

“The Atonement”
Exodus 32:30-35
(Preached at Trinity, May 17, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. For several weeks we’ve been looking at the account of Israel’s fall into idolatry. We’ve been examining the account of the golden calf. Tonight I want to bring to a close this sad chapter in Israel’s history. They had been blessed above every nation upon the face of the earth. They were God’s covenant people. He had come to them. The Law was being given to them. But in this sad story they replaced His holy worship with a golden calf.
2. After Moses destroyed the tablets of the Law and destroyed the golden calf he went to the gate of the city and shouted these defining words,
“Who is on the LORD’S side?”
This is an important question that must ring in our ears:
“Who is on the LORD’S side?”
3. God demands of us absolute allegiance to Him. He will not allow us to serve other masters. We must serve and obey Him no matter what the cost.
4. After Moses spoke these defining words the tribe of Levi rose in allegiance before God. At the command of God they donned their swords and began moving through the camp killing those who were guilty – presumably those who had been the instigators of the uprising, probably the very leaders of Israel.
 - a. There was to be no mercy – they killed brother, friend, and neighbor. They were to become the priests. The priests were to serve as the protectors of God’s holiness. Sin had to be dealt with quickly and decisively.
 - b. About three thousand were killed. Then God destroyed the remaining ones with a plague.
5. After the rebellion had been put down and the instigators killed Moses knew he had to do something about the rest of Israel.
 - a. There was no question as to their guilt. He also knew that God could not simply overlook their sin.
 - b. There was no question as to God’s condemnation. They had fallen into idolatry and were under the judgment of God. He remembered God’s words,
Exodus 32:9-10 – “I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: ¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them. . .”
 - c. Moses in no way tries to soften or excuse their sin – it was no small thing.
Exodus 32:31 – “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin”
6. Moses makes an incredible offer before God.
Exodus 32:31-32 – “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. ³² Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”
 - A. What a love Moses had for his people. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of his people.

- B. The Apostle Paul made a similar statement:
Romans 9:1-3 – “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, ² That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. ³ For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:”
- C. This is the heart of an excellent leader – to be willing to give of himself for the good of his people.
2 Corinthians 12:15 – “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you;”
- D. Jesus said,
John 15:13 – “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”
7. This was a bold and wonderful offer that Moses made – But God rejected it!
 This may seem strange to our ears. Why did God reject Moses’ offer?
- I. It was an un-ordained atonement - God’s salvation is something that originates with Him
- A. Moses had to learn that atonement is an act of grace and mercy – it is by God’s choice and God’s design.
1. Although it was a gracious gesture by Moses, it was all of Moses
Exodus 32:30 – “Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.”
 Moses was under no assurance that God would not destroy Israel
 2. Israel was justly condemned by God
Exodus 32:9-10 – “And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people: ¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them”
 - a. **Verse 14** tells us that God turned from His fury to destroy them.
 - b. This does not mean that His condemnation had been removed. God cannot simply overlook sin.
 3. Moses knew their guilt – it was a just condemnation
Exodus 32:30 – “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin”
 4. All that turned from God deserve His wrath. Reconciliation is completely according to God’s sovereign will. He is just to condemn
 5. After this experience Aaron would surely know that failure to reverence God deserves swift death
Leviticus 10:1-3 – “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. ² And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

- B. We must understand that human beings deserve nothing good from God – His goodness is all of grace
1. We must understand how good and gracious God is
He gives good things to men because He is pleased to do so
 2. Even the garden was an act of grace. Adam did not deserve the garden. It wasn't something he was due. When Adam was created he was not under God's judgment but this doesn't mean he deserved God's goodness. The garden was all of grace.
 - a. Look at the rest of creation
You have swans and vultures. You have porcupines and puppies
What makes one to differ from the other?
 - b. Look at men – what makes one to differ from the other
1 Corinthians 4:7 – “For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*”
- C. In a fallen world we deserve nothing but God's wrath
1. Reconciliation and forgiveness is all of grace
Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
Ephesians 2:8 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:”
 2. If God chose to save none it would be just. If He chose to save only one it would be just. Arminian claims of God's injustice is foolishness.
 3. God rejected Moses plea for mercy upon the guilty in Israel
 4. This would be a perpetual reminder to them of how precious God's Mercy Seat is.

II. It was an inadequate atonement

- A. Moses was asking God if he could be a substitute for Israel
Exodus 32:32 – “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”
1. What does Moses mean by the “book”
 - a. Some believe Moses was referring to the registry of the living. God knows the precise list of all who are alive today. Names are being removed daily. Soon your name will come to the top of the list.
David seems to refer to this book
NAS **Psalm 139:16** – “Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them.”
 - b. Others believe Moses is speaking of the book containing the names of believers.
Philippians 4:3 – “And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.”

- c. Either way, Moses is referring to himself as a substitute. He is referring to giving his life for Israel.
 2. Moses is offering himself as a substitute for Israel
- B. Moses had learned some things as God described the Tabernacle to him – he knew that propitiation demanded the shedding of blood
 1. The Tabernacle would be a bloody place – blood spilt daily. Blood was to be sprinkled everywhere. Death would be ever before them
 2. Death is the only proper consequence of sin
Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:
 3. The consequences of sin is death – life is in the blood. In the Bible to take another man’s life is called the shedding of blood.
Genesis 9:6 – “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”
 4. God’s wrath will only be satisfied when justice has been fully accomplished – when the man has been put to death.
 Hell is the eternal satisfaction of God’s justice.
 5. There can be no reconciliation unless God’s wrath has been turned away
 - a. God had turned from His immediate desire to destroy them, but His wrath had not been turned away.
 - b. Atonement can only take place through the shedding of Blood
Hebrews 9:22 – “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”
 - c. Propitiation is the satisfaction or appeasement of God's anger and wrath by the covering over of our sins through a substitutionary sacrifice
- C. Although Moses was sincere he could have never have been the ultimate mediator for Israel
 1. Moses could not offer up his own life as a substitute because he himself was a sinner.
 2. He might have been innocent of the golden calf incident but he wasn’t without sin
 - a. Moses had been blessed above all others
Exodus 33:11 – “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.”
 - b. Moses was a good man, but not a perfect man.
 Moses suffered long to control his passions – his anger
 Remember why he spent 40 years in Midian.
 - c. Besides this, Moses was a son of Adam
Romans 5:12 – “ Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”
 3. Israel would later offer the blood of animals but they too were not sufficient. Though animals are sinless they are not men
 4. Only a perfect sinless substitute would suffice

II. The perfect atonement of Christ

- A. Where Moses offer of atonement was un-ordained, Jesus *was* God's eternal plan of redemption
Acts 2:23-24 – "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."
1. Jesus was sent to redeem His people
Matthew 1:21 – "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."
John 6:38-39 – "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."
 2. Jesus was the sent one, the anointed one, the Christ. He was ordained from eternity as God's Redeemer – God's chosen Son, God's beloved Son
 3. This was God's plan and He is carrying it out perfectly
- B. The whole Old Testament speaks of Christ
1. It is the story of God's eternal redemptive purpose for His people
 2. It is God's plan and He will accomplish it to the fullest.
Ephesians 1:4-5 – "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"
- C. Where Moses was an unacceptable sacrifice Jesus was perfect in every way
1. His life was perfect
 2. His blood was the one, only, perfect propitiation. He alone was able to accomplish the redemption of His people.
Hebrews 1:3 – "Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"

Conclusion:

1. Where Moses was willing but unable, Christ came both willing and able. He was the ultimate expression of love for God's people.
1 John 4:10 – "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins."
2. Have you experienced this love? Have you experienced this forgiveness?
 All of us are under God's wrath. He could consume us at any moment but He has shown forth His forbearance, longsuffering, and mercy. But His wrath is not turned away. This can only come through Christ.
Psalm 7:11-12 – "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day. ¹² If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready."
3. Oh, but when God's wrath has been turned away we know nothing but His love and goodness.