

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION AND CHRIST'S SATISFACTION ENJOYED IN THE FUTURE

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We come as worshippers. God's centre of old was the tabernacle, with the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, not a scholastic academy, nor a Grecian debating college. And He condescends to "seek" worshippers still.

We are helpfully reminded that Doctrine and Prophecy are entwined, even as Doctrine is the source of godly Practice. Indeed, all truth is one: we do not read in Holy Scripture of "doctrines", except in condemnation of errors. And we should speak of "the doctrine of grace", not the doctrines, and likewise of truth, rather than truths.

Many propound theories of atonement, and a philosophy of salvation: we desire neither, for we have the Fact and the Fruit, and rejoice in the Reality of God's atonement, and His Revelation thereof, and, by His grace, our Realization. May this be ever deeper, fully, richer, and characterized by praise!

Covenant Redemption

The Scriptures set forth a particular or (if I may vary the wording) a covenant Redemption, and set it forth positively. "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it," "He bare the sin of many," "To give His life a ransom for many," "My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many." Compare "the children" and "the people" in Hebrews 2:14, 17. Such words would be nullified if there be not a definiteness in our Lord's work for His chosen ones, the "Mine" and "Thine" of John 17:10.

But it may be asked, honestly and earnestly, "Are there not other verses which emphasize another aspect?" We would not avoid, but welcome, difficulties. God has expressed everything in the best way. Difficulties thus viewed must be fruitful and blessed. A firm belief in verbal inspiration is inseparable from this expectation.

Some Difficulties Met

The twofold unveiling of truth is often misused, but thereby God lovingly draws us from all pride and harshness through the onesided and overbalanced tendency of man. Just as we rejoice in the Deity and Humanity of our adorable Lord, and own the harmony of "he cannot sin, because he is born of God," and "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing", so is it with redemption. Take the "widest" passages in their context. Israel misused "particular" blessings to despise the nations. Hence the witness, "Behold the Lamb of God (beyond Israel's passover), Which taketh away the sin of the world", and "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (for Israel), so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish". The types were for Israel, the Antitype is for "all nations" blessed, as the Gospel before preached unto Abraham declared, "in thee", and "in thy Seed", Which is Christ. No one misunderstands such language in other connections. "All nations" indicate those of all nations, as Revelation 5:9 sets forth, with adoration, "Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." "All Judea . . . were baptized" (Matt. 3:5, 6) does not suggest every individual, but all manner of persons, of every class and kind, even as "all sickness and all disease" is rightly rendered "all manner of" in Matthew 4:23.

1 Timothy 2:1, 2 explains the "all" by enumerating varied classes, and the 'all' in verse 4 is at once elucidated by "men" in 5, and the "all" of 6 is immediately linked with "the Gentiles" or "nations" of 7, as the words "to be testified in due time, whereunto I am ordained" make clear.

If we come to John 12:32 we have the context of Greeks desiring to see the Lord Jesus (20-22) in the days when He was among Israel, as a Minister of the circumcision (Rom. 15:8). Hence He speaks of the "much fruit", of His approaching death, and thereby the judgment of the world, and the drawing all, not only Israel, unto Himself (cf. John 11:52). Let it be noticed that these passages make the result as large as the provision. If the redemption is universal, so is the salvation, and none would be lost. But that is not the teaching of Scripture.

2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 shows a covenant "all", to

whom, as the "we all" of verse 10 (cf. Isa. 53:6) the chapter applies. Its true rendering is "If One died for all, then all died" (not "were dead"). They died with Him, hence His redemption cannot be wider than those who are thereby delivered from judgment.

The Divine Plan Harmonizes

Further, the unveiling of all God's plan harmonizes with covenant redemption, and this alone is secure. What is God's teaching as to the law in one of the most misunderstood verses of Holy Writ? "The Man (i.e. a prophecy of the Lord Jesus) Who hath done (not, who doeth) these things shall live" (i.e. after having done, in resurrection). But the Perfect One under law could not die, except by the guilt of others being laid on Him. Any vagueness would be injustice. Substitution is the only righteous principle set forth, and this must signify a covenant people, not those who will afterwards suffer for the same sins!

The theory of universal redemption would not add to the redeemed, but rather rob us of all real redemption. It would make the blood of Christ like to the blood of bulls and goats, and associated with long-suffering, and the temporary putting aside of sins, instead of with eternal grace, and their changeless putting away. A redeemer who does not redeem would be no redeemer at all.

Again, the book of life is the Lamb's book of life, and we read of those "given" to Christ. But if all were thus given, such words lose their meaning: if He, Who came to do the Father's will for those given to Him (John 6:39), redeemed those not given, His perfect service would be marred.

Moreover, the blood is that of "the New Covenant", and thus contrasted with the old "which they brake" (Jer. 31:32), and including a glorious "I will" of the writing in the hearts, and the sins and iniquities remembered no more for those embraced within it. How could this be true if the redemption did not essentially redeem?

We call to mind the words, "Raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:25, literally). If the justification were then settled before God for "us", how could it be, or become, indefinite and uncertain?

Either we were justified, or not? The work of Christ was not to make men savable but to save. Those for whom He died are viewed as having died with Him. Is not this particular redemption?

Purchase by Precious Blood

And does not the word "redeem" or "buy" itself contain this precious message? If we were bought in grace to be His possession by One Who acted in love and wisdom, there was a real purchase of a real object. The Purchaser and the One Who received the purchasing price are alike God, and neither the Father nor the Son would fail in the covenant-contract. All else would be confusion. Nor can we forget that a contrary interpretation would imply that He bore the sins of those already long in judgment, before He died. The inference from such error would seem to be universalism, or a hope after death, or a raising up for a period of probation, all of which are out of harmony with revealed truth.

But it may be asked, "Do we not read in 2 Peter 2:1 of denying the Lord That bought them?" Yes, but the word "Lord" is "Despot", not that which is associated with the redemptive glory of Christ. He has judgment over all the lost as the Son of man (John 5:27), and this twofoldness reminds of John 17:2: (a) "authority over all flesh"; (b) "to give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him."

The Lord Jesus bought the field for the sake of the treasure. His redemptive purchase must not be confused with His authoritative purchase: the former is substitutinary, and deals with our guilt, and its complete removal. Blessed be His Name!

Does not Hebrews 10:29 (often misunderstood) set forth that Christ was set apart and "sanctified" in His own blood, the blood of the covenant? This harmonizes with John 17:19, and Hebrews 13:12. His justification (1 Tim. 3:16) is our justification (Rom. 4:25), His glorification is ours (Rom. 8:30). Is it not so with sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30)? Hebrews 10:29 does not undo verse 10, but harmonizes therewith in exalting the Holy One Whom wilful sinners disown so grievously. Thanks be unto God, the blood of the covenant cannot be "a common thing"; it is effectual in sanctifying His elect, with Him Who,

sanctified and perfected, or brought to the goal for evermore (Heb. 7:28, marg.), is their sanctifying Lord (Heb. 2:11).

The Objections of Human Inferences

may be brought before us. Are we told "Particular redemption is unfair"? What? Did we have any right to salvation? Were we not all "children of wrath", and is it not undeserved favour or grace if any are saved? Such an objection would aim at the very foundation of the Gospel. But it may be more guardedly worded, "There is partiality: but God does not respect persons." First, the thought of respecting persons is joined with the Judge and His throne. God never excuses sin, nor fails to judge with exact justice. But can He not carry out such holy condemnation, and yet in grace do what He wills with His own bounty (Matt. 20:15)? Because He does not respect "faces" (Prov. 28:21) we have no hope in ourselves, but may He not, in pure grace, without revealing "Why", make, from the ruined lump, vessels of mercy unto honour (Rom. 9:21-23)? Who can doubt His right? Who can question His love? Let us leave the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29) and not dare to reply against Him (Rom. 9:20), but rather come into the sanctuary, and sit before the Lord as David in 2 Samuel 7. So in His light shall we see light even now, and know the riches of His grace more fully in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7).

Some may raise objections through a natural kindness. But let us remember the peril of putting human feelings against God's testimony. We little know the nature and extent of sin against Him. The natural tendency to object to "eternal punishment" because "I would not do this" may easily involve criticism of God's past judgments in the Flood and in Egypt. God has done what "I" would not have done, but "as for God, His way is perfect." Let our feelings be within His revelation, lest we unconsciously seek to bring His revelation within our feelings!

Is a Vague Redemption Real Kindliness?

Is one more saved thereby? Is it not rather that redemption is robbed of its real power, and its cen-

tre shifted from the power of Christ's precious blood to the human application of a sinner, while he is still dead in sins, and before he is saved? Does this glorify the Lord Jesus Christ? Does this shut out works? "Our" faith is thus made creative rather than responsive, and the work rendered absolutely inoperative without the co-operation of one whose condition is enmity against God! Far from making the redemption wider, it makes this narrower, and ineffective. The widening is of man's activity, his so-called "part". And what if man is dead, and his share "dead"? There is no gain, there is loss, nothing but loss.

The Problem of Preaching the Gospel

is at times mentioned. Beloved fellow-believer, to whom this is a difficulty, tell me one verse of proclamation in Scripture which I should hesitate to use when I acknowledge covenant redemption? If none can be produced there, the evidence seems rather the other way, and should not the preaching of to-day be corrected? I rejoice to declare the command, "Come, for all things are now ready," though I do not give the pearls of promise to those who would trample under foot. Nor do I add "ready for you", any more than Scripture does, without emphasizing the condition to which the Holy Spirit applies. "Ho, every one that thirsteth", "Let him that is athirst come", "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He healeth the broken in heart: the promises are to such.

Universal redemption would lead to preaching a cheap gospel; covenant redemption to a free one. Universal redemption would encourage the self-righteous and those who claim to do something. Covenant redemption meets the need of the helpless and hopeless. The suitability of the covenant redemption to the very ones who come to Christ in utter need would show it is the true testimony. The key that fits every word is again seen as Divinely made for the lock; no skeleton key will avail. There is no lack of harmony in God's perfect truth.

"He Shall See of the Travall of Hls Soul, and Shall be Satisfied"

(Isa. 53:11). How bright is the hope! An unsatisfied Saviour would be disappointed of His purchase, and where would the dishonesty lie? An unsatisfied people would share the gloom. But such shall not be the case. The house shall be filled without one empty place (Luke 14:23). Israel, in the converging of two lines of grace (namely, individual election and the restored remnant becoming the living nation, the "all Israel" (Jer. 50:20; Rom. 11:26), shall be Christ's glory, to be united after the thousand years, with Gentiles of all nations, in eternal union and communion with Himself. God has not failed. God will not fail. Again we worship and rejoice, nor would we cease so to do.

But let us not forget the heart-searching implications of covenant redemption to-day. Are we bought? Then we are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Our Whole Lives Belong to Our Purchaser

Are we bought, and shall we be independent? Shall we deny the rights of the Holy Spirit Who has sealed us, as the Earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of this purchased possession? Can we regard ourselves as men of this age? If redemption were secured by the ratifying work of a sinner dead in sins, we might be still linked with the world, but, as it needed a Divine work of effectual power, we cannot but be separate, nor can we fail to recognize in all redeemed ones a co-membership of Christ, which at all times precludes us from doing aught against such, in whatever nation they are found. Their life is ours, their interests are ours. And such a redemption should break down all the barriers of sect and system, that "I" or tradition may have created, or inadvertently maintained, and should lead saints back, with confession and sin and humility, to the "first things". Here is a call to own the oneness of saints, not only in verbal acknowledgment but in practical expression ere our Lord comes again. Is it not possible? Were not saints together once? Has the Lord changed, or the Holy Spirit become weaker? Shall we not seek, on our knees, the beginning of revival that will lead

up to "a people prepared for the Lord"? Are the words meaningless: "His wife hath made herself ready"? If we look to history, we say, "How?" If we look to self, we say, "It cannot be". If we look to Him, all is changed. And the faith that is only ready to act in a distant to-morrow is not faith.

What shall our climax be? Romans 8 leads up to the challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? . . . Who is he that condemneth? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and then, after showing the impossibility of such failure, another bright prophetic portion of the epistle conducts us to the heart-exclamation, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! . . . Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen." Then comes the immediate practical application in the power of the Spirit. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this age, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." And there our hearts would rejoice to rest and to act, and press forward, until we see Him Who loved the Church and gave Himself for her, that He might present her to Himself. He loved the unlovely to make them lovely and loving, and shall we not love Him with the love that obeys, in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit? O that it may be so, "from this day and upward!"