

SERIES ON THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE
#10
Text: Hebrews 9:11-15, 25-28
March 25, 1984

Sermon

REDEMPTION: ATTEMPTED, OR ACCOMPLISHED?

or, THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED (or DEFINITE) ATONEMENT

Pastor L. Dwight Custis

For several Sundays we have been talking about the doctrines of grace. We have been seeing a little bit of what the Word of God teaches about the need that exists in every heart--what it means that we are sinners. And then we considered what God did in eternity past in planning our salvation. We have seen the evidence in Scripture of His sovereign choice. And now, looking at the atonement, as we are doing, we have seen from Scripture that God had a specific purpose to accomplish in the death of Christ.

But before we continue with the subject of the atonement in this service, let me remind you again that the subject of salvation is the central theme of all of Scripture. You find it all through the Old Testament. The prophets were all looking ahead to the coming of the Redeemer. The Gospel records, of course, are centered in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, followed by His wonderful resurrection. Of all of the messages in the book of Acts, you will not find a single one that does not deal with the Gospel. It was the message of the Apostles and the message of the early church. The main purpose of the Epistles from the book of Romans to the book of Jude is to explain and to apply this glorious message of salvation. And then, if you could be with us on Tuesday as we study the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ, you would see in that book the crowning effects of salvation and the fulfillment of the glorious hope that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is a book of salvation. Salvation, as it is taught in the Scriptures, is only through the Lord Jesus Christ because of His suffering and death on the Cross, and His glorious resurrection from

the dead. You have salvation portrayed in the types of the Old Testament. Probably the greatest type that we have is the Passover Lamb. God gave to Moses instructions concerning the various sacrifices that they were to bring. These sacrifices give us a picture of our salvation. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are found in Psalm 22 when David gave expression to that agonizing cry that our Lord was to utter from the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And we could add to this many other passages in the Old Testament. Isaiah said, when speaking of the Redeemer, that He was "wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." And so we see salvation all through the Old Testament.

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The New Testament abounds in expressions that have to do with salvation. All of us know, I am sure, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And then in the book of Acts, chapter 5, we have this wonderful record of the preaching of the Apostle Peter: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (verses 30-32). When Paul was writing to the Corinthians, he recognized that this message was not a popular message, but he said, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). And later on in that same Epistle he said, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). When he wrote to the Galatian churches he said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). And to the church at Ephesus he wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). It is the Apostle John who wrote in 1 John 1:7 that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The doxology at the beginning of the book of The Revelation says this: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us (or loosed us) from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5). So anyone who reads the Scriptures with any understanding at all must admit that this message of salvation is taught throughout the Word of God from beginning to end, and that salvation is through Christ, through His death and His resurrection when He offered Himself as a Substitute for sinners.

But as we examine the Scriptures the question needs to be raised, when we see the outworking of this marvelous plan of redemption, did Jesus

Christ die to provide salvation for all men, or did He die to save certain ones in particular? Or we could state it another way. Was the death of Jesus Christ for all men universally, or was it specifically and definitely for some? Was salvation merely attempted at the Cross? That is, was there a provision made but nothing certain about it, or was it rendered certain for all for whom our Lord Jesus Christ died? These questions may never have occurred to you, and yet, I believe that as you examine the Scriptures which deal with salvation, you will see that these are questions that need to be answered.

I. THE STRONG STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE

In our text which was read to us earlier we have some very strong statements that I want you to note. Perhaps one reason that we have the ideas about salvation that we do is because we have not noted the specific way in which salvation is referred to in the Bible. So that if you have your Bibles opened to Hebrews chapter 9, I would like to re-read some of these passages, pointing out, in some of these verses, the strong statements that are made.

In verse 11 we read, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "Having obtained eternal redemption." This means that the Lord Jesus Christ actually accomplished something upon the cross. It was not a sacrifice that was

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made in the hope that some, at least, would hear and believe, but that He actually accomplished an "eternal redemption." The words "for us" are added to what the original text says because the writer of the book of Hebrews was speaking specifically to believers.

Now skip over to the second part of our reading, in verse 26, and you will see that there the writer said, "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He actually accomplished the work of putting away sin!

These verses do not speak of something merely attempted by God through the death of His Son, but of a work that was accomplished. Sin was put away. Eternal redemption was obtained. A work was made certain--absolutely guaranteed by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another passage is 1 John chapter 2--a verse that is often raised to

oppose the doctrine of particular redemption. Usually when this verse is read we look at the expression in verse 2 that "he is the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world." And yet we need to look at the word "propitiation" because the word "propitiation" means a satisfaction! The word "propitiation" means a work was accomplished. It means that when the Lord Jesus Christ died, when He--in the language of Hebrews chapter 9--"put away" our sin--He completely satisfied God with respect to the sins of those for whom He died. And, as I sought to bring out last week, if He had satisfied God for the sins of all of the people of all of the world for all time, then there would be nothing standing in the way of the salvation of every person who has ever lived on the face of the earth. If Christ paid the penalty for the sins of all men, and then those who do not receive the Lord Jesus Christ go to hell (even having their sins atoned for), then God is requiring a double payment for their sins. Those for whom our Lord Jesus Christ died were the recipients of this propitiatory sacrifice which our Lord Jesus Christ offered, and their sins were put away! This is the wonderful meaning of this verse.

"But," you may say, "what do you do with the expression, 'he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'?" Well, if you read your Bible carefully, you will see that there are times when this word "world" is used in Scripture when it does not mean every person without exception.

Just the other day my wife was reading to me from Luke, the second chapter, where the statement is made that a decree went out "that all the world should be taxed." This does not mean that the decree which went out from Caesar Augustus affected every person living on the face of the entire earth! It meant that all the Roman world, all the world that was under the rule of Rome, was to be taxed. So you have the word "all" and you have the word "world" used in a sense in which it does not mean all the people of all the earth, but all of the people within a limited sphere. Also, when you come to this expression, "the world," as it is used in the New Testament, remember that one of the things that was such a great problem in those days was that the Gospel was being preached to the Gentiles. The door of salvation was being opened to the Gentiles. Therefore, this word "world" is used in many places in the New Testament to indicate that the door was being opened for the Gospel to be proclaimed to the Gentile world. So when John, who seemed to be writing particularly to Hebrew Christians here in 1 John, said that "He is the

propitiation for our (Jewish) sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world," by this last expression he meant that

Christ died not only to save Jews, but to save Gentiles as well. He made propitiation for the sins of people throughout the whole world.

Now please turn to Romans chapter 8. It seems that in dealing with the question of salvation you cannot get away from the eighth chapter of Romans. I am, however, just selecting a few passages of Scripture to indicate the certainty of the work that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished when He died on the Cross.

In verse 28 of Romans 8 we read, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Now things do not always work together for good for everybody. They "work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." So Paul was speaking specifically of believers. And then he went on to speak of the work of salvation. But by the "good" that he was talking about he did not mean that things are always going to turn out the way that we would like for them to. He meant that which is "good" in the sense that it was fulfilling the purpose of God in salvation. Paul indicated this in the verses which follow: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called . . ." This means, called into salvation. "And whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now you see, these verses extend from--if I can describe it this way-- from eternity past to eternity to come. God did a work of electing, God did a work of predestination. When He did that, He took into consideration everything from that declaration of predestination to the glorification of His people. These are the people whom He has called; these are the people for whom salvation has been specifically accomplished. So, God did not merely attempt to do something in Christ. If the work of salvation were not made certain by God Himself, it would have been possible that Jesus Christ could have suffered and died on the cross without anybody being saved! But He accomplished a work, fully accomplished the work that He sent the Lord Jesus Christ to do. Any other view of the death of Christ would be a denial of the sovereign power of God and the sovereign power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, having seen this, now look at Romans 8:32. How did Paul describe the death of Christ there? Listen! "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?" Here Paul specifically said that Christ was delivered up by the Father "for us all." How could it be clearer that Christ died specifically to accomplish the salvation of those whom God had chosen?

II. ELECTION AND THE ATONEMENT

Now, having seen that--and this is just a sampling of many passages of Scripture that I could direct your attention to this morning--let me say just a word about election and the atonement.

Two Sundays ago we were considering together the doctrine of election, a doctrine that never has been very popular, a doctrine that many Christians never hear about, a doctrine that some feel we would be better off to leave alone. When they feel that way, they are passing judgment upon the way God has given us His Word, because

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we find election again and again in the Scriptures. The doctrine of election teaches us that God has chosen from all eternity those who will be saved. This is specifically stated as the Father's will.

Will you turn to Ephesians chapter 1? I appreciate your taking the time to look at these verses because, as I have said many times, it is always better for you to see them than just to hear them. If you can hear them and see them it makes a double impression upon your mind. In Ephesians 1:3-6 we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him." You see, He has blessed us in accordance with that choice He made "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." This whole work of salvation is described here as the will of God. He chose us before the foundation of the world because this was His will. Then, look down in the passage at verses 11 and 12 where he said, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

You see, salvation is not just a thing of chance. Salvation is not something that is left up to the will of men. It is not something where God has said, "Well now, the Lord Jesus Christ has died and salvation has been provided. And so you who are members of the body of Christ get out into the world and win as many as you possibly can." No, God is working out His will. God has chosen those who are going to be saved. We have this inheritance according to that purpose which is after the counsel of His will. So that whenever a person really comes to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the outworking of God's eternal purpose. We don't know who the elect are; but we are sent to preach the Gospel to every creature. We are sent to beseech people to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. When people receive the Lord Jesus

Christ, when they are born again and we see that their lives are changed because they have become new creatures in Christ, it is no credit to them. It is no credit to the preacher or the witness who has taken the message of salvation to them. This is God accomplishing His work, God fulfilling His own will, God carrying out His own purpose.

Now I want you to see that in every generation it is the will of God in salvation that is being accomplished. Election is the work of the Father; the atonement is the work of the Son. I hope that you would agree with me when I say that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one. When we say that They are one, we recognize that They are distinct Persons. There is a Person Who is God the Father. There is a Person Who is God the Son. There is a Person Who is the Holy Spirit. They are one in nature, one in Deity.

But we must also remember that They are one as to Their purpose in salvation. The Father has elected those who are to be saved; the Father has ordained the means of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ came and died on the cross for sinners. And the Holy Spirit in every generation is convicting people in "the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8b). Now if God elected some to be saved, but, when Jesus Christ came to die on the Cross, He went beyond the will of the Father and died in order that all men might be saved--all men in every generation-- then you have conflict in the Godhead. If it is the purpose of the Holy Spirit in

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using the Word of God to ignore what God declared should be accomplished by His decree of election, then again, you see, you have conflict between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But They are one in their purpose. What the Father elected, what the Father determined should be done by election, the Lord Jesus Christ came to accomplish. And the ministry of the Spirit of God is in perfect harmony with the work of the Father and the Son. The Lord Jesus said, you remember, "I came not to do mine own will, but I came to do the will of him (the Father) that sent me" (John 6:38). We can say that those whom the Father has chosen, the Lord Jesus Christ died to save, and those for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died are the very people that the Holy Spirit is regenerating.

Please turn to our Lord's prayer in John chapter 17. There we see this wonderful truth of election as it relates to the atonement referred to in a number of expressions. Now if God the Father has chosen from all eternity some to be saved, then the question is: Would Christ come and die on the Cross in order that all might be saved? Look at what the Lord said in His high priestly prayer: "These words spake Jesus, and

lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:" Now look: "As thou has given him power (authority) over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:1, 2). Now the Lord Jesus Christ did not say that He would give eternal life to every person on the face of the earth. You see, this was not the Father's purpose in election. And so this was not the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ in dying. I hope that we understand the power and the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ enough to know that if it were the Father's will to save everybody, then everybody would be saved! It is amazing, isn't it, that we somehow set the sovereignty of God aside when it comes to salvation when that is the main thing that God is doing. We have an omnipotent God. God gave the Lord Jesus Christ authority over all flesh--and by this expression we should know that if it had been the Father's purpose for all to be saved, they would have been saved--in order that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given to Him.

Look at verse 6, "I have manifested thy name unto" everybody? No! But "unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were," (and notice that this means they were God's before He gave them to Christ, because God had set His hand upon them from all eternity) "and thou gavest them me." And the evidence that they have been given by the Father to the Son and had been redeemed is: "and they have kept thy word."

Now turn back to John chapter 6 and let me show you this passage where the Lord Jesus Christ said "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." John chapter 6, beginning with verse 37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. . ." Now see here the Lord was speaking of the elective purpose of God, of the Father giving the elect to Him, the Son. The Lord Jesus Christ said that all of those whom the Father had given to Him would come to Him. You see, there is no uncertainty about this salvation. We preach the Gospel to men who do not want the Gospel, to people who cannot understand it, to those who are rebels against God--dead in their trespasses and sin, unable to help themselves--and yet, the Lord Jesus Christ said that when the Father gives someone to His Son, they are going to come! You see, the will of the Father with regard to salvation was determined from all eternity when He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Word is going forth and people are hearing the message of salvation and God is accomplishing His purposes. And all whom the Father has given to the

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Son will come to the Son. So we are talking about a work that is absolutely certain.

Look at verse 60 of this same passage. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:60-66). You see, the doctrine of election and the doctrine that God is fulfilling His purpose and working out His plan according to His will, has never been popular. It is not popular today. But it is very clearly the teaching of the Word of God.

I am not speaking this morning about the value of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. That obviously has to be infinite. As I have said before, if God should suddenly change His mind--which is inconceivable with God--and should decide that He is going to save all men everywhere in every generation, it would not be necessary for the Lord Jesus to die again. But we are not concerned about the value of the death of Christ when we are talking about His work of salvation. We are talking about God's purpose in sending His Son, God's purpose in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ--as well as the intention that Christ had when He went to the Cross. We are concerned with the sovereignty of God. We are concerned with the glory of God. Can God do what He determined He would do from all eternity? Or did Christ die for all, but now He has to be disappointed that all people are not coming to Him? To say that Christ died for all, but that it was the Father's will only to save some is, to introduce (as I have said) discord into the Godhead. If it were the intention of the Lord to save all men, then for every person who goes to hell it must be said that Christ died in vain--that He could not do what He intended to do by His death. But such thoughts are inconceivable when we are considering a sovereign God and His wonderful work of salvation. Christ died for those whom the Father had chosen. He put away their sins. He obtained eternal redemption for them. He completely satisfied God on their behalf. He is the propitiation for their sins. Salvation is not guaranteed for all men, but only for those who believe. And who believes? Those, as we saw last Lord's day, who are the Lord's sheep, those who are called, and those who are chosen.

I would like to ask you, as we close this morning, to look again at John chapter 10 where you can see this emphasized. I trust, in seeing these passages of Scripture, that you are going to realize more and more the wonderful work of salvation that God has made possible through the death of His Son. In John chapter 10 and verse 24, "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If

thou be the Christ (the Messiah), tell us plainly. Jesus answered them. I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." You see, He said specifically that the reason that they did not believe was because they were not of His sheep. And, of course, the Lord Jesus could say this because He knew the hearts of men. But then He went on to say, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life." This is the way that we can detect the elect of God. There is no

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way in which God has marked His sheep, but He has sent us to preach the Word. He has sent us to proclaim the message of salvation to every creature. Anyone, who either in personal witness or in the public proclamation of the Gospel, finds that two things always happen when the Gospel is preached: some reject it, and some accept it. Those who accept it may not necessarily accept it the first time that they hear it. But the Lord Jesus, in speaking of His sheep, was speaking of His elect ones. He said that His sheep would hear His voice; they would pay attention to His Word; they would be responsive to the Gospel when it is proclaimed. The reason that they did not believe, He was telling these Jews, was because they were not of His sheep. Here is the outworking of God's purpose. It is hard to see how this wonderful message of salvation could be any clearer than it is in the Word of God.

So, as we look at the Scriptures, we ought to be able to see that there is no conflict between the preaching of the Gospel and the work that the Lord is going to accomplish in the hearts of those who receive this message. But I realize that most of you to whom I am speaking are those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust that the Spirit of God is making this truth clear to you--that we have a sovereign God Who is carrying out His purposes. He sent His Son to die for those who are going to be redeemed. He has put away their sins. He has satisfied God concerning them. And they are the ones who, as the Gospel is being preached, are being drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope that you will be able to see the importance of understanding this. You see, one reason that believers do not profit from the truth of the sovereignty of God is because they hold false ideas regarding their salvation. You know, even believers can be confused as far as this point is concerned. I hope that you have been able to see, in what I have been saying this morning, that, when you look at this whole work of salvation, you see that God decreed in time past that certain ones would be saved, and that when the Lord Jesus Christ came and died on the Cross He died specifically, definitely, for those whom the Lord had

chosen to be saved. And, in the process of time, they are being saved. So, we have a certain work of a sovereign God. We have God working all things out in accordance with His will. The outcome of the Gospel ministry is not in the hands of men. But God is giving people, His sheep, to His Son. And His sheep hear His voice, and they come to Him, and they believe in Him.

If you understand these things about God, then, when it comes down to the daily trials and testings of your life, you are going to realize that this sovereign, omnipotent God, Who is carrying out His purposes with regard to the salvation of men, is perfectly sufficient to take all those troubles, all those difficulties, and all those things that seem to stand in your way, and work them together for good!

Let me leave this verse with you: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. 2:6) This means that your understanding, and my understanding, of what is involved in our salvation, is going to affect our walk. If you have an idea that God is not sovereign and that God is finding out from one day to the next just how His Gospel is going to fare in the world, then it is no wonder that you get disturbed when things go wrong, is it? But it is when you understand the sovereignty of God, and when you realize that He is accomplishing His purposes, then as these trials come to us, and we are subjected to things that we may not like very much, yet we know that in those trials we can trust God, that He is in absolute control, and that this is a part of His plan and His purpose for

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us.

So as you have received Him (and I trust that you have received Him with a consciousness that He is a sovereign God), so walk in Him. Is it any wonder that the Apostle Paul in that third chapter of Colossians would go on to say, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col. 3:15) I trust that the Lord is opening your eyes to these truths and that you will rejoice in the wonderful salvation that God has provided for us and see the working out of His infinite plan and purpose. Things are not in the hands of men. Things are in the hands of a holy, sovereign God.