

Particular Redemption

by Doyle D. Dewberry

NOTE: The term "Particular Redemption" is a term used in place of "Limited Atonement", one of the five points of Calvinism.

Text: John 10:11,26

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." - John 10:11, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." - John 10:11,26

Particular redemption is one of the most documented subjects in the Bible, but the most contested. It is referred to also as "Limited Atonement"; not that it is limited in what it accomplishes, but only in the scope of it. For those it was intended, it accomplished complete atonement, but was limited to those intended i.e., the elect of God.

"Did Christ offer up Himself a sacrifice for the whole human race, for every individual without exception; or did His death have special reference to the elect? In other words, was the sacrifice of Christ merely intended to make the salvation of all men possible, or was it intended to render certain the salvation of those who had been given to Him by the Father?" (L. Boettner)

This doctrine necessarily follows election, for since God has elected a people from the foundation of the world, it follows they were the ones Christ went to the cross to die for. It does not make sense that Jesus would die for those God predetermined not to save. "If we say Christ's death was for everyone, then we cannot at the same time say it was only for those people whom God had chosen. If Christ died for everyone, God had no need to choose a special people. On the other hand, if we say that God did choose a special people as the Bible teaches - then it would have been pointless for Christ to die for everyone" (John Owen).

The saving benefits of redemption do not redound to any but elect persons. Whatever in one place is ascribed to redemption, as the special fruit and consequent thereof, is elsewhere ascribed to election, and to this as the first and original root. Redemption itself is the fruit of electing love, *Elect unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* (1 Pet 1:2) - Elisha Coles, God's Sovereignty.

John Gill, Baptist theologian, in his Body of Divinity, said this concerning redemption. "The objects of redemption are described by such characters as

show them to be a special and distinct people; particularly they are called, the people of God and Christ; *for the transgressions of my people*; saith the Lord, *was he stricken*; that is, Christ was, or would be, stricken by the rod of justice, to make satisfaction for their sins, and thereby redeem them from them..." Isa 53:8

Those who oppose this teaching of redemption attempt to maintain that Jesus died for every living person. It would infer that Jesus died for Judas just as much as he did for Paul; for Esau as much as Jacob, for the unbelieving as much as the believing. If this were so, then He died in vain for a multitude, and it puts an Omniscient God to shame, and sets forth an Omnipotent God as failing. Is God unable or unwilling to carry out His purpose? We are told that it is impossible for God to fail of His purpose.

Some would have us refer to those passages which speak of *all*. One such is *that Christ gave himself a ransom for all*; the *all* meaning every living being rather than the all of certain ones. Elisha Coles would have us think on such verses as these: *Come see a man that told me ALL THINGS that ever I did* (John 4:29). All he told her was how many husbands she had had, and presently what she had. Again Paul said, *to please ALL MEN in ALL THINGS* (1 Cor 10:33). Paul pleased but few men, and in all things next to none. The Gospel is said to be *come into ALL the world, and to bring forth fruit as it did in them* (Col 1:6), when it had come into but a corner of the world. He then said,

It is therefore to be noted, that where those general, or rather indefinite terms are used about redemption, it is mostly to show that the Church of God, which Christ was to gather in, was not confined to the offspring of any particular head, nor consisted of any separate sort or rank of persons, exclusive to others, but some of every kindred and nation under heaven, classes and degrees among men. The Church of God takes in all, and so doth redemption. However different they are in respects, they are *all one in Christ* (Gal 3:28). Elisha Coles

We cannot overlook those passages which limit the *ALL* to *ALL OF US*. Consider what Paul said in Rom 8:32, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for US ALL, how shall he not with him also freely give US ALL THINGS?* Another passage which so says is found in Isaiah, *ALL WE like sheep have gone astray; we have turned EVERY ONE to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of US ALL* (53:6). The term *a ransom for all* is to be understood by the term *a ransom for many* (Matt 20:28)

The universal redemptionists infer that Jesus did not accomplish salvation for anyone, just made it possible for all. As Spurgeon put it, "He died for everyone in general, and no one in particular", and universalists are the ones who actually limit the atonement. One has to remember that the Gospel is not good advice, but good news, and falls as such on regenerate ears.

The saved and the unsaved out from all nations are spoken of as sheep and goats. Jesus said, *“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”* Matt. 25:32-33 God is not making sheep out of goats, as he is not making wheat out of tares. Jesus said those on his right will *“inherit the kingdom, prepared ... from the foundation of the world”* v 34, and those on left, *“shall go away into everlasting punishment..”* v 46. The “prepared kingdom” includes the inhabitants, and it was for these that Jesus died. These are the ones to whom the apostles were sent when Jesus commanded them, *“..go rather to the LOST SHEEP OF the house of Israel.”* Matt 10:6.

Paul tells us, *He hath made him to be sin for US who knew no sin that WE might be made the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Cor 5:21). Who are those people for whom the Lord Jesus Christ was made to be sin? Since Jesus died for all the sins of His people, yet if He died for everyone, then what is left to determine man’s lost condition? Unbelief? Did not Jesus die for the sin of unbelief as well? Would it not be a charge against the Son of God for having died for those who ultimately suffer eternal damnation? This writer once heard a seminary professor explain his universalist theory of the atonement. He likened it to a women buying pickles from a barrel. Instead of selecting the amount she needed, she bought the entire barrel. That is incredibly unreal as it pertains to the death of our Savior on the cross. God doesn’t have to atone for all people just to save his elect. His Son merely dies just for the elect. If the women of his illustration did her buying of all her needs in that manner, she would have to buy the entire market to obtain the few things she needed for her household.

We cannot close the exposition of this verse without just remarking upon the *us* here intended. *The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of US ALL.* It is usually conceded by us who hold the doctrine of particular redemption that there was in the death of Christ very much of generality and universality. We believe that the atonement of Christ was INFINITE IN VALUE, and that if Christ had decreed to save every man of woman born, He need not have suffered another pang; there was SUFFICIENT in His atonement if He had so willed it to have redeemed the entire race. We believe also that by the death of Christ there is a general and honest invitation given to every creature under heaven in terms like these: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.* We are not prepared, however, to go an inch beyond that. We hold that from the very nature of the satisfaction of Christ it would not have been made for any BUT FOR HIS ELECT; for Christ either did pay the debts of all men or He did not? if He did pay the debts of all men they are paid, and no man can be called to account for them. If Christ was the surety of every man living, then how in the name of common justice IS CHRIST TO BE PUNISHED, AND MAN PUNISHED TOO? If it be replied that the man would not accept the atonement, then I ask again, Was there a satisfaction given, for if so it was given WHETHER THE MAN ACCEPTS IT OR NOT, or else satisfaction by itself is powerless until man puts efficacy in it, which is preposterous to suppose.

(C.H. Spurgeon)

It is rather ironic that John 10 has verifiable proof that He did not die for all. In verse 26, Jesus said to the Jews that were around him, "*But ye believe not because ye are NOT OF MY SHEEP*". If there were some there who were not of his sheep, then He did not die for them. Notice that He did NOT say, "Ye are not my sheep because ye believe not," but *ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep*. This means if they were His sheep they would be believers, and those for whom he died. Since Jesus gave his life *a ransom for many* we must see that a ransom is for a particular person or persons. *Matt.20:28*. No one pays a ransom for undetermined people.

The chosen of God have been so from the foundation of the world. They were ordained unto salvation being called according to the purpose of God, FOREKNOWN, and predestinated, and as Isaiah spoke in chapter 53, a prophecy of Christ's death, *...when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, HE SHALL SEE HIS SEED* (Isa 53:10). We therefore believe that Jesus died for His people. "God Himself has given to the elect of His Sovereign love, which was already theirs in Christ Jesus even before time began. I speak of a salvation which has either already been accomplished by our Saviour, or else it never will be." (Cesar Malan).

Spurgeon also said this against the universal redemptionist position,

"If Christ has died for you, you can never be lost. God will not punish twice for the one thing. If God punished Christ for your sins He will not punish you. 'Payment God's justice cannot twice demand; first at the bleeding Saviour's hand, and then again at mine',"

In the 10th chapter of John, Jesus demonstrates why He is the "Good Shepherd". (v 11). Those He was to die for are called sheep. Only a shepherd could love a dumb, helpless animal as a sheep. They are so helpless they need a shepherd. Other foraging animals can be left for themselves to range for food. Not sheep, they must be led. A sheep aptly fills the charge of Total Inability.

Those sheep He was to die for are called *..his own sheep*. (v 3). They have been born into His flock, and the Good Shepherd cares for, and tends for His sheep. They are His chosen, and He selects His sheep. The sheep do not chose the shepherd, the shepherd chooses them. Our salvation is not according to our works, or our faith, since faith is the gift of God. (Eph 2:8-9). We do not chose Christ, He chooses us. (John 15:16).

The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep (vs 11,15). This shepherd, unlike the hireling, does not flee when the wolf comes, but protects His sheep with His life. As noted before, if one does not believe, then that one is not of His sheep. (v 26). On the other hand, if one does believe, he is one for whom the Shepherd died. The only redemption is a particular redemption. The only

atonement is a limited atonement. Christ's death saves His sheep to the uttermost, but not all are sheep. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life FOR HIS FRIENDS.* (John 15:13).

When the porter openeth the door, these sheep *hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.* (v 3) The Good Shepherd's call is effectual. He knows them by their names, and these sheep know the Shepherd's voice and they respond. Romans 8 tells us we are the *called according to His purpose.* (Rom 8:38). The psalmist said, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*

Under the control of the Good Shepherd, these sheep are secure. He saith of His sheep, *..they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* (v 28). These sheep persevere. It is the shepherd's promise. He seeks the lost sheep until He finds it, and when he finds it he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing .. saying to his friends, *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.* (Luke 15:4-6). We are likewise told, *He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* (Phil 1:6). We are also told that we are *kept by the power of God.* (1 Pet 1:5).

Why did Jesus come to this earth? What was His purpose? It was not only to die, but that His death would accomplish a purpose. This purpose was given at His birth when the angel of the Lord told Joseph, *..thou shalt call his name JESUS: and he shall save HIS PEOPLE from their sins* (Matt 1:21). Who are His people? Those given to Him by the Father before the world began. (John 17).

One has to be very naive to feel that Jesus died for every individual. Consider the world of the ungodly in the days of Noah when they refused the flood's warning, and it came and took everyone away. Did Jesus die for them? What of those sodomites whose infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrha were turned to ashes condemning them with an overthrow? Did Jesus die for them? Consider Esau whom Paul said God hated. Did Jesus die for him? What of Pharoah and those Egyptians who pursued the nation Israel out of Egypt? and perished in the Red Sea. Did Jesus die for them? What of those who rebelled at the God-appointed leadership of Moses and Aaron? Korah and the rebels who were with him? God opened up the earth and they all perished in unbelief and disobedience. Did Jesus die for them? And what of Judas? who betrayed the Lord Jesus so that He might be brought before the Sanhedrin to condemn him to death? Did Jesus die for him? What of those whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life? Did Jesus die for them? What of the rich man in hades? Did Jesus die for him? If your trust is in Jesus Christ, and you believe on His name, even believing in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, then know that Jesus died for you. If you hear his voice, and believe on the one sending Christ, you have everlasting life, and you shall not come into condemnation. (John 5:24). If you continue to believe not, then He did not die for you. May God be gracious to you, bestowing the grace of His salvation upon you, knowing that only those whom Jesus died for will be saved. One can make his election and calling sure - *Whosoever shall call upon the name of*

Lord (Jesus Christ) SHALL BE SAVED. Those who have - understand they were chosen and the Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ died for them.

Amen!
