

Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, Lesson #19

I. The Divine Purpose in Christ's Sacrifice

If Christ's death was intended to save all men, then we must say that God was either unable or unwilling to carry out His plans. But since the work of God is always efficient, those for whom atonement was made and those who are actually saved must be the same people. Arminians suppose that the purposes of God are mutable, and that His purposes may fail. In saying that He sent His Son to redeem all men, but that after seeing that such a plan could not be carried out He "elected" those whom He foresaw would have faith and repent, they represent Him as willing what never takes place,—as suspending His purposes and plans upon the volitions and actions of creatures who are totally dependent on Him. No rational being who has the wisdom and power to carry out his plans intends what he never accomplishes or adopts plans for an end which is never attained. Much less would God, whose—wisdom and power are infinite, work in this manner. We may rest assured that if some men are lost God never purposed their salvation, and never devised and put into operation means designed to accomplish that end.

John 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 10:26-28 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Will anyone maintain that He laid down His life for these, seeing that He so pointedly excludes them? The angel which appeared to Joseph told him that Mary's son was to be called JESUS, because His mission in the world was to save His people from their sins. He then came not merely to make salvation possible but actually to save His people; and what He came to do we may confidently expect Him to have accomplished.

Since the work of God is never in vain, those who are chosen by the Father, those who are redeemed by the Son, and those who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit,—or in other words, election, redemption and sanctification,—must include the same persons. The Arminian doctrine of a universal atonement makes these unequal and thereby destroys the perfect harmony within the Trinity. Universal redemption means universal salvation.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her

II. The Exclusion of the Non-elect

It was not, then, a general and indiscriminate love of which all men were equally the objects, but a peculiar, mysterious, infinite love for His elect, which caused God to send His Son into the world to suffer and die. Any theory which denies this great and precious truth, and which would explain away this love as merely indiscriminate benevolence or philanthropy which had all men for its objects, many of whom are allowed to perish, must be un-Scriptural. Christ died not for an unorderedly mass, but for His people, His bride, His Church.

III. The Argument from the Foreknowledge of God

The argument from the foreknowledge of God is of itself sufficient to prove this doctrine. Is not God's mind infinite? Are not His perceptions perfect?... Since He knew beforehand who they were that would be saved—and the more evangelical Arminians admit that God does have exact foreknowledge of all events—He would not have sent Christ intending to save those who he positively foreknew would be lost. For, as Calvin remarks, "Where would have been the consistency of Gods calling to Himself such as He knows will never come?"... They do but deceive themselves who, admitting God's foreknowledge, say that Christ died for all men; for what is that but to attribute folly to Him whose ways are perfect? To represent God as earnestly striving to do what He knows He will not do is to represent Him as acting foolishly.

IV. Certain Benefits Which Extend to Mankind in General

"It is not denied by the advocates of particular redemption, or of a limited atonement, that mankind in general, even those who ultimately perish, do derive some advantages or benefits from Christ's death; and no position they hold requires them to deny this. They believe that important benefits have accrued to the whole human race from the death of Christ, and that in these benefits those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving partake. What they deny is, that Christ intended to procure, or did procure, for all men these blessings which are the proper and peculiar fruits of His death, in its specific character as an atonement,—that He procured or purchased redemption—that in, pardon and reconciliation—for all men. Many blessings flow to mankind at large from the death of Christ, collaterally and incidentally, in consequence of the relation in which men, viewed collectively, stand to each other. All these benefits were of course foreseen by God, when He resolved to send His Son into the world; they were contemplated or designed by Him, as what men should receive and enjoy. They are to be regarded and received as bestowed by Him, and as thus unfolding His glory, indicating His character, and actually accomplishing His purposes; and they are to be viewed as coming to men through the channel of Christ's mediation,—of His suffering and death." - William Cunningham