

A1 - ATONEMENT

The Bad News

Last week we looked at the many good reasons why we should get rid of the sin of pornography from our life. When it comes to sin, the Bible tells us to “throw it off” (Hebrews 12:1), “get rid of it” (Ephesians 4:31) and “put it to death” (Colossians 3:5). The old school theological term for this process is “Mortification” (from the Latin word “mort” meaning “death”)



Unfortunately, last week’s study not only told us why WE should hate our sin, it also reminds us of all the reasons that God hates our sin even more.

Unlike us, God is holy. God is pure. God does not compromise. God does not and will not ignore sin. In fact, God is 100% committed to hating, opposing and condemning sin. This holy opposition to sin is called God’s “wrath”. It is a good thing. It is just and right. But it does leave us with a major problem.

How can we approach God as sinful people? How can we receive his Spirit to change our hearts? How can we fight sin and put it to death if the very one we need to help us is also the one whose wrath is against us?

We are left unable to kill our sin by ourselves and unable to come to God for help. This is a pretty depressing and hopeless situation. So what do we do?

If we feel unable to turn to God for help, what are some ways that we try to deal with our sin?

5 WAYS WE TRY TO DEAL WITH OUR SIN

1. At first we just **I** _____ it.
 - a. “What sin?”
2. If we can’t do that, we **C** _____ it.
 - a. “At least, I’m not as bad as THAT guy.”
3. Or we try to **J** _____ it.
 - a. “C’mon, it’s understandable.”
4. If we can’t do that we despair and **P** _____ ourselves for it.
 - a. “I’ll never be forgiven. I might as well just give up.”
5. Or we try to **M** _____ for it:
 - a. “I promise I’ll never do it again!”



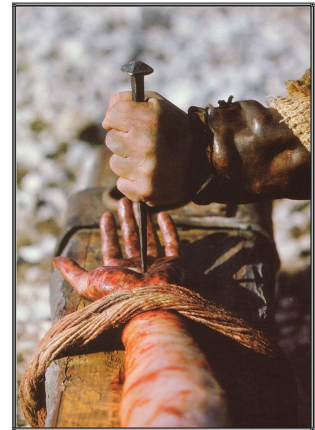
ANSWERS: 1. Ignore 2. Compare 3. Justify 4. Punish 5. Make Up

Which of these 5 responses to sin do you find yourself doing?

The Good News

God's solution to our big problem is the atonement. God comes in Christ, lives the faithful sinless life that we should have lived and dies the death that we deserve. It is his death in our place that solves the problem of our sin. It doesn't sweep our sin under the carpet. On the contrary, it exposes our sin and shows us how much God hates it. On the cross we see the holy wrath of God as it is poured out on Jesus.

The ONLY way we can escape this wrath being poured out on us is if we put our complete trust in the sufficient work of Jesus on the cross.



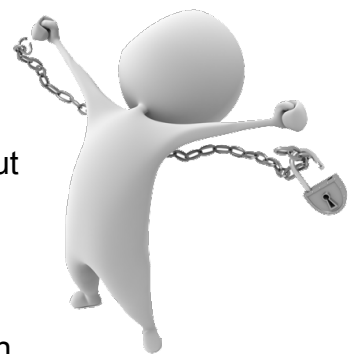
This is the good news. This is the gospel. Sinners like you and I are called to repent from our sin and trust in Jesus as our atonement and our Lord.

For those that hear this gospel and respond to it, God promises forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption into his family, the gift of his Spirit to begin changing us and the hope of a future with God and without sin forever.

On the Day of Judgment, God will pour out his wrath on all sinners. But for those who trust in Christ, there is no judgment left. It has all been taken by the atonement. As Paul writes in Romans 8:1, *“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Think about that... For Christians, there is no condemnation. Ever. If you are in Christ, God is never punishing you, never rejecting you, never angry with you.

The bible's word for this is “Justification”. It is a judicial term. It means that you have been declared to be right and innocent before God. If you have turned to trust in Christ, then the staggering reality is that you have already heard the judge's sentence that will be given to you on the Day of Judgement. Your sin – past, present and future – has been already dealt with by Christ's atonement.

This changes everything! Now there is no need to run from God or feel far from God or be ashamed before God or be worried about how God might punish you as you struggle to put your sin to death. With our sin no longer separating us from God, he gives us his Spirit to change our hearts and empower us to grow in Christ-likeness. Even in the very midst of committing a sin, you should have confidence that you can access God for help, rescue, comfort and the power to fight sin.



Reflect on: *Romans 5:1-11, Hebrews 10:10-25, 1 John 1:5-2:2, Acts 13:38-39*

The atonement, and only the atonement, is the one foundation for your hope that you can find freedom from porn and satisfaction in Christ. That is why this is the first “A” in our series. It is the most important thing that we must get right and be continuously reminded of in this journey.

RESPONDING TO SIN IN LIGHT OF THE ATONEMENT

- Always remember that Christ had to die for that sin and that people will be thrown into hell because of that sin. Don't take the atonement for granted. Your sin may be forgiven, but it is very serious. (Colossians 3:5-6, Ephesians 5:3-7)
- Don't ever use the atonement as an excuse for sin. This is like taking a gift from your parents and then spitting in their face. It mocks God's kindness and doesn't show that you have actually repented from sin. If you say, "Well, God will just forgive me later" I think you are right to question your own salvation. The atonement frees us before God, but it should not make us feel free to sin. (Galatians 5:13, Romans 6:1-14)
- If you are not sure you have truly repented and you are actually a Christian, don't despair! Simply respond to the gospel now. When the crowd in Acts 2 was convicted of sin they asked Peter "What shall we do?" He answered, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:37-39)
- If you have put your trust in Christ, then know that **GOD IS NOT FAR FROM YOU**, even when you sin. The atonement prevents you from ever being separated from God and so if your sinful temptations or sinful actions ever make you feel far from God, know that that is a lie. You are not far from God. You are not alone. Thanks to the atonement, you can always call out to God for help or guidance or protection or forgiveness. (Ephesians 2:12-13, Hebrews 10:19-25)
- Don't let the shame of sin keep you from talking to God, reading God's Word or meeting with God's people. We all know, after a fall, we can beat ourselves up and feel unworthy to engage with God. But this is a false gospel. It exposes the fact that before we fell, we thought we could engage with God because of our good performance, rather than the work of Christ. Whether we succeed or fail in our battle against sin, we must know that we can engage with God only thanks to the atonement. The practical application of this is, as soon as you have fallen, you should immediately pray to God and don't waste any time in self pity or self condemnation. (Romans 8:1-4, 1 John 2:1-2)
- Know that the atonement does not simply wipe out our sins – it also gives us a new identity. It is out of that new identity in Christ that we fight and "mortify" sin. As the analogy goes: "You don't bark to become a dog, you bark because you are a dog." You must know both what Christ has done for you and also who you are in Christ. These are the two pillars on which you can partner with the Holy Spirit to mortify sin. (Ephesians 4:17-23, Colossians 3:1-10)



**Fighter Verse #1**

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

CONTEMPLATION QUESTIONS

- If I really believe that because of the atonement “there is no condemnation”, does that inspire me to kill my sin or does it inspire me to sin more? Why?
- The atonement gives us great freedom before God but in Galatians 5:13, Paul warns us: “do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh”. How can we make sure we do not do that? What instructions does Paul give us in Galatians 5:13-25 to help us avoid abusing our freedom?
- When I have sinned, do I try to stay away from God? Do I find it hard to pray? Do I think God is angry with me or that God is punishing me? Do I feel far from God? Why do I feel these things? What does the truth about the atonement teach me when I feel these things?
- Read Titus 2:11-14. It says the gospel of grace teaches us to say “No” to sin. How do you think it does that?
- Read 2 Peter 1:3-11. It says in v9 that those Christians who do not grow in the qualities of godliness have “forgotten” that they have been forgiven. What is the connection between remembering our forgiveness and growing in godliness?