

Efficacious Atonement - Part 1

Justification

February 11, 2001 - Brett Baker

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

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

- ☐ **Justification** - Although previously found guilty, now declared righteous before the law.
- ☐ Propitiation
- ☐ Redemption
- ☐ Crucifixion
- ☐ Reconciliation

❖ Introduction

As with any other major tenet of Christianity, the doctrine of the atonement is frequently misunderstood. As we can see by the opening verse Paul says that he taught the Corinthians that which was of *first importance*—the gospel. Even though all things in the Bible may be equally *true*, not all things are equally *important*. However, when we consider the *most* important things that the Scriptures teach us, the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord are preeminent. The significance of these three events, which when considered together constitute the Atonement, goes beyond the mere historical fact of the events. What most history books cannot report is what was actually *accomplished* in this Atonement.

It is in this regard that the Atonement was efficacious—the incarnation of the Word of God as Jesus of Nazareth was successful in accomplishing that which God intended. God's purpose was to reconcile the world to Himself. It would not be efficacious if it only provided the *opportunity* for reconciliation. In order for the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to be an efficacious atonement, it must have definitely *atoned*. In this series, we will be studying the five fruits of the atonement of Christ.

❖ Justification - Romans 3:1-31

The term justification is a generic legal term which refers to one's standing before a law. Those who are subject to the law can have one of two standings before the law—guilty or innocent. For those who are determined to be guilty of transgressing the law there is typically some remedy in the law for justification. Justification is therefore defined as changing one's status from guilty to not guilty.

All are guilty of violating God's law. - Verses 9-18

- “ This forms the basis of the dilemma at the heart of the Gospel; all humans without exception are under the condemnation of the law because of their sin and because of their association by nature with Adam. In Adam, all who were included with him died (Romans 5:18) thereby making all of those who inherited his nature into objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). The extent of the wrath of God is a second eternal death. (Romans 6:23). All of the descendants of Adam must be born, die physically and then also are by nature children of wrath.
- “ We must also answer the question as to what it means to be under the law. Those who would attempt to achieve a righteousness of their own by works rather than by faith are under the curse of the law. Galatians 3:10-14

There is nothing that the descendants of Adam can do to be made justified before the law of God - Verses 19-20

- “ There has been no remedy provided in the law of God for reconciliation. The sacrifices of the Levitical system were never able to actually make those who offered them perfect before the sight of God. These sacrifices, although referred to as an atonement, were not actually able to justify the descendants of Adam (Hebrews 10:1-4). Instead the sacrifices served as a shadow of the sacrifice that would be provided by God later.

God revealed His righteousness which is apart from obedience to the law. - Verses 21 - 26

- “ Because righteousness through deeds of the law could not justify the descendants of Adam God revealed His righteousness which is not based on deeds of the law but is by faith in the Second Adam (Romans 5:18-21). This righteousness is based on the faithfulness of someone else—the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 13:38-39)
- “ This righteousness is imputed or reckoned to the account of those who believe by faith that God will not impute their sins to them (Romans 4:5-8; 23-24) Those who are deceived into thinking that they may supply a righteousness of their own are those who are under the condemnation of the law. There is no level of zeal or righteousness that can be sufficient to atone for the sins of Adam or of the individual believer because the works of the law cannot justify. But the imputed righteousness of Christ is able to make perfect those who are saved.

How can a “just” God be the justifier of the guilty? - Verse 26

- “ A natural question which should come to mind is how can a God who is just, and not a crooked judge, justify those who are actually found guilty? He could diminish the importance of the law, yet this would make Him violate His own attributes of truth and purity. He could look the other way when considering our sin, but this would make Him guilty of the law as well. Instead, He satisfied the righteous requirements of His own law by sending His Son to fulfill the law (Romans 8:1-4).

How is it that Christ was raised for our justification - Romans 4:23-25)

- “ Given that the atonement consists of three events, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, we cannot separate these events when considering the whole work of the Atonement. In the cross, we see the penalty of the sins of the Church (whom Christ was given for cf. Ephesians 5:25) being paid by the wrath of God being poured out on Christ. Either the penalty for sin is paid by the sinner or it is paid by someone else, but not by both. If payment is demanded by both then neither actually paid it; it would have only been paid in part. Nevertheless, the Scriptures teach that Christ in fact paid for the sins of the Church and she stands forever faultless before the law. However, the blessing of this new position before the law is found by not only being included with Christ in His death but also in His resurrection.
- “ It is the resurrection where we see that God declared to the world that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed His only begotten Son (Romans 1:1-7). Therefore, we know that it was the Son of God who received the wrath for the sins of the Church and it was this same Savior whom God rose from three days in the tomb. No other man’s death could atone for Her sins, but this one could, because He was the Son of God. In the resurrection we have the life of righteousness being imputed or granted to those who through faith are included in the death and burial of Christ.

This new justified life is imputed by faith - Verses 27-31

- “ The justifying fruit of the efficacious atonement is granted through faith and this in no way diminishes the law. The law of God remains perfect, holy and in tact except where the new covenant has replaced it. This faith does not come by ethnic heritage or by the power of the will. Instead this faith is a gift given by God so that even in the matter of faith, no one will be able to boast. Therefore our justification is a work of God from first to last.