

Positive Aspects Of Atonement

5 Elements of Atonement

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Well it is a wonderful positive day, full of encouragement and excitement in one sense. We, the elect of God, know that Satan deceives the whole world. His greatest tool is in getting humanity to believe the lie and in one sense God leaves humanity to itself because it does not love the truth. He lets people believe what is false and what ends in their destruction. People are left to believe impostors, to trust in false teachers, to rely on unproven information, and to create their own religions based on human reasoning.

II Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie: that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

That is certainly an indictment of this world today; they just do not believe the truth. Humanity needs to be rescued from a lie. They desperately need the atonement and this day that we are worshipping on today.

The Day of Atonement was instituted by God forever, in order to keep the plan of redemption continually before the eyes of His church. And, to show that humanity has believed the lie.

Satan's lie consists of getting people to believe him instead of God. The lie is that the accomplishments of humanity are all good. If it feels good do it. All pleasure is good, and God's truth is not true. The lie goes on and on and on. I speak of the lie in general terms rather than specific. This includes the entire world's system of politics, economics, commerce, and science that God calls Babylon.

Webster says "to atone," which the world so desperately needs, means to "set at one"—to join in one; to form by uniting. We are not completely joined in one and united with God as long as Satan can influence human beings. God and humanity cannot be completely united—in full agreement—until Satan is restrained and kept from influencing humanity with his pride and rebellious nature; a nature that man is so willing to take upon himself and make a part of his own character.

Jesus took our guilt and our sins upon Himself as an innocent substitution. This sacrifice paid the penalty of sin, which is eternal death, as the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 6:23. But the origin and instigator of sin is Satan the devil. He is the author of the sins of humanity. So all of the Satan inspired sins of humanity symbolically will be put right back on Satan's head where they belong.

The realization of the Day of Atonement will be when Satan and his demons are completely restrained by Christ, from further leading humanity into sin, and ultimately when a humble humanity unites with God. No longer will Satan be able to broadcast his evil attitudes into people's minds.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience: among whom also we all once conducted ourselves, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Unity is required for atonement. Satan is the primary adversary of that unity. He capitalizes on human nature's disinclination to want to be unified. We see that in the world today, with all of the nations being against one another, with all of the violence. As a result, we see contention and war as banners of humanity. By nature, human beings are children of wrath.

The Day of Atonement's picturing of the binding of Satan is a result of atonement. It is not the purpose however. The purpose is to bring people spiritual at-oneness—atonement with God.

This means that the only seemingly negative result of the Day of Atonement is Satan and His demons being placed in outer darkness where they can do no harm. But in reality, this is not a negative result. It is an extraordinary positive result for the first fruits of God's family and for humanity as a whole.

Atonement's primary emphasis is Christ's sacrifice of Himself in the putting away of sin. This opens up the way to a new life in Christ. And that new life, the fruit of the atonement, is that to which all else leads.

The New Testament writers, writing from different standpoints, and with different emphasis, give us a number of facets of the atonement. Each wrote as God inspired

him to see. Some saw more deeply than others, but they did not see something different in the basic doctrinal teaching of atonement. They were all unified in what they saw in the basic doctrinal teaching.

The atonement has many, many positive aspects. Today, I am going to talk about five such aspects. Those five are love, justification, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption, all of which show the wonderful, positive nature of atonement. As you can tell by the immense size of these subjects, I will not go into them in a lot of detail. It is my goal to clearly show you:

How these five aspects associate with the atonement.

The effect they have had in bringing the Day of Atonement its future realization.

1. Love. God's love for us is revealed in the Atonement. Our redemption from sin is attributed to God's wondrous love.

Isaiah 38:17 But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back.

Now continuing in Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2 and in verse 4 sets forth how, in a wonderful way, our entire salvation springs forth from the mercy and love of God.

Ephesians 2:4-8 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

It is because of the love of the Father that we will be granted a place in God's Kingdom. But the supreme manifestation of the love of God, as set forth in Scripture, is expressed in the gift of His only-begotten Son to die for the sins of the world. In the best known text in the Bible, John 3:16, we find that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

From this wonderful love of God in Jesus Christ nothing in heaven or earth, created or uncreated or to be created, shall be able to separate us from God. The atonement

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proceeds from the love of God. It is not something squeezed from an unwilling Father, who is perfectly just, but perfectly inflexible, by a loving Son.

The love of God underlies all that He has done and is doing. The greatest disclosure and most complete proof of divine love are seen in redemption. The atonement shows us the love of the Father just as it does the love of the Son. Paul gives us an explanation of this when he says here in Romans 5:8

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The word "love" is the warm word agape. This Greek word for love is used several different ways in the Bible.

Agape love indicates the nature of the love of God toward His beloved Son, toward the human race generally, and toward those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Agape love conveys God's will to His children about their attitude toward one another. Love for one another is a proof to the world of true discipleship. Humility makes way for this love.

Agape love also expresses the essential nature of God. Love can be known from the actions it prompts, as seen in God's love in the gift of His Son. Love found its perfect expression in Jesus Christ. Christian love is the fruit of the Spirit produced in the faithful.

Peter thought he was showing love when he scolded Christ for seeming to be negative about His future having to do with suffering, rejection and murder. But Peter spoke out of human ignorance and was influenced by Satan about things he did not understand.

In Mark 8:31 we see the conflict that makes the Day of Atonement necessary. Satan was influencing Peter to go against the will of God.

Mark 8:31-33 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of

men."

Peter thought he was showing love, but he lacked good judgment. He had zeal for Christ and His safety, but not according to knowledge and truth. Christ sees the wrong in what we say and do, when we ourselves are not aware of it. God always sees. He knows that it originates from a wrong spirit, even when we ourselves do not know it. Peter did not realize that what he stated was from a wrong spirit.

Peter spoke as if without understanding of Christ's purpose. He had not deeply considered the reason for Christ's work. He took it to be material and human, when in reality, it was spiritual and divine.

Romans 8:3-8 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 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 against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

That is a pretty clear statement.

In the account in Mark 8:33, Peter seemed to care more about the things that related to the physical world, and the life that is now, than those that relate to the spiritual world, and the life to come. Caring about physical things more than the things of God. This is something that every human being has to fight continually. One of the reasons is that Satan is always there filling our minds.

Being concerned more for our own ease and safety, more than the things of God, and his glory and the Kingdom would be a sin. But this attitude was common among Christ's disciples. It seems natural to shun trouble, but if with that we shun duty, it is worldly wisdom, and it will be folly all the way to the end.

II Corinthians 1:12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

In Hebrews we read that it was 'by the grace of God' that Christ tasted death for everyone.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

The love that Jesus Christ has for us, as manifested in His sacrificial death, was essential in preparing the way for the Atonement.

2. Justification. This is necessary for atonement.

Justify is a legal term meaning to acquit, to declare righteous. It is the opposite of condemn. Justifying is the judge's act. 'To be justified' means to get a verdict as in the court room.

In Scripture, God is the judge of all the earth. His dealings with human beings are constantly described in terms of a legal argument. Righteousness, which is conformity to law, is what He requires of people. He shows us His own righteousness as Judge in taking vengeance on those who fall short of it. There is no hope for anyone if God's verdict goes against him. Just as in a court room when the verdict goes against the defendant.

Because God is King, the thought of Him as justifying may have an executive, as well as, a judicial aspect to it. Like the ideal royal judge in Israel, He will not only pass a verdict in favor of the accused, but will actively implement it by showing favor towards him and publicly reinstating him. It is far more than just receiving a favorable ruling or verdict.

For example, the justifying of Israel and the Servant Christ, that was predicted in Isaiah 45:25 is a public vindication through a change in their circumstances.

The justification of sinners that the apostle Paul expounds is simply the passing of a favorable verdict. Paul taught that God shows favor to those whom He has acquitted. That is what we look for, that acquitting by God.

Justification is a judgment passed on a human being, not a work produced within him. Justification is an act of remitting the sins of guilty people. They are accounted righteous, freely, by his grace, through faith in Christ; not of their own works, but of the representative law-keeping and redemptive shed blood of Jesus Christ on their behalf.

Romans 4:5-8 But to him who does not work, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

Paul's explanation of justification is his characteristic way of saying that God forgives people who are repentant and trying to be faithful.

Though justification has much in common with forgiveness, the two terms should not be regarded as interchangeable. Forgiveness of sins can be stated related to confession and repentance, setting it somewhat apart from justification, which is a declaration of God on behalf of the faithful ex-sinner.

To be justified includes the truth that God sees the sinner in terms of his relation to His Son, with whom He is well pleased.

Paul says that faith in Christ is the means whereby righteousness is received and justification is bestowed. Sinners are justified by and through faith. Paul does not regard faith as the foundation of justification though.

In Romans 4:3 Paul quoted the case of Abraham who "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," to prove that a man is justified through faith without works.

Romans 4:1-5 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

Paul referred to the book of Genesis as teaching that Abraham's faith was accounted for righteousness. All he means is that Abraham's faith, whole-hearted reliance on God's promise, was the occasion and the means of his being justified.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; Through whom also we have access by

faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12-18 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those that had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offence. For if by one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

In verse 16, the work of Christ is designed to have reference to many offenses, so as to produce pardon or justification in regard to them all. The work of Christ does not benefit humanity unless it is faithfully embraced.

Justification and reconciliation are the first and primary fruit of the death of Christ. We are justified by His blood and reconciled by His death. Sin is pardoned, the ex-sinner accepted as righteous, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in.

Christ has done all that was required on His part to be done in order that upon our repentance, acceptance of Jesus Christ in baptism, we are actually put into a state of justification and reconciliation. Our justification is attributed to the blood of Christ because without blood there is no remission of sins.

The blood is the life, and that must go to make atonement. In all the propitiatory sacrifices, the sprinkling of the blood was the essence of the physical part of sacrifice. It was the blood that made an atonement for the person.

I mentioned the word propitiatory and that happens to be the next positive aspect. The

reason I am giving them to you in this way is so that you can see the difference between these terms in more of a simplified manner and see how positive their influence has been and how positive they make the Day of Atonement.

3. Propitiation. This expresses the idea that Jesus died on the stake to pay the price for sin that a holy God demands from the sinner. Christ's atoning death for the world's sin altered the whole position of the human race in its relationship to God. God recognizes what Christ accomplished in behalf of the world whether a person enters into the blessings of it or not.

The sacrifice has rendered God propitious, or appeased, toward the unconverted as well as to the erring saint. But a person must repent and be baptized in order to receive benefit from it.

The fact that Christ has borne all sin renders God propitious. The three Greek words dealing with the doctrine of propitiation are: 'hilasmos,' 'hilasterion' and 'hilaskomai'.

Hilasmos signifies what Christ became for the sinner.

I John 2:2 He Himself is the propitiation [hilasmos] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Hilasterion denotes the place of propitiation; it is the term for the "mercy seat" or "the lid of the ark of the covenant", which was sprinkled with blood on the Day of Atonement.

Hebrews 9:3-5 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Some later versions have "the propitiatory" in the margin instead of "mercy seat".

Hilaskomai indicates that God has become gracious, or propitious, or appeased as in Luke 18:13, where it says "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, be propitious) to me a sinner!' We see humility in this tax collector, a very important attitude on the Day of Atonement.

In this present age since the death of Christ, God does not have to be asked to be propitious, because He has become so through the death of Christ. To ask Him to become propitious, when He is already, in view of Christ's sacrifice, would show faithlessness.

In the Old Testament, the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies could be made a place of propitiation by sacrificing as we just read in Hebrews 9:5. Now, however, the blood-sprinkled body of Christ has become the Mercy Seat for humanity once and for all.

The Mercy Seat, or propitiatory, is a continual throne of grace. What would otherwise be an awful judgment throne from the sinner's perspective becomes an altar of infinite mercy for the faithful.

God Himself set forth Christ as the Mercy Seat, and this is the supreme expression of ultimate love. God had all the while been merciful, friendly, passing over people's sins with no adequate grounds for doing so.

Now, in the blood of Christ sin is condemned, and God is able to establish and maintain His character for righteousness, while He continues and extends His dealing in gracious love with ex-sinners who exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

The propitiation originates with God, not to appease Himself, but to justify Himself in His consistent kindness to human beings deserving harshness.

Basically, propitiation signifies the removal of wrath by offering a gift. Propitiation is a reminder that God is relentlessly opposed to everything that is evil, that His opposition can be described as 'wrath', and that His wrath is put away only by the atoning work of Christ.

4. Reconciliation. It is necessary for atonement with God.

Reconciliation applies not to good relations in general, but to the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel. It implies that the parties being reconciled were formerly hostile to one another.

We are bluntly told that sinners are 'enemies' of God in Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21, and James 4:4. An enemy is not someone who is a little short on being a friend; he is completely opposed. God is pictured throughout Scripture as vigorously opposed to everything that is evil.

The way to overcome enmity is to take away the cause of the quarrel. We may apologize for a hasty comment, we may pay money that is due or we may make what reparation or restitution is appropriate. In every case, the way to reconciliation lies through an effective wrestling with the root cause of the enmity.

This holds true in any relationship between husband and wife, parents and children, between family members of a wider range, or members of God's church.

Christ died to put away our sin. In this way He dealt with the enmity between human beings and God for those human beings who accept Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins.

Though we were once enemies, we now have become unified—reconciled through the blood of Christ. The hostility between God and His creation is abolished for those who benefit from the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:6-11 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The scope of this reconciliation reaches cosmological proportions. Through Christ, God will reconcile **all things** to Himself.

Colossians 1:19-23 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 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 irreproachable in His sight. If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

The living creatures and elders surrounding the throne of heaven celebrate reconciliation following the atonement. This great song becomes the chorus of every Christian.

Revelation 5:11-13 Then I looked, and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

In Revelation 19:9 the imagery of the sacrificial lamb is joined with the imagery of the final wedding feast. This great celebration of salvation symbolizes that atonement will be fully accomplished when the redeemed in Christ enter their final providence of eternal life in the new heaven and new earth.

It is important to notice that no scripture speaks of Christ as reconciling God to human beings. Always the emphasis is on human beings being reconciled because it is the sins of the people that have caused enmity.

God's love toward us never varies. The whole atoning work of Christ stems from God's great love. It was 'while we were yet sinners' that Christ died for us.

5. Redemption. The redemptive deliverance of Christ's work and death that is necessary for atonement. More simply put, redemption is necessary for atonement.

Paul sees in Christ's sacrifice the way of deliverance. People naturally are enslaved to sin, but in Christ people are free. Similarly through Christ, human beings are delivered from the flesh. They have crucified the flesh, they do not war according to the flesh.

Human beings are under the wrath of God on account of their unrighteousness, but Christ delivers from this as well. The faithful are justified by His blood, and therefore, will be saved by Him from the wrath of God. When God reveals sin using His Law, we are delivered from sin as part of His redemptive work.

Romans 7:7-12 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

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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. 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.

The law and all of scripture may be thought of in many ways. But when people consider it as a way of salvation it is unpleasant and uncomfortable to sinners because it shows people their sin, and that entering into an unholy alliance with sin slays them.

The longing for evil things becomes apparent when the commandment declares: this evil thing is forbidden. Then the sinner wants it. Without law, sin is death, that is unknown or undefined. They feel happy. 'Ignorance is bliss'—you have heard that comment made by human beings. In their blindness, that has a sense of truth, but not in reality. In reality this becomes punishment. Paul does not say that sin is not committed without law. He is saying that without law sin is not apparent to people.

To the worldly, death is a harsh enemy against which no one can prevail. But Paul wrote down a song of triumph in Christ who gives victory even over death.

I Corinthians 15:55-57 "O Death, where is your sting?" O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is very clear that Paul sees in Christ a mighty Deliverer.

Redemption means deliverance from some evil, by payment of a price. It is more than simple deliverance. In this way prisoners of war might be released on payment of a price called a ransom. Christ's death was a ransom for many.

The characteristic thing about the form of release is the payment of the ransom price. Redemption is the name given to the process. Common to all ransoms is the idea of freedom secured by payment of a price. The payment of a price for deliverance is the basic and characteristic thing.

Jesus taught that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. In line with this, Paul thought of himself as carnal, sold under sin, sold as under a cruel slave-master. He reminded the Roman church of God, that in earlier days they had been slaves of sin.

Sinners are under sentence of death on account of their sin. For the wages of sin is death. Sinners are slaves and are doomed to death. So humanity unknowingly cries out for redemption. Without redemption, the slavery continues, and eventually the sentence of death is carried out. The sacrifice of Christ is the price paid to release the slaves, to let the condemned go free.

Wherever redemption is used in Scripture there is the thought of effort. God redeems with a stretched out arm. He makes known his strength. Because He loves his people He redeems us at cost to himself. His effort is regarded as a price.

Redemption means deliverance on payment of a price, and that price is the atoning death of the Savior. When we read of 'redemption through His blood', the blood of Christ is being regarded as the price of redemption. Besides repentance and obedience, our responsibility is to have faith in the individual paying the price.

Romans 3:21-26 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 which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God set forth to be 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.

Here Paul is using three metaphors, those of the court of law, of the sacrifices, and of liberation. In liberation, Paul pictures a process of freeing, but by the payment of a price, and that price is the blood of Christ.

Redemption not only looks back on the sacrifice of Christ, but also looks forward to the freedom in which the redeemed stand.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

We are redeemed at such a high cost we must be owned by God. We must show in our lives that we are no longer caught up in bondage from which we have been released.

We are exhorted to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and not getting entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Let us take a look at the perfection of Christ.

The atoning sacrifice of Christ appears in the legislation of the Day of Atonement described in Hebrews 9.

The epistle to the Hebrews interprets the observing of the Day of Atonement as a type of the atoning work of Christ, emphasizing the perfection of Christ

Hebrews 9:6-15 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 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? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

As the High Priest of the Old Covenant entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of his sacrificial victim, so Jesus entered the throne room of God the Father, the holiest of all, to appear before the Father on behalf of His people.

The high priest had to offer sin offerings each year for his own sins and the sins of the people. This was an annual reminder that perfect atonement had not yet been provided. Jesus, however, through His own blood achieved eternal redemption for His people.

The epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the Levitical offerings could achieve only the purification of the flesh. They ceremonially cleansed the sinner, but they could not bring about inward cleansing, the prerequisite for fellowship with God. The offerings served as a type and a prophecy of Jesus, who, through His better sacrifice, cleanses the conscience from dead works.

The Old Testament tabernacle was designed, in part, to teach Israel that sin hindered access to the presence of God. Only the high priest, and he only once a year, could enter the Holy of Holies, and then 'not without taking blood' offered to atone for sins.

Jesus, however, through a new living way, has entered the throne of God, the true Holy of Holies, where He lives to make intercession for His people. The elect of God no longer have to stand afar off, as did the ancient Israelites, but may now through Christ approach the very throne of grace.

In Hebrews 13:11-12 we are reminded that the flesh of the sin offering of the Day of Atonement was burnt outside the camp of Israel. Jesus also suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem that He might redeem His people from sin.

Hebrews 13:11-16 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

We must be a living sacrifice in offering up praise and thanks to God. These are pleasing sacrifices to Him, and very appropriate for the Day of Atonement. We have already begun to do this, we are praising Him with song and we are praising Him with worship in a humble attitude. The great truth of the book written to the Hebrews is Christ as our great High Priest, and the uniqueness and the finality of the offering made by Christ.

Unlike the way that was established on the altars of the Israelites, and ministered by priests of the Aaronic line, the way that was established by Christ, in His death, is of permanent validity. It will never be altered. Christ has dealt completely with the penalty of sin.

We have seen that the atonement has many positive aspects. We have briefly looked at five aspects: love, justification, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption. There are others, such as sanctification, that I did not talk about in regard to Atonement, but these are some of the main aspects.

Here, in a summary, is the significance of each of these five positive aspects:

1. Love is not only one of God's attributes; it is also an essential part of His nature. "God is love," the apostle John declared—the personification of perfect love. Such love surpasses our powers of understanding. Love like this is everlasting, free, sacrificial, and enduring to the end. The love that Jesus Christ has for us manifested in His sacrificial death was essential in preparing the way for the Atonement.

2. Justification is the declaration that God has made a judgment. God made a legal act to impute the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us, once we have accepted His sacrifice, for the remission of our sins. It puts us in alignment with God and His law. Justification is the event whereby we are set or declared to be in right relation to God. It puts us at one with God. Justification involves God's faithfulness to the covenant, a faithfulness confirmed through Christ's death and resurrection. Atonement is possible after the justification of human beings through faith.

3. Propitiation is the divine side of the work of Christ on the cross. Christ's atoning death for the world's sin altered the whole position of humanity in its relationship to God. He recognizes what Christ accomplished in behalf of the world whether people enter into the blessings of it or not. The cross has rendered God propitious toward the unsaved as well as toward the erring saint. The fact that Christ has borne all sin renders God propitious.

4. Reconciliation is the restoring to favor of those having fallen under displeasure. It contains the idea of an atonement or covering for sin, and involves changing thoroughly from one position to another. Reconciliation, therefore, means that someone or something is completely altered and adjusted to a required standard.

God and humans are alienated from one another because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Through the sacrifice of Christ, humanity's sin is atoned and God's wrath is appeased by Christ's sacrifice. A relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship. God Himself has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

5. Redemption is deliverance by payment of a price. It refers to salvation from sin,

death, and the wrath of God by Christ's sacrifice. We have redemption in Jesus Christ. We have redemption through His blood (an atoning sacrifice), the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. We are exhorted to remember the price of our redemption as a motivation to personal holiness.

Redemption will continually occur until all are made spirit beings in the Kingdom of God — we as the first fruits and the rest of the world later. Atonement makes this possible for the rest of the world who have been under the influence of Satan.

Sometimes we struggle with the inadequacy of language to understand what God inspired the New Testament writers to write and preach as they sought to present us with what this great divine act of redemption means.

The imagery surrounding the Bible's teaching on atonement basically points to a process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity. Atonement is the work of Christ in dealing with the problem posed by the sins of humanity, and in bringing sinners into a right relationship with God.

Jesus Christ is going to return to earth to complete the atonement He began with us as the first fruits of His Kingdom. But, Satan must be cast into outer darkness and restrained from influencing anyone. Satan promotes sin, and sin separates us from God. As long as Satan is around to influence humanity, or even those of us who have God's Holy Spirit, then there is that separation because Satan has to be put away. In our lives we work to overcome Satan while he is still around. We accomplish this with the help of the Holy Spirit, with God's help.

The Day of Atonement is a vivid illustration of the state of mind necessary for salvation. It pictures an attitude of humility, of faith, of Godly sorrow, and of earnestly seeking for the right way. It is also a warning of the state to which God will be forced to reduce Israel by war, captivity, deportation, slavery and persecution. Also, the way the rest of the world will have to be treated and judged.

The commandment to observe the fast of the Day of Atonement is a test commandment, to see if we will obey or rebel. Humbling ourselves, resisting Satan, and submitting to God are symbolic of how we will be able to replace Satan as world ruler. Not that we individually replace Satan as world ruler, that is Jesus Christ, but we along with Jesus Christ will rule the world.

Isaiah 58:6 Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and

that you break every yoke?

At Satan's chaining by an angel of God, the minds of human beings, formerly kept spiritually closed by Satan, will be spiritually opened by the Spirit of God.

For the first time, humanity will be able to understand God's master plan of salvation. People will then want to repent and receive forgiveness, through Christ's sacrifice, of their sins. Only then will human beings become completely "set at one" with Jesus Christ and God the Father, completely unified, as pictured by the Day of Atonement.

The glorious spirit bodies we shall have after the resurrection—the instantaneous change of the just—will have no need of food to sustain life. Our bodies today gain their meager amount of chemical energy from this physical environment. Without constant replenishment, we run down quickly. But it is not this way with spirit. Spirit contains life inherent within itself, not dependent upon any outside source other than the Spirit of God.

When we fast on the Day of Atonement it pictures the time and condition when we will no longer need to partake of physical food for our sustenance. We will no longer be physical and temporary. It pictures the time when we will have the power to go where we will, whenever and wherever necessary according to God's will to administer the government of God, while we teach others how to inherit the same magnificent spirit bodies that we will have.

Yes, by afflicting our bodies we are humbled, and our minds are dull from lack of nourishment, but we should not be sorrowful on the Day of Atonement as the world sorrows, having no hope. Though we sorrow because of the effects of sin, we are thankful because of the accomplishment of Jesus Christ and God the Father in our lives. Though subdued physically, in spirit we are thrilled with the promise of eternal, vibrant life!

I see, in the Day of Atonement, a very encouraging and positive day that we can all be so thankful for. It helps us to rise above the physical feeling that we have of a lack of energy and hunger, to worship, reverence and obey God in humility.