

*Redemption
Accomplished
and Applied*

by John Murray

Eighth Lecture

Presented by Dr. Richard Spencer

Review

- We have covered:
 - The necessity of the atonement
 - The nature of the atonement
 - The perfection of the atonement
- And we almost finished the extent of the atonement, which addresses the question:
For whom did Christ die?

Review

- We have:
 - Examined positive scriptural evidence for particular atonement
 - Examined the most common arguments against particular atonement
 - Examined some passages used to support universal atonement and discovered that in order to understand what is meant by “all” we must examine the context
- Now we want to look at a few more scriptures used to support universalism

What about Hebrews 2:9?

we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9

- The context of the verse makes it clear that he is speaking of the many sons to be brought to glory (v 10), who are being made holy, are of the same “family” as Christ, and are called his brothers (v 11-12), and who are “the children God has given” to Christ (v 13); so “everyone” clearly does not mean each and every one

What about 2 Corinthians 5?

- A popular passage of universalists is,
Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- We can again simply say that “all” does not necessarily mean each and every one, but far more can be said for this passage
- Let’s compare it with Romans 6:4-8

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We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. Rom 6:4-8

- Both speak of being united in his death, so to live for him in 2 Corinthians 5 is parallel to being united in his life and resurrection, and to being freed from sin and crucifying the old self in Romans; but these are clearly not true of everyone

Finally, what about 1 John 2:2

- This is the most popular passage of universalists

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

- We must admit this is consistent with universal atonement, and does not itself teach particular atonement
- But is it also consistent with particular atonement? If it is, then we must look elsewhere to decide (as we already have)

Finally, what about 1 John 2:2

- What might John mean by “the whole world”?
He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
- There was good reason for this language without assuming universal atonement:
 - It implies that the *scope* of the atonement was not limited to the specific disciples John had mentioned and written to; it includes all believers
 - It sets forth Jesus as the *only* sacrifice for anyone in the world (i.e., the *exclusiveness* of the sacrifice)
 - It sets forth the fact that Jesus is the only sacrifice for *all* time (i.e., the *perpetuity* of the sacrifice)

Murray Concludes on 1 John 2:2

Hence the scope, the exclusiveness, and the perpetuity of the propitiation provided sufficient reason for John to say, “not for ours only but also for the whole world.” And we need not suppose that John was here enunciating a doctrine of propitiation that is distributively universal in its extent.

RA&A, pg 74

- Therefore, we must let the rest of Scripture tell us the extent, and as Murray labors to prove, the rest of Scripture teaches particular atonement

Does the Bible Teach Universal Atonement?

- Murray draws the following conclusion regarding passages such as these

So it will not do to quote a few texts from the Bible in which such words as “world” and “all” occur in connection with the death of Christ and forthwith conclude that the question is settled in favour of universal atonement.”

RA&A, pg 61

One Last Point

- Murray concludes the chapter by pointing out that 1 John 2:1 speaks of Christ as our advocate:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

- Therefore, we cannot separate the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice from the efficacy of his intercession, they are both parts of his priestly office

Christ Our High Priest

- In Christ's fulfilling both the sacrificial and intercessory aspects of his priestly office, we cannot overlook the exclusivity of his high-priestly prayer in John 17:

I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. John 17:9

- There is a distinct group of people, chosen by the Father and given to Christ, for whom he functions as the high priest, both in his sacrifice and his intercession

Be Careful

- Murray also issues an important warning,

There is only one source from which we can derive a proper conception of Christ's atoning work. That source is the Bible. There is only one norm by which our interpretations and formulation are to be tested. That norm is the Bible. The temptation ever lurks near us to prove unfaithful to this one and only criterion.

RA&A, pg 76

- This statement provides a nice segue into the material with which I want to close this section of the book – the Bible is our “norm”

How Do We Understand the Bible?

- We must use our minds (i.e., reason) to understand and apply the Word of God, but we must use our reason in a ministerial way, rather than a magisterial way

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

- Sin affects our thinking (the noetic effect of sin) and we need to work to overcome this problem by the power of the Holy Spirit

How Do We Understand the Bible?

- So, we must:
 - Use our minds because God is a god of logic
 - But logic is one of his attributes, not an external constraint
 - The most fundamental rule of logic is the law of noncontradiction – so we should not embrace a *real* contradiction (e.g., did I call on Monday, or Tuesday?)
 - Not stand in judgment over the Word of God, it alone is the infallible rule for doctrine and life
- We can look at both general and special revelation, but the Bible is the ultimate norm!

What Does the Bible Say?

- God commands and commends the proper use of logic and reason:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Acts 17:11

How Do We Interpret Scripture?

- The primary reformation hermeneutic is called *The Analogy of Faith*, which is represented by the slogan *Sola Scriptura*
 - *This means that we use Scripture itself to interpret Scripture; if one passage is not clear, we look to others that are clear, and we never pit Scripture against itself (we have been using this principle!)*
- *The second rule is to interpret Scripture literally – i.e., as you would literature; what is the common meaning of the expression?*
- *The third rule is to use the grammatical-historical method*

Hermeneutics – Private Interpretation

- Two important principles of the reformation were the right to private interpretation and the concomitant right to have the Bible translated into the vernacular
- In responding to the demand that he recant his teachings, Luther said (at the Diet of Worms):
 - “Unless I am convinced by sacred Scripture or by evident reason, I cannot recant. For my conscience is held captive by the Word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me.”
 - He also said that Popes and councils have erred and that only the Scriptures never err.

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Hermeneutics – Private Interpretation

- Martin Luther himself spoke strongly against abusing the privilege of private interpretation:
 - “Now I learn that it suffices to throw many passages together helter-skelter whether they fit or not,” he said. “If this is the way to do it, I certainly shall prove with Scripture that Rastrum beer is better than Malmsey wine”
N. Pearcey, *Total Truth*, pg 303
- John Calvin also commented on this:
 - “I acknowledge that Scripture is a most rich and inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom; but I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man, at his pleasure, may assign.”
Ibid, pg 303

Return to the Central Question

- The central question at issue between Arminian and Reformed theology is how to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility
- Free will as we have presented it is often called *compatibilist* because it is compatible with divine sovereignty (determinism)
- Arminians propose a *libertarian* free will, which is not constrained by nature and is not compatible with divine sovereignty – to be sovereign is to rule

Proceed with Caution!

- Clark summarizes Calvin's warning about the topic of predestination in the following way,
“The curiosity of men” makes “disputation about predestination, already a difficult thing in itself, perplexing and hazardous.” If unbridled, this curiosity will lead one straight into a labyrinth. The only safe path, therefore, when inquiring into predestination, is to give oneself over to those “secrets of his will” that he has determined to reveal in his Word.

R. S. Clark, *Election and Predestination*, Ch. 5 in *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, 2008, P&R Publishing, pp 108-109

Libertarian Free Will?

- Arminians assume that God can't fairly judge men without libertarian free will
 - To absolutize this assumption leads to eisegesis
- But libertarian, or absolute, free will is a myth:
 - Even God does not have such freedom
 - Truly morally neutral people would not be able to make moral decisions, they have no basis
 - The Bible teaches total depravity – not that we are as bad as we could possibly be, but that sin affects every aspect of our being; our thinking and our affections included

Total Depravity

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time Genesis 6:5

We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. ... the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:9-18

the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Romans 8:7-8

What Does the Bible Say?

- Consider Ephesians 1:11,
In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will
- God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass as the Westminster Confession correctly says
- R.C. Sproul points out that this is a *necessary* result of God's sovereignty and is a logically necessary tenet of real theism

What Does the Bible Say?

- Also consider God's prophecy against Assyria, *The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. I will crush the Assyrian in my land ... For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"* Isaiah 14:24-27
- There are many other prophecies like this one, and many astounding examples of fulfilled prophecies (e.g., about Christ), so it is clear that God *is* sovereign

What Does the Bible Say?

- Most important for the discussion on predestination, consider Romans 9:10-15,
Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."
- This refers to the individuals, not the nations as in Malachi 1
- Why did Paul have to deal with the objection?

What Does the Bible Say?

- And continue with Romans 9:16-18,
It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.
- Now it is explicitly stated that it is *not* man's desire or effort, but mercy
- Also, look at God's dealing with Pharaoh

What Does the Bible Say?

- And continue with Romans 9:19-24,
One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory
- God is the potter, we are clay
- His purpose is to manifest his multifaceted glory!

Summary

- The Bible clearly teaches *both* the absolute sovereignty of God and man's responsibility
 - Consider Joseph and his brothers:
You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. Gen 50:20 (see Grudem, Ch 16)
 - Also consider Judas:
None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.
John 17:12
But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.
Matthew 26:24

How Can This Be?

- We must avoid going beyond Scripture, there is a mystery here; but, it isn't insurmountable as some think, we must understand:
 - What is meant by free will; autonomy is impossible with a sovereign God, but free will is not
 - An analogy: we do not need to physically force animals in order to train them
- So, reject Arminianism as unbiblical, but don't divide the body of Christ unnecessarily
- There are other ideas out there (e.g., middle knowledge); see Frame, *The Doctrine of God*

Perkins' Explanation

- The Puritan William Perkins – sometimes called the father of Puritanism, held the Biblical (Reformed) view that God decrees everything, but did not *cause* Adam to sin

Perkins distinguished the necessity of infallibility and necessity of compulsion. ... what [God] decreed will infallibly come to pass. But the voluntary acts of the creature are in no way coerced or compelled by God's secret decree.

A Puritan Theology, Beeke & Jones, RHB, 2012, pp 121-122

Summary Continued

- Finally, we absolutely *must* reject universalism; it *is* heresy
- One of the most vocal modern proponents is Rob Bell and his book *Love Wins*. But note:
 - He absolutizes God’s love to the exclusion of his holiness, justice, truth and other attributes
 - He misuses Scripture (e.g., 1 Tim 2:4, God “wants all men to be saved” means that all will be!)
 - Read Kevin DeYoung’s review online:
“The emerging church is not an evangelistic strategy. It is the last rung for evangelicals falling off the ladder into liberalism or unbelief.”

Application

- We must think carefully about our faith – and be transformed - not standing in judgment over God and his works, but standing in awe of them as we stand at the foot of the cross

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

To Prepare for Next Session

- You should read Chapters One and Two of Part II, Redemption Applied