

Suffering is the portion of the Godly. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Timothy 3:12). Christ Jesus, being at the same time very God and very Man, suffered in the flesh that His Humanity would learn Obedience to the Moral Law of Love. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He Obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). This process of suffering to learn obedience is the Practical Sanctification that all Christians must learn, as well. "4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is One LORD: 5 and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). However, Christ's Suffering on the Cross was more than Practical Sanctification, for it was through the "Once For All" (Hebrews 10:10) Atonement of Christ "Our Lawgiver" (Isaiah 33:22) that "we are sanctified through the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 10:10). In the Counsels of God, it was deemed that the "Sufferings of Christ" (1Peter 1:11) on the Cross of Calvary could most wisely be substituted for the Eternal Damnation of sinners, thus preventing an infinite amount of suffering in those who would repent. "Christ also suffered for us... Who His Own Self bare our sins in His Own Body on the Tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto Righteousness: by Whose Stripes ye were healed" (1Peter 2:21, 24). The Sufferings of Christ Jesus in the Atonement demonstrated the determination of Christ the King not to yield the Authority of His Law, but at the same time manifested the "Love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:19) towards His undeserving, Hellbound, and rebellious subjects. "13 Greater Love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are My friends, **if ye do whatsoever I command you**" (John 15:13-14).

The Natural Love that we have for ourselves is a Universal Truth, for "no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Ephesians 5:29); and, Jesus the Son of Man was no different. "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet **without** sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He had no special enjoyment of suffering, just as we do not enjoy suffering. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a Merciful and Faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). It is difficult for the Righteous to watch the Guiltless and Innocent suffer, because their suffering is our suffering. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Hebrews 13:3). Further, we have been advised by the Scriptures to remain "simple" concerning the specifics of the sufferings that evil men inflict. "For your Obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple [Greek, akeraion, harmless] concerning evil" (Romans 16:19). It was only the Providence of God that allowed the human mother of Jesus to be at the scene of Christ's Crucifixion, and one can only imagine the impression upon Mary as she beheld the Agony of her Son upon the Cross! Perhaps it was at that moment that Mary recalled the prophetic words of Simeon from the dedication of Jesus. "34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a Sign which shall be spoken against; 35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35). For those we love, suffering and even death for ourselves would be more desirable than to watch them suffer. But, Jesus **willingly** set His face **like flint** to suffer the Cruel Death of the Cross for friend and foe alike, e.g., the Roman centurion in charge of His Crucifixion exclaimed about the events and manner of Christ's Death on the Cross, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

Imagine the situation from God's point of view. He created Humankind as Moral Agents, whose necessity is to always obey the Moral Law of Love, e.g., "35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, 36 Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the First and Great Commandment. 39 And the Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:35-40). But, man has characteristically disobeyed God's Law. "For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The problem: How can God preserve respect for His Law of Love, which requires that all lawbreakers must be punished, i.e., "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20), while manifesting Love to the same lawbreakers? Unless there was an Atonement, God could not pardon Sinners without announcing to the world that His Law was worthless, since a law without a commensurate penalty is only advice. "6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I [Christ], Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy [the Father's] Will, O God. 8 Above when He [Christ] said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the Law; 9 then said He [Christ], Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. 10 By the which Will we are Sanctified through the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:6-10). An Atonement was necessary to Justify God in His Pardoning of Penitent Sinners, if the object is to save the Sinner and return the ex-Rebel to a continual Obedience to the Moral Law of Love. "24 Being justified freely by His Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in His Blood, to declare His Righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 to declare, I say, at this time His Righteousness: that He might be Just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

The value of the Suffering of Jesus Christ the Son of God is primarily in the subduing effect that it has upon the Rebellious, when they understand that it was for them that He suffered and bled and died. "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). [Charles G. Finney \[1792-1875\]](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html) -- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> -, in his [Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html) -- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> -, enumerated twenty-four reasons "why an atonement in the case of the inhabitants of this world was preferable to punishment, or to the execution of the divine law."

- First, "God's great and disinterested love [love given by God to all without regard to their moral character] to sinners themselves was a prime reason for the atonement." "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16).
- Second, "His great love to the universe at large must have been another reason, inasmuch as it was impossible that the atonement should not exert an amazing influence over moral beings [e.g., angels], in whatever world they might exist, and where the fact of atonement should be

known." "10 Of which Salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that should come unto you: 11 searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when It testified beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1Peter 1:10-12).

- Third, "Another reason for substituting the sufferings of Christ in the place of the eternal damnation of sinners, is, that an infinite amount of suffering might be prevented. The relation of Christ to the universe rendered his sufferings so infinitely valuable and influential, as an expression of God's abhorrence of sin on the one hand, and his great love to his subjects on the other, that an infinitely less amount of suffering in him than must have been inflicted on sinners, would be equally, and no doubt vastly more, influential in supporting the government of God, than the execution of the law upon them would have been. Be it borne in mind, that Christ was the lawgiver, and his suffering in behalf of sinners is to be regarded as the lawgiver and executive magistrate suffering in the behalf and stead of a rebellious province of his empire. As a governmental expedient it is easy to see the great value of such a substitute; that on the one hand it fully evinced the determination of the ruler not to yield the authority of his law, and on the other, to evince his great and disinterested love for his rebellious subjects." "Which in His times He shall shew, Who is the Blessed and Only Potentate, the KING of kings, and LORD of lords" (1Timothy 6:15).
- Fourth, "By this substitution, an immense good might be gained, the eternal happiness of all that can be reclaimed from sin, together with all the augmented happiness of those who have never sinned, that must result from this glorious revelation of God." "In Thy Presence is fulness of Joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).
- Fifth, "Another reason for preferring the atonement to the punishment of sinners must have been, that sin had afforded an opportunity for the highest manifestation of virtue in God: the manifestation of forbearance, mercy, self-denial, and suffering for enemies that were within his own power, and for those from whom he could expect no equivalent in return. It is impossible to conceive of a higher order of virtues than are exhibited in the atonement of Christ. It was vastly desirable that God should take advantage of such an opportunity to exhibit his true character, and show to the universe what was in his heart. The strength and stability of any government must depend upon the estimation in which the sovereign is held by his subjects. It was therefore indispensable, that God should improve the opportunity, which sin had afforded, to manifest and make known his true character, and thus secure the highest confidence of his subjects." "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, Glorious in Holiness, Fearful in Praises, doing Wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).
- Sixth, "Another reason for preferring atonement was, God's desire to lay open his heart to the inspection and imitation of moral beings." "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).

- Seventh, "Another reason is, because God is love, and prefers mercy when it can be safely exercised. The Bible represents him as delighting in mercy, and affirms that 'judgment is his strange work. Because he so much prefers mercy to judgment as to be willing to suffer as the sinner's substitute, to afford himself the opportunity to exercise pardon, on principles that are consistent with a due administration of justice.'" "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His Heritage? He retaineth not His Anger for ever, because He delighteth in Mercy" (Micah 7:18).
- Eighth, "In the atonement God consulted his own happiness and his own glory. To deny himself for the salvation of sinners, was a part of his own infinite happiness, always intended by him, and therefore always enjoyed. This was not selfishness in him, as his own well-being is of infinitely greater value than that of all the universe besides, he ought so to regard and treat it, because of its supreme and intrinsic value." "Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 38:23).
- Ninth, "In making the atonement, God complied with the laws of his own intelligence, and did just that, all things considered, in the highest degree promotive of the universal good." "For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are My Ways higher than your ways, and My Thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).
- Tenth, "The atonement would present to creatures the highest possible motives to virtue. Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted. If God, or any other being, would make others benevolent, he must manifest benevolence himself. If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless." "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His Glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21).
- Eleventh, "It would produce among creatures the highest kind and degree of happiness, by leading them to contemplate and imitate his love." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).
- Twelfth, "The circumstances of his government rendered an atonement necessary; as the execution of law was not, as a matter of fact, a sufficient preventive of sin. The annihilation of the wicked would not answer the purposes of government. A full revelation of mercy, blended with such an exhibition of justice, was called for by the circumstances of the universe." "Justice and Judgment are the habitation of Thy Throne: Mercy and Truth shall go before Thy face" (Psalm 89:14).
- Thirteenth, "To confirm holy beings. Nothing could be more highly calculated to establish and confirm the confidence, love, and obedience of holy beings, than this disinterested manifestation of love to sinners and rebels." "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" (Ephesians 1:4).

- Fourteenth, "To confound his enemies. How could anything be more directly calculated to silence all cavils, and to shut every mouth, and for ever close up all opposing lips, than such an exhibition of love and willingness to make sacrifices for sinners?" "8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the Death of the Cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: 10 that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth; 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the Glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:8-11).
- Fifteenth, "A just and necessary regard to his own reputation made him prefer atonement to the punishment of sinners. A desire to sustain his own reputation, as the only moral power that could support his own moral government, must have been a leading reason for the atonement. The atonement was preferred as the best, and perhaps only way to inspire an affectionate confidence in God. It must have been the most agreeable to God, and the most beneficial to the universe." "Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive Glory and Honour and Power" (Revelation 4:11).
- Sixteenth, "Atonement would afford him an opportunity always to gratify his love in his kindness to sinners, in using means for their salvation, in forgiving and saving them when they repent, without the danger of its being inferred in the universe, that he had not a sufficient abhorrence for their sin." "Wherefore [Jesus] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make Intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).
- Seventeenth, "Another reason for the atonement was, to counteract the influence of the devil, which was so extensively and powerfully exerted in this world for the promotion of selfishness." "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from The Beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8).
- Eighteenth, "To make the final punishment of the wicked more impressive in the light of the infinite love, manifest in the atonement." "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the Second Death" (Revelation 21:8).
- Nineteenth, "The atonement is the highest testimony that God can bear against selfishness. It is the testimony of his own example." "6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth His Love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).
- Twentieth, "The atonement is a higher expression of his regard for the public interest than the execution of law. It is, therefore, a fuller satisfaction to public justice [justice concerned with the well-being of the public good, not retributive]." "15 But not as the offence, so also is the Free Gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the Grace of God, and The Gift by Grace, which is by One Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as

it was by one that sinned, so is The Gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the Free Gift is of many offences unto Justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of Grace and of the Gift of Righteousness shall reign in Life by One, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:15-17).

- Twenty-first, "The atonement so reveals all the attributes of God, as to complete the whole circle of motives needed to influence the minds of moral beings." "But let him that glorieth Glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I Am the LORD which exercise Lovingkindness, Judgment, and Righteousness, in the Earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:24).
- Twenty-second, "By dying in human nature, Christ exhibited his heart to both worlds." "14 I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. 15 As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My Life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My Voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My Life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it again. This Commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:14-18).
- Twenty-third, "The fact, that the execution of the law of God on rebel angels had not arrested, and could not arrest, the progress of rebellion in the universe, proves that something more needed to be done, in support of the authority of law, than would be done in the execution of its penalty upon rebels. While the execution of law may have a strong tendency to prevent the beginning of rebellion among loyal subjects, and to restrain rebels themselves; yet penal inflictions do not, in fact, subdue the heart, under any government, whether human or divine." "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13). "As a matter of fact, the law was only exasperating rebels, without confirming holy beings. Paul affirmed, that the action of the law upon his own mind, while in impenitence, was to beget in him all manner of concupiscence. One grand reason for giving the law was, to develop the nature of sin, and to show that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The law was therefore given that the offence might abound, that thereby it might be demonstrated, that without an atonement there could be no salvation for rebels under the government of God." "Moreover the Law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).
- Twenty-fourth, "The nature, degree, and execution of the penalty of the law, made the holiness and the justice of God so prominent, as to absorb too much of public attention to be safe. Those features of his character were so fully revealed, by the execution of his law upon the rebel angels, that to have pursued the same course with the inhabitants of this world, without the offer of mercy, might have had, and doubtless would have had, an injurious influence upon the universe, by creating more of fear than of love to God and his government. Hence, a fuller revelation of the love and compassion of God was necessary, to guard against the influence of slavish fear." "16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the Voice of the trumpet exceeding loud;

so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. 18 And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. 19 And when the Voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a Voice. 20 And the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. 21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. 22 And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them" (Exodus 19:16-22).

Conclusion

As distasteful as Suffering is to our Natural Love of ourselves, we ought certainly to be grateful that the All Wise God felt that our Salvation was worth the Suffering of His Only Begotten Son. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). How can we not love Him, serve Him, obey Him, and worship Him for now and forever, as we gaze upon the face of Him Who loved us so? "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1John 4:19). Until He comes for us, may we walk worthy of Him. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to Escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

[Read Charles G. Finney's [Lecture 34 on the "Atonement"](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034) -- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> -- from his [Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html) -- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> -- for a better appreciation of the suffering of Jesus Christ in the Atonement for our sins.]

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