

Triune Salvation: Why the Unity of the Trinity Demands a Particular Redemption

Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

Well, last week I introduced to you a series of sermons that I've entitled, *O Perfect Redemption!* It's a series on the atonement of Christ, and, specifically, on the perfection of the atonement of Christ, and therefore on the design, the nature, and the extent of the atonement of Christ. It's that age-old question, "For whom did Christ die?" Did Christ die on the cross for every single individual who has ever lived throughout human history, or did He die on the cross only for those whom the Father chose and gave to Him—those who will eventually come to faith in Christ and be saved?

And I mentioned that the cause for the study on this series is because what you understand about the *extent* of the atonement has necessary bearing upon what you believe about the *nature* of the atonement. What did Christ do on the cross? Your answer to that question runs to the very heart of the Gospel. And therefore, if your understanding of *whom* He did it for affects *what* He did, we need to make sure we understand both of those things rightly. I mentioned that it's not a desire on my part to say, "Christ didn't die for some of you, so you go over there and be excluded." No, it's a desire to safeguard the achievements of Christ's cross from being robbed of their power. The offer of the Gospel is not so great because we can offer possibilities to everybody. No, the offer of the Gospel is great because we offer accomplishments, achievements, actualities—a perfect cross that saves perfectly everyone who trusts in it.

And I mentioned to you that the debate over the extent of the atonement often reaches a frustrating stalemate—a breakdown in communication that often leaves those participating in the discussion unnerved, frustrated, and maybe even arguing with one another. And that stalemate results, ironically, from focusing too exclusively on the passages of Scripture which comment directly on the scope of Christ's sacrifice. You say, "How can that be? We're asking the question of the scope of Christ's sacrifice. How can it be confusing to focus on the texts that address that?" Well, because of statements like Mark 10:45 compared to 1 Timothy 2:6. I mentioned this last week. Mark 10:45 says Jesus gave His life as a ransom for *many*. And 1 Timothy 2:6, which says He gave Himself as a ransom for *all*. Both verses use almost identical language: "give His life a ransom," and "gave Himself a ransom," right up until the comment on the extent of that ransom. And one verse says "many," and the other says, "all." Now, there is no way around that stalemate if both sides simply stack the commentators who say "all" means "many" against the

commentators who say that “many” means “all.” Taking isolated proof texts and volleying them back and forth—“Many!” “All!” “Church!” “World!”—fails to move the discussion forward in any helpful way.

The key to breaking that stalemate is to understand what “died for” means. It’s to define what “give oneself as a ransom” means. It’s to set those isolated texts in the larger context of all of Scripture’s teaching concerning not just the extent of the atonement, but also the design and nature of the atonement. Understanding *what* the atonement is—its nature—and what the atonement is *intended* by God to accomplish—its design—is the key to properly understanding *whom* the atonement is *for*—its extent. What I mean is: if Scripture is clear that God designed the atonement not merely to provide a salvation that could be accepted or rejected but actually to save, and if Scripture is clear that the nature of the atonement was not that Christ’s death merely made salvation possible but actually accomplished the salvation of those for whom He died, then when we come to two virtually identical texts where one says “all” and one says “many,” we have sound, biblical reasons for interpreting “all” as “all without distinction” rather than “all without exception,” “Gentiles as well as Jews,” rather than “everybody who’s ever lived.” The clear biblical teaching on the design and nature of the atonement helps us interpret the less clear teaching on the extent of the atonement.

And so if the key to breaking the stalemate in the debate over the extent of the atonement is to consider how the design and nature of the atonement bear on its extent, this morning we’ll consider something of the design of the atonement by studying the *Designer* of the atonement. And the Designer of the atonement is our Triune God. My aim this morning is to show you why unity in the Trinity demands a particular redemption.

You say, “Really? What does the Trinity have to do with the extent of the atonement? Well, the reality is, you can’t speak of the one doctrine without the other! The atonement is what the Savior does to save sinners. But the Trinity is who the Savior *is* who saves sinners. The Savior who saves by the atonement is the Triune God—one and only one God, who subsists in three co-equal, consubstantial, co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Triunity of God is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. It is the heart of the Christian faith. There is no Christianity without it, because there is no Christianity without God. And the Trinity is who God is. Herman Bavinck captured it well when he wrote, “The entire Christian belief system, all of special revelation, stands or falls with the confession of God’s Trinity. It is the core of the Christian faith, the root of all its dogmas, the basic content of the new covenant” (2:333). Elsewhere Bavinck wrote, “Every [theological] error results from, or upon deeper reflection is traceable to, a departure in the doctrine of the Trinity” (2:288). And I find that to be true even in the case of the doctrine of the extent of the atonement. Could it be that the reason the

church is so deficient in understanding the nature of our salvation is because we're deficient in understanding the nature of our Triune God?

You see, because the Trinity is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and because the Gospel is the central message of Christianity, the two are inextricably linked. The Gospel is essentially and fundamentally Trinitarian, because the God who saves is Trinitarian, and all that God does is grounded in who God is. All of God's saving acts are rooted in His Triune being. The Father plans and sends the Son; the Son comes and lives and dies and rises again to atone for sins; and the Spirit renews and regenerates and applies what the Father has planned and the Son has accomplished. Salvation is Trinitarian!

And so here's the argument that I'm going to make this morning. I'm going to give it to you right at the beginning, so you know exactly what I'm setting out to prove. The argument is: because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are perfectly united in their essence, the three persons of the Trinity must be perfectly united both (a) in their saving intentions and (b) their saving acts. What the Father wills must be what the Son wills, and what the Son wills must be what the Spirit wills. Those whom the Father intends to save must be the same exact number as those whom the Son intends to save, and those whom the Son intends to save must be the same exact number as those whom the Spirit intends to save.

And since Scripture teaches (a) that the Father has chosen to save a particular people and not all without exception, and since it teaches (b) that the Spirit will regenerate that same particular people and not all without exception, it also teaches (c) that the Son has atoned for that same particular people and not all without exception. To say otherwise is to strike at the heart of the unity of the Triune God. It is to undermine the doctrine of the Trinity, the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Unity in the Trinity demands a particular redemption.

That's the argument. And in our remaining time together this morning, I hope to prove to you that that's biblical. And we're going to take **three points** to do it. First, we'll consider the **Triune Savior**; second, we'll examine the **Triune plan**; and third, we'll see **Triune particularism**.

I. The Triune Savior

Point number one: **The Triune Savior**. The God of the Bible—the only God who exists—is one God. Deuteronomy 4:39 “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that Yahweh, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.” Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is *one!*” And yet in unexplainable mystery, this one God exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that the Father is God, and that the Son is God, and that the Spirit is God; and yet that they are not

three gods, but one God. Each person is fully and truly God. And yet, no one person is another person. The Bible also teaches that the Father is not the Son; nor is the Son the Spirit; nor is the Spirit the Father. They are each God, and there is one God. And it is these strands of biblical teaching that are captured in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, again: that there is one God, who subsists in three persons.

And these three persons are co-eternal—that is, God has always existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; there has never been a time when one of them was not. They are coequal—that is, no one person is greater than the others, because each one is fully God. And God cannot be greater than God. And the three persons are consubstantial—that is, they are of the same substance, the same essence, the same being, the same nature. And what is that nature? It is the divine nature. It is Godhood.

And that Godhood is not divided among the three persons, such that the Father has a piece, the Son has a piece, and the Spirit has a piece, and then they all come together and they make God. No, that would be to say that each person is merely a part of God. In that case, you couldn't say, "The Father is God." You'd have to say, "The Father is a part of God, and He makes up God when He gets together with the Son and the Spirit." No: all three persons of themselves are fully and truly God. And yet they are not three gods but one God. Another way of saying this is that each person of the Trinity fully subsists in the undivided divine essence. And that means that, though the persons of the Trinity can be *distinguished* from one another, they can never be *divided* from one another. There is *Tri-unity*. The being of God is indivisible.

Well, one of the implications of the indivisibility of God's *being* is the indivisibility of God's *actions*. All of God's acts are grounded in the Trinitarian life of God Himself. In other words, God does what He does because He is who He is. And so if God's being can never be divided, neither can God's works be divided. This is what's called the doctrine of inseparable operations. And what it means is: in every act that God performs, all three persons of the Trinity are directly involved. Because they share an identical being, an identical essence, no one person of the Trinity ever acts without the other two. They are always indivisibly working together in perfect harmony.

So for example, Scripture identifies the Father as the Creator of the world. First Corinthians 8:6 says, "There is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist." The Father is the one from whom are all things. And yet, Scripture also identifies the Son as the Creator of the world. Colossians 1:16: "By *Him* all things were created." And further still, Scripture identifies the Spirit as the Creator of the world. Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made, and by the *breath of His mouth*"—or literally, by the *spirit* of His mouth—"all their host." The Father creates by speaking, the Son is the Word spoken, and the Spirit is the breath by which the Word goes forth. Glorious Trinity! So, the Father created the

world, the Son created the world, and the Spirit created the world. And the point is: these are not three separate acts of creation. There are not three worlds! The one act of creation is performed *by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit*. Three distinct persons acting, but their acts, like their essence, are perfectly united and inseparable.

Now, that doesn't mean that the acts of the Father, Son, and Spirit can never be *distinguished* from each other. Remember: the persons can be distinguished but not divided. And so, while their works cannot be divided, they can be distinguished. Distinguishing the acts of the persons from one another came to be known as the doctrine of appropriations. The doctrine of inseparable operations must always be complemented by the doctrine of appropriations. That is to say, while no person of the Trinity ever acts apart from the other two, each divine act is properly appropriated, or attributed, to one of the persons in particular. And so, to use our previous example, while all three persons are involved in creation, Scripture most often identifies the Father as the Creator. For another example, it is the Son alone who is the subject of the incarnation. The Father and the Spirit do not take on human nature like the Son does. John 1:14: "And *the Word* became flesh and dwelt among us." Philippians 2:5–7: "*Christ Jesus* nullified Himself by taking the form of a slave." But, it was the Father who sent the Son into the world, 1 John 4:19, and it was the Holy Spirit who conceived the holy Child in the womb of the virgin, Luke 1:35. Even though the Son alone is the subject of the incarnation, even the act of the incarnation is not without the participation of the Father and the Spirit.

Think of it this way: the persons of the Trinity work neither in unison nor in discord, but in harmony. The doctrine of appropriations ensures that they do not work in unison, because different acts are attributed to different persons. But the doctrine of inseparable operations ensures that they are never in discord, because their undivided acts are rooted in their undivided essence. In every act of God, all three persons of the Trinity must work in perfect harmony, or they are not one God.

And that is no less true for the work of the Triune God in salvation. As I said, He is our **Triune Savior**. And I could go to a lot of texts to illustrate this, but turn with me to Titus chapter 3. Hear the Trinitarian emphasis, here. See your **Triune Savior**. In Titus 3:4, Paul says, "But when the kindness of God our **Savior** and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us." And that reference to God, there, is a reference to God the Father. Verse 5: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." So, our saving Father saves us by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. And verse 6: "the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our **Savior**." So within a span of three verses, we're told that the Father is our **Savior**; the Son is our **Savior**, and that the Spirit is our **Savior**. And these are not three Saviors, but One Savior. There are not three salvations, but one salvation. Salvation

planned by the Father, who sends the Son; salvation accomplished by the Son, who bears our sin; and salvation applied by the Holy Spirit, who renews and regenerates us.

And we have texts like Galatians chapter 4, verses 4 to 6: “But when the fullness of the time came, God”—that is, the Father—“sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law,”—there’s the atonement: redemption—“that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God”—the Father—“has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” The Father sends the Son into the world. The Son takes on a human nature, so that He might stand in man’s place and redeem those who because of their sin were bound to suffer the curse of the Law. And then the Spirit is sent to apply what Christ has accomplished by transforming our hearts in regeneration and putting us into possession of the adoption as sons, along with the rest of the blessings of salvation.

But it’s perhaps nowhere clearer than in that glorious hymn of praise of Ephesians chapter 1. Turn there with me. Paul writes, Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as *He chose us in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” The plan of redemption begins with the Father’s saving election of His people before time began. Before we had ever existed, the Father chose a people for His salvation. How’s He going to save them? Verse 7: “In Him”—who is “Him”? It is, end of verse 6, “the Beloved”—the Father’s beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” And then verse 13: “Having...believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” And so the Father chooses, the Son redeems by His blood, and the Spirit seals and sanctifies. Redemption planned, redemption accomplished, and redemption applied.

Our **Triune Savior** works neither in unison nor in discord, but in perfect, glorious harmony.

II. The Triune Plan

Second, this Triune Savior saves us according to a **Triune plan**. Number two: the **Triune plan** of salvation. One of the greatest causes for confusion and misunderstanding concerning the nature and extent of the atonement stems from abstracting the Son’s saving mission from the eternal Trinitarian plan of salvation. You see, when the eternal Son took on flesh to dwell among man and accomplish our salvation by His atoning death, He was not acting as a rogue agent, haphazardly embarking on a mission of His own devising, divorced from the intentions and actions of the other persons of the Trinity. We’ve learned from the doctrine of inseparable operations that that would be impossible.

But that's not just an implication of orthodox Trinitarianism. It's also explicitly biblical. In John chapter 6 verse 38, Jesus says, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Jesus says, "I'm not acting independently, here." He says that He self-consciously conducted every aspect of His ministry in strict accordance with the will of the Father. And that will of the Father was made known to the Son in the eternal council of the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Spirit devised a **Triune plan** to rescue fallen humanity from sin and death.

And we see Scripture testify of this **Triune plan** of salvation in several ways. In the first place, several passages speak of the saving work of the Son as being divinely predetermined. Turn to Ephesians chapter 3. Here, Paul is speaking of the Gospel that was accomplished in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, where He reveals the mystery long hidden and makes Jew and Gentile one. In verse 11, he says that Gospel was accomplished "in accordance with *the eternal purpose* which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord." That is to say, Christ's redemptive work was carried out according to a predetermined plan, namely, the Father's purpose which He designed in eternity past. And so at the Last Supper, when Jesus was telling His disciples that He would soon be betrayed, He said in Luke 22:22, "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined." Determined by whom? By the **Triune** God, in His eternal purpose, or **plan**. In Acts 2:23, as Peter preaches his Pentecost sermon, he says that Jesus was "delivered over by the predetermined **plan** and foreknowledge of God."

And so Scripture makes clear that all of the Son's atoning work was carried out according to this eternal divine purpose, or **plan**.

In addition to that, there are a number of passages that identify Jesus' mission as a matter of obedience to His Father's will, which clearly implies that this will had been made known to the Son in a prior agreement. We've already seen John 6:38: I've come not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. In John 10:18, when He speaks of laying down His life as a sacrifice for sin, He says, "This commandment I received from My Father." In John 4:34, Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." "The Father who sent Me has given Me a work to accomplish, and that's why I'm here! That's what I'm doing!" We see the same truth at the close of Jesus' ministry in John 17. As He prepares to return to the glories of fellowship with the Father, He prays to the Father in John 17:4: "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." So, whatever the Son intended to accomplish on His saving mission, it was precisely that purpose for which the Father had sent Him.

And then, there are a number of passages of Scripture that outline the roles that the Father, Son, and Spirit would take on in the enactment of this **Triune plan** of salvation. But for the sake of time, let's just turn to Isaiah 53. We've already seen in Ephesians 1 that this **plan** begins with the Father's choice to rescue certain sinners from damnation. If we had time, we could turn to Isaiah

42, where the Father says He's going to send the Son into the world to accomplish salvation, and that He'll anoint Him with the Holy Spirit. But in Isaiah 53, we find that the Father will send the Son into the world, verse 12, specifically to intercede for the transgressors, by bearing their sins, which He will do by pouring Himself out to death. And after all of this, the Father promises to reward the Son for His work. Verse 10: "If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days. And the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see and be satisfied." Verse 12: "Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong." So the Father anoints the Son, sends the Son to die for sinners, and promises to reward the Son for His work. That's the Father's role.

What's the Son's role in this **plan**? He will take on human nature; He will live in the weakness of human flesh; He will suffer; and He will bear the sin of many by dying in their place. And though we don't see it in *this* text, we learn from the rest of Scripture that the Spirit's role is to beget the Son in Mary's womb, Luke 1:35, and to empower the Son throughout His life and ministry. And so at Jesus' baptism the Spirit descends on Him as a dove (Luke 3:22). We're told in Luke 4:1 that Jesus was "led around by the Spirit in the wilderness." Luke 4:14 says that after He emerged from His temptations He "returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit." Matthew 12:28: The Spirit empowers Christ to perform miracles. Hebrews 9:14 says that, in His death, Christ "offered Himself without blemish to God ... through the eternal Spirit." Romans 8:11 says the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. And then, apart from supporting the mission of the Son from His conception, to His death, and even through to His resurrection, the Spirit then applies the salvation that the Son has accomplished through His regenerating work.

So, to summarize: in this plan, the Father appoints the Son to be the Mediator for those whom He's chosen, and He sets the terms for the Son's Mediation: He will have to bear man's nature in order to bear man's curse. The Son voluntarily accepts His role as Mediator and carries out His entire saving mission according to the Father's will. The Spirit agrees to be the agent of conception in the incarnation, to support Christ throughout the execution of His saving mission, and then to apply what Christ has accomplished to those for whom He accomplished it (cf. Trueman, 214).

Now, what does all this teach us? These realities demand a perfect and complete unity of purpose and intention in the saving will and saving work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though the three persons have distinct roles—the Father electing, planning, and sending, the Son living and dying and rising to accomplish salvation, and the Spirit empowering the Son and applying His accomplishments to sinners—nevertheless, the external works of the Trinity are undivided. No person of the Trinity works or wills out of accord with the others. No, they do not work in unison; but they do work—indeed, they must work—in harmony, and never in discord. The

slightest rift in the saving will of the Father versus the saving will of the Son versus the saving will of the Spirit would undermine the consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity.

And that means: the election of the Father, the atonement of the Son, and the regeneration of the Spirit must be coextensive. They must extend to the very same number of people. The extent of the Father's election is identical to the extent of the Son's atonement, which is itself identical to the extent of the Spirit's regeneration. If any one person of the Trinity acts to save more or fewer sinners than any other person of the Trinity, they could not be said to be united in their saving will. And so the Father elects unto salvation; the Son redeems those same people whom the Father has chosen; and the Spirit gives life to those same people whom the Father has chosen and whom the Son has redeemed.

III. Triune Particularism

So what is the question that must be asked, then? If the Son redeems all those and only those whom the Father has chosen, whom has the Father chosen for salvation? Has the Father chosen all without exception to be saved? Or has He chosen a particular people to be brought to Himself in salvation? Is the Father's election universal or particular? The answer is: it is particular. In the inscrutable wisdom of the Triune God, the Father has chosen to save some, and not all, from the just punishment of their sins. That brings us to our **third point**. We've seen the Triune Savior, and just now the Triune plan. Now we come to **Triune particularism**.

How do we know that the Father has chosen only some for salvation, and not all? There are a lot of texts we could turn to, but none clearer than Romans chapter 9. Romans 9:13: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I" what? "Hated." Verse 18: "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." Verse 21: God is the Potter and man is the clay. And as the Potter, verses 22 and 23, the Father has fashioned both vessels of mercy whom He prepared for glory, and He has fashioned vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. And I know those verses raise a lot of questions, but my only point here is that they prove that the Father has not chosen to save all without exception. There are vessels of mercy, and there are vessels of wrath.

And every objection against a particular *redemption* could be charged against a particular *election*. You say, "Oh, *that's not fair* for Jesus to die for only some!" Well, according to that reasoning, it's not fair for the Father to choose only some. You say, "But *everybody* deserves a *chance* to be saved! What chance do they have if the Son doesn't die for them?" But what chance do they have if the Father doesn't choose them? "But how can you preach the Gospel to people Christ hasn't died for?" How can you preach the Gospel to people the Father hasn't chosen? You see, every objection that you would advance against a particular redemption can also, with consistency, be advanced against a particular election. But Scripture is explicitly clear that the Father has chosen some and not all—that there are vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. And

so, the objection proves too much, if it was allowed to stand. That means that something in the rationale of the objection is unbiblical, is untrue.

So if (a) the Father's election is particular and not universal, and if (b) the Father and the Son are perfectly united in their saving will and purpose—indeed, since the Son's saving mission is nothing other than the Father's appointed means to save those whom He's chosen—then (c) it is impossible that the Son's atonement should be universal and not particular. The Son's incarnation and atonement are birthed out of the Father's choice to save a particular people. I love the way theologian Robert Reymond captures this. He says, "It is unthinkable to believe that Christ would say: 'I recognize, Father, that your election and your salvific intentions terminate upon only a portion of mankind, but because my love is more inclusive and expansive than yours, I am not satisfied to die only for those you have elected. I am going to die for everyone'" (*ST*, 678). That *is* unthinkable! And yet that is exactly what you must confess if you deny particular redemption.

Said another way, if the atonement is universal, then either (a) election is also universal (which we've just established is not the case), or (b) the Father and Son are at cross purposes with one another. But: "Cross purposes with one another"? The Father and the Son? Those who subsist in the single, undivided divine essence—divided in their saving purposes? Contradicting one another? It simply cannot be. Not only does Jesus Himself say, "I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me," but you would sooner divide the Trinity than find the Father and the Son with different wills trying to accomplish different things with different people!

And yet, isn't that exactly what you have in Arminianism? The Father looks down the corridors of time, foresees those who will freely choose Him, and chooses to save *them*. The Son atones for all people without exception who have ever lived or will live. And the Spirit works to persuade the hearts of only those people who hear the Gospel. But since (a) not all without exception hear the Gospel, and since (b) some who do hear the Gospel reject it and will not finally be saved, therefore (c) you've got the Father choosing one group, the Son dying for another group, and the Spirit working in the lives of still another group! A divided Trinity!

You see, a universal atonement—when you think about it carefully enough and tease out its implications for the rest of Christian theology—fatally undermines the doctrine of the Trinity. It is to introduce dissonance and discord where there can only be harmony. It is to strike at the very heart of the Christian faith itself. Unity in the Trinity demands a particular redemption.

The saving will of the Father is expressed in His particular election: He has chosen some, not all, to be saved. And the Son explicitly states that He has come to do the will of His Father who sent

Him. The reason Jesus believes He is on earth is to accomplish the specific mission His Father gave Him. Again: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.” “I have come down from heaven, ... to do ... the will of Him who sent Me.” Well, if the Father’s will circumscribed and conditioned every aspect of Jesus’ saving work, what was the Father’s will as Jesus understood it? And here I want you to turn with me to John chapter 6. Verse 38: I’m here to do the will of Him who sent me. Verse 39: “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that *of all that He has given Me* I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”

Jesus does not say that the will of the Father is that He go out and try to save as many people as possible so long as He’s a gentleman and respects their free will. He does not say that the will of the Father is to pay the for the sins of everyone who ever lived in order to make their salvation possible. No, He says that there exists a group of chosen individuals whom the Father has given to the Son. Remember Ephesians 1:4: “He chose us in Him.” The Father chose His elect *in* the Son. To choose to save someone in the Son is to appoint the Son to be their Savior. So for the Father to choose to save individuals by appointing the Son to be their Mediator, Jesus says, is for the Father to *give* those individuals to the Son.

And Jesus says, “Of all that He has *given Me*, I lose *nothing*, but raise it up on the last day.” Jesus is not providing the possibility of salvation for everybody! He is effectually saving all those and only those whom the Father has given to Him, ensuring their resurrection unto life on the last day! “I will lose *none* for whom I die!” Friends, do people die lost in their sins? If Jesus says, “I lose none for whom I die,” and people die lost, then He didn’t die for every single individual.

There exists a group of chosen individuals whom the Father has given to the Son. And it is on *their* behalf, He says, that He accomplishes His redemptive work. And Jesus talks about this all over the place. Just two verses earlier in John 6:37 he says, “All that the Father *gives Me* will come to Me.” Who’s going to believe in Jesus? You say, “Well, anyone who decides of their own free will to believe in Him.” Not what Jesus says! Jesus says the ones who will come to Him in faith are the ones the Father chose before the foundation of the world and gave to the Son.

Turn to John chapter 10. In John 10:14, Jesus says He is the good shepherd who *knows* His sheep. In verse 15, He says He *lays down His life* for the sheep. Then, just a few verses later in verse 29, He says, “My Father, who has *given* them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” So here, Jesus identifies “those whom His Father has given Him” as His sheep. This is the same group. And John 10:15 says, “I lay down My life for the sheep.” “I die for the sheep. I die for those whom the Father has given Me.” Jesus is telling us, as plain as He possibly can, “I die for those whom the Father has chosen.”

Now, some people say, “Sure, He dies for His sheep. But it doesn’t say that He dies *only* for His sheep. He’s emphasizing the sheep here, but He’s not excluding the rest of the world.” Now, there’s a lot that can be said in response to that objection, but for now consider this. In verse 26, Jesus looks at the Pharisees and says, “But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.” Note that. Not: “You are not My sheep because you do not believe.” Not: faith turns goats into sheep. No. Being a sheep is what causes faith. “The reason you don’t believe, Pharisees, is because you’re not among those whom My Father has chosen from before the foundation of the world. You’re not among those whom the Father has given to Me.”

Now, for Jesus to say that He lays His life down for His sheep, and then for Him to immediately identify certain people as those who are not of His sheep, is to say, almost as plainly as could be said, that He did not lay down His life for those Pharisees. “I lay My life down for the sheep! And you’re not them!” So did He lay His life down for them? No, He didn’t. His Father hadn’t given them to Him, because the Father hadn’t chosen them. Even if these Pharisees whom He was talking to on that day were the only ones for whom He didn’t die, it would still mean that the atonement is not universal.

But one more text. Go to John chapter 17. This is the text of Jesus’ high priestly prayer. On the eve of His crucifixion—as He prepares to undertake the capstone of His work as Mediator—He prays to the Father concerning those on whose behalf He performs His priestly ministry of atonement. In John 17:2, He says to the Father, “You gave [the Son] authority over all flesh, that to *all whom You have given Him*, He may give eternal life.” Now that’s interesting, isn’t it? If Jesus believed in a universal atonement, you might have expected Him to say, “You gave [Me] authority over all flesh that to all flesh I may give eternal life.” But no. In distinction from all flesh, the Son exercises His authority to give eternal life only to those whom the Father has given Him.

Verse 6: “I have manifested Your name to the men *whom You gave Me* out of the world.” So again: in distinction from “the world,” but to those the Father gave Him out of the world. The disciples were part of this elect number that the Father had given to Him. Then He says explicitly: “They were Yours.” “What do you mean, Jesus? Everything belongs to God! He owns the cattle on a thousand hills! Whatever is under the whole heaven is His! “They were Yours” is a clear reference to election, as this group belonged to the Father in a special sense, in a way the rest of the world did not. God set His love on His people and made them His own from all eternity. “They were Yours, and You *gave them* to Me. And I lay My life down for the sheep you have given Me.”

And then, in verse 9, He once again explicitly distinguishes “those whom the Father had given Him” from the rest of the world. He says, “I ask on their behalf; I do *not* ask on behalf of the *world*, but of those whom You have *given Me*; for *they* are Yours.” Do you hear this? The Great

High Priest, interceding before the Father on behalf of those for whom He would offer Himself as an atonement for sins, explicitly denies praying for the rest of the world. “I’m not praying on behalf of the world, but only for those whom the Father has given Me.” How could Jesus refuse to pray for those for whom He’s going to the cross? He couldn’t! He would be a terribly faithless High Priest if He did that—if He refused to intercede for those for whom He would offer Himself as sacrifice. No, when it comes to those for whom He lays down His life as a priestly offering of atonement, He does so not for the world, but only for those whom His Father had given to Him.

And so if (a) the Son has come to do the will of the Father, and if (b) the will of the Father is that the Son should give eternal life to all whom the Father has given Him, and if (c) the Father didn’t give Him the world but only some out of the world, then the redemption accomplished by the Son is particular, not universal. This is **Triune particularism**.

Conclusion

So, how can we sum up? By virtue of their own unity of essence, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfectly united in their saving will and purpose. Christ has been sent by the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit to save no more and no fewer people than the Father chooses and the Spirit regenerates. The Father has elected some, and not all; the Spirit regenerates some, and not all. To suggest that Christ has atoned for all, and not some, is to put the Persons of the Trinity entirely at odds with one another. It is to be forced to say that the will of the Son is not the will of the Father and the Spirit. That not only threatens the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity, but it flatly contradicts Christ’s own explicit statements that He had undertaken His saving mission precisely to do the will of His Father. As the Father has given to the Son a particular people out of the world, it is for these—who Scripture calls His sheep, His own, the church, the many—that Christ lays down His life. Unity in the Trinity demands particular redemption.

Dear friend, if you are here this morning, and you are trusting in Christ as your only hope for the forgiveness of your sins, brothers and sisters: do you understand that the reason for your salvation runs so much deeper than a decision you made? In fact, the reason you are saved is because of a decision that the Father made, before the foundation of the world, to give a group of a ransomed sinners as a love gift—as a Bride—to His worthy Son, to worship Him for all of eternity. Do you understand how ancillary you are? *God* is central in the plan of salvation! *His* glory is what He aims at, ultimately! And you get to be glorious beneficiaries of the overflow of that! The Father’s love to His Son is grace to you!

Before you and I had ever existed, before we had done anything good or bad, the God of perfect holiness set His love upon you, and chose to save you from your sins. He chose to appoint His

own dear Son to stand in your place as your Mediator, even though it would mean the undoing of His beloved Son—even though that Son would ask in the Garden, “Father, if there’s any other way...” and would hear silence! Even though He would ask for His friends to keep watch and pray with Him, and they would fall asleep! Even though, when His friends were asked about their associations with Him, they all dispersed: “I do not know the man!” Even though He was whipped and beaten, even though He had the crown of thorns laid upon His head! Even though, on the cross, after being abandoned by His friends, He has to ask, “My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken me?” Abandoned by His friends, abandoned by His Father. What a terrible thing this appointment as Mediator meant for the Son!

And yet the Father chose to do it, out of unmitigated, unconditional, undeserved love to sinners! And how free the grace of Christ is to you, who in that moment sees all that that would mean for Him, and says, “I will do it. I will go. I will go, Father, more willingly to the cross than even those whom I will save will come to Me in prayer and Bible reading each morning. I’ll go to pay for the sins of My people more willingly than My people will come to Me to confess their sins, and to receive forgiveness from My open hand.” Glorious work! Jesus is not *trying* to do anything! He is *accomplishing* everything that He set out to do with *perfect* efficacy.

If you’re a believer in Christ this morning, you can rest in the truth of sovereign election—that, as Jesus says, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me”—that He gives eternal life to His sheep, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of His hand. He is the Good Shepherd, who will lose none whom the Father has given to Him, but will raise you up on the last day. Nobody snatches His sheep from His hand. Do you understand that the power that keeps you saved is the power that got you saved? The power to let no one snatch you from His hand is the power that’s exhibited in securing your salvation on the cross. Not *providing* for it, not just *offering* it, but *doing* it, accomplishing it, securing it! “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.” “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?” Not just the ones who happen to believe, but the ones whom God chose, which election *determines* that belief.

And to those outside of Christ, you who may be wondering, “Did Jesus die for me? Has the Father chosen me? Am I one of those whom the Father gave to the Son in eternity past?” I want you to focus on the second half of John 6:37. The first half says, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.” But the very next words are, “And the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out.” Dear sinner, God does not call upon you to peer into the eternal counsels of the divine mind and say, “Well, was I chosen?” God calls upon you to come to Christ in repentant faith—turning away from all of your sins, abandoning all trust in yourself for righteousness, and trusting in Christ alone for all of your salvation. Jesus promises that the one who comes to Him in simple faith, He will certainly not cast out. And so you say, “How can I be saved unless I’m elect?” God says, “You know how you can know you’re elect? You come to Christ in repentance

and faith!” Come to Christ! And what He has accomplished on the cross will avail for you, just as it has for us, precisely because it is a *perfect* redemption.