

The Doctrines of Grace: Particular Redemption

Ephesians 2:1-10

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What I would like to do in this scripture reading is turn to two or three separate passages. We are dealing today with the doctrines of grace, as part of this series, and in particular, this morning, we are going to what is called the third doctrine of grace. We have studied total depravity, and found that our forefathers had it in the Articles of Faith in this church along the entire Mississippi Baptist Association in this area. The Second Doctrine that we studied from the Bible is called unconditional election: that there is nothing in man that causes God to choose him. The third doctrine that we will look at today is called particular redemption or definite atonement. It means that Christ accomplished in his death upon the cross an effectual salvation for all whom he represented.

Turn with me to Matthew 1 where we have the first statement in the New Testament about the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ coming to earth. In Matthew 1 the angel of the Lord spoke to Mary and he spoke to Joseph, and in verse 21 he said, "...and she will bare a son and you shall call his name Jesus," (which is the Old Testament name for Joshua in Hebrew; it means the Lord is salvation), "...you shall call his name Jesus, for it is he who will save his people from their sins." We see here in this passage at the very beginning that He has a people, and we saw that last week these people were given to him before the foundation of the world; sinners to be saved by His grace and work upon the cross. It also says in verse 21 that he *will* save them from their sins; that He will *actually* save them. Not make it possible, not make it probable, but that he *will* save His people from their sins.

Turn with me to Matthew 11. Here we see the necessity of the work of God in the heart to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew 11:27 Jesus said, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him." Here we find salvation is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ; that He is the one that works in the hearts of His people to reveal to them the gospel and the salvation that He has accomplished.

Now turn with me to Ephesians 5. These are just a few of the many places that we could turn in the New Testament which teach that the crucifixion of Christ upon the cross actually accomplished something. It did not just make things possible but accomplished something. We had, many years ago to my embarrassment, a guest preacher in this pulpit that I invited, and he was talking about God choosing from before the foundation of the world to save his people from their sins; but the way he taught it was this: he said, I think I know now why Jesus died upon the cross. He died upon the cross and came to this world hoping that there was the least possibility that just someone would believe in Him. And of course Joe Nesom had prayer after that sermon and prayed all of the five points of the doctrines of grace. I was embarrassed, and I was asked questions about it. Well meaning, but it backfired.

To think of Jesus' death upon the cross as so impotent that he just thought and hoped that someone would have the good sense to believe in him one day, takes the very heart out of the Bible,

and the Bible's description of the power and effectiveness of his death to accomplish what he came to accomplish. "You shall call his name Jesus, because it is he who *will* save his people from their sins."

In Ephesians 5, when Paul is trying to teach husbands the kind of love that they are to have for their wives: how sacrificial, how unconditional, how humble, a husband's thoughts and love for his wife should be. He chose the example and the comparison of the effectiveness and the accomplishment of Jesus' work upon the cross for his people. He said in verse 22: "Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is also the head of the church, he himself being the savior of the body; but as the church is subject to Christ so also the wives should be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loves the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and blameless."

This is not just the possibility; the hope that someone would form the church by having the good sense to believe in Jesus. It is teaching that He gave himself for the church in order to make sure that she came before Him cleansed of all sin and prepared to live eternally with him. Christ loved the church and he gave himself up for her.

I want to lay some foundations for this great truth this morning: this truth that the atonement of Jesus Christ is effectual; that it accomplishes what was intended by His death. Let me read to you what the founders of this church, of Ebenezer church across the Mississippi line, of First Baptist Church Jackson, and of other churches, believed about the death of Christ: "We believe that there is one mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus, who by the satisfaction which he made to law and justice in becoming an offering for sin, has by His most precious blood redeemed the elect from under the curse of the law that they might be holy and without blame before him in love." You can hear the echoes of Ephesians 5 in that statement.

Our forefathers believed in what is called particular redemption. Now to understand particular redemption or definite atonement, or sometimes called limited atonement (which is not a great term), you have to understand why we need it. What does the bible first of all teach about the need of atonement before God? The first reason is found in the character of God. Our forefathers understood that there was need concerning the understanding of the law of God and the justice of God. The explanation for these two terms is not often even stated today when you read books on the atonement.

The justice of God is hatred of sin. It is so perfect and intense that He has determined that He cannot be honest with himself, and He cannot have integrity in His word, unless He brings perfect justice upon every evil and sin in this universe. We see a lot of sin on the TV, and in the newspapers, and if we are honest, we see a lot of sin in our family and co-workers, and if we are truly honest we see a lot of sin in ourselves. At the root of all wars and conflicts, all hatred and evil in this world is sin in the heart of man. Jesus said: "Out of the heart flow evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, false witness and slander," and the violation of the Ten Commandments flow out of the heart of man as well. There is a need of atonement before a just and holy God. He created this world in righteousness, and He will not rest before every evil and sin has been eradicated from its existence.

You may say that I don't see that today. God is allowing sin all over the place to exist in this world. He is, for awhile, but the bible teaches very clearly that when Christ comes in His glory there will be an ending of this world as we know it and a final accounting of every single soul for every single

thought, word, deed, that was sinful before a holy and perfect God of justice. Then He will create a new heaven and a new earth in which there is no sin and only those who have dealt with their problem of sin may enter.

This is what the bible teaches. For we are made in His image to be holy; we have fallen from His image into sinfulness and selfishness and rebellion, and because He is perfect love and perfectly just, he will by no means let any sin go unpunished.

Let me read to you a few verses from Exodus 20:7: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." Have you ever taken the name of the Lord in vain? Have you ever used God's name in a curse word? Or have you said that you believe in God, and you have taken His name, and then you have sinned as if it doesn't matter what God thinks? Have you ever had thoughts that were evil about others knowing that God knows and saying you believe in God? Or have you refused to take His name upon yourself in unbelief? That is also taking His name in vain: making it useless.

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." Exodus 34:7, "He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." Nahum 1:3, "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." This simply means that God is going to punish every sin with a just penalty that you and I have ever committed and thought; feelings, words, or deeds, one way or the other: they will all be punished that His justice may be satisfied for the crimes against Him. Either we will bear the penalty of our sins ourselves in hell, away from the presence and under the wrath of God forever, or we must find some way for atonement to be made for us. If you don't find that other way to satisfy God's justice against you, his perfect memory and omniscience will bring before you, on the day of judgment, every single word and thought and deed you have done that is sinful in his sight; he will bring to you a perfect justice for what every single one of those sins deserve.

So the justice of God has to be understood in need of our atonement for sin. The second thing we need to understand is what the Lord Jesus Christ did in atonement upon the cross for our need. He offered an atonement that satisfies the justice and righteousness of God, perfectly, for the forgiveness of the sins of His people.

Paul taught that if God was to forgive sins, it could not be just by blankedly forgiving them. We have people in our seminaries who teach that if God just wanted to forgive sins he could, without Jesus having to die upon the cross. But usually those people who say such a thing, have in their background some sort of liberal teaching that the God of the Old Testament is a blood thirsty God, and the God of the New Testament is a God of love. They have an evolutionary idea of religion.

What the bible teaches is that God is so perfect in his justice that neither in the Old Testament nor the New Testament would he forgive sins without blood being shed, because the blood is the life that unless there was an atonement that was life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, death for death, there could be no forgiveness of sins. That is why the bible says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." There had to be equal atonement for the gravity of sin against God; for His justice to be satisfied, and that forgiveness may come, and wrath be lifted from the heads of the guilty.

So Paul said in Romans 3:24 that we are justified, accepted as righteous and declared righteous in God's eyes as a gift. We are justified as a gift by His grace thru the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. There has to be redemption, a payment, against the sins we committed for God to justify us, and it has to be a gift by his undeserved grace. And he said, "Whom God displayed as propitiation in his

blood through faith..." that is, Jesus had to actually die and offer to his father in heaven an absolutely righteous and perfect sacrifice to propitiate: to make the full payment of the crimes that we have committed against God. And then he continued and said, "...this was for the demonstration of his righteousness, God's righteousness, at the present time so that he would be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

God cannot just forgive sins without the death of Jesus. He cannot decide for the way people seem to think where they live a life of rebellion against God and at the last minute when they stand before God, God is going to forgive them because he is so nice. All of that is saying that the death of Christ was worthless and useless, but Paul says justice had to be satisfied; Christ had to pay for every single sin in thought, word or deed for the entire life of every single one of those he came to save: "He made Him who knew no sin, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

I love Peter's statement in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God having been put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit."

Think just a minute about Jesus and what he did when he substituted himself upon the cross: killed by the hands of godless men according to the predestined will of God; think what happened to Him upon the cross for a minute: every sin that we commit, just like Adam's one sin, condemns us to eternal punishment in God's justice—every single one: if we lived a whole life and only committed one sin, God hates sin so much that he will punish us with a just penalty: which is death eternally.

What must a sinner, one sinner, deserve for a lifetime or a multitude of evil thoughts and sinful words and sinful looks? What about deceit and lying, discontent and grumblings? All these violations of the Ten Commandments: profaning the Lord's Day, ignoring God, sinning against all of the Ten Commandments; if only one sinner was in the number for whom Christ died the sins that he or she had committed in their life would be like the mountains of the Himalayas. Huge! Almost unimaginable in their greatness; the multitudes of their sins would be like the flood of Noah that covered over the whole earth and the mountains; just from one sinner! These were placed upon the Lord Jesus to bare eternal wrath and hell; now multiply this by a multitude no man can number that God has determined to save before the foundation of the world!

What the Lord Jesus suffered upon the cross was more than nails and thorns. It was far more than the spitting of man and their cursing His name. The horror of what Godless men did to him upon the cross grieves us when we read about it in scripture, but there was something that happened there that is invisible to our eyes; it is infinitely worse than that: the Father looked upon the Son and treated him as if he had committed each and every sin, of the lifetime, of all of his people and poured out his full wrath upon him till he satisfied the penalty of hell; a thousand hells, a million hells, a billion hells! What He endured upon the cross was the wrath and anger of his Father against everyone of his people's sins, and he drank the cup of that wrath to the last dregs until it was satisfied, and God's justice was perfectly satisfied so that when a sinner comes to Jesus Christ and pleads his blood and righteousness for the forgiveness of his sins, he can know that in Christ all of his sins have been atoned for and punished upon the head of another, and he or she is free from the wrath to come.

"Truly, truly I say to you," he said, "he that believes in me and the Father who has sent me has eternal life and has not come into judgment but has passed out of death unto life." What a blessing it is to be forgiven of sin, but what a sorrow comes to the heart to the true believer when we begin to

understand what Jesus endured upon the cross when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” Absolute blackness; no words of kindness or love from the Father anymore; a separation so dark and so horrifying to the Lord Jesus Christ that he felt the pangs of hell for every one of his people until God the Father’s justice was satisfied. This he took upon himself voluntarily, substitutionarily, and vicariously atoned for all the sins of His people. You see, our love for Him and our understanding of what he has done for us, only grows in accordance as we understand the magnitude of our sins and the perfect offense of a just God against them. And as we look to the cross and we see the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, the shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep: the bridegroom who laid down his life for the bride, and as we see Him taking upon himself the sins of his own, we begin to see the magnitude of the love and the humility and kindness of His heart that comforts us and grants us hope of eternal life and God’s daily fatherly care of man.

The need of atonement is so great that it is going to take an eternity for us to fully understand what he endured upon the cross for us and for each and every sin that we have committed. How thankful that we should be to him, how much we should love him for taking that upon himself and not allow our hearts to become insensitive and calloused towards sin; we should not think lightly of it and say, “Well, everybody does it,” saying, “well, I can’t help myself sometimes.” Every single sin must be covered by the blood and righteousness of Christ to be forgiven.

Our Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross not just to make possible the salvation to any who had the good sense to believe him, but to accomplish the redemption of a multitude no man can number. This is the design, secondly, of the atonement: to accomplish the salvation of the people that were given him before the foundation of the world in unconditional election: people totally depraved and unable to help themselves, condemned by God, spiritually dead, unable to repent and believe because they don’t want to; now, Jesus, upon the cross, not only making atonement for their sins, but purchasing everything necessary to conquer their hard cold hearts and convict them of the sins against God and enable them to see in Jesus Christ a perfect savior in whom they can trust for a future salvation.

There are two views of the doctrine of the atonement out there today: one is called general the other is particular, and there is a ton of others you don’t even want to read about. The general view is that Jesus died upon the cross to make it possible to save sinners, but he did not actually die to save anyone in particular. He just provided a way, and now it is up to sinners to decide for themselves, of their own ability of faith, of whether or not they are going to come to him and take his atonement for themselves.

The second view is called particular redemption. It teaches that Christ came for a people to save them from their sins, to die upon the cross for them and guarantee and ensure that they were brought to eternal glory by his death and everything necessary to bring them safely to heaven. Charles Spurgeon, who preached a sermon on particular redemption, put it this way: in general atonement folks build a great big bridge that is very wide, but it only goes halfway across the river and there is no way to get to the other side. But those who believe in particular redemption build a narrower bridge that goes all the way across the river to take you safely into the eternal kingdom. He said, “I will take the second bridge.” Jesus Christ is a savior who saved you in spite of yourself and overcomes your own stubborn will and spiritually dead soul to bring you safely to his bosom and eternal life.

This is a hated doctrine by many. They say it makes God unjust not to give everyone an equal chance to be saved, but what they don’t understand is that God has already given them that chance:

that Adam, their representative, chose to disobey God, and since that day he has been calling all men everywhere to repent and return to God because they are already under his wrath. God does not have to send his Son into the world. He does not have to send his Spirit into our hearts. He owes us nothing as rebels, but justice. And yet, in His mercy he has sent his Son to rescue sinners and overcome their own hearts, and if he had not done that no one would have been saved.

Others say that this doctrine spoils evangelism: if you really believe that God saves his elect people from the earth; that Jesus died upon the cross to guarantee their salvation; you won't go and preach the gospel to every creature. You won't say to everyone repent and believe the gospel. But you see that is not true, because it is the truth that God has promised to save a multitude that no man can number, (this is a huge multitude that you can't even count), from every tongue and tribe and race and nation until Jesus comes he will call forth the Holy Spirit to work in His people's hearts and they shall be saved. This is what enabled William Carey and Adoniram Judson and Lottie Moon to go forth and put down their lives for the salvation of others in a culture that was hostile to Jesus Christ and his gospel, because they believed that God saves sinners, and that he has a people for whom Jesus died to bring in to eternal life, and they went preaching the gospel as the means by which the Holy Spirit would awaken dead hearts and bring them to life.

So what difference does it make to believe in particular redemption and the effectualness of Jesus' death, versus a general atonement that actually saves no one, but makes it possible to those who have the right kind of spiritual life to choose salvation within themselves? That kind of thinking exalts man and particular redemption exalts God. What difference does it make? Well, to the believer, to believe in particular redemption means that when you look at the cross of Jesus Christ, which you rely on for your salvation, you are looking into the face of God's eternal love for you from before the foundation of the world. You are looking at his desire for you to be rescued out of your darkness and become his redeemed child forever. You are looking at the cross where he actually wants to bless you, and that he overcame sin and death, through the purchase of the cross and its redemption; that He, in the blood of Christ, overcame your darkness and your stubbornness and your spiritual deadness, to purchase the work of the Holy Spirit to raise you from the dead and bring you to salvation. You are looking at the completeness of your salvation from beginning to end in one place where Jesus' blood was shed to make an atonement for your sins and bring you safely to heaven, and all of the blessings necessary to do that: where you have been born, how the gospel has been brought to you, how the Holy Spirit convicted you of sin, how you felt the weight of God's wrath and judgment upon you, and how you looked at the cross and said: I don't think I fully understand everything, but the Bible says: if I will trust in Him to atone for my sins, God will accept me. And you came.

Not only are your sins forgiven and that God wants to bless you, but by the atonement of Christ and the shedding of his blood, he has promised that he will continue to do everything necessary to bring you safely to heaven. "For I am confident of this very thing," Paul said to the Philippians, "that he who began a good work in you will bring it to perfection in the day of Christ Jesus."

Jude said, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to make you to stand... (*I love that phrase. It doesn't say, to help you to stand, but to make you stand*)... in the presence of his glory: blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord: the glory, the majesty, dominion, authority before all time and forever more." The assurance of our salvation at last!

The perseverance to the end in faith was purchased by the blood of the Son of God for all who come to him as his people.

I want those of you who have not yet come to Christ...this doctrine is difficult to understand...Charles Spurgeon preached about it, and he wanted to make sure that the unbelievers who heard about particular redemption were not discouraged from coming to Christ; that they would not sit there and wonder if they were elect or if Jesus died for them or not. Very clearly the bible says that He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and the other side of that coin is: he who comes to God will not be cast out.

The thing is, you don't have to understand how these things fit together before you come. If you know that you are a sinner, if you desire to have mercy, if you believe that Christ is sufficient, God is already working in your heart and he is calling you to come as you are today.

Let me read to you what Surgeon said, "I will tell you whether he died for you. Do you want a Savior; do you feel that you *need* a Savior? Are you this morning conscience of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Jesus died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscience that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God's justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourself? And can you say on your bended knee: Lord save! Or I perish? When you are stripped of everything but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty handed and take Christ to be your all and to be yourself nothing, then you may look upon Christ and you may say, 'Thou dear, thou bleeding Lamb of God, thy grief's were endured for me; by thy stripes I am healed and by thy sufferings I am pardoned.' Then see what peace of mind you will have: for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, he will never punish you.

"Payment, God's justice, cannot demand first at the bleeding sureties hand and then again of mine. If we believe in Christ, we can march to the very throne of God and stand there and if it is said, 'Art thou guilty?' We can say: yes, guilty. But if the question is, 'What have you to say, why you should not be punished for your guilt?' We can answer: 'Great God, thy justice and thy love are both guarantees that thou wilt not punish us for sin. For did thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst thou then be just? How canst thou be God at all if thou doest punish Christ, the substitute, and then punish afterwards?'

"Did Christ die for me? 'This is a faithful saying and worthy all acceptation: that Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Can you write your name down as one of the sinners? Do you feel yourself a sinner? Do you bemoan it? Do you seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? You are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ dies for you because you are a sinner. You are bidden by Him to cast yourself upon this great immovable Rock and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Is that what is in your heart? Then it was put there by God. It is a testimony that is calling you this morning: to come to him, to lay down confusion, to lay down stubbornness and fear, and trust in the goodness of God who would send his Son to death for the likes of us. Truly he can be trusted to build a new life for you upon His truth and upon His word and His commandments; and not only that, he will keep you in his hand until the end in spite of your weaknesses and follies and bring you safely to the eternal kingdom.

The amazing truth of the Gospel is that God did not let our sins stop him from saving us from our sins at the cost of his own Son's blood. And today, nothing stops anyone here from taking hold of

Jesus Christ and the full redemption that He accomplished upon the cross but your unwillingness to come to him as you are. You don't have to understand everything, but you do have to believe that He is the only place where sin can be atoned for in this world and in the next; and you must come to Him upon his promise: that the one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out; and that is enough, and it is sufficient.

For God so love the world, literally translated: that He gave his only begotten Son that all those believing in Him will not perish but have eternal life. Do you believe in Him? You will not perish. He will keep you from falling. Do you wish to be a believer in Him? Then come to him and he will give you all the benefits of his perfect atonement upon the cross and you will be saved.