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THE ESSENCE OF THE ATONEMENT

“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”

How did Christ’s sacrificial death actually save us – that is, rescue us from jeopardy and ruin? By redeeming us, effecting our transfer from a state of bondage without hope to a state of freedom with a future, by paying the price that the transfer required (Romans 3:24; Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Ephesians 1:7).

How then did the cross actually redeem us, through Jesus’ death? By reconciling us to God, ending the alienation and estrangement that were previously there, linking God and us together in new harmony, replacing enmity between us with friendship and peace, by means of the putting away of our sins (Romans 5:11; Colossians 1:19-22).

So how did the cross actually reconcile us to God, and God to us? By being a *propitiation*, ending God’s judicial wrath against us (Romans 3:25).

And how did the cross actually propitiate God? By being an event of *substitution*, whereby at the Father’s will the sinless Son bore the retribution due to us guilty ones (2 Corinthians 4:21; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 2:14).

For Paul, this substitution Christ bearing our penalty in our place, is the essence of the atonement. Certainly he celebrates the cross as a victory over the forces of evil on our behalf (Colossians 2:15) and as a motivating revelation of the love of God toward us (2 Corinthians 5:14-15), but it would not for him have been either of these had it not been an event of penal substitution. **As Galatians 2:20 declares, Paul’s life of responsive faith was wholly formed and driven by the knowledge that his Savior had revealed divine love to him by giving himself to die on the cross in order to save him. AMEN.**

~Dr. J.I. Packer

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18 – 20

