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The Pauline Model of Atonement in Romans 3:19-31

by

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1.1 Abstract

The Pauline model of Romans 3:19-31 is a description of substitutionary atonement. Sin, guilt, righteousness, faith in Christ, justification, redemption, propitiation, Christ a covering, atonement in his blood, substitute, justice, justifier, and the principle of faith are descriptive of this view of the atonement.

A barrage of literature has arisen against penal substitution. Penal substitution has been confused with substitutionary atonement. Penal substitution has also been referred to as penal substitutionary atonement which isn't substitutionary atonement. Substitutionary atonement has been clouded by such atonement theories as Christus Victor. Aulen's view of reconciliation doesn't adequately describe the New Testament atonement. Substitutionary atonement has been clouded by such atonement teaching on both reconciliation and salvation. Secondly, by others who have objected to the violent nature of the atonement. Steve Chalke and Alan Mann are representative of this view. Thirdly, historical research on the atonement has been neglected. The Church Fathers held the view of substitutionary atonement. Fourthly, assaults have been made on penal substitution at the same time failing to comprehend the difference between penal substitution and substitutionary atonement. Critics of the nature of the atonement may lack the exegetical and historical skills to do justice to atonement theory.

1:2 Key Words

atonement, righteousness, justification, redemption, propitiation

1:1 The Pauline Model of Atonement in – Romans 3:19-31

1:1:1 The Translation of the Text

1:1:1 ‘Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those under the Law in order that every mouth may be shut and all the world may be accountable to God’ (3:19).

1.1.2 ‘because by works of law all flesh will not be justified before him for through law knowledge of sin’ (3:20).

1.1.3 ‘now without law righteousness of God has been manifested being testified by the Law and the Prophets’ (3:21).

1.1.4 ‘now righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all those believing (3:22)’.

1.1.4.1 ‘for there isn’t any distinction’ (3:22).

1.1.4.2 ‘for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (3:23).

1.1.5 ‘being justified freely by his grace through redemption (apolutroseos) which is in Christ Jesus’ (3:24).

1.1.5.1 ‘whom God has displayed (proetheto) a propitiation through faith in his blood’ (3:25).

1.1.5.1.1 ‘for proof of his righteousness’ (3:25)

1.1.5.1.1.1 ‘because of the passing over of previously committed sins’ (3:25).

1.1.5.1.1.1.1 ‘in the forbearance of God’ (3:26).

1.1.5.1.2 ‘for proof of his righteousness at the present time (kairo) for him to be righteous and the justifier the one by faith in Jesus’ (3:26).

1.1.6 ‘Therefore, where is boasting? It has been excluded. Through what kind of law? of works? No, but through law of faith’ (principle of faith) (3:27).

1.1.6.1 ‘for we reckon (count true) a man to be justified by faith without works (plural) of law’ (3:28).

1.1.6.2 ‘God isn’t the God of the Jews only, is he? Not also Gentiles? Yes, also the Gentiles’ (3:29).

1.1.6.3 ‘Since God is one, who will justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith’ (3:30).

1.1.7 ‘Therefore, law is annulled through faith, isn’t it? May it never be! but law we establish’ (3:31).[1]

1.1.2 The Outline of the Text

1.1.2.1 The Righteousness of God…

1.1.2.1.1 is apart from works (3:21).

1.1.2.1.1.1 Man will not be justified before God by works (law) (3:20).

1.1.2.1.1.1.1 It is through the Law comes knowledge of sin (3:20).

1.1.2.1.1.2 This theme is testified to by both the Law (Mosaic) and the Prophets (3:21).

1.1.2.1.1.3 It is through faith in Jesus Christ (3:22).

1.1.2.1.1.3.1 It is to all those believing (3:22).

1.1.2.1.1.3.1.1 This is because God is impartial (3:22).

(Paul continues this explanation.)

1.1.2.1.1.3.1.2 Secondly, all have sinned (3:23).

1.1.2.1.1.3.1.3 Thirdly, all fall short of the glory

[1] B.F. Westcott, and F.J. Hort, *The Greek New Testament.*(New York: American Bible Society, 1968), 536-538.

of God (3:23).

1.1.2.1.1.3.2 Man is justified freely (3:24).

1.1.2.1.1.3.3 It is by God's grace (3:24).

1.1.2.1.1.3.4 It is through redemption in Christ Jesus (3:24).

1.1.2.1.1.3.4.1 God displayed Jesus Christ a propitiation (3:25).

1.1.2.1.1.3.5 It is appropriated through faith in his blood (3:25).

1.1.2.1.1.3 This is proof of God's righteousness (3:25).

1.1.2.1.1.3.1 God passed over previously committed sins (3:25).

1.1.2.1.1.3.1.1 This was done in the forbearance of God (3:26).

1.1.2.1.1.3 This is proof of God's righteousness at the present time (3:26).

1.1.2.1.1.3.1 God is righteous and the one justifying the one comes by faith in Jesus (3:26).

1.1.2.2 Paul concludes.

1.1.2.2.1 Boasting is excluded (3:27).

1.2.1.1 This isn't because of works but law of faith (principle of faith) (3:27).

1.1.2.2.2 The principle of faith is stated in 3:28.

1.1.2.2.2.1 Man is justified by faith.

1.1.2.2.3 God is both God of Jews (circumcision) and Gentiles (non-circumcision) (3:29).

1.1.2.2.2.2 God justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith

(3:30).

1.1.2.2.4 The Law (Mosaic) isn't annulled because of the principle of faith (3:31).

1.1.2.2.4.1 May it never be – me genoito (3:31).

1.1.2.2.4.2 The law has been established (3:31).

1.1.2.2.4.2.1 The purpose of the law has been clarified (3:31).

1.1.2.2.4.2.1.1 It is through the law that the knowledge of sin comes (3:20).

1.1.3 The Exposition of the Text

1.1.3.1 The Context

Paul concludes in 3:9. This verse is to be understood in the light of 3:1 and 2. The Jew isn't better than the Gentile. He asks: 'What then?' (Rom. 3:9). 'We ourselves aren't advantaged, are we?' Paul adds: 'Not at all (by no means), for we have charged Jews and Gentiles to be under sin' [author's translation]. [2] The preposition 'upo' is to be rendered under the power of sin.[3] This is the divine decree that all men (Jews and Gentiles) are under sin's control. No man is able to contribute anything to their salvation.[4]
Such a decree is necessary if salvation is to be of grace.[5] The apostle has brought an indictment against the Gentile (1:18-32) and the Jew (2:17-29).[6] The Gentiles are guilty before God because they have suppressed the truth that creation witnesses to God's existence (1:18-20). They believed the lie that the creature is God (1:21-23). The Jews are guilty of the

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[2] Westcott, & Hort, *The Greek,*535.
[3] W. Arndt, & F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.*(Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1957), 851, 2B, (b).
[4] L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 3, (Dallas:Dallas Seminary Press, 1971), 231.*
[5] Chafer, *Systematic Theology,* 231.
[6] W. Sanday, & A.C. Headlam, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle To The Romans.*(Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1971),75.

sin of hypocrisy.[7] The Jew taught the Law regarding stealing, adultery, and idols. Yet, they were guilty of doing the very things that they taught others not to do (2:17-23). You is singular in Romans 2:17-27 referring to the Jew. [8] The Jew blasphemed the name of God among the Gentiles by leading a double life (2:24). Romans 2:24 is taken from the LXX (Is. 52:5).[9] The Hebrew text meant that the enemies of Israel reviled God's name. Paul, as an apostle, changed this by including di' umas and enthesin from the LXX.[10]

1.1.3.2 The Text 3:21-31

The righteousness of God manifests itself apart from the law (3:21). This theme is testified to by the Law and the Prophets (3:21). The Pauline idea is that the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ (3:22). This is true for 'all those believing and continuing to believe' (present active participle, accusative plural) (3:22). Paul continues his exposition by giving three reasons for the need of God's righteousness. God is impartial (3:22). All men have sinned (3:23). Men fall short of the glory of God in the present (3:23). 'Dikaioumenoi' begins a new clause referring back to 'pantas tous pisteouontas'.[11]. God the Father declares a man justified through faith in Jesus Christ. through faith in Jesus Christ. 'Dikaiow' is a legal term that is used in a court of law where the defendant is acquitted on the basis of the evidence. [12] The adverb 'dorean' lends support to the manner by which God justifies a man. The sinner is justified freely. It is all because of the grace of God.[13] The words 'by His grace' indicate the free favor of God now on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (3:24).[14]

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[7] J.A. Witmer,*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: an exposition of the scriptures, New Testament Edition,* edited by J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zuck, (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 446-447.
[8] Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledged Commentary,* 447.
[9] Sanday & Headlam, *The International Critical Commentary,* 67.
[10] Sanday & Headlam, *The International Critical Commentary,* 67.
[11] Sanday & Headlam, The International Critical Commentary, 85.
[12] Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 196.
[13] D.J. Moo, *The Epistle To The Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996), 221-228.
[14] A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament,* (Nashville:Broadman, 1931), 347.

It points to the origin of the justification and to the ground of merit not in man but in God and His grace. The preposition 'dia' plus the genitive case points to the means ' the redemption which is in Christ Jesus' [author's translation] (3:24). The word redemption is made up from two greek words 'apo' and 'lutrosis' (release). The word is used of a payment made for the ransom of a slave. It is a payment made to obtain one's freedom.[15] Redemption is at a price the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7). Now the apostle Paul under the divine superintendence (inspiration) of the Holy Spirit pens how Christ became redemption for us. God the Father displayed Christ as a God-satisfier (propitiation) of his holy and just demands on the cross (3:25).[16] This can refer to the divine purpose in the decree of God. The verb prostithemi is an aorist middle, 3rd person singular. It can be translated publicly displayed.[17] This is the historical fact of the crucifixion. Paul paints the picture of Jesus Christ and him crucified. It was this very act which satisfied God's judgment on sin. The apostle adds: 'through faith in his blood' (3:25). 'In his blood' goes with 'hilasterion' rather than through faith.[18] The blood shed and sprinkled is a primary idea not a secondary one.[19] Witmer informs that 'hilasterion' is used in Hebrews 9:5 for the place of atonement.[20] The appropriation of this once and for allsacrifice of Christ is through faith. I. Howard Marshall talks of the sweep of the atonement based on both the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew word to make atonement is 'kapar'.[21] Three nouns are derived from this verb. The first noun 'koper' translates ransom. Harris argues from the meaning of 'koper' that the meaning of 'kapar'can be understood to mean atonement by a substitute. The second noun 'kippur' means atonement. It is used of the day of

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[15] Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 95.
[16] Sanday & Headlam, *International Critical Commentary*, 87.
[17] Sanday & Headlam, *International Critical Commentary,* 87.
[18] J.A. Witmer, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Edited by Walvoord & Zuck, 451.*
[19] Sanday & Headlam, *International Critical Commentary,* 89.
[20] J.A. Witmer, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary,* 451.
[21] R. L. Harris & G.L. Archer, *Theological wordbook of the Old Testament.* (Chicago:Moody, 1980), 452-453.

atonement. The third noun 'kapporet' is used for the place of atonement. This last noun is used 27 times referring to the covering of the ark which was in the holy of holies. God spoke to Moses from above this covering in Numbers 7:89. In Romans 3:25, God displayed Christ a 'hilasterion'. In the LXX, 'hilasterion' is used as the place of propitiation. This word is applied to Christ in Romans 3:25. Christ was the covering by which atonement was made for sin. The historical fact of the crucifixion of Christ is proof of the righteousness of God. Righteousness used in the context of Romans 3 is to be understood judicially of a right standing before God of God's judicial righteousness.[22] The theme of Romans is 1:17 in which the righteousness of God 'reveals itself'. The right standing that God gives is on the basis of man's response of faith in the gospel.[23] God the Father had passed over previously committed sins in forbearance (3:25-26). 'Anoche' means a holding back, delayed, or paused.[24] The context argues for the judgment of God as evidence in the display of his son making him a 'hilasterion'. The forbearance of God must be seen in this light.[25] Paul adds that this was the proof of God's righteousness at the present time (3:26). The phrase 'eis to einai auton' is better understood to signify results rather than purpose (3:26). The result being that God the Father might be both just and the one justifying (declaring innocent) those who place their faith in Jesus (3:26). The actual result is that God is righteous. It is God who justifies! Faith in the New Testament that saves always has the same object, Jesus Christ.

'Kauchesis' translated boasting is both the act, the reason, and the object.[26] Boasting is shut out.[27] It is man who does the glorying. This is based on Paul's words on the righteousness of God in Romans 3:21-26. This is indicated by the word 'oun' for

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[22] Witmer, *Bible Knowledge Commentary,* 451.
[23] Witmer, 451.
[24] Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon,* 72.
[25] Witmer, 451.
[26] Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon,* 427.
[27] Robertson, *Word Pictures,* 348.

a partial conclusion. The principle of justification by works is excluded. The law of faith is to be understood as the principle of faith. The principle of works has been excluded by the faith principle. Paul explains by the 'gar' clause in 3:28: 'for we reckon to justify by faith a man without works of law'.[28] The apostle raises two questions in 3:29: God isn't the God of the Jews only, is He? The answer is no. God is also the God of the Gentiles, isn't He? The answer is yes. Paul adds: 'Yes also Gentiles'. The subordinate conditional intensvie conjunction 'eiper' in 3:30 carries with it 'if indeed this is true'.[29] It is true that God is one God. He justifies both the circumcision and the uncircumcision by faith. The Law hasn't been annulled or done away with because of the principle of faith but it has been established (3:31). Paul's earlier reason 'for (gar) through law knowledge of sins'[author's translation].[30]

In summary, the righteousness of God (a right standing before God) is appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe (3:22). This righteousness isn't appropriated by the law (3:21). Paul's idea is in line with the theme of the both the Law and the Prophets (3:21). In diatribe style, the apostle gives three reasons for the need of the righteousness of God (3:22-23). The problem of original sin becomes a necessary factor to understand the need for atonement. A man is justified (acquitted) on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (3:24). Two values of the death of Christ are brought out in this passage as to its meaning. These are redemption and propitiation. Redemption is a price paid for our liberty. Payment has been made for our ransom from the power of sin (3:9,24). The historical fact of the crucifixion is brought out in 3:25. God the Father appointed Christ. This is a legitimate nuance based on the verb 'proetheto' in 3:25. It means as well to publicly display Christ. Christ became a 'hilasterion'. The text adds: 'en to autou aimati' (3:25). This

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[28] Westcott & Hort, *The Greek New Testament,* 537-538.
[29] H.W. Hoehner, *Greek Exegesis Class* Dept. New Testament Exegesis. (Dallas:Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975).
[30] Westcott & Hort, *The Greek New Testament, 536.*

word ‘hilasterion’ is used in Hebrews 9:5 for the place of atonement. The Hebrew verb ‘kapar’is used for the atonement by a substitute. These words center around the nuances of atonement, day of atonement, and place of atonement. ‘Hilasterion’ in the LXX is used of the place of propitiation. It is applied to Christ by Paul in Romans 3:25. The divine purpose, the historical fact of the crucifixion, and the covering for atonement are all intended nuances. This is proof of the righteousness judgment of God on sin. The justice of God is the focus of Romans 3:25 and 3:26. Boasting is excluded by the principle of faith. A man isn’t justified by works the principle of law but by the principle of faith. Both the Jew and the Gentile are justified by faith. The law isn’t done away with because of the principle of faith. Rather, it is established for it is through the law that the knowledge of sin comes. Righteousness, sin, justification, redemption, propitiation, Christ’s blood sacrifice, God’s righteousness, and justice argue that the atonement is to be understood as substitutionary atonement. Those who argue for a non violent atonement haven’t done justice to an exegesis of Romans 3:21-31.

1.1.4 Soteriology

The Pauline model of the Atonement in Romans 3:19-31 is a description of substitutionary atonement. Sin, guilt, righteousness, faith in Christ, justification, redemption, propitiation, Christ a covering, atonement in his blood, substitute, justice, justifier, and the principle of faith are descriptive of this vieww of the atonement.

A discussion and debate in recent years has emerged over the atonement. Franklin finds these accusations against penal substitution.[31] It is argued that the doctrine is outdated, irrelevant, morally reproachable, and anthropomorphic in its view of theology proper. Buhram concurs that the idea of violence in the nature of

[31] P Franklin, “Penal Substitution in Perspective: Re-Evaluating The Articulation and Application of the Doctrine”, *MJTM,* no. 10 (1) (2008-2009), 22-52.

substitution itself is rejected by feminist and womanist theologies. The reason being that this validates patriarchical use and the abuse of violence.[32] Ensor argues that penal substitutionary atonement was the view held by Justin Martyr in his two *Apologies* and his *Dialogue with Trypho*. Justin Martyr dates from the second century A.D (ibid:218-232. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he saw Christ's cross as the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture. The whole race is under a curse. Everyone who hangs on the tree is accursed (Deut. 21:23, Gal. 3:13). The Father's will was for Christ to take the curse upon himself (Gal. 3:13). Christ became a curse for us. This is to be understood as penal substitution This is the Father's purpose according to Isaiah 53:5.[33] Pannenberg views the atonement as both vicarious and penal substitution.[34] Aulen's *Christus Victor* falls short of a proper understanding of reconciliation. His view of the atonement was based on the theory of both Anselm and Albert Ritschl. God had reconciled the world to himself and himself to the world.[35] The short fall in Aulen's argument is that reconciliation in the New Testament must be made personal. This is clearly stated in such New Testament passages as 2 Corinthians 5:20, and Colossians 1:22. Those who had received pesonal reconciliation had placed faith in Christ (Eph. 1:13, Col. 1:4).

A considerable amount of literature that argues for a non violent atonement has appeared in the 21st century. Steve Chalke and Alan Mann's *The Lost Message of Jesus* is typical of this approach. Another major work that came about in 2008 is Tidball and Hilborn's *Atonement Debate: Papers in the London Symposium on The Theology of Atonement.* Ovey, and Sach refuted Chalke and Mann's views as incorrect on God, man, and the cross.[36]

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[32] W D Buhram, "The Narrative Testimony of Kierkegaard and Rowling: Fidelity As The Basic Criterion in Substitutionary Atonement", Renascence, no. 64 (4) (2011), 273-276.
[33] P Ensor, "Justin Marytr and Penal Substitutionary Atonement", *EQ*, no. 83 (3) (2011), 217-232.
[34] H Neie, & W Pannenberg, *The doctrine of the atonement in the theology of Wolfhart Pennenberg.*(New York:de Gruyter, 1978), 130.
[35] H Schwarz, *Theology in a global context: The last two hundred years.*(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 255.

However, a distinction must be made between penal substitution and substitionary atonement. Penal substitution means that it was Christ's choice to voluntarily lay down his life. He was punished for sinners. This act met the demands of God' justice so that God can forgive sins. This argument is similar to Christus Victor's argument of all are forgiven because Christ's death reconciled the world to God and God to the world. Substitutionary atonement is a stark contrast to penal substitution. In the former, Christ died as a substitute for others in their place. Christ must be received as the sinner's substitute. Flood draws this distinction based on the church fathers.[37] The church fathers held the view of substitutionary atonement not penal substitution as Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach argued in *Pierced for Our Transgressions*. Substitutionary atonement must be viewed within the context of the justice of God.

It should be noted that the importance of the Church Fathers came about as the Roman Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation. An emphasis was placed on the Church Fathers to deal with the Protestant doctrine of the Bible the Word of God. Green and Baker in their *Recovering The Scandal of the Cross* make an assault on penal substitution.[38]

Philosophical objections are raised in the non violent arguments of the atonement.

It is argued that the violent nature of the atonement obscures God's love. This is the age old liberal argument that God is a God of wrath in the Old Testament and a God of love in the New Testament. Larry Shelton and Steve Holmes argue from the standpoint of ethics that the violent nature of the atonement puts penal substitution in a category of the morally doubtful. They argue that this late development can be traced to Anselm. Hood makes an excellent point that the perspective of the entire Bible on the cross is lost.[39]

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[36] S Jeffery, M Ovey, & A Sach, *Pierced for our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution.* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007).

[37] A Flood, Substitutionary Atonement and the Church Fathers: A Reply to the Authors of Pierced for our Transgressions, *EQ* 82 (2) (2010), 142-149.

[38] J B Hood, The Cross in the New Testament: Two Theses in Conversation with Recent Literature, *WTJ* 71, (2) (2009), 281-295.

[39] J B Hood, The Cross in the New Testament, 284-286.

Further, Hood attributes Chalke's view which generated a great deal of debate in the United Kingdom for changing the direction of the atonement debate from the need for a comprehensive treatment of penal substitution. It must be remembered that penal substitution and substitutionary atonement are entirely different views. Hood may be right though that writers on the theme of the atonement may lack the necessary exegetical and historical skills to do justice to the subject. The German atonement debates have added little if anything to the needed clarification. They have ended largely in a debate over universalism on the subject of salvation.[40] The recent trend in modern Pauline studies and scholarship hasn't helped the atonemement debate. Witherington notes that the direction of recent studies is in the comparison of Paul the Christian scholar to that of Paul in his former life as a Pharisee, liberation studies, the feminist perspective, the rhetorical address, and the resurgence of an examnation of the internal evidence.[41]

In evaluation, the atonement is approached from two perspectives. These are the philosophical and the exegetical. An exegetical view such as presented in our exposition of Romans 3:21-31 supports substitutionary atonement within the context of the justice of God the Father. The birrage of literature on the necessity of a non violent atonement is philosophically oriented. They are to be faulted on the basis of both exegesis and historical skills. Penal substitution and substitutionary atonement are two very different views. Substitutionary atonement was necessary because of man's sin and the justice of God. It is only through substitutionary atonement that God could be both just and the justifier of the one who comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

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[40] J M Austin, D Holmes, W G Bishop, *A Debate on th Doctrine of Atonement,Universal Salvation, and Endless Punishement*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

[41] J D G Dunn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 256-269.