

The Satisfaction of Christ Studies in the Atonement 19. Its Extent

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Transcript

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Considering all the ground which has already been carefully gone over, there really ought to be no need for a separate discussion of this phase of our subject. The question, For whom did Christ make satisfaction — for whose sins did He atone? has been clearly anticipated and definitely answered in almost every aspect of our theme which has been before us. If we go back to the very foundation, namely, the everlasting covenant, there we find that the Father promised the Son a specific reward (Isa. 53:10-12) upon His performance of the work assigned Him. The Son perfectly accomplished that work (John 17:4), therefore He must "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." If a single one of those for whom He died be not regenerated, justified, sanctified and glorified by God, then the Father's promise to His Son would be nullified. The nature of Christ's satisfaction determines to a demonstration those who are the beneficiaries of it. First, it was a federal work. There was a legal oneness between Christ and those for whom He acted. The Savior stood as the Surety, and if a single one whose debts He paid receive not a full discharge from the law, then Divine justice would be reduced to a farce. Second, it was a substitutionary work. Christ acted not only on the behalf of, but in the stead of, those who had been given to Him by the Father; hence all whose sins He bore must of necessity have their sins remitted — God cannot punish twice, once the Substitute and then again the subject. Third, it was a penal work: every requirement of the law, both preceptive and punitive, was fulfilled by Christ, therefore all for whom He acted must receive the reward of His obedience, which is everlasting life. Fourth, it was a priestly work: His sacrifice being accepted by God, its efficacy and merits must be imputed to all those for whom He offered it. The design of Christ's satisfaction as made known in Scripture reveals its scope. To suppose that the greatest and grandest of all God's works was without design would be to be guilty of blasphemous thoughts. That design was framed by infinite wisdom, so that there can be no flaw or failure in it. That design is executed by omnipotence, so that it is impossible to thwart it. What that design was, has been shown (in part) in the 9th chapter of this series. It was not an indefinite and undefined one. Scripture has made known in plain and unmistakable terms that the mediatorial work of Christ was in order to God's being magnified, the God-man glorified, and God's elect saved. The eternal Son of God became incarnate in order to "save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). But without reviewing any further the preceding chapters, let us now say why we deem it expedient to devote a separate chapter to the more specific stating and proving of what has come before us previously in only a more or less incidental or subordinate way. It is because a right (Scriptural) view of this point is absolutely essential, if God is to be honored and Christ is to be

glorified by us therein. The enmity of the Serpent against the Seed of the woman has been inveterate throughout the ages, and perhaps at no other one point has he so persistently attacked the glory of Christ. While it is impossible for Satan to either undo the finished work of the Savior, or to destroy any of its fruits, yet he is permitted to misrepresent it, and nowhere has his subtlety been more exercised and manifested than in the means employed here. He has indeed appeared as an "angel of light." His very attempts to discredit the satisfaction of Christ have been made under the guise of magnifying it, and that is why he has succeeded in getting many men reputed as "orthodox" to do some of his foul work for him. Perhaps it will enable most of our readers to grasp more readily what we have just referred to in the above paragraph, if we frame the following questions. Which seems to have the greater tendency to exalt Christ: to say that He died because He desired and sought to make possible the salvation of all mankind or to say that He died only for God's elect, the "little flock"? Which seems to display the more His compassion for sinners? Which seems to bring out the more the value of His blood: to say that it avails only for the "few"? or to say that its merits are so infinite that every member of Adam's race would be redeemed did he or she put their trust in it? The very fact that every one of us would answer the question in the wrong way until we are taught aright from Scripture, not only evidences the worthlessness of carnal reasoning upon spiritual things, but also shows to what a terrible extent our minds have been poisoned by the venom of the Serpent. If it can yet be clearly shown that, in reality, the wider view actually dishonors Christ, then the consummate guile and malice of the Devil therein should be plainly apparent. Before exposing the futility of the above reasoning, let us prepare the way by giving other illustrations or examples of our inability to think aright where spiritual things are concerned. Does it not seem to us that a greater revenue of glory had accrued to God had sin never invaded His dominions and corrupted His creatures? Yet He deemed otherwise, or else He had not suffered it so to be. Again; does it not seem to the Christian, every Christian, that he could glorify God more in this present life if the sinful nature were eradicated from his being? Yet if this were so, God would take the "flesh" completely out of our beings when He regenerated us. And does it not seem to many a reader that he or she could accomplish more for Christ, if better health, different circumstances and surroundings, or more money, were given to them by God? And so we might continue. The fact is that the wisest Christian is utterly incapable of thinking rightly about Divine things until his thoughts are formed by Scripture. But coming now to a closer answering of the questions raised above. First, many imagine the glory of God is exceedingly exalted by affirming that He truly desires the salvation of every member of Adam's fallen race, and that they who teach that His free grace is restricted to the elect, grievously dishonor His benevolence. Now to maintain aright the glory of God we must speak in the language of His Word. Only that is glorious in God which He ascribes unto Himself. "Our inventions, though ever so splendid in our own eyes, are unto Him an abomination, a striving to pull Him down from His eternal excellency, to make Him altogether like unto us" (J. Owen). "God is dishonored by that honor which is ascribed to Him beyond His own prescription" (Jerome). To assign unto God any thing which He has not assumed, is only to deify our own imaginations. Many objects present a fair appearance when viewed at a distance, but their defects become apparent when examined at close quarters. So it is here. The assertion that God's design in sending His Son to this earth was that every sinner might be saved by Him, may at first glance seem to conduce unto the magnifying of His goodness and grace, but a little reflection thereon should quickly show the contrary. It certainly is not to the glory of God to suppose that the success of Christ's costly undertaking should be left contingent on the creature's will — that can never be the measure of His honor. And it certainly is not to the glory of God to suppose that He designed to save any that perish, for that would show His benevolent purpose was frustrated and would proclaim a disappointed and defeated Deity. The truth is that the glory of God's grace consists not in the number of objects to whom it is shown, but in its being free and undeserved, thus tending to lay the highest of all

obligations on those who are concerned therein. The fact is that those who advocate the scheme of a general redemption, are so far from magnifying the grace of God, that they, really, degrade both Divine grace and Christ's sacrifice. For according to their theory God has only provided a precarious salvation, which is offered to the caprice of man's acceptance, a mere possibility, which can only become actual through the sinner's compliance with certain conditions; a possibility, which when properly examined, is seen to be an impossibility. How vast the difference between a precarious salvation, and an infallible one! How immeasurably superior a redemption which secures the certain salvation of every one for whom it was made, and a suppositious redemption which guarantees the salvation of none, leaving everything uncertain, dependent upon fickle man! How infinitely greater the glory which comes to God by that plan, through which grace efficaciously works in and applies the saving benefits to all for whom Christ died, than a method which would exalt the power of the creature and set the crown upon his free-will! If it be still contended that we magnify the grace of God far more by proclaiming its universality rather than by insisting upon its particularity, by affirming that it extends to all mankind rather than to an elect remnant, then to carry out such an argument to its logical conclusion, we should be obliged to believe that God will save all, for He certainly will do that which is for His highest glory — this being the paramount consideration before Him in all that He does: see Psalm 29:9; Proverbs 16:4; Revelation 4:11. Moreover, such an argument would require, yea demand, that Divine grace be extended unto the fallen angels as well as to all mankind. Will men pretend to reflect on God's goodness because He has not extended His grace to all who might have been the objects of it had He so pleased? Has He not a right to do what He wills with His own? Which exalts Christ the more? which demonstrates the more the value and efficacy of His atonement: that which effectually secures the actual salvation of every one for whom it was made? or that which ends in the great majority of those for whom He shed His precious blood being eternally punished in hell? Surely none with any spiritual discernment can fail to see which view is more glorifying to the Redeemer. And if we call to mind the nature of His satisfaction, that it was a specific bearing of the sins of definite persons, that it was a paying of their debts, a suffering the law's curse in their stead, in order that they might go free; and when we remember that the Judge of all accepted this atonement, was satisfied with the price the Sponsor paid — then, where would be God's honor, His justice, His faithfulness, were He, notwithstanding, to yet punish millions of those for whom His Son bled and died? If Christ died for all men universally, then all men universally must be saved. There is not other possible alternative, except to say that God will punish twice, first in the person of the Surety, and then in the persons of many in whose place He is supposed to have stood. We sincerely trust that neither writer nor reader is lacking in compassion to his fellow-creatures, yet we must not allow our pity for men to lead us to adopt any principle which is dishonoring to the Divine perfections and subversive of Christ's satisfaction. Others may speak for themselves, but the writer would not dare to trust his salvation to a Savior who was unable to save those for whom He died. If it were true that Christ shed His blood for those who are now in hell, what guarantee would be left me that I shall not go there? An atonement, that fails to atone, a sacrifice which fails to deliver, is worthless. To say that salvation is possible to all, if all would receive Christ, is to ignore those unequivocal words of the Savior in John 6:44, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." To say that salvation turns upon the sinner's own acceptance of Christ would be like offering a sum of money to a blind man upon the condition that he would see, or offering to ransom a prisoner on the proviso that he burst his way out of his steel-walled cell. "Many divines say that Christ did something when He died that enabled God to be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. What that something is they do not tell us. They believe in an atonement made for everybody; but then, their atonement is just this; that Judas was atoned for as much as Peter, that the damned in hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in heaven. Though they do not say it in

proper words they must mean that, in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for they say He died for all, and yet so ineffectual was His dying for them, that many are damned afterwards. Now, such an atonement I despise—I reject it. I had rather believe a limited atonement that is efficacious for all for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of man be joined with it. Why, my brethren, if we were only so far atoned for by the death of Christ that any one of us might afterwards save himself, Christ's atonement were not worth a farthing, for there is no man of us can save himself — no, not under the Gospel" (C. H. Spurgeon on Isa. 53:10). But is not a true believing on the Lord Jesus Christ required in order to a receiving of God's great salvation? Certainly it is, but it is the office of the Holy Spirit to give saving faith to every one of those for whose sins Christ atoned. There is an infallible connection insured between the one and the other. The costly price of redemption was far too precious in the sight of God for it to be cast away on souls that perish. Therefore did He predestinate that the Spirit should communicate life to all for whom Christ died. "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25): that is clear enough — all whose "offenses" Christ bore, must be "justified"! There are inseparable and saving benefits bestowed upon all them whom Christ loved and gave Himself for. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10): these go together, hence, as the greater part of men are not "saved" by His life, that is proof positive that they were not "reconciled by His death." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. . . That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13, 14): to each of those whom He redeemed, Christ gives His Spirit. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21): as inevitably as Christ was "made sin" for those for whom He died, so inevitably must those for whom He was made sin be "made the righteousness of God in him"! "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32): if God delivered up Christ for all mankind, then He will, He must to make good His word here, freely bestow (not "offer," but actually "give") repentance, faith and every spiritual blessing to all mankind. It is this sure and certain connection between Christ's purchase of salvation and the actual enjoyment thereof by those for whom it was wrought, which the advocates of a universal redemption lose sight of. Hear that prince of the Puritans, John Owen. "Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man's deliverance from bondage to him that detains him, who hath power to set him free, and is contented with the price I give, were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men, and those men not redeemed? that a price should be paid, and the purchase not consummated? Yet all this must be made true, and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted. A price would be paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet few of them redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners enthralled!" The difference then, between truth and error on this vital subject, lies in the returning of scriptural answers to these questions: What was the purpose of God in the mission of Christ? Was it to make the salvation of all Adam's race possible? or was it to make the salvation of His own people certain? Was it simply to remove those "obstacles" which stood in the way of the Divine righteousness pardoning any one? or was it to remove the sins of those whom God had predestinated unto eternal glory? Was it simply to "open a way" whereby sinners may approach unto the Holy One? or did Christ die the Just for the unjust that "He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18)? That the second of each of these alternatives is the true one, consider: 1. THE PURCHASE OF CHRIST By the term "purchase" Scripture signifies that Christ meritoriously procured for His people the actual bestowment

upon them of all those good things which He earned for them, which may be summed up under "life," "salvation," and an "eternal inheritance." Now these blessings were not purchased for His people "conditionally," but absolutely, just as when a surety pays a debt, the debtor is necessarily discharged, or as when a ransom is given for the redeeming of a captive, the captive must be freed. Christ's work was not of such a nature that the will of God is still conditional as to whether or not the reward of His satisfaction should be bestowed upon certain ones. No, He has absolutely obtained for His people peace with God and the remission of their sins, and that by purchasing for them that very faith with which they believe, appropriate and enjoy the salvation which He wrought out for them. Scripture is most explicit in demonstrating that Christ's purchase and the Spirit's application of the purchased blessings have for their objects the same individuals: that for whomsoever Christ obtained any spiritual blessings by His death, unto them it shall most certainly be communicated. For whomsoever He wrought reconciliation with God, in them doth He (by His Spirit) work reconciliation unto God. The one is not extended to any to whom the other does not reach. It is true that no sinner obtains any of the saving benefits of Christ's satisfaction until he repents and believes, but it is equally true that Christ has purchased these very graces for His people, and is now exalted on High to administer them: Acts 5:31, etc. The Scriptures perpetually conjoin together the benefits purchased by Christ and the benefits bestowed on those for whom they were purchased, so that we cannot sever the one from the other. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5): His chastisement and our peace, His wounding and our healing, are inseparably associated. Thus the design of Christ's satisfaction is infallibly made known by the results of it. The intendment of God in the atonement is plainly evident through what is accomplished by it, for whatsoever He has purposed must be effected (Isa. 46:10); hence, what is secured by the sacrifice of Christ makes manifest what God planned it should procure. "If there be anything plainly taught in Scripture, it is that the sacrifice of Christ was made for those only who shall eventually be saved by it. If the wisdom of men cannot reconcile this with their views of what is right, let them be prepared to dispute the matter with the Almighty in the day of Judgment" (Alex. Carson).

2. THE RECTITUDE OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER

God's justice indispensably requires that all the benefits of Christ's sacrifice should be imputed and imparted to every one for whom it was offered and accepted. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He. The Supreme Being gives to every one his due. This principle cannot be violated in a single instance. He cannot, according to this, either remit sin without satisfaction, or punish sin where satisfaction for it has been received. The one is as inconsistent with perfect equity as the other. If the punishment for sin has been borne, the remission of the offense follows of course. The principles of rectitude suppose this, nay peremptorily demand it: justice could not be satisfied without it. Agreeably to this it follows that, the death of Christ being a legal satisfaction for sin, all for whom He died must enjoy the remission of their offenses. "It is as much at variance with strict justice or equity that any for whom Christ has given satisfaction should continue under condemnation, as that they should have been delivered from guilt without satisfaction being given for them at all. But it is admitted that all are not delivered from the punishment of sin, that there are many who perish in final condemnation. We are therefore compelled to infer, that for such no satisfaction has been given to the claims of infinite justice — no atonement has been made. If this is denied, the monstrous impossibility must be maintained, that the infallible Judge refuses to remit the punishment of some for whose offenses He has received a full compensation; that He finally condemns some, the price of whose deliverance from condemnation has been paid to Him; that, with regard to the sins of some of mankind, He seeks satisfaction in their personal punishment after having obtained satisfaction for them in the sufferings of Christ; that is to say, that an infinitely righteous God takes double payment for the same debt, double satisfaction for the same offense, first from the Surety, and then from those for whom the Surety stood. It

is needless to add that these conclusions are revolting to every right feeling of equity, and must be totally inapplicable to the procedure of Him who loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness" (W. Symington). Christ made full satisfaction unto the law of God (Matthew 5:17; Gal. 4:4,5), but how could He have made satisfaction for the sins of those on whom the law will take satisfaction for ever? How can the justice of God have been appeased in the case of those against whom its flaming sword will awake to all eternity? Christ expiated offenses (Rom. 4:25), but how can those offenses for which the guilty perpetrators shall suffer endlessly, have been expiated? How did Christ redeem from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13) those who are to be kept in everlasting thralldom and misery? This scheme postulates a Savior of those who are never saved, a Redeemer of those who are never redeemed, a Deliverer of millions who are never delivered. To reply to the above by saying that, Christ made a sufficient atonement for the sins of all men universally, but that many are not saved by it because they trust not in it, is to lose sight of the fact that half of the human race have never heard the Gospel, and so could not believe it! Whatever blame may rest upon Christians for their dilatoriness and selfishness, the Holy Spirit would most certainly have stirred up some to carry the glad tidings to those who have perished in heathen darkness had Christ purchased their salvation. To say otherwise would be rank blasphemy. The special mission of the Spirit is to apply the saving benefits of Christ's salvation to all for whom it was made. The One who is able to "raise up children" out of "stones" (Matthew 3:9) cannot be checkmated by the coldheartedness of His people.

3. THE DECLARATIONS OF HOLY WRIT

As we have shown in previous chapters, the Satisfaction of Christ had its origin in the sovereign will of God, hence His mere good pleasure decided and determined who should be saved by it. A favored section of Adam's race were chosen to be its beneficiaries: herein, we behold the "goodness" of God. Fallen angels and the remainder of Adam's family were not to be redeemed by it, but were predestinated to suffer the due reward of their iniquity: therein we behold the "severity of God" (Rom. 11:22)! The same contrastive principles are adumbrated in the material creation: nature, no more than Scripture, knows anything of a God who is mighty to save and yet not mighty also to destroy — witness tidal waves, tornadoes, earthquakes, famines and pestilences. In keeping with what has just been said, we find that Scripture divides mankind into two classes: the Church and the world, the "friends" of God and His "enemies," the "sheep" and the "goats." And let it be properly noted that whatever is affirmed distinctly of the one class, is implicitly denied of the other. Every assertion that Christ died for "His people," is a repudiation of the theory that He died for all mankind. Just as when it is said that a certain man toils to provide food for his family, no one is foolish enough to conclude that he is also laboring to provide food for all mankind; so when the Word declares that Christ "loved the Church and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25), all should see that such discriminative language is meaningless, if He also loved and gave Himself for the entire human race. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). Here a broad line of distinction is drawn between two classes of the human family, with respect to one of which the Savior makes the solemn affirmation, "I never knew you." The import of those words, according to Scripture usage, is too plain to be misunderstood; the antithetical "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19), shows that He never had a saving cognizance of those to whom He shall say "depart from me." "Our Lord speaking of those for whom He died, calls them sheep: 'I lay down my life for the sheep' (John 10:15). He explains who His sheep are by saying that they are such persons as 'hear his voice and follow him' (vv. 3, 4), and He adds, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.' Does it not plainly follow from His words that those for whom He died shall be saved, that He died for none but those upon whom the gift of faith should be

bestowed? And does He not signify, by particularizing them as the persons for whom He laid down His life, that He did not die for others of an opposite character? If He died for all, there would be no meaning in saying that He died for His 'sheep,' because in this case there would be nothing peculiar to them, nothing by which they were distinguished from any other description of men" (J. Dick, 1850). To this we may add, the name "sheep" is synonymous with "elect," for such are "sheep" before they believe, yea, before they are born (see John 10:16); and that in this very same passage Christ affirmed there were some who are not His "sheep" — see 10:26. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37): but this would not be true if the enmity of the carnal mind, the stubbornness of the unrenewed will, or the oppositions of Satan, were able successfully to resist the "drawing" (John 6:44) of the Father! Christ expressly said, "I pray not for the world" (John 17:9), therefore He died not for the world, for His sacrifice and His intercession have the same objects: (Rom. 8:34). "Feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28): if the atonement be of universal extent, if Christ's blood be shed for all, then such discriminating language would not only be unnecessary, but altogether misleading. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28): no satisfactory reason can be given why Christ should say only "many" if all mankind were also included: cf. Hebrews 9:28. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14): those for whom Christ died are "a peculiar people," and not the whole Adamic race indiscriminately. Those passages which are appealed to by those who advocate the doctrine of universal redemption will be carefully considered in the next chapter.

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