

*Redemption
Accomplished
and Applied*

by John Murray

Seventh 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 started the extent of the atonement
- The question is,
 - For whom did Christ die?
- We examined positive evidence that he did not die for everyone, but for the elect; those who are chosen by God and who will be glorified

Questions from Last Time

- Some were confused by the statement that Christ's payment was of sufficient value for everyone
- This is a statement agreed to by virtually all theologians, both Reformed and non-Reformed, and is the result of the perfections of Christ's person and work
- But to be sufficient *in value* for all does not mean that it is automatically *effectual* to satisfy the demands of God's justice

Satisfying God's Justice

- We saw last time that it is a matter of grace whether or not a judge accepts a substitute for a judicial satisfaction (as opposed to a pecuniary debt)
- The doctrine of limited atonement, or particular atonement, means that Christ's sacrifice, while sufficient for all, is not efficacious for everyone; the application of the sacrifice to each individual requires grace
- R. C. Sproul put it this way:

The value of his [Christ's] sacrifice is unlimited. His merit is sufficient to cover the demerits of all ...

When we speak of the sufficiency of the atonement, however, we must ask the question, Is it a sufficient satisfaction of divine justice? ... if Christ really, objectively satisfied the demands of God's justice for everyone, then everyone will be saved. It is one thing to agree that faith is a necessary condition for the appropriation of the benefits of Christ's atoning work, for justification and its fruits. It is quite another to say that faith is a necessary condition for the satisfaction of divine justice. If faith is a condition for God's justice to be satisfied, then the atonement, in itself, is not sufficient to satisfy the demands of God's justice.

R.C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?*, Baker Books, 1997, pg 165-166

The Condition: Faith

- We read from Hodge last time that when a substitute is accepted for a judicial satisfaction, there can be conditions imposed, and the substitute's payment is not actually applied until the conditions are met
- Faith is the condition that must be met for God to apply Christ's sacrifice to a person, and *any* person who truly believes will be saved – the offer *is* genuine and the payment *was* sufficient

The Condition: Faith

- As Paul wrote in Romans,

if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9

- But is everyone able to believe?

No!

- God must graciously cause us to be born again before we are able to believe (more on this later)

Review: Alternatives

- We saw that the alternatives to limited atonement (or particular atonement) are:
 - No one is saved
 - Everyone is saved
 - The atonement is limited in its effectiveness
- The first two are clearly unbiblical
- The third view is in opposition to the essential character of God's works in general, and the atonement in particular
- Both the second and third are common views and we will address them more later

Review: Objections

- We examined arguments against particular atonement
- Opponents claim:
 - ❖ The offer of the gospel is not genuine
 - ❖ There is no reason to evangelize anyone
 - Particular atonement denies real human free will
- We covered the first two last time, but Murray makes one further important observation in this regard:

The truth really is that it is only on the basis of such a doctrine [i.e., particular atonement] that we can have a free and full offer of Christ to lost men. What is offered to men in the gospel? It is not the possibility of salvation, not simply the opportunity of salvation. What is offered is salvation. ... It is the very doctrine that Christ procured and secured redemption that invests the free offer of the gospel with richness and power.

What Does the Bible Say?

- Consider Mathew 1:21, where the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to tell him to go ahead and take Mary to be his wife,

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

- God's intent was that Jesus would save his people, not make salvation possible for everyone; and God accomplishes what he intends to accomplish

Objections

- Now it is time to address the third objection:
 - Particular atonement denies real human free will
- Free will is not explicitly discussed by Murray in this book, but we will examine it because there is great confusion on this point, which leads to unbiblical views of the atonement

What is Free Will?

- Jonathan Edwards defined the will as “That by which the mind chooses any thing.”
The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Hendrickson, 2005, Vol 1, pg 4
- He explains that we always choose that which we most desire at the moment given our circumstances; in that sense we have free will
- But our wills are constrained by both our natural abilities and our moral abilities
 - We can't stay underwater like fish or fly like birds
 - Nor can we go against our nature
 - What does the Bible say?

What Does the Bible Say?

- Consider Matthew 7:18,
A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
- And 1 Corinthians 2:14,
The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
- A person's nature determines his actions – there is no neutral state; and if there were, how would a decision be made?

Neutral Decision Making?

- The idea that a “neutral person” could make a decision is, in general, a myth
- Consider the choice of which route to take to a particular destination, route A or route B
 - If you have *absolutely no preference* for either route, you make a random choice, not a true decision; any real decision is based on a preference of some sort
- But can true faith be based on a random choice?
- Consider what the Westminster Shorter Catechism says

Repentance and Faith

Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel. WSC, Ans. 86

Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience. WSC, Ans. 87

- The decision to believe is based on the gospel offer, a true sense of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, a “neutral” person cannot do this

Neutral Decision?

- A neutral person cannot make a true decision; there must be some preference and the preference will be based on some perceived advantage; something is “better” than something else in some way
 - Neutrality only works in *purely* amoral decisions (e.g., which bolt is stronger) where we can evaluate data to decide
- But almost all decisions involve some value judgment about what is better or more desirable and so values, or nature, matter

What is Free Will?

- Returning to the question of free will, note that an absolutely free will is not possible, even God's will is constrained by his nature!
 - For example, He cannot choose to lie
- So now, returning to the question of the atonement; virtually all agree it is of sufficient merit and that the condition for that merit to be applied to an individual is faith, so the real question becomes:

Can man, in his fallen state, choose to believe?

Can Natural Man Choose to Believe?

- Classic Arminians and Reformed believers agree that man, in his natural state, cannot choose to believe
- Classic Arminians (and post-Trent Roman Catholicism), however, believe that prevenient grace is given to everyone at some point in life and that it enables each person to freely choose
- But there is no Biblical evidence for this neutral condition being established, and if it were, what would motivate a decision?

Not by Grace Alone

- If two people both have prevenient grace and both hear the gospel, what makes one choose Christ and the other not?
 - It isn't grace (they both have the same grace)
 - It isn't the gospel (they both heard the same gospel)
 - It must be something the one did that the other did not do (he cooperated with the grace)
- So, whether you call it work or not, it is salvation by grace plus *something*, and that *something* comes from man, not God

What Does the Bible Say?

- Consider John 6:63-65,
The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."
- This refutes the modern view that all people naturally have the ability to accept or reject the gospel; but classic Arminians would say prevenient grace enables belief

What Does the Bible Say?

- So now consider Ephesians 2:8-9,

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

- What does the grace accomplish? By it you have been saved, it is not that salvation has been made possible
- Yes, it is through faith, but that faith is a guaranteed result of the gift of grace or the stated end, salvation, would not result

What Does the Bible Say?

- Also consider Ephesians 1:4-6,

he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves..

- This does not comport well with the view that God foresaw who would believe, it does comport with his sovereign choice

What Does the Bible Say?

- Also consider John 10:26,
you do not believe because you are not my sheep.
- And John 8:47, where Jesus is telling the people why they don't believe him,
He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.
- Jesus does not say that these people are not his sheep because they don't believe, rather he puts it the other way around; They don't believe *because* they aren't his sheep!

What Does the Bible Say?

- In John 3:3 & 5, Jesus tells Nicodemus,
I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. ... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.
- Just as no one is responsible for his own birth, so no one is responsible for his own re-birth; it is a monergistic work of God
- It also makes no more sense to say that you can reject new birth than it does to say that you can reject being born

What Does the Bible Say?

- Finally, consider John 6:44,
No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him
- Arminians say that “draw” here means to persuade, but the Greek verb used is ἔλκω, which means to move by irresistible force; it is also used in:
Are they [the rich] not the ones who are dragging you into court? James 2:6
they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace Acts 16:19

Biblical Conclusion

- Fallen man is not able to respond to the gospel call in faith unless God first causes him to be born again (regeneration)
- It simply makes no Biblical sense to speak of faith preceding new birth or regeneration
- It also makes no sense to speak of someone rejecting new birth; certainly people resist the grace of God, but God wins!
- There is no violation of our free will; God gives us a new nature and, as a result of that new nature, we freely choose to believe

Old Testament Confirmation

- The New Testament teaching on new birth agrees completely with the Old Testament; God gives us a new nature:

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Ezek 11:19

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezek 36:26

Conclude the Extent of the Atonement

- We are now ready to take up the last topic in this chapter; Murray addresses a number of the scriptures that are used by proponents of universal atonement
- Some people who believe in universal atonement believe in universal salvation – we will address that next time, but others, such as Arminians, simply believe that the atonement was intended for all, but is not efficacious
- The doctrine of particular atonement says that God only *intended* it for his chosen people

Did Christ Die for All?

- There are Scriptures that would seem to say that Christ died for everyone

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

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

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

1 John 2:2

The Use of “All”

- Consider the following,

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. Romans 5:18

- The first “all men” refers to each and every man descending from Adam by ordinary generation (i.e., not Jesus Christ)
- The second “all men” cannot refer to each and every man unless everyone is saved, which goes against other clear Biblical teaching

Did Christ Die for All?

- Therefore, Murray points out that
From beginning to end the Bible uses expressions that are universal in form but cannot be interpreted as meaning all men distributively and inclusively.

RA&A, pg 59

 - “distributively” as used here means to apply without exception to each individual member
 - “inclusively” means to include all possible members
 - So the phrase “distributively and inclusively” means the same as “each and every”

Application

- Far from making us feel like puppets who have had their freedom trampled, the doctrine of particular atonement should cause us to rejoice greatly in God's sovereign mercy – so give thanks to God!
- We should cry out with David & the psalmist,
Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?

2 Sam 7:18

I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

Psalms 118:21

Prepare for Next Session

- If you haven't already, you should read Chapter Five, the brief conclusion to *Redemption Accomplished*, to prepare for our next session