

What about the Punishment for My Sin?

It is important to look back to the Old Testament sacrificial system to fully understand the impact of our sin and the punishment that Jesus took for these sins. Under the Levitical system, the sinner would bring their animal for atonement to the priests. The sinner would then place their hands on the animal's head to transfer their sin to the animal. The sinner would then slit the throat of the animal in preparation for the sacrifice. One must be willing to embrace the imagery of this moment. Blood, which symbolizes the atonement, would emerge from the animal signifying the blood of Jesus as it emerged from his wounds; blood that would sanctify the altar from the sin of the person and then be poured out at the base of the altar, signifying the pool of blood that flowed from the side of Jesus.

The animal would then be prepared for burning, with the stench of the burning carcass filling the air. To mankind it would remind us of the offensive nature of our sin to God, but to God it was a pleasing aroma that indicated repentance for sin behavior on the part of the repentant person. The whole drama of the sacrifice was to place the impact of the imagery on the heart of the person to cause them to discontinue their sinful behavior.

We don't have such a procedure in place today so often the sin in our life does not affect us in such a dramatic fashion. It is easy therefore to become complacent about our sin. We need to always place the price of the punishment for our sin in our thoughts, in order to affect our desire to not sin. We can start this process by first acknowledging the great price that Jesus paid for our sin. We need to understand that Jesus was always a part of the Father and as such, they had a very intimate relationship. When Jesus was to take the form of a man, the nature of their communion would change forever, as mentioned in Philippians 2:6-8 NLT: **Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.** We need to understand that in whatever form that Jesus existed in before the incarnation, He was now to assume a new form for all of eternity. We need to understand that His previous form was in the exalted form of the Father, but now for all of eternity, He would bare the semblance of mankind. An imperfect analogy that fails to capture the full significance of this transformation would be that of us taking on the form of an ant.

In addition to the transformation of his being, was the immense amount of suffering that He endured while in our form, Hebrews 5:8 NLT: **Even though Jesus was God's Son, He learned obedience from the things He suffered.** These would be the everyday sufferings that a holy, righteous person experiences in this sin cursed world. In addition to these sufferings were the excruciating experiences of the crucifixion. Part of this suffering was experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22:44 NLT: **He prayed more fervently, and He was in such agony of spirit that His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.** Then there were the scourgings and the painful crucifixion, in which every part of His body ached from being suspended in this manner. Just like the atoning animal, Jesus was wholly given up to take our punishment on Him that we so justly deserved. It was this punishment that Jesus nailed to cross, not the need to be obedient to God's will for us, Colossians 2:14 NLT: **He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.**