A Map of Atonement Through Christ

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Salvation is reconciliation,[1] an interpersonal process accomplished by interpersonal means[2] in the interpersonal realm. God's response to human sin has been remedial, not just just punitive.

[3]ALIENATION [Repentance[4] + Forgiveness[5]] RECONCILIATION

GRACE +[5] offered in promise
God added a practical component
to foster repentance.
God initiated this reconciliation
out of love for mankind.
God's added grace was appropriate
rather than inherently necessary.
Incarnation makes love visible.
The Son gave up his
prerogatives as deity,
exemplifying humility.
The Son lived righteously
in the physical realm,
climaxed by dying on a cross,
which showed extreme love.
God appointed the righteousness Son
for us to identify with as his
condition for forgiving us.

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Our response expresses repentance;
so does identification with Christ,[6]
so does faith/trust (*vs* works).[7]
It is a condition (*vs*. a cause),[7]
aspiration (*vs*. achievement).[7]

GRACE APPLIED →
(gift *vs*. debt)[8]

This formulation of atonement shows in red how Christ's work fits into the normal reconciliation process as an elaboration of the factor that fostering repentance.

[1]2 Corinthians **5**:18-20

[2]"The law of the harvest" says that cause and effect are of the same kind: Matthew **7**:16; Luke **6**:44; John **3**:6; James **3**:12; cp Hosea **8**:7; 1 Corinthians **15**:50.

[3]The basic format for reconciliation is (a) repentance by the offender plus (b) forgiveness by the offended. That removes the past act from any longer affecting the present relationship.

[4]Repentance itself is a condition laid down by the offended party; it does not require the one sinned against to forgive (Hebrews **12**:16-17). Allowing repentance to have a place is already a preliminary act of grace. Repentance is repentance only if a person means it.

[5]Forgiveness itself is also an act of grace since repentance is a condition for forgiveness, not a cause of it. That means that anything further is GRACE +.

[6]Identification with Christ means commitment to him in this case because he is Lord. It means commitment to his values and purposes, which are the same as the Father's. The equation of Father-Son is something of another elaboration of the basic reconciliation process. Normally offenders identify with the ones they have sinned against in some unloving act. Love is essentially an act of identification with someone by acting toward the other as "I" would want to be acted toward if I were in their shoes (as limited, of course, by the general principles of interpersonal behavior common to all people).

[7]Works produce the result; faith/trust relies on someone else to provide the result. The offender acts in both faith and works, but the acts have different values.

A cause is done to bring about the result; a condition is done toward another person, who gives the result (John **3**:14-15). The other person is the one that established that condition in the first place.

Aspiration tries to do all though fails to achieve all. Here is where sanctification by degrees takes place, which is Christian growth toward complete righteousness

[8]If people were to do everything all the time that God expected (*Deuteronomy **27**:26 < Galatians **3**:10), he would owe it to them to count their perfect righteousness as basis for friendship (Romans **4**:1-4).

Reconciliation is always a "gift" to the offender by the offended; (a) the one in need of restoration always has to rely/trust/believe on the offended one's promise to choose to renew/give relationship, because repentance—in all its manners of expression—is always an (appropriate) condition that the offended ones themselves choose to lay down.

Besides, perfection is always the standard of behavior between persons, and (b) perfection once broken cannot be overcome.

Finally, we may even add another way of looking at it: (c) by sinning we have identified ourselves with the Adam group which as a group is separated from God by spiritual death as pictured graphically by physical death (1 Corinthians **15**:22; cp. Romans **5**:12-21).

So, it is inherently impossible for persons to save themselves (autosoterism).