

Christology- The Atonement (Part 2)

Selected Scriptures

February 25, 2018

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Well we are looking together at the atonement of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The word, of course, has to do with the covering of sin. The way to make us right with God. We began to study this several weeks ago, and it's important to realize that this issue separates the Christian faith from all the other religions of the world. I began last time by making that note, and I will do so again. Because it is Christianity alone, let this sink into your mind, it is Christianity alone that teaches that God Himself, the One whose character and holiness our sin has offended, it is God who initiated and has made full and complete atonement for sinners. That is unique. And amazingly, and again, we get so accustomed to these truths that are at the heart of the Christian faith, that we say them and we don't allow it to penetrate our consciousness, but think about this: amazingly, He made atonement by the substitutionary sacrifice of His own Son on a cross. That's at the heart of the Christian faith. And that's what we're studying together.

Let's begin by reminding ourselves of what we looked at last time; briefly reviewing it, I am not going to spend any time here. But first of all, we talked about the necessity of the atonement. It was not absolutely necessary to the character of God for Him to save anyone at all. In other words, God could have left all of us in our sins, and He would have still been just and consistent with His character. But, once God determined to save a people for His Son, then the death of Jesus Christ became absolutely necessary. What do I mean by that? Once the Father decided to redeem fallen people, there was no other way to accomplish our redemption than through the death of His Son. It was necessary. And again, that simply illustrates the gravity of our sin. That in the brilliant wisdom of Creator God, there was no other way for you to be right with Him, and for me to be right with Him.

We talked about the cause of the atonement. The cause of the atonement was God's own character. His justice specifically, His justice demanded that sin be paid for. God couldn't just forgive, God couldn't just wave His hand and say, you're forgiven, that would have been a violation of His justice. Just like you wouldn't expect the judge who hears the case of the man who shot those kids in that school in Florida, you wouldn't expect him, in contradiction of the law, to simply say, you're forgiven, pardoned, walk free. That would be a travesty of justice, and the same thing would be true on a larger, grander, universal scale if God were to do so; His justice demanded the atonement. But His love also demanded the atonement. God is love. And His love compelled Him, as we saw in a number of texts. His gracious will in electing sinners to salvation compelled Him. He decided to do this out of His grace and that compelled Him to do it this way. He also was driven by His own glory as Ephesians 1 makes clear again, and again.

We looked at the nature of the atonement, beginning with false theories of the atonement, and I'm not going to spend any time here, we talked about these, but these are wrong ideas. Perhaps

the most common one on here for people that would call themselves somewhat evangelical, is the first one, the ransom to Satan. Many people have imbibed it in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* where the idea of the ransom to Satan is prominent. That's a false view of the atonement. Instead, the biblical doctrine is this; look at the second definition there, Alan Cairns says, "It was the satisfaction of divine justice by the Lord Jesus Christ in His active and passive obedience; that is, His life and His death, which procures for His people, a perfect salvation." That's what we mean when we talk about the atonement, and that is its nature.

As you can see in that definition, Christ's atonement consists of two parts. It consists of His obedience, sometimes called His active obedience; that is, His 33 years of righteous living. And it also consists of His sufferings; His suffering and dying for our sins. This is called His passive obedience. This is His suffering and His dying. This included the physical suffering, it included the weight of sins guilt on One who was perfectly holy and had never known sin. And it included, most importantly of all, the weight of the wrath of God, as God treated Jesus on the cross as if He had sinned your sins, as if He had lived your life. This is what the atonement consists of. Now that's what we have looked at so far.

When you think of the biblical doctrine of the atonement, and specifically the second aspect, and, that is, Christ's sufferings, the passive obedience of Christ as it's sometimes called, His suffering and death on the cross, there are a couple of key words, key terms that define the nature of that suffering. The first word is the word, *penal*. Penal; it's a word that relates to punishment for breaking the law. We talk about the penal code. The law code. And so, when we say that Christ's death is penal, we mean that it had reference to God's Law. He needed to satisfy the demands of God's Law. The key idea here is just that. The atonement then, the reason Christ had to suffer and die, was to correct our standing before the Law of God. Because we had broken God's Law, this is our standing before God. We are deserving of immediate punishment and undeserving of God's goodness. We are a slave to sin and we're under the curse of the law. We are at war with God. We are under God's wrath. We are without personal righteousness of any kind. That's our problem. That's our standing before God, as a result of our sin, and here's God's provision, through the atonement at the cross. And I've lined up the numbers so you can see how this provision matches our need.

God provides common grace so that instead of our getting what we deserve, which is immediate judgment, the first time we sin God doesn't strike us dead and send us to hell, that's common grace. That was purchased at the cross. We are a slave of sin and under the curse of the law, to which God responds with redemption. Released from the bondage of sin and the curse of the law. We're at war with God to which the atonement provides reconciliation. That is, the removal of the enmity between God and the sinner, and the establishment of a new relationship of peace and friendship between them. We are under God's wrath, but at the cross there was propitiation. Romans 3:25-26, that is the appeasement or the satisfaction of God's just wrath against sinners.

By means of an atoning sacrifice. This is what's been provided and, of course, justification, as we're looking at in the book of Romans. And that is the establishment of a sinner in a righteous standing before God. We are without personal righteousness, but in the atonement we receive the righteousness of another, the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So you see how our standing is met by the atonement of Jesus Christ. And the provision through His sacrificial death. So, Christ's death for us then, was penal. That is, it had to do with breaking God's Law. There are a number of references, and I am not going to belabor these, I'll just put them up here and you can look at them at your leisure, but John 11, verses 50 through 52,

"it is expedient for you [Caiaphas said] that one man die for the people [you remember?], and that the whole nation not perish. [He was talking pragmatically, look if we're going to save the nation, let's get rid of this guy, it's worth it to save the nation. But John says, Caiaphas, that wicked high priest], did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation.

In Romans 5, "God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." And then he puts it in legal terms, "Much more then, now having been justified by His blood, we are saved from the wrath of God through Him." Justified is that word of made right before God and His Law.

Titus 2:14, "Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed," there again, lawless deed, making it a penal transaction. "And to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

First Peter 3:18, "Christ also died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit." Again, you see the just for the unjust, put in these terms of legal language.

So, how can God accomplish all those things relating to His Law through the death of Christ? That list I gave you of God's provision, how does that happen? Well, it happens through another word that provides a key insight into the nature of the atonement, and that is the word, *substitutionary*, or we could use the word *vicarious*. Let me give you definitions of those two words so you're not unclear. *Substitution* is simply the act of taking the place of another. We use this word in lots of different ways, and it always means the same thing. If you're a substitute for someone, you're taking their place, and that's what Jesus did in His atonement.

Vicarious is a word that describes that which is endured by one person substituting for another. So substitution is the act of taking the place of another, vicarious describes what is endured, what is faced by that one person who is substituting for another.

Charles Hodge writes this,

According to this doctrine, [that is, the substitutionary atonement or the vicarious atonement. According to this doctrine] the work of Christ is a real satisfaction of infinite inherent merit to the vindicatory justice of God. So that He saves His people by doing for them and in their stead what they were unable to do for themselves. Satisfying the demands of the law in their behalf and bearing its penalty in their stead; whereby, they are reconciled to God, receive the Holy Spirit, and are made partakers of the life of Christ to their present sanctification and eternal salvation.

Notice that expression, "satisfying the demands of the law in their behalf," that's His active obedience. And then, His passive obedience, "bearing it's penalty in their stead." Let me give you just a brief defense of substitution; I am not going to spend much time here because I think we all embrace and believe this. But if you're interested in studying this issue more, let me encourage you to read a book. I am sure we have it in our bookstore, and if we don't you can order it on-line, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, with three authors, I'll mention their names in a moment, but *Pierced for our Transgressions*, will give you a thorough defense of substitution. But let me just give you a brief defense. Here's why we say Jesus died as our substitute.

First of all, the nature of the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to the work of Christ as substitutionary. Leviticus 1:4, speaks of the worshipper, "laying his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement of his behalf." Or you come to Leviticus 16, and you have again, the high priest, Aaron, in verse 21, "laying both of his hands on the head of the live goat", the scapegoat, you remember on the day of atonement and, "confessing over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins. And he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away." And verse 22 says, and "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land." And it's put outside the camp of God's people.

Leviticus 17:11, says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." The point here in verse 11, Geerhardus Vos writes this, "The sacrificial animal in it's death takes the place of the death due to the offer. It is life for life, forfeit for forfeit."

How could an animal substitute for the life of a person? Well it's important to remember that they really didn't. An animal's death, let me say it clearly, an animal's death never took away a single sin. Hebrews 10:4 says, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." So it was merely a picture, but listen closely this is the point I want you to get. Although animal sacrifices only pictured the eventual sacrifice of Christ, for the picture to work, there had to be some sort of a transfer of objective guilt from the person offering the animal to the animal substitute that would die. Some sort of an objective transfer of the guilt, how did that happen? It was accomplished by the laying of your hands on the head of the animal. If you were to bring a trespasser a sin offering in Old Testament times, if you had sinned against God, and you brought that animal to be sacrificed, here's what you would do.

You would bring it to the forecourt of the temple, there near the priest's area. And you would have taken that animal and you would have laid your hands on it's head, just like the verses we just read. And you would have confessed your sin over the head of that animal. As your hands rested on the head of that animal, you would have confessed your sin, not to the animal, to God. But as you confessed your sin, your hands on the head of that animal, pictured the transfer of your guilt to that animal- it is now your substitute. And then the priest would have handed you the knife. And having transferred your guilt, the guilt of your sins to that animal, you would have severed its throat. There is no clearer picture of a substitute than that. The animal dies in your place, bearing your guilt.

A second argument for substitution is many passages describe the transfer of human guilt for the violation of God's Law directly to Christ. And again, I am not going to belabor this, you know these texts. Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all," the guilt, the idea of that word is both the sin and the guilt that it accumulates. The Lord has caused our guilt, "To fall on Him." The Hebrew word, as I have told you before, is an amazing word, it's a word that literally means *to strike Him*. The Lord has caused your guilt to strike the substitute.

Isaiah 53:12, "He Himself," the Messiah, "bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors."

John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who picks up and takes away the sin of the world!" The picture here is that of the scapegoat. He's the scapegoat who has the sins of His people confessed over His head and He carries them away into the wilderness outside the camp of God's people.

Second Corinthians 5:21, "God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf."

Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." Why? Because, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

Hebrews 9:28, "Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time," you see that transfer of guilt. It's very clear in these passages. Just like in the Old Testament sacrificial system. And this is one of my favorites, 1 Peter 2:24, "He Himself bore our," notice the plural, "sins." Not our sin in some general, vague sense, but our sins. Specific acts of transgression. Specific sinful thoughts and sinful words. it's as if we laid our hands on the head of Christ and confessed our sins, and the guilt of our sins was transferred to Him. That's exactly what the Father did.

A third argument for substitution is the use of the Greek prepositions *huper* and *ante* in connection with the work of Christ. First of all, *huper*. It's a word which means *for the benefit of*, in some cases, or it can mean *instead of*, but in many passages *for the benefit of* makes absolutely no sense. For example, 1 Corinthians 15:3, "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died *for the benefit of* our sins?" It doesn't make any sense. It has to mean *instead of*, and there are other texts that I have supplied here.

The other word is the word, *ante*. And the Greek word *ante* only means *instead of* or *in the place of*, it means nothing else. For example, these are some non-theological examples. Matthew 2:22, "when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea," here it is, "*in the place of* his father Herod." Or Matthew 5:38, "You have heard that it was said, An eye [*in place of* or] *instead of* an eye, and a tooth [*ante*] *instead of* a tooth."

Now, look at the theological uses of it then. Matthew 20:28, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom [*ante, in the place of*], *in the stead of* many." And the same usage in Mark 10:45. Clearly, Jesus died, not only with reference to God's Law, but He was able to accomplish that because He died in a vicarious death. He died as our substitute. As I've said, it's as if the Father took, in fact this is what the Father did, He took our account, all the sins in our account, the specific sins and He credited them to Christ. It's as if we put our hands on Christ's head and transferred all the guilt for all of our sins and He bore them in His own body, Peter says, on the cross. That's the gospel and that's our only hope because that's the only way God's justice is met and God can say to you and to me, you are forgiven. You are not condemned, like you deserve to be, but there is no condemnation. Because He bore the wrath in your place. Again, as I said, if you want to read further on this issue, I recommend to you, *Pierced for our Transgressions*, by Ovey, and Jeffery, and Sach.

Alright, let's move on then to the extent of the atonement. We've talked about the nature of the atonement, now let's talk about the extent of the atonement. Let me begin by just asking you a question, does this matter? Or is this some kind of esoteric impractical theological issue? I love the way John MacArthur puts it in his *Systematic Theology*, he says,

This is an intensely practical discussion, for the nature of Christ's cross work runs to the very heart of the gospel. [Listen to this]. If the Son of God has destroyed the power of sin, and has purchased the redemption by which sinners may be freed of divine judgment, can there be any more important question to ask, than for whom has He done this?

Obviously, we're dealing here with the design of the atonement. The controversial question: for whom did Christ die? Now before I teach this to you, let me say that the elders of our church have agreed, that we don't want our position on this issue to become a source of division within the church. We don't want arguments and debates about this. But, we also agreed that when this issue must be explained, we will teach what we believe the Scripture says about this issue and that's exactly what I intend to do now.

If you want to study this issue more than I am going to have time to deal with it tonight, let me encourage you to buy these three resources; first of all I mentioned, Mayhue and MacArthur's *Biblical Doctrine* book, handles this issue very well, I think you would benefit from reading it. Also, if you want a very thorough book that has been, it is really a compilation of a number of authors, *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, that line from the hymn that we sing. Talking about the extent of the atonement. And then finally, the classic work if you're really ready for some heavy sledding, it's worth the effort, but it is work, and that's, *The Death of Death and the Death of Christ* by John Owen. That work has never been adequately answered. Nobody has ever responded to it in a way that answers the arguments he presents there.

Now let me start by just making sure that we're clear on some things that are often misunderstood. There's often a lot of heat about this debate and very little light and that's because people on both sides sort of talk around each other. So let me begin by saying that the two orthodox views, I'm going to tell you what the three views are in a moment, but the two orthodox views agree on certain things. So really, I hope none of you here are holding the heretical unorthodox view I'll talk about in a moment, so let me assume that all of us here are on one of those sides of the orthodox positions, okay?

The two orthodox views agree on this: first of all, we all agree that not everyone will be saved. It's important to begin there; not everyone will be saved. Secondly, we agree that a free offer of the gospel, a genuine offer of the gospel can be made to every person who has ever lived. There is no one that regardless of which of these positions you hold, you are somehow bound and you can't go up to someone and say, Christ died and if you will repent and believe, there is forgiveness for you. Thirdly, and this is important as well, there are universal aspects of the atonement. Both sides of this argument agree that there are universal aspects of the atonement; the question is what are those aspects? And number four, both sides agree, that Christ's substitutionary death is sufficient to save all men who have, or ever will, inhabit this planet. So

the question about the extent of the atonement, listen carefully, is not a question about the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. If there were a million worlds the sacrifice of Christ would be sufficient. So we're not talking about sufficiency.

So what are we talking about? Well, let's look at the three primary views. When we talk about the extent of the atonement, there are three primary views. The first one, is heresy, and I hope you don't hold it. And that is that Jesus died in the place of every sinner to provide an actual salvation for every person. This is also known as universalism. Is this held today? You bet it is. There's a guy named Rob Bell, he is still exists and is around. He is a neo-liberal. He wrote a book called, *Love Wins*, in which he argued for universalism. That everyone will eventually be saved. He kind of came out of the emergent movement, the seeker sensitive emergent movement, pastored up in the upper mid-west, and this is the view that he held to. But this is a clear contradiction to a huge body of Scripture including our Lord's own teaching about hell. And it contradicts what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, that there's a narrow gate and a narrow way that lead to life and only a few find it, but broad is the gate, broad is the way and many go in there. Clearly, this view is wrong and I'm not going to spend a lot of time here because I don't think this is something that most of us struggle with.

So let's move on then to the second primary view, and it's this: that Jesus died in the place of every sinner, and provided a potential salvation for every person. Not an actual salvation, but a potential salvation. This view teaches that Jesus offered Himself as a payment to God in exchange for the lives of every human being that will ever live. Those who hold this view would quote passages like 1 Timothy 2:6, "He gave Himself as a ransom for all." And then they would say, so there's this potential salvation that Jesus bought at the cross, and that potential salvation is personally applied when a person believes. The best argument for this view, and I'll talk about this more, but the best argument for this view is that there are passages in the Scripture that say that Jesus died for all or He died for the world. And those are the verses that those who hold this view would use.

For example, like 1 John 2:2, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Now, let me just tell you, on a personal note, this is the view that I, many years ago, used to hold. But I no longer hold to it, and there are reasons and I'm going to deal with those reasons under the next point, the third view.

The third view is this, and this is the view that I hold, and will defend to you now. And that is, that Jesus offered His life as a propitiation to the Father to satisfy God's wrath for a specific group of people. This is called limited atonement by some. I don't like that expression particularly because it's sort of negative, it's *limited*. It's makes it sound like, you know, it's not really enough. That's not the idea at all. These other expressions, I think, make it a little clearer and that is it is definite atonement. It was for definite people or it was particular redemption. It

was aimed at particular people. Now again, there are certainly unlimited aspects to the death of Christ. When we talk about that, it's important to understand that. What do I mean? Well, for example, common grace. Romans 3 talks about the fact that Jesus vindicated God's justice in letting sinners live a moment longer than their first sin at the cross. God vindicated His justice in showing common grace to sinners by what happened at the cross. Also, Jesus purchased the right for there to be a universal offer of the gospel like in Revelation 22:17, "Whoever will come, let them come."

So there are these unlimited aspects to the death of Christ, but the real question is this, for whom did Christ die in the mind of God? Or what was the divine design of the atonement? Or we could ask it this way, what did the death of Christ actually accomplish? Or I think this one is even clearer, for whom did Jesus die as a substitute?

Now let me give you several reasons that I believe that the answer to those questions is that Jesus died as a substitute and satisfied the wrath of God only for His own people, for the elect. Let me give you several arguments, and you think this through with me as we go along.

Argument number one: this view is consistent with the eternal plan of redemption. Now let me give you several sort of sub points under this, and develop this idea a little bit of this eternal plan of redemption. First of all, Scripture speaks generally of an eternal Trinitarian plan of salvation. Do you understand in eternity past, the Trinity came to a decision, a conclusion about redemption and how this would unfold? For example, Ephesians 3:11, talks about Christ and His work, it "was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord." Literally, the Greek text in that verse says, *the plan of the ages*. There is a plan of the ages, and that plan of the ages was carried out in the historical life of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Second Timothy 1:9, "He has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works," now listen to this, "but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus," when? "From all eternity." There was an eternal Trinitarian plan, a plan of the ages.

Acts 2:23 says that the death of Christ was included in this plan. "This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," notice that, "the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." Again, in Acts 4:27-28,

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, [listen to this] to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

That word *predestined*, don't be troubled by it. It's a word that means *to determine the destiny before*. This plan, and the destiny of Christ in His death was determined beforehand by God.

So, Scripture speaks of this eternal plan. And Scripture speaks of Jesus obeying the Father's will to accomplish that plan. When He came, He came to accomplish that eternal plan of redemption. John 10:18, He says, "No one takes my life from Me, I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up," so He's talking about His death, and notice what He says, "This commandment I received from My Father." This implies that the Father had made known His will to the Son before the incarnation.

In Hebrews 10:7, as Jesus is in the Psalm here is quoted, is talking about His coming into the world, He says, "I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.'" Jesus says, I came in the incarnation, I received a body. That's the context of Hebrews chapter 10 there, and I did so to do Your will.

John 17:4, "I glorified You on the earth," as He prays to the Father, "having accomplished," listen to this, "the work Father which You have given Me to do."

Philippians 2:8, speaks of this work of Christ as obedience, "being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Now stay with me, I am building a case here. Okay, there's this eternal plan, and Scripture speaks of the Jesus obeying the Father's will to accomplish that plan. The Father promises to reward the Son once He completes His work on that plan.

And there's several texts, I'll just point these out to you. Psalm 2: 7-8. Jesus, the Messiah, speaking here, says,

I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord;
The Father said to Me, [Messiah], "You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession."

Because of Your obedience, in carrying out the plan, in carrying out what I have assigned You, I'm going to give You the reward of nations. People from all over this planet who will worship, and love, and serve You, and ultimately, the world itself. Another text like that is in Isaiah 53:10-12,

The Lord was pleased To crush Him, [talking about His death] putting Him to grief;
And He rendered Himself, [here is the reason for the death of Christ], He was a guilt offering, [but as a result of His death],
He will see His offspring [talking about the Messiah],
He will prolong His days [that's a reference to the Resurrection, how can you die as a guilt offering and prolong your days? It's the Resurrection].
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.
As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities. [Now watch this, verse 12]
Therefore, [God says], I will allot Him [the Messiah], a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

The Father says, I'm going to reward the Son for His work on this plan.

One last text, of course, Philippians 2, because "He humbled Himself being obedient even to the point of death on the cross. God has highly exalted Him, given Him the name which is above every name," what is that name, by the way? It's not the name *Jesus*, that's His human name. It's the name *Lord*, and He goes on to basically say that the name of Jesus, that that name of Lord, "every knee will bow; every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God, the Father."

So the Father promises to reward the Son, but that brings us, now here's where I was going, that brings us to the most important part of this eternal plan of salvation, and it's this. As part of the eternal plan, the Father chose specific individuals whom He gave to the Son, and on whose behalf the Son was to accomplish redemption.

Let's take that apart. First of all, in sovereign election. Sovereign unconditional election; wasn't conditioned on anything in us. That's the point of Ephesians 1:4, "He chose us," the Father chose us, that is believers, He chose us, "in Him," and it was unconditional, it was, "before the foundation of the world." Before we had done anything good or bad, "that we would be holy and blameless before Him." The Father chose those whom He would give to His Son. And then the Father gave those He chose to His Son so that His Son could accomplish their redemption. Let me show you this.

Turn with me first of all to John 6. John makes this so clear in his Gospel, John 6, and look at verse 37. Jesus is speaking here, and He says,

All that the Father gives Me, [He's talking about people], will come to Me, [and in that context, He's talking about come to me in for salvation. All that the Father gives Me, all the people the Father gives Me will then come to Me. What came first, the coming or the giving? The giving. All those that the Father gave Me, they will come to Me] in faith, believing in Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. [Now watch verse 38], For I have come down from heaven, [here's that idea again], not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [And what is the will of the Father for Jesus? Verse 39], this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, [talking about people, He gave them to Me, that I would] lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, will have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.

That is an extraordinary passage. Do you see what Jesus is saying? He is saying, I came to do the will of the Father. And the will of the Father was for Me to save and preserve those the Father gave Me. That was His will for Me, to save them and to preserve them, not to lose one of them.

Turn over to chapter 10, John 10. And Jesus comes back to this same idea. John 10:14,

I am the good shepherd; and I know My own [that is, My own sheep], and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; [and watch what He says in verse 15], and I lay down My life for [whom? What was the extent of the atonement in the mind of Jesus? I lay down my life for] my sheep. I know who they are and I lay down my life for them.

Go down to verse 29. "My Father, who has given them to Me," that predated this work of Christ. "My Father, who has given them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." Jesus says here, that He planned to lay down His life for His sheep. And who are His sheep? The ones the Father gave Him.

Turn to John 17. In this great high priestly prayer, on the night before His crucifixion, this becomes even clearer. John 17:1,

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, [I have authority over every living human being], that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. [Who gets

eternal life? The ones who the Father gave to the Son]. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. [Go down to verse 6]. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world [here, talking about the disciples specifically]; And they were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. [Verse 9] I ask [now, this is an amazing statement. Jesus says, I pray], on their behalf [the ones you've given Me], I do not pray on behalf of the world, but I pray for those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours. [Now go down to the end of the chapter, and notice verse 20,] I do not ask in behalf of these alone [that is, the eleven, Judas is gone at this point], but for those also who believe in Me through their word [who in the world believes on Jesus through the word of the apostles? That's us, that's Christians throughout church history. Jesus says I am praying for them too. And notice how He finishes, verse 24]; Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me...

Now here, this expression is broader. It can't just be the eleven, why? Because He's praying that all of these people will be with Him forever. That's all Christians, and now He's praying not only for the eleven, He's praying for who will believe in Him through the word of the apostles, that's us. And He says Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me, that's us. You were given to Christ by the Father as an expression of His love to the Son. And He says the ones you've given Me, all believers, I want them to,

...be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for you loved Me before the foundation of the world.

What I want you to see, is that definite atonement; Jesus dying as a substitute for the elect, is perfectly consistent with the eternal plan of redemption.

There's a second reason that I believe Jesus died only for the elect, and that is many passages speak of Jesus offering Himself for a specific group out of mankind, and not for mankind in its entirety. Let me just give you a quick sampling.

Matthew 1:21, "she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, [watch this] for He will save [whom?] His people from their sins." "He will save His people from their sins."

I already quoted Matthew's version of Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom [ante, in the place of], in the stead of, [whom]? Not all, but what?] Many." Many.

Ephesians 5:25, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Hence that line in the Psalm, that the authors stole for their book title, *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, to be His holy bride.

Acts 20:28, Paul tells the Ephesian elders, "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Whom did He purchase? The church. There are other passages as well.

Let's move on to a third argument. A third argument for limited atonement. Those passages that are used to argue against limited atonement, do not prove a point. In other words, this is a negative argument. I am going to give you some passages that people will say, wait a minute Tom, hold on, what about these other passages? I want you to see that they don't prove that the atonement of Christ is unlimited in the sense that He died to make atonement potential for everybody. So we're going to look at those. Now, let me first of all say, that it is not my intention, in the time remaining that we have, to address every passage that proponents of unlimited atonement; that is, that Jesus died as a potential substitute for the world, I don't intend to site every passage that they use to argue for their view. If you want to do that, buy the resources that I mentioned earlier because they will address all of those passages and give you arguments and explanations for why they don't mean universally everyone.

What I want to do is address a couple of key examples and I want to address them in the two main categories. In other words, I want to do it in an overview because I think that will be more helpful to you. Alright?

So, first of all, there are a set of passages, that those who are proponents of unlimited atonement, or against limited atonement or definite atonement would use that speak of Christ dying for all. For all. And those who hold to an unlimited atonement, will site passages where this word *all* is included, and they will argue, and I am not making fun of them here, this is, I have brothers who believe this. I want to be fair in representing them, they would say this, *all* must always be all people without exception. *All* must always mean all people without exception. But let me just say that that absolutely cannot be true. Because there are passages where *all* cannot refer to all people without exception.

Let me give you an example, turn to Romans 5. I read it this morning in a different context, but this is a key one. And I explained it briefly this morning as I read it, and of course, as I taught through Romans 5, I explained it at length, but let me just call to your attention, Romans 5:18. Here's a place where *all* does not mean everybody without exception. Verse 18, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men," now there, the word *all* means whom? Who is condemned? All without exception; "even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to," whom? To "all men." Now you tell me, have all men, everybody without exception, been declared just before God? That's what they would

have to say this text means. That's not what it means. As I pointed out to you this morning, He is comparing the *all*, has to do with the all who are in that person as their representative. Who had Adam as their representative? All people without exception. All men without exception, so the *all* there is truly everyone without exception. But who has Jesus as their representative? Only those who believe; and therefore, that *all* doesn't mean all men without exception, it means all men who are in Christ. Okay? So, my point is the word *all* doesn't always mean all people without exception, in fact, there are places where it cannot mean that.

Now here are the passages that they would typically site. I am going to throw them up here on the screen, and then I don't want to deal with all of them, but I want to deal with a couple of them. Let's start with 1 Timothy 4:10. This is a passage that would be sited. It says this, "it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of," whom? "All men, especially of believers." Now those who hold to an unlimited view of the atonement will say, see Jesus is, in His atonement, the Savior of all men, He provided a potential salvation for all men. So, is that what this verse is saying? Let's look at it carefully. We have to be precise.

Notice that the antecedent of the word *Savior* in this verse, is not Jesus. The antecedent of *Savior* in this verse is God, the Father, specifically here called, the Living God. So, we first need to note that this verse isn't defining the extent of the atonement of Jesus Christ. It's talking about God's nature as Savior. And it is simply identifying two ways that God expresses His nature as Savior. He is on the one hand, the Savior of all men, in a temporal sense. In that they enjoy His common grace, they're not immediately destroyed. All men do enjoy something of the Savior hood of God; in that, they don't get what they deserve the moment they deserve it. But He is uniquely and profoundly the Savior of believers in a spiritual sense, saving them, and that's why He says, "especially those who believe."

Let's take another text, and my point here is not to exhaust all of the potential explanations of these texts, but just to show you that you have to read and look carefully. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all," there's our word. For all "to come to repentance." Now, I need to note several things here, first of all, the fact that God doesn't take pleasure or delight in the death of the wicked, as He says in Ezekiel, does not mean that Christ atoned for all men without exception. The one doesn't come from the other, that's not a logical deduction. In addition, when you have here, that God is not willing for any to perish, you have to understand that clearly in Scripture there are different wills in God.

Let me give you examples. First of all there is the will of decree. There are certain things that God decrees to be, and they happen without exception. God says, I will it, and it happens. As

Psalm 33 says, "The counsel of the Lord will stand." There are certain things He decides, and He does, and nobody gets in His way. It's His will of decree.

Secondly, there is His will of precept; that is, God has a will that's laid out in His word. Does God want everything that's in His word? Does He will that? Yes. But that's His will of precept. Does God decree that all men will keep everything that's in His word? No. That His will of decree, he doesn't decree that. But then there is His will of desire. So, God does not decree that all men will repent, but He does command all men to repent, it's His will of precept, and He does desire all men to repent. That's He takes no delight in the death of the wicked as Ezekiel says.

But, that aside, this verse, 2 Peter 3:9, is not talking about unbelievers who never come to faith. Peter specifically says, notice, "The Lord is patient toward," whom? Whom? You. Whose you? Well, you're at a bit of a disadvantage here, because I just showed you the verse on the screen, I didn't have you turn there, but the verse before it, verse 8, says, "it's those who are beloved of God." So the *you* here is those beloved of God. So, Peter is talking, in verse 9, about the people of God. How do you explain that? Listen carefully. Verse 9 is saying this. The Lord delays His return because He is patient toward those who are His, the ones the Father has given Him and for whom He died, but who have not yet come to faith.

So, my point here isn't again to exhaust these texts, we don't have time for that, but just to show you that there are definite legitimate ways to interpret them that don't do violence to the text that fit in with limited atonement.

The other set of verses that are used to argue against limited atonement, that don't prove the point, are a large set of verses that talk about Christ, I say large, it's not that large, but Christ died for the world. And again, those that hold to an unlimited atonement will argue that the world must mean every person in the world without exception. But again let me say to you, that in several passages the world cannot refer to every person in the world without exception.

I'll just give you one example, John 18:20. Jesus said to Pilot, "I have spoken openly," guess what He says, "to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret." Now I don't think anyone reading that text, would argue that Jesus is claiming, that He spoke to every person in the world without exception. That isn't what He's claiming. He's using it as an expression of without distinction. Not without exception.

Now, taken as a whole, that's how I think these passages should be legitimately interpreted, they mean *all* without distinction, the world in that sense, rather than *all* without exception. Here are the passages that are sited in sort of as evidence that the world must mean that Jesus died for

every person in the world. Just look at 1 John 2:2. It says, Jesus, "Himself is the propitiation for our sins," talking obviously about believers, and what does the word *propitiation* mean? It means, as we saw a few minutes ago the satisfaction of God's just wrath against sin. So He Himself is the satisfaction of God's wrath for our sins, "and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Now, here's an example of a text, where the *whole world* cannot mean every person without exception. Because of the word *propitiation*. It means to fully and completely satisfy the wrath of God. If Jesus propitiated, if He satisfied fully the wrath of God for every person in the world without exception it seems to me you only have two choices. Either you're forced to redefine propitiation, He didn't really satisfy completely the wrath of God for that person or you have to embrace universalism. Ultimately every person on the planet will be right with God. Because what it says is, He fully satisfied the wrath of God for them.

So, who are these people in the whole world? Well you have to understand 1 John in its context, He's talking as a Jewish person, making the point against Jewish exclusivism. He's saying listen, Jesus didn't just die for the sins of Jewish people, He died for sins of people all over the world, without distinction, not without exception. So, those passages that are used against limited atonement do not prove the point.

A couple of more arguments quickly. Number four, only a definite atonement is consistent with divine election. As we saw, the Bible teaches that in eternity past, unconditioned upon anything in us, God chose some for eternal life. That is a very clear teaching. If you wonder about that, if you struggle with that, go listen to a series I did in Ephesians 1, verse 4 and following. I did about six messages on election there, dealing with this issue because I know this is a struggle. I grew up not believing in election. But you have to deal with the text, so, if you struggle with that, go listen to that series, and I hope it will help you. I try to even answer some of the common questions people have about this issue. But the Bible teaches it. Now if the Bible teaches that God chose some for eternal life, in eternity past, then it is logical to assume what? That in the mind of God, Jesus was substituting for whom in His death? Those He chose in eternity past. He knows who they are. Why would He have Jesus dying for people that He didn't choose? It's inconsistent.

That's why in John 17:9, this makes no sense. "I ask on their behalf," Jesus prays, on behalf of those you've given Me, "I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours." Now, you tell me. How likely is it that Jesus would substitute for those for whom He even wouldn't pray?

Here's what John MacArthur says in his book, *Biblical Doctrine*,

If Christ has provided the same potential atonement for everyone [that's what the second view we talked about teaches, if it's a potential atonement for everyone],

then the decisive difference between the saved and the lost is not the omnipotent grace of the Savior, but the depraved will of the sinner. [That's what makes the difference. It's the will of the sinner]. Taken to its logical conclusion, [he goes on to say], it is to say that Christ saves us with our help and what that means when one thinks it out is this, that we save ourselves with Christ's help.

Definite atonement is the only view that is consistent with divine election.

The final argument, only a definite atonement is consistent with the biblical concept of substitution. And for me, this was what convinced me, it was this very argument that convinced me of the rightness of this view. Because I had studied substitution, I had studied what that means. I studied what Christ did. And when I say that Christ's atonement is definite, I am not talking about those universal aspects of the atonement. We are not dealing with common grace or any of those things. We are talking about what is at the heart of the atonement. And what is at the heart of the atonement is substitution, Jesus dying in the stead of, in the place of sinners. So this is the issue.

In a nutshell, here it is, did Jesus die as a substitute in the place of every unbeliever, even those who will be eternally condemned in hell? Did He pay for their sins fully upon the cross forever satisfying the wrath of God against their sins? That's what His redemption accomplished. That's what the Scriptures speak of. Was that the purpose in the mind of God? That Jesus was paying for the sins of every human being on the cross satisfying the wrath of God for their sins? Because if Christ did substitute for everyone, listen carefully, if He substituted for them in the biblical sense of that word, there should be no wrath left for the sinner. Because that's what propitiation means, the full and complete satisfaction of the wrath of God. So why would a sinner for whom God has completely satisfied His wrath in the death of His Son, why would He turn around and send that sinner to hell?

I'll close with one text, turn with me to Isaiah 53. We all love Isaiah 53 it talks about substitution and says it so many different ways. But I want you to see this very interesting part of a verse. Isaiah 53, let's start in verse 10,

But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring [there's the Resurrection, implied],
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.
As a result of the anguish of His soul,
[The Messiah Himself] will see it and be satisfied [He'll be satisfied with what He accomplished, now watch the end of verse 11];

By His knowledge [or by our knowledge of Him is the idea] the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

Now notice the two sides of the end of that verse. Those He will justify, and those whose iniquities He actually bears are exactly the same group. They're the same group. This is what the Scriptures teach.

What is the practical implication of this? Let me give you two points of application and I'm done. Why does this matter personally for you as a believer? Do you understand that Jesus had you personally, and your sins in mind, when He died on the cross for sins? It was not something potential, it was not, well maybe someone out there will be helped by this. It was you, and you, and you. More than that, what He accomplished in His death for you, was not potential salvation, what He accomplished was actual salvation. And at the moment that you were made alive, that you were regenerated, that was applied to you. His atonement, actual atonement, was applied to you.

Again, MacArthur writes in *Biblical Doctrine*,

Scripture teaches that Christ has actually, not potentially, provisionally, or hypothetically, but actually accomplished the salvation of His people by virtue of His work on the cross.

We have a real Savior. And a real actual salvation by divine design.

Let's pray together.

Father, we are amazed. Amazed at Your wisdom, overwhelmed by Your grace, that You would choose us, that You would set Your love upon us, that You would draw us to Yourself. And Father, all of us here who have believed in Jesus, we believed because You gave us to Him in eternity past, and we came to Him, because You have given us to Him. We thank you that He then offered His life to accomplish specifically our salvation. What amazing grace. What great love.

We thank you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

