

GOD CONDONES NOTHING

Introduction

Charles Spurgeon from sermon “The Blood of Sprinkling” (Part 1):

“If ever there should come a wretched day when all our pulpits shall be full of modern thought, and the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice shall be exploded, then will there remain no word of comfort for the guilty or hope for the despairing. Hushed will be for ever those silver notes which now console the living, and cheer the dying; a dumb spirit will possess this sullen world, and no voice of joy will break the blank silence of despair. The gospel speaks through the propitiation for sin, and if that be denied, it speaketh no more. Those who preach not the atonement exhibit a dumb and dummy gospel; a mouth it hath, but speaketh not; they that make it are like unto their idol...”

“Would you have me silence the doctrine of the blood of sprinkling? Would any one of you attempt so horrible a deed? Shall we be censured if we continually proclaim the heaven-sent message of the blood of Jesus? Shall we speak with bated breath because some affected person shudders at the sound of the word ‘blood’? or some ‘cultured’ individual rebels at the old-fashioned thought of sacrifice? Nay, verily, we will sooner have our tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.”

Our series this Easter is on penal substitutionary atonement. We will explain that theological phrase throughout the series, but understand that this topic has been chosen because *“we will sooner have our tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.”*

Penal Substitutionary Atonement Defined

“Penal substitutionary atonement refers to the doctrine that Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners. God imputed the guilt of our sins to Christ, and he, in our place, bore the punishment that we deserve. This was a full payment for sins, which satisfied both the wrath and the righteousness of God, so that He could forgive sinners without compromising His own holy standard.”

From the excellent book on PSA called *Pierced for Our Transgressions*: “the doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin.”

The Reason and Necessity for Sermon Series

As Spurgeon noted in his day, the doctrine of the penal substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is a target and in danger of being “exploded.” This is the most embattled theory of the atonement. Last Easter we looked at many images or theories of the atonement, but by far and away most of the attacks from within Christianity are against PSA.

J. I Packer: “Throughout my 63 years as an evangelical believer, the penal substitutionary understanding of the cross of Christ has been a flashpoint of controversy and division among Protestants. It was so before my time, in the bitter parting of ways between conservative and liberal evangelicals in the Church of England, It remains so, as liberalism keeps reinventing itself and luring evangelicals away from their heritage. Since one’s belief about the atonement is bound up with one’s belief about the character of God, the terms of the gospel and the Christian’s inner life, the intensity of the debate is understandable. If one view is right, others are more or less wrong, and the definition of Christianity itself comes to be at stake.”

The authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions* comment on Spurgeon’s quotation: “Mercifully, that ‘wretched day’ has not quite arrived – at least not yet. For ‘the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice’ has not been ‘exploded’; it is still preached faithfully and fervently in churches all over the world. However, an increasing number of theologians and church leaders are calling it into question. . . . In short, after rumbling away for a century and a half behind the closed doors of the liberal scholarly academy, criticisms of penal substitution have recently been voiced by several influential evangelical theologians and church leaders, provoking a storm of controversy within the Christian community.”

We are doing an Easter Sermon Series on PSA because it is at the very heart of the gospel, the very foundation of the New Covenant. We will defend it; we will rejoice in it!

*This Sunday we focus
on the Penal aspect of PSA.*

Easter - April 7, 2019

PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

Main Idea: God does not condone sin, but rather punishes it; the substitutionary atonement of Christ is worked out through God's penal judgment of sin.

ROMANS 2:6-8 ESV

⁶ HE WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS: ⁷ TO THOSE WHO BY PATIENCE IN WELL-DOING SEEK FOR GLORY AND HONOR AND IMMORTALITY, HE WILL GIVE ETERNAL LIFE; ⁸ BUT FOR THOSE WHO ARE SELF-SEEKING AND DO NOT OBEY THE TRUTH, BUT OBEY UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, THERE WILL BE WRATH AND FURY.

God Penalizes Our Sin

The first part of understanding the penal nature of Christ's atonement is to understand God's eternal and unremitting posture towards sin.

The title for this sermon comes from a quote from **James Denney, a theologian best known as a defender of the penal nature of Christ's atonement in his own time**: "God condones nothing. His mercy itself is of an absolute integrity. He is a righteous God, even in justifying the ungodly; and the propitiation which he sets forth in Christ Jesus, dying in his sinlessness the death of the sinful, is the key to the mystery."

To say God penalizes our sin means that he subjects sinners to punishment. God IS merciful, but his mercy does not act at the expense of his holy integrity.

God Judges

"He will render to each one according to his works"

To render each his due is to give each what they deserve.

Through divine judgment, God will determine what each person deserves and will deliver their due.

OLD TESTAMENT

- **Proverbs 24:12 ESV** If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?
- **Jeremiah 17:10 ESV** “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”

JESUS

- **Matthew 16:27 ESV** For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.
- **Revelation 22:12 ESV** “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

Divine retribution in Scripture indicates clearly that God approves of and rewards righteousness and disapproves of and punishes unrighteousness. He will perfectly determine what people deserve and he will act accordingly.

God Penalizes

“for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury”

There is divine punishment for sin, called here unrighteousness, and it is described as wrath and fury.

2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10 ESV ⁷ ..., when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

PRESENTLY:

Wrath = death: **John 3:36 ESV** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

There is a penalty in God's economy. The penalty for sinning is incurred by those who sin. The penalty for sin is death and eternal punishment.

⇒ Pre-season ring the game with no penalties... until shoot out.
↳ many think they are getting away with sin, but God judges + punishes and he never misses a call.

We Merit the Penalty

“to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.”

HERE IS THE QUESTION:

Apart from Christ, are we patient well-doers seeking glory or self-seeking unrighteousness obeyers?

Romans 3:23 ESV for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

1 John 1:8 ESV If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

We are all unrighteousness obeyers... and we know it!
↳ clenched fist draws offside

Is there a penalty for sin? Yes!

Are we sinners? Yes!

Then we deserve “wrath and fury,” we deserve to “suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”

Happy Easter to you too!

In this sermon I have accomplished what was intended: to start our Easter series on PSA by demonstrating that God's posture towards sin is penal in nature and therefore the atonement—Christ's work in dealing with sin—~~also had~~ ^{must have} a penal component to it.

The penal component is a result of God's evaluation of humans in which he determines that all have sinned. His response to his own determination of sinfulness is penal: sinners will be punished and the punishment is death and eternal wrath and fury.

I could stop there. Which might leave us all feeling the burden of being sinners. Perhaps you would think "Well happy Easter to you too Pastor Jude." But there is more to the story which we will consider next Sunday as we consider "SUBSTITUTIONARY" and on Maundy Thursday as we consider "ATONEMENT" and on Easter Sunday as we consider PSA in light of the resurrection. But let me give you a glimpse now.

Christ Pays Our Penalty

The penalty for sin is death and eternal punishment. This punishment is meted out to all sinners.

However, **1 Corinthians 15:3 ESV** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,

Christ paid the penalty of death for the sins of those who repent and put their faith in Christ by trusting him.

And, **Romans 3:22b-25a ESV** ²² For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. . . .

For those who believe in the Son, their penalty—eternal wrath and thus death—is paid for by the Son; Jesus as propitiation means the wrath falls on him.

GOSPEL: That is what Easter is all about. The penal substitutionary atonement by Christ for sinners; Why not turn from your sin and turn to God through faith in Christ this morning?

Application: Obtain Clarity

Idolatry is a blurry view...

A Clear View of God (reinforces PSA)

Fundamental to idolatry in biblical terms is the idea of an exchange – swapping the true God for something else.

Jeremiah 2:11 ESV Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

Romans 1:25 ESV because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

That idolatrous exchange has different paths:

- Someone might exchange the true God for an alternative ‘deity’, such as the pagan god Baal who proved so tempting for God’s people in Old Testament times. (Not many explicit Baal-worshippers these days)
- Someone might exchange the true God who genuinely blesses for something else supposed to bring blessing, such as sex or money.
- Someone might make an exchange that amounts to modifying God’s character, subtly changing attributes ^{of God} that are not our preference in order to make a more convenient God in our image.
 - **The authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions*:** “This last kind of idolatry is hardest to spot, because we can indulge in it while retaining Christian vocabulary. We continue to speak enthusiastically of ‘God’, and even about ‘Christ’ and ‘the gospel’, while all along we are operating with an imitation forged by our own sinful imaginations. When we suppress certain truths about God (e.g. his holy wrath against sin) or distort others (e.g. his love) to produce our own designer deity, then we are guilty of false faith, and are left with a ‘counterfeit God’
 - See God clearly. Don’t take an idolatrous approach which takes some attributes of God that are contrary to our sensibilities and remove them from the equation. And from there worship a god that is one of your own making.

- A God that doesn't penalize sin but tolerates it is neither good, nor truthful, nor faithful. A good God would not tolerate sin. A truthful God would not lay out the consequences of sin if they were not real. A faithful God would not commit to penalizing sin and then overlook it.
- Rather, see clearly that God penalizes sin unwaveringly. When you believe what the Bible says about God to be true you will not only see that aspect of Him clearly but also all his other glories more accurately.

A Clear View of Ourselves

- **John Stott:** "Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size."
- The enormity of our sin—evoking the wrath of God, eternal punishment, and the death of Christ—brings a realization of the smallness of ourselves apart from Christ.
- Don't minimize your sin by suggesting God will overlook it. Don't diminish the offence of your transgressions by fabricating a God that doesn't penalize unrighteousness. Those are vain attempts to make yourself bigger and more important than God or His Son.
- Your sin is a big deal. But thankfully, God is a much bigger deal.

A Clear View of Jesus

- We will participate in communion to see Christ more clearly.