

Atonement - Satisfaction Theory

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What's wrong and how do we fix it?

The satisfaction theory aims to answer that question in the big picture and, in doing so, to help us find ultimate meaning and purpose in this life.

God created humanity immortal and with free will to be an important part of his created order.

The problem is sin, but what is sin?

For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

—Romans 8.19-22

So, the creation is “frustrated” because humanity disobeyed God, rejected His will.

And that is sin which creates a debt of honor which must be satisfied.

“Sin is not to give what we owe to God, i.e., ‘not to render his due to God’. That is to say, it is the deliberate

refusal to affirm one's place as a creature in God's design and to offer free and undivided obedience to God's will... Thus we are drawn to the conclusion that sin has robbed God, and thereby incurred a debt to the justice and honor of God."

—Anselm

Christ restores God's authority over creation; redeems the universe and reconciles people to God through the cross and resurrection.

"By being God and human, Jesus Christ resolves the predicament. He is the divine Son, who stands in relation to the Father and Spirit, as well as the human Jesus, the Second Adam. He is born of the virgin, assumes full humanity, and actualizes the true obedience and holiness that Adam lost. As the divine/human one, he freely accepts the life of obedience according to the will of God, offering his life to God the Father."

—Peter Schmiechen

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, my God.'"

First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" - though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

—Hebrews 10.5-10

Because of Christ's honorable obedience to God humans can be forgiven and can fulfill God's will, their honorable role.

"This brings the argument to the final stage: The Father bestows a reward upon the Son, which authorizes the Son to remit the sins of humanity."

—Anselm