

## 1 Peter 2:21-25, Part E

1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:** <sup>22</sup> *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth";* <sup>23</sup> **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup> who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.** <sup>25</sup> **For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

As we progress through this passage in [1 Peter 2](#), we have come to v24. This is a precious verse on the atonement and the impact of the atoning work of Christ in the believer's life. However, before even beginning an exegesis of the passage, it is important to appreciate that the word "**atonement**" is not a word that is used in the New Testament. It is used nearly 100 times in the Old Testament, and is used nearly one half of those times in [Leviticus](#). The verb "**atone**" is only used in two instances, and both of those are in the Old Testament again. We are all familiar with what was called "The Day of Atonement" in the Old Testament. Even today, it is still considered to be the holiest day of the year for Orthodox Jews. The Day of Atonement is also known as Yom (day) Kippur (Atonement). On the Day of Atonement, there were several animal sacrifices made, but there were two in particular that had the greatest significance. The first was a male goat that was sacrificed as "L Adonai", or "to the Lord". A second male goat was selected by lottery and represented what was called the "Azazel goat". The priest would lay his hands on the goat's head as a way of signifying that the sins of the people were being laid on the goat, or symbolically transferred to the goat, and then the goat was released out into the wilderness as the "Scapegoat" after the High Priest had entered into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the "Mercy Seat". Obviously, all of this was symbolically foreshadowing what Christ would do regarding sin.

So, if we use the noun "**atonement**" in this discussion, then it is very critical that we understand two things. First, it is not a New Testament word, and secondly, it is critical to gain an understanding of how the word is actually used theologically. Wayne Grudem in his book [Systematic Theology](#) defines the word "**atonement**" as "*the work Christ did in His life and death to earn our salvation*".<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur in his book [Biblical Doctrine](#) defines "**atonement**" as "*The aspect of the work of Christ, and particularly His death, that secures the restoration of fellowship between individual believers and God.*"<sup>2</sup> So, the word "**atonement**" is used to describe the very unique work of Christ that was performed on the believer's behalf. There are some theologians that place the greater emphasis on the death of Christ, but in reality, the death of Christ would have been meaningless if in reality He had not lived a perfect life, one that was fully submitted to His Father's will. In my mind, it would be doctrinally misleading to, in some subtle way, divorce His death from His life.

Now, anytime that we are analyzing a passage, the most critical element of our analysis is to find the key words, the key terms, the key verbs. The first term is "**who Himself**". Most of the translations of our verse in [1 Peter 2:24](#) emphasize this same intensive use of the word. For instance,

<sup>1</sup> Grudem, Systematic, 1236.

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, Biblical, 924.

1Pe 2:24 (KJV) **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.**

1Pe 2:24 (NASB) **and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**

1Pe 2:24 (ESV) **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.**

1Pe 2:24 (NIV) **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**

In John MacArthur's commentary, He said this about this emphatic and intensive use of the term "who Himself". I love the way he stated this. He said,

*"He Himself" is an emphatic personalization and stresses that the Son of God voluntarily and without coercion died as the only sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all would ever believe."*<sup>3</sup>

Listen to how Jesus described this in [John 10:15-18](#),

Jn 10:15 (NKJV) **As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.<sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.<sup>17</sup> Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.<sup>18</sup> No one takes 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 command I have received from My Father."**

The illusion in [1 Peter 2:24](#) is probably to [Isaiah 53](#). Listen to these three verses out of [Isaiah 53](#).

Isa 53:4 (NKJV) **Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.**

The pronoun "He", just like in [1 Peter 2:24](#), as used in this context is what is known as an intensive pronoun which simply means that it is emphasizing the person that it is addressing. It would be like saying "**He Himself and He alone has borne our griefs**". [Isaiah 53:11](#) essentially uses the same grammatical structure.

Isa 53:11 (NKJV) **He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.**

It is the clear idea that Jesus Christ Himself, He is the One who has born our sins and iniquities. Whenever sacrifices were made in the Old Testament, the priest would bring the sacrifice to the altar. In the same way, it was Christ and Christ alone who brought the sacrifice of His life to the cross so that He could bear the sins of His people. I am reminded of what Jesus said to His disciples during His last meal with them the night that He was betrayed. He said this in [1 Corinthians 11:24](#),

1Co 11:24 (NKJV) **and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."**

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<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, 170.

Our third verse in [Isaiah](#) is [Isaiah 53:12](#) and says,

**Isa 53:12 (NKJV) Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**

In [1 Peter 2:24](#), the same word “**bore**” is used as it is in the Isaiah passages. It is the Greek verb “*anaphero*” and it comes from two words – “*ana*” for up and “*phero*” for to take. It is an aorist tense, indicative mood, active voice which is the perfect parsing of the verb for something that someone did in the past of their own accord. It is the primary technical term that is used in the Old Testament Septuagint for offering a sacrifice on an altar. However, “*anaphero*” can also have the idea of bearing something, of enduring something, and that is probably the best way to understand this verb “**bore**”.<sup>4</sup>

So, it means to take up, to bear, to suffer, and is a direct Old Testament and New Testament reference for offering up a sacrifice, and in the [1 Peter 2:24](#) verse it speaks of Christ offering “**Himself**” up to suffer for our sins. For instance, [Hebrews 7:27](#) says,

**Heb 7:27 (NKJV) who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up (*anaphero*) sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up (*anaphero*) Himself.**

[Hebrews 9:28](#) says,

**Heb 9:28 (NKJV) so Christ was offered (*prosphero* – to take to, to accomplish) once to bear (*anaphero*) the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.**

Now, I know that someone is going to think to himself or herself “*Why so much detail on a word which we all fully understand and appreciate?*” Well, I always like to think of it this way – what Jesus did for me is what I deserved to happen to me. At a personal level and in and of our own power and abilities, none of us have any power whatsoever to deal with sin. Before we were saved, we stood as guilty before God as we possibly could have, so what Jesus Christ did for us is really indescribable. We have entire courses that are taught at the seminary level on just Christology. I could spend months teaching on who Christ is and what He accomplished. This is no normal death. This is not just someone passing away or dying. This is a substitutionary death, or someone paying for the sins of an undeserving person with their own life. This is someone dying for someone else so that the hostility and enmity that separated them from a holy and righteous God could be completely and eternally removed. This is someone who did not deserve wrath, but who not only suffered a horrible physical death, but also suffered indescribably in His divine nature. He did it so that the wrath that would be directed at us, or eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire, was completely removed. Whatever judgment was to be placed on us as sinners was placed on Him. If Jesus Christ had not done this for us, then we would still remain condemned. If I can say this in a gracious way, you and I literally have no idea what Jesus Christ did for us when He offered Himself up and bore our sins – we have no idea. We come to church, we sing songs, we pray, we read the Bible, but we have no idea of the magnitude and of the greatness and of the enormity of what Christ did for us. Just what He gave up to become the God / Man in the Incarnation has to be the greatest

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<sup>4</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 132.

sacrifice in all of eternity.

So, whenever we speak in very simple terms of the word “**bore**”, or of Christ bearing our sins, it is actually humanly impossible for us to grasp the colossal magnitude, extent, and scale of what actually was taking place on the cross. Please do not lose sight of the simple fact that this is not just “someone” dying. This is the “**He Himself**” of Scripture that is dying. This is the living God of all eternity, the Creator of all things bearing all of the sin, all of the punishment, and all of the wrath that was to be poured out on individuals in both His physical body and His divine nature. This is the one person in all of eternity who did not deserve one ounce of such inhumane treatment. The enormity of this is impossible to describe, impossible to grasp, impossible to understand. I am convinced that the magnitude of this sacrifice is so great that we humanly cannot even appreciate it.

So, why did I say “*Why so much detail on a word which we all fully understand and appreciate?*” It is to let us know that we really do not understand it and that we really do not appreciate it. It is so that in our busyness, and in our infatuation with the world and all of its glamor and glitter, and in all of our pursuits of comfortable lifestyles and creature comforts, and in all of our self-indulgences in things that have no eternal value, that maybe for just a few moments that we let God bring us back to His spiritual realities. If I can say it in a different way, that maybe for just a few moments God can stagger us and astonish us and shake us out of our little spiritual cocoons and our little “holy huddle” to the point that Jesus becomes greater to us. This is not a reproof or a rebuke – not at all. To the contrary, this is a simple spiritual reality check to help us refocus on what is truly important for our life.

The actual weight of sin that continues on in the world and too often in our own personal lives is so great that it defies explanation. Listen to what Paul says about this aspect of sin operating in the world. This is staggering to me. [Romans 8:22](#) says,

**Ro 8:22 (NKJV) For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.**

Everything in creation, the whole creation – it is groaning and laboring because of sin. This is the only place in the New Testament that this word for “**groan**” is actually used, and it means that the creation in some mystical way is moaning, sighing, wailing, and lamenting the effects of sin on it and everything in it. No wonder God is going to create “**a new heaven and a new earth**”. The last thing that we ever want to do is to somehow take forgiveness lightly, to take grace lightly, to take mercy lightly, and worst of all to take Jesus Christ lightly – just put Him on the back burner. Just so that we keep all of this personal, [1 Peter 2:24](#) says “**who Himself bore our sins...**” Whatever it was that He willingly chose to do, it was for me, it was for you.

Now, from a practical point, it is important to see another aspect of why all of this happened. The death of Christ is so extensive in its impact that it is literally impossible to capture all that it accomplished. However, in this verse it is apparent that even though one primary purpose was the forgiveness for our sins, it was also so “**that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness...**” The last thing that we want is for us to have such a low appreciation for the work of Christ on our part that we simply ignore one of the great purposes of His dying. Immediately we have to ask the question – “*How do we live for righteousness?*”, and the answer is simple – we die to sins. The particular Greek word for “**died**” is “*apoginomai*” and it means to be separated from, to take no part in, and to cease to be what we use to

be.<sup>5</sup> In fact, this is such a unique meaning for this word that it is the only place that it is used in the New Testament. It has the distinct idea of departing from something, so it is not the typical definition that we would use for physically dying.<sup>6</sup> It is a word that clearly represents the idea of just not living how we use to live. This is a word that speaks of a conscious effort on the believer's part to actually honor the death of Christ, to exalt the death of Christ by living as righteous a life as is possible, and in order to do that I have to be willing to die to the things that are not honoring to Christ. It is a word of great privilege and great concession on our part to the Father's will for our life. It is seeing the Christian life as a life of personal sacrifice and commitment to something much greater than we are.

I received a text message from one of my online students recently and he wanted to know if he could eat or drink broth during a fast. I wrote back and said sure you can. Then he wrote me back and said that he was fasting until God delivered him from his anger issues. I wrote him back and said that he really did not need to focus on his anger, but on his self-control. His issue is a lack of self-control. The way that we “**live for righteousness**” and “**die to sin**” is that practically we focus our life on the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the attributes and qualities of Christ. The more that we focus on the negative, the more it stays in our mind, and the more it keeps before us of what we are trying to overcome. The ability to have personal victory in our Christian life is not a by-product of our self-determination, of grunting and groaning to overcome something, but simply committing ourselves to that which is good and right – in this student's case, self-control.

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<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, 220.

<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, 145.