

For Whom Did Christ Die?

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For many centuries the question, "For whom did Christ die?" has divided and still divides some of the most orthodox and scholarly theologians. On the one hand those who according to theological usage are known as "limited redemptionists" contend that Christ died only for that elect company who were predetermined of God to be saved; and on the other hand those who are known as "unlimited redemptionists" contend that Christ died for all men. The issue is well defined, and men of sincere loyalty to the Word of God and who possess true scholarship are found on both sides of the controversy.

It is true that the doctrine of a limited redemption is one of the five points of Calvinism, but not all who are rightfully classified as Calvinists accept this one feature of that system. It is equally true that all Arminians are unlimited redemptionists, but to hold the doctrine of unlimited redemption does not necessarily make one an Arminian. There is nothing incongruous in the fact that many unlimited redemptionists believe, in harmony with all Calvinists, in the unalterable and eternal decree of God whereby all things were determined after His own will, and in the sovereign election of some to be saved (but not all), and in the divine predestination of those who are saved to the heavenly glory prepared for them. Without the slightest inconsistency the unlimited redemptionists may believe in an election according to sovereign grace, that none but the elect will be saved, that all of the elect will be saved, and that the elect are by divine enablement alone called out of the state of spiritual death from which they are impotent to

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take even one step in the direction of their own salvation. The text, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44), is as much a part of the one system of doctrine as it is of the other.

It is not easy to disagree with good and great men. However, as they appear on each side of this question, it is impossible to entertain a conviction and not oppose those who are of a contrary mind. The disagreement now under discussion is not between orthodox and heterodox men; it is within the fellowship of those who have most in common and who need the support and encouragement of each other's confidence. Few themes have drawn out more sincere and scholarly investigation.

Three Doctrinal Words

Though common to theological usage, the terms *limited redemption* and *unlimited redemption* are inadequate to express the whole of the problem which is under consideration. There are three major aspects of truth set forth in New Testament doctrine relative to the unmeasured benefits provided for the unsaved through the death of Christ, and redemption is but one of the three. Each of these aspects of truth is in turn expressed by one word, surrounded as each word is by a group of derivatives or synonyms of that word. These three words are: ἀπολύτρωσις, translated "redemption," καταλλαγή, translated "reconciliation," and ἱλασμός, translated "propitiation." The riches of divine grace which these three words represent transcend all human thought or language: but these truths must be declared in human terms if declared at all. As it is necessary to have four Gospels, since it is impossible for one, two, or even three to present the full truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, so the Scriptures approach the great benefit of Christ's death for the unsaved from three angles, to the end that what may be lacking in one may be supplied in the others. There are at least four other great words—*forgiveness*, *regeneration*, *justification*, and *sanctification*—which represent spiritual blessings secured by the death of Christ; but these are to be distinguished from the three already mentioned in that these four words refer to aspects of truth which belong only to those who are saved.

Over against these, the three words *redemption*, *reconciliation*, and *propitiation*, though incorporating in the scope of their meaning vital truths belonging to the state of the saved, refer in

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particular to that which Christ wrought for the unsaved in His death on the cross. What is termed *the finished work of Christ* may be defined as the sum total of all that these three words connote when restricted to those aspects of their meaning which apply alone to the unsaved.

Redemption is within the sphere of relationship which exists between the sinner and his sins. This word, with its related terms, contemplates sin as a slavery, with the sinner as the slave. Freedom is secured only through the redemption, or ransom, which is found in Christ Jesus (John 8:32-36; Rom 6:17-20; 8:21; Gal 5:1; 2 Pet 2:19).

Reconciliation is within the sphere of relationship which exists between the sinner and God, and contemplates the sinner as at enmity with God, and Christ as the maker of peace between God and man (Rom 5:10; 8:7; 2 Cor 5:19; James 4:4).

Propitiation is also within the sphere of relationship which exists between God and the sinner, but propitiation contemplates the larger necessity of God being just when He justifies the sinner. It views Christ as an Offering, a Sacrifice, a Lamb slain, who, by meeting every demand of God's holiness against the offender, renders God righteously propitious toward that offender (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Thus it

may be seen that redemption is the sinward aspect of the Cross, reconciliation is the manward aspect of the Cross, and propitiation is the Godward aspect of the Cross. These three great doctrines combine to declare one divine undertaking.

The question at issue between the limited redemptionists and the unlimited redemptionists is as much a question of limited or unlimited reconciliation, and limited or unlimited propitiation, as it is one of limited or unlimited redemption. Having made a careful study of these three words and the group of words which must be included with each, one can hardly deny that there is a twofold application of the truth represented by each.

Redemption

There is the aspect of redemption that is represented by the word ἀγοράζω, (“to buy, redeem”) which means “to purchase in the market”; and, while it is used to express the general theme of redemption, its technical meaning implies only the purchase of the slave, but does not necessarily convey the thought of his release from slavery. The word ἐξαγοράζω (“to redeem”) implies much more, in that ἐξ, meaning “out of,” or “out from,” is

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combined with ἀγοράζω and thus indicates that the slave is purchased out of the market. (The even stronger terms λυτρόω and ἀπολύτρωσις connote “to loose” and “to set free.”) There is, then, a redemption which pays the price, but does not of necessity release the slave, and there is a redemption which is unto abiding freedom.

Reconciliation

According to 2 Corinthians 5:19 there is a *reconciliation* declared to be worldwide and wholly wrought of God; yet the following verse indicates that the individual sinner has the responsibility to be himself reconciled to God. What God has accomplished has so changed the world in its relation to Himself that He, agreeable to the demands of infinite righteousness, is satisfied with Christ’s death as the solution to the sin question for each and every one. The *desideratum* is not reached, however, until the individual, already included in the world’s reconciliation, is himself satisfied with that same work of Christ (which has satisfied God) as the solution to his own sin question. Thus there is a reconciliation which of itself saves no one, but which is a basis for the reconciliation of any and all who will believe. When they believe, they are reconciled *experientially* and *eternally*. At that moment they become the children of God through the riches of His grace.

Propitiation

In one brief verse, 1 John 2:2, God declares that there is a “propitiation for our [the Christian’s] sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” While due recognition will be given later on to the interpretation of this and similar passages as offered by the limited redemptionists, it is obvious that the same twofold aspect of truth—that applicable to the unsaved and that applicable to the saved—is indicated regarding propitiation as is indicated in the case of both redemption and reconciliation.

From this brief consideration of these three great doctrinal words it may be seen that the unlimited redemptionist believes as much in unlimited reconciliation and unlimited propitiation as he does in unlimited redemption. On the other hand the limited redemptionist seldom includes the doctrines of reconciliation and propitiation specifically in his discussion of the extent of Christ’s death.

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The Cross Is Not the Only Saving Instrumentality

It is one of the points most depended on by the limited redemptionists to claim that redemption, if wrought at all, necessitates the salvation of those thus favored. According to this view, if the redemption price is paid by Christ it must be the thought of ἐξαγοράζω or ἀπολύτρωσις, rather than ἀγοράζω, in every instance. It is confidently held by all Calvinists that the elect will, in God’s time and way, each and every one, be saved, and that the unregenerate believe only as they are enabled by the Spirit of God. But the question here is whether the sacrifice of Christ is the only divine instrumentality whereby God *actually* saves the elect, or whether that sacrifice is a divine work (finished, indeed, as to its scope and purpose) which renders all men *savable*, but is applied in sovereign grace by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit only when the individual *believes*.

Certainly Christ’s death of itself forgives no sinner, nor does it render unnecessary the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Anyone of the elect whose salvation is predetermined, and for whom Christ died, may live the major portion of his life in open rebellion against God and during that time manifest every feature of depravity and spiritual death. This alone should prove that men are not severally saved by the act of Christ in dying, but rather that they are saved by the divine *application* of that value when they *believe*. The blood of the Passover lamb became efficacious only when applied to the doorpost.

The fact that an elect person does live some portion of his life in enmity toward God, and in a state in which he is as much lost as any unregenerate person, indicates conclusively that Christ must not only die to provide a righteous basis for the salvation of that soul, but that that value must be applied to him at such a time in his life as God has decreed, which time, in the present generation, is almost two thousand years subsequent to the death of Christ. By so much it is proved that the priceless value in Christ’s death does not save the elect, nor hinder them from rejecting the mercies of God in that period of their life which precedes their salvation.

The unlimited redemptionist claims that the value of Christ’s death is extended to all men, nevertheless that the elect alone come by divine grace (wrought out by an effectual call) into its fruition, while the nonelect are not called but are those passed by.

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They hold that God indicates who are the elect, not at the Cross, but by the effectual call and at the time of regeneration. It is also believed by

the unlimited redemptionists that it pleased God to place the whole world in a position of infinite obligation to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ. Though the mystery of personal condemnation for the sin of unbelief when one has not been moved to faith by the Spirit cannot be solved in this world, the unregenerate, both elect and nonelect, are definitely condemned for their unbelief so long as they abide in that condition (John 3:18). There is nothing more clarifying in connection with this age-long discussion than the recognition of the fact that while they are in their unregenerate state no vital distinction between the elect and the nonelect is recognized in the Scriptures (1 Cor 1:24 and Heb 1:14 might suggest this distinction along lines comparatively unimportant to this discussion). Certainly that form of doctrine which would make redemption equivalent to salvation is not traceable when men are contemplated in their unregenerate state, and a salvation, which is delayed for many years in the case of an elect person, might be delayed forever in the case of a nonelect person whose heart God never moves. Was the objective in Christ's death one of making the salvation of all men *possible*, or was it the making of the salvation of the elect *certain*? Some light is gained on this question when it is thus remembered that the consummating divine acts in the salvation of an individual are wrought when he believes on Christ, and not before he believes.

Universal Gospel Preaching

A very difficult situation arises for the limited redemptionist when he confronts the Great Commission which enjoins the preaching of the gospel to *every* creature. How, it may be urged, can a universal gospel be preached if there is no universal provision? To say on the one hand that Christ died only for the elect and on the other hand that His death is the ground on which salvation is offered to all men is perilously near contradiction. It would be mentally and spiritually impossible for a limited redemptionist, if true to his convictions, to urge with sincerity those who are known to be nonelect to accept Christ. Fortunately, God has disclosed nothing whereby the elect can be distinguished from the nonelect while both classes are in the unregenerate state. However the gospel preacher who doubts the basis for his

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message in the case of even one to whom he is appealing, if sincere, does face a real problem in the discharge of his commission to preach the gospel to every creature. To believe that some are elect and some nonelect creates no problem for the soulwinner provided he is free in his convictions to declare that Christ died for each one to whom he speaks. He knows that the nonelect will not accept the message. He knows also that even an elect person may resist it to near the day of his death. But if the preacher believes that any portion of his audience is destitute of any basis of salvation, having no share in the values of Christ's death, it is no longer a question in his mind of whether they will accept or reject; it becomes rather a question of truthfulness in the declaration of the message. As Alexander points out:

On this supposition [that of a limited atonement] the general invitations and promises of the gospel are without an adequate basis, and seem like a mere mockery, an offer, in short, of what has not been provided. It will not do to say, in reply to this, that as these invitations are actually given we are entitled, on the authority of God's Word, to urge them and justified in accepting them; for this is mere evasion.¹

On the question of the beliefs of sincere gospel preachers, it would repay the reader to investigate how universally all great evangelists and missionaries have embraced the doctrine of unlimited redemption, and made it the very underlying structure of their convincing appeal.

Is God Defeated If Men Are Lost for Whom Christ Died?

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*.

To state that the value of Christ's death is suspended until the hour of regeneration is not to intimate that its value is any less than it would be were it applied at any other time. There are reasons which are based on the Scriptures why God might

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provide a redemption for *all* when He merely purposed to save some He is justified in placing the whole world in a particular relation to Himself so that the gospel might be preached with all sincerity to all men, and so that on the human side men might be without excuse, being judged, as they are, for their rejection of that which is offered to them. Men of this dispensation are condemned for their unbelief. This is expressly declared in John 3:18 and implied in John 16:7-11, in which latter context the Spirit is seen in His work of convincing the world of but one sin, namely, "that they believe not on me." But to reject Christ and His redemption, as every unbeliever does, is to demand that the great transaction of Calvary be reversed and that his sin, which was laid on Christ, be retained by himself with all its condemning power. It is not asserted here that sin is thus ever retained by the sinner. It is stated, however, that since God does not apply the value of Christ's death to the sinner until that sinner is saved, God would be morally free to hold the sinner who rejects Christ accountable for his sins; and to this unmeasured burden would be added all the condemnation which justly follows the sin of unbelief. In this connection, reference is made by the limited redemptionists to three passages which, it is argued, indicate that impenitent men die with their sins on them, and therefore, it is asserted, Christ could not have borne their sins.

John 8:24

"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." This is a clear statement that calls for little exposition. It is a case of believing on Christ or dying in the condemnation of sin. It is not alone the one sin of unbelief, but "your sins" to which Christ refers. There is occasion for some recognition of the fact that Christ spoke these words *before* His death, and also that He here requires them to believe that He is the "I am," that is, Jehovah. These facts are of importance in any specific consideration of this text; but enough may be said if it be pointed out that the issue is as much a problem for one side of this discussion as for the other. Suppose the limited redemptionist were to claim that the reason these

people to whom Christ spoke would die in their sins is that they were nonelect and therefore their sins were not borne by Christ. Two replies may be given to this argument. (a) The condition on which they may avoid dying in their sins is not based on the extent of His death but rather on the necessity of belief (“if ye believe not...ye shall die in your sins”). (b) If it were true that

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these people would die in their sins solely because of their position as nonelect for whom Christ did not die, then it would be equally true that those among them who were of the elect (cf. v. 30) and whose sins were laid on Christ, would have no need to be saved from a lost estate since their sins were already removed. Yet the context clearly stresses the necessity of belief for the removal of sin (“If ye believe not...ye shall die in your sins.... As he spake these words, many believed on him”). What this important passage actually teaches is that the value of Christ’s death, as marvelous and complete as it is, is not applied to the unregenerate until they believe. It is the effectual calling of the Spirit which indicates God’s elect and not some partial, unidentified, and supposed discrimination wrought out in the death of Christ.

Ephesians 5:6

“Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” The designation “children of disobedience” does not refer to the personal disobedience of any individual in this class, but rather to the fact that all unregenerate people are disobedient in the federal headship of Adam. This includes the elect and nonelect in their unsaved state; besides it should be noted that those elect saved people to whom the Apostle is writing were, until saved, not only children of disobedience, but under the energizing power of Satan they were also in a state of spiritual death (Eph 2:1–2). Thus the value of Christ’s death is applied to the elect, not at the Cross, but when they believe.

Revelation 20:12

“And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” This scene is related to the great white throne judgment of the unregenerate of all ages. The sum total of sin in the present age is *unbelief* (John 16:9), as the sum total of human responsibility toward God in securing a right relation to God is *belief* (John 6:29). It is very possible that those of this vast company who were of this dispensation may be judged for the one inclusive sin of unbelief, while those of other ages may be judged for many and specific sins; but from the foregoing proofs it is evident that it is in no way unscriptural to recognize that the impenitent of this age are judged according to their own specific sins, since the value of Christ’s death is not applied to or accepted for them until they believe, and these, it is evident, have never believed.

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It is appropriate to consider the challenge which the limited redemptionists universally advance, namely, that if Christ bore the sins of the nonelect, they could not be lost, for it is claimed even the condemning sin of unbelief would thus be borne and therefore would have lost its condemning power. By this challenge the important question is raised whether Christ bore all the individual sins except *unbelief*.

To this it may be replied that the sin of unbelief assumes a specific quality in that it is man’s answer to that which Christ wrought and finished for him when bearing his sins on the Cross. There is, doubtless, divine freedom secured by Christ’s death whereby God may pardon the sin of unbelief since He freely forgives all trespasses (Col 2:13), and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). The sin of unbelief, being particular in character, is evidently treated as such in the Scriptures. Again, if Christ bore the sin of unbelief along with the other sins of the elect, then no elect sinner in his unregenerate state is subject to any condemnation, nor is he required to be forgiven or justified in the sight of God.

At this point some might question whether the general call of God (John 12:32) could be sincere in every instance since He does not intend to save the nonelect. In response it may be asserted that since the inability of the nonelect to receive the gospel is due to human sin, from His own standpoint God is justified in extending the invitation to them. In this connection there is an important distinction to be observed between the sovereign purpose of God and His desires. For specific and worthy reasons, God, as any other being, may purpose to do more or less than He desires. His desire is evidently toward the whole world (John 3:16, 1 Tim 2:4), but His purpose is clearly revealed to be toward the elect.

The Nature of Substitution

The limited redemptionists sincerely believe that Christ’s substitution for a lost soul *necessitates* the salvation of that soul. This is a fair issue and there is some light available through the careful consideration of the precise nature of substitution itself.

Man did not first discover the necessity of a substitute to die in his place; this necessity was in the heart of God from all eternity. Who can declare what sin actually is in the sight of infinite rectitude? Who will assume to measure the ransom price God must require for the sinner? Who can state what the just

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judgments of outraged holiness were which were required by the Father and rendered by the Son? Or who can declare the cost to God of the disposition of sin itself from His presence forever?

Two Greek prepositions are involved in the doctrine of substitution. ὑπὲρ (translated “for”) is broad in its scope and may mean no more than that a thing accomplished becomes a benefit to others. In this respect it would be declared by this word that Christ’s death benefited those for whom He died. However, this word is invested at times with the most absolute substitutionary meaning (cf. Titus 2:14; Heb 2:9; 1 Pet 2:21; 3:18). =Ἀντὶ (also translated “for”) conveys the thought of complete substitution of one thing or person in the place of another. Orthodox men, whether of one school or the other, will contend alike that Christ’s death was *for* men in the most definite sense. However, substitution may be either absolute or conditional, and in the case of Christ’s death for the sinner it was both absolute and conditional. Randles states this twofold

aspect of truth.

Substitution may be absolute in some respects, and conditional in others, e.g., a philanthropist, may pay the ransom price of an enslaved family so that the children shall be unconditionally freed, and the parents only on condition of their suitable acknowledging the kindness. Similarly, the substitution of Christ was partly absolute, partly conditional in proportion to man's capacity of choice and responsibility. His death availed for the rescue of infants from race guilt; their justification, like their condemnation, being independent of their knowledge and will, and irrespective of any condition which might render the benefit contingent. But for the further benefit of saving men who have personally and voluntarily sinned, the death of Christ avails potentially, taking effect in their complete salvation if they accept Him with true faith.²

The debate between limited and unlimited redemption is not a question of the perfect character of Christ's substitution; His substitution is complete whether applied at one time or another, or if it is never applied. Likewise it is not a question of the ability or the inability of the sinner to believe apart from divine enablement. Rather it is a question of whether the full value of Christ's death might be *potentially* provided for the nonelect, even though they never benefit from it, but are only judged because of it. The elect are saved because it is *necessary* for them to be saved in view of the fact that Christ died for them. The unlimited redemptionists believe that the substitutionary death of Christ accomplished to infinite perfection all that divine holiness could ever require for each and every lost soul, that the elect are saved on

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the ground of Christ's death for them through the effective call and divine enablement of the Spirit, that the value of Christ's death is rejected even by the elect until the hour that they believe, and that that value is rejected by the nonelect forever, and for this rejection they are judged.

It has been objected at this point that the belief of the unlimited redemptionist results in the end in man being his own savior; that is, he is saved or lost according to his works. One passage of Scripture will suffice to clear this matter. In Romans 4:5 it is written, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Here the thought is not that the candidate for salvation performs no works *except* belief, but rather that by believing he turns from all works of his own, on which he might depend, and confides in Another to do that which no human works could ever do. By so much the determination rests with man, though it is recognized that no man possesses saving faith apart from a divine enablement to that end. The peculiar manner in which God enlightens the mind and moves the heart of the unsaved to the end that they gladly accept Christ as Savior is in no way a coercion of the will; rather the human volition is strengthened and its determination is the more emphatic. It is futile to attempt to dismiss the element of human responsibility from the great gospel texts of the New Testament.

It is both reasonable and scriptural to conclude that a perfect substitution avails for those who are saved, that in the case of the elect it is delayed in its application until they believe, and that in the case of the nonelect it is never applied at all.

The Testimony of the Scriptures

In the progress of the discussion between the limited redemptionists and the unlimited redemptionists, much Scripture is noted on each side and, naturally, some effort is made by each group to harmonize that which might seem to be conflicting between these lines of proof. Some of the passages cited by the limited redemptionists are the following.

John 10:15. "I lay down my life for the sheep." This statement is clear. Christ gave His life for His elect people; however, it is to be observed that both Israel's election and that of the church are referred to in this text (v. 16).

John 15:13. Christ laid down His life for His friends.

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John 17:2,6,9,20,24. In these important verses Christ declares that He gives eternal life to as many as are given to Him, that an elect company has been given to Him, that He prays now only for this elect company, and that He desires that this elect company may be with Him in glory.

Romans 4:25. Christ is here said to have been delivered for the sins of the elect and raised again for the justification of the elect. This, too, is specific.

Ephesians 1:3-7. In this extended text the fact that Christ is the Redeemer of His elect people is declared with absolute certainty.

Ephesians 5:25-27. In this passage Christ is revealed as both loving the church and giving Himself for it so that He might bring it with infinite purity and glory into His own possession and habitation.

In contemplating the Scriptures cited above and others of the same specific character, the unlimited redemptionists assert that it *is* the primary purpose of Christ to bring many sons into glory. He never lost sight of this purpose (that it actuated Him in all His sufferings and death is beyond question), and His heart is centered on those who are thus given to Him of the Father. However, not once do these passages *exclude* the truth, equally emphasized in the Scriptures, that He died for the whole world. There is a difference to be noted between the fact of His death and the motive of His death. He may easily have died for all men with a view to securing His elect. In such a case, Christ would have been motivated by two great purposes: to pay the forensic ransom price for the world, and to secure His elect body and bride. The former seems to be implied in such texts as Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," and John 3:17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." The other purpose seems to be implied in such passages as John 10:15, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." The Scriptures do not always include all aspects of a truth in any one passage. If these texts are used in isolation to "prove" that Christ died only for the elect, then it could be argued with equal logic from other isolated passages that Christ died only for Israel (cf. John 11:51; Isa 53:8) or that He died only for the Apostle Paul (for Paul declares of Christ, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal 2:20). As well might one contend that Christ restricted His prayers to Peter because of the

fact that He said to Peter, "But I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22:32).

The problem that both groups face is the need to harmonize passages that refer to limited redemption with passages that refer to unlimited redemption. To the unlimited redemptionist the limited redemption passages present no real difficulty. He believes that they merely emphasize one aspect of a larger truth. Christ did die for the elect, but He also died for the sins of the whole world. However, the limited redemptionist is not able to deal with the unlimited redemption passages as easily. These passages may be grouped together in the following way:

1. Passages which declare Christ's death to be for the whole world (John 1:29; 3:16; 2 Cor 5:19; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

The limited redemptionist states that the use of the word *world* in these and similar passages is restricted to mean the world of the elect, basing the argument on the fact that the word *world* may at times be restricted in the extent of its scope and meaning. They claim that these universal passages, to be in harmony with the revelation that Christ died for an elect company, must be restricted to the elect. According to this interpretation, John 1:29 would read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the elect." John 3:16 would read, "For God so loved the elect that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever of the elect believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Second Corinthians 5:19 would read, "God was in Christ, reconciling the elect unto Himself." Hebrews 2:9 would read, "He tasted death for every man comprising the company of the elect." First John 2:2 would read, "He is the propitiation for our [elect] sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of those who comprise the world of elect people."

A study of the word *cosmos* has been presented elsewhere.³ There it was seen that usually this word refers to a satanic system which is anti-God in character, though in a few instances it refers to the unregenerate people who are in the *cosmos*. Three passages serve to emphasize the antipathy which exists between the saved who are "chosen out of the world" and the world itself: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18–19); "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16); "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness"

(1 John 5:19). The limited redemptionist, then, is forced to claim that the elect, which the world hates and from which it has been saved, is the world. Shedd points to certain specific passages in an attempt to show that the word *cosmos* can at times refer to the "world" of believers.

Sometimes it is the world of believers, the church. Examples of this use are: John 6:33, 51, "The bread of God is he which giveth life to the world" [of believers]. Rom 4:13, Abraham is "the heir of the world" [the redeemed]. Rom 11:12, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world." Rom 11:15, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world." In these texts, "church" could be substituted for "world."⁴

In spite of Shedd's assertion, not one of the passages quoted requires that it be interpreted in any light other than that usually accorded to the satanic system.

2. Passages which are all-inclusive in their scope (Rom 5:6; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Tim 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11).

Again the limited redemptionist points out that in these passages the word *all* is restricted to the elect. Indeed, such passages must be restricted if the cause of the limited redemptionist is to stand—but are these properly so restricted? By the limited redemptionist's interpretation, Romans 5:6 would read, "In due time Christ died for the elect, in their ungodly state." Second Corinthians 5:14 would read, "If one died for the elect, then were the elect dead." First Timothy 2:6 would read, "Who gave himself a ransom for the elect, to be testified in due time." First Timothy 4:10 would read, "Who is the Saviour of the elect, especially of those that believe." Titus 2:11 would read, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to the elect."

3. Passages which offer a universal gospel to men (John 3:16; Acts 10:43; Rev 22:17; etc). The word *whosoever* is used at least 110 times in the New Testament and always has an unrestricted meaning.

4. A special passage, 2 Peter 2:1, wherein the ungodly false teachers of the last days who bring swift destruction on themselves are said to "deny the Lord that bought them." Men are thus said themselves to be ransomed who deny the very ground of salvation and who are destined to destruction.

Two statements may be in order in concluding this section:

a. The limited redemptionist's interpretation of John 3:16 tends to restrict the love of God to those among the unregenerate who are the elect. This interpretation is supported by quoting

passages which declare God's peculiar love for His saved people. There is no question but what there is a "much more" expression of the love of God for men after they are saved than before (Rom 5:8–10), though His love for unsaved men is beyond measure; but to assert that God loves the elect in their unregenerate state more than the nonelect is an assumption without scriptural proof. Some limited redemptionists have been bold enough to say that God does not love the nonelect at all.

b. What if God did give His Son to die for all men in an equal sense to the end that all might be legitimately invited to gospel privileges? Could He, if actuated by such a purpose, use any more explicit language than He has used to express such an intent?

Conclusion

Again let it be said that to disagree with good and worthy teachers is undesirable, to say the least; but when these teachers appear on both sides of a question, as in the present discussion, there seems to be no alternative. By an inner bent of mind some men tend naturally to accentuate the measureless value of Christ's death, while others tend to accentuate the glorious results of the application of His death to the

immediate salvation of the lost.

The gospel must be understood by those to whom it is preached and it is wholly impossible for the limited redemptionist, when presenting the gospel, to hide with any completeness his conviction that the death of Christ is only for the elect. And nothing could be more confusing to an unsaved person than to be drawn away from considering the saving grace of God in Christ to contemplating whether or not he is one of the elect. Who can prove that he is of the election? If the preacher believes that some to whom he addresses his message could not be saved under any circumstances, those addressed have a right to know what the preacher believes and in time they will know. Likewise it is not wholly sincere to avoid the issue by saying the preacher does not know whether any nonelect are present. Are they absent from every service? Is it not reasonable to suppose that they are usually present when such a vast majority of humanity will probably never be saved at all? In the preaching of salvation through Christ to lost men, no greater wrong could be imposed than to reduce truths that are throbbing with glory, light, and blessing to mere philosophical contemplation. May the God who loved a lost world

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to the extent that He gave His own Son to die for that world ever impart that passion of soul to those who undertake to convey the message of that measureless love to men!

¹W. Lindsey Alexander, *A System of Biblical Theology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), 2:111.

²Marshall Randles, *Substitution* (London: J. Grose Thomas, n.d.), p. 10.

³Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1948), 2:76–90.

⁴W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 2:479.

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