

Even God Has Limits

The wickedness of man filled the earth following the fall of Adam, yet the purpose of God to save a remnant from among His sinful creatures stood firm. In the covenant of peace, before the foundation of the world, God committed the care and wellbeing of His chosen people into the hands of His dearly beloved Son. Everything required to deliver the guilty from condemnation and prepare them for glory became the responsibility of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's fitness to serve

It was needful that Christ should represent us. God's holiness requires justice and satisfaction for sin. The Law of God weighs, measures and marks every transgression of word, thought and deed. No mere man can carry the burden of his own guilt or another's sin, or pay the debt owed to God's broken Law. An able, worthy and willing Redeemer was required and only the Lord Jesus was such a One.

Holiness cannot be denied

Nevertheless, salvation's plan must honour God's holiness as well as magnify His mercy. Love did not overlook sin. It provided a Substitute for sinners. Grace did not deny justice. It honoured it. When the Law declared 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die'. The Lord Jesus interposed Himself and declared, 'the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep'. Though the Law insisted, 'the wages of sin is death', God commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Justice must be satisfied

Paul adds 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' showing that guilty sinners are justified by Jesus' blood and saved from wrath by Him. The good news of the gospel is that the Lord Jesus Christ by His death has made peace with God for all the chosen people committed to His charge. God's holy Law is honoured, God's justice is satisfied, God's love has accomplished its purpose of grace and Christ's people are prepared for glory.

Christ must be successful

In our verses the apostle Peter emphasises how redemption was accomplished by the offering up of Christ's innocent life and shedding of His precious blood on the cross. The value of this blood is in the purity of Christ's humanity. The Saviour was uniquely suited to save all for whom He died and He was successful in doing so. His success, says Peter, is evidenced by God raising Him up from the dead, and giving Him glory. The faith and hope of God's elect is in the death, resurrection and glory of our Saviour.

The language of redemption

The scriptures often use commercial language of debt and payment to describe Christ's work of atonement and reconciliation; words such as ransom, redemption, remission and surety. On the cross the Saviour paid our debt of sin, effectually redeemed His purchased possession and, in His role as Surety of the covenant, fully remitted all that was owed to God. This great transaction successfully accomplished the full redemption and complete liberty of all for whom Christ died. His death secured the release of the ransomed and the discharge of every debt of all the elect.

No universal redemption

There are those who teach Christ died for all the sin of all people and made salvation possible for everyone, conditional upon individual faith. The death of the Lord Jesus, they contend, provided all men and women with the opportunity to gain eternal life by exercising their freewill and trusting Him. This we do not believe. We do not believe man is able to please God without faith and we believe faith is a gift of God. Man's innate enmity against God contradicts freewill.

Particular atonement

God's election of a people before time and their delivery into the charge and care of His Son before the foundation of the world limits the number of those for whom the Saviour died. Christ was foreordained to be Redeemer and to ransom a definite number of particular people. His atoning work is co-extensive with the electing purpose of God. The number of the redeemed is a limited number matching the number chosen to salvation and placed in Christ's hands in the covenant of peace.

A gospel worth believing

This truth is the foundation of all present comfort and future hope. We believe in a completed work, a successful sacrifice and a Saviour who truly saved His people from their sin when He died on the cross. Nothing else is required or can be added to make Christ's work efficacious. It remains only to be believed. All for whom Christ died will believe and come to saving faith in Christ by the preaching of the gospel.

Amen

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