

# SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## KEY TERMS: PROPITIATION, PART 2

Referring to Romans 11, Berkhof makes the astonishing claim that “the word ‘world’ cannot be all-inclusive, since the context clearly excludes Israel.” This is the imposition of replacement theology onto the text. My point is that even Soteriology is compromised when God’s plan for Israel is denied. Many dispensational theologians, in an effort to be nice, will claim that only eschatology is affected by Reformed doctrines concerning prophecy but that is incorrect. This doctrine affects every area of biblical and systematic theology.

Along the same lines, their theology is that “all men” really means all classes of men because any other meaning, they claim, becomes universalism and, if it is universal, then all people must be saved. For example, 1 Timothy 2:4 presents the truth that God desires all men to be saved but to these theologians that can only mean all classes of men otherwise everyone must be justified. By all classes of men, they mean that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation may be saved but that salvation is not available to every person without qualification. Only the elect from every tribe, tongue, and nation can possibly be saved. That is untrue. God’s desire is, in fact, that all men be saved yet He knows that many will remain unsaved. Their theological presupposition is that God died only for those who will receive eternal life; therefore, if He died on behalf of all then all must be saved or His sovereignty is defeated. The Reformed thinking is that the death of Christ on the cross actually redeemed the elect people at that moment which means He died only for those elect people since they are the only ones who will ultimately be saved. Those who understand unlimited atonement would say that Christ’s sacrificial death makes possible the justification of every person dependent only on belief in the person and work of Christ Jesus. Chafer explains it this way: “One objection often raised by limited redemptionists is that if Christ died for those who are never saved, then He has experienced defeat. Of course it must be conceded that if the finished work is a *guarantee* of salvation then God is defeated if even one fails to be saved. But does Christ’s redemptive work automatically guarantee salvation for all, or does Christ become the surety of salvation only when one *believes*? Christ’s death is a finished transaction, the value of which God has never applied to any soul until that soul passes from death unto life. It is *actual* as to its *availability*, but *potential* as to its *application*” [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137, no. 548 (Oct.-Dec. 1980): 316]. Chafer is exactly correct in his theology.

They use the same hermeneutical trick with John 3:16. “God so loved the world” really means God loved some people from every tribe, tongue, and nation but

that He didn't and doesn't love every person in the world. Only the elect are the "some" people that God loves. "Far from being thwarted, the clear invitations of Scripture for all to come to Christ (Mt 11:28; Jn 6:35; 7:37) are even more fully justified by the fact that the Spirit will use this universal good news to draw his elect to Christ. The Sinai Covenant focused Israel's hopes on the Messiah through types and shadows, but the Abrahamic covenant promising salvation for the nations is now announced to the world. It is in this sense that we understand the verses that refer to Christ's death on behalf of 'all' and 'the world.' Since Christ's blood 'ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev. 5:9), there is no distinction any longer between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free (Gal. 3:28). Through the flood, God simultaneously judged and saved the world—even though only eight persons were rescued. How much greater then is the salvation that is assured by the Triune God through his promise that there will be a remnant from every nation entering into the heavenly sanctuary as his new humanity" [Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*, pp. 519-520]. With respect to salvation, this is how the word "world" is understood in this theological system; it only means the elect. As an interesting side note, Horton claims that a remnant from every nation will be saved but the only two times the word "remnant" is used in the New Testament, it pertains to Israel and the Jewish people (Rom. 9:27, 11:5). Because Horton is a replacement theologian, he believes Israel has been replaced by the church; therefore, Israel is no more and the remnant must refer to believers.

Notice that Horton said "the Spirit will use this universal good news to draw his elect to Christ." The problem with this view is that the Scriptures concerning God's drawing ministry do not confine themselves only to the elect. The Bible never says what this theologian claims it says. John 6:44 simply says that God will draw those who come to Christ so this verse is neutral in terms of confirming or denying this theology. John 12:32 says that Christ will draw "all" to Himself. There is nothing except the presuppositions of a theological system to suggest that the work Christ performed on the cross is limited to the elect. John 16:8 says that the Holy Spirit will convict the "the world;" therefore, the Spirit's ministry cannot be confined to the elect. Redefining the words "all" and "world" to mean only the elect is not biblical exegesis. It is the subjugation of biblical soteriology to theological determinism.

John 6:44 <sup>44</sup>"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 12:32 <sup>32</sup>"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

John 16:8<sup>8</sup>“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

Concerning the drawing ministry of the Father, “Belief in Jesus never occurs unless a person has first been drawn to Him by God the Father [John 6:44]. Jesus does not say anything about the extent, duration, resistibility to this drawing. All He said is that drawing is necessary for belief to occur....The duration of the drawing is variable, for God may draw someone for eighty years or He may draw someone for only a short time. This drawing is resistible. Judas resisted intense drawing for over three years. All who die as unbelievers have rejected God's drawing. Unbelievers can labor for the food that endures to everlasting life because the Father is drawing them. However, if an unbeliever hardens his heart, God may cease drawing him” [Robert N. Wilkin, “John” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, p. 1:396].

We know that every single person knows God.

Romans 1:18–19<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup>because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

As a result of the drawing ministry of God, people can respond to the light God has given in whatever form whether it is through natural revelation or in response to hearing the Word of God and as these unbelieving people respond they are given more light until they either reject further light or hear the gospel and make a decision to believe or not. There is nothing in Romans that limits this knowledge of God to the elect and there is nothing that limits a response to this drawing ministry to the elect. Every person is drawn to Christ by the Father and every person has the opportunity to respond.

People can and do harden their hearts to the point that God's drawing ministry either no longer operates in their lives or is at least seriously hindered. I am somewhat reluctant to say that God completely stops drawing anyone to Him because up to the point of physical death, everyone can believe and live. It is true that he allows them to go their own way, but whether he ever completely stops completely drawing an unbeliever is not addressed in Scripture. Pharaoh could have come to faith even after the devastation of all the plagues. The Lord

seemed to give Judas an opportunity to believe right up to the time he left the Passover supper to betray Him.

Romans 1:28 <sup>28</sup>And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

Acts 13:46 <sup>46</sup>Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

In Acts, it is obvious God's drawing ministry was operative in Pisidian Antioch through Barnabas and Paul and the preaching of the gospel but it was rejected by the Jews to whom they were preaching the gospel. In his commentary on John, Leon Morris makes the claim that no one can resist the drawing ministry of God. He rejects Barclay's claim that man can resist the draw of God. "Not one of his examples [Barclay's] of the verb shows the resistance as successful. Indeed we can go further. There is not one example in the New Testament of the use of this verb where the resistance is successful. Always the drawing power is triumphant, as here [John 6:44]" [Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev., p. 328n]. Morris is operating under the Calvinist doctrine of irresistible grace; he believes God only draws the elect and they cannot resist. The Jews in Pisidian Antioch were experiencing God's drawing ministry whether or not the text uses that word to describe what was going on and they rejected it. The presuppositions held by Morris are invalid. Any of these Jews could have believed at a later time. The fact they rejected the truth at that moment does not mean they were not among the elect and it does not mean they couldn't submit to God's drawing ministry and believe at some later time. Just because the Scripture doesn't contain the word "draw" doesn't mean God's drawing ministry isn't active in that time and place. It is always active. Even more troubling, however, is the fact that the conclusion Morris draws about John 6:44 and its success in drawing people to Him is not supported by context of this pericope. By the time you get to John 6:64, it is revealed that there were people there who did not believe the words of the Lord. How can Morris claim that the drawing ministry is always effective and never rejected? He can do that because his theology trumps his exegesis.

In John 12:32, Jesus said He would draw “all” to Himself; the word “men” has been inserted into the text by the translators of the NASB. Other Bible versions have “people” or “peoples” inserted there. The NET Bible translation note on this verse says, “The word ‘people’ is not in the Greek text but is supplied for stylistic reasons and for clarity.” Either way, the text does nothing to suggest that only the elect are the subjects of the Lord’s words.

The word draw, ἐλκύω means to pull in, drag, draw, or haul in; it is to pull or drag requiring force because of the inertia of the object being dragged. People don’t seek God out of their own volition or will but they can respond to this drawing ministry. God has to exert His divine power to overcome the natural rejection people have for spiritual matters. He also has to overcome the mindset of most people that they are “good” and don’t need a Savior. They think they can do enough good works and be a good enough person in order to earn their way into eternal life. It seems that part of the purpose of God’s drawing ministry is to overcome this sin induced mindset that plagues mankind.

Borchert presents a rather balanced view of this situation. “Salvation is never achieved apart from the drawing power of God, and it is never consummated apart from the willingness of humans to hear and learn from God. To choose one or the other will ultimately end in unbalanced, unbiblical theology” [Gerald L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary: John 1-11*, p. 268]. People can go overboard on the free will side of the issue as the Arminians do and people can go overboard on the side of predestination and election that they think flows from the sovereignty of God as the Reformed/Covenant/Calvinist theologians hold. There is a balance.

The convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8 is not confined to the elect either; it is a ministry to the world. There is nothing to suggest that “world” is limited to the elect found in the various nations, tribes, and tongues of the world. That concept is simply a theological construct forced onto the text by theological presuppositions. As a result of the Spirit’s ministry, every person on earth knows they are not able to stand before God and live. The word for convict is ἐλέγχω and it means to show one’s fault implying there is a convincing of that fault. Said another way, it is to state that someone has done wrong with the implication that there is adequate proof of such wrongdoing. Even the godliest of saints, including the disciple Jesus loved, fainted in terror when they saw the glory of the Lord. Once a person is confronted with the holiness of God

in an up close and personal way, they instinctively know they have no business in that situation and are facing death because of their sin nature. Daniel's fright is recorded in Daniel 8:15-19 and John fell as if dead when he saw the Lord (Rev. 1:17). Isaiah was frightened when he saw the Lord sitting on his throne (Is. 6:1-7). The unbelievers who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden all fell to the ground when He simply identified Himself as "I am" (John 18:6). The point is that everyone ultimately knows they are a sinner in relation to God whether they will admit it or not. The convicting ministry is not confined to the elect. "It is 'the world' that the Spirit convicts. The Lord's statement is about actuality, not potentiality. Thus this is a statement of what is true of all people, even those who have never heard the name of Jesus. The Spirit convicts all of sin, righteousness, and judgment. That conviction becomes specifically linked to the Lord Jesus when the Bible is proclaimed" [Wilkins, p. 1:453].

While these aberrant theologians claim to believe Christ's propitiation is sufficient for the whole world, they must acknowledge that no one can be told Christ died specifically for them as an individual because they may not be one of the elect. "Because it is not hypothetical but actual, we can proclaim to everyone with confidence, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (Jn 3:16). Again, as we have seen, particular redemption does not limit the *sufficiency* of Christ's death. With the New Testament, advocates of particular redemption can cheerfully proclaim, 'Christ died for sinners,' 'Christ died for the world,' and 'Christ's death is sufficient for you,' acknowledging also with the Scriptures that the assurance 'Christ died for you' is to be given only to believers. If Christ's sin-bearing does not actually bear away God's wrath for every person for whom he died, then, as Bavinck concludes, 'The center of gravity has been shifted from Christ and located in the Christian'" [Horton, p. 519]. All of a sudden that's not so cheerful for the one who isn't among the elect, is it? The presupposition for all this is that Christ's death is only for the elect; His death couldn't be for anyone who isn't saved because then He failed in His cross work to save those for whom He died. But of course that isn't what the Bible says. He died for the sins of the world but only through faith does that death become effective for any one individual person. In addition to all this, their doctrine of perseverance of the saints makes it impossible to know the identity of any believer including themselves because they might fall away from the faith or commit such egregious sin that they prove they are not elect either! We maintain that the Bible specifically says that "Christ died for you" can certainly be said to every person without qualification. Christ has paid the sin debt for every person. Personal sins are not the issue; belief in Christ which solves the sin problem inherited from our father Adam is the issue.

The way these theologians can say that Christ died for the world is to impose another theological construct onto the Scriptures by claiming the presentation of the gospel to all people is true and should be done but only the elect can respond to a "special inward call" and be saved. "...the Father; before the foundation of the world, marked out those who were to be saved and gave them to the Son to be His people. At the appointed time, the Son came into the world and secured their redemption. But these two great acts—election and redemption—do not complete the work of salvation, because included in God's plan for recovering lost sinners is the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, by which the benefits of Christ's obedience and death are applied to the elect. It is with this phase of salvation (its application by the Spirit) that the doctrine of irresistible or efficacious grace is concerned....this doctrine asserts that the Holy Spirit never fails to bring to salvation those sinners whom He personally calls to Christ. He inevitably applies salvation to every sinner whom He intends to save, and it is His intention to save all the elect.

The *gospel invitation* extends a call to salvation to every one who hears its message. It invites all men without distinction to drink freely of the water of life and live. It promises salvation to all who repent and believe. But this outward general call, extended to the elect and nonelect alike, will not bring sinners to Christ. Why? Because men are by nature dead in sin and are under its power. They are of themselves unable and unwilling to forsake their evil ways and turn to Christ for mercy. Consequently, the unregenerate will not respond to the gospel call to repentance and faith. No amount of external threatenings or promises will cause blind, deaf, dead, rebellious sinners to bow before Christ as Lord and to look to Him alone for salvation. Such an act of faith and submission is contrary to the lost man's nature.

Therefore, the *Holy Spirit*, in order to bring God's elect to salvation, extends to them a *special inward call* in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call, the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner, which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ. The inward change wrought in the elect sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth; in the spiritual realm, he is given the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The Spirit creates within him a new heart or a new nature. This is accomplished through regeneration or the new birth by which the sinner is made a child of God and is given spiritual life. His will is renewed through this process, so that the sinner spontaneously comes to Christ of his own free choice. Because he is given a new nature so that he loves righteousness, and because his mind is enlightened so that he understands and believes the biblical gospel, the renewed sinner freely and willingly turns to Christ as Lord and Savior. Thus, the once dead sinner is drawn to Christ by the inward, supernatural call of the Spirit, who through regeneration makes him alive and creates faith and repentance within him.

Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion

of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners, but is issued to the elect only....The grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused; it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ” [David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented*, pp. 52-54].