**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**A Ministry of Integrity, Part 3**
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:14
Code: 47-36

I want to invite you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 as we continue in our study of this letter from the Apostle Paul to the believers at the church in Corinth, a letter basically designed to defend the integrity of this apostle. As we have been learning, in our study of 2 Corinthians, it is very hard to endure false accusation, to be lied about, to be unjustly slandered and shamed. And this is particularly true for someone who preaches or teaches the Word of God because the most valuable commodity that the preacher possesses is his reputation. It is the foundation on which all believability is erected and believability is behind all authority and influence.

When people don't trust the minister, then everything is lost. Paul knew that. Some false teachers had come into Corinth, as you remember, and began to assault his integrity, began to do everything to discredit him. And so he battles to defend his integrity against these lying false teachers and those who had been victimized by their lies among the congregation there in the church.

This epistle then is written as a defense of his own integrity. He was eager to defend his integrity for all the right reasons. Mainly, because he wanted to sustain his ministry. It wasn't that he needed the personal prominence of prestige, it was that he needed the platform. False teachers were doing everything they could to discredit him so they could replace him and teach errors, lies and doctrines of demons...as they are called in Scripture.

And sadly, as we have learned, many of the Corinthians believed the lying teachers against Paul and so he writes this lengthy letter for the purpose of defending his character, his motives and thus his integrity. I remind you that the attack was unfounded. The attack was unfair. None of the accusations were true and still people believed the lies. And so the Corinthian church was in chaos, already torn up by a number of iniquities listed in the first letter, things are compounded now as they have subjected themselves to the wicked insinuations of false teachers about their teacher and their shepherd, Paul.

The church then stood in serious danger of defecting from the true teacher to false teachers, and consequently defecting from the truth to lies. And Paul was deeply concerned that they not get caught up in satanic lies, that they be preserved for the truth and for the glory of the Lord. And in order to accomplish that, he had to be the teacher and the shepherd that he had been, and thus he has to defend his integrity so he can have an ongoing ministry. It was imperative that they trust him. It was imperative they believe in him, they have confidence in him so he could continue to minister to

them because, after all, he was the channel of divine revelation to them as he was to the rest of the churches in that part of the world in that time.  So he writes this lengthy letter.

I don't want to belabor the point but I think periodically as we go through 2 Corinthians, it's good to get in touch with the big picture.  And as I was thinking about that I thought this morning I might just take you on a quick little trip through so you get a feeling for what this letter is really about so that you feel his heart opening up.  He says in the letter, "My heart is wide open, I'm just tearing back everything so you can see exactly what's in my heart.  There is nothing deceptive there, I just want to open myself up to you and you need to just look and see the integrity of my life."

That is the sense that you feel as you go through the book, starting in chapter 1, for example, in verse 12 where he appeals to the highest earthly court, which is the court of conscience, and he says, "Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially towards you."

He says to them...Look, my conscience is clear.  I have functioned with integrity, with godly sincerity, with holiness in the grace of God before you and before the world.

In chapter 2, again he defends himself in verse 17 by saying, "We are not like many peddling the Word of God."  Hucksters, con-men, charlatans, frauds, false teachers, deceivers who use the Word of God for their own gains.  But, he says, "We are coming from sincerity, we are coming from God, we speak in Christ, very much aware that we are in the sight of God."  Again he refers to his integrity.

Then in chapter 3 he does it again, verse 5, "We're not adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God who also made us adequate as servants of the New Covenant."  He is saying that he is an adequate servant, he is a sufficient messenger from the living God Himself.

Over in chapter 4 he does it again.  In verse 2, they had accused him of a secret life of shame and deception and craftiness and adulterating the Word.  And he says, "We have renounced the things hidden because of shame.  We do not walk in craftiness or adulterate the Word of God, but by manifestation of truth commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."  There again he defends his integrity.  He is not deceitful.  He is not corrupt.  He is not an adulterator of truth.

In chapter 5 we find again in verse 9 another word of his own defense, "Therefore," he says, "we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him because we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ."  He says I'm conducting my life as one who will stand before God and give an account for my life.

Chapter 6 he defends himself again down in verse 3. He says, "Giving no cause for offense in anything in order that the ministry be not discredited." He says I don't want to...I don't want to cause any offense any time about anything because it will discredit my ministry. "In everything...verse 4...commending ourselves as servants of God." He serves God genuinely, he does not offend, he does not discredit his ministry.

In chapter 7 and verse 2 he says, "Make room for us in your hearts, we wronged no one. We corrupted no one. We took advantage of no one." Again, these were the things the false teachers were accusing him of doing and they were all lies, and he denies them again.

Chapter 8 we find him saying very similar things down in verse 20, "Taking precautions," he says, "that no one should discredit us." Again he says we have not discredited ourselves, we have not brought reproach upon our ministry. Verse 21, "We have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord but in the sight of men. He is committed to that which is honorable.

And then in chapter 10 we find it again. He says in verse 7, "If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we." Obviously the false teachers were saying that Paul didn't even belong to Christ, that he didn't even belong to the Lord and he has to defend himself against such a basic accusation.

And then over in chapter 11 in verse 5 he says, "I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles." And there again he is defending his right to speak with authority. And down in verse 30 he says, "If I have to boast, I'll boast of what pertains to my weakness." Obviously his weakness was what provided the pathway for God's strength, as he points out later in chapter 12.

Over in chapter 12 and verse 11, again he says at the end of the verse, "I am a nobody, but I am not inferior to the most eminent apostles."

And then finally in chapter 13 and verse 5 he says, "Test yourselves to see if you're in the faith. Examine yourselves." Then in verse 6 he says, "I trust you will realize we ourselves do not fail the test." We're for real. We're genuine. I've been honest.

And so you get the feeling all through this whole epistle that he is defending his integrity against these assaults...against it. Assaults, as I've told you all along, intended to dethrone him as the reigning teacher so that the false teachers could replace him and teach their satanic lies.

Now what these emphases and what this whole letter tells us is that the man in ministry, the servant of God, the preacher, the minister, or for that matter any Christian, and we all have ministries so we all need to do this occasionally, but any of us on the threat of having our ministry destroyed because

of lies has a right to defend our integrity. Paul has every right to say I am honest, I am sincere, I am genuine, I'm the real thing, I passed the test, there is no taint of hypocrisy in my life. It is the false teachers, on the other hand, who are the fakes, the frauds, the deceivers and the charlatans.

Now admittedly, such a strong defense, thirteen chapters of it, could lead some people to conclude that Paul was self-serving, that he was self-commending for purposes of pride, greed and power. And so in this section he gives us his motives. Lest he be falsely accused he opens up to us here the real motives. And we started that in verse 11 and it is a tremendous, tremendous portion of this epistle because it tells us why it is so important that he defend himself.

Notice the little phrase that is the key to everything, in verse 11, "We persuade men...we persuade men." He's persuading men about his integrity. Literally that verb means to seek the favor of. We desire that men would look on us favorably. Why? For personal gain? No, so that the ministry can be sustained. So that we have believability and credibility which is the basis of authority and influence. He's a man then who defends his integrity for all the right reasons and from all the right motives.

Now, the first one, reverence for the Lord...and I'm reviewing briefly...reverence for the Lord. "Knowing the fear of the Lord," he says in verse 11, "we persuade men." It is because--fear meaning reverence--we reverence, adore and worship God and wouldn't want to do anything that would bring reproach upon his name.

Secondly, out of concern for the church, verse 12. We looked in to verse 12 last time and we saw that Paul was very concerned about the church. The false teachers had come in, took pride in the outward appearance, had no transformed hearts, they came in and started to tear up the church. They were like those grievous wolves in Acts chapter 20 who don't spare the flock but rip and tear, discord, disunity, fracture, division comes into the church. And so Paul says we're writing not with the end result of commending ourselves, but of arming you our friends to take up our defense for the sake of the unity of the church. His concern for the church, his reverence for the Lord compelled him to this defense of his integrity. The church needs to reject the fakes and follow Paul for the sake of its unity, its growth and its testimony.

And then thirdly, by way of review, his devotion to the truth. Reverence for the Lord, concern for the church and devotion for the truth...they had accused him of being insane and being out of his mind because he was so passionate and he was so zealous. In verse 13 he says, "If we are beside ourselves it is for God." It is because we're serving the living God. It is because we're dealing with transcendent and eternal truth, divine revelation, a mandate from heaven. And if we are of sound mind or sober or more moderate, it's for your sake. So he's simply saying we may be accused of being passionate and zealous, and you have to understand, if we seem fanatical it is because we are speaking the word of the living God. And if we are calm, it is because we're trying to be patient with

you in getting you to learn it.

But in either case it was the truth that compelled him. On the one hand to be compassionate, on the other hand to be patient and tender, like a nursing mother cherishing her children as he nurtured them along in the understanding of the truth about which he was so passionate. So he defends his integrity then out of reverence for the Lord, concern for the church and devotion to the truth.

Now let's come to today's point, and it will be just one for this morning because it's an important one...gratitude to the Savior. Here is another compelling internal motive, gratitude to the Savior. Verse 14, "For the love of Christ constrains us," some say controls us, "the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that One died for all therefore all died." This is a very, very important verse.

The essence of it in the flow of thought for Paul is that he is constrained, compelled, pressured, driven, motivated by the love of Christ to defend himself. It is important to him that if Christ loves him so much that he must never be put in a position where he cannot offer back to Christ the full ministry out of gratitude. He will defend his ministry in order that its fullness and its richness may be offered as an act of gratitude back to the one who loved him so much.

Now when it says "for the love of Christ," he's not talking about his love for Christ. Let's get that straight right at the beginning, he's talking about Christ's love for him, as the context will clearly demonstrate because he follows up by saying, "Having concluded this that one died for all." In other words, it is the love of Christ manifest in the death of Christ that overwhelms Paul. Paul is not overwhelmed with his own love for Christ. He's not saying...I'm...I'm driven by my own love for Him. Certainly that is a part of motivation. He is saying I am driven out of gratitude for his love for me that was so magnanimous He died. That's the point. Christ's love for him.

Now that is a theme of Paul's. He writes about the love of Christ a number of occasions. I think back to the eighth chapter of Romans in which he says the love of Christ is an unbreakable love, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? Goes on to say, "Not death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth or any other created thing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." So he loves to talk about the fact that it is an unbreakable love. Christ has a love for him that is inseparable, non-severable, unbreakable, inviolable, permanent, eternal.

In Galatians chapter 2, a familiar verse, verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ," he says, "it is not longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." And you know what he's saying there? He is saying that the love of Christ toward me was voluntary.

You remember that Jesus said, "No man takes my life from me, I lay it down by myself." He is saying that the Lord Jesus delivered Himself up for me. Nobody took Him captive, He gave Himself up. It overwhelmed Paul that the Lord would love him with an eternal love that could never be severed and never be changed. I mean, he was a...her certainly was a wonderful guy and he would be an easy guy to be attracted to but to love him with a love that was eternal and unbreakable and unst...and non-severable, that kind of love overwhelmed him because he knew his own weakness and he knew his own sinfulness. Beyond that, that Christ would voluntarily choose to love him and voluntarily give up His life for him was equally overwhelming.

And then in Ephesians 3:19, just to give you a few samples, there are many others, he says something else about the love of Christ. He says, "To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." It is an incomprehensible love, it is an unbreakable love, and it is a voluntary love. It is at the discretion completely of the Lord Jesus Christ who chose to give Himself up for Paul. It was that, that overwhelmed Paul. It was that immense reality that the Lord Jesus Christ loved him with an eternal, inseparable love and out of that love He voluntarily gave up His life on Paul's behalf, a love expressing itself in a way that surpasses comprehension.

That is the love, Paul says. Now back to our text, that controls us. Now what about that word "control," sunechomiin the Greek. It means a pressure that causes action. That's the...that's the simplest bottom-line meaning, a pressure that causes action. It can mean to restrain, constrain, rule, control. He is simply saying I am pressured by this love that Christ has for me and out of gratitude for that love I want to give Him back everything I have to offer. And I want to give Him back my life and my ministry as an act of worship. And if you discredit me and my ministry is lost, then I cannot express my gratitude which I am compelled to express by this immense love. That's what he's saying. He's defending his integrity because he is constrained to sustain his ministry because his ministry is how he expresses gratitude for this love with which Christ has loved him, a love so great that He laid down His life and greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends...Jesus said. So he could never live for himself...this man Paul, could never defend himself for his own sake, but only for Christ...his whole life was an act of gratitude. That's why, and we've studied this in months past, that's why as he writes his epistles, periodically he bursts out in doxologies because he's constantly filled with gratitude for this amazing, amazing love. His life then was literally pressured by the powerful gratitude that he felt for the Lord's love for him.

Now let's follow the verse. It is this love that Christ has for me that pressures me to defend my integrity. And then he explains why. "Having concluded this..." in other words, because I have come to a settled conclusion, I have come to a conviction, I have gone through a process that has yielded a confidence, and the confidence is, "that One died for all, therefore all died."

What are you saying, Paul? He's saying, let me explain to you why this love is so powerful. Let me explain to you why this love puts such tremendous pressure on me to be grateful. It is because I have come to the settled conviction that Christ died for all, therefore all died. Now this is a very profound statement and at first it seems somewhat simply confusing. And you can look at it and pass it by and think you understand it, you can dwell on it for years and think you understand it. It is deep. But let me see if I can't simplify it in a few minutes for you.

Let's take the phrase "that One died for all...that One died for all." Let's break it down. In the Old Testament Jewish economy many died, right? Thousands and thousands, and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of animals were slaughtered. And they were basically offered as animal sacrifices for an individual so that what you had was many dying for one. Right? But now in Christ you have One dying for all, so you have a completely different concept to begin with.

The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, the writer of Hebrews says, but Jesus Christ by one offering has forever perfected them that are sanctified. So the single sacrifice of Christ is very, very important. Jesus Christ in one sacrifice accomplished death for all. In contrast to many animals dying for one, One dies for all. No more need to repeat daily sacrifices for the nation, the family or even the individual.

Now when it says "Christ being the One, died for all," what do we mean there? The Greek phrase huper panton, pantonmeans all, huper, preposition, means in the place of, that's the best rendering. It could mean "in behalf of, for the benefit of." The simplest way to define it is "in the place of," listen now, that One, namely Christ, died in the place of all. To borrow the words of Galatians 3:13, "He was made a curse for us."

Now what is indicated here...now you've got to get this because this is what is really on Paul's mind...what is indicated here is the great truth that theologians have long called the doctrine of substitution...substitution. We think of that as an athletic word. Long before it was an athletic word it was a theological term. And the theological term "substitution" has immense significance. And that is what Paul is saying. That One, namely Christ, demonstrated His love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, in our place. That is substitution. Jesus Christ did not die as a martyr to show us how noble it is to die for a cause. He did not die to demonstrate to us some high level of ethics, to show us a man who was so devoted to God that He would give His life for that to which He was devoted. No, He died as a substitute. He didn't die to demonstrate some ethical standard to us, He didn't die to show us how extreme and how noble martyrdom is, He died as a substitute in our place. That is to say, He bore a punishment that should have been ours, right? That's the essence of Christian salvation theology, that Christ died as a substitute.

Now this is what the Scripture teaches. And just to show you, and I don't want to...I don't want to have you miss this so I want to unfold it to you as clearly as I can. Go back to Isaiah 53, you're going

to find that this is really a powerful point when we understand what Paul is saying here, as he understood it. Back to Isaiah 53, the classical Old Testament passage that presents the coming work of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, Isaiah 53 predicting that the Messiah will come and die. And I want you to notice how substitution is the theme of Isaiah 53.

We read about Jesus, that in verse 3 He was despised and forsaken of men. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was despised and so forth. We didn't esteem Him. It describes there Christ in the horrors of His death and rejection.

But then in verse 4 we immediately are thrust into this idea of substitution. "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, our sorrows He carried, yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Now follow. "But He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him and by His scourging we are healed." At the end of verse 6, "The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." To fall on Him.

At the end of verse 11, "He will bear their iniquities." At the end of verse 12, "He Himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors." The whole theme of Isaiah 53 is built around the concept that the Messiah would come and die for us, in our place, as our substitute. That is to say we should die and He dies for us. We should pay the penalty for our sin and He dies in our place. That is Christian theology. That is what the church has always proclaimed, the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. God's wrath required death, Jesus took that wrath and died in our place and thus satisfied the justice of God, that's why we can say He made propitiation, that is to say He made satisfaction because He satisfied the wrath of God with a perfect sacrifice in our place.

In John 6 Jesus Himself even speaks of the substitutionary aspect of His death. Verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven, if anyone eats of this bread he shall live forever and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." In other words, I'm going to die to bring life to the world. I'm giving My life for the world.

In chapter 11 of John's gospel, God the Father even puts this truth in the mouth of an unbeliever named Caiaphas who was the high priest. Caiaphas, not having any idea what he said, made the statement in verse 50 of John 11, "It is expedient for You that one man should die for the people." And the next verses tells us he didn't even know what he was saying. But Christ died in behalf of, for the benefit of, in the place of the people, the world. In this case, of our text, He died for all.

Now that we see then in the Old Testament, Isaiah 53. We see it in the gospels, as I pointed out a couple of, and there are many other texts we could look at in the gospels, but when we come to the epistles, this idea of substitution, which is prophesied in the Old Testament and explained in the gospels, is then elucidated and formalized and catalogued in the epistles.

Let's look at some of the epistles. Go to Romans chapter 5. And this is very important for you to understand. It is, as I said, at the very heart of Christianity. It is what we believe. Verse 6 of Romans 5, "While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." End of verse 8, "Christ died for us." Verse 10 says, "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." He died in our place, thus satisfying the wrath of God and opening up the path of reconciliation for sinners to come to God. God could then accept them because their sin was paid for in the death of His Son. That's why it says that God sent His Son into the word to die for us. It's just a very, very essential part of our doctrine.

In Romans 14:15 Paul says, "Do not destroy with your food," that is by what you do with your liberties, how you eat and drink and all of that, "don't destroy him for whom Christ died." Here, again Christ died for this believer, being identified there is the one for whom Christ died. Again, just emphasizing the substitutionary aspect.

First Thessalonians 5:10 it says, "The Lord Jesus Christ who died for us." And this is all through the New Testament. In fact, in Ephesians 5:2, "Christ loved you and gave Himself up for us." You find it again in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 5 and 6, "Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all." You find it in Titus chapter 2 verse 14, "Who gave Himself for us." You find it, and Peter makes a major point of it in 1 Peter 2:24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross." He was there in our place bearing our sins, Peter says. And then in 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ died for sins, once for all, the just in the place of the unjust in order that He might bring us to God."

And so, over and over and over the Scripture indicates this substitutionary aspect of the death of Christ. And by the way, I'm going to say something that you must understand, that sums it up. The only way...I'll say it again...the only way that the death of Christ could benefit the sinner was by substitution. If He didn't die in our place, then we have to die for our sins and that spells eternal death. The death of Christ is therefore meaningless apart from its substitutionary definition. He dies in our place, that's what we believe, that's what we preach.

Now, let's go back to our text because there are some things that are very important about the next phrase. Paul says, "I am literally pressed, pressured, driven, compelled by this love that Christ has for me because I have concluded, I have a settled conviction that One died for all." That is to say that He died for me. Me, Paul, blasphemer, injurious, murderer, Christian killer, persecutor, Pharisee, egotist, religionist, legalist, I was the worst of all of it, he says to Timothy in 1 Timothy, the chief of sinners. And One, namely Christ, died for all. He offered Himself for that all that includes me.

The question is, who are the all? And somebody would immediately say, "He died for the world." The all means the world, all the people who have ever lived. And as I have pointed out many times in recent studies, there is an unlimited element to the death of Christ. We've talked about that and I'll

say more about it in a moment. But when he says One died for all here, if the sentence ended there we might conclude that he was referring to that general sense in which the death of Christ can be applied or has benefit to all, but he qualifies it by that second phrase, "Therefore all died." Now the parallel here is this. The One died for all, therefore the all died. Now follow the logic. We can conclude then that the all that He died for are the all who died. Is that not true? That's not too tough. The all that He died for, says Paul, are the all who died.

You say, "Well so what?" Well I'm getting to it. He doesn't say...now watch this...he doesn't say that One died for all because all were dead. What that would mean would be something very different because all sinners who have ever lived are dead in trespasses and sins, right? So if he said He died for all, therefore...or because all were dead, we would say...well fine, the whole world is dead in trespasses and sin and He died for all of them. That's not what it says. What it says is One died for all therefore all died. It's not talking about a condition, it's not talking about a state, He's talking about an event. He's saying that He died for the all who died when He died.

What do you mean by that? What Paul means by that is He died for the all who died in Him. That's the only way you can interpret it. Anything else is exegetically untenable. He died for the all. Who are the all? They're the all who died. That's exactly what he says. He died for the all, therefore all died. It can't be the whole human race because the whole human race didn't die in Christ, did they? If the whole human race died in Christ, then the whole human race is...what?...saved. So you can't have the whole human race dying in Christ or the whole human race is saved.

He's getting very specific here. He died for the all who therefore died. What is Paul saying? Paul's saying...here's what I'm overwhelmed about, I'm overwhelmed that Christ loved me so much that the One Christ died for all and I was part of the all who died in Him. What is overwhelming to Paul is that while he was still a sinner, Christ was bearing his sins on the cross. That's what's astounding to him. He is not saying that Christ provided a possible salvation and I was smart enough to cash in on it. He is not saying that Christ threw it out there and I grabbed it and therefore part of the credit goes to me. He is saying is what is absolutely compelling to me is that while I was yet a sinner, He died and when He died He was dying for my sins. This is what he's saying. This is Romans 6, isn't it? We have been united with Christ in His death and in His resurrection, Paul says in Romans 6.

The believer is joined to Christ in His death and resurrection. When you come to Jesus Christ, God accepts you because you repent and you believe. That's what's required. But there's something required before that and that is a sufficient atonement had been made for your sins. And Christ died as your substitute and He bore your sins on the cross, therefore you died with Him there. This is a limiting aspect of the death of Christ. It necessarily limits the application of the atonement. The atonement, listen carefully, can only be a real substitution for those who died in Christ. I'll say that again. The atonement can only be a real substitution for those who died in Christ on the basis of those statements in that verse. The all is everyone who died in Christ, everyone for whom Christ was

the substitute.  That is the sense of the atonement which is limited.

Let me say it.  Christ is the Savior of the whole world, I don't argue that, I believe that with all my heart.  He is the Savior of the whole world.  His work is abundantly sufficient to secure the salvation of all who put their faith in Him.  There is a sweeping sense, therefore, in which all sinners can be called to repentance and all sinners can be held culpable if they refuse to repent.  And they can be judged by that.  But Christ not only in His atonement expressed an unlimited feature, but a limited one in that in a special sense He procured on the cross for those who were in Him not a possible salvation but a real salvation.

The atonement has its unlimited aspects.  We've talked about that.  You see benefiting from the atonement in unlimited ways the human race through temporal deliverance, He's the Savior of all men in a temporal sense, that is He doesn't destroy them all immediately upon their sin.  You see providence, God's care in a very general sense He lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust.  Divine goodness.  And then you see gospel invitations given to every man and every man held culpable for the rejection of that invitation to be punished eternally because he will not believe.  All of those indicate to us that there is an unlimited aspect of Christ's work on the cross.

But when you talk about substitution, you now are talking about the limited aspect of it.  It is limited to those who died in Christ.  Now you have to ask the question...who are those who died in Christ?  To answer that, look at Romans chapter 3--Romans chapter 3.  In Romans chapter 3 this is very important, verse 25, well verse 24 talks about the gift of God's grace which is the salvation or redemption in Christ.  In verse 25 God displayed publicly as a propitiation, a satisfaction, a covering, appeasing the wrath of God, He displayed Christ as that.  So He's talking about Christ's redeeming work, His justifying work, His work of salvation.  And then in verse 26 we get right down to it.  The middle of the verse, "All this that Jesus Christ and that God whose purpose it is might be just and the justifier of the one who...what?...has faith in Jesus."  There's the qualifier.

Who are those who died in Christ?  Those who have faith in Jesus.  It is in that sense that we can say Christ died for His own.  He died for the church.  In the substitutionary sense He died only for those who died in Him.  Those who die in Him of whom He is the justifier are those who put faith in Jesus, or it could be translated, is of the faith of Jesus, that would be who believed the gospel about Jesus Christ.  So He is the substitute only for those who believe.  That's the point.  Otherwise you've got a major problem because you've got Christ dying as a substitute for the whole world, that means He was bearing the sins of the whole world in a substitutionary sense.  And if, in fact, He was carrying Himself to the cross as a substitute for the sins of every person who ever lived, He would therefore have done away with the wrath of God and procured for them eternal life, and we'd all be universalists.  So there has to be a limiting feature.  And I think that's what Paul is speaking of here when he narrows this down that One died for all, therefore all died.  The One who died died for the all who died in Him, the all who died in Him are those who believe.

Look at Ephesians 5:25 for a moment. And I know this is theological but it's important, it's the foundation of our faith. "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church," and here you have this narrowness again, "and gave Himself up for her." Here again you see Christ substituting for the church, to sanctify her, to set her apart from sin, to cleanse her, to present her to Himself without spot or wrinkle or blemish and that she should be holy and blameless. So here you have Him clearly dying to bring the church to Himself.

Back in John 10 Jesus speaks even of these limited ideas when in John 10 and verse 11 Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for...what?...the sheep." And again the substitutionary aspect is limited to the sheep as it was limited in Ephesians 5 to the church. Down in verse 15 it's the same thing. "I lay down My life for the sheep."

Over in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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." Here He purchased the church. He laid His life down for the sheep. He gave Himself for the bride. There is the narrow sense in which the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ actually procured salvation for those who belong to Him.

The atonement then, as I said, has unlimited aspects. And every man therefore can hear the gospel invitation and every man therefore is required to respond. But the actual substitutionary feature of that atonement where He bore the sin actually away and satisfied the justice of God is only applicable to those who died in Him and those who died in Him of whom He is the justifier are those who have put their faith in Him. He did not die as a substitute, taking away the sin of people who don't believe in Him, or He would have procured a salvation for them and everybody would be saved. His substitution...the substitutionary, the actual narrow substitutionary aspect of His death was a complete satisfaction of the justice of God on behalf of those who believe. And obviously if you follow that back, He knew who they would be because He chose them from before the foundation of the world.

It is not easy to harmonize all these things. It leaves us with apparent paradoxes and mysteries. I can only tell you what the Scripture tells you and leave the sorting out to your own heart and mind and some day to the clarity with which we will all understand when we are in the presence of the Lord.

Let me give you one other illustration of this. In Romans 5:19, in Romans 5:19 Paul says, and he's comparing Adam to Christ here, "Through the one man's disobedience," that's Adam, "the many were made sinners." Now we understand that, don't we? You have one man, Adam, who sinned. And what happened as a result? Through that one man everybody who was in the loins of Adam got the consequence, true? And we all were there. All of us, if you go back far enough, were in Adam.

We're all progeny from him.  So when he fell, his disobedience made us all sinners because we were all in Adam, genetically.  We were all back there.  So that's just a concept that we can grasp.  We were all in Adam when he sinned, and so he made us all sinners.

And then Paul says, "So through the obedience of the One," and you remember He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, so through the death of Christ on the cross, "The many will be made righteous."  And who are the many?  They are the same ones who are in Him.  As those in the loins of Adam became sinners because of his sin, those in Christ become righteous because of His death.  That's the parallel that he's drawing. And the same parallel he makes again in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 22, "Since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead." Then in verse 22, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."  Whoever was in Adam died, and whoever was in Christ when He died was made alive.

The sin of Adam...listen...was legally and effectively the sin of his race.  The death of Christ was legally and effectively the death of His people.  Whoever was in Adam was made a sinner.  Whoever was in Christ was made righteous.  And eventually what Christ accomplished on the cross would unfold in God's plan and time because whom the Lord predestined, He...what?...justified.  And that's the point of substitution.  Christ died on the cross, the death of all who put their faith in God.  He satisfied God's justice and brought about full forgiveness and reconciliation by being their substitute.

And so, the Bible is not emphasizing here that Jesus made salvation possible.  It's emphasizing that He procured it.  So that the death of Christ was not to provide a possible salvation, but it was a means to a certain salvation to all who believe because all who believe were in Christ when He died because God so designed it.  The death of Jesus Christ was an actual substitution and that's what boggles the mind of Paul.  Do you see why he's so compelled by this?  If he was saying..."Well, you know, the Lord threw salvation out there and I was smart enough to pick it up," that would be one thing.  Far less compelling than to say, "Can you get this?  That God the eternal holy God sent His Son into the world, spotless Son of God, who went to the cross to die as a substitute for my sins while I was yet in them.  And procured for me a salvation who am the chief of sinners."

What startled him was that he was there and he actually died in Christ in the view of God who was a substitute for his own sins.  That was what was so overwhelming.  There was no way to give himself credit for that.  Here come reconciliation, justification, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, deliverance from wrath, deliverance from eternal death, deliverance from the curse of the law, deliverance from sin.  It all came to Paul and it all came to him purely because God sent His Son to die for Paul.  Jesus Christ actually bore the penalty of the transgressions of those for whom He substituted.

And so it is true that Jesus Christ did die for the whole world.  He did put men in a position where they are commanded to repent and believe.  But somehow mystery of mysteries that God understands in

the substitutionary sense, He bore only the sins of those who ultimately would put their faith in Him because they were His. He made an actual atonement by which those who were placed into His death can be truly reconciled to God.

The death of Christ then opens a way for a sincere offer of salvation by God to all who will come and believe. But it secures that salvation to the elect. I don't understand how all of that comes together. All I can do is take the text and tell you what is so glorious in the heart of Paul is that when Christ died, all died in Him. And that's what was overwhelming, that this man, this chief of sinners, this violent aggressor, this blasphemer, this persecutor who deserved to die was given a substitute, namely Christ, when he was so unworthy. Is it any wonder after that in 1 Timothy he says, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory forever and ever, amen"? And as he often did, he got to talking about these things and launched into a doxology. He was absolutely overwhelmed by such love.

You see, that's why he's defending his integrity. Let's get back to the main point. That's only a sub-point. He's saying, "Look, I have to maintain my integrity because I have to maintain my ministry because there's no reason to live except for Christ, right? If I don't have a ministry, I might as well die because I don't want to live for myself and I want to live for Him and living for Him means having a ministry and having a ministry means maintaining my integrity. I'll defend myself for the sake of my integrity, for the sake of my ministry because I have no reason to live except for Him."

That's why he said, "For me to live is Christ, and when I can't do that anymore, I'm going to die." The overwhelming reality of this immense love pressed him to the defense for the future integrity of his ministry.

Well, out of reverence for the Lord, concern for the church, devotion to the truth and gratitude for the Savior's love, he defended his integrity. Would you believe there's more? That's for next week. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, as we come before You and consider these things, we confess that they're hard to understand, that they...they're difficult, even Peter confessed that and said of Paul that he said things hard to understand. And, Lord, we know You've called the whole world to repent, and You've removed the barrier for all sinners so that they can all hear the invitation and they're all responsible to come. And yet in the end Christ died as a substitute only for those who have faith. And You knew who they would be because You chose them before the foundation of the world. And so in that narrow sense He substituted for us who believe. How astonishing, how amazing that He didn't just throw out a possible salvation and the smartest of us picked it up. But He procured salvation for us, in the case of Paul, while he was living in sin, while Paul was a wretched sinful Pharisee, Jesus was bearing his sins. And long before we were ever born You bore our sins. That's the amazing thing. And that is why we can say it is not of works lest any man should boast, for by grace are you saved.

He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.  He who knew no sin because sin that we might become righteous.  That kind of love, incomprehensible, voluntary and unbreakable, constrains us to live our lives to Your glory, to Your praise.

We need to defend our own integrity and we need to maintain our own integrity because we reverence You, because we love the unity of Your church, because we're concerned for the truth and because we're grateful for Your love.  Forgive us for apathy and lethargy and indifference and taking for granted this incomprehensible love with its height and depth and length and breadth, surpassing all understanding.  Thank You for loving us so much that Jesus died for us and for all who will believe.

We thank You that Scripture doesn't put us on some quest to find out if we're on the list, but we hear the words of Jesus, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and I will give you rest."  We hear You say, "Call upon Me and I will answer you."  We hear You say, "Come, take of the water of life freely, whosoever will, let him come and drink."  We hear Jesus say, "Whoever comes to Me I will not turn away."  All that's required from our standpoint is that we come and plead for mercy and salvation.

And when it's done, it's all of You and You did it without any consideration of anything but our sin. And we are overwhelmed by that and may our gratitude express itself in a life lived to please You. For Your Son's sake.  Amen.

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