

**The Doctrine of Actual Atonement, Part 2**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-278

Those of you who have been with us know we are tackling some of the more challenging and profound and difficult doctrines in the Scripture. And I trust we're having a wonderful time digging deeply into God's precious truth.

Last Sunday night we began to look at the subject, "For whom did Christ die?" Or, "The Nature of the Atonement." Or as I chose to call it, "The Doctrine of Actual Atonement." And I want to go back to that. If you weren't here last week, it really would be helpful for you to get the tape or the CD, whatever is best for you, and to listen to what I said and pair it up with what we're going to say tonight because you're going to get just a very abbreviated review of that important foundation.

These doctrines challenge us. They challenge us because even when we understand them the best we can from a biblical viewpoint, there is still a lot left over. There is still the inscrutable reality of the incomprehensible mind of God. And there are always going to be things that just don't quite resolve completely to us. Every doctrinal symphony is, in some ways, an unfinished symphony. Every major doctrine of the Scripture ends in an unresolved chord because we, in our finite minds, cannot, in the end, fully grasp the infinity of God's mind. But we do the best we can and we leave the rest to Him. And so, in the end we entrust to Him what we do not understand and embrace with all our hearts what we do.

Certainly, the doctrine of the extent of the atonement is one of those doctrines that takes us way beyond where we will be comfortable to go. It stretches our minds to the breaking point. It takes our theology out to the perimeter of our tolerances. And in the end it leaves us with some incomprehensible realities, and that's as it should be. Since we are finite and He is infinite, there should be a vast distinction between what we can know and what God does know. But there are ways in which we can go to the edge of our comprehension and to the edge of biblical revelation to understand the greatness and the glory of the work of redemption.

Let's begin tonight by sort of working our way up to discussing the extent of the atonement. Jesus came into the world, He said, "to seek and to save those who are lost," Luke 19:10. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. He was on a recovery mission. He came into this world to rescue sinners, sinners who were alive then, who had lived already, and would live in the future. His redemptive work on the cross reached back, and reached forward, and reached out to those in His own generation.

The coming of the Lord Jesus was the most perfect revelation of the eternal God ever. God was never so clearly manifest as He was in Jesus. The nature of God, the character of God, the purpose of God, the will of God was seen in Jesus. And so we conclude that God is by nature a Savior. The apostle Paul loves to call Him "God our Savior." He is by nature a Savior, and so Jesus comes into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, to fulfill that part of God's nature which reaches out to redeem sinners.

In order for God to save sinners, there had to be a sacrifice that paid the penalty for their sins. Jesus - who is God - came into the world, took on human form to offer Himself as that sacrifice, an unimaginable condescension, an undeserved act. On the cross Jesus died not under the wrath of men, really, but under the wrath of God. Not by the plans of the Romans and the Jews, but by the determined plan of God, predestined before the world began. And He bore the wrath of God and He bore separation from God for sinners, for all the sinners who would ever believe. And while it was a sacrifice for Christ to do this, it was a satisfying sacrifice. It was why He came, to offer that sacrifice, to purchase God's chosen people, to purchase His own bride.

Turn in your Bible to Isaiah 53. This is a good place to start as we look at this sacrifice of Christ. Isaiah 53:4. This is the classic Old Testament section of Scripture which deals with the substitutionary death of Jesus in which He dies in the place of sinners. And Isaiah is inspired to write of His death in these words, starting in verse 4. "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." That is to say that He was literally punished by God for our sins. Verse 5. "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. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter."

I want you to go back for a minute to verse 4. "Our griefs, our sorrows." Verse 5, "Our transgressions, our iniquities, our well-being." "All of us - " verse 6 " - each of us, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." Our, our, our, our, us, us, us, and the question comes, who is this? Whose sins did He bear? Whose transgressions? For whose iniquities was He crushed? For whose healing was He scourged? Whose iniquity was placed on Him?

Go down to verse 10. "The Lord was pleased to crush Him." It's an amazing statement. Because God is by nature a Savior and He finds His own satisfaction in saving sinners, which means He is pleased to have His Son be the sacrifice that saves them. "The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring."

In other words, He is being crushed, He is being put to grief, He is being given as a guilt offering in the confidence that He will see His seed, His offspring. Verse 11 says, "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it* and be satisfied." God was pleased and Christ was satisfied because out of it would come His offspring, His seed.

And then verse 11 says, the end of the verse, "My servant - " meaning Messiah " - will justify the many, and He will bear their iniquities." And at the end of verse 12, "He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors." And the question is, who are the *ours* and the *uses* and the many? It must be the offspring. Must be those that are the seed born out of that sacrifice because that is what pleased God and that is what satisfied Christ.

In the New Testament, it tells us in 1 Timothy 1:15 that the Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Paul said that. That's his own testimony, "The Lord came into the world to save sinners." That's the great enterprise. God is an evangelist. God is a Savior. Christ then, God manifest, does a saving work. He came into the world to save sinners. And all those that He saves He then mandates to carry on this work. And according to the great commission, we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We are to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I've commanded you and lo, I am with you always. We are ambassadors for Christ, begging people to be reconciled to God. We have been redeemed to be caught up in this great evangelistic enterprise.

In Acts 1:8, as Jesus leaves this world, His final words, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, even to the remotest part of the earth." That's the last thing Jesus said on earth. "My Father is a Savior. I am a Savior and you are to pick up the glorious gospel of salvation and take it to the ends of the earth."

That's why we're here. Everything else is secondary, everything else is tertiary in the church. Everything else in a sense is less important. And I don't want anything to ever diminish that. That's why when you've been teaching on the doctrine of sovereign election, and you've been teaching on the doctrine of absolute inability and unwillingness, and you're teaching on the doctrine of the extent of the atonement, it is still absolutely consistent to follow all that up with four nights of evangelism on four Sundays, because this is our mandate, this is why the church is here.

We will worship better in heaven. We will serve the Lord better in heaven. We'll love each other better in heaven. In fact, we'll do all of that perfectly. But one thing we won't do in heaven is evangelize the lost. They won't be there. And God, who weeps through the eyes of Jeremiah, and Jesus, who weeps through His own eyes over the lost in Jerusalem, calls on us to weep over the impenitent and to go forth bearing precious seed with tears.

God weeps over the impenitent. God weeps over the unbelieving. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And He offers a legitimate and genuine call to sinners across the face of the world, both from the pages of Scripture and out of the mouths of all of the believers who go and take the message, a legitimate call to come and believe and be saved.

That evangelistic mandate defines why the church is in the world. It's why we're here, to preach the gospel of salvation and reconciliation and forgiveness and heaven to the whole world. We are to beg people to come to salvation. And as I noted in Psalm 126:5, we are to go forth with tears, bearing the precious seed of saving truth and reaping the harvest of faith with rejoicing. It was Jesus who said, "Come to Me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, I'll give you rest."

We are told to pray for the salvation of all people, 1 Timothy 2. We are told to set a godly example and to live our lives as shining lights so that men can see the power of Christ in us and be drawn to Him. We are told if we're going to name the name of Christ, we ought to be like Him. We are told to proclaim the gospel and never to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it's the power of God to salvation. We are told to proclaim it to the Jew and to the Greek as well. And it is a legitimate offer, and a real offer. And every sinner on the planet is accountable for the response to that offer. And as we saw in our study this morning, every man has a stewardship that God has given him. It may be a stewardship of a law written in his heart, and a stewardship of his rational mind looking at the creation around him and being led to the knowledge of God. And if he follows the path, as he should, in obedience to that stewardship that God has given him, he will find the truth will open to him. Every man is accountable and no man has an excuse. And so we are mandated to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. But we know this: Not everybody will repent and not everybody will believe. We know that. That has always been true, always.

There are numerable souls even now that have left this earth and are already out of the presence of God forever in eternal torment. That fact is inescapable. And they're going there every day that we live. By the thousands, they die. There is an eternal hell and it will be continually filled with sinners until redemptive history is over, sinners who ignored conscience, sinners who ignored the law written in their hearts, sinners who ignored that which was known of God that was placed in them, sinners who ignored the truth when they heard it, the Scripture when they read it, the gospel when it was preached to them, sinners who rejected the grace and goodness of God, sinners who refused to repent. And they all end up in hell and if they were given the choice while in hell to choose differently, they wouldn't do it. They showed no interest in God then, they will have no interest in Him now.

So we are called to a worldwide task, and sinners are accountable for how they respond to the message at whatever level they receive it. Now as I will point out in the sermon next Sunday morning, there are degrees of punishment in hell. Not everyone's punishment will be equally severe in hell. That will depend upon how much truth you had, truth is dangerous. The more you have, the more

culpable you are, the greater your guilt, the greater your punishment.

We shouldn't be surprised at this. Go back to Isaiah 6 while you're in Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 6. And here is a call of God on the prophet Isaiah. And in verse 8, the Lord asks a question. And the question is this. "Whom shall I send and who shall go for Us?" The people of God are in serious trouble. They are in grave danger. The prior chapter, chapter 5, lays out the sins that were characteristic of God's people and judgment is coming, severe and deadly judgment is coming. It's described at the end of the fifth chapter. And God needs a messenger to warn, a messenger to call the people to repentance before the judgment comes. And the question is asked, "Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?" Meaning the Trinity.

And Isaiah responds, "Here am I, send me. I will go." This, of course, should be the response of every believer. "Who am I going to send to this world plummeting into judgment?" "I'll go." And then the most bizarre statement. And the Lord said, "Go and tell this people. You go tell them, go and tell them about judgment, and tell them about grace, and forgiveness, and mercy, as well. Tell them to turn from their sin. You go, you tell them." And then it says, "Keep on listening, but don't perceive; keep on looking, but don't understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, return and be healed."

What that is saying - and by the way, that passage is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament, because it's the defining passage on the obstinacy of an unbelieving society, in particular Israel. "Know this," He says to Isaiah, "They're going to listen, but not understand. They're going to see, but not comprehend. They're going to be insensitive, dull of hearing, dim of sight. They won't get it. They won't return. They won't repent. They won't be healed. So know this when you go."

I read somewhere, just yesterday, a little note that said, "There is a massive turning to Christ in the world today." Really? Where is that? I must be missing something. And he asked the right question in verse 11. "I said, 'Lord, how long?' " I mean, why should I do that very long? How long do I do that, like a couple of weeks maybe? No, just keep doing it "until cities are devastated and have no inhabitants, and houses have no people and the land is desolate and the Lord has removed everybody far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land." Just do it till the place is devastated. Do it till there's nobody left to do it to, just keep preaching.

You say, "Well, wait a minute. This seems fruitless." No. Verse 13 is the key. "There will be a tenth portion in it." This is one of the very most tangled Hebrew constructions of any passage in the Old Testament. I'm not going to try to unscramble it for you. Simply to say, the Lord says there's a tenth, this is what we call the "doctrine of the remnant." There's a tenth. There's a stump. And at the end of verse 13,

"There is a holy seed that is that stump." There's a group, there's a remnant, there's a holy seed. It's

that same seed that the Messiah saw in Isaiah 53 and He could see His seed and His soul was satisfied. Do you think God has some mystery about who's going to be saved? Of course not. He knows. He knows it will be few. He knows it will be a remnant. He knows it will be only a portion, a holy seed. The word "holy" means "set apart."

So we go like Isaiah went. We go to the world and we go with the gospel and we know that most will not believe. And we could be very discouraged and say, "How long do I do that?" And the Lord says, "Just keep doing it because there is out there a seed already designated as holy." They're already in the purposes of God set apart for God. They are the elect, who upon hearing the gospel, will repent and will believe.

You remember Acts 13:48. "When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. There is a remnant. There is a people appointed to eternal life.

In Acts 18, the Lord came to Paul in a vision. "Do not be afraid any longer - " the Lord said " - Go on speaking, do not be silent. I am with you and no man will attack you in order to harm you - " listen to this, " - for I have many people in this city." They weren't converted yet. They weren't converted yet. You go there, you preach as I have many of the holy seed already there. They're just waiting to hear.

So who will believe? Who will believe? Who will believe our report? Isaiah says. Who will be saved at the preaching of the gospel? All men are accountable and the offer is legitimate, but who will be saved? And this launches us into our look at the doctrine of actual atonement or definite atonement or specific atonement or peculiar or particular atonement as it's all been called.

Now we already know this, when we ask the question who will believe and be saved? We just finished talking about the doctrine of absolute inability and unwillingness, sometimes called the doctrine of total depravity. And that doctrine says no sinner - and this is taught in the Bible - no sinner on his own can or will seek God, right? No sinner on his own will pursue the truth, will pursue righteousness, will come to reconciliation and salvation. He will not because he cannot. His condition as being dead in sin makes that impossible. And so the only ones who can come are those to whom God gives life and light and understanding and repentance and faith. And we also learned from the study before that those to whom God gives that are those whom He has chosen to give that to. God chooses whom He will save and God saves whom He has chosen.

Clearly, then, salvation is all of God. It's His holy seed. It's His holy offspring, in the language of Isaiah 53. It's His people he has already identified. Now, their salvation is not apart from their will, but it is in harmony with their will when their will is altered by the power of God. So that raises the question then for whom did Christ die? For whom did He die?

And we said last time, I'll just quickly review, most people in the church think that He died for everyone potentially and no one actually, right? He just died for everybody potentially, it's sort of out there, and you can pick it up if you want it or you don't, it's not going to be applicable to you. So He died for everybody potentially, and no one actually. Therefore, the actualizing of the atonement depends upon the sinner deciding to actualize the atoning work of Jesus Christ on his own behalf. And if the sinner never believes, if he chooses never to receive Christ, then the death of Christ for Him remains an unrealized potential.

So those who believe that, believe - now listen carefully - that the atonement of Christ is limited in its effect, okay? It's limited in its effect. They like to say they do not believe in a limited atonement, they believe in an unlimited atonement. That's not true. They believe in an atonement that is limited in its power, that is limited in its effect, that is limited in its impact to the will of the sinner. That's a very limited atonement. They believe that it is unlimited in its extent, that it extends to the whole of the human race, but it is very limited in its effect.

What the Bible teaches is just the opposite. It is limited in its extent to those whom God chooses and saves. And for them it is unlimited in its effect, in its power. It is then not a potential salvation for all, it is an actual salvation for the many. Who is our, and our, and us, and us, and the many, and the many for whom He died, for whom He actually bore sin's judgment? It is the holy seed. It is the holy offspring. It is the chosen of the Father. It is the bride of the Son. See, this changes everything. If you believe that there's this sort of hanging sort of a potential atonement floating around the world and you just have to convince sinners to pick it up, to take advantage of it, then evangelism takes on a completely different approach. It all becomes working on the will of the sinner to get him to actualize this only potential atonement.

And you have to ask yourself who gets the credit for that one? Right? It doesn't sound like the way to glorify God. See, that's the idea that Jesus' atonement is unlimited in its extent but very limited in its effect. In fact, it isn't enough to save you. Is that amazing? Jesus dying on the cross, paying the penalty for your sin under that theology isn't enough to save you. You've got to do something to complete it, which sounds to me like salvation by works. But how is the sinner going to do that when he's absolutely unable to do that and unwilling to do that? Dead in trespasses and sin, blinded by Satan. So we know not everybody's going to be saved. The atonement is limited in its extent and the question is, who limited it? Who limited it? God.

I know that's sometimes hard to take. But He did. There is hell and most people who live in this world end up there. That's how it is. The real hard doctrine is the doctrine of eternal punishment. If there were no hell, we wouldn't even need to debate these other issues, they'd be academic. But it's God who decides whom He will save and who chose them before the foundation of the world.

I just can't look at the cross and see Jesus at the very end of the cross looking up and saying, "It is started." What? "It is potential." That's not what He said, is it? Was the death of Christ a full and complete payment to God satisfying His just wrath for some particular chosen people? Or was it a potential for nobody? An actual for nobody, a potential for everybody.

Let's look at the Scripture and see how to understand that. We only have a little bit of time. This is going to be a survey kind of look. We have to look at some terms. Okay. World. let's take world. Everybody comes and says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, what about the world, what about the world?" Let me help you with that, okay? It's going to be like those old sword drill Bible drills that you had when you were a kid. You've got to move fast with me.

We've heard the world mentioned. When we hear the word "world" we think the world means everybody who ever lived. That's not biblical. John 1:9. "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." What does that mean? Coming into the world, what does that mean? Does that mean He came to every human being on the face of the earth? No, it just means He came into the human realm. He was in the world. He was in the human realm. "And the world was made through Him, and the world didn't know Him." "World" is just a term for humanity, or the created world. He was in the world, God in human flesh. There's nothing about every single individual on the planet being necessarily involved in that word, just the created order, just humanity.

So, here you see the word world immediately has to be qualified. John 1:29. "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of - ' what? " - of the world.' "

Now wait a minute, we have to qualify that immediately, don't we? If He took away the sin of the world, what? Everybody would be – what? - saved. They'd all have their sin taken away. So immediately we have to qualify the word "world." And how do you qualify it? He came into this human realm, He came into this created order, He came to humanity to take away sin. And in the future, of course, it will be removed completely in the new heaven and the new earth.

But you will notice that this is clearly limited. He didn't come to take away the sin of everybody. Go back to verse 11. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." Verse 12. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name." So taking away the sin of the world is then qualified by whoever believed in Him. They were the only ones who had the right to be forgiven and become children of God. So "world" is just a generic term meaning humanity, the created order. And it has to be qualified.

In John chapter 3:16, again, "God so loved the world." And that's something we're going to talk about in January: The love of God and how far, and how wide, and how high, and how deep is it? "God so



loved the world.” What does that mean? Humanity. “He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.” Well immediately you know the world has to be qualified. If you don’t qualify it, we’re all going to come out universalists here, with everybody being saved. And we know that can’t be true because the Bible is so clear on judgment.

In John chapter 4 - all it means in John 3 is He loved humanity, He loved mankind. He loved people from all tribes and tongues and nations. He loved, and in a very general sense, the sense of common grace and the offer of the gospel and compassion, He shows love to the world. But His saving love for the world is limited to those in the world, the realm of humanity, who believe. “God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes.”

John 4:42, again, it’s the same thing. It says, “It’s no longer because of what you said that we believe for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.” It doesn’t say He’s the potential Savior of the world, He is the Savior of the world. He is the Savior of the world unqualified so therefore the world has to be qualified, you can’t qualify the word “Savior.” He is the - well, potential Savior. You’re trying to protect the universal concept of world and you wind up limiting the Savior. It really points out the picture, doesn’t it? Either you’re going to limit the effect of the saving work of Christ, or you’re going to limit the extent of it, one of the two.

He is the Savior of the world in this sense: He’s the only Savior this world will ever have. He’s the only Savior the human race will ever know. The world has no other Savior. And what’s really important to note in all the way through the gospel of John, whenever you read this, “the Savior of the world,” “God so loved the world,” “He was in the world,” et cetera, keep in mind that John is addressing an environment of Jewish anti-Gentile racism. And the idea that the Messiah is for the world was a foreign idea - no pun intended. It was a revolutionary idea.

In John 6:33, again the same emphasis. “The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.” To the world. What part of the world? Verse 35, “He who comes to Me shall not hunger, he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” You’re going to have life if you come and you believe from whatever nation on this planet. He’s the Savior of the world. 1 John 4:14 says the same thing in the sense that it’s not limited to the Jews.

But it is limited. It’s limited always to those who believe. John 6:33 we just read, and John 6:51 follows it up. “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 that I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.” He gives His life for the world, but who in the world? It says in the same verse, “Whoever eats the bread will live forever.”

It's always qualified by believing, by believing. You see it again, it's all through the gospel of John. John chapter 12:47-48, again always needing to be qualified. "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do judge him; I didn't come to judge the world, but to save the world." Obviously, this does not mean that He's going to save every human being whoever lives. It does mean that He is going to extend His salvation without regard for race, or color, or sex across this planet, humanity in general.

Look at chapter 14:22. This is just another illustration of how you always have to qualify the world. Judas in John 14:22. "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You're going to disclose Yourself to us and not the world?'" What do you think Judas meant by that? What did he mean that "You're going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" He certainly didn't mean every human being on the planet. The wider world, the wider realm of humanity outside this narrow group, the general public, it means there.

And Jesus even understood His own limitations on the word "world." Look at John 17, very important. John 17. Jesus is praying and He prays for, verse 6, "the men You gave Me out of the world." The men You gave Me out of the world I pray for them. "They were Thine, they were and Thou gavest them to Me and they've kept Thy Word." And then go down to verse 9. "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world." There you have Jesus not interceding for the world, but for the men whom God gave Him out of the world. Again, you have to qualify, and Jesus Himself there makes that qualification.

In John 17:15, He prays for His own and says, "I ask that You not take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil one." And there He understands the world as this human enterprise with all its sin. In verse 16 He says, "They're not of the world." Verse 18, "You sent Me into the world, and I sent them into the world." But "I don't pray for the world, I just pray for those You've given Me out of the world." Jesus even knew there were qualifications on the use of the word "world," just general, beyond Israel, across all races and languages. The world is always qualified, never is there an occasion when we can dogmatically say it means every human being whoever lived.

In fact, in John 12 - I can't resist this, just thought of it - John 12:19. The Pharisees were getting more and more concerned about Jesus so in John 12:19 it says, "The Pharisees therefore said to one another, 'You see that you're not doing any good. Look the world has gone after Him.'" Well, what do you think they meant by that? Every human being that ever lived? No, it's always qualified. In Luke 9:25, Jesus says, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world?" Well, that's qualified, no man is going to own the whole world.

So, we simply in the context understand that the term "world" is to get us beyond the provincialism, the narrowness, and the racism of Judaism to get us to the extent of the atonement stretching across this earth in all times and all nations. Paul in Romans 11:15 says that the rejection of Israel has

brought about the reconciliation of the world. And again, Paul doesn't believe for a moment that that means that every single person whoever lived will be reconciled to God. What he means is that Israel's rejection being set aside, the church is grafted in and the church is made up of Jew and Gentile.

The Jews had a hard time with this. That's why the apostles had to sort of shock them with the fact that the Lord was doing a work among the Gentiles. You remember the book of Acts? "While Peter was still speaking - " in Acts 10, " - the Holy Spirit fell - " on Cornelius, Gentiles, " - and all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also." Well, that was part of that same provincialism. And the gospel was never intended to be limited to Israel. The same is in Acts 15:6 and following. Verse 7, we can pick it up. "Peter stood and said, 'Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.'" It's a hard pill for the Jews to swallow, that the gospel stretched outside Judaism to humanity, from every tongue, and tribe, and people, and nation.

So, we look at the term "world" and we always qualify it. There's another passage - two more - that need our brief attention. I'm just going to comment briefly. First John 2. First John 2. "Jesus Christ the righteous - " verse 1. Verse 2. "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*." What is that saying? That "He is a propitiation not only for our sins - " again this is very Jewish in its context " - but for the whole world." It's making the same point that John made over and over and over again, the same point that they made in the book of Acts, the same point that Paul makes in Romans 11: That the gospel is not limited to the Jews.

Propitiation, by the way, is a very strong word, *hilasmos* in the Greek. And "propitiation" means the actual satisfying of God's just wrath. It's not a potential. It's an actual word. It could be translated "placated," or "satisfied." He Himself is the satisfaction. He is the placation. He propitiates God, satisfies God, placates God's anger for our sins. But not just ours, as the inside people, but the whole world. That is to say there is no other propitiation for people in any other nation than the one who is the propitiation for us.

If this meant that He was actually a satisfaction for every person who ever lived, then the word is way too strong to mean anything potential. It would have to mean actual because it's a satisfaction. God was satisfied with the sacrifice on their behalf. Nothing is left out. And Jesus' death, dear one, was a satisfaction. He was the sacrificial lamb on the ultimate day of atonement whose blood sprinkled before God was a true satisfaction. Propitiation is too strong a word to mean something potential because propitiation means it turns God's wrath away forever. Not just for us, but for any Gentile or anyone else who believes.

And in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and I'm just going to cover this one because I know if I don't you'll come up and ask me about them. 2 Corinthians 5:19. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." And again, you say, "Well, okay, reconciling the world. People always know...didn't He reconcile the whole world?" Well, what do you mean by the world? It always has to be qualified. Otherwise you end up, as I said, a universalist, and then what do you do with everybody that's being sent to hell? God is reconciling the world to Himself. And what does it mean? Listen to this, "Not counting their trespasses against them." That's not a potential anything, that's an actual.

God is reconciling. God is not making reconciliation possible. God is not removing a barrier to reconciliation. God is not giving, you know, the sort of the eight-tenths of the deal and telling the sinner to take the next two steps. He is reconciling to Himself in Christ, that is in the death of Christ, the world not counting their trespasses against them. And let me tell you, my friend, not having your trespasses counted against you means that He bore your transgression in full and you are under no condemnation.

And that is not a potential salvation, that is an actual salvation. Whoever the world is here, it is the ones who no longer have their trespasses counted against them. It is those who are, verse 17, new creatures in Christ. It is those in verse 21 for whom "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." Whose behalf? Those who were reconciled to God that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

There's no such thing in the Bible as a potential atonement. It simply means that there are no racial limits, there are no ethnic limits. These passages regarding the world are all qualified. It's just humanity, the human world, this realm, not every single individual who ever lives. You know, that has been sold to us through the years. Christ did not pay in full, He did not reconcile, He did not satisfy God fully so that God no longer counts trespasses against every human being in the world. If that were true that is an actual salvation and there can be no hell cause there can't be any punishment. That's - then God would be what? Not just but what? Unjust.

Well you say, "Well, the Bible says 'all,' the Bible says 'all.' I know it says 'all.' " Yeah, it says all. Want to look at some "alls"? Romans 5. Let's look at some "alls." Just give me a few more minutes and we'll get there. I only have about 45 passages here. We can cut it off anywhere and we'll get it some other time.

But Romans 5:18. "So then - " this is another passage important. "So then through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men." That one transgression was Adam, right? And that did effect everybody. "Even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." Well if you're not careful there, if you drive the parallel in the wrong direction, you're going to come out with this. "Well, everybody was affected by Adam's sin and became sinners, therefore everybody

is affected by Christ's righteous work and becomes righteous." The problem with that is that's not true.

There's only one illustration being made here. It's simply this. The argument is coming up, Paul is talking about the impact of the work of Christ, how that the work of Christ is the redeeming work of all who believe. And the question that comes up in the mind of the reader is going to be, "How can one man's act have such a great effect? How can the act of one man have such massive implications?" And so he simply makes the parallel. "Look, by one man's sin, everybody died. Everybody who died died. And by one man's righteousness, everybody who became righteous became righteous." He even changes his terminology in verse 19 where he says - just to make sure we don't think the 'all' is inclusive - "as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of one, many will be made righteous." And I think he puts that in there just to back us off the wrong understanding of verse 18 which would make everybody saved. And he, "Whoa, that's not what I'm trying to say. Let's use the word 'many' so we don't get mixed up here. We're only trying to illustrate the point that one man's work, one man's deed effects all who proceed from that one man." So that is all only in the appropriate sense, qualified again in the context.

Go to Romans 8:32. Here's "all" again. "He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." Who's the "all" here? Christ was delivered up for us all. Now some people will say, "Well, He was delivered up for everybody in the whole world." That's not - is that who he's talking about here? Is that Paul's "us"?

Well, let's go back to verse 31, just back up one. "If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?" Now who is the "us" there? Everybody in the whole world? Is God for everybody in the whole world? We have a qualified "us." Well who is the "us" that God is for? I'll tell you who it is. Verse 29. "Whoever He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, whoever He predestined - " verse 30 " - He called, whoever He called He justified, whoever He justified, these He also glorified and if God is for us, who can be against us?" It's the "us" of those who were predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified. To put it another way, verse 33, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" It is the elect, we are the us all.

Second Corinthians chapter 5. Second Corinthians 5:14. And here's language very much like Romans 5, just so you can compare it. Second Corinthians 5, we were there in the little, few verses down. I want to go back to 14 and 15. "The love of Christ controls us, having concluded that one died for all, therefore all died; And He died for all, that they who live shall no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." Now the "all" is qualified. Now just follow this carefully.

"The love of Christ controls us, having concluded that one died for all." People say, "Oh, He died for all. He died for the whole world, every single person in the whole world." He died for them all? No.

“He died for all, therefore all died.” The all He died for died. What is that? Well, when you came to Christ, do you remember you died, is that not true? “I am crucified - ” what? “ - with Christ.” In Him you die. So, “He died for all, therefore all died.” He died for the all who died in Him. Verse 15, “He died for all - ” and who are the all? “They who live.” He died for those who died and live in Him. It was for them that He “died and arose again - ” end of verse 15 “ - on their behalf.” On their behalf.

You could look at the word “many,” if we had time. It has some interesting usages and you will find a number of references to the word “many.” We already saw one in Romans 5, just so you can compare it, saying that the Lord died not for all, but for many. And that’s another way to get to the same point, “all” meaning “all” in a broad sense across the world, “many” meaning “less than everyone.”

In Hebrews 9, “Christ also having been offered once to bear the sins of many.” Wow, offered to bear the sins of many. You don’t want to do too much with these words other than to understand in the context how they are always qualified.

Listen to Matthew 20:28. “The Son of Man didn’t come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.” For many. Who are the many? All who would believe. He actually was a ransom. He actually was a satisfaction. He actually provided an expiation. He actually achieved an atonement for those who would believe.

To put it in the angelic language, it goes like this. The angel says, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, and she will bear a Son and you shall call His name Jesus - ” listen “ - for it is He who will save - ” who? “ - His people from their sins.” The Bible teaches nowhere a potential salvation. He saves His people from their sins. That’s what He will do when He comes. It will be a real salvation for His people.

John 10:11. “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep - ” and I know My own sheep. “I am the Good Shepherd, I know My own, My own know Me...I lay down My life for the sheep.”

In John 11:50, “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.” So says Caiaphas. “Now this he did not say on his own initiative, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation - ” listen to this “ - and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” Wow, what a statement. Get that? Jesus died. Jesus died not just for Jews, but to gather into one body the children of God scattered all over the world. That’s who He died for.

In Ephesians chapter 5 - just a couple more. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved - ” what? “ - the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by

the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory." He paid the price for His bride, His church. He redeemed her. It wasn't a redemption of nobody in particular, it was a redemption of His own redeemed church.

It was a particular redemption. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. He predestined us. "In Him we have redemption," Ephesians 1:7. We have "the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which he lavished on us." We are - I love this - Ephesians 1:14, "God's *own* possession." It says "the redemption of God's *own* possession." A people of His own possession.

Titus 2:13. We "look for the blessed hope, and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ - " I love this " - who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us and purify for Himself a people for His own possession." And who was that people? The people whom God chose before the foundation of the world and gave to the Son as His bride.

Peter says, "He bore our sins in His own body," 1 Peter 2:24. Peter says, "Christ died for sin once for all, the just for the unjust in order that He might bring us to God." He didn't die to potentially bring people to God, He died to bring us to God. He died to satisfy God. He died to redeem the holy seed, the holy offspring.

One other text, that's it. One other one, because I know you'll ask me. Hebrews 10:29. It's a clarification, really. Hebrews 10:29. "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified?" Some people say, "Well, wait a minute. That says right there that some people who are going to be punished, some people who trample underfoot the Son of God, and regard as unclean the very blood of His covenant are said to be sanctified."

Can I help you with that verse? Take out your little pen and put just a little line above the "h" that turns it into a capital H. It's not talking about sinners being sanctified, it's talking about Christ, "by which He was sanctified." "Trampling underfoot the Son of God and regarding as unclean the blood of the covenant by which He was set apart as the covenant sacrifice."

Well, somebody could throw in a verse like 2 Peter 2:1 and say, "Wait a minute, it says of those people there who were apostate that they denied the Master who bought them." Sure, there's a sarcasm there, they claimed to be true believers. They claimed to be true teachers. They infiltrated the church as false teachers and Peter says, "You now have denied the Master who bought you." We know the Master didn't pay the price for damnable heretics.

So how do we summarize this? The death of Christ was a real, true actual satisfaction of divine justice. It was a true payment and a true atonement in full, actually, not potentially, paid to God by

Christ, on behalf of all who would ever believe because they were chosen and redeemed by the power of God. The death of Christ was then definite, particular, specific and actual on behalf of God's chosen people, limited in extent by the sovereign purposes of God, but unlimited in effect. For all for whom it was rendered it is fully in force, or will be in each individual life.

It is the work of God. It is the work of Christ who accomplished redemption, not to make redemption possible to then be finally accomplished by the sinner. Christ procured salvation for all whom God would call and justify. Sinners do not limit the atonement, God does. Jesus did actually take the penalty in full for all who would ever believe.

What does that mean to you? Well for one, you ought to rejoice because the price was paid in full for you. You don't have to activate it. You're a trophy of God's divine grace. Secondly, go out and evangelize the lost with joy knowing that there's a holy seed out there for Christ has already paid the price for their sins and it's our joy and our privilege to be God's instruments to reach them.

Father, thank You for our time tonight and may we rejoice in every sense in the greatness of our salvation, in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).