

SIN AND ATONEMENT IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

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1. SIN IN ISLAM

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There are many words for sin in the Qur'an. The most important are as follows:

1. **Al Dhanb** (offence, crime, misdeed) - There are 39 verses on this subject in the Qur'an. Most of them align with the thought expressed in (Sura 48:1-2) "Lo, We

have given thee (O Muhammad) clear victory that Allah may forgive thee of thy sin (Al Dhanb) which is passed, and that which is to come."

2. **Al Fahsha`** (vile deed, crime, adultery) - This term is used mostly to express the sin of adultery. The Qur'an forbids it saying, "Do not draw near to vile deeds, neither that which is seen or that which is hidden." (Sura 6:151)
3. **Al Wizr** (sin as a heavy load, burden, encumbrance) - "Have We not given thee relief, and removed the burden (Al Wizr) which weighed down on thy back?" (Sura 94:1-3)

Explaining this verse, Al Fakhr Al Razi said that the angel Gabriel came to Muhammad, cut open his chest, took out his heart, washed and purified it from rebelliousness, and then filled it with knowledge and faith.

Ibn Hisham, quoting Muhammad Ibn Ishaq, explained this, saying: "A group of Muhammad's friends asked him, 'O prophet of Allah, tell us about yourself.' He replied, 'I was nursed among the Bani Sa'd. When I was with a foster brother behind our houses taking care of the herd, there came to me two men dressed in white, and carrying a golden bowl full of snow. They took me and split open my body and removed my heart and split it and took from it a clot of dark blood, and threw it away. Then they washed my heart and my body in the snow. Then one said to the other, 'Weigh him against ten of his people.' He did so, and I outweighed them. Then he said, 'Weigh him against one hundred of his people.' He did so, and I outweighed them also. Then he said, 'Weigh him against a thousand of his people.' He did so, and I outweighed them also. Then he said, 'Leave him, for by Allah, if you were to weigh him against all his people, he would outweigh them."

4. **Al Dalal** (straying, to be lost) - "Thy Lord will give unto thee so that thou wilt be satisfied. Did He not find thee an orphan and shelter thee? Did He not find thee destitute and enrich thee?" (Sura 93:6-8) Al Kalbi interpreted the word 'lost and straying' as 'unbelief.'
5. **Al Kufr** (godlessness, atheism) - As the Qur'an says to the believers, "Allah hath made atheism (Al Kufr) and iniquity and rebellion hateful unto you." (Sura 49:7) Al Zamakhshari explains this expression saying, "There are three subjects here, Al Kufr, which is denial of God; and Al Fusuk, which is lying and Al `Uryan, which is rebellion."
6. **Al Zulm** (unjust, iniquity, unfairness) - As it is said: "When thy Lord called Moses saying, 'Go to the unjust folk (Al Zalimin).'" (Sura 26:10)
7. **Al Ithm** (crime, misdeed, offence) - The Qur'an says, "Forsake wickedness; both the open practice and the secret intention thereof. Lo! those who practice misdeeds will be awarded according to that which they have committed." (Sura 6:121)
8. **Al Fudjur** (immorality, depravity) - It is said in the Qur'an, "And lo! The depraved (Al Fudjur) verily will be in hell, and they will not be absent from it, they will burn therein on the Day of Judgment." (Sura 82:14-15)

9. **Al Khati'a** (sin, offence) - The Qur'an says, "Whoso committeth a sin (Al Khati'a) or misdeed (Al Ithm), then blames it on the innocent, hath burdened himself with slander (Al Buhtan)." (Sura 4:112)

There are three names for sin in this verse: Al Khuti'a, Al Ithm and Al Buhtan. Al Imam Al Razi distinguished between them in these ways:

- Al Khati'a is small (sin), and Al Ithm is great (sin).
 - Al Khati'a is a fault which affects the sinner himself, and Al Ithm is a crime against others, such as injustice and murder.
 - Al Khati'a is an act which should not be done whether it is either pre-meditated or by mistake, and Al Ithm is a sin which is deliberately committed.
 - Al Buhtan, however, is the casting of detestable suspicion on an innocent person. The slanderer is censured with the strongest censure in this world and most severely punished in Eternity.
10. **Al Sharr** (evil) - The Qur'an states, "Whoso doeth ill (Al Sharr) an atom's weight, will see it then." (Sura 99:8)

Abu Ja'far Al Tabari, quoting Yunus bin `Abd Al' A`la from Ibn Wahab from Yahya bin `Abd Allah from Abi `Abd Al Rahman Al Hubali from `Abd Allah bin `ASmr bin Al `As, said, "This chapter was sent down when Abu Bakr Al Saddik was seated. He wept when it was sent down. The Prophet of Allah said to him, 'What makes you weep, Abu Bakr?' and he replied, 'This Sura makes me weep.' Then the Prophet said to him, 'If you did not sin and do wrong and in that received Allah's forgiveness, Allah would create a people who would sin and do wrong and would forgive them.'"

11. **Al Sayyi'a** (offence, misdeed) - The Qur'an says, "Whoso bringeth a misdeed (Al Sayyi'a), such will be flung down on their faces in the Fire." (Sura 27:90)

Ibn 'Abbas said, "When this verse was sent down, the believers found it unbearable, and said to Muhammad, 'Who of us has not done misdeeds, how then will the recompense be?' and Muhammad replied, 'Allah has promised for obedience ten blessings, and for one disobedience one punishment, so one to whom an offence is accounted loses one of the ten blessings and nine still remain.'"

12. **Al Su`** (evil, misfortune) - It is said, "He who doeth evil (Al Su`) will have the recompense thereof, and cannot find against Allah any protecting friend or helper." (Sura 4:123)
13. **Al Fasad** (corruption) - It is stated in the Qur'an, "When (the hypocrite) turns away (from thee) to corrupt the world, the crops and the people are destroyed and truly Allah does not love corruption." (Sura 2:205)
14. **Al Fisk** (viciousness, moral depravity) - It is written in the Qur'an, "Verily, We have sent down unto thee clear verses and no one other than the depraved

- consider them a lie." (Sura 2:99) Commentators expound that Al Fisk is when man goes beyond that which God has limited and that the depraved are godless.
15. **Al Buhtan** (slander, lying) - It is written, "I is not for us to speak of this. Praise to Thee (Allah); this is awful slander (Al Buhtan)." (Sura 24:16)

There are many other words which describe Sin, but we have no space in which to mention them or their Qur'anic context. Before I finish the discussion about sin, I must mention that the Qur'an teaches the existence of 'original sin' and states that it was the cause of the fall of Adam and Eve and their descendants. There are many verses in the Qur'an proving this, but it is enough to mention the clearest and easiest to understand.

For example, the Qur'an states, "And We said, 'O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise (the Garden of Eden) and eat with pleasure from its fruits, wherever you want but do not come near this tree lest you become of those who offend.' But Satan misled them and expelled them from the place in which they were; and We said, 'Fall down each one of you a foe unto the other! There shall be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time.' Then Adam received from his Lord words and he (Allah) accepted his repentance. Lo! He is the acceptor of repentance (forgiving), the Merciful." (Sura 2:35-37)

Arabic scholars disagree over the whereabouts of Adam and Eve before their fall. Abu Kasim Al Balkhi and Abu Muslim Al Isfahani said Paradise (the Garden) was on Earth and explained that the Fall (Al Iibat) was a transfer from one place to another, as the Qur'an uses the verb 'fall' (Iibat) for removal, e.g. go down to Egypt. (Sura 2:61) But Al Djabba'i said that Paradise (the Garden) was in the seventh heaven, because it is said "fall down from it."

It is to be noted that the Qur'an agrees with the text of Genesis, in that the rebellion of Adam was the eating from the tree in the midst of the Garden. However, Muslim scholars disagree over what kind of tree it was. They have many accounts, all based on proofs ascribed to Islamic tradition. To quote some of these:

- Ishak, quoting from `Abd Al Razzak, said, "We were told by Ibn `Uyayna and Ibn Al Mubarak and Al Hasan bin `Amara and Minhal bin `Amru and Sa`id bin Jubair and Ibn `Abbas that the tree which God has forbidden to Adam and his wife was an ear of corn."
- Ibn Hamid said that he was told by Salama, quoting Ibn Ishak, some people of Yaman, and Wahab bin Munabbih Al Yamani that it was wheat, but that a single grain of it was the size of a cow's kidney, softer than butter, and sweeter than honey.
- It is said that Abu Bakr Al Saddik asked the Prophet of Allah about the 'tree' and he replied, "The blessed tree was an ear of corn."
- Salama said that he was told by Muhammad bin Ishak and Ya'kub bin `Ataba that it was the tree which the angels rubbed against to gain immortality.
- Ibn Waki' said he was told by `Abd Allah, who received it from Isra'il, who received it from Al Saddi, who was told by Ibn `Abbas, that it was a vine.

- Mudjahid and Katada said it was as fig tree.
- Al Rabi'Ibn Uns said that he who eats of the tree has to defecate and there should not be any defecation in Paradise (the Garden).

The Qur'an agrees also with the book of Genesis in that Adam and Eve approached the tree to eat through the seduction of the Devil, for it says "the Devil misled them."

Ibn Djuraydj said, quoting Ibn `Abbas, that the word "misled" should be "He seduced them."

In the teaching of the Qur'an Adam is one of the Prophets, and Prophets according to Islamic teaching are infallible. Thus there has arisen a problem concerning the "fall" of Adam. Commentators have endeavoured to escape from this difficulty and have said that at the time when that offence was committed Adam was not a prophet but became one afterwards. This opinion is not unanimously accepted. Other commentators have said that Adam was a prophet from the beginning but fell through forgetfulness. They compared him with someone fasting who forgets and eats by mistake because he has been absorbed in some activity of life. Yet other version is that Eve offered him wine until he became drunk. Therefore, he sinned while he was drunk.

I can't understand how this explanation can find acceptance since the Qur'an says, "Then Adam received from his Lord words and He (Allah) accepted his repentance. Lo! He is the acceptor of repentance (forgiving), and Merciful." (Sura 2:37) The word `repentance' here shows that without doubt, he fell into sin wilfully even though, as the Bible says, he tried to blame Eve.

On the other hand, many scholars confirm that Adam ate from the tree intentionally. Abu Dja'far Al Tabari, quoting Yunis `Abd Al'A`la and Wahab and Ibn Zayd, in explaining the expression "Adam received from his Lord words" said, "He, Allah, taught them this verse, `Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, surely we are lost.'"

Musa bin Harun, quoting `Amr bin Hammad and Asbat and Al Saddi, in explanation of the verse, "Adam received from his Lord words" said, "Adam said to the Lord, `Have you not created me by your hand?' The answer was yes. `Have you not breathed into me your spirit?' The answer was yes. `Does not your mercy surpass your wrath?' The answer was yes. He said, `O Lord, have you predestined me to do this?' The answer was yes. Then he said, `O Lord, if I repent and make amends, will you restore me to Paradise (the Garden)?' He said yes Allah said, `Then his Lord chose him, and accepted his repentance and guided him."

Another account from Muhammad bin Bashshar, who quoted `Abd Al Rahman bin Mahdi, who was informed by Sufyan, who received it from `Abd Al `Aziz bin Rafi', who in turn said he was informed by one who heard 'Ubayd bin `Umayr, says that Adam said, "O Lord, this sin of mine which I committed, was it foreordained by You before You created me or something which I invented myself?" Allah said, "It was something I

foreordained for you before I created you." Then Adam said, "As You have foreordained this for me, forgive me." So the verse, "Adam received from his Lord words" was given.

All these explanations do not negate the logical fact that Adam chose to sin. This is what Al Fakhr Al Razi thought when he said, "The verses which they (scholars) adhere to concerning actions of people are many, and the first of them is the story of Adam. They hold seven views with regard to this:

1. That he was disobedient and the disobedient is a great sinner in two ways. First, the text of the Qur'an demands that he must be punished according to the word of the Highest who said 'who disobeys Allah and His Prophet deserves the fires of the hell.' Secondly, the word 'disobedient' is a derogatory title which must not be given except to great sinners.
2. It is demonstrated from the story of Adam that he was seduced, as the Qur'an states: 'He was seduced,' and seduction is against right guidance.
3. He was repentant, and the repentant is an offender. The repentant is remorseful over his offences, and the one who is thus remorseful confesses about himself that he is an offender. If he lies in that confession, then he is an offender in lying, and if he is true in his confession, he has proved himself an offender.
4. He committed that which was forbidden by His (Allah's) words, 'Did I not forbid that tree to both of you?' and 'Do not draw near to this tree,' and the committing of that which is forbidden is the essence of offence.
5. He was called a transgressor according to his (Allah's) words, 'Then you will be from the transgressors.' He (Adam) called himself a transgressor in the verse, 'O Lord, we have transgressed against ourselves.' The transgressor is accursed, according to Allah's words, 'Truly the curse of Allah rests on the transgressors,' and he who merited the curse was a great sinner.
6. He (Adam) confessed that if it were not for the forgiveness of Allah granted to him, then he would surely be one of those who had lost all. Thus he declared himself to be a great sinner.
7. He was sent out of the Garden because of Satan's devilish insinuation, and his degradation was a recompense for his act in obeying Satan. This demonstrated that he was a great sinner.

There is disagreement among scholars as to how Satan entered Paradise (the Garden) and was enabled to tempt Adam.

Al Kassas, quoting Wahab bin Munabbih and Al Saddi and Ibn `Abbas, said that "When Satan wanted to enter Paradise (the Garden), he was forbidden by the angelic guards. After he had presented himself to the other animals and not one of them had accepted him he came to the serpent, a creature having four limbs, the best of all walking creatures. So the serpent swallowed him and brought him into the Garden secretly. When the serpent entered Paradise (the Garden), the Devil emerged from his mouth, and busied himself with his whisperings. There is no doubt that the serpent was cursed, lost its legs and had to crawl upon its belly. Its sustenance was found in the dust and it became an enemy of the children of Adam."

In a book (Djami 'Al Bayan) of Al Tabari, he quotes Al Hasan Abi Yahya and `Abd Al Razzak who said " `Amr bin `Abd Al Rahman bin Muharrib told us that he heard Wahab bin Munabbih say, `When Allah put Adam and his descendants in Paradise (the Garden), He forbade them the `Tree'. The `Tree' had manifold intertwining branches and fruit which the angels partook of in order to gain their immortality. This is the fruit which Allah forbade Adam and his wife. When the Devil desired to cause their downfall he entered inside the serpent, which had four limbs and was from the best of the walking creatures which Allah had created. When the serpent entered Paradise (the Garden) the Devil emerged from inside it and took from the `Tree' which God had forbidden to Adam and his wife and brought the fruit to Eve and said, `Look at this Tree, how fragrant is its scent, how delicious its taste and how nice its colour.' So Eve took and ate from it, then went with it to Adam and said, `Look at this Tree, how fragrant is its scent, how delicious its taste and how nice its colour.' Then Adam also ate from it, and their shame appeared to them. Adam then entered the hollow of the Tree and his Lord called to him, `O Adam where are you?' He replied, `I am here, O Lord.' Allah asked him, `Will you not come forth?' But Adam replied, `I am embarrassed before Thee, O Lord.' Then Allah said, `Cursed be the earth from which you were created, a curse which will change its fruits into thorns.' (There was not in Paradise (the Garden), nor on earth, anything like it (the fruit) which was better than the banana and the lotus.) Then God said, `O Eve, you are the who deceived my slave. You will not become pregnant except with aversion, and when you desire to bring forth children you will often be near to death.' To the serpent He (Allah) said, `You were the one who brought the accursed one inside you into the Garden to receive my slave. Therefore, you are completely cursed. Your limbs will go into your belly, and there shall be no sustenance for you other than dust. You are the enemy of men and they are yours. Wherever you find one of them you will catch his heels, and where he finds you he will shatter your head."

Other experts in the Islamic Law say that when Adam and Eve were going towards the gate of the Garden the Devil was waiting nearby, and he began to whisper to them.

However, there is a text in the Qur'an which settles the matter as to whether Adam was a sinner. This says, "But Satan whispered to him, `O Adam! Shall I show thee the tree of immortality and a possession that wasteth not away?' Then the two of them ate so that their shame became apparent unto them and they began to cover themselves with some of the leaves of the Garden. And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he went astray." (Sura 20:120-121)

This word `astray' is taken from a root, meaning `error.' Al Razi in explaining the word `astray' says it is synonymous with `error.' `Error' is the opposite of `integrity of conduct.' Such a sin includes only the depraved who is resigned to his dissolute life.

Abu Imam Al Bahili said, "The case of Adam was extraordinary, as Allah awakened in him desire for continual rest and an ordered life by his saying, `Let him not drive you both out of the Garden so that you be distressed... and that you do not thirst therein nor toil.' (Sura 20:117,119) The Devil also made him desire continual rest saying, `Shall I show thee the Tree of Immortality' and also to desire an ordered life by saying, `and a

possession that wasteth not away?' The thing which Allah made Adam desire was the same as mentioned by the Devil. But Allah made it conditional on his not touching the tree. Satan on the other hands enticed him to partake of it. Then seeing as Adam had a perfect mind and the knowledge that Allah was his Lord, teacher and helper, and the knowledge that the Devil was his enemy, how did he believe the Devil and reject the word of Allah?"

It is a fact that the commentators are unable to eradicate the offence of Adam, because the Qur'an declares his offence in the saying, "Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray." The commentators all agree, relying on the verses of the Qur'an, that rebellion is an offence, and "the rebel" is a name of disparagement which is not given except to a great sinner. There is no reason in giving the name "a great sinner" except it be to one who has committed a deed worthy of punishment.

2. SIN IN CHRISTIANITY

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Sin is evident in the history of mankind. Everyone who examines his own heart or considers the behaviour of his fellowman must admit it to be a reality. All men, even those who have never received the light of divine revelations, are conscious of their sins and confess their shortcomings and inability to fulfill the moral obligations demanded of them.

Sin is not merely shameful behaviour as many people think, but it is also a departure from God, our Creator and sole aim. This departure from God is not just the inclination towards evil; it is a separation from that which is good.

Experience has proved that the natural man cannot discern the power of sin and the strength of its influence in man. The believer has the divine law as his instructor to lead him to Christ. Christ gave man grace, so he knows the reality of sin and its effect in luring him into a state of depravity. He became aware of his need for divine grace and for the blood of atonement for his justification.

Sin is transgression of the law of God (1. John 3:4). It is offensive to God no matter what the sinner's excuse may be or how insignificant the sin.

The Coming of Sin into the World

We read in Romans 5:12 that "Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all men sinned." The apostle means that the cause of all men becoming sinners was Adam, the father of mankind. Paul, in using the words "through one man," looks upon Adam and Eve as one, as is mentioned in

Genesis 5:2. The apostle does not mention the temptation by the serpent nor Eve's disobedience because his purpose is to show that Adam represented all his ascendants.

Some philosophers say that man is born innocent and that if he lives in a corrupted environment, he would be influenced by it and sin would infiltrate him. The truth is man is born with a sinful nature. A corrupted environment may assist the growth of sin but man is sinful at heart.

Sin is an Inheritance

We know from experience that a living creature can not reproduce offspring different from itself. A bull will not produce a lamb and as Christ said, "grapes are not gathered from thorns." This law applies also to man. Adam, the father of mankind, lost his righteous life through his disobedience. As a punishment he was cast out of the purity of the Garden of Eden to a land cursed because of his sin. There he begat children, and as a matter of course these descendants knew nothing of the Garden of Purity. The Bible states this fact in the words of David in Psalm 51:5, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Paul also said in Romans 3:10-12, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one."

Augustine explained the teaching of the Bible concerning the Fall and the inheritance of sin, saying:

1. God created the first man in His own likeness, in knowledge and righteousness and holiness, chosen to be immortal; and committed to him the responsibility for other creatures. He gave Adam the power to choose good or evil, thus confirming his moral nature.
2. Allowed to choose his own way, Adam sinned against God by choosing wrongly when he was tempted by the Devil. He fell from the life for which he was created.
3. As a result of his disobedience, he lost his divine likeness and his whole nature was corrupted and ruined. Now being spiritually dead, he became incapable of doing good. He became subject to physical death and exposed to all the evils of this life and eternal death.
4. Thus, that which is true of Adam as head of the human race is true also of his descendants. They are born condemned, devoid of the likeness of God, and morally depraved.
5. This personal inherited corruption is the very nature of sin, though it is not sin in action.
6. The loss of original righteousness and the corruption of nature, which resulted from Adam's sin, are the penalties of the first sin.
7. Regeneration is the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit. Man is the object, not the author of it. Without exception it is related to the will of God. Salvation is of grace alone.

The Effect of Sin on Man

The English scientist Huxley has said, "I know of no study which has led to spiritual misery greater than that of the evolution of mankind. From the dark background of the study of history it seems that man is subject to an element put within him which dominates him with a terrible power. He is a blind and feeble victim of impulses leading him to destruction and given up to endless delusions which bring upon him heavy mental cares, resulting in his physical body being worn out by worry and strain. For thousands of years he has been the same, fighting and persecuting his fellowman and returning to lament his victims and build their tombs."

Does anyone need such a testimony to realize the effect of sin? Isn't enough for man to look into the depth of his own heart, to discover his tendencies and whims and realize the presence of the law of sin dwelling in him?

We have only to glance at human society to perceive this fact in all men. As Psalm 14:1 says, "They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds," and in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way." All are devoid of that likeness of God which Adam had before he fell.

The existence of sin in the life of every man is indisputable. The corrupt nature of man is evident in his inability to keep the moral law even though there be personal contrition. This is a sign of his degeneracy and failure. He must receive the help of God through the Holy Spirit. It is quite evident to us that the soul of man is devoid of the original righteousness which the first man had before the Fall.

It is enough for us to take a look at the history of crime over the years to find conclusive proof that man has lost his godly nature and taken on a nature of corruption. The first time we see this evil nature is in Cain, the son of Adam. He killed his brother Abel. Why did he kill him? Was it not because Cain was evil? Why do we quarrel one with another? Is it not because of the evil nature deeply rooted in us? Why does one nation war against another nation? Is it not the cumulative effect of the sin of individuals?

The Wages of Sin

God said to Adam in Genesis 2:17, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die." We read in Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sins shall die," and in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." Adam and Eve died spiritually when they sinned, were cut off from God, and lost their holy spiritual fellowship with the Lord God. Also, they lost the desire to be in the presence of God and hid from him among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:8). Perhaps some lack of bodily strength or illness caused them to remember the Lord's warning, "The day that you eat of it you shall die."

It certainly is alarming to see the result of one's sin face to face. But did the first family lose all its privileges? Has hope been lost therefore of mankind ever being able to return to that state in the garden which was lost as a result of sin? Has his purity been taken from him forever? No! For God is love, and His love is rich in mercy, and with Him is

great forgiveness. Love moved His heart with compassion which has no delight in the death of the wicked. He has become the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind in the person of Jesus Christ the Word, who was in the beginning with God. The first thing the love of God did was to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, clothing them with garments of skins (Genesis 3:21). In so doing the Lord God initiated the principle of the covenant of atonement.

3. ATONEMENT IN ISLAM

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There are fourteen verses in the Qur'an on the subject of atonement. According to the theme of the chapter, we find the first of the Qur'anic texts on atonement in the saying of Allah, "If you show your almsgiving, it is a blessing, but if you give it to the poor secretly, it will be better for you, and He will atone for your evil deeds". (Sura 2:271)

The theologians explain atonement as a covering or veil. This explanation is near to the thought of the Old Testament. It is a fact that personal works in Islam as in Judaism, play an important part in the matter of atonement for sins. The foremost of these works is prayer. As it is said, "Establish worship (pray) at the two ends of the day, and some time in the night. Lo! Good deeds annul evil deeds." (Sura 11:114)

Al Tirmidhi quotes Abi Alyu saying, "A woman came to me to buy dates. I embraced and kissed her, and then I went to Muhammad and informed him of what had happened. He bowed his head in thought a long time then said: 'Pray (establish worship) at the two ends of the day and in sometime of the night. Lo, good deeds annul evil deeds.' Which means that the 'five (official) prayers' annul sins and atone for them.

Then his companions said, 'O prophet of Allah, is this specially for this man or for all men?' He replied, 'It is for all.'"

Muslim related that 'Abd Allah said, "A man came to the prophet and said, 'O prophet of Allah, I had handled a woman from the outskirts of the town and gratified my desire but without intercourse. Here I am. Judge me as you wish.' 'Umar nearby said to him, 'Allah would have kept your secret if you had kept it yourself.' The prophet of Allah said nothing, and the man rose and went. Then the prophet called him and recited to him this verse: 'Establish worship...etc.'"

Muslim quoting Abu Bakr said, "I heard the prophet of Allah say, 'There is no man (in his situation as a slave to Allah) who sins (offends) and who washes himself (according to the Islamic ritual) and then stands to pray twice the full ritual prayer and seeks the forgiveness of Allah, whom He will not forgive.' Then he recited: 'Those who, when they did an evil thing or wronged themselves, remembered Allah and implored forgiveness for

their sins - who forgives sins save Allah only? - did not knowingly persist in that which they did." (Sura 3:135)

There is nothing more suggestive of the efficacy of works for atonement than is found in Sura 7:8-9; "The weighing on that day is the true (weighing). As for those scale is heavy, they are successful. And as for those whose scale is light: those are they who lost themselves because they rejected our revelations."

The Imam Al Razi, in explaining the weighing of works, says two things.

(1) He states that Allah will set up a balance with an indicator and two weighing pans on the Day of Resurrection, on which will be weighed the deeds of mankind, their good and their evil deeds.

It is related on Ibn `Abbas that he said, "The believers's work will appear in the best form and be placed on the pan of the scales, his good deeds outweighing his evil deeds." There are many points of view as to how works will be weighed. One is that the works of believers will appear in a form which is good and the works of the unbelievers in one which is disgraceful, and it is that form which will be weighed. The second is that the weighing will be of the pages on which there is the written record of man's works.

(2) The second saying, taken from Mudjahid and Al Dahhak and Al A`mash is that the purpose of the balance is justice and judgment. Muhammad was asked about the weighing on the day of Resurrection, and he said, "The records."

There is an extraordinary story about the length of the indicator of the balance and the width of the weighing pans. `Abd Allah Ibn Salam says, "If the earth and heaven were put on one of the weighing pans, there would be room for them, while Gabriel holding its support would be able to observe the indicator."

As for the method of weighing, it is told of `Abd Allah Ibn `Umar that he said, "The prophet of Allah said, `On the Day of Resurrection, a man will be brought to the balance and 99 books of records will be brought to him each one extending as far as the eye can see. In them is written his sins and offences and these will be put on the pan of the scales. Then there will be brought to him a tiny scrap of paper, as big as the finger tip, written on it the confession, `There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.' This will be put on the other scale and will outweigh his evil deeds."

There is a Qur'anic text which alludes to the weights saying, "We prepare just weights for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul is wronged in aught. Though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard seed, we bring it. And we suffice for reckoners." (Sura 21:47)

Commentators say that it is possible there will be a balance to weight the intent of the heart and one to weigh the outward action.

Al Fakhr Al Razi related a current story and its meaning: David asked his Lord to show him the balance and when he saw it, he swooned. When he regained consciousness, he said, "O my God, who is able to fill the scale with good deeds?" He replied, "O David, if I am pleased with my servant, I will fill it with fruit (grain)."

Bilal bin Yahya, quoting Hadhayfa, said, "Gabriel, on whom be peace, in the Day of Resurrection will be responsible for the balances and Allah will say, `O Gabriel, weigh between them and repay the oppressed, and if the oppressor has no good deeds put on his scale from the evil deeds of his colleague (the oppressed), then the man (oppressor) will go and his burden will be as heavy as mountains."

Abu Dja'far relates that Muhammad said, "Nothing is put on the scale which is heavier than excellency of character."

Lastly, it is possible to summarize the comments with the word of Muhammad bin Sa'd quoting Ibn `Abbas, "Whoever has surrounded his ill deeds with his good deeds, his scale will be heavy. His good deeds will annul his evil deeds, and whoever has surrounded his good deeds with his evil deeds certainly his scale will be light, and he is a child of Hell. His ill deeds have annulled his good deeds."

Godliness atones for sins

As Allah said, "O you who believe. If you reverence Allah, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong) and will cover your evil deeds. and will forgive you, and Allah is of great bounty." (Sura 8:29)

We note here that the reward of godliness is threefold:

1. He will give you distinction. The word used for distinction is interpreted by Islamic legislators as meaning that Allah will determine between the godly and the ungodly; that is to say, Allah appoints to the godly guidance and knowledge, and He endows their hearts and breasts with gladness, and removes from their hearts malice and hatred.
2. He will cover your evil deeds, all the evil you have committed.
3. He will forgive you.

4. FORGIVENESS IN ISLAM

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When we carefully consider the texts of the Qur'an, we find there is a difference between atonement and forgiveness. The commentators make the distinction that atonement for

evil deeds means a covering in this world and that forgiveness means removal of sins on the Day of Resurrection.

Works and Forgiveness

The teaching of Islam tells us that forgiveness of sins is based on good works, according to the saying of the Qur'an, "Such as ward off with good works the evil deed, the outcome for those will be the (heavenly) Home. They will enter the Gardens of Eden, along with all of their forbears and their married partners and their descendants who were good (righteous)." (Sura 13:21-23)

It is said of Muhammad that he said to Mu'adh bin Djabal, "If you have done an evil deed, then do along with it a good deed and this will erase it."

Also Al Hasan in describing these (who did good works) said, "They were deprived of help, then they gave; and when unjustly wronged, then they were gracious."

Zudjadj said, "Allah has made it clear that lineal descent is useless if not accompanied by good deeds."

Al Wahidi and Al Bukhari quoting Ibn `Abbas said that, "Allah makes part of the reward of the obedient the pleasure of having his family with him in the Garden." This indicates that they enter it in honour of the obedient one who is bringing good deeds. If they enter it because of their own good deeds, there would be in this no honour to the obedient one, for everyone who is good in his deeds will enter Paradise (the Garden).

Fasting and Forgiveness

Sura 33:34 says that for those who fast, men and women, there is prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.

It is stated in the Qur'an that fasting for a period of two months obtains forgiveness for the sin of killing. It is written, "It is not permissible for a Muslim believer to kill a Muslim believer, unless it be by mistake. He who hath killed a Muslim believer by mistake must set free a Muslim believing slave and pay him the bloodmoney to the family of the slain, unless they remit it as a charity. If he (the victim) be of a people hostile unto you, and he is a Muslim believer, then he (the slayer) has to set free a Muslim believing slave. And if he cometh of a people with whom you have a covenant, then the bloodmoney must be paid unto his family, and a Muslim believing slave must be set free. And whoso hath not the ability to pay, must fast two consecutive months, and Allah will accept this repentance. Allah is Omniscient, Wise." (Sura 4:92)

It is said that the cause for which this verse was given is as follows: `Urwa bin Al Zubayr relates that Hudhayfa Ibn Al Yaman was with the prophet of Allah on the day of the battle of Uhud where the Muslims erred and thought the father of Al Yaman was one of the unbelievers. So they took him and struck him with their swords, even though

Hudhayfa said, "He is my father." However they did not understand his words until after they had killed him. Then Hudhayfa said, "May Allah forgive you. He is the most merciful." When the prophet of Allah heard this, Hudhayfa went up in his estimation and thus the verse was given.

There is another story behind the verse. Abu Darda', who was with a group of fighters, went aside for a certain need. He found there a man with some sheep and attacked him with a sword. Then the man said, "There is no god but Allah," but Abu Al Darda' killed him and drove away his sheep. Afterwards he felt disturbed and mentioned the matter to the prophet who said, "Could you look into his heart to know if he was a believer or not?" Then Abu Al Darda' repented and thus the verse was given.

It is written in the Qur'an also, that fasting for three days will obtain forgiveness for the sin of a false oath. As it is written, "Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will take you to task for the oaths which ye swear in earnest. The expiation thereof is the feeding of ten of the needy according to the average of that wherewith ye feed your own folk, or the clothing of them, or the liberation of a slave, and for him who has not the ability to do so then a three days' fast will make expiation of your oaths when ye have sworn. Keep your oaths. Thus, Allah expounded unto you His verses in order that you may give thanks." (Sura 5:89)

Al Fakhr Al Razi mentions that the cause for which this verse was given was that some of the followers of Muhammad denied to themselves food and clothing and choose to become monks, and took an oath concerning it. When Allah forbade this they said, "O prophet of Allah, what shall we do about our oath?" Thus the verse was given.

Pilgrimage and Forgiveness

It is quoted, "Lo! (the mountains) Al Safa and Al Marwa are among the signs of Allah. It is therefore no misdemeanour for him who is on Pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) or visiteth it, to go between them. And he who doeth good of his own accord, lo! Allah is Responsive, Omniscient." (Sura 2:158)

Ibn `Abbas said, "There was on Al Safa an idol and Al Marwa an idol. The ignorant unbelievers used to circle these spots and touch them, but when Islam came the Muslims hated to circle these spots because of the presence of the two idols. So this verse was given."

The word "no misdemeanour" mean "no crime" and God accepts the good work of him who voluntarily goes on pilgrimage.

Giving of Alms and Forgiveness

It has been said, "Those who offer prayer and give alms have a reward with Allah their Lord, and there is no fear for them, and they will not be sad."

Commenting on this Ibn `Abbas says, "They have no fear of that which awaits them in the circumstance of the Day of Resurrection, and they will not be sad over that which they have left behind in the world."

Al Asam explains, "There is no fear that they will suffer on that Day, nor will they be sad because they have not obtained as great a happiness as some others, because there is no rivalry in the next life."

Striving in the Way of Allah and Forgiveness

In Sura 2:218 we read, "Those who emigrate and strive in the way of Allah, these have hope of Allah's mercy. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

It is related of `Abd Allah bin Djahsh that he questioned Muhammad, "O! prophet of Allah, suppose there is no punishment for what we have done, can we expect from our works recompense and reward?" This verse was given because `Abd Allah had emigrated and had striven in the way of Allah.

The Reading of the Qur'an and Forgiveness

In Sura 7:204 it says, "When the Qur'an is read, listen to it, that ye may obtain mercy."

The commentators say that Allah asserted before this verse that the Qur'an is mercy for the world.

In the Hadith it says that Abu Dhar Al Ghifari said to Muhammad, "O Prophet of Allah, I am afraid to learn the Qur'an and not practice its teachings." Muhammad replied, "Be not afraid, O Abu Dhar. Allah does not afflict the heart in which dwells the Qur'an."

About Anas Ibn Malik it is said, "The prophet spoke to me and said, `Who hears the Qur'an, the afflictions of the world do not come near him, and he who reads it will be kept from the afflictions of the life to come."

To quote Ibn Mas'ud, the prophet said, "He who reads the Qur'an, learns it by heart and keeps it, Allah will bring him into Paradise (the Garden), and he will be given permission to intercede for ten of his own people who were destined for Hell."

The Testimony of the Creed and Forgiveness

Abu Huraira said that Abu Dhar Al Ghifari asked Muhammad, "O prophet of Allah, how is a Muslim saved?" Muhammad replied, "He is saved by saying, "I testify that there is no god but Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah."

The Will of Allah and Forgiveness

It is said in Sura 3:129, "Unto Allah belongeth the heavens and the earth. He forgiveth whom He will and punishes whom He will."

Fakhr Al Razi said in explanation of this verse, "Our colleagues allege in support of this verse that seeing as Allah is above all, He has the right to bring into Paradise through His divine judgment all unbelievers and rebels, and He has the right by His divine judgment to send all the upright to Hell. There is no protest against Him in the doing of this."

Al Razi does not object to this idea; rather he supports it when he says, "The verse clearly indicates this meaning and intellectual proof supports it also, because the deeds of man depend on the will, and that will is Allah's creation. If Allah created that kind of will, man obeys, and if He created another kind of will, he disobeys. Man's obedience and his disobedience are alike from Allah. As for the acts of Allah there is nothing obligatory for him. Obedience does not necessarily bring reward, nor disobedience of necessity deverse punishment. Everything is from Allah, and is according to His divine will and compulsion and power."

Such an idea is opposed to that of the Bible, which insists on sacrifice as an atonement for sin. This obligation was made known from the beginning for we see the blood of sacrifice running like a crimson thread through the Bible. In the book of Hebrews we read, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Hebrew 9:22)

In fact, God being perfect, it would not be in accordance with His will to forgive man his sin on account of His Truth and Justice which says, "The soul which sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4,20) If He is to forgive the sinner there must be a reason for forgiveness, a reason which satisfies Justice, and this satisfaction in the Old Testament was from the offering of animal sacrifices, goats, calves and sheep. God accepted these because they symbolized the sacrifice of Christ, which was offered in the New Testament of Grace, satisfying divine justice forever, and making perfect all the believers. That which is written in Psalm 85:10 was fulfilled: "Truth and mercy have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Sins which cannot be Forgiven in Islam

(1) The Attributing of Partners to Allah

According to the Qur'an "Allah pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He Pardoneth all except that." (Sura 4:116) Commentators say that the polytheist is excluded completely from the mercy of Allah, as polytheism is a treat error. Some say this verse was given because of those who used to worship angels and said that they were the daughters of God. Razi says those who do not believe in the future life name the angels as feminine. Other commentators say that the verse was given because of those who used to worship idols, and that there was a demon in each idol which spoke to them.

(2) The Killing of a Believer

As the Qur'an says, "Whoso slayeth a believer of set purpose, his reward is hell forever. Allah is wroth with him and hath cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom." (Sura 4:93) Abu Hunayfa said, "There is no atonement for a deliberate killing." Ibn `Abbas said, "Repentance on the part of one who deliberately kills is not accepted."

(3) Apostacy

As it is said, "Lo! those who disbelieve after their profession of belief, and afterward grow in infidelity, their repentance will never be accepted. And such are those who are astray." (Sura 3:90)

The commentators say that the apostate multiplies his disbelief. In other words, the apostate, remaining and persisting in it, increases his unbelief. It may be that he adds further infidelity to disbelief.

Al Kaffal and Ibn Al Anbari say, "Whoever forsakes his faith again, after repenting, his original repentance is not accepted. It is as if it had never been."

5. ATONEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY

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Atonement is a word which means a covering or hiding. In Christianity it denotes the work of Christ, who by His perfect obedience, provided salvation for men from the curse of the law and reconciliation to God by the blood of His Cross. Concerning this the apostle Peter says in I Peter 3:18, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God." The value of Christ's atonement is based on His being the eternal Son of God.

Let us look at the atonement of Christ from various angles: first, in its relationship to God in view of His love, justice and holiness; then its relationship to man, its work in him and for him. It is said that Christian atonement is an expiation for the sin of man and is a clear declaration of the effectiveness of the sacrifice of Christ to save the sinner from the curse of the Law and to remove condemnation from him. It is also said that the atonement of Christ was a satisfaction to God and a fulfilment of his justice; that is, a means of satisfying and propitiating Him. This is an expression of the effectiveness of the sacrifice of Christ as removing the wrath of God and of His pleasure in the acceptance of the sinner unto reconciliation.

It is also said that atonement is a covering for the sinner by the blood of Christ. Punishment is no longer demanded of him. This has been removed and placed upon Christ who was sacrificed for him. This aspect is pointed out by the apostle John who said, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins." (I John 4:19)

It is said also that atonement opened the door for reconciliation between man and God without doing injustice to the holy law of God. This is what Paul said in II Corinthians 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

Man has philosophized greatly about the nature of God and His relation to His sinning creatures but has never reached a satisfactory conclusion. Where philosophies of the world failed, the Bible makes it clear. It says that God is just and His justice demands the punishment of the sinner, so there can be no reconciliation without atonement. The practice of sacrifices to cover sin began with this fact. It began in the Garden when God made coverings of skin for Adam and Eve for it was necessary to slay animals to obtain these skins.

We know from the Bible that the sacrifice of Abel which God accepted was a shadow of the coming atonement. But it (sacrifice) was by revelation and inspiration (Genesis 4:4)

In the same way the ram which was provided by God for Abraham to redeem his son Isaac, was also a type of the atonement through the sacrifice of Christ which God planned from the beginning (Genesis 22:1-14).

The passover lamb also, which God ordered the people to offer in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-42), was again an outstanding type of the New Testament passover Lamb of God, spoken of by Paul in I Corinthians 5:7,8: "For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

In the New Testament, 'atonement' is represented as the 'redemption', which Christ accomplished on the Cross in order to fulfil the demands of the law of God in the place of sinful man and for his salvation. There was in His sufferings and substitutionary death an atonement to completely fulfil the punishment due to man for his sin. It fulfilled the demands of divine justice, and justifies the sinner who believes and repents.

In the language of the Bible the redemption of Christ is expressed in the word 'grace,' because the Heavenly Father was not obligated to offer a sacrifice for sinful man. Neither was the Son obligated to take human form in the capacity of a Redeemer. God, who is rich in mercy because of His great love, put an end to the punishment of the Law, accepting the vicarious sufferings voluntarily endured by the incarnate Word of God instead of sinful man.

The Redeemer made this truth clear when He said in John 10:15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." When we compare this statement with John 15:13, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," we can grasp the purpose for which God was ready to empty Himself and become flesh and suffer, carrying our sins in His body on the cross.

The apostle Paul has made clear the need for this vicarious suffering in his letter to the Romans, "For God has done what the law, weakened by flesh, could not do: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3,4). That is to say that eternal death, the wages of our sin, was taken by Christ upon Himself, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5, "Upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole; and with His stripes we are healed."

Redemption gives assurance of forgiveness and continuing blessings of salvation for God's believing people, and that for two reasons:

First of all, God promised redemption to believers, in view of the obedience and sufferings of Christ. We read the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 5:18,19, "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by man's disobedience (Adam) many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience (Christ) many will be made righteous."

Secondly, redemption has satisfied the requirements of God's justice because it is based on the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. To remove any possible doubt man may have concerning the fact Divine revelation has recorded that, "When Christ came into the world, He said, 'Sacrifice and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God.'" (Psalm 40:7 and Hebrews 10:5-7) So Jesus became man, to be a substitute for the sinner, and to take the punishment of condemnation. He fulfilled the demand of a broken covenant.

The apostle Paul expounded this subject saying: "But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God." (Romans 5:8-9)

Reasons which make Redemption Necessary

1. The need of Salvation

Redemption is not merely a collective need, but a personal necessity for every individual. Every man is doomed and perishing. Christ once asked the question, "What shall a man give in return for his life?" (Matthew 16:26) Man has nothing with which to redeem his soul, neither is he able to redeem his brother. God spoke through the words of David in Psalm 49:7, "Truly no man can ransom himself, or give to God the price of his life."

As for repentance, in man's heart there is a natural intuitive awareness that it cannot remove past sins. There must be some other means of obtaining forgiveness, and this is by way of redemption. Otherwise how can we explain the existence of sacrifice from time immemorial, and it being found in most religions of the world? Is it not that they agree with the need the sinner feels in his heart for redemption? It is a fact that our moral

nature leads us to respect the demands of holiness, even if our behaviour contradicts it. Everyone of us realizes that his conscience is disturbed about deliverance from the outcome of his former's sin. Deliverance is only by justification through redemption.

2. Man's Depravity-God's Holiness

God is holy and man is a sinner. Man's sin is in opposition to divine holiness. Therefore, it is under condemnation. If it were possible to become righteous through repenting, still man's righteousness would not move past sins. But if God forgave him without redemption, the sinner would have no respect for God's law, nor His holiness. Therefore, redemption was ordained to remove the condemnation of sin and reveal the absolute perfection of God's character.

3. Redemption is consistent with Man's Moral Need

Man has a moral nature. His conscience teaches him the excellence of justice and holiness. If he is under conviction of sin and knows nothing of atonement, his conscience is disturbed. However, forgiveness by means of redemption satisfies man's conscience and fulfills his moral needs.

4. Redemption meets the Requirements of the Law

The Law demands the punishment of sinners. A Law which is without punishment is not practicable. It is self-evident that an honorable law demands punishment and that forgiveness without redemption means the collapse and failure of the Law. This is opposed to the word of Christ in Matthew 5:18, "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." This must be remembered, that any forgiveness without redemption is tantamount to saying that sin need not be punished. This is an insult to the justice and holiness of God.

5. Redemption is Specified in the Word of God

If there had been no need for redemption, God would not have included it in His Holy Word. In John 3:14 Christ states, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

6. The Requirement of the Moral Order

God, being a moral judge, must comply with the order of His own judgement. Disobedience and confusion cannot be approved in a moral universe over which He rules. He cannot make light of the breaking of His commandments, but must call transgressors to account, and sentence them to punishment. In fact, in the divine provision of redemption God reveals His hatred of sin and His wrath upon evil. In order to honour His law He has opened the door of reconciliation to sinners.

7. The Fact that Atonement Exists in many Religions

This shows that the conscience of man calls for redemption and is not satisfied with mere repentance for sin. Man seeks atonement, which is by the shedding of sacrificial blood for the sinner.

All these reasons prove the necessity for redemption.

Good Works and Forgiveness

1. Good works are a moral obligation and must be done, but they do not compensate for sins committed. In other words, they can never be a means of forgiveness for past sins. Christ indicated this truth by his words, "When you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" (Luke 17:10) And the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast."

2. As for our possessions, and the health we enjoy, they are from God, and we are merely entrusted with them. When we give generously or offer service, we have not sacrificed anything of our own, or done anything worthy of reward.

David spoke about this in I Chronicles 29:14, after he had offered large sums of money for the building of the Temple. He said, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from thee, and of thy own have we given thee."

3. The good works which we do are not able to wipe out the insult and affront we have committed against God. His holiness and righteousness and truth are unlimited, thus good works cannot obtain forgiveness for us.

4. To be in the presence of God demands holiness from us. Without holiness none can ever see God. Good works alone cannot make us holy. Holiness is given to the believer who is born of the Spirit of God. Christ said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:5,6)

Prayer and Forgiveness

It goes without saying that prayer is a link with God by conversation with Him and meditation upon His Person.

The sinner is separated from God and his prayer is not acceptable. Therefore, he will not receive an answer. God has said so through the prophet Isaiah. "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you so that He does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness." (Isaiah 59:2,3)

David also experienced this truth, and said by the Spirit of prophecy, "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." (Psalm 66:18)

Fasting and Forgiveness

Fasting like prayer is a facet of worship. It is an aspect of humility and brokenness before God, but it cannot bring man back to the state of righteousness which he had before he fell. Like prayer, fasting has no power to compensate for the offence of sin to a holy God. So it cannot be a means of forgiveness. God has said in the words of Zechariah the prophet, "When you fasted and mourned... was it for me that you fasted? And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?" (Zechariah 7:5-6)

A Summary

1. Man's salvation is based on redemption. This is no mere philosophic theory but an actual fact necessary to the removal of the burden of sin from fallen man.
2. We all agree that Adam fell and that his fall involved all mankind for Adam was man's representative in the divine test. For this reason God in love planned the removal of the penalty of sin from man, whom he had created in His likeness, by providing a substitute for him.

This substitute must be able to express the power and love of God in order that man might be saved. Such an expression of His love must come from God himself. So God in His love for mankind willed that Christ should participate in a flesh and blood relationship with man, and be a perfect substitute for man or, as the apostle said, a second Adam. Thus the first Adam represented man in the fall, and the second Adam was man's substitute in atonement and redemption.

3. It was necessary for this representative to pay the full price to remove sin from the world. Christ paid it by His dying on the Cross where He carried our sins in His body. What convinces us of the need of the redemption by the cross, is the offering of blood sacrifices of old, which pointed as a type to Jesus the Lamb of God.

One of the special characteristics of the sacrifice of Christ is that it not only removes sin from man, but heals him of a moral disease. The life of each one who receives Christ the Crucified is renewed. There is born within him a hatred of sin. The Cross especially has opened the eyes of his mind to see the awful work of sin and its terrible punishment.

At this point comes the word of the apostle John saying, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:7)

**God shows his love for us in that Christ died for us
while we were yet sinners**