

Spurgeon on the Atonement and the Gospel¹

By

Richard C. Schadle

Preface

2 Corinthians 5:20,21 where Paul tells the Church at Corinth that:

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”,

is one of the many blessed passages where Paul summarizes and applies the Gospel. It is in truth “the Heart of the Gospel” as Spurgeon titled his sermon. Misunderstanding Paul’s clear and unambiguous message, as multitudes, including Spurgeon do is fatal to the Gospel. What better way for Satan to deceive the very elect, if possible, than to muddy the waters here. The pure water springing up to give life is turned into a poisonous and deadly mixture.

Some years ago, there was a series of TV shows about magicians. The main character was a magician himself but the whole point of the program was to expose how many of the “magic” tricks were performed. It was a real eye opener to say the least and the other magicians were not happy about it. After viewing three or four episodes I could see a clear pattern emerging. Although the acts were widely varied there were common clues to how they were all done. It was very like finding a key or keys by which you could see the big picture and not be fooled any longer. This illustrates my purpose in writing this and other essays about Spurgeon’s sermons. Its long past the time when true Christians need to awake from Spurgeon’s magic spell. He uses his great memory and enormous oratory skills in the same way magicians use their props. I am in no way whatsoever writing against Spurgeon as a man. He has many good, moral, and generous aspects to his personality. I am however seeking to give my readers keys to unlock his teaching and preaching. To see what his doctrine of the Atonement and theological bias really are. Once seen clearly this becomes all too obvious. All, however, is for God’s glory and to the praise of his grace and mercy. We are all dead in trespasses and sins until and if God opens our hearts and gives us ears to hear and eyes to see. May we follow the great hymnist and raise our praise to God alone:

¹ Version 1 Oct. 17th 2022

1

Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head;
My God, my Portion, and my Living Bread;
In him I live, upon him cast my care;
He saves from death, destruction, and despair.

2

He is my Refuge in each deep distress;
The Lord my strength and glorious righteousness;
Through floods and flames he leads me safely on,
And daily makes his sovereign goodness known.

3

My every need he richly will supply;
Nor will his mercy ever let me die;
In him there dwells a treasure all divine,
And matchless grace has made that treasure mine.

4

O that my soul could love and praise him more,
His beauties trace, his majesty adore;
Live near his heart, upon his bosom lean;
Obey his voice, and all his will esteem.²

Part One: His introduction to “The Heart of the Gospel”³

The Lord Jesus himself tells us something of great importance about the words we speak when he says:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.⁴

² Safety in Christ. Phil. 4. 19; Heb. 13. 6 W. Gadsby. Gadsby selection 667

³ This is number 1910 preached by Spurgeon on Sunday Morning July 18th 1886 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle

⁴ Matthew 12:33-37

The Lord God Almighty has record of all that we speak and think. The true believer, of course is, as the Bible so clearly teaches totally free from the Law of God and as justified as the Lord Jesus himself. It is the false prophets and deceivers who are in grave danger of their words coming back to worry them. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “deception” as: “the act of causing someone to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid: the act of deceiving resorting to falsehood and deception”. I raise a question for the reader here and leave answer up to the reader. Spurgeon often and with great eloquence sides with five-point Calvinism. He casts himself as one of this number. If this were true then does not Spurgeon, at least in regard to this sermon, practice deception for the doctrines and appeals are the opposite to the truth. Does he in fact deny the doctrines he professes to teach?

Spurgeon delivered this sermon during a time in England when many were turning away from the orthodox faith to liberal theology, He went on to write a series of articles denouncing this change in the Baptist Churches in the “Sword and Trowel.” This started what was called the “Down Grade Controversy.” I believe it’s important to be aware of the context in which Spurgeon preached this sermon. This will help us to appreciate how earnestly he pleaded for what he as the atonement. In doing so he gives us a clearer and fuller insight into what his heartfelt beliefs really are. In other words what his doctrine is rather than just what he utters.

Coming now to Spurgeon’s opening words here is what he says:

THE heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth preach the gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken; but they who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message.⁵ In these days I feel bound to go over and over again the elementary truths of the gospel. In peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth which lie far afield; but now we must stay at home, and guard the hearths and homes of the church by defending the first principles of the faith. **In this age there have risen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things. There be many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations, whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach, and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain. It is well that some of us, who know what we believe, and have no secret meanings for our words, should just put our foot down and maintain our standing, holding forth the word of life, and plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

In light of the fact that we will all stand before the judgement seat these are very bold words indeed. The raise an obvious question: What was the Atonement in Spurgeon’s opinion?

Like his sermon his introduction is divided into several parts. The first two sentences are true for everyone who preaches or teaches the substitutionary death of Christ. That of necessity includes me, Spurgeon, and anyone else. Either the atonement is truly preached, or it is not. However just

⁵ All bolded or underlined text is my own in order to emphasize points that I feel are important.

saying that we believe in or preach substitution means little or nothing at all. Spurgeon goes on to agree with my statement in the second part above. He proclaims in the clearest possible words that he is a true defender of the atonement. He even underlines this, as it were, emphasizing that he has no “secret meanings” that he indeed holds forth the word of life. In other words that his preaching the substitutionary death of Christ is the true and purely biblical preaching of it. He is setting himself to the defense of this gospel against all comers.

To continue to emphasize these things he turns, at this point, to tell his audience a parable. The purpose of this parable is twofold. First to underscore (that is say again in parable form) that he is bringing true food for the soul. Secondly to introduce in parable form the idea of lost souls starving for the bread of life which he professes to have. He sums up this part by saying:

God grant us this day that our ship may have nothing on board it that may merely gratify the curiosity, or please the taste; **but that there may be necessary truths for the salvation of souls.** I would have each one of you say: “Well, it was just the old, old story of Jesus and his love, and nothing else.” I have no desire to be famous for anything but preaching the old gospel.

It becomes more and more obvious that his real purpose is to have souls “saved”. He had declared that “the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ”. And that we should be “plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” However it’s not substitutionary atonement itself that he wishes to deal with. That is only the means to an end. In fact, it’s not God’s righteousness, justice, glory, or anything else these are not his main interest. He goes on to state this fact unmistakably as he continues saying:

I intend, dear friends, to begin my discourse with the second part of my text, in which the doctrine of Substitution is set forth in these words — “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” **This is the basis and power of those appeals which it is our duty to make to the consciences of men. I have found, my brethren, by long experience, that nothing touches the heart like the cross of Christ; and when the heart is touched and wounded by the two-edged sword of the law, nothing heals its wounds like the balm which flows from the pierced heart of Jesus.**

Spurgeon does of course go on to preach about the atonement. All I am pointing out here is that he has a very singular purpose in mind. So intent, in fact is he on this purpose that he interjects a pagan myth (he calls it a legend and a parable). Based on this myth he says:

When we see men quickened, converted, and sanctified by the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, **we may justly conclude that it is the true doctrine of atonement.** I have not known men made to live unto God and holiness except by the doctrine of the death of Christ on man’s behalf. Hearts of stone that never beat with life before have been turned to flesh through the Holy Spirit causing them to know this truth. **A sacred tenderness has visited the obstinate when they have heard of Jesus crucified for them.** Those who have lain at hell’s dark door, wrapped about with a sevenfold death-shade, even upon them hath a great light shined. **The story of the great Lover of the souls of men who gave himself for**

their salvation is still in the hand of the Holy Ghost the greatest of all forces in the realm of mind.

As the well-known saying goes Spurgeon is preaching that the ends gained justify the means taken. As I shall show in greater detail below its placing man in control. It's not the Holy Spirit regenerating nor is it Gods election. It is mans' mind being overcome by emotion with supposed help from the Holy Spirit. All that is needed is professions of faith followed by what amounts to moral living. If we see that then what was preached was the "true" atonement. Spurgeon has seen that in abundance as well as some true conversions, therefore to him his gospel must be the true gospel.

Part Two: Just what is the Great Doctrine of Substitution?

Section One: The first part of Spurgeon's discourse: Who was made sin for us?

Up to this point both Spurgeon and I are still totally in the realm of "saying". Spurgeon now comes to his first real point where he says: "First, then, with as much brevity as possible I will speak upon THE GREAT DOCTRINE." My purpose also is to do the same thing. However, Spurgeon and I teach very different doctrines each opposed to the other. Now we can deal with facts that can be proven or disproven by the Word of God.

Before getting deeper into his sermon, I would like to point out two aspects of the doctrine of substitution. These are the question of **who Christ was a substitute for** and **what his substitution accomplished**. These are critical questions. The various answers that have been given through the course of history are all based on how each, either separately or together, are answered. For example, the Arminian preacher says that Christ was a substitute for all mankind, he died for all. They then say that he made salvation possible for all but that it is dependent of man's free will to accept what God has provided. My position is that which is commonly called Calvinism (today it is more often called hyper Calvinism). This is the clear teaching of the scriptures that Christ died for the elect alone. All the rest of mankind being justly passed by on account of their original and personal sins. Secondly that his substitution fully satisfied the demands of justice, fulfilled all parts of the law, Christ bearing the guilt of our sin and we becoming as righteous as Jesus Christ himself. In this case God is sovereign, just, and merciful and salvation is all of God alone.

Various other theories seek to find middle ground between the two views above. While these are many and various the most common today is a system started largely by Andrew Fuller and William Carey (a very late comer of what is called the modern missionary movement.) This is the so called "Duty Faith Gospel" Spurgeon is a strong advocate of such teaching, but he adds and subtracts so that his own peculiar version is somewhat different. Among many good resources against duty faith is the New Focus website for which I give the following link to one particular article by Peter L. Meney: <https://go-newfocus.co.uk/articles/app/category/theology/article/ten-arguments-against-duty-faith> Another site with many in depth articles of great benefit is Leroy Rhodes site: <https://mountzionpbc.org/>

The topic of duty faith and of the different theories of the atonement are topics which are in and of themselves beyond the scope of my essay. I am concerned with Spurgeon's doctrine of the atonement in this one sermon and how it compares to what the Bible teaches. What the Bible teaches is deeply connected with the nature and attributes of the God who has given us the Bible. The whole purpose of theology (the study of religious faith, practice, and experience especially the study of God and of God's relation to the world⁶) and doctrine (The basic meaning of the term doctrine is "teaching." Christian doctrine, accordingly, is the attempt to state in intellectually responsible terms the message of the gospel and the content of the faith it elicits.⁷) is to enable us to understand what God has revealed to us. For this reason, I will be quoting from different theological references.

Finally, before I turn again to Spurgeon's sermon, I want to leave the reader with a simple but effective method of determining whether any particular doctrine is true to the Bible or not. Spurgeon, J. I. Packer, and many others seek to circumvent this simple test by proposing contradictions in the Bible. Since Packer, they often call it an antinomy or antinomies. For example, they say that divine sovereignty and human responsibility to choose Christ are two separate but parallel lines. They say both are equally true even though we, as humans may not know how. Packer, himself puts it like this:

For our purposes, however, this definition is not quite accurate; the opening words should read "an appearance of contradiction." For the whole point of an antinomy — in theology, at any rate — is that **it is not a real contradiction, though it looks like one.** It is an apparent incompatibility between two apparent truths. An antinomy exists when a pair of principles stand side by side, seemingly irreconcilable, yet both undeniable. There are cogent reasons for believing each of them; each rests on clear and solid evidence; but it is a mystery to you how they can be squared with each other. You see that each must be true on its own, but you do not see how they can both be true together.⁸

It is of course drivel to propagate contradictions in the Bible and then try to explain that they are not really contradictions. Either we listen to Satan and eat the forbidden fruit or listen to God and acknowledge the plain truth that salvation is of the Lord alone. Spurgeon delighted in such supposed "contradictions / antinomies" because he felt they gave him the freedom to make the Bible say whatever he chose. The Bible knows nothing of this and does not teach any such thing. Such teaching is heresy. The Bible teaches that man's will is free to choose any path he wishes but he can only choose to sin. He has no will in spiritual matters except to hate God and all he stands for. **My method is this: Any attempt to elevate man (give him life where the bible says he is dead: freedom where the bible say enslaved etc.) must of absolute necessity take something away from God and demean his Holy Word.** Such teaching is not true biblical teaching. IT has failed the test. Spurgeon as I will show takes a great deal away from God making him dependent of man's choice to believe.

⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theology>

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/Christian-doctrine>

⁸ Taken from: https://www.gracegems.org/30/packer_divine_sovereignty.htm

Returning then to this sermon here is how Spurgeon sets about his task of teaching us about the Lord Jesus and his sinlessness.

He defines the great doctrine as being:

... that God, **seeing men to be lost by reason of their sin, hath taken that sin of theirs and laid it upon his only begotten Son, making him to be sin for us**, even him who knew no sin; and that in consequence of this transference of sin **he that believeth in Christ Jesus is made** just and righteous, yea, is made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. **Christ was made sin that sinners** might be made righteousness. That is the doctrine of the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf **of guilty men**.

For the sake of comparison, I will change some of the words that I have bolded above. In this way I believe we come much closer to the Bible's meaning: Representing the Biblical teaching I say then:

... that God, **desiring to justify, sanctify and glorify his elect whom he chose from eternity to love, hath taken that sin of theirs only and laid it upon his only begotten Son, making him to be sin for them alone**, even him who knew no sin; and that in consequence of this transference of sin **his elect will be made as just and as Christ himself**, yea, **are** made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. **Christ was made sin that his elect** and them alone might be made righteousness. That is the doctrine of the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf **of his elect**.

Spurgeon has man's sin as the root cause. The Bible has God's love as the root cause. Spurgeon by his words chooses leaves the atonement open to all man, he calls it **those that believe in Christ**. The Bible teaches that it is the elect and to them alone. No one will truly choose Christ unless God has first chosen them. Why Spurgeon chose this exact wording rather than what the Bible teaches will become clearer as I proceed to examine his sermon. For now, it's important to realize that the doctrine set forth in both definitions is vastly different. The former lifts up man while that latter lifts up God.

There is little in his definition to explain in any detail what Christ actually accomplished. He is still mostly in the realm of saying. He uses the correct terms "making him to be sin for us" etc. but at this point we do not know what he means by these words. We gain some idea however of the who Christ died for. It is not the elect but "he that believes". Some may say at this point that he that believes means that same thing as the elect. However, as I will show below this is not his meaning.

After giving his definition Spurgeon goes on to talk about Christ's sinlessness. In the middle of some perfectly correct scriptural teaching on the sinlessness of Christ he interjects heresy that strikes at the heart of the atonement. The following three sentences substantiate what I'm saying:

"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became incarnate, and was made flesh, and dwelt here among men; but though

he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he knew no sin. **Though upon him sin was laid, yet not so as to make him guilty.** He was not, he could not be, a sinner: he had no personal knowledge of sin.

Please bear with me as I make this as plain as possible. Here is the quote with the critical sentence omitted giving evidence to what the Bible teaches:

“He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became incarnate, and was made flesh, and dwelt here among men; but though he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he knew no sin. ... He was not, he could not be, a sinner: he had no personal knowledge of sin.

I confess, that at this point I am “reading into” his meaning to some extent because of the greater detail he goes into later in his sermon. There is a common idiom which illustrates what he is doing here. That saying is that someone is “sailing near to the wind”. It means that a company or person may not actually be breaking the law, but they are close to doing so. His purpose is to sound as much like a Calvinist as possible while propagating error.

The scriptures are perfectly definite, without question Christ, in his nature as the God-man our Saviour was NOT a sinner. He indeed knew no sin whatsoever in the personal sense. The elect of God however are nothing but sin in and of themselves. As Christ has no sin, we have no righteousness. The purpose of the substitutionary death of Christ is to maintain God’s Law and righteousness while at the same time justifying and making his elect righteous. God did this by putting the actual guilt of the elects’ sins upon Christ. He was punished as if he were guilty because of the sins of those Father had given him.

Galatians 3:13 is very important in this regard where Paul says: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:” Exactly what is Paul’s meaning here? In what sense did Christ become a curse for his elect? This deals with the second purpose I mentioned above “what his substitution accomplished.” Spurgeon with this statement “Though upon him sin was laid, yet not so as to make him guilty” gives us some definite doctrine on this subject. As I said, he is more explicit later in his sermon, but his words here give us the first clue to his doctrine.

What then does Calvinism teach about this aspect of the atonement? What does it mean to preach the doctrines of grace when dealing with passages like 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13? Louis Berkhof, a very moderate Calvinist⁹, deals in detail with the doctrine of the Atonement. Under point 2 of the heading “Scriptural proof for the vicarious atonement of Christ.” He refers to both these verses (among others when he states:

(2) There are several passages in Scripture which speak of **our sins as being "laid upon" Christ, and of His "bearing" sin or iniquity**, Isa. 53:6,12; John 1:29; **II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13**; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 2:24. **On the basis of Scripture we can,**

⁹ I have the Banner of Truths edition of his Systematic Theology reprinted in 1974. The Banner is still publishing an expanded version of this work today (2022) This fact alone shows how close his theology is to theirs.

therefore, say that our sins are imputed to Christ. This does not mean that our sinfulness was transferred to Him — something that is in itself utterly impossible — but that the guilt of our sin was imputed to Him. Says Dr. A. A. Hodge: "Sin may be considered (1) in its formal nature as transgression of the law, I John 3:4; or (2) as a moral quality inherent in the agent (macula), Rom. 6:11-13; or (3) in respect to its legal obligation to punishment (reatus). In this last sense alone is it ever said that the sin of one is laid upon or borne by another."⁴⁵ **Strictly speaking, then, the guilt of sin as liability to punishment was imputed to Christ;** and this could be transferred, because it did not inhere in the person of the sinner, but was something objective.¹⁰

Wikipedia defines the Biblical teaching of the Atonement in a similar fashion:

Penal substitution (sometimes, esp. in older writings, called forensic theory) is a theory of the atonement within Christian theology, which declares that Christ, voluntarily submitting to God the Father's plan, was punished (penalized) in the place of sinners (substitution), thus satisfying the demands of justice so God can justly forgive sins making us at one with God (atonement). It began with Luther and continued to develop with the Calvinist tradition as a specific understanding of substitutionary atonement, where the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death is understood in the sense of a substitutionary fulfilment of legal demands for the offenses of sins.¹¹

Any theory of the Atonement which does not place the guilt of the sins of those for whom Christ died upon Christ is not the doctrine of the Bible. Also, meaning the same thing it is not the Doctrines of Grace, commonly referred to as Calvinism. I will examine this in more detail below where Spurgeon gives more details of the doctrines he holds.

He continues then with his description of Christ being sinless. Doing much to support my views in this essay he makes manifest his unscriptural view of human sin. He says:

As there was no sin of commission, so was there about our Lord no fault of omission. **Probably, dear brethren, we that are believers have been enabled by divine grace to escape most sins of commission;** but I for one have to mourn daily over sins of omission. **If we have spiritual graces, yet they do not reach the point required of us.** If we do that which is right in itself, yet we **usually mar** our work upon the wheel, either in the motive, or in the manner of doing it, or by the self-satisfaction with which we view it when it is done. **We come short of the glory of God in some respect or other.** We forget to do what we ought to do, or, doing it, we are guilty of lukewarmness, self-reliance, unbelief, or some other grievous error. It was not so with our divine Redeemer.

¹⁰ Taken from <https://ccel.org/ccel/berkhof/systematictheology/systematictheology.v.iii.iv.html>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penal_substitution (I have excluded the references)

I think there is little need for me to comment upon this hideous evaluation of our own sinfulness and demeaning of our Lord's sacrifice. What of man's total depravity? What of the plain teaching of scripture: Psalm 51:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:9-19 etc. Spurgeon lays the goal of a sinless life upon the saved person, making sinless perfection by human effort almost a possibility as we "escape most sins of commission". Apart from Christ's righteousness we have no righteousness at all.

Near the end of his rather long discussion of Christ's sinlessness he sounds more like a real Calvinist. Remember however he is here saying and not defining. Even here he leaves himself a loophole. All this can be seen when he says:

He was capable of standing in the room, place, and stead of others, because he was under no obligations of his own. He was only under obligations towards God because he had voluntarily undertaken to be the surety and sacrifice for those whom the Father gave him. He was clear himself, or else he could not have entered into bonds for guilty men. Oh, how I admire him, that being such as he was, spotless and thrice holy, so that even the heavens were not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly, yet he condescended to be made sin for us! How could he endure to be numbered with the transgressor and bear the sin of many? ... His sensitive and delicate nature must have shrunk from even the shadow of sin, and yet read the words and be astonished: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Our perfect Lord and Master bare our sins in his own body on the tree. He, before whom the sun itself is dim and the pure azure of heaven is defilement, was made sin. **I need not put this in fine words: the fact is itself too grand to need any magnifying by human language**

Section Two: The second part of Spurgeon's heading one: What was done to Christ who knew no sin?

My reader, you will find out shortly what Spurgeon's actual clearly stated doctrine is but for a moment, yet he has more to say first. That is saying with fine sounding words but only a hint of real definition. With great eloquence and power, he states for example:

. . . "He hath made him to be sin for us." The Lord God laid upon Jesus, who voluntarily undertook it, **all the weight of human sin**. Instead of its resting on the sinner, who did commit it, it was made to rest upon Christ, who did not commit it; while the righteousness which Jesus wrought out was placed to the account of the guilty, who had not worked it out, so that the guilty are treated as righteous. Those who by nature are guilty, are regarded as righteous, while he who by nature knew no sin whatever, **was treated as guilty**.

He then goes on to speak of the Atonement being a miracle. That is specially that the transference of sin from us to Christ and righteousness from Christ to us was done by a miracle. He says:

I think I must have read in scores of books that such a transference is impossible; but the statement has had no effect upon my mind I do not care whether it is impossible or not with learned unbelievers: it is evidently possible with God, for he has done it. But they say it is contrary to reason. I do not care for that, either: it may be contrary to the reason of those unbelievers, but it is not contrary to mine; and **if I am to be guided by reason, I prefer to follow my own. The atonement is a miracle, and miracles are rather to be accepted by faith than measured by calculation.** A fact is the best of arguments. It is a fact that the Lord hath laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God's revelation proves the fact, and our faith defies human questioning! God saith it, and I believe it; and believing it, I find life and comfort in it. Shall I not preach it? Assuredly I will.

Do we then come to that point in his sermon where he starts talking about actual definable doctrine? Sadly no, not yet for by his own words what happened is beyond human knowledge! It cannot be calculated. Here are some of the synonyms of calculated. These all agree with a dictionary definition but bring out meaning clearer for my purposed here. For example, analyzed, estimated, gaged, determined, reckoned, evaluated, and assessed. To Spurgeon the Bible gives us no knowledge of what actually happened when Christ died for us. It's true because the Bible says it happened but it's beyond our comprehension. As God has given us no insight, we must just accept it. Paradoxically Spurgeon, as I relate below, tells us in clear words what he thinks the atonement is. In order to preach it he must of necessity give some form of doctrinal explanation.

It's time for me to introduce more scriptural doctrinal teaching. The observant reader may have noticed that Louis Berkoff quoted A.A. Hodge on the atonement in the quotation I gave earlier. A.A. Hodge is very important for understanding the subject in hand. How can defenders of Spurgeon deal with the fact that Spurgeon used A. A. Hodge's "Outlines of Theology" for his students when he denied some of its most basic doctrinal teaching? Chapter 25 of this book is titled "The Atonement: its Nature, Necessity, Perfection, and Extent" Part of what Hodge shows that Bible teaches is as follows:

4th. The significance of the term PENALTY and the distinction between CALAMITIES, CHASTISEMENTS, and PENAL EVILS. Calamities are sufferings considered without any reference to the purpose with which they are indicted or permitted. Chastisements are sufferings designed for the moral improvement of the sufferer. Penal evils are sufferings inflicted with the design of satisfying the claims of justice and law. "Penalty" is that kind and degree of suffering which the supreme legislator and judge determines to be legally and justly due in the case of any specific criminal. If these sufferings are endured by a substitute, they are no less the penalty of the law if they in fact satisfy the law. The nature and degree of the sufferings may be changed justly with the change of the person suffering, but the character of the sufferings as penalty remains, or the substitution fails.

5th. The meaning of the terms SUBSTITUTION and VICARIOUS. Substitution is the gracious act of a sovereign in allowing a person not bound to discharge a

service, or to suffer a punishment in the stead of a person who is bound. The discharge of that service, and the suffering of that penalty by the substitute and therefore the services and sufferings themselves, are strictly vicarious, that is in the stead of (vice) as well as in the behalf of the person originally bound.

6th. EXPIATION AND PROPITIATION. Both these words represent the Greek word ἱλάσκεσθαι. When construed, as it constantly is in the classics, with τὸν θεόν and τοὺς θεούς it means to propitiate for sin, by sacrificial atonement. In the New Testament it is construed with ταῦν ἁμαρτιῶν (Hebrews 2:17), and signifies to expiate the guilt of sin. Expiation has respect to the bearing which satisfaction has upon sin or the sinner. Propitiation has respect to the effect of satisfaction in thus removing the judicial displeasure of God.

7th. IMPETRATION and APPLICATION. Impetration signifies the purchase, or meritorious procurement by sacrifice, of that salvation which God provides for his own people, and Application signifies its subsequent application to them in the process commencing with Justification and Regeneration and ending in Glorification.

Not only so but Hodge goes into much more detail and backs up his doctrine with many scriptural references as I show below. Now Spurgeon was perfectly knowledgeable about what A.A. Hodge and a host of other Calvinistic theologians taught. He said of Hodge's Outlines of Theology that:

‘We commend the Outlines of Theology to all who would be well instructed in the faith. It is the standard textbook of our college. We differ from its teachings upon baptism, but in almost everything else we endorse Hodge to the letter’. — C.H. SPURGEON¹²

If I remember correctly, Spurgeon had read through Matthew Henry's Commentary on his knees. He had in fact, and especially at this time, a massive library at his fingertips. Yet he here rejects all of this and takes what he thinks the Bible shows or does not show by faith and ignores all he has read in opposition to that. As I will show shortly, he has his own personal clearly defined doctrine of the atonement. All he is doing at this stage is laying down a foundation to make his doctrine seem legitimate. He continues ‘saying’ rather than defining. For example, in Calvinistic sounding terms he says:

Christ was not guilty and **could not be made guilty**; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated as **if he had been sin itself in the abstract**. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin.

Now he is not only preparing the ground but is starting to come to his actual beliefs and doctrine. I.E., some unknown amount of suffering rather than actually bearing the penalty of his elect's sins.

¹² Taken from Banner of Truth's webpage for their printing of this book.

A.A. Hodge has given us examples of true Biblical teaching, even in the short section I quoted above. Remember what he said:

“Penalty” is that kind and degree of suffering which the supreme legislator and judge determines to be legally and justly due in the case of any specific criminal. If these sufferings are endured by a substitute, they are no less the penalty of the law if they in fact satisfy the law.”

Sighting unknown sufferings Spurgeon again hides the plain words of scripture behind a veil of mystery:

We know that he bore pains innumerable of body and of mind: he thirsted, he cried out in the agony of desertion, he bled, he died. We know that he poured out his soul unto death, and yielded up the ghost. **But there was at the back, and beyond all this, an immeasurable abyss of suffering.** The Greek Liturgy fitly speaks of “Thine unknown sufferings:” **probably to us they are unknowable sufferings.** He was God as well as man, and the Godhead lent an omnipotent power to the manhood, so that there was compressed within his soul, and endured by it, an amount of anguish of which we can form no conception. **I will say no more: it is wise to veil what it is impossible to depict. This text both veils and discovers his sorrow, as it says, “He made him to be sin.” Look into the words. Perceive their meaning, if you can.**

At long last, near the end of Part one and his second point he gives us the first of many actual doctrinal statements (‘facts’). These are his own personal versions of what the atonement is.

Speaking about “He made him to be sin.” He says:

I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it; but I do say that what he endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of his law **more clear and more effectual** than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom he died. The cross is under many aspects a more full revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet, and the smoke of torment which goeth up for ever and ever. Who would know God’s hate of sin must see the Only Begotten bleeding in body and bleeding in soul even unto death: he must, in fact, spell out each word of my text, and read its innermost meaning. There, my brethren, I am ashamed of the poverty of my explanation, and I will therefore only repeat the full and sublime language of the apostle — “He hath made him to be sin for us.”

To emphasize he unequivocally denies any Biblical (men call it Calvinist) understanding of the atonement for he said: **“I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it;**

Section Three: The third part of Spurgeon's First heading: Who did it?

Oddly, but happily for our understanding, Spurgeon deals more with what he comprehends by the death of Christ than the part that the Father played.

Spurgeon's pride and arrogance seems to be limitless as he confidently states:

The fact of our Lord's death is sure, and it has to be accounted for. Ours is the fullest and truest explanation. In the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be made sin for us, **there was first of all a display of the Divine Sovereignty.** God here did what none but he could have done. It would not have been possible for all of us together to have laid sin upon Christ; **but it was possible for the great Judge of all, who giveth no account of his matters, to determine that so it should be.** He is the fountain of rectitude, and the exercise of his divine prerogative is always unquestionable righteousness. **That the Lord Jesus, who offered himself as a willing surety and substitute, should be accepted as surety and substitute for guilty man was in the power of the great Supreme. In his Divine Sovereignty he accepted him, and before that sovereignty we bow.** If any question it, our only answer is, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

The death of our Lord also displayed divine justice. **It pleased God as the Judge of all, that sin should not be forgiven without the exaction of the punishment which had been so righteously threatened to it, or such other display of justice as might vindicate the law.**

Before continuing, let me elaborate on the bolded sections of the above quote. The reader may question why I said Spurgeon was prideful and arrogant. It's partly because of these first two sentences: "The fact of our Lord's death is sure, and **it has to be accounted for. Ours is the fullest and truest explanation.**" He never acknowledges the true source of this theory of the atonement. He boldly challenges God and denying the Bible states that "**Ours** is the fullest and truest explanation. The "Ours" must mean Spurgeon himself as no other reference from other sources is given. Even though to him the death of Christ is a miracle, and its purpose is hidden behind a veil Spurgeon has the best answer! Next, he tells us that sin was transferred secretly by an act of God ("**it was possible for the great Judge of all, who giveth no account of his matters, to determine that so it should be.**" It's all an act of Divine Sovereignty and we must just accept that period! "**In his Divine Sovereignty he accepted him, and before that sovereignty we bow.**" Finally, getting to the subject of God's justice, Spurgeon ignores the demands of God's Holy Law and God's own righteousness, saying that penal substitution is not needed. Something much less than actual punishment will do just fine! "**It pleased God as the Judge of all, that sin should not be forgiven without the exaction of the punishment which had been so righteously threatened to it, or such other display of justice as might vindicate the law.**"

He continues the defense of his system making it sound as God glorifying and Biblical as possible before he comes to part 2 of his sermon. Because the incautious reader or listener might be swept up in this rhetoric, I want to examine two other places where he reveals his true doctrine.

In this next quote he continues to reveal the true source of “Our doctrine” and categorically states that this satisfies all the requirements of the law. I’ll remark upon the first point here and the latter with the next quotation from Spurgeon.

God is the great moral Governor of the universe, and it behooves him to deal with sin in such a way that it is seen to be an evil and a bitter thing. God cannot wink at wickedness. I bless his holy name and adore him that he is not unjust in order to be merciful, that he does not spare the guilty in order to indulge his gentleness. Every transgression and disobedience has its just recompense of reward. But through the sacrifice of Christ, he is able justly to pardon. I bless his holy name that **to vindicate his justice he determined that, while a free pardon should be provided for believers, it should be grounded upon an atonement which satisfied all the requirements of the law.**

In the quotations I have given above Spurgeon has revealed a great deal about his doctrine of the atonement. Much more so in fact than he normally does. He is here fighting for his life as it were against “modern theology”. He is striving to get his message across but at the same time to appear as Biblical as possible. Based on his own words it is possible now for me to reveal what his doctrine of the Atonement is. **His doctrine then is nothing else, but the Arminian / Pelagian doctrine called “The Governmental Theory” of the atonement.** Theopedia.com under the heading /atonement-of-christ summarizes this anti-biblical heretic doctrine in this way:

The Governmental Theory: God made Christ an example of suffering to exhibit to erring man that sin is displeasing to him. God's moral government of the world made it necessary for him to evince his wrath against sin in Christ. Christ died as a **token** of God's displeasure toward sin and **it was accepted by God as sufficient; but actually God does not exact strict justice.** This view was formulated by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and is subsequently found in **Arminianism, Charles Finney, the New England Theology of Jonathan Edwards (the younger), and Methodism.** See main page on Governmental theory of atonement¹³

Theopedia.com under the link just sited (/governmental-theory-of-atonement) shows just how opposed this teaching is to any form of Calvinism.

They say:

The Governmental theory of the atonement (also known as the moral government theory) maintains that Christ was not punished on behalf of the human race. Instead, God publicly demonstrated his displeasure with sin by punishing his own sinless and obedient Son as a propitiation. Because Christ's suffering and death served as

¹³ <https://www.theopedia.com/atonement-of-christ>

a substitute for the punishment humans might have received, God is able to extend forgiveness while maintaining divine order, having demonstrated the seriousness of sin and thus appeasing his wrath.

This [governmental atonement] view holds that Christ by His death actually paid the penalty for no man's sin. What His death did was to demonstrate what their sins deserved at the hand of the just Governor and Judge of the universe, and permits God justly to forgive men if on other grounds, such as their faith, their repentance, their works, and their perseverance, they meet His demand. ... But this is just to eviscerate the Savior's work of all its intrinsic saving worth and to replace the Christosoteric vision of Scripture with the autosoteric vision of Pelagianism. -- Robert Reymond

The similarities between Spurgeon's own words and what the Government view teach are extremely evident already but is more to learn yet.

Turning now to the latter part of Spurgeon's quotation above where he said, "to vindicate his justice he determined that, while a free pardon should be provided for believers, **it should be grounded upon an atonement which satisfied all the requirements of the law.**" We now know that he is referring to the Governmental theory of the atonement. He is telling us in plain words that this answers all the requirements of God's law!

He reaffirms this near the end of this point when he says:

You tell me that God might have pardoned without atonement. I answer that finite and fallible love might have done so, and thus have wounded itself **by killing justice**; but the love which both required and provided the atonement is indeed infinite. God himself provided the atonement by freely and fully giving up himself in the person of his Son to suffer **in consequence** of human sin.

Incredibly, but again in plain words, he doubles down saying that the moral government theory, (for as I have shown, that is what he is talking about) is the only way God's justice can be preserved. He calls it a "substitutionary sacrifice" in the following quote. Also, most importantly he discloses to the reader the fact that he does not believe Christ bore the actual guilt of our sins! Remember, as I showed above, to him it's all a miracle and unfathomable. Because he has rejected the true Reformed doctrine the best, he can offer is his own false doctrine, which is not even his own.

What I want you to notice here is this, if ever your mind should be troubled about the propriety or rightness of a substitutionary sacrifice, you may at once settle the matter by remembering that God himself "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." If God did it, it is well done. I am not careful to defend an act of God: let the man who dares accuse his Maker think what he is at. If God himself provided the sacrifice, be you sure that he has accepted it. There can be, no question ever raised about it, since Jehovah made to meet on him our iniquities. **He that made**

Christ to be sin for us, knew what he did, and it is not for us to begin to say, “Is this right, or is this not right?” The thrice holy God hath done this, and it must be right. **That which satisfies God may well satisfy us.** If God is pleased with the sacrifice of Christ, shall not we be much more than pleased? Shall we not be delighted, entranced, imparadised, to be saved by such a sacrifice as God himself appoints, provides, and accepts? “He hath made him to be sin for us.”

Section Four: The fourth and final part of Spurgeon’s First heading: What happens to us in consequence?

Spurgeon devotes little time to this most important subject. After giving out this part of his passage. “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” he simply states that he cannot explain it!

Oh, this weighty text! No man living can exhaust it. No theologian lived, even in the palmiest days of theology, who could ever get to the bottom of this statement. **Every man that believes in Jesus** is through Christ having taken his sin made to be righteous before God. We are righteous through faith in Christ Jesus, “justified by faith.” More than this, we are made not only to have the character of “righteous,” but to become **the substance called** “righteousness.” **I cannot explain this**, but it is no small matter. It means no inconsiderable thing when we are said to be “made righteousness.” What is more, we are not only made righteousness, but we are made “the righteousness of God.” **Herein is a great mystery.**

He closes part 1 and section 3 in a truly Arminian fashion saying to all sinners (as many as believe):

Sinner though thou be, and in thyself defiled, deformed, and debased, yet **if thou wilt accept the great Substitute** which God provides for thee in the person of his dear Son, **thy sins are gone from thee, and righteousness has come to thee.** Thy sins were laid on Jesus, the scapegoat; they are thine no longer, he has put them away. I may say that his righteousness is imputed unto thee; but I go further, and say with the text, “Thou art made the righteousness of God in him.” No doctrine can be more sweet than this to those who feel the weight of sin and the burden of its curse.

That this is plain and simply Arminianism is easy to see even before going on to Part 2 of his sermon. He states clearly in the above quote that all the sinner must do is to accept Christ: “**if thou wilt accept the great Substitute ... thy sins are gone from thee, and righteousness has come to thee.**” Believing in Christ is to Spurgeon a simple matter of the sinner deciding to accept what Christ offers. God has done all he needs to do, it’s over to the sinner now to choose.

Part Three: His so called “Great Argument”

Section One: Some introductory thoughts

First than, Spurgeon has come now to the last part of his chosen passage: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” He has reversed that order of 2 Corinthians 5:20,21. He intentionally laid down his doctrine before coming to his evangelistic preaching. He calls this “the application of teaching”. His teaching is what I call his first foundation. He does not explicitly define his second foundation, but it is obvious what it is. He has determined that Paul has been and is still addressing all mankind. In other words, he has totally ignored the context of 2 Corinthians as a whole and chapters five and six in particular. Before I examine the last part of his sermon, I believe it’s imperative to at least look briefly at the significance of these two foundations.

The apostle Paul lays down the one true “teaching” when he says in Ephesians 4:1-6:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

And again, in Galatians 1:8,9

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Spurgeon wants to be an Arminian and a Calvinist at one and the same time. To side with the likes of Westley’s and Finney’s doctrine yet profess views totally opposite at the same time. I examined this above where I referred to the term ‘antinomy’ Paul on the other hand, preached a clear and certain gospel. A gospel what stands up against all the false gospels that are or ever were. **A gospel that never contradicts itself.** Upon this firm foundation a truth or fact stands firm: **There is only one and can be only one true gospel and one true faith. One and only one correct understanding of what the atonement of Christ accomplished.** I do not mean that we shall have while on earth a perfect understanding by knowing all there is to know. I do mean that the Bible though the Holy Spirit has given us abundant insight to know truth from error.

The most fundamental cause of false doctrine is a false view of the atonement. A false view of the atonement will inevitably lead to a false gospel and therefore to untruthful preaching. As I showed above Spurgeon, at least in this sermon (and in others as I have shown) bases his gospel on a heretical view of the atonement. His whole evangelical ministry is based on Arminianism and his false view of the atonement. Inevitably false views like his lead to Arminianism or something even worse. So much than for a brief review of what he teaches.

Secondly his second foundation consists in ignoring the context of 2 Corinthians 5:20,21. His main purpose of teaching a false gospel was to prepare a way of applying that to a false evangelism. As

so much has been written by so many able teachers about how Arminians misuse passages like the one under review here I will limit my remarks, referring the reader the many works on this subject

Limiting this subject than to the immediate context of verses 20 and 21 let's look at 5:13 to 6:1

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, **it is for your cause.** 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that **if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.** 16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. 17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who **hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;** 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though **God did beseech you** by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, **be ye** reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 6:1 **We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.**

Clearly and without question Paul is speaking to a particular group of people. He stated that emphatically in this letter's introduction saying: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, **unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:** 2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." He is writing to believers exclusively and not to unbelievers. That is to the elect and not to the non-elect. I quoted from A.A. Hodge above where I mentioned the fact that he gave scriptural proofs for his teaching on definite atonement. It's instructive to see just how many times he quotes from the later part of 2 Corinthians 5 (quoted above) in his defense.

8. Show that the Scriptures teach that Christ suffered as our Substitute in the definite sense of that term.¹⁴

A substitute is one appointed or accepted to act or to suffer in the stead of another, and his actions or sufferings are vicarious. That Christ obeyed and suffered as the substitute **of his people** is proved— 1st. The preposition ὑπερ with the genitive signifies "instead of" (John 11:50; **2 Corinthians 5:20**; Philemon 13), and this construction is used to set forth the relation of Christ's work to us.—**2 Corinthians 5:14 and 21**; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 3:18. 2nd. The preposition ἀντί definitely and always expresses substitution (Winer, "N. T. Gram.," Pt. 3, § 47).— Matthew 2:22; 5:38. This is rendered more emphatic by being associated with λύτρον, ransom, redemption price. Christ came as a ransom in the stead of many.—Matt. 20:28;

¹⁴ Ibid A.A. Hodge, Outlines

Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6. Christ is called ἀντίλυτρον, i.e., substitutionary ransom. 3rd. The same is proved by what the Scriptures teach as to our sins being "laid upon" Christ.—See below, Q. 9. 4th. And by what the Scriptures teach as to the nature of sacrifices, and the sacrificial character of Christ's work. —See below, Qs. 10 and 11.

9. Do the same with regard to those passages which speak of our sins being "laid upon" Christ, and of his "bearing" sin or iniquity.

Sin may be considered (1) in its formal nature as "transgression of law," 1 John 3:4; or, (2) as a moral quality inherent in the agent, Romans 6:11–13; or, (3) in respect to its legal obligation to punishment.

In this last sense alone is it ever said that the sin of one is laid upon or borne by another.

1st. To impute sin is simply to charge it to one's account as the ground of punishment. (1) The Hebrew word אָשַׁם means to estimate, count, credit, impute as belonging to.—Genesis 31:15; Leviticus 7:18; Numbers 18:27; Psalm 106:31. (2) The same is true with regard to the Greek word λογίζομαι.—Isaiah 53:12; Romans 2:26; 4:3–9; **2 Corinthians 5:19**. (3) The Scriptures assert that our sins are imputed to Christ.—Mark 15:28; Isaiah 53:6 and 12; **2 Corinthians 5:21**; Galatians 3:13.

Please note his references to 2 Corinthians 5:19. Spurgeon, on the other hand, takes the word "world" out of context and treats it as those who oppose any form of true Calvinism do.

A.A. Hodge deals even more specially with Spurgeon's false doctrine a little later in his points 12 and 13. As I am quoting only the most relevant parts I refer the reader to an online copy of his Outlines at:

<http://www.apuritansmind.com/wp-content/uploads/FREEBOOKS/OutlinesofTheology-AAHodge.pdf>

Hodge continues than saying in part:

12. Prove the truth of the doctrine as to the nature of the satisfaction of Christ above stated from the effects which are attributed to it in Scripture.

1st. As these effects respect God they are declared to be propitiation and reconciliation. (1.) ἱλάσκεσθαι signifies to propitiate an offended Deity by means of expiatory sacrifice.—Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, and 4:10; Romans 3:25. (2) ῥῆμα; in respect to sin a covering, and in respect to God propitiation. It is properly translated in our version to make atonement, to appease, to pacify, to reconcile, to purge, to purge away, Ezekiel 16:63; Genesis 32:20, 21; Psalm 65:3, 4; 78:38; 1 Samuel 3:14; Numbers 35:33; to ransom, Psalm 49:7; to make satisfaction, Numbers 35:31, 32. (3) καταλλάσσειν to reconcile—by the death of Christ, not

imputing transgressions, justifying lay blood, etc., Romans 5:9, 10; **2 Corinthians 5:18–20**.

And Again:

13. In what sense and on what grounds was the satisfaction rendered by Christ necessary? and how does the true answer to this question confirm the orthodox doctrine as to its nature?

Since the salvation of men is a matter of sovereign grace, there could have been no necessity on the part of God for the provision of means to secure it, but on condition of God's determining to save sinners, then in what sense was the satisfaction rendered by Christ necessary?

1st. The advocates of the Socinian or Moral Influence Theory say that it was necessary only contingently and relatively, as the best means conceivable of proving the love of God and of subduing the opposition of sinners.

2nd. **The advocates of the Governmental Atonement Theory hold that it was only relatively necessary as the best sin deterring example of God's determination to punish sin. ...**

4th. **The true view is that it was absolutely necessary as the only means possible of satisfying the justice of God in view of the pardon of sin. The grounds of an absolute necessity on the part of God, can, of course, only be found in the immutable righteousness of his nature, lying behind and determining his will.**

Even Spurgeon's own textbook condemns his own view of the atonement, as can be seen especially in the last points 2nd and 4th quoted above.

To continue to lay down my own foundation I think it's important to quote from Adam Clarke's Commentary¹⁵. Clake was a British Methodist theologian who served three times as President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. Teaching Arminianism in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:19 he says:

Verse 19. That God was in Christ — This is the doctrine which this ministry of reconciliation holds out, and the doctrine which it uses to bring about the reconciliation itself.

God was in Christ:

1. Christ is the same as Messiah, the Anointed One, who was to be prophet, priest, and king, to the human race; not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles. There had been prophets, priests, and kings, among the Jews and their ancestors; and some who had been priest and prophet, king and priest, and king and prophet; but none have ever sustained in his own person the threefold office except Christ; for none

¹⁵ Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:19". "The Adam Clarke Commentary". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/2-corinthians-5.html>. 1832.

have ever ministered in reference to the whole world but he. The functions of all the others were restrained to the ancient people of God alone.

2. Now all the others were appointed of God in reference to this Christ; and as his types, or representatives, till the fulness of the time should come.

3. And that this Christ might be adequate to the great work of reconciling the whole human race to God, by making atonement for their sins, God was in him. The man Jesus was the temple and shrine of the eternal Divinity; for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Colossians 2:9; and **he made peace by the blood of his cross.**

4. Christ, by his offering upon the cross, made atonement for the sins of the world; and therefore one important branch of the doctrine of this reconciliation was to show that God would not impute or account their trespasses to them, so as to exact the penalty, because this Jesus had died in their stead.

The whole of this important doctrine was short, simple, and plain. Let us consider it in all its connections:

1. You believe there is a God.
2. You know he has made you.
3. He requires you to love and serve him.
4. To show you how to do this he has given a revelation of himself, which is contained in his law,
5. You have broken this law, and incurred the penalty, which is death.
6. Far from being able to undo your offences, or make reparation to the offended majesty of God, your hearts, through the deceitfulness and influence of sin, are blinded, hardened, and filled with enmity, against your Father and your Judge.
- 7. To redeem you out of this most wretched and accursed state, God in his endless love, has given his Son for you; who has assumed your nature, and died in your stead.**
- 8. In consequence of this he has commanded repentance towards God, and remission of sins, to be published in his name in all the earth.**
- 9. All who repent, and believe in Christ as having died for them as a sin-offering, (2 Corinthians 5:21,) shall receive remission of sins.**
10. And if they abide in him they shall have an eternal inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Clarke, who died in 1832, is just one example among many Arminian theologians. His doctrine of the Atonement though totally unbiblical was perhaps less flawed than Spurgeon's. In any event Spurgeon was very favorable to the Wesleyans of whom Clarke is a prime representative. The similarities of Spurgeon's views on this verse will become even more obvious as I continue to examine this sermon.

Section Two: Spurgeon applies his doctrine

Earlier, under part two: "Just what is the Great Doctrine of Substitution?" And section one: "The first part of Spurgeon's discourse: Who was made sin for us?", I posed a test we can use to tell if a doctrine is true or not. Simply put it is: Who is exalted most God or Man? Spurgeon, early in his ministry was aware of the importance of this test. He indeed put himself under it saying:

But since it is said that texts may be found to prove almost everything, we must remark, that a form of sound words must be one that *exalts God and puts down man*. We dare not for a moment think that any doctrine is sound that does not put the crown upon the head of Jesus and does not exalt the Almighty. If we see a doctrine which exalts the creature, **we do not care one fig about what arguments may be brought to support it, we know that it is a lie, unless it lays the creature in the very dust of abasement and exalts the Creator**. If it does not do this, it is nothing but a rotten doctrine of pride; it may dazzle us with the brilliant malaria rising from its marshes, but it never can shed a true and healthful light into the soul, it is a rotten doctrine, not fit to be builded on the gospel, unless it exalts Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah the Father, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

By our very words we shall be judged! By his very words above he judges his words below; he condemns his own teaching and preaching! For example, as quoted below, speaking of sinners, he says:

God would make him his friend, and spends the blood of his dear Son to cement that friendship; but man will not have it. See the great God turns to beseeching his obstinate creature! his foolish creature! In this I feel a reverent compassion for God. Must he beseech a rebel to be forgiven? Do you hear it? Angels, do you hear it? He who is the King of kings veils his sovereignty, and stoops to beseeching his creature to be reconciled to him! **I wonder not that some of my brethren start back from such an idea, and cannot believe that it could be so: it seems so derogatory to the glorious God.**

Returning to his sermon we find him in a fervor of emotionalism, preaching what to him is the gospel. His theory of the Atonement offers a form of substitution that opens the door for all sinners to accept or reject at their choice. His final part 2 is very short in comparison to his Part one. I'm

¹⁶ "The Form of Sound Words" sermon number 79 by Rev. C.H. Spurgeon at New Park Street Chapel May 11th, 1856

simply going to give a series of quotations from this part of his sermon and then add a few comments and some teaching from John Gill in closing.

Speaking then as I have shown from verse 20, he starts his pleading by saying:

Oh, that these lips had language, or that this heart could speak without them! Then would **I plead with every unconverted, unbelieving soul within this place**, and lead as for my life. Friend, you are at enmity with God, and God is angry with you; **but on his part there is every readiness for reconciliation**. He has made a way by which you can become his friend — a very costly way to himself, but free to you. He could not give up his justice, and so destroy the honor of his own character; but he did give up his Son, his Only Begotten, and his Well-Beloved; and that Son of his has been made sin for us, though he knew no sin. See how God meets you! See how willing, how anxious he is that there should be reconciliation between himself and guilty men. **O sirs, if you are not saved it is not because God will not or cannot save you; it is because you refuse to accept his mercy in Christ**. If there is any difference between you and God to-day it is not from want of kindness on his part; it is from want of willingness on yours. **The burden of your ruin must lie at your own door: your blood must be on your own skirts**.

... Why should you not be at peace with one who so much wants to be at peace with you? Why should you not love the God of love, and delight in him who is so kind to you? **What he hath done for me he is quite willing to do for you**: he is a God ready to pardon. ...

... It must be wrong for you to refuse the great atonement: **you do refuse it if you do not accept it at once**. It must be wrong for you to stand out against your God; and you do stand out against him if you will not be reconciled to him ...

... As I came along this morning I felt as if I could bury my head in my hands and weep as I thought of God beseeching anybody. He speaks, and it is done; myriads of angels count themselves happy to fly at his command; and yet man has so become God's enemy that he will not be reconciled to him. **God would make him his friend, and spends the blood of his dear Son to cement that friendship; but man will not have it. See the great God turns to beseeching his obstinate creature! his foolish creature! In this I feel a reverent compassion for God**. Must he beseech a rebel to be forgiven? Do you hear it? Angels, do you hear it? He who is the King of kings veils his sovereignty, and stoops to beseeching his creature to be reconciled to him! **I wonder not that some of my brethren start back from such an idea, and cannot believe that it could be so: it seems so derogatory to the glorious God**. Yet my text saith it, and it must be true — "As though God did beseech you by us." ...

Finally at the end of his sermon he closes by continuing to utter the hideous cry of all those who in actual fact deny the absolute sovereignty of God. In effect giving that honor to man's free will:

We do not exhort you to some impossible effort. We do not bid you do some great thing; we do not ask you for money or price; neither do we demand of you years of miserable feeling; but only this — be ye reconciled. It is not so much reconcile yourselves as “be reconciled.” **Yield yourselves to him** who round you now the bands of a man would cast, drawing you with cords of love because he was given for you. **His spirit strives with you, yield to his striving.** With Jacob you know there wrestled a man till the breaking of the day; let that man, that God-man, overcome you. Submit yourselves. Yield to the grasp of those hands which were nailed to the cross for you. **Will you not yield to your best friend?** He that doth embrace you now presses you to a heart that was pierced with the spear on your behalf. Oh, yield thee! Yield thee, man! Dost thou not feel some softness stealing over thee? Steel not thine heart against it. He saith, with a tone most still and sweet, “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” **Believe and live!** Quit the arch-enemy who has held thee in his grip. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, but flee where thou seest the open door of the great Father’s house. **At the gate the bleeding Savior is waiting to receive thee,** and to say, “I was made sin for thee, and thou art made the righteousness of God in me.” Father, draw them! Father, draw them! Eternal Spirit, draw them, for Jesus Christ thy Son’s sake! Amen.

I highly doubt that one could find more impassioned pleas from even the strongest Arminian, past, or present. Spurgeon feels the freedom to plead in this way for the reasons I have gone over above. **He has little or no concern for anything except what he believes any given scripture teaches as he expounds it.** It simply does not matter to him how inconsistent that is with other passages or what he has said or taught elsewhere. On these principles he says he is a Calvinist but preaches (and expounds) as an Arminian when it suits his purpose as in this sermon. One moment God is exalted, and man debased. Next, as we find here man is exalted and God debased.

I want to close with Dr. John Gills comments on 2 Corinthians 5:19,20. This will leave my reader with God glorifying and uplifting teaching that is entirely the opposite to Spurgeon’s false teaching on these two verses of God’s word:

Dr. Gill expounds these verses in this way:

Ver. 19. *To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, &c.]* This expresses and explains the subject-matter of the ministration of the Gospel, especially that part of it which concerns our reconciliation with God; and declares the scheme, the author, the subjects, the way, and means, and consequence of it. The phrase, *in Christ*, may be either joined with the word *God*, as in our version, *God was in Christ reconciling*; that is, he was in Christ drawing the scheme, fixing the method of reconciliation; his thoughts were employed about it, which were thoughts of peace; he called a council of peace, and entered into a covenant of peace with Christ, who was appointed and agreed to, to be the peacemaker. Or with the word *reconciling*, thus, *God was reconciling in Christ*; that is, by Christ; and so it

denotes, as before, actual reconciliation by Christ. God, in pursuance of his purposes, council, and covenant, sent his son to make peace; and laid our sins, and the chastisement of our peace upon him, this is the punishment of sin, whereby satisfaction was made for it, and so peace with God: or with the word *world*, thus, *God was reconciling the world in Christ*; by whom are meant, not all the individuals of mankind, for these are not all in Christ, nor all reconciled to God, multitudes dying in enmity to him, nor all interested in the blessing of non-imputation of sin; whereas each of these is said of the world: but the elect of God, who are chosen in Christ, whose peace Christ is, whose sins are not imputed to them, and against whom no charge of any avail can be laid; and particularly the people of God among the Gentiles are here designed, who are frequently called *the world* in Scripture; being the world which God loved, for whose sins Christ is the propitiation, and of the reconciling of which mention is particularly made, John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 11:12, 15. And this sense well agrees with the context, which signifies, that no man is regarded for his natural descent; 'tis no matter whether he is a Jew or a Gentile, provided he's but a new creature: for Gospel reconciliation, and the ministry of it, concern one as well as another. Moreover, this reconciliation must be considered, either as intentional, or actual, or as a publication of it in the ministry of the word; and taken either way it cannot be thought to extend to every individual person in the world: if it is to be understood intentionally, that God intended the reconciliation of the world to himself by Christ, and drew the scheme of it in him, his intentions cannot be frustrated; his counsel shall stand, and he'll do all his pleasure; a scheme so wisely laid by him in his son, cannot come to nothing, or only in part be executed; and yet this must be the case, if it was his design to reconcile every individual of mankind to himself, since a large number of them are not reconciled to him: and if the words are to be understood of an actual reconciliation of the world unto God by Christ, which sense agrees with the preceding verse, then it is out of all question, that the word *world* cannot be taken in so large a sense as to take in every man and woman in the world; since it is certain that there are many who are not reconciled to God, who die in their sins, whose peace is not made with him, nor are they reconciled to the way of salvation by Christ: and should it be admitted that the ministry of reconciliation is here designed, which is not an offer of reconciliation to the world, but a proclamation or declaration of peace and reconciliation made by the death of Christ; this is not sent to all men; multitudes were dead before the word of reconciliation was committed to the apostles; and since, there have been great numbers who have never so much as heard of it; and even in the times of the apostles it did not reach to every one then living: besides, the text does not speak of what God did by the ministry of his apostles, but of what he himself had been doing in his son, and which was antecedent, and gave rise unto and was the foundation of their ministry. There was a scheme of reconciliation drawn in the counsels of God before the world began, and an actual reconciliation by the death of Christ, which is published in the Gospel, which these words contain the sum and substance of: and this reconciliation, as before, is said to be *unto himself*; to his

offended justice, and for the glory of his perfections, and the reconciling of them together in the affair of salvation: *not imputing their trespasses*. This was what he resolved upon from all eternity, that inasmuch as Christ was become the surety and substitute of his people, he would not impute their sins to them, or look for satisfaction for them from them; but would reckon and place them to the account of their surety, and expect satisfaction from him; and accordingly he did, and accordingly he had it. And this will, not to impute sin to his people, or not to punish for it, which existed in God from everlasting, is no other than a justification of them; for to whom the Lord does not impute sin, he imputes righteousness, and such are properly justified. *And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation; or put it in us*, as a rich and valuable treasure; for such the doctrine of peace and reconciliation, by the blood of Christ, is; a sacred deposition, committed to the trust of faithful men, to be dispensed and disposed of for the use and purpose for which it is given them. Ver. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, &c.] Since God has made reconciliation by Christ, and the ministry of it is committed to us, we are ambassadors for him; we come with full powers from him, not to propose terms of peace, to treat with men about it, to offer it to them, but to publish and proclaim it as made by him: we personate him, and God who made it by him, as though God did beseech you by us; to regard this embassy and message of peace, which we bring from him; to consider from whence it takes its rise, what methods have been used to effect it, and how it is accomplished; which should oblige to say and sing with the angels, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men; and to behave in a peaceable manner to all men, and one another: we pray you in Christ's stead; personating him as if he was present before you: be ye reconciled to God; you, who are new creatures, for whom Christ has died, and peace is made; you, the members of the church at Corinth, who upon a profession of faith have been taken into such a relation; be ye reconciled to all the dispensations of divine Providence towards you; let your wills bow, and be resigned to his, since he is the God of peace to you; and as you are reconciled by Christ as a priest, be reconciled to him as your King, and your God; to all his ordinances and appointments; to all the orders and laws of his house: conform in all things to his will and pleasure, which we, as his ambassadors, in his name and stead, have made known unto you. You ought to be all obedience to him, and never dispute anything he says or orders.¹⁷

¹⁷ Gill, J. (1809). [*An Exposition of the New Testament*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 791). Mathews and Leigh.

