:

*"Therefore God also **gave them up** to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts ..." (Verse 24)*

*"For this reason God **gave them up** to vile passions ..." (Verse 26)*

*"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God **gave them over** to a debased [reprobate] mind ..." (Verse 28)*

God's wrath is defined here as God giving them up or giving them over. God is giving the people freedom to separate from Himself. On page 9 in his book, *The Loving Wrath of God*, Gary Hullquist writes:

"When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, 'the **anger of the Lord** was kindled against them; and **He departed**. And the cloud **departed** from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous.' [See Numbers 12]. God's ways are truly different from ours. When our anger is kindled against someone we move **toward** them, to attack, to strike out! But God moves **away**. He departs."

At times, it does appear that God's wrath is the direct cause of killing or harming someone. In Hosea 13:11 God says to Israel: "I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath." It definitely appears that God directly killed King Saul in His wrath, but let's look at verses 9 and 10, along with verse 11 as it reads in the *King James Version*:

*"O Israel, **thou hast destroyed thyself**; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? **I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.**" (Hosea 13:9-11)*

God's wrath and anger is connected to Israel *destroying themselves* by requesting an earthly king. God's "anger" responded by giving them what they selfishly desired. But can we know for sure what God meant by saying He "took away" their king in His wrath? Yes.

*"So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; **therefore He [God] killed him**, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.'" (1 Chronicles 10:13,14)*

Ah ha! Taking Saul away in wrath does mean that God directly killed Him! Well, not so fast. How exactly did Saul die? Let's read verses 3-6:



*"The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armorbearer, 'Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me.' But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore **Saul took a sword and fell on it.** And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died. **So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.**" (1 Chronicles 10:3-6)*

How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction? God "killed" and "took away" Saul by respecting his free choice and not preventing him from committing suicide.

Here is one more example:

*"Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat?' ... Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families ... and **the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused;** Moses also was displeased .... Now a wind went out from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp ... And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail ... But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, **the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people,** and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague." (Numbers 11:4,10,31-33)*

We'll discuss the "struck the people" part in a second, but here again we see God's anger and wrath at work. Please note that God's anger is once again expressed by God giving them exactly what they wanted – flesh to eat. Notice how the Psalmist speaks of this incident:

*"He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He brought in the south wind. He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas; and He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled, for **He gave them their own desire.**" (Psalm 78:26-29)*

But what does Moses mean by stating that “the Lord struck the people with a very great plague”? Throughout Scripture we read strange statements such as God hardening hearts (Exodus 7:3), sending evil spirits (Judges 9:23; 1 Samuel 16:14), destroying lives (Genesis 6:7; 1 Corinthians 3:17) and sending strong delusions (2 Thessalonians 2:11). These are all *idiomatic Hebrew expressions* where God is said to “do” that which He reluctantly “permits” to be done. Striking the people with a plague is to be understood as God’s protective presence being withdrawn, which inherently permits plagues and sickness to enter in. The plague came as a direct result of them eating the quail.

This goes back to Psalm 7:11 we read earlier which said, “God is angry with the wicked every day.” Is this “anger” expressed by God reluctantly giving them over to what they desire, thus destroying themselves? Yes, verses 14-16 say:

*“See the one who is pregnant with wickedness, who conceives destructive plans, and gives birth to harmful lies – **he digs a pit and then falls into the hole he has made. He becomes the victim of his own destructive plans and the violence he intended for others falls on his own head.**” (New English Translation)*

Here we see yet again that God ALWAYS honors free will. In fact, in verse 17 the author equates this with God’s “justice” – “I will thank the Lord for *His justice*; I will sing praises to the sovereign Lord!” Can you see that, if God killed those who choose things outside of His will, He would be a God whose government is based upon force and works contrary to freedom of choice?

Now that we understand a little more about what God’s justice and wrath is, we can conclude that God is not the One who directly kills the sinner. But if Christ did not come to save us from God killing us, what did Christ come to save us from?

# **Jesus Came to Save Us From ....**

*"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for **He will save His people from their sins.**" (Matthew 1:21)*

Jesus came to save us from our sins! Why?

*"But each one of us is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**" (James 1:14,15)*

Jesus came to save us from our sins because it is sin which brings forth death. Jesus didn't come to save us from God killing us, He came to save us from sin killing us. Paul brings this truth out when he said:

*"For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)*

Most people read this verse thinking that God will pay us with death, but it doesn't say that. It says *sin* pays us with death. God cannot pay us with death because there is no death in God; only life (Proverbs 12:28), just as our employer cannot pay us money if they do not have any money. Paul says:

*"The one who sows to please his flesh, **from the flesh will reap destruction**; but the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." (Galatians 6:8; Berean Standard Bible)*

We reap destruction "from the flesh" because it is sin which naturally results in the death of the sinner. God decided which activities were sinful based on whether or not they would produce a hurtful result. His laws are not arbitrary but totally reasonable. John says, "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4) and it's the SIN which "brings forth death", not the Lawgiver.

The penal view of God's law teaches that sin is not what inherently harms you, instead you get into trouble with the Lawgiver who will use

His power to punish and hurt you, and if He didn't, then you can live forever in sin because it's not the sin which actually hurts you. In other words, sin is not the problem, the problem is God's attitude towards the sinner, and even though He loves the sinner, He is still required to punish, kill or even torture the sinner. Thus the reason why Christ came and died is to change God's mind toward us. This is the lie of the penal-legal view. Take a look at this verse in the book of Genesis:

*"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die.**" (Genesis 2:17)*

So here's my question: Is this a threat from God or a warning?



- **Threat** - "in the day that you eat of it I will kill you."
- **Warning** - "in the day that you eat of it you will naturally die because you have unplugged yourself from Me – your only source of life."

If you and I were flying in a plane at 35,000 feet in the air and you say, "If you jump out of this plane without a parachute, you will surely die", are you threatening to kill me or warning me of the natural consequences? I'm sure it would be a sincere warning. But what if someone lied to me and convinced me that I wouldn't surely die from the fall, but that *you* are the one who would kill me when I landed? I would be more afraid of *you*, than the fall.

The deception here is that I would no longer believe that the design law of density (that my body weighs more than air) will lead to my destruction, but that my destruction will come from the one stating the law. In others words, the law of design, which warns of inherent

consequences, is now believed to be a legal law demanding imposed arbitrary punishments. This is what Satan accomplished in the minds of Adam and Eve and to all their future offspring. Notice how Adam and Eve responded to God's words:

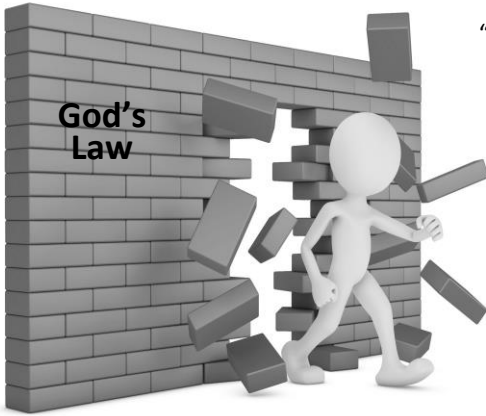
*"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and **Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD** God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:6-10; King James Version)*

Adam and Eve responded in fear because they assumed God was coming to pay them their wages of sin – death. In their minds, sin was not the problem – God was! Their warped view of God's character, caused by sin, changed His warning to a threat in THEIR minds.

*"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. **But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.** For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity." (Isaiah 59:1-3)*

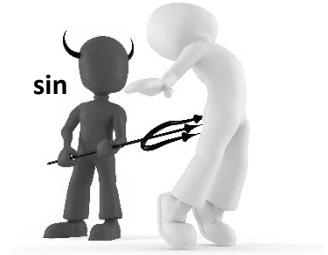
Isaiah is not saying that God is so disgusted with you that He is turning away and covering His ears from your cries. He's saying that our sins have hid, or clouded, God's merciful face from us. God is there with open arms, but sin is deceiving us to think God is against us and will not listen to us unless His wrath and justice are legally satisfied.

It is true that sin is offensive to God, but only because it harms the sinner whom He loves.



Sin is the transgression of the law

"Evil shall slay the wicked"  
(Psalm 34:21)



Sin (not God) brings forth death

Isaiah said "your hands are defiled with blood" because we wrongly believe God needs to be appeased with blood-sacrifices in order to forgive us. This is how far sin has deceived us, and our "lips have spoken lies" by saying, "God is not willing or able to simply forgive sin without first requiring a satisfaction for it." But what does Scripture say?

***"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require."***  
(Psalm 40:6)

Adam and Eve responded in fear because they did not fully know God. This is why Jesus came to this earth. He came to reveal the true character of His Father, and by doing so, He would break the spell of sin which was deceiving us and win us back to trust. The night before He died, Jesus prayed these words to His Father:

*"I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."* (John 17:4)

Jesus had finished the work His Father gave Him to do the night *before* His death! That work was to glorify His Father. All throughout His life in human flesh Jesus revealed His Father's true character. Not once did He condemn or kill anyone. He only healed and restored those who were sick, both physically and mentally. He told Phillip, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9).



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*Jesus always acts godly, and His Father always acts Christ-like. If we ever wonder about God's true character and the way He treats sinners, all we need to do is look at the life of Jesus!*

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But what about Jesus' words when He said of Himself:

*"... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give His life a ransom for many.**" (Matthew 20:28)*

Here's how Albert Barnes defines "ransom" in his commentary:

"The meaning is, that he died in the place of sinners, and that God was willing to accept the pains of his death in the place of the eternal suffering of the redeemed. The reasons why such a ransom was necessary are:

1. that God had declared that the sinner shall die; that is, that he would punish, or show his hatred to, all sin.
2. that all people had sinned, and, if justice was to take its regular course, all must perish." (*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*)

Not only does Barnes hold an incorrect view of how God administers justice, but also an incorrect view of the paying of a ransom. Is it not the kidnappers who demand a ransom in order to let their captives go free? Who is the one holding us captive and demanding a ransom?

God or Satan? According to Barnes, Christ paid the ransom *to God* who “was willing to accept the pains of his death in the place of the eternal suffering of the redeemed.”

However, the book of Hebrews says that “through His [Jesus’] death He might destroy the one holding the power of death, that is, **the devil**; And **deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage**” (Hebrews 2:14,15, *Berean Standard Bible*). Keep in mind here that Jesus doesn’t destroy the works of the devil by killing him, but “through His death.” Overcoming evil with good is how God executes His vengeance (Romans 12:14-21).



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*“Did Jesus pay a price?”*

*‘For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’ (1 Cor 6:20)*

*‘Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.’ (1 Cor 7:23)*

*Yes, He paid a very large price but not as appeasement to an offended Deity. If you save your child from being hit by a bus but the only way to do it is to give your life, you have paid a large price (what is often called ‘the ultimate price’) but it was not in the form of appeasement.”*

*~ Ray Foucher ~*

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John writes:

*“... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested [revealed], that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)*



Jesus came to free us from our kidnapper – the one holding us in the bondage of lies about God and from our own selfish (sinful) natures. Thus, upon the cross, Jesus cried out: “It is finished!” (John 19:30).

Remember, it is Satan who is our condemning accuser. At Jesus’ death He “canceled the condemning charges which were against us”, therefore “disarming *the rulers and authorities* and put *them* to open shame, by triumphing over *them*” (Colossians 2:14,15). Jesus didn’t disarm God, He disarmed “the rulers and authorities of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

God’s true character had been darkened by the lies of Satan, however, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made His light shine in our hearts **to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory [character] of God in the face of Jesus Christ**” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

What will that knowledge of knowing God’s true character do?

*“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. **And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**” (John 8:31,32)*

Paul says it is “the law of sin” which held us captive:

*“But I see another law in my members [my body], warring against the law of my mind, and **bringing me into captivity to the law of sin** which is in my members [my body].” (Romans 7:23)*

By giving us a true understanding of God’s character, Jesus will save us from “the law of sin and death.”

*“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has made me free from the law of sin and death.**” (Romans 8:2)*



But how did sin kill Jesus if Jesus never committed sin? The answer is found in a very well-known Messianic prophecy which, unfortunately, is also severely misunderstood.

## ***Smitten of God***

Isaiah chapter 53 is a Messianic prophecy written 700 years before Jesus came as a babe in Bethlehem. Let's take a look at a few verses which have caused much confusion:

*"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: **yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**" (Isaiah 53:4)*

A quick surface reading of this verse from the *King James Version* leads us into thinking that Jesus was smitten (killed) by God. Notice how well-known pastor John MacArthur explains it:

"The reality of Christ's vicarious, substitutionary death on our behalf is the heart of the gospel according to God—the central theme of Isaiah 53. **We must remember, however, that sin did not kill Jesus; God did.** The suffering servant's death was nothing less than a punishment administered by God for sins others had committed. That is what we mean when we speak of penal substitutionary atonement ... **He [God] fully satisfied justice and put away our sin forever through the death of his Son.** There's no way to sidestep the fact that the doctrine of penal substitution is unequivocally affirmed in the plain message of Isaiah 53." (John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to God*, [crossway.org](http://crossway.org))

First, let's look at MacArthur's statement that "sin did not kill Jesus; God did" in light of what we learned in the previous chapter, then we'll see if it is true "that the doctrine of penal substitution is unequivocally affirmed in the plain message of Isaiah 53."

As we dissect Isaiah 53 a little more closely, let's look at verse 4 again, this time in the *New American Standard Bible*:

*"However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore, And our pains that He carried; **Yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted, struck down by God, and humiliated.**" (Isaiah 53:4)*

Isaiah is not prophesying that God would smite His Son instead of killing the sinner. It says we would *think, perceive, or assume* He was smitten (struck/killed) by God, just as Adam and Eve *assumed* that God was coming to execute the death decree upon them. Through Adam, we have all inherited this warped mindset due to our sinful natures. Ever since sin was conceived in man, we have thought of God as a punishing deity. The Israelites of old assumed God was "a Man of war" (Exodus 15:3) in a similar way to how they were men of war. But God's ways are not like our ways (Isaiah 55:8).

They had also misunderstood the reason why God instituted the sacrificial system and began to believe that God needed to be appeased by blood sacrifices like the pagan gods of the surrounding nations. But the reality is realized in verse 5 of Isaiah 53 where it says:

*"But He was wounded **for** our transgressions, He was bruised **for** our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)*

The word "for" causes many to believe that Jesus was dying "for" us to pay the death penalty that God supposedly demanded. However, the Hebrew word translated "for" is  $\text{מִן}$  (*min*) which denotes "from" or "out of." Therefore, He was wounded "from" or "out of" our transgressions. Another way to read it is "He was wounded **BY** our transgressions"; "He was bruised **BY** our iniquities" and not by God.

*"All of us like sheep have wandered, each to His own way we have turned, **and Jehovah hath caused to meet on Him, the punishment of us all.**" (Isaiah 53:6, Young's Literal Translation)*

In our blindness we naturally read these texts as God's anger against us, but instead of punishing us, He places that punishment onto His Son. Or, as MacArthur puts it, "[Jesus'] death was nothing less than a punishment *administered by God* for sins others had committed." If this were true then we should praise the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers for simply carrying out God's orders. However, what if we read this another way? Can you see that the punishment laid upon Christ was "our punishment" in the sense that WE are the ones punishing Him? Another way of translating it would be, "The Lord **let** all our punishment come upon Him."

Peter, referring to Isaiah 53:5, says that Jesus "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). How did Jesus bear our sins? Here's how *gotquestions.com* explains it:

"The doctrine of the substitutionary atonement teaches that Christ suffered vicariously, being substituted for the sinner, and that His sufferings were expiatory (that is, His sufferings made amends) ... As Jesus was hanging on the cross, suspended between earth and heaven, the sins of the world were placed on Him (1 Peter 2:24). The perfect Son of Man carried our guilt ... **So, Jesus took our place judicially, bearing the penalty of sin and dying in our place** ... God's law says, 'You are guilty of sin against a holy God. Justice demands your life.' Jesus answers, 'Take My life instead.'"

According to this article, Jesus bearing our sins means God placed all of our sin and guilt upon His innocent Son and, since His "justice demands your life", God took Jesus' life instead of ours.

However, we have seen that this is not how God executes His justice. Jesus bearing our sins means:

1. All through His life on earth, Jesus bore our sinful nature – for God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). But hold that thought, we will come back to this later.

2. Jesus bore our sins by permitting us to punish Him, letting us see the hatred in our hearts towards Him and His Father, whom He represented.

Let's focus on point number 2 for right now. Paul tells us "the carnal [selfish] mind is enmity [hostile] toward God" (Romans 8:7) and Peter tells us Christ bore that sinful enmity (hostility); for when we "hurled insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats" (1 Peter 2:23). Instead, He cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

So, instead of Christ being crushed by God's wrath against us, Christ was being crushed by our wrath against Him – not just the wrath of the Jews or the Romans, but from all mankind!



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*"Satan convinced the human race that God wanted to kill us and was willing to have His Son sacrificed in our place. This was satanic genius because this would mask our treachery of actually wanting to kill the Son of God."*

*~ Adrian Ebens ~*

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Remember, Adam and Eve ran and hid when they heard "the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). Interesting how it says "the voice" of God was walking. An ancient Aramaic translation says it was, "the Word of God." John tells us:

*"In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made ... And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (John 1:1-3,14)



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*Christ being the mediator between God and sinful man does not mean that Christ and man are trying to get God to accept us, but that Christ and His Father are pleading for us to accept Them!*

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In the book of Revelation, John foresees the second coming of Christ saying, "His name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). John is indirectly telling us that "the Voice of God" or "the Word of God" which was walking in the Garden of Eden was the Son of God; for He is the only Mediator between God and sinful humanity (1 Timothy 2:5).

As an excuse to why he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam said to Christ, "The woman whom *You* gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). Not only is he shifting the blame to his

wife, but he is also shifting the blame onto the Son of God. By condemning the Son of God, Adam reasoned that blame could be shifted and that another could pay the debt he believed God demanded. Therefore, it was Adam, in his wrong state of mind, who introduced the concept of penal substitution, thus Christ became "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

The everlasting gospel is that "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and He has NEVER condemned anyone. He is always patient and kind and keeps

no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:4,5, *New International Version*). "His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 118:2). All mankind had to do in the beginning was simply trust in Him and accept His FREE forgiveness.

The disease of sin, however, has warped our understanding of God. Through sin, mankind distrusts God, believing He is unwilling to forgive us unless some form of sacrifice or payment is given. We, like Cain, too often repeat the lie that "My crime is too great for me to be forgiven" (Genesis 4:13, *Brenton's Septuagint/margin of the King James Version*). Satan has tricked us into thinking God is the one against us, but Christ has come to deliver us from our sinful (satanic) mind which is hostile toward God. But in order to do this, Christ had to first magnify our sin.

## ***Christ Died "to Make an End of Sins"***

In the 9th chapter of Daniel, we read a time-prophecy concerning the first coming of Messiah the Prince (Jesus):

*"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, **to make an end of sins**, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks ..."* (Daniel 9:24)

Some commentators believe that Gabriel is telling Daniel that his people (the Jews) better shape up before the Messiah gets here, and thus they have a certain allotted time to finish transgressing and to make an end of their sinning. This kind of teaching only promotes fear and force, which is not the way God works. The pressure of a deadline, which is combined with the threat of punishment or death, is not only an application of force, but actually psychological abuse. Many refer to

“a time of probation” which is a set time God gives us in order to behave, and if we are not good by the deadline, then we all “better watch out” because Jesus is coming to town!

However, properly understood, we are the ones who close our own probation. God is forever merciful (Psalm 100:5; 107:1; 118:2; 136:1; Ezra 3:11; Jeremiah 33:11), and so it is mankind who ends God’s mercy by not accepting it. Once you become so hardened in your heart not to accept God’s free forgiveness, there’s nothing more that God can do, and thus you close the door of opportunity. Paul calls this condition in man “a reprobate mind” and “having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (Romans 1:28; 1 Timothy 4:2).

Others say that when the Messiah came, He finished the transgression and made an end of sins by dying on the cross, thus satisfying God’s wrath and justice. They see the cross as a one-day event that took place in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., falsely assuming this divides the two covenants.<sup>1</sup> Then, after Jesus died, God was now capable of forgiving us. But, as we have seen, Jesus is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8) because “His mercy endures forever.”

*“Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily**, and follow Me.’” (Luke 9:23)*

Clearly, the cross is not about satisfying the justice God supposedly demanded, but about the *daily walk* of denying self to serve, help, and heal others. If the cross of Christ was meant to pay off God, why does Jesus ask us to carry our cross? If you owed your father \$100 and I paid it for you, wouldn’t it be odd if I and your father still wanted you to pay him \$100?

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<sup>1</sup> Many assume the two covenants span two long eras of time (before the cross/after the cross). Paul, instead, tells us that they are two *mindsets* within the individual, giving Abraham as one example of someone experiencing both covenant mindsets (Galatians 4:22-24). For more info, read the book *Faith Journey* for free at [lastmessageofmercy.com](http://lastmessageofmercy.com).



The truth is, the death of Christ is not about making a legal payment to God. Scripture tells us that Christ has been carrying His cross from "all the days of old":

*"In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them all the days of old."*  
(Isaiah 63:9)

What happened to Christ on the cross in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. was a magnification of what He has been daily going through from the moment sin was conceived in the heart of Satan and mankind.

This was the object-lesson of the sacrificial system. It wasn't given to show us God needs to be appeased with blood, but to show us how depraved we are in our thinking. It was to give us an intense illustration of our natural hatred towards the Son of God and that we "crucify [murder] the Son of God afresh [daily], and put Him to an open shame" whenever we reject the pleadings of His Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:6). It also reveals to us that sin not only kills the guilty, but the innocent.

Christ making an "end" of sins when He physically died on the cross is spoken of in the sense of mankind's rebellion (transgression) and sin coming to *completeness*, or to its *fullness*. Paul reminds us that we all have inherited a natural hatred towards God and His Son through sin when he wrote:



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*"Judging is when you ascribe worth to yourself at the cost of another. Love is the opposite. Love is ascribing worth to others at the cost of ourselves. The cross is the perfect example of this."*

*~ Greg Boyd ~*

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*"The carnal mind is enmity [hostile] toward God: for it is not subject [submissive] to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:7,8)*

God tells us that His law is a reflection of His righteousness – "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults" (Isaiah 51:7). John tells us that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4); therefore, committing sin is the revelation of our hatred towards the righteousness of God and His Son.

Because the "end-objective" of sin is to kill, mankind's rebellion and sin (hatred towards God) was "finished" and "ended" (came to its complete fullness/was fully revealed) when we physically condemned and murdered the Son of God. This condemning of the Son of God will, in the end, cause us to be disconnected from the source of life – and God showed us what this looks like in the Garden of Gethsemane when His Son experienced the severe mental anguish that sinners will feel when cut off from God. The only difference is Jesus loved His Father where the lost don't and, since He had a much closer connection to His Father, the effect of being separated was more painful than what they will experience. Thus, in the period from Gethsemane to the cross, Jesus reveals the true character of sin (as in the true full consequence of it).

The prophecy foretold that man's rebellion and sin will be brought to the full "to make reconciliation [or, atonement] for iniquity", and this will "bring in everlasting righteousness." How does this work?

*"Now the law [God's righteousness] entered in [privately into the heart], **that sin might abound**. And where sin abounded, grace did more abound." (Romans 5:20; Douay-Rheims Bible)*

God permits our sins to abound (come to the full) so we will be convicted of that sin. He doesn't do this to condemn us, but to reveal to us the proper diagnosis of our disease so that we in turn seek His grace to begin the healing process (Job 13:23; 34:32; Psalm 139:23,24).

*"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, **I would not have known sin except through the law.** For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' But **sin**, taking opportunity by the commandment, **produced in me all manner of evil desire.** For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died [the law magnified the sin]. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For **sin**, taking occasion by the commandment, **deceived me, and by it killed me.** Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good [the law] become death to me? Certainly not! But **sin, that it might appear sin**, was producing death in me through what is good [the law], **so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.**" (Romans 7:7-13)*

Remember, Christ came into the world to reveal the true character of God our Father (John 1:18; 17:4,6; Luke 10:22; 2 Corinthians 4:6). This character is the opposite of our character and what we expected God to be like (Isaiah 55:8,9; John 1:10,11), and this caused our sin to abound by retaliating and killing Christ, thus bringing the rebellion and the sinfulness of mankind to its fullness.

The works of the devil had to be manifest for them to be destroyed. They particularly had to be revealed *inside of us*. We are at enmity with God and hate when He tries to show us our sinfulness, but we are unaware of this condition. But in how the human race treated Jesus, being inspired to hate Him by Satan, we see our sinfulness is revealed. Now that we know it is there, we can confess it, repent of it, and let God forgive and heal us. This is what is gained by the suffering of Christ – a true revelation of ourselves, and the revelation of the consequences of sin. We hated His purity and holiness of character (His righteousness) because it was a constant rebuke to our selfishness and corruption; for as the saying goes, "truth sounds like hate to those who hate the truth."

As we will see, in this wrong state of mind, man interprets all affliction as divine punishments coming from God who supposedly is out to harm and destroy sinners. "To the pure, You [God] show Yourself pure, and to the morally corrupt, You *appear* to be perverse" (Psalm 18:26, *International Standard Version*). This is why the cross is interpreted as God rising up to smite His own Son.

## ***I Will Smite the Shepherd***

A great illustration of this is the way most understand a prophecy of Zechariah concerning God's Shepherd:

*"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: **smite the Shepherd**, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn My hand upon the little ones."*  
(Zechariah 13:7; King James Version)

The most common understanding of this passage is that God Himself would smite (strike/kill) His Shepherd (Jesus). It does seem to support the penal substitution view. After all, Jesus, who said He is "the good Shepherd" (John 10:11), definitely applies this prophecy to Himself:

*"Then saith Jesus unto them [the disciples], All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, **I will smite the Shepherd**, and the sheep [the disciples] of the flock shall be scattered abroad."*  
(Matthew 26:31; King James Version)

Jesus adds an extra understanding to the text by inserting the word "I" – "I will smite the Shepherd." Again, this has led many to conclude that God is the One who killed Christ as a scapegoat in order to let us go free.

But did God strike the Shepherd Himself or are we misunderstanding what God is saying? When God says, "I will smite the Shepherd" it is to

be understood as one of those idiomatic expressions we discussed earlier. "I will smite" simply means God will *permit* the Shepherd to be smitten by His enemies.

If this is true, how do we harmonize this with Zechariah's prophecy that it would be God's "sword" which will smite the Shepherd? Many times throughout Scripture God has said He would destroy certain nations with the sword, but how did He accomplish this?

*"And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy."* (Leviticus 26:25)

Again we see that God is not the *cause* of the destruction, but He did *allow* soldiers from other nations to come in and do the destruction. It is spoken as God doing it because He is the One who ultimately allows it to happen by reluctantly removing His protective hand. He never removes His protective hand out of spite, no matter how evil the people have become. Jesus taught us that God is always, "kind to the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). However, God will never interfere with our free choice to reject Him, so it is with tear-filled eyes that He gives mankind over to their selfish desires and they reap the inherent consequences from the actions they have sown (Galatians 6:8).

Listen to David's prayer when he says, "... deliver my soul from **the wicked, which is Thy sword**" (Psalm 17:13; *King James Version*). David defines God's sword in this circumstance as being his wicked enemies whom God was permitting to oppress David (verse 9). Likewise, God would permit wicked men to oppress the Shepherd as a sword.

During the time of Jesus' trial, Matthew tells us that "the chief priests, and the elders, and all the council" used the testimony of "false witnesses" against Him to secure His death sentence (Matthew 26:59, 60). In Proverbs 25:18 we read:

*"A man who bears **false witness** against his neighbor is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow."*

Here again we see the connection between "the sword" and Christ's enemies who, not only struck Him physically on the cross, but by also bearing false witness against Him.

Jesus said, "He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him" (John 8:29). If God never left Jesus alone, why did He cry out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

## ***Why Have You Forsaken Me?***

Upon the cross we hear Jesus' cry: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" (Matthew 27:46). Did God really forsake Jesus, or was Jesus experiencing what the unbelieving sinner experiences when trials and tribulations come? When Jesus said these words, He was quoting from the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the book of Psalms:

*"My God, My God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent." (Psalm 22:1,2)*

This is the mental anguish that crushes the unbelieving sinner who has lost their true identity as a child of God and therefore has not trusted in God's everlasting free forgiveness and grace. Sin has hidden (clouded) the merciful face of God, causing them to believe He has turned away His face and abandoned them (Isaiah 59:2), when He is right there by their side as can be seen from reading verse 24 of the same chapter in Psalm 22:

*"For He [God] has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him; But **when he** [the afflicted] **cried to Him** [God], **He heard.**" (Psalm 22:24)*

It wasn't God who turned His face and rejected Jesus, it was us!

*"He is despised and **rejected by men**, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And **we hid, as it were, our faces from Him**; He was despised, and we did not esteem [value] Him." (Isaiah 53:3)*

God's silence at the cross causes us to *perceive* that God is the One who's abandoning Christ and crushing Him as a stern judge. But the "sorrows" and "grief" Christ experienced came directly out of the rejection He faced from men; for "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). He still experiences it today!

"In the collective rejection of Christ, in that moment of realisation that there was no one on the planet that wanted Him, He experienced in His heart the reality that:

'There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.'  
Roman 3:11 (NIV)

The leaders of Israel later express the universal sentiment, revealing the all-pervading enmity of man against God:

'He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' Matthew 27:43 (NIV)

These words are in reality the projection of the thoughts of the human race onto God. The collective sovereign will of the sons and daughters of Adam speak with one voice.

'... 'Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!' 'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate asked. 'We have no king but Caesar,' the chief priests answered.' John 19:15

**The heavenly Father does not protest. He allows us to project this onto Him. How? In His silence.** The only pulse Jesus can feel is the collective human pulse of rejection. The voice of humanity,

aided by Satan and his angels, drowned out the voice of God. God allowed us to sit on His throne to judge and condemn His Son. Why did He let us do this? That our offense might abound.

**'These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you;** but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.' (Psalm 50:21)." (Adrian Ebens, *Atonement*, p. 207)

As mentioned earlier, Jesus bore our sins by keeping silent. He did not retaliate (1 Peter 2:23). He did not speak but let us have our own way.

*"He [Jesus] was oppressed and He was afflicted, **yet He opened not His mouth**; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is **silent**, so **He opened not His mouth**."* (Isaiah 53:7)

This is how God delivered up His Son:

*"He [God] who did not spare His own Son, but **delivered Him up** for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32)

Again, to whom did God deliver up His beloved Son? Jesus tells us:

*"Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man [Jesus] **will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death and will deliver Him over to the Gentiles**, who will mock Him and spit on Him and flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise again."* (Mark 10:33,34; Berean Standard Bible)

When the chief priests and Roman soldiers came to take Jesus away, He said, "When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. **But this is your hour, and the power of darkness**" (Luke 22:53). God delivered (gave) Christ over to *us* (mankind) on that prayerful and agonizing night in Gethsemane, and within 24 hours we put Him to death!



In Hebrews 2:9 we read that "Jesus ... by the grace of God should taste death for every man." The most common understanding of this is that Jesus died for us – or in place of us – as a payment that we owed to satisfy God's justice. Here's how Juli Camarin at *jcblog.net* interprets it:

"The prescribed punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23) so Jesus tasted death for everyone so that we could escape it. When He died for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2), He took them on his body and essentially became sin (1 Corinthians 5:21). He dealt with the sin issue once for all. This is a radical statement for some, but sin is not an issue with God. Every sin, past, present and future has been paid for by Jesus and forgiven by God. **The punishment for sin was placed on Jesus. He tasted death in our place.**"

However, tasting death "for" us is meant in the sense of "for the benefit of every man." Christ died in order to help us comprehend the true disastrous results of sin. Remember, Jesus died to make an "end" of sins – to reveal sin in its complete fullness – not to pay off God. In her comment above, Mrs. Camarin refers to "1 Corinthians 5:21" (actually 2 Corinthians) which says:

*"For **He [the Father] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"*  
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

What does it mean that Christ was made to be sin for us? According to Mrs. Camarin and mainstream Christianity, it means "The punishment for sin was placed on Jesus" thus "He tasted death in our place." But is it ever right for an innocent person to be punished for someone else's crime? Is this true justice? What does God say?

*"Woe to those who are mighty to drink wine, and champions at mixing strong drink; who **acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice for the innocent!**"* (Isaiah 5:22,23; King James Version)

If I murdered one of your children, and you demanded the death penalty, would you accept someone innocent paying my penalty by

dying in my place to let me go free? Wouldn't it matter to you who died? Or would you not care who died as long as someone dies? Would that satisfy *your* sense of justice? God warns:

*"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." (Ezekiel 18:20)*

Jesus being made to be sin is equivalent to what Paul says in Romans:

*"For 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." (Romans 8:3; King James Version)*

The law cannot heal us, it can only diagnose the problem – "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Christ coming in the likeness of sinful flesh is the healing Remedy – "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe ..." (Romans 3:21,22). This is also equivalent to what Paul says in Galatians 4:4-5:

*"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, **born under the law**, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*

When Jesus was born of Mary, He took on her sinful flesh with all the propensities toward sin. Although He had a human mother, He did not have a human father. He was fathered by the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20) and thus Jesus was both a partaker of sinful nature and the divine nature. This goes back to point number 1 on page 28 regarding how Jesus "bore our sins in His own body."

Although Jesus was born in the likeness of sinful flesh, He did not participate in sinful deeds; for He "was in all points tempted as we are,

yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He relied upon the grace of His Father's indwelling Spirit, which empowered Him to overcome the propensities of His sinful flesh (Luke 2:40; John 5:30).<sup>2</sup>

Upon the cross Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when the power of darkness overshadows the face of God. In that darkness Christ could not sense the abiding presence of His Father, just as the wicked in the end will not be able to sense the Father's presence due to their disbelief in His everlasting mercy. They, as did Christ, will sense they are forsaken.

The propensity and temptation to distrust God weighed heavily upon our Savior. God delivers and permits His Son to assume that He is a stern judge, divested of the endearing qualities of a

father. This may be yet another reason why Zechariah's prophecy spoke of a "sword" smiting God's Shepherd. A sword is an instrument designed to sever, or separate. Our Messiah was feeling the sense of separation from His Father, and fear and selfishness were striving for His soul. However, Jesus overcame the doubts by believing that His Father would not ultimately forsake Him but would raise Him from the



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*Just as we wrongly "did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted", the last in the end will wrongly believe they are "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted", when in fact it is only the disease of sin running its deadly course (James 1:14,15).*

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<sup>2</sup> It is important here to emphasize that, although Jesus was born as a man with the propensities *toward* sin, He did not have propensities *from* sin. We, on the other hand, not only have inherited tendencies toward sin, but cultivated tendencies from sin. Meaning we have not only the sinful inclinations from our ancestors, but also the inclinations we have built up in ourselves from a lifetime of living in sin.

dead. Jesus shattered the darkness when He prayed: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).

The faith of Jesus overcomes all of our false ideas about the character of God. He was tempted to believe God had forsaken Him, which is what sin causes every man to believe when God remains silent while we go through tough times, but His perfect faith in His Father did not surrender to this lie. Thus Christ "condemned sin in the flesh." In what flesh? In sinful flesh!

As we can see, the phrase "Jesus died *for* our sins" is misunderstood by the majority of Christianity. It does not mean "in payment for" in order to legally cancel out our sins. Cleansing the heavenly record books does not entail Jesus simply erasing the word "sinner" next to your name. How would you feel if you had a terminally ill disease, which was recorded in your health records, and went to see a different doctor and upon viewing your health record, he simply erased the condition from the record? Would you be healed of the condition? No. The only way you can erase the condition from the record is if you receive a remedy which cures you from the disease.

*"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, **how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"** (Hebrews 9:13,14)*

The traditional pagan understanding of this, which has crept into Christianity, is that Christ offered His blood *to God* to *pay* for our sins. Referring to Hebrews 9:14, John Calvin writes: "... Christ alone was the lawful victim and capable of appeasing God ..." (*Calvin's Commentary on the Bible*). And John Gill adds: "... this sacrifice was offered up 'to God', against whom his people had sinned, and whose justice must be satisfied ..." (*Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible, Hebrews 9:14*).

But that's not it at all. Just as a pharmaceutical representative gives medicine to a physician to give to the patient, Jesus "offered [gave] Himself without spot to God" – our great Physician – who then would give Jesus to us!

Jesus' spotless life was proof that the Remedy works. He proved that sinning is NOT necessary! The excuse, "Well, I am human" when we sin is no excuse due to the fact that Jesus was human. He daily, breath by breath, denied Himself (His sinful nature) and submitted to the divine nature dwelling in Him.

"But wait!" someone objects, "We don't have a divine nature dwelling in us. So how is this possible for us?" The blood of Jesus was offered to God, which represents His sinless life (Leviticus 17:11,14; Deuteronomy 12:23). Jesus counsels us to figuratively "drink" His blood (John 6:54) because, as Paul says, "we shall be saved by His life" working in and through us (Romans 5:10; Philippians 1:6). The Remedy we drink results in the learning of, appreciating and displaying in our own lives His perfect character as we become "partakers of the divine nature":

***"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."** (2 Peter 1:3,4)*

Escaping our evil desires depends on us partaking of the same divine nature that Christ took part of. It is not that we become God, or Divine, but we take on the *character attributes* of Divinity. How do we partake of it? Our Father receives "the blood" (sinless life) offered by Jesus and gives it to us as a "blood" (life) transfusion.



How does God administer this Remedy? "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6). We receive it through the channel of the Spirit (life/presence) of "Christ in you" which is the only hope of glorifying God (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus told His disciples, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, **the works that I do he will do also**; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12). He continued saying that, after He goes to the Father, the Father "will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth" (verses 16,17). This "Helper" is the Holy (selfless) Spirit of the Father (the Source of life) given to us through Christ (the Channel); for Jesus says, "I will not leave you orphans; **I will come to you** ... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him** and make Our home with him" (verses 18,23).

*"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: **He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity [hostile] toward God: for it is not subject [submissive] to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.** Now if anyone does not have **the Spirit of Christ**, he is not His. And **if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.** But if the Spirit of Him [God] who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through **His Spirit who dwells in you.**" (Romans 8:3-11)*

Paul tells us that, "in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of deity [divinity] lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9), and with the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we will "be filled with all the fullness [character traits] of God":

*"He [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory [character traits], to be strengthened with might **by His Spirit [divine nature] in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height [of His love] so you will know [experience] the love of Christ, which passes all knowledge, **that you might be filled with all the fullness [character traits] of God.**"*  
(Ephesians 3:16-19)



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*Through the Spirit of Christ, the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress His own character upon His people.*

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The Spirit (life/presence) of God, through Christ, is the saving Remedy which is injected into our hearts and minds, resulting in our acts of sin going into "remission." "Christ in you" is a lethal injection which destroys fear and selfishness. No longer will we distrust our heavenly Father, but will live "by the faith OF the Son of God."

*"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ lives in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)*

*"Even the righteousness of God which is by [the] **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." (Romans 3:22)*

In the book of Hebrews, the author says Jesus is “the author and finisher of *our* faith” (Hebrews 12:2). However, instead of saying “of *our* faith”, the Greek text only states “of faith.” The author is saying that Jesus is the only Being who has ever perfectly practiced righteousness by faith. Thus He is the *author* of faith and He alone knows how to give this faith (His faith) to us, thus becoming the *finisher* of faith.



*Christ coming in the likeness of sinful flesh was not to pay off God with a bribe, but to give to the world an example of what perfect humanity might be when united with divinity.*



“For **the grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.**” (Titus 2:11,12)

“Through Him **we have received grace** and apostleship **for obedience to the faith** among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:5,6)

Remember, Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore, “being made perfect, He [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey [accept/submit to] Him” (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus’ perfect faith will empower us to overcome just as He overcame (Revelation 3:21). How did Jesus overcome every temptation? By receiving God’s power of grace through faith. Jesus said, “the Father who dwells in Me does the works” (John 14:10). “Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16) — just as Jesus did!



It is this trust in our heavenly Father's mercy and grace that saves us from wrath:

*"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Romans 5:9)*

But what does that truly mean? The traditional penal-legal view of this is that, since Jesus absorbed God's wrath and anger against sin as our substitute, God's wrath has been quenched and satisfied and justice no longer obliges Him to kill us unless we reject the sacrifice Christ made on our behalf.

However, keep in mind that the text does not say we are saved "from the wrath of God." The words "of God" are not in the Greek, even though some translations insert the words to reflect their own preconceived ideas. Verse 10 clearly says that "we were God's enemies", thus we are the ones with wrath or enmity towards God. We have previously learned about how God expresses wrath. God's wrath is "letting go" or giving the unbeliever over to that which they think or desire. God's wrath, therefore, is letting man's wrath manifest itself.

If you lack trust in God and persistently think you are abandoned by Him when He is silent, God will give you over to that thinking (Proverbs 23:7). Job explains this concept:

*"For **the thing I feared has overtaken me**, and **what I dreaded has befallen me**. I am not at ease or quiet; I have no rest, for trouble has come." (Job 3:25,26)*

Instead of saying "trouble has come", the *Aramaic Bible in Plain English* says "wrath came."

In times of affliction we most-often grieve God's Spirit by wrongly believing He has turned to be our enemy and is, not only fighting against us, but is the One who is afflicting us:

*“But they rebelled, and vexed His holy Spirit: **therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.**” (Isaiah 63:10)*

Isaiah is not saying that God got upset and turned against them. He’s saying, in their warped understanding, God *appeared* to turn against them, not realizing that “in all their affliction, He was afflicted” (verse 9). Jesus saving us from wrath is not about a legal payment to God in order to calm Him down, but saving us from being overtaken by our own lack of faith (trust) in God, which saves us from our self-destructive wrathful hatred towards God, thus healing the broken relationship.

*“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit ... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who **delivers us from the wrath to come.**” (1 Thessalonians 1:6,9,10)*

The Greek word for “wrath” here is ὀργή (*orgé*) which not only is the same word used in Romans 5:9, but also in Mark 3:5 where we saw Jesus express “anger” (*orgé*) by His *intense grief* for the Pharisees’ hardness of heart. It can mean “a movement or agitation of the soul.” This is what every unbeliever will experience when God’s glory is fully revealed. There will be “great weeping and gnashing of teeth”, not by God inflicting pain or torture upon them, but by their own intense mental anguish (torment) of mind and soul as they become fully aware of all the hurt they have caused God and their fellow man. God’s selfless and purifying love, which will engulf His people, will be to the lost as a consuming fire (Song of Songs 8:6; Isaiah 33:14,15; Hebrews 12:29).<sup>3</sup>

This is the wrath Jesus saves us from if you love, trust and depend on your heavenly Father as much as Jesus does. Christ being our substitute means He came as a man, the second Adam, and rendered trusting

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<sup>3</sup> For more info on this, please see the Q&A article entitled: *Doesn’t the Bible Say That God Will Burn and Torture People “Forever and Ever”?*, at our website.

obedience to the only true God where the first Adam failed (Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:45). We receive His life as a substitute for our sinful life. What the Father did in and through His only begotten Son while living in the likeness of sinful flesh, He will do in all those who submit and die to self. And this is why "it pleased the LORD to bruise Him" (Isaiah 53:10).

## ***It Pleased the LORD to Bruise Him***

*"Yet **it pleased the Lord to bruise Him**; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."* (Isaiah 53:10)

Again, this should be interpreted as God giving Jesus over to be bruised by man. George Whitehead wrote:

"There are still those that reject and disesteem Christ, and that esteem him smitten or plagued of God, and even to have undergone the wrath and vengeance of his Father in their stead ... Whereas, first, God had never any such wrath nor revenge, against his innocent Son, to execute upon him; nor will he so clear the guilty in their sins: **It pleasing the Lord to bruise him, was neither in wrath, nor to take vengeance on him, nor yet actually or immediately by himself to bruise him, but permissively.**" (George Whitehead, *The Nature of Christianity, in the True Light Asserted: in Opposition to Anti-Christianism, Darkness, Confusion and Sin-pleasing Doctrines*, 1833, p. 25)

And Samuel Whitman further explains:

"An objection no doubt will be raised, founded upon the fifty third chapter of Isaiah, the ninth and tenth verses. 'He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.' It is asserted, you say, by

the prophet, that it pleased the Lord to bruise his well beloved Son. **Answer; and it is equally true, that God said, that the serpent [Satan] should bruise him [Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:9]. From this, it is evident, that in whatever sense the hand of God might be concerned in the event, it was not from his immediate hand, but by the power of Satan through divine permission.**" (Samuel Whitman, *A Key to the Bible Doctrine of Atonement and Justification*, 1814, pp. 298, 299)

Although the Hebrew word  $\text{יָצַח}$  (*chaphets*) can mean "to be pleased" or "delighted", it also carries the meaning of "to incline" or "bending down." Here's what *Strong's Concordance* says:

A primitive root; properly, **to incline** to; by implication (literally but rarely) **to bend**; figuratively, to be pleased with, desire -- X any at all, (have, take) delight, desire, favour, like, **move**, be (well) pleased, have pleasure, **will, would**.

This meaning of "to incline" or "to bend" is intended to communicate that God was willing or allowing this bruising to go on. The *International Standard Version* has it: "Yet the LORD was willing to crush Him ..." Again, the true meaning here is that God was *willing* or *allowing* this crushing or bruising to take place by fallen man, not that God was directly killing His Son.

But why is He pleased or willing to do this? The answer is in the phrase, "He shall see His seed." He is pleased or willing to have Him suffer because He knows the *results* of what this will accomplish. Justice appeased? No! Christ will see His seed, or His spiritual offspring. His life and death will *draw* people to the Father:

*"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."*  
(John 12:32)

*"... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."* (2 Corinthians 5:19)

The author of the book of Hebrews says it was because of “the **joy** that was set before Him” that Christ “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). What is this “joy” that was set before Him? You and I!

This is all in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy we spoke of earlier which said, after the Shepherd is smitten, “the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn My hand upon the little ones” (Zechariah 13:7). Remember, Jesus refers to “the little ones” as His disciples who would be offended at Him and “be scattered abroad” (Matthew 26:31). Some look at the phrase, “I will turn My hand upon the little ones” as something negative, as if God would turn and pour out destructive wrath upon them. Look how it reads in the *Contemporary English Version*:

*“The LORD All-Powerful said: My sword, wake up! Attack My shepherd and friend. Strike down the Shepherd! Scatter the little sheep, and I **will destroy them.**” (Zechariah 13:7)*

The *New American Standard Bible* says, “I will turn my hand against the little ones.” The *Good News Translation* says, “I will attack my people.” Then, as a result of this attack from God, “throughout the land two-thirds of the people will die” (verse 8).

However, the death of two-thirds of the scattered sheep is caused by those who physically struck the Shepherd – the Romans as they invaded the temple and destroyed Jerusalem which scattered the sheep throughout the world.

Turning His hand upon the little ones who have been scattered abroad means that the LORD would turn His *forgiving* and *protective* hand upon them who were the great “joy” set before Him. As the darkness of confusion had set over His people throughout the period of the “Dark Ages”, God would seek for His lost sheep:

*"As a shepherd looks for his scattered sheep when he is among the flock, so I will look for My flock. I will rescue them from all the places to which they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness."  
(Ezekiel 34:12; Berean Standard Bible)*

It was during the Dark Ages when pagan concepts of appeasement-theology flourished throughout the Roman empire, resulting in these errors being "taken up" (incorporated) with the truths of pure Christianity. God's law was "changed" in their minds from being a spiritual law of design which warned of inherent consequences if broken, to an arbitrary legal code which could be altered and demanded imposed punishments if disobeyed. The fourth beast of Daniel's prophecy was coming to fruition (Daniel 7:23-25; 8:9-12).

"The great men who built up the Western Church were almost all trained **Roman lawyers** ... **They had the lawyer's idea that the primary duty laid upon them was to enforce obedience to authority**, whether that authority expressed itself in external institutions or in the precise definitions of the correct ways of thinking about spiritual truths. **No branch of western Christendom has been able to free itself from the spell cast upon it by these Roman lawyers of the early centuries of the Christian church.**"  
(Thomas Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, p. 168)

In an online article entitled, *The Lie That Led to Penal Substitution Theology*, Timothy Jennings writes:

**"Because imperial/imposed-law requires punishment for wrongdoing, the church of the Dark Ages taught that sin must be punished.** This led to the doctrine of purgatory, where after death, conscious souls have their sins purged through punishment ... One of the major doctrines that the great reformer Martin Luther rejected was the teaching that conscious souls are punished in purgatory ... Luther put forth a new theory designed to free people from both the fear of purgatory and the exploitation of indulgences to buy loved ones their freedom from further punishment in

purgatory. He expanded Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement by adding inflicted punishment. **Luther taught the idea that all sin by all humans from all time were placed on Christ at the cross and punished by God at the cross.** Thus, for the saints, there were no unpunished sins remaining to be punished, thus there was no need for purgatory. **Unfortunately, the same root lie underpins both purgatory and Luther's solution—that God's law functions like human law and that breaking the law (an act of sin) requires punishment** ... The completion of the Reformation requires the rejection of this imposed law lie, in order to take the eternal gospel to the world, to prepare the world for Christ's return." (*comeandreason.com*, January 10, 2019)

In Zechariah 13:9 it says God finds a remnant whom He will refine:

*"I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name [character], and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"* (Zechariah 13:9)

In his Commentary, Matthew Henry writes:

"These words, 'I will turn my hand upon the little ones' may be understood ... as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again; the lambs of his flock, though frightened by the beasts of prey, shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms and laid in his bosom. Sometimes, when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which, it was feared, would be a prey (Num. 14:31), are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them." (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Zechariah 13:7*)

The "hand" of God represents God's "power", which is Christ:

*"Who [Christ] being the brightness of His [the Father's] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the **word of***

**His power**, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the **right hand** of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3)

*"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God**, and the wisdom of God."*  
(1 Corinthians 1:23,24)

So, the context here is that after God allows the Shepherd to be smitten, the sheep will be scattered (speaking of the disciples) and in His great mercy God will restore His great Hand/Power (Jesus) to those who have been brought low through the loss of the Shepherd (meaning He will restore Jesus to His disciples).

*"Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand [power, strength], and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young."* (Isaiah 40:10,11)

God will gather His people by cleansing us from all the lies of Satan (Isaiah 1:16-18). When we realize that God gave His Son over to us and allowed Him to suffer the deadly results of our rebellion and hatred towards Him, we begin to fully see His love for us.

*"We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's [present] life [in us]!"* (Romans 5:10, Good News Translation)

The changing of our minds to become friends (reconciled) to God takes place because Christ loved us so much that He was willing for us to reject and kill Him while He still revealed a character of loving forgiveness. This great love in the face of our furious hatred causes us to realize how good and kind and merciful He is, allowing us to believe we are forgiven (for it is in our sinful nature to be tormented by doubt of whether He really loves and forgives us). Christ did not die to satisfy



His Father's anger against us but rather He died because of our human anger against Him. He reveals our rage and hatred towards God and our fellow man while revealing God's perfect love toward us.

Modern Christianity teaches that biblical reconciliation is a two-way street between opposing parties:

1. **God:** God first needs His anger and justice satisfied before He can legally forgive the sinner and look on him in favor.
2. **Man:** Man needs to be assured that he is forgiven and accepted through a sacrifice which restores trust in God.

However, Scripture says nothing about God needing to be reconciled to man; for God never changes (Malachi 3:6). God always looks with favor and infinite love towards man. It is *our* minds that need changing:

*"And you, who once were alienated and enemies **in your mind** by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight."* (Colossians 1:21,22)

This is the true definition of the atonement process; for *reconciliation* and *atonement* mean the same. In the traditional penal understanding, atonement is understood to be the satisfaction of God's justice by the payment of a legally-imposed penalty, that penalty being death. Notice how *gotquestions.org* wrongly defines "atonement", equating it with a legal payment:

**"According to the doctrine of penal substitution, God's perfect justice demands some form of atonement [meaning, 'payment'] for sin.** Humanity is depraved, to such an extent that we are spiritually dead and **incapable of atoning [meaning, paying] for sin** in any way (Ephesians 2:1). Penal substitution means Jesus' death on the cross propitiated, or satisfied, God's requirement for justice. God's mercy allows Jesus to take the punishment we deserve for our sins. As a result, Jesus' sacrifice serves as a substitute for anyone who accepts it. In a very direct sense, Jesus is exchanged for us as the recipient of sin's penalty."

However, that's not the word's original meaning. The original meaning is "at-one-ment." It's the process of becoming and being at-one with God. This process is accomplished by the renewing of our minds, not by a legal payment. Ray Foucher explains:

"How does the reconciliation process happen? The answer is given quite directly:

*'... God, who hath reconciled us to himself **by Jesus Christ** ...' (2 Cor 5:18)*

But what does that mean? Does Jesus, on behalf of His Father, go into our minds and change some circuits so that, in our minds, we are now happy with God? Reconciliation is a process of the mind, a change from enmity to favor and friendship ... so there must be some change in thinking caused by seeing/understanding some additional knowledge. Scripture does speak of that:

*'But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass **the glory of the Lord**, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'* (2 Cor 3:18)

*'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**'* (2 Cor 4:6)

So we are given knowledge of God by what we see in His Son Who the Bible describes as being 'the express image' (Heb 1:3) of His Father. That knowledge changes or renews our minds:

*'And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.'* (Rom 12:2)

*'Therefore if any man be **in Christ**, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are **become new.**'* (2 Cor 5:17)

The renewing of the mind and the becoming new describe a process:

*'And have put on the new man, which is renewed **in knowledge after the image of him that created him:**'* (Col 3:10)

The form of the Greek word that is translated as 'renewed' in that verse indicates 'being renewed,' a continuous process. Him that created is the Son of God (Heb 1:2)." (Ray Foucher, *The Reconciliation Process*, [characterofgod.org](http://characterofgod.org))

In an online article entitled, *It Pleased God*, Floyd Phillips gives us some insights as to what really pleased God:

"This notion that God engages in punishing the innocent on behalf of the guilty originates with the father of lies and is designed to further undermine our appreciation of God's trustworthiness. This is the intoxication of the wine of Babylon that has distorted true justice all throughout history. Yet modern Christianity asserts that Jesus in essence bribed God to acquit guilty sinners by denying justice to His Son, the innocent one willing to take the punishment supposedly due to sinners ... By letting us unleash all the venom of our world's animosity against God on Jesus, He knew that the lies behind all that animosity would inevitably be exposed

and would at last be discredited. **This is what was pleasing about all the evil that happened to Jesus from God's perspective, not that it would placate some pagan notion that God was furious at sinners but that sinners would come to see the lies that kept them angry and hostile towards God** ... Jesus came to reveal the trustworthiness of God's heart, and because He did so in such a spectacular way He exposed all



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*True reconciliation is not about appeasing an angry God and changing His mind toward us, but about us changing our minds toward Him. True reconciliation is accomplished when we, through the demonstration of Christ, see the evidence that we have a tender loving Father who loves us with "an everlasting love" simply because we are His children (Jeremiah 31:3).*

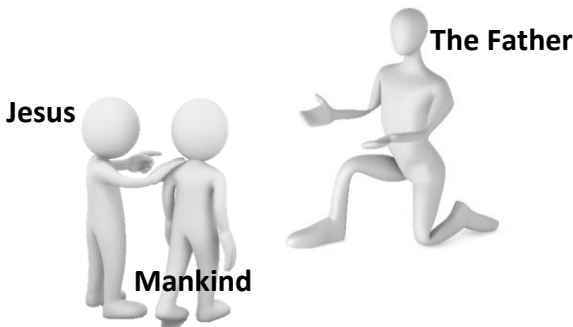
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the deceptions of the enemy. He has proven that He can be trusted to represent God truthfully and consistently and that all of Satan's allegations are groundless, false and sinister. **This is the method by which God achieves victory over evil – by making Himself vulnerable instead of using His infinite power to overwhelm His enemies.**"  
*(biblicalconcepts.blogspot.com, August 12, 2018)*



**False Gospel:** Jesus came to; **1.** Absorb the punishment for sin from God, which was due us, allowing His Father to kill Him instead of us as an atoning sacrifice, thus satisfying God's wrath and justice so that He could finally forgive us. **2.** If we accept this sacrifice, we benefit by God crediting our account with Jesus' death. However, if we reject the sacrifice, God's wrath is rekindled against us and He is obligated to destroy, or even torture us, in accordance with His justice.



**True Gospel:** Jesus came to; **1.** Reveal His Father's true character, which had been misunderstood and therefore misrepresented, in order to win us to trust that God had never condemned us, and that His mercy is everlasting, thus reconciling us to our endearing Father. **2.** Develop in Himself a perfect humanity to provide to us as the antidote for sin and selfishness through His Spirit. However, God will not interfere with one's free choice to reject the antidote and therefore will reluctantly permit sin to run its deadly course.

This work of reconciliation has been committed to us, to do as He did:

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and **has given us the ministry of reconciliation**, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and **has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**" (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)*

Are you ready to share and demonstrate this message of reconciliation, or will you still hold your enemies' sins accountable?

## ***Without the Shedding of Blood There is No Forgiveness***

We learned earlier that "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1) because neither God nor His Son had ever condemned us in the first place. Likewise, if you are truly "in [one-with] Christ" there will be no condemnation coming from you towards others. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world" (John 3:17); "as My Father sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). God has promised: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26). Therefore ...

*"be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)*

How did God forgive you? Did He demand a blood sacrifice? Referring to animal sacrifices, foreshadowing the death of Jesus, *Christianity.com* says, "In order for the Israelites to gain forgiveness, something had to die." And *gotquestions.com* says, "In order for us to be saved, Jesus had to take our place and die for sin. He had to lay down His life as a

sacrifice, because ‘without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness’ (Hebrews 9:22).” If this is true, then you would need to demand the same – you would need someone to shed blood – in order to “forgive one another even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Is it not true then that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22)? The Greek word for “forgiveness” here is ἄφεσις (*aphesis*) which comes from the word ἀφιέμι (*aphiēmi*). It means a forgiveness that is *received* by the one being forgiven and is in contrast to the Greek word χαρίζομαι (*charizomai*), found in Ephesians 4:32 (cited on previous page), which is a forgiveness that is being *granted*. In verse 31, Paul says the Ephesian assembly was forgiven (past tense) even while they were practicing “bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking.” Thus, *charizomai* is unconditional forgiveness towards someone, while *aphiēmi* is conditional on us recognizing our condition and accepting that God is forgiving. This then leads to *aphesis* which literally means your sins go into *remission* now that you have partaken of the Remedy.

*“If we confess our sins [recognize our condition], He is faithful and just to **forgive [aphiēmi]** us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)*

Notice God is “just” (justified) to forgive us after we “confess our sins.” Clearly this is not talking about God’s unconditional forgiveness towards the sinner. John is talking about a forgiveness that is accepted and received by the already-forgiven sinner who acknowledges His need. God would be unjust to force anyone to accept His forgiveness.

So, how does the shedding of blood fit in here? Christ shedding His blood for us was not something that God needed or required to be done in order to forgive (*charizomai*) us (Psalm 40:6). His forgiveness toward us is unconditional. However, because sin had warped our thinking concerning God’s justice, we needed and required the shedding of blood (a sacrifice) in order to believe in, and receive, God’s

forgiveness (*aphiēmi*). Seeing Christ shed His blood was the only way we would accept the fact that God has forgiven (*charizomai*) us. Thus in Their love for us, God and His Son accommodate us, meeting us where we are.

The literal definition of the word forgiveness is “to release a debt.” If God had set the ransom price of death, and needed to punish Jesus in order to satisfy His justice before He could forgive us, He would have gotten paid and therefore didn’t really forgive anything. God did not forgive us *because* Jesus died on the cross due to the fact that the cross doesn’t *achieve* or *provide* God’s unconditional forgiveness, it *displays* it – and all we need to do is trust Him by reaching out to *receive* it, and in turn, grant it to others who harm us.

*“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6; Berean Standard Bible)*

Before His death, did not Jesus say to the paralyzed man, “Take courage [receive as fact], son; your sins are forgiven” (Matthew 9:2)? If sins weren’t forgiven until Jesus shed His blood, and God’s justice satisfied, wouldn’t Jesus have said, “Your sins will be forgiven”?



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*~ Think About It ~*

*If God needed Jesus to shed His blood as a sacrifice in order for us to gain forgiveness, what would have happened if everyone had accepted Jesus and He was not crucified, but simply died of old age? Would we all be lost?*

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In God's mind, there is never a need for the offender to bring a satisfactory payment for sin. Those who are stuck in this sort of thinking will cite this verse:

*"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10)*

Instead of seeing the Greek word, ἱλασμός (*hilasmos*), translated here as "propitiation", as meaning Jesus has become the Remedy and cure for the infection of sin and selfishness, most people understand it as God being the One needing to be appeased or placated. This is made clearer by reading this verse in the *Amplified Bible*. Take note that the words in brackets are straight from the *Amplified Bible* and reflect the translators' interpretation of the text:

*"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [that is, the atoning sacrifice, and the satisfying offering] for our sins [fulfilling God's requirement for justice against sin and placating His wrath]."*

Notice how it is believed that Christ dying as a propitiation is satisfying God's justice and placating His wrath. To "placate" someone means "you stop them from being angry by giving them something or doing something that pleases them" (*vocabulary.com*). Here again we see the general understanding of propitiation and atonement as being a legal payment offered to God. Here is how *Christianity.com* interprets why Jesus is our propitiation:

"Propitiation is a big word that means satisfaction. Because God is a holy God, His anger and justice burns against sin. And He has sworn that sin will be punished. **There must be a satisfactory payment for sin.** But God said, 'If I punish man for his sin, man will die and go to hell. On the other hand, if I don't punish man for his sin, **My justice will never be satisfied.**' ... His wrath burned out on the cross when His only Son died as man's propitiation for sin. And this is love (see 1 John 4:10)."



Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), in his sermon *Particular Redemption*, describes his understanding of the atonement. Notice once again it is used in the sense of a payment to God:

“There was never an ill word spoken, not an ill thought conceived, not an evil deed done, for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. **He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ.** If you have no atonement [meaning, ‘a payment’] to bring through Christ, you must for ever lie paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery; for as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, and stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it; it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible.”

However, placing this character trait upon God only makes Him out as acting no differently than the pagan gods of many cultures. E.J. Waggoner (1855-1916) makes this connection:

“Of course the idea of a propitiation or sacrifice is that there is wrath to be appeased. **But take particular notice that it is we who require the sacrifice, and not God. He provides the sacrifice. The idea that God’s wrath has to be propitiated in order that we may have forgiveness finds no warrant in the Bible. It is the height of absurdity to say that God is so angry with men that he will not forgive them unless something is provided to appease his wrath, and that therefore he himself offers the gift to himself, by which he is appeased** ... The heathen idea, which is too often held by professed Christians, is that men must provide a sacrifice to appease the wrath of their god. All heathen worship is simply a bribe to their gods to be favorable to them. If they thought that their gods were very angry with them, they would provide a greater sacrifice, and so human sacrifices were offered in extreme cases [Micah 6:6-8]. They thought, as the worshipers of Siva in India do today, that their god was gratified by the sight of blood.” (E.J. Waggoner, *The Signs of the Times*, Vol. 22, January 23, 1896)

Please don't miss the point here that it is *we* who require a sacrifice, not God, because *we* are the ones who believe "without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness." Jesus shedding His blood as a propitiation was not to propitiate God, but man! So, instead of God requiring a sacrifice and *we* providing it; it is *we* who require the sacrifice and God providing it. It was all about placating and appeasing *us* who were hostile to Him.



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*It is not God who demands "without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness", but rather it is man who believes this because he cannot believe God will forgive him unless he does a sacrifice.*

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gave up all He had and took the nature of a servant ... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). Having the mind of Christ in us, we will proclaim, "We are not here to be served, but to serve, and give our lives for you!" (Matthew 20:28). As Revelation says of God's people:

*"And they defeated him [Satan and his temptations to accuse and condemn others] by the blood [indwelling life] of the Lamb [Jesus] and by their testimony [the word of reconciliation]. And **they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die.**" (Revelation 12:11)*

With the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we will forgive others "even as" God in Christ forgave us. We will not condemn those who persecute us nor demand a sacrifice from them before we will even think about forgiving them.

We will selflessly take all the initiatives to placate (propitiate) our enemies, being ever willing to carry our cross and die for them.

Paul counsels us to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who ... of His own free will

Through Christ's Spirit of love empowering us, we will joyfully and naturally carry out His work of reconciliation.

*"But I say to you who hear: **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.** To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. **For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**" (Luke 6:27-36)*

Paul also speaks of Christ as a "propitiation" in the book of Romans:

*"[Christ] whom **God set forth as a propitiation** by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:25, 26)*

The *Amplified Bible* describes it as God putting Christ on public display "as a life-giving sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation (propitiation) ... to demonstrate His righteousness *which demands punishment for sin.*" However, the Greek word used for *propitiation* here is ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*), which actually means "mercy seat" and refers to the lid covering the Ark of the Covenant. This word is used only one other time in the Greek New Testament where the writer of Hebrews says, "Above the Ark were the cherubim of glory,

overshadowing the **mercy seat [hilasterion]**" (Hebrews 9:5). The meaning is clear – we can go to Jesus and rest in the bosom of His everlasting covering of mercy (Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 11:28-30). Therefore, in Romans 3:25, Paul is saying, "God presented Christ as the Mercy Seat to demonstrate His righteousness." God's righteousness is about mercy (lovingkindness), not about demanding punishment for sin.

Although *Christianity.com* recognizes the mercy seat allusion, they still come to the wrong conclusion, believing Christ absorbed punishment from God in our place:

"Christ is 'the propitiation,' because by his becoming our substitute and assuming our obligations he expiated our guilt, covered it, by the vicarious punishment which he endured."

In his *Bible Exposition*, John Gill also recalls the "allusion to the mercy seat, which was a type of him [Jesus] as such." However, he goes way off track when he defines what this means:

"Christ is the propitiation to God for sin; **which must be understood of his making satisfaction to divine justice**, for the sins of his people; these were imputed to him, and being found on him, **the law and justice of God made demands on him for them; which he answered to satisfaction**, by his obedience and sacrifice; and which, as it could not be done by any other, nor in any other way, is expressed by 'reconciliation', and 'atonement': **whence God may be said to be pacified [soothed/paid off], or made propitious** ... Christ has not, by his sacrifice and death, procured the love and favour of God, but has removed the obstructions which lay in the way of love's appearing and breaking forth; there was, a law broken, and justice provoked, which were to be attended to, and **Christ by his sacrifice has satisfied both**; so that neither the wrath of God, nor any of the effects of it, can fall upon the persons Christ is the propitiation for, even according to justice itself; so that **it is not love, but [God's] justice that is made propitious.**"

Notice yet again, the common understanding of reconciliation and atonement is an act of payment to God to satisfy His justice. The word *hilasterion* is a derivative of the word ἰλάσκομαι (*hilaskomai*) which means, "be merciful, make reconciliation." The only two verses that use *hilaskomai* are:

*"And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be **merciful (hilaskomai)** to me a sinner!'" (Luke 18:13)*

*"Wherefore in all things it behoved Him [Jesus] to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make **reconciliation (hilaskomai)** for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17, King James Version)*

Taking into consideration what we have learned concerning the words reconciliation, atonement, and propitiation, Scripture is not telling us that God's justice needed to be satisfied (paid off), but instead that God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration (reconciliation and atonement) through the established evidence of God's true character revealed in Christ who propitiated our requirement of justice.

**"An atonement can be made only by God so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men's hearts will be touched to tenderness; and they, being delivered from Satan's delusions, may see how fully and terribly they have misunderstood the divine One, and so have done despite to the Spirit of his grace. Thus they may be led, as returning brethren, to come back to the Father's house in blissful unity. The atonement is not to appease God's wrath, so that men dare come to him, but it is to reveal his love, so that they will come to him. It was not Christ reconciling God unto the world, but God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."**  
(George Fifiield, *God is Love*, p. 48)

By Christ revealing God's true character to us, we become reconciled to God through Christ. Not because He legally appeased God's justice and wrath, but that we now finally believe and trust that "God is love"

and that He never condemned us or needed to be appeased in any way shape or form. Thus, we, in turn, treat others the same. This is what satisfies *God's justice* because God's justice is not about making people *pay* for their sins – it is about *saving* people from their sins; for “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11).

## ***Calling Jesus Accursed***

In his first letter to the Corinthian believers, Paul writes something interesting:

*“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)*

At first glance, it seems obvious that no man who is speaking by the Spirit of God would call Jesus accursed, however, when we look at what Paul is saying a little more closely, we find that he is saying something which has a deeper meaning than what we would understand today. First, let's look at some definitions of the word accursed. Here's the definition from *Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary*:

### **ACCURSED**

1. Doomed to destruction or misery:

The city shall be accursed. Josh 6.

2. Separated from the faithful; cast out of the church; excommunicated.

I could wish myself accursed from Christ. Romans 9:3

3. Worthy of the curse; detestable; execrable [extremely bad or unpleasant].

Keep from the accursed thing. Josh 6.

Hence,

4. Wicked; malignant in the extreme.

Can you imagine a believer calling Jesus any of those things? Maybe a non-believing Jew would believe that, but Paul is writing to the Corinthian assembly made up of mostly Gentiles (and some Jews) who believe in Jesus. Why would he need to remind the believers of this most obvious point? Even today the English word accursed is mostly referred to as someone or something which is doomed, hateful, detestable etc. Clearly, there must be something deeper here that we are missing.

As mentioned earlier, the church in Corinth was predominantly composed of Gentile believers who converted from paganism to Christianity. They were formerly steeped in idolatry. Notice how Paul addresses them at the beginning of his letter:

*"Now concerning spiritual **gifts**, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led." (1 Corinthians 12:1,2)*

When reading this we immediately conclude that the subject of Paul's discussion is spiritual **gifts**. But what we need to understand is that the word "gifts" is an added word by the translators. Some translations italicize the word, showing that the word "gifts" is not in the Greek. The first sentence should read, "Now concerning spiritual brethren [or persons], I do not want you to be ignorant."

So, the subject of Paul's discussion is not spiritual gifts, but "spiritual persons" and what these "spiritual persons" are teaching is connected to what they formerly believed as idol worshipers. Therefore, in verse 3 Paul is saying that no spiritual person (one who is led by God's Holy Spirit) will call Jesus accursed, which again is something connected to what they formerly believed as pagan idolaters.

The Greek word Paul used, which is translated as "accursed" here, is the word *ἀνάθεμα* (*anathema*). This can be seen in other translations as well (e.g., *American Standard Version* and *Young's Literal Translation*).

Paul is saying that anyone under the influence of God's Spirit will not call Christ *anathema*. We must find out what anathema meant to Paul and the Corinthians so that we too will not be found guilty of calling Christ anathema. Anathema is defined by *Strong's Concordance* as:

**ἀνάθεμα (*Anathema*):**

That which is laid up, i.e. a votive offering.

Anathema is defined above as "a votive offering." What exactly is "a votive offering"?

"Votives were gifts offered to the gods by their worshippers. They were often given for benefits already conferred or in anticipation of future divine favors. Or they could be offered to propitiate the gods for crimes involving blood-guilt, impiety, or the breach of religious customs. They could be given either voluntarily or in response to demands by the cult's priesthood that the donor fulfill a religious vow or honor some religious custom ... Sacrifices were also thought of as gifts to the gods. They took the form of bloodless offerings such as grasses, roots, cereal grains, fruits, cheese, oil, honey, milk and incense, or were blood-offerings like wild and domesticated animals, birds and fish. The foodstuffs and liquids were either burnt on raised altars so that their aroma could rise heavenward or dropped or poured into wells, holes or tombs. What was left was usually consumed by the sacrificers." (*penn.museum/The Ancient Greek World*)

Anathema is a votive offering which is a thing offered to a god (or to *the* God). Paul is saying Christ is NOT this in the sense that the Corinthian church would understand it. Christ is not a votive offering to appease the wrath of an angry God. Paul is warning them that some professed spiritual brethren are mingling their old pagan beliefs founded upon penal atonement with what Christ truly accomplished upon the cross. Earlier in chapter 10 Paul cautioned them by saying ...

*"... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons."*  
(1 Corinthians 10:20)



In *Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary* it gives two definitions of the word anathema. The first definition is the act of being excommunicated from a church. The second definition, however, is the way Paul used it in his letter to the Corinthians in connection to their former pagan idolatry:

"In heathen mythology, an offering, or present made to some deity and hung up in a temple. Whenever a person quitted his employment, he set apart, or dedicated his tools to his patron-deity. Persons who had escaped danger remarkably, or been otherwise very fortunate, testified their gratitude by some offering to their deity."

This pagan doctrine with a "Christian" twist from "spiritual" persons is what Paul was warning us about. Jesus was not "born to die" as a sacrifice to God in order for God to finally be able to forgive fallen man. Jesus did not die to save us from God's wrathful anger against us. He did not die to save us from being killed or tortured for eternity in flames by our heavenly Father. God has never condemned us. He is not, nor ever has been, an enemy towards us, but we have been enemies towards Him (Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 8:31; Hebrews 13:5).

Throughout the years Satan has been working to steer our minds away from the truth. Subtly bringing in the pagan doctrine of appeasement atonement into the "Christian" church is a work of genius in order to deceive us into believing Jesus was sent to this earth to die as an appeasing atonement (payment) to God. This dangerous doctrine self-acquits us from the verdict of murdering the Son of God to doing something that God wanted or needed to be done.<sup>4</sup> We have deceived ourselves in becoming God's accomplices instead of God's enemies who, without His Spirit, are "hostile against God" (Romans 8:7) and desire Christ dead and out of the way.

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<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that Christ did not need to die. We needed Christ to die in order for us to *believe* God has forgiven us, but God did not need Christ to die in order to forgive us.

# ***The Hour of His Judgment Has Come***

In the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Revelation we read:

*"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, **for the hour of His judgment has come**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'" (Revelation 14:6,7)*

To "fear God," in this verse, does not mean to "be afraid." It means to be awe-inspired by Him because you have gained knowledge through the everlasting gospel (good news) concerning His true character. It is to trust in His everlasting, unconditional and free mercy:

*"The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy." (Psalm 147:11)*

This adjustment or "setting right" of your reasoning towards God is what the Bible calls *justification*. As that knowledge takes root in your heart and mind, you begin to experience that character, resulting in worshipping the true Creator (Designer). This is the process of *sanctification* in which you begin to emulate that character through the indwelling presence of Christ's Spirit which renews you to the image and likeness of God and His Son mankind had in the beginning before sin (Genesis 1:26,27).

"We must return to worship our Creator and Designer and realize His laws are the protocols upon which life is built. We must realize that sin changes the sinner, causing a state of being which is incompatible with life in God's universe, because the sinner is no longer operating upon the law (protocols) that God constructed life to exist. Thus God, through Christ, has been working to heal and restore sinners back into perfection. **This is healing substitution theology**, 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that

in him we might *become the righteousness of God*' (2Cor 5:21). This is the true mission of the church—one that we will only fulfill when we eliminate imposed law, with its penal substitutionary distortion, from our pulpits, books, doctrines, universities, and institutions." (Timothy Jennings, *The Lie That Led to Penal Substitution Theology*, [comeandreason.com](http://comeandreason.com), January 10, 2019)

Going back to Revelation 14:7, the prophet speaks of a worldwide work of *glorification* coming during the time in which we will give glory to God at "the hour of His judgment."

Read that phrase again – "the hour of HIS judgment" has come. Yes, it is the time in which the inhabitants of this world will judge God!

"... *Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That **You [God] may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You [God] are judged.**'* (Romans 3:4)

This judgment does not *determine* God's righteousness; it *confirms* it:

*"Great and wonderful are Your works, O Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!"* (Revelation 15:3)

Because of the knowledge we have gained through the everlasting gospel (good news), spoken and demonstrated by Jesus, we now have proper judgment (discernment) concerning God's character and how He executes justice. This gospel, which is to be preached and practiced before all the world, *justifies* God in His words, thus disproving Satan's and man's lies about Him. It will "tear down arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God" and "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5), resulting in the *sanctification* of His name (character):

*"And I will sanctify My great name [character], which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes."* (Ezekiel 36:23)



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*For people who truly understand God's character, their appreciation of and love for Him encourages them to reflect that character by their good works. Not to gain a reward or to escape a so-called "punishment from God", but to attract others to Him. Like Christ, when they see us, they see the Father; for "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2).*

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"angels" who are proclaiming "the everlasting gospel (good news)", resulting in the earth being illuminated with God's glory (character), represent the *last message of mercy* to be proclaimed just before Jesus returns. I pray that this book is part of that last message to vindicate our heavenly Father from all the lies perpetrated by "the father of lies" who was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

God, being justified in our minds and sanctified in our lives, will bring glorification to Him by those who see God's selfless character being demonstrated in and through His last-day people.

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)*

As you can see, *our* justification, sanctification and glorification will be a witness to the world about God, resulting in *His* justification, sanctification and glorification – or, in other words, His vindication!

*"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, **and the earth was illuminated with His glory.**" (Revelation 18:1)*

Take note, that the word for "angel" is ἄγγελος (*aggelos*), which means "messenger", or "one conveying news from God to men." These

Jesus said, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father ..." (John 5:22,23). This means God has entrusted His Son to present evidence so that people can make up their minds (judgment). Confirming this, Jesus says:

*"For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see [by choosing to accept the truth Jesus demonstrated], and that those who [say they] see [but don't] may be made blind [by rejecting the truth Jesus demonstrated]" (John 9:39)*

Jesus Himself even says that He does not pass judgment on others:

*"You judge according to the flesh; **I judge no one**. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me" (John 8:15,16)*

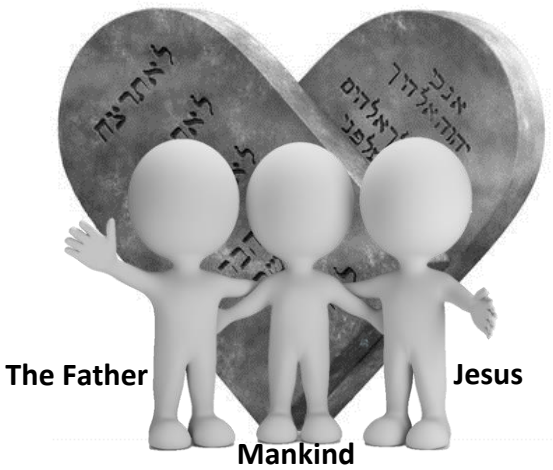
Jesus said if He did judge, His judgment would be true because just as our judgment of God doesn't *determine* God's righteousness, God's judgment doesn't determine the fate of the lost, it *confirms* it. The heavenly judgment isn't about God going through record books saying, "This person is a sinner, therefore I must punish, kill or torture him!" No, it's the *condition* of the people, whether or not they have accepted the Remedy Christ has provided, which determines their fate. Thus God's judgment is the accurate *diagnosis* of what is already in every heart and mind.

*"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11)*

If neither the Father nor the Son passes judgment on anyone, who judges us?

*"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him— the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48)*

Everyone will pass judgment on themselves by the way they judge Christ's words regarding His Father's character; "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2).



*"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)*

Remember, the whole process of fear which led to self-condemnation and the condemning of others came by Adam (Genesis 3:8-12). It was fear that caused this faulty thinking of God's character. God does not accept worship through fear, but love; for "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because **fear has torment**. He that fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). Please notice how *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines the word "torment" here:

**κόλασις (kolasis):**

From *kolazo*; penal infliction — punishment, torment.

In other words, "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has **the concept of penal infliction tied to it.**" Since "God is love" (1 John 4:8), then there has never been, nor will there ever be, any concept of penal infliction (penal atonement) in God, and whoever thinks contrary to this will never be "made perfect in love."

**After reading this material you may have lots of questions. Please visit the Q&A section at [lastmessageofmercy.com](http://lastmessageofmercy.com) to find answers to questions such as these:**

- (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5) Doesn't Jesus Tell Us to Fear God Who Can Destroy Both Body and Soul in Hell?
- (Exodus 21:24) What About the Retributive Justice of "An Eye For An Eye"?
- (Numbers 15:32-36) Why Did God Command the Horrific Death Sentence of Stoning?
- (Deuteronomy 32:39) Why Does God Say, "I Kill, and I Make Alive"?
- (Jeremiah 18:7-10) Why Does God Say He Will Repent of Doing Evil?
- (1 Samuel 15:1-3) Why Would a God of Love Command King Saul to Kill Men, Women and Babies?
- (John 2:13-16) Didn't Jesus Show Violence and Anger When He Kicked the Moneychangers Out of the Temple?
- (Exodus 20:24) Did a God of Love Really Prescribe the Inhumane Practice of Killing Millions of Animals to Appease Him?
- (Revelation 14:10-11) Doesn't the Bible Say That God Will Burn and Torture People "Forever and Ever"?
- (Exodus 12:12) Who Really Killed the Firstborn in Egypt?
- (Genesis 19:13, 24-25) Did God Send Angels to Kill the Inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah?
- (Genesis 6:5-7) Did God Really Drown Millions of People in the Flood?
- (Isaiah 45:7) Did God Create Evil?

*"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ:*

***Be reconciled to God.***" (2 Corinthians 5:20)

# Everything you thought you knew about the gospel is about to be turned upside down!

The Penal Substitutionary Theory is the most popular way of explaining the gospel in Christian circles. It teaches that "God is not willing or able to simply forgive sin without first requiring a satisfaction for it" (*Wikipedia*).

To solve this problem, a popular Christian website called *gotquestions.org* explains: "Jesus' sacrifice on the cross takes the place of the punishment we ought to suffer for our sins. **As a result, God's justice is satisfied, and those who accept Christ can be forgiven and reconciled to God.**"

Another famous theologian, John MacArthur, adds: "The reality of Christ's vicarious, substitutionary death on our behalf is the heart of the gospel according to God ... **We must remember, however, that sin did not kill Jesus; God did.** The suffering servant's death was nothing less than a punishment administered by God for sins others had committed. That is what we mean when we speak of penal substitutionary atonement ... He fully satisfied justice and put away our sin forever through the death of his Son."

And Jon Bloom of *desiringgod.org* writes: "**Jesus was primarily the object of his Father's wrath** — the most just, righteous, and terrible wrath there is."

But is this really the gospel of the kingdom Jesus came to demonstrate? Did Jesus really come to satisfy God's justice and wrath to save us from being killed by our heavenly Father? Have we been duped by Satan and others to frame the murder of Jesus on God in order to suppress our own wrath and enmity (hostility) towards God, free ourselves from our own guilty conscience, and to satisfy our own sense of justice?