

We observe then that the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ should not be viewed as the payment of a debt, because Jesus did not suffer the identical punishment that sinners deserve in consequence of their sins. When a person's debts are paid, the creditor receives the identical sum which his debtor was owing him. But surely there is a wide difference between the sufferings and death of Christ and the *punishment due to sin*, though the former was intended to serve the same ends in the moral government of God as the latter, in order to the safe and wise and righteous dispensing of pardon by the God of mercy. There is one element in the punishment, which sinners deserve because of sin, which could not enter into the atoning sufferings of the spotless Redeemer,—that of remorse. No power in the universe could cause a holy being like Jesus to endure remorse. That dreadful feeling cannot be experienced by any one not personally guilty. It was quite possible for Jesus, as standing in our room, to do and to suffer what would answer the ends of moral government as well as, or better than, the punishment due to sinners, so that God on wise conditions might, without injury to any interests in his moral universe, forgive sin,—we say, this was quite possible without his enduring the identical sufferings that sinners deserve. But not only were the sufferings of Jesus not the same *in kind* as the punishment which sinners merit, they were not the same *in duration*. The Bible declares that sin merits everlasting punishment: but the sufferings of Jesus, though intense and dreadful beyond our conception, were endured for a limited period.

Further, the propitiation of Christ is not the payment of a debt because, though Christ has completed his undertaking, sinners living in unbelief are still exposed to condemnation,—are still unpardoned, and must fulfil the condition of believing in Christ in order to enjoy the forgiving love of God. When a person's debts are paid, no matter by whom, the creditor has no further claim on him. But the mere fact of atonement does not free any from the penal consequences of their sins. If Christ's atonement were the payment of a debt, there could be no such thing as forgiveness, for when debts are once paid it is absurd to speak of their being forgiven. There is no room and no scope for forgiveness in such a case, and consequently no room and no scope for conditions on which it may be enjoyed. It would be wrong for a creditor to detain his debtor a single moment after his debts were paid; as a matter of justice the debtor is free, and free at once, by the very