

# Perhaps I Can Make Atonement

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Date: 16 October 2022

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please open your Bibles to Exodus chapter 32. It was just three months after walking through the Red Sea on dry land and watching the Egyptians chasing after them, swallowed up by the waters, that the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, where God drew near in an awesome display of His glory.

We're told that the mountain was covered with fire and smoke, thunder and lightning flashing, the sound of trumpets announcing that God was drawing near.

And the voice of God then speaking words such that those who heard it begged that no further words should be spoken to them. It was so terrifying to everyone, Moses included, that he too was trembling with fear.

It was the Ten Commandments that they heard that day coming from the very mouth of God. You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[ 1 : 28 ] Well, the people upon hearing the Ten Commandments were so terrified that they begged Moses, speak to us yourself and we will listen, but do not have God speak to us or we will die.

God called Moses then and his aide Joshua up the mountain to receive further instructions and laws for Israel.

You remember it was 40 days and 40 nights that Moses and Joshua stayed on the mountain that looked like a consuming fire. Meanwhile, back down at the camp of Israel, we read in Exodus 32 verse 1, when the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, come, make us gods who will go before us.

As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him. Aaron answered them, take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing and bring them to me.

So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool.

[ 2 : 51 ] Then they said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.

So the next day, the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward, they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Then the Lord said to Moses, go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They've been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf.

They bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. I have seen these people, the Lord said to Moses, and they are a stiff-necked people.

Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.

[ 4 : 06 ] Again, this was just a couple weeks after hearing God's voice, give the second commandment forbidding the making of idols. So Moses, as the mediator of the old covenant, the one to stand between God and the people, interceded for the Israelites, pleading the honor of the

Lord as a reason not to destroy them.

What will the nations think of you, O Lord, when they see that though you brought them out of Egypt, you were not able to bring them into the promised land? How you will be slandered then? And so Moses comes down the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the Ten Commandments inscribed by the finger of God. We read in verse 19, when Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

And he took the calf that they had made and burned it in the fire. Then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it. He said to Aaron, what did these people do to you that you led them into such great sin?

Do not be angry, my Lord, Aaron answered. You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, make us gods who will go before us.

[ 5 : 35 ] As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him. So I told them, whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.

Then they gave me the gold and I threw it into the fire and out came this calf. Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughing stock to their enemies.

So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, whoever is for the Lord, come to me. And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says.

Each man strap a sword to his side, go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor. The Levites did as Moses commanded and that day about 3,000 of the people died.

Then Moses said, you have been set apart to the Lord today for you were against your own sons and brothers and he has blessed you this day. The next day, Moses said to the people, you have committed a great sin, but now I will go up to the Lord.

[ 6 : 50 ] Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses went back to the Lord and said, oh, what a great sin these people have committed. They have made themselves gods of gold, but now please forgive their sin.

But if not, then blot me out of the book you have written. The Lord replied to Moses, whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.

Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.

And the Lord struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made. Man's biggest problem is that we have sinned against a holy God and he is determined to punish sin wherever it's found.

Here it was idolatry. We saw this morning that the essence of idolatry is entertaining thoughts about God that are unworthy of him. And so we too have been implicated with sin against this God determined to punish sin.

[ 8 : 07 ] Our sins have incurred guilt. It's a debt that must be paid. It's sin has made us liable to God's wrath and judgment and has effectively separated us from God, from his blessings of salvation and from eternal life.

And our sad plight is that we are unable to do anything to undo our sin, to turn God's wrath away from us. There's nothing we can do to right the wrong to atone for our sins.

And it's in the face of that helplessness and this serious reality that Moses tells the guilty Israelites in verse 30, you have committed a great sin but now I will go up to the Lord perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.

The basic idea behind this word atonement is to bring together two opposing parties. To do something about our sin and God's wrath that will bring us together.

That will bring about atonement. You see that in the word atonement. Atonement. What would do that? Well it's by taking away our sin and turning away God's wrath.

[ 9 : 28 ] Well Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. He's the one that stood between God and man and we see him in this passage more than once going before God to intercede for the people before the Lord.

So now he he says I'll go up to the Lord on your behalf perhaps I can make atonement for your sins.

There was no certainty here that the Lord would forgive their sins. That his wrath would be appeased. That their sins would be taken away and atoned for and make them one with God. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sins. Brothers and sisters what I want us to appreciate tonight is that the Lord Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant.

And as such he comes to us his people with a far more certain word than Moses does here to Israel. There is no perhaps I can make an atonement for your sins.

[10:40] There's nothing iffy at all about it but rather our Lord Jesus comes to us tonight saying I have made a complete atonement for your sins.

my blood has fully atoned for all your sins and has therefore turned God's wrath away from you. And so our faith can feed tonight on the absolute certainty of it that we are at one-ment with a holy God through the finished work of atonement that our Lord Jesus has accomplished for us. Listen to the way the book of Hebrews emphasizes this. It presents Jesus Christ as the mediator and guarantee of a better covenant.

Chapter 7 verse 22 that our Lord Jesus introduces a better hope by which we may draw near to God.

Chapter 7 verse 19 and this ministry that the Lord Jesus has received is founded on better promises. Chapter 8 and verse 6 it's the better promises of the new covenant that are found in chapter 8 and chapter 10 where he promises quoting from Jeremiah 31 to write his law upon our minds and to put it into our heart where he promises that all in the new covenant will know him in a personal relationship and where he promises to forgive our wickedness and to remember our sins no more.

[12:19] These are the better promises of the better covenant the new covenant in Christ's blood. So the perhaps of Moses is replaced by these sure promises of Christ in the new covenant and the new covenant has better sacrifices not the blood of bulls and goats and lambs but the blood of the God man Jesus Christ.

It offers better and lasting possessions. chapter 10 and verse 34 and it promises a better country than the promised land in Israel indeed a heavenly one.

So the Lord Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant with sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood for vengeance pleaded to the skies but the blood of Jesus for our pardon cries.

So the book of Hebrews shows us the certainty of the work of the mediator of the new covenant though Moses could only say to the Israelites perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.

Our Lord offers the absolute assurance that he has made full atonement for our sins. Drink in these statements of certainty found in Hebrews chapter 9 as he referring to this work of the better high priest and the better mediator.

[13:50] Hebrews 9 11 and following when Christ came as high priest of the good tiding of the good things that are already here he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle.

That is not a man made one. That's to say not part of this creation. No he did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they're outwardly clean. How much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God.

For this reason Christ is the mediator of the new covenant that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

He has by his own blood obtained eternal redemption. No perhaps about that. Eternal redemption has been obtained for his people. He has died as a ransom to set us free from sin.

[15:20] Nothing iffy about it. Verse 26, but now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. He has done away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

928, Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people. And so the perhaps of Exodus 32 becomes the assurance and certainty of the new covenant.

1 John 1, 7, the blood of Jesus, God's son, perhaps will cleanse us from all iniquity. No, it does cleanse us from all sin. And if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It's certain Christ has provided purification for our sins. Hebrews 1, 3 says, Christ has died once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.

And that's why there is therefore now no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. Because what we could not do and what the law could not do and that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own son and sending him in the likeness of sinful flesh.

[16:45] And for sin, God condemns sin in the flesh of his own son. And because God condemned him, there's no condemnation for us. These are certainties that Christ has accomplished.

So when the jailer asks Paul and Silas, what must I do to be saved? It was not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and perhaps you'll be saved.

It was believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And that because of the Lord Jesus who has made atonement for the sins of all who call upon him for pardon.

Perhaps is a word of uncertainty and perhaps is the best that so, the best thing that so-called Christian churches often offer in the way of salvation.

We think of the Roman Catholic Church that says perhaps atonement can be made for your sin if you come to confession, if you go through penance, if you do enough good works, if you pray enough Hail Marys and Our Fathers, if you attend Mass enough, if you give enough and take the Eucharist enough, and if and if and if, then perhaps atonement can be made for your sins.

[18:04] It's very much like the uncertainty of those words on Moses' lips. And so they think that the only way to keep people engaged in religion is by fear of not making it.

There's much of that religion today, but it's losing its hold on people, isn't it? There's not much religion left and morality left in those churches because fear alone is not enough to make men holy.

That may be the only way to motivate unregenerate hearts to religion, but new hearts that are assured that Christ has loved them and made an atonement for their sin have a motivation that the unregenerate know nothing of, a motivation of love and gratitude for the one who loved me and gave himself for me, that I will no longer then live for myself, but for him who died for me and was raised again, who took away my sins by suffering the punishment for them, who turned God's wrath away from me by enduring it himself in my place on the cross.

That's the gospel of grace. And sadly, many Protestant churches are little better than the Roman church in offering assurance, the certainty of sins put away once and for all by the atonement of Christ's finished work.

What a difference is the true gospel of grace. There's no perhaps about this. It was for this very reason, for the atonement, that the eternal Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

[19:48] Hebrews 2, 17. For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and in order that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

That's why he came. That's why he became man. For this reason, the Father sent him into the world as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. And so the Son of God became man for us.

That he might become sin for us and that he might become a curse for us and might die for us and make atonement for us. Hebrews 10, 4 and following says, it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said sacrifice an offering you did not desire. Father, you weren't looking for more animal sacrifices such as had gone on for ages, but rather a body you prepared for me.

A body. A real body that could shed blood and die and suffer and die in the place of other men. And so we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

[21:09] That's why he was sent. There was no perhaps to make atonement, but for that very reason, to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness.

Daniel 9, 24. So he does not come into the world on a mission to perhaps make atonement for sin, but with the sure promise that his father made to him in that eternal covenant of redemption made before time to give to Christ the reward for his sufferings.

A bride for himself, a redeemed bride, redeemed with his blood. And it was that certainty of his father's promise that caused our savior to endure the cross, to scorn the shame of the cross. For the joy set before him, the joy of bringing many sons to glory by his sacrifice. Jesus knew he had come not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Indeed, for all that the father had given to him. So think of his cry from the cross.

[ 22 : 26 ] What was it? It is finished. Not the cry of perhaps. I wonder if I've accomplished anything here on this cross. No, it was a triumphant cry of accomplishment after he suffered the wrath that was due us, the separation, the darkness, the abandonment of his father.

It was after that, the darkness passed and the light returned and he cries out in triumph of the accomplishment of the work of his atonement.

Having finished the work his father gave him to do, having paid it all and having actually ransomed many. And what was the empty tomb?

Not a sign that perhaps atonement can be made for your sins, but rather it was a sign of the father's approval of the son's work of atonement. That indeed, the father has accepted this sacrifice for the turning away of his wrath and the pouring out of his salvation benefits upon all who trust in his son. And so now we've come to the Lord's Supper. that Christ instituted there in the upper room with his twelve on the night of his betrayal.

[ 23 : 46 ] An ordinance were to partake of regularly until he comes. And why? Why, child of God, is it to lead you on in the faint hope that just perhaps he might be able to make atonement for you if you live well enough?

No, it's just the opposite. The Lord's Supper is for just the opposite. It is to assure you that he has made full atonement for all of your sins.

Now, the Lord's Supper is the host at this supper. It's called the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11, 20. Just as this is the Lord's day, Revelation 1, 10.

So this is the Lord's Supper. It's his. And so he invites us to it. Yes, even commands us to do this in remembrance of him. And what he brings to us in this supper is himself.

A real feast for our souls. A feast for our faith. The bread and the cup are symbols of nothing less than his real body and his real blood given for us that actually did purchase our eternal redemption.

[ 24 : 59 ] And did accomplish once for all time our atonement with God. For he took the bread saying this is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you. So they were symbols.

But they were symbols of his body and blood by which he made atonement. So the Lord's Supper is a new covenant meal. It's a ceremony of covenant renewal.

Every time we take it we are renewing this covenant. Each time he puts the bread and cup into our hands. Christ is coming and confirming the new covenant promises that he's made to us.

He's committing himself afresh to us. Obliging himself to perform everything promised to us in the new covenant. That I will write my laws on your heart and put them into your mind.

[ 26 : 01 ] I will give you to know me personally. I will forgive your sins and remember them no more. And all for the sake of the merit of my body and blood which was given for you.

You. And so the Lord Jesus is coming to you tonight and saying it's over. My child, the atonement for your sins has been made.

It's a finished work. It's accomplished. There's nothing you can add to it and there's nothing that you can detract from it. Calvary's middle cross was the last altar.

And Jesus Christ, his body and blood was the last sacrifice. Your sins are forever forgiven. Forever remembered.

No more against you, child of God. And there's nothing perhaps about this atonement for your sins. That's the message tonight. That's the message of the Lord's supper. That's what he's bringing to you.

[ 27 : 01 ] It couldn't be more certain. Take and eat and drink. He's saying drink it in for your soul. This is my guarantee to you of an atonement that has been made for your sins.

So Jesus really did pay it all. That hell to pay for sin. There's nothing left for us to pay. There's nothing left of the punishment for us to suffer.

There's no purgatory. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. It's done. There's nothing left in the cup of wrath.

For us to drink. He drained the cup himself. So he took the curses of a broken covenant that were due to us. And he gives to us the blessings of the kept covenant that were due to Christ for his obedience.

Hallelujah for the cross. Now the Lord's supper is an ordinance only for the saved disciples of Jesus Christ.

[ 28 : 09 ] It's for those who are repenting and are trusting only in Christ to save them and who have identified with him in the waters of believers baptism.

If that's not true of you, then let the cup pass until it is true of you and don't put off the gospel. The gospel call to repent and be baptized. But if it is you, then take the assurances of your atonement. That's what we have. The symbols, the assurances that the atonement is complete. Revel in it. Relish it. Rest in it.

And just as God renews his commitments to bless you for Jesus' sake, so renew your confidence to expect all of his blessings only because of what Jesus has done for you.

His body given for you. His blood shed for you. We do praise you, O Lord, for this wonderful Savior. Father, for giving him up for us.

[ 29 : 17 ] Lord Jesus, for coming and dying for us. Holy Spirit, for coming to our hearts and opening our eyes to our need for a Savior and then showing us how Jesus perfectly meets that need.

We love you, Father. We love you, Son. We love you, Holy Spirit. But we confess we never would have loved you for a million years had you not first loved us.

Had you not first come to us in the deadness of our sin and made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. We would have been like Augustine we heard of this morning in the Sunday school hour with a sense that we should love you, that you are the most lovable person in the universe, and yet that we would be powerless to break our love for sin and to love you more than our sin.

So thank you. Thank you for breaking into our lives and supernaturally changing us, giving us a new birth, writing your law upon our hearts, making us right with God, giving us a living relationship with the living and true God.

A God we can talk to. A God who still speaks to us from the scriptures. A God who relates to us. The God who's come to live in us by your spirit.

[ 30 : 36 ] We thank you. We've sung tonight of our love for you. We've sung of death and the difference that the death of Christ will make in the day of our death.

We thank you for the difference that your death, Lord Jesus, has made in this life, setting us free from sin. And yet we want to love you perfectly.

We want to love you with unsinning heart. And we thank you that in that day we'll be forever set free. And that at your return, our bodies will be raised incorruptible.

And we'll spend all eternity loving you and enjoying you forever. Thank you for all of this purchased by the life, the death, the resurrection of our Savior.

We pray in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen.