



new creation teaching ministry: tuesday night studies 2009

the things we firmly believe

led by andrew klynsmith and ben bleby

Study 9: Fruits Of The Atonement (1)

(*TTWFB, chh. 18-19, pp. 114-122*)

The Atonement and its Fruit

Jesus spoke about his coming death and resurrection this way in John 12:24—

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit.

The prophet Isaiah had spoken about the Suffering Servant who would ‘see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied’ (Isa. 53:11). The Atonement—the action of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in Christ’s death and resurrection—has borne much fruit. Another way of saying that is that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have achieved the goal for which Father had planned these events. Briefly summarised these fruit are as follows:

1. The atonement brought about the clearest revelation of the character of God in history.
 - a. God’s nature as holy was vindicated by the Atonement. (John 12:31-33; Matt. 28:54; Rom. 3:25)
 - b. The revelation of God as love was completed at the cross. (John 19:26-27, 1John 4:9-10)
 - c. His goodness was shown to the world in seeking the blessing of others before Himself. (Matt. 28:42, Luke 23:34)
 - d. His truth was shown in His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises scattered through the Old Testament. (Luke 23:43, 24:26-27, 45-47)
 - e. And He displayed His righteousness by fulfilling the demands of His justice and Law in Jesus Christ. (Luke 23:41, 47; Rom. 3:21-25)
2. The Kingdom of God has been sealed and all of God’s enemies have been defeated. This means that God’s plan and purpose for the world is certain and sure; nothing will derail or hinder it. Christ is ruling and bringing creation to its destiny. *Salvation has been secured.*
3. Entrance to the Kingdom of God is now open for all who believe, for Jesus bore the sins not only of Israel but of the whole world in his death on the cross. *Salvation has been universalised.*
4. The defeat of all evil and the enemies of Man must be understood in the light of Christ bearing the guilt of Man and also God’s judgment on our guilt. (We will see this in more detail in a moment.) *Salvation has been thoroughly moralised.*
5. The Atonement is itself the source of repentance and faith, in which believers come to forgiveness, justification, redemption, reconciliation, cleansing and regeneration, as well as sanctification, adoption and glorification. (Again, we will see more of these things in this study and the next.) *Salvation has been energised.*

The Atonement and the Defeat of the Enemies

The power that lies at the heart of the enemies' overthrow is Jesus' dealing with the guilt of Man before God. The *practical evidence* of Christ's victory in the Cross over all evil and all enemies is seen in that Christ subjected himself to them in all their power, but proved victorious over them. The resurrection of Jesus from death is *the* sign of his triumph over them all. We don't say that death, or any of the enemies, was defeated by the resurrection *per se*, but rather through the bearing of guilt and judgment on that guilt, Christ destroyed death's power and the resurrection was the sign and outcome of that triumph. If there had been no resurrection we could only lament the fact that the Atonement had failed to deal with guilt and judgment. In this way, every fruit of the Atonement depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The following table sets out Scripture passages that indicate just how the death and resurrection of Christ deal with the enemies we saw in our last study.

SIN	Matt. 1:21; John 8:31-36; 1Pet. 2:24; 2Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:7, 17-21
DEATH	2Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14; 1Cor. 15:55-57
GOD'S WRATH	1John 2:2; 4:17-18; 1Thess. 1:10; Rom. 5:9
THE LAW	Gal. 3:10-13; 2:16-21; Rom. 3:19-25; 8:1-3
CONSCIENCE	Heb. 9:14 (cf. Titus 1:15); 10:22; 1Tim. 3:9
SATAN	Heb. 2:14-15; 1John 3:8; John 12:31; 16:11
POWERS, PRINCIPALITIES	Col. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:37-39
THE WORLD	Gal. 1:4; 6:14; John 16:33; Col. 2:20; 2Pet. 1:4; 2:20; 1John 4:4
THE FLESH	Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 5:24
IDOLS	Gal. 4:8-9; 1Thess. 1:9; Col. 3:1-10

The Personal Fruit of the Atonement

In the rest of this study and then in next week's also we are going to look at the fruit of the Atonement for us as persons. What has the Atonement achieved in us? The Father is the initiator of the Atonement and His Son, Jesus Christ is the agent or mediator of that Atonement. The Holy Spirit is the agent of the Atonement in a double way—he empowered Christ for the atoning work (e.g. Heb. 9:14) and he applies the Atonement to us and produces the fruit of the Atonement in us (see John 16:7-15). Everything we look at in this section is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Every person who believes in Christ does so by the Holy Spirit and so has the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e. receiving the Holy Spirit is not subsequent or additional to believing in Christ). For this reason we can be sure that all these fruits are actually ours if we are believers in Christ.

1. Faith and repentance

These two things are at the most obvious level human activities—human beings are actually commanded to repent and to believe the gospel. Yet behind that obvious human action there is a deeper truth and that is that both faith and repentance are gifts of God and are evoked by the reality

of the Atonement. When the Gospel is preached and the truth of the love of the Father, the grace of the cross, the holiness and righteousness and truth and goodness of God is revealed by that proclamation, then faith and repentance are granted, or worked in us by the Holy Spirit. See Acts 5:31; 11:18 which makes clear the gift nature of repentance. Romans 10:17 says that faith comes from hearing the message—i.e. it is a gift that the message itself gives. The Gospel works faith and repentance in us because of the ‘revelating’ or illuminating work of the Holy Spirit (2Cor. 4:6).

Repentance means a change of mind—about God, and about ourselves. One man has defined it as:

...that inward change of mind, affections, convictions, and commitment rooted in the fear of God and sorrow for offenses committed against him, which, when accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ, results in an outward turning from sin to God and his service in all of life. It is never regretted ... and it is given by God.¹

Faith is trust in God the Father and His Son, who have effected the Atonement. Faith is primarily *trust* in God and His actions rather than *assent* to the truth about God, although the God in whom we trust has revealed Himself to us in a definite way—the only God we know is the God who acted in Jesus Christ to redeem the world to Himself. The purpose (and the fruit) of the Atonement is not that we come to accept a complete (and orthodox) system of doctrine—even one as good as this course!—but that we come to know God as Father and Jesus Christ whom He sent, for this is life. (A complete and orthodox system of doctrine is helpful in us understanding all that the Father has brought us into.)

2. Forgiveness and Cleansing

Jesus spoke about the cross as being for forgiveness (Matt. 26:28; Luke 23:34). A number of different Greek words get translated as ‘forgive’ in the New Testament, and the thread that runs through them is the idea of something being put away, removed, let go or disregarded, and this done freely and graciously. A debt is cleared by being disregarded; a charge no stands against an accused man because the charger refuses to press the charges. When God forgives us the great burden of our souls is lifted up from us and taken away, and we never have to bear it again.

In the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement, Israel’s sins were confessed over the head of a goat which was then carried away to a remote place and let go. In this action the removing of sin, the forgiveness of God was being symbolised. Through the Atonement God puts away our sin, freely and graciously, and no longer considers that sin in His relating with us. The forgiveness that we hear spoken of in the Bible² is complete—‘Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more’ (Jer. 31:34, qu. Heb. 10:17); ‘As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us’ (Psa. 103:12). Forgiveness is always on account of Jesus Christ, not just as a ‘random act of kindness’ by God; we can trust God’s forgiveness because it is thoroughly moral. (‘Nothing will satisfy the conscience of Man which does not first satisfy the conscience of God.’—P. T. Forsyth) (See Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14—‘in *him* we have redemption (through his blood), the forgiveness of our sins, also Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).

Cleansing is closely related to forgiveness, and it speaks of the removing of the *stain* or the *pollution* of sin. Uncleanliness is deeply related to shame—shame is the personal experience of the pollution of sin. When the Spirit applies the Atonement to us, the pollution is cleansed and the shame is removed. God enables us to walk before Him with heads held high, and with a deep sense of liberty from what had been such shame to us. In Acts we read about those whose hearts were purified through faith in

¹ C. G. Kromminga, ‘Repentance’ in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, gen. ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1984, p. 936

² ‘No book of religion except the Bible teaches that God completely forgives sin, but there it is frequently taught...’ J. K. Grider, ‘Forgiveness’ in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit., p. 421

Christ (Acts 15:9), and Paul speaks of Christ presenting the church pure to himself, having cleansed her (=us) from her sins through the washing of the word of the Gospel (Eph. 5:26) and that matches the picture of the bride being given beautiful clean linen for her wedding gown in Rev. 19:8.

3. Justification

‘Justification is that God does not impute our sins to us [i.e. count them against us], but He does impute the work of Christ [i.e. He counts that for us], both in His passive and active obedience.... Justification is really acquittal from the charge and condemnation of sin, a righteousness accounted to us in regard to the law.’³

‘The Biblical meaning of “justify” is to pronounce, accept, and treat as just; i.e. as, on the one hand, not penally liable for law enforcement, and, on the other, entitled to all the privileges due to those who have kept the law.’⁴

To be justified is to be ‘*just as if I’d never sinned.*’⁴

The first half of this quote ties justification very closely with forgiveness, and often in the New Testament they are directly linked (e.g. Acts 13:38–39; Rom. 4:1–8). Christ’s death on the cross (his ‘passive’ obedience, i.e. his accepting of the penalty of sins on our behalf) is accounted to us, for he fully identified with us in his suffering. His active obedience towards the Father in the cross and in the totality of his life, is accounted to us as our righteousness. This is a wonderful exchange done on our behalf even before we were asking that it be done!

Justification is primarily objective—i.e. it primarily relates to our standing before the law of God. However the knowledge of justification that the Spirit makes known to us liberates us from having to desperately prove ourselves to whoever it is we see as our primary judge (God, peers, family, ourselves).

4. Sanctification

Literally to sanctify is to make holy. Sanctification in the New Testament involves cleansing from sins and incorporation into Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God, so that we are members of the holy people of God (see 1Cor. 6:11, 2Thess. 2:13, Titus 3:5-7). This is the work of the Spirit as he brings to us the work of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

In daily living then we are not trying to become holy as a response to being redeemed. We were redeemed into holiness; it was given to us as a gift. We must not seek to live up to and attain to holiness, but rather to live from and in holiness conferred in Christ. Practical living in holiness relies on God both sanctifying and justifying us (which are closely linked, e.g. Heb. 10:14). This work being done in Christ and applied to us through the Spirit, the purified person now is filled with a desire to express that purity which is his or hers in Christ (1John 3:3) The removal of guilt frees us from the power of sin, and the Holy Spirit brings into our hearts a new obedience. All our practical seeking of holiness—which is to be strong and vibrant—is the result of the energising work of the Holy Spirit. Philippians 2:12-13 says:

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, *for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

Without that energising of the Holy Spirit, we would neither will nor have power for the holiness of God. But this has been granted us as the Spirit brings home to us the Atonement.

³ Geoffrey Bingham, *The Things We Firmly Believe*, 2nd ed., NCPI:Blackwood, 1986, p. 120

⁴ J. I. Packer, ‘Justification’ in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, *op. cit.*, p. 593