

Sufficient For All But Not Efficient For All?

Christ's Death - What Did It Accomplish?

There are a number of pastors today, who call themselves calvinists, who say they believe in the doctrines of grace, and who say they believe in Limited Atonement (a.k.a. Particular Redemption), yet they muddy the waters with ideas that are more philosophical than biblical. And this is where they migrate away from Scripture, when they say things like:

"Christ's death was sufficient for all but efficient only for God's elect". They will often add: "Christ's atonement was of infinite value, but only efficacious (applicable) to the elect - God's chosen people, those whom God covenanted with His Son to be the Bride of Christ, i.e. they are parties to the covenant of election".

As to when exactly this line of thinking started may be hard to nail down. But a Presbyterian "theologian" from the nineteenth century by the name of W. G. T. Shedd wrote, "*Christ's death is sufficient in value to satisfy eternal justice for the sins of all mankind...Sufficient we say, then, was the sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of the whole world, and for the expiation of all the sins for all and every man in the world.*"

The only problem with this idea of "sufficient for all" is that that cannot be, unless Christ's death was not a propitiatory sacrifice... a sacrifice that appeased the wrath of God. Yet Scripture says that Christ's death was a propitiation for our sins, and that that sacrifice did appease the wrath of God:

Romans 3:25 - "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

1John 2:2 - "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

1John 4:10 - " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Romans 5:9 - "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

So then, how could a sacrifice that was sufficient for all, not save all? It must save all if it is sufficient for all. Else, it is INsufficient, unless words no longer mean what the dictionary says they mean. Someone commenting on an article about this matter summed up the atonement of Christ much more accurately than these "sufficient for all" theologians when he said:

"The atonement is only sufficient and efficient for the elect. It is sufficient to do exactly what God designed it to do - that is - atone for all the sins of the elect."

[source: <http://expositorythoughts.wordpress.com/2007/04/12/limited-atonement-sufficient-for-all-efficient-for-the-elect/>]

Now looking at Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45:

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

we see that Christ was a ransom for many - not a ransom for ALL. And what is a ransom, if not a payment, and if a payment **for all**, then where is the sin debt? Is it not gone and all are pardoned, none condemned? But Christ told us that hell would be quite full [Matthew 7:13].

Jim Ellis makes a good point about the scope of Christ's atonement when he rebuts the premise that:

*"since Christ in His person is divine and infinite, so must be His work on the cross; therefore His death is sufficient for all." by saying "It is a non sequitur [a statement containing an illogical conclusion] to move from the deity of the sacrifice to the sufficiency for every individual person. **Such a conclusion assumes that the Deity can perform nothing by measure.** In His feeding of the five thousand, Jesus multiplied the loaves by a divine act. Yet all the loaves in the world were not multiplied, only the ones He handled and blessed for the five thousand. Again, it was a divine act (and thus infinite) that raised Lazarus from the grave. Yet this was limited to Lazarus. To say that the raising of Lazarus was sufficient for all but efficient for Lazarus makes little sense if any. It is obvious that Christ had the power to raise whomever He chose. The fact is He chose to raise only Lazarus, and His divine actions were limited to that". [source: <http://www.the-highway.com/sufficiency.html>]*

SEE ALSO:

Sufficient For All - by Jim Ellis