



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, Revelation 5:1-14

"The Work of Christ as Priest: The Design of the Atonement"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee again and ask Thy blessing upon us as we study in the Scriptures. Give us guidance and direction. May our words be words that flow from Thee through the Holy Spirit and through the human messenger. May, Lord, our meditations and our comments be in accordance with Thy mind and Thy will. And we pray for each one present that there may be responsiveness to the word of God and openness to it as well. Enable us to understand the difficult things as well as the simple things. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We are in the third of the series on "The Work of Christ as Priest" and we have in the study several weeks ago, discussed the necessity of the atonement and we related that to the holiness of God and also to Satan. We then spoke for a while on the subject of the nature of the atonement and pointed out that it was a federal atonement. That is, our Lord acted as representative. We also pointed out or tried to point out that it was a sacrificial atonement that the Lord Jesus Christ rendered by virtue of his death a penal satisfaction to the Father. It was a substitutionary work so all of these things are parts of the nature of the atonement.

Well, it's reasonable that we should tonight speak about, "The Design of the Atonement" and this will be the third and final one in our series on "The Work of Christ as Priest." We're turning for our Scripture tonight to Revelation chapter 5. And so if you have your Bibles, I wish you would turn to that chapter and we'll read through the chapter. Later on, we shall refer to one particular section of it in more detail; Revelation chapter 5 and verse 1. This is part of the vision which, in a sense, governs the unfolding of the judgments of the Book of Revelation,

"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll, and to loose its seals?' And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the scroll, neither to look on it. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look on it. And one of the elders saith unto me, 'Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the scroll, and to loose its seven seals'. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood men out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made them unto our God a kingdom of priests: and they shall reign on the earth. (Now you'll notice that as I read that I made some changes in the text of verses 9 and 10 of chapter 5 here and they are true to the original text. Now if you have a New American

Standard Bible, you probably didn't notice any change at all. The change I made in the Authorized Version text. Verse 11,) And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the numbers of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing'. And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, 'Amen'. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Our subject tonight is, "The Design of the Atonement." My interest in this particularly emotional issue goes back to nineteen hundred and fifty-eight in the spring when I was asked to teach a course in New Testament Soteriology in Dallas Theological Seminary. In Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer's Systematic Theology, there is a chapter in the section on Soteriology entitled, "For Whom Did Christ Die?" And it was this that aroused my interest in this particular topic. Because as I gave the students outside reading in other theologies that particular spring, I discovered from extensive reading on my own part that when I had gone through seminary the alternatives were not particularly stressed in our classes. And, in fact, I think it was true to say that they were not stressed really at all. And if a person came to understand the alternatives to the universal redemptionist viewpoint, it was simply because he did some reading on his own. And I had been teaching New Testament exegesis of the Greek text for about ten years and in most of the key verses, some of which we'll look at tonight, I had interpreted them always in accordance with the Arminian viewpoint not really realizing that my views were as Arminian as they were.

I used to speak of myself as Calvinistic, but at the same time, my views on this subject were not. Well, at any rate, that began my interest in the study of the design of the atonement and for about ten years off and on, I spent time on this particular topic. It's a very emotional topic. A lot of people immediately are disturbed if you were to say to them, "I believe that Christ died for the elect." They're very much upset. They have many conceptions of what that may do to biblical doctrine, to Christian work, to the Christian life. They often have never studied the issue out for themselves, but they've listened to others who have given them objections to the doctrine.

Well, I know that that is true because that was my own viewpoint for a long, long time. This is a serious question and it touches several important theological doctrines. It touches the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, because if we believe that God is sovereign and that Jesus Christ was sent by this God to die for all men, and if we were willing to grant that it's obvious that all men are not saved, then some how or other, the purpose of God has been frustrated.

Now generally speaking, it is traceable to the unbelief of man. And so you can see that this doctrine touches the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. What we really have, if we believe that Christ died for all men, that is, with the design of saving all men, and yet all men are not saved, then we do have a frustrated deity. Not only that, this doctrine is important for the substitutionary atonement and the savability so called of man. If it is true that Jesus Christ really was a substitute for men, if he bore their legal judgment, then if he has born that judgment, how is it possible for man to suffer again for the penalty which Jesus Christ has paid? And it is the doctrine of those who believe in universal redemption that it is possible for men to suffer for the penalty to be executed twice; once on the substitute and then once on the unbelieving individual.

Was Toplady right when he said, "Payment God cannot twice demand, first from my bleeding Surety's hand, and then again from mine"? On what basis is heaven able to execute a legal judgment upon an individual for whom Jesus Christ has already paid the

penalty? So you can see that this touches the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement.

What does substitution really mean?

Now it is the contention of the Arminians that Jesus Christ rendered men savable by his atonement. But that raises the question, you see, of was it a substitutionary atonement? Did he really bear our judgment? It raises another question too, and it has to do with Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the doctrine of interpretation.

Now if we are justified in adding the term "possibility" to the saving work of Christ or the word "conditionality," for example, if we are able to say that Jesus Christ died in order to make it possible for all men to be saved, then we are adding to the express statements of Scripture. As I shall say later on again, because I'll forget that I've said it right now, there is no place in the New Testament at all that says that the atoning work of Jesus Christ is a conditional work. The term "possible" or "savable" is never used with reference to the death of Christ. So what justifies us in adding this to the express statements that Jesus Christ died for our sins?

That raises the question of how we interpret the Bible. Are we justified in adding these words to the statements of holy Scripture? In other words, the faith of man is supposed to secure what Christ could not secure in his death. I have a good friend who wrote me a letter about this. He's a missionary in Tunisia. He said, "That's a gross idea that man by his faith is able to secure salvation, which Jesus Christ was unable to secure by his death on the cross."

Now this is a serious difference of opinion, but I don't want to mislead you. It is an important difference of opinion, but it's not the most important theological doctrine that there is. Edward John Carnell, who's now in heaven said, "It's better to be divided by truth than united by error." And so, we want to stand up for what the Bible teaches. We don't want to deny the significance of the definite atonement of Jesus Christ. Now we want to, we're willing to be divided by truth rather than being united by error. So we'll not say that this is unimportant. But it's not the most important doctrine and there are

some things about it that I think levelheaded Arminians and levelheaded Calvinists will both admit are difficult of full explanation.

Charles Wesley, who was an Arminian himself, in this respect, said, "'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies: Who can explore his strange design?" Well, I think we can explore it a little more than Mr. Wesley thought that we could explore it, but there is a sense in which there are some things about it that we may not fully be able to understand. You may bring up some text that will stump me (for a while [laughter]) and there are some of them puzzle me still about not so far as the ultimate meaning of the text or the doctrine, but the best explanation of them. One thing I think we can say without any dispute and that is that the great Reformed creeds all agree in the doctrine of the particular redemption or definite atonement of Jesus Christ.

This is what the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches. It is what the Canons of the Synod of Dordt teach. They do not differ one from another and it's what the Belgic Confession teaches. It's what the Heidelberg Confession teaches. In other words, there is a great agreement on the part of a large body of Christianity that this is the teaching of the Bible.

Now we don't have a whole lot of time tonight, so we're going to have to go rather rapidly and what I would like to do now is to discuss the nature of the question so that we understand what really is at issue. Many questions about this subject are answered right here if we understand what the question is. Let me first state the Arminian view and then the Calvinistic view and then we will talk about the point at issue for a moment.

The Arminian view is that Jesus Christ died to save all men indifferently on the condition of faith. He died to save all men indifferently on the condition of faith so that man's destiny hangs on the use of the grace that God gives to him. For most Wesleyan Arminians it is cooperation with the sufficient grace of God. But Christ died to save all men indifferently on the condition of faith.

The Calvinistic view is different. The Calvinistic view is that God sent Jesus Christ and he died in order to save the elect and in his death he secured the means as well as the atonement when he died; the means of appropriation. In other words, he died to save the elect. He paid their penalty and he also secured by the death that he died, the gift of faith, which would be given according to the will of the Holy Spirit in God's own time. So that the death of Jesus Christ saves in that it is the payment, legal payment, of all that that individual owes to the Lord God's holiness and justice and also there is secured for him faith, the means of the appropriation of the benefits of the death of Christ.

Now what is the point at issue? This is capital "C" in the outline: "The Point at Issue." Well, I think that we can put it in two ways. First, negatively and then positively, and I want you to be sure and get this. What we are saying about this particular doctrine, the definite atonement or particular redemption, may be put in this way. The issue is not negatively the sufficiency of the atonement of Jesus Christ. All Calvinists believe that Jesus Christ's death is sufficient in value to save every single human soul. It is of infinite value. No Calvinist denies the sufficiency of the death of Jesus Christ.

It does not relate to the application of the atonement of Jesus Christ in the sense that it affects the number of people who will be in heaven. Now Arminians like to make a parade of the liberality of their doctrine. They say, "Christ died for all men" as over against the Calvinists, "Christ died for the elect", but if you ask a Bible student among the Arminians, "Whose going to be in heaven?" Well, he will say, "Well, the elect are going to be in heaven" and if you ask the Calvinists, "Who is going to be in heaven?" the Calvinist will say, "The elect are going to be in heaven." So though they may parade the liberality of their view that Christ died for all, their view does not in any way mean that one single person more is going to be in heaven than the Calvinists with their own particular doctrine.

So the issue does not relate to the sufficiency of the atonement. It does not relate to the application of the atonement. Even the Arminians admit the atonement is

ultimately received only by the elect. It does not relate to the universal offer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All Calvinists believe that the gospel is to be preached to all and so they preach the gospel to all. The fact that we believe that Christ died for the elect does not mean that we do not preach a universal offer through gospel preaching.

It does not mean that there are not some benefits of the death of Christ that extend to all men. For example, the Lord Jesus by his death purchased common grace. There are certain benefits that all men enjoy by virtue of the coming of the Redeemer. In that sense, it could be said that Christ died for all. But that is not the sense that people mean when they say, "Christ died for all." They mean, "He died to save all."

Positively, the point at issue is, "Did Jesus Christ die to make salvation possible for all or did he die to save the elect?" Let me repeat it so you'll understand exactly the point at issue. "Did Jesus Christ die to make salvation possible for all or did he die to save the elect?" In other words, the design of the atonement is the point at issue. It's not whether Christ's death is sufficient for all. It's not whether the atonement shall be applied to all. It doesn't have anything to do with the universal preaching of the gospel. It does not have to do with the fact that some benefits are for all men. It has to do with this primary issue, "Did Jesus Christ die to make salvation possible for all or to save some?"

Now let's begin by discussing some of the problems of the Calvinistic view and for the sake of a heading, capital "A": "Philological." Now that's not really too good a heading, but it's the only thing that I could think of in a few moments. I want to say this right as begin some of these problems, I have not discussed all of the problems, but I think I've picked out those that are most often lodged against the Calvinistic view. The fact that we don't have but five or ten minutes to discuss this means, of course, we have to be very selective, but I've tried to hit upon those that cause people the most difficulty and also those that the Arminian thinks are his best arguments.

Now we do not deny that Jesus Christ died for all in some senses. We deny, however, we Calvinists, that he died for all equally and with the same design. We don't

believe that he died to save all. But now what about those texts in the Bible that say in effect, "He died for all" or "He tasted death for every man"? Texts like that. Well now, I say in only twenty-five or thirty minutes, it's impossible to look up texts and I just suggest that you do this for yourself. And also, if you have time, I suggest that you read John Owens book, *The Death of Death* or look up in his 10th volume of his works, the section on "all", and "every", and "world", and check the meaning of this particular expression.

If you want to, to do it on your own, take your concordance and look up "all", and look up "every", and look up "world" in connection with atoning statements and see what those words mean. If you'll look up the term "all", you will find that in the New Testament it sometimes means all of all sorts of men. Jesus Christ is Lord of all, Lord of all sorts of men.

It also sometimes means all of some sorts of men. In Romans chapter 5 and verse 18, where he speaks about all men being justified, it's obvious that he doesn't mean everybody is justified without exception. Because there are men, Paul will tell us that are going to be lost. But it does mean all of some sort. That is, believers in Christ.

Then occasionally it means some of all sorts of men. Mark chapter 11, verse 32, Romans chapter 11, verse 32 is an interesting text to look at as well. So the term "all" has different meanings dependent upon the context in which it is found. In Hebrews chapter 2, for example, it says, "Christ tasted death for every man." But then when one studies the context, you will see that in verse 16, just after he said this above, the text says, "That he came to lay hold upon the seed of Abraham." So the every man is not every man without exception, but rather as a reference to all of the seed of Abraham, so one must look at the context.

Another word over which there has been a great deal of discussion is the word "world." And again, I suggest you take a concordance and look up the term "world." You'll be surprised at the worlds of difference that this "world" has in meaning in the New Testament. For example, sometimes it means "the world of believers." In John chapter 6

and verse 33 in the chapter on the bread of life, we read, "For the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." Well, it's obvious he did not give life to every single individual in the world. But he does give life to all kinds of men in the world, Jews and Gentiles. So the world sometimes has meaning the world of believers.

Occasionally it means the world of nonbelievers. In John chapter 14, verse 17 and John chapter 17, verse 9, it's clear that the term "world" is the world of nonbelievers in those contexts. He says that he's going to give them the Holy Spirit which the world cannot receive. That's the world of nonbelievers. The Lord Jesus said, "I do not pray for the world. I pray for you, the world of nonbelievers."

And then also it refers to the non-Jewish world. For example, in John chapter 4, where it is stated that salvation is of the Jews, he then goes on to speak about what he's going to do and he's called at the end of the chapter "the Savior of the world." Well, now that in the context means he's not only the Savior of Jews, but he's the Savior of Gentiles. So the term "world" is a term that refers to the non-Jewish world. So what I'm suggesting to you is that you must look at the context and in the light of the context determine the meaning.

Let's take a look at some of the exegetical texts that have been suggested. 1 John chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. This is a text, incidentally, that Mr. Sam Storms has written a paper on, which is a very good paper, and I suggest that you get it and read it, because this is a text that is often thrown up to Calvinists as teaching that Christ died to save all. Chapter 2, verse 1 of 1 John reads this way, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Arminians like to point at this. It's one of their favorite cannons which they like to train on Calvinists and blow them out of the country if they possibly can. But they have

their own particular interpretation of this verse and they've never bothered to study it very carefully, in my opinion. When John speaks here and says, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world", he's talking about the ethnically universal character of the gospel. He's writing primarily for Jewish believers and he says that "He's the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also the sins of the whole world"; comprehending Gentiles and also Gentiles in other locales than the present locale of his readers.

Let me give you an example of the exegesis of an Arminian whose book is regarded very highly by some Arminians and some even in this particular city who say that they are mild Calvinists. Norman Douty has written a little book on the death of Christ and the atonement and he says that we are to read this text something like this, "And he is the propitiation for our sins (believer's sins): and not for ours only, but he is also the potential propitiation for the sins of the whole world." In other words, he is the propitiation for our sins, which means he's the actual propitiation for our sins. But we're also told by Mr. Douty that he's the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. But that propitiation is not actual; that one's potential. So here in this very verse, he's given that word two different senses. He is the propitiation for our sins, really actually is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours also, but for the sins of the whole world. Now Mr. Douty wouldn't say that that is actual propitiation because he would fall into the trap of universalism and he knows it himself. So in order to escape the Calvinistic view, he says we must add the word "potential" or "provisional." So he is the potential propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

Now that's not very good exegesis to take the word in two senses right here in this one verse. It's much better, you see, to recognize the fact that the term "world" has different senses in the New Testament, easily substantiated by looking up those terms. And to take it in its plain sense, he is the propitiation for our sins and he is the

propitiation for the sins of the whole world. That is, believers who are in the whole world who are not Jews, but Gentiles.

John 3:16, I'm not going to say much about John 3:16, because Dr. Gerstner was here just the other night and he spoke about this text, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Warfield has an excellent sermon on this text in which he points out that what the Lord Jesus or John the Apostle, depending upon who really spoke that verse, we're not sure from that third chapter, that what they have in mind is the greatness of the love of God; but not the greatness of the love of God quantitatively, the greatness of the love of God qualitatively. That is, the love of God was so great that he even loved such an object as the world, which was so opposed to the teaching, so opposed to the truth of God. For God so loved the world. It's not so much that his love was so big as to encompass all the world, but it was so intensive as to encompass a bad, evil, wicked world.

That's what Professor Warfield says this text means and that has a great deal of appeal to me. On the other hand, Dr. Gerstner explained it rather simply and I think there's a lot to be said for his explanation. He says, simply if you look at that text, all you'll see that it says is that Christ is given by the Father for believers, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life." Christ died for all believers in the world and that's all the text says. That's very simple and it satisfies all of the needs of John 3:16. As far as I'm concerned, it's an excellent interpretation of the passage. There is no reason whatsoever to say from that text that Jesus Christ came to die in order to save the whole world.

In fact, that is denied in the context that follows because in John chapter 3 and verse 17 we read, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." But now let's look at that for a moment,

"that the world might be saved." Well now, if that means that he did come to save the world, he did not secure the results of his death, did he? And thus we have a frustrated deity. It's clear from verse 17 that that is not to be interpreted as saving everybody in the world, but rather, saving elect believers who are in the world.

Now there is another text that is often pointed to by proponents of Arminianism and its 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 1. Let me look at that for just a moment. You're probably familiar with that passage. It's often thrown into the teeth of sweet little Calvinists by these big bad Arminian wolves and sometimes they don't get the kind of answer that they ought to get either. Here we read. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

Now notice the clause "denying the Lord that bought them." Well, the context says these men are false teachers. They're not believers. How then can it be said that they are bought by the Lord Jesus Christ? Does not that plainly say that Jesus Christ died for unbelievers as well as the elect? Did he not come then to save all since they deny the Lord that bought them?

It was interesting the other night when this young man sitting over here, first year student at the seminary, was asking Dr. Gerstner some questions. And Dr. Gerstner put his finger on his real difficulty was that he didn't believe in the depravity of the lost. And that was very, very true and afterwards he came over and stood over here, and you know, I was very pleased, I must say this. When that young man got up and the meeting was over, he really ran into a buzz saw [Laughter] and I was very pleased because it showed me that the people in the Chapel are listening. Some of them are listening and they are getting things.

And so they stood around and asked him questions and he could not answer. He was unable to answer them. And I got in it too, to have a little fun as well, and I asked

him about this passage in 2 Peter. I said, "By the way, have you ever looked at that word that is translated "bought" in the Greek text?" Well, I maybe tell you, I didn't know what year he was at the seminary, but I suspected he was from the seminary and it turned out he had not. So I cannot blame him for what he was saying because he hasn't done sufficient study of it yet.

But this word, which is translated "bought" is a word that is found about six times in the New Testament in atonement contexts. Usually it has a price listed. When you say "bought", it's bought with a price. Remember those occurrences in 1 Corinthians, "You were bought with a price", it's this same word. This is the only place where no price is mentioned so there may be something important about that. I don't have time to go into it and discuss the details tonight. But what I want to point out is this, that word wherever it is found in the New Testament in atonement contexts refers to an effective purchase. That is, a purchase that results in which the purpose of the purchase is realized. In other words, if these men were bought, they were redeemed. It's not a case of potentiality or provisionality; it's a case of actuality, effectual purchase.

And I usually start right here because my friends think they've won the battle and I like to just point out right at the beginning, "Well, now evidently you believe that you can lose your salvation because these men were bought and that word always refers to an effective purchase. So evidently you think that they're false teachers now, they were bought and redeemed but now they're lost." Well, most of the men who contend with me, believe in the security of the believer, so they don't like that and they usually drop the argument at that point, because they usually have not looked at that particular aspect of the text.

The text, really you see, is not their text. It's our text always. The texts of the Bible support the Calvinistic viewpoint. The standard interpretation given by most students of Calvinism in response to this Arminian objection is to affirm that Peter is speaking in Christian charity. That is, what he really means by this is they deny the Lord

that they, the false teachers say bought them, but he did not really buy them. In other words, he takes them at their own word.

Some wonder, is that a biblical principle? Do you find that? Yes, you find it in the Old Testament; you also find it in the New. Let me just give you one illustration because you'll all know the text, the Lord Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Who are the righteous? Who are they? There are no righteous men. But our Lord said, "He did not come to save the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance." There are no righteous people, but he was taking them at their profession or according to the opinion of men.

Now it is possible to understand the text in that way and Wardlaw, Ralph Wardlaw, a theologian of relatively high regard, who was not a Calvinist, said that's a perfectly good interpretation of this passage. He wrote a three volume systematic theology, which Dr. Chafer of the seminary loved and quoted from often in his own systematic theology.

Now it is possibly to understand it that way and it's possible also to understand it as all men have been bought by the Lord Jesus in the sense that when he died on the cross, he gained absolute rights over the whole of the creation both the animate and the inanimate creation. And that will ultimately be brought to fruition in the kingdom of God upon the earth and finally the eternal state. In that sense, all men are bought not redeemed. He did not come to save them spiritually, but they are bought. They belong to him; they are part of his property to do with as he pleases. Some he will save, some he will send, of course, to eternal perdition.

There is a theological objection often raised against the doctrine that Jesus Christ came to die with the design of dying for the elect and it's that this will kill evangelistic fervor. Now that's an amazing objection. It has no support whatsoever in fact. Listen to the theologians who believe in this particular doctrine, the doctrine of definite atonement: Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, William G. T. Shedd, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, Louis

Berkhof, James Packer, modern contemporary theologians, John Murray, these are some of the great theologians of the last century.

Among the Bible teachers and preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Arthur W. Pink, I should have put John Bunyan first because Bunyan lived before them, Joel Nederhood of the Christian Reformed Hour, which many of you used to hear in Dallas at 8:00 o'clock on Sunday, Donald Ray Barnhouse, James Montgomery Boice, one of the leading preachers today as well, Edwin Palmer who edited the New International Version, the thing that you hold in your hand, Francis Schaeffer.

These are just some of the individuals who hold to this particular viewpoint. It's not something that just a few weirdoes [laughter] or whackos believe. It is, in my opinion, the wisest strain of biblical theologians and preachers have held to this viewpoint. Even Dr. Chafer wrote a review of Henry Meeter's, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*, in which this was set forth in *Bibliotheca Sacra* and said these words, "There is little feel for controversy left as to the biblical character of Calvinism. It may be assumed that Bible expositors almost without exception are Calvinists. This volume is commended as a real contribution to this great theme. Meeter's book is standard Calvinism. That's all."

Now as far as the support of the Calvinistic view is concerned, let me just briefly in a moment or two run down a few points that are, I think, significant. Looking at our passage in Revelation chapter 5, verses 9 and 10 for just a moment, what I want you to notice about this, let me read it again, "They sang a new song, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood men of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made them unto our God a kingdom of priests.'" What I want you to notice are two things. First of all, that he says here, that he has redeemed men to God "by Thy blood out of every kindred, tongue, and people, and nation.

Now that is a partitive construction. What's the point of saying he has redeemed men out of every tongue, people, and nation if he has redeemed all men of every tongue,

people, and nation? How can you say he has redeemed men out of them? What's the point of saying he has redeemed men out of it if he has redeemed all, every tongue, people, and nation? It is obvious that John here speaks from the standpoint of a particular redemption.

Furthermore, the redemption is a redemption that is effective. Everyone who is redeemed becomes a priest of God. He has redeemed to God by his blood men from every kindred, tongue, and people, and nation; and he has made them a kingdom of priests so that the redemption is an effective redemption. Every redeeming work of Jesus Christ is effective in the Bible. The idea of provisional or conditional or possible redemption is never spoken of in the New Testament at all. It is an effective redemption.

Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5; 2 Corinthians chapter 5. The apostle in verses 14 and 15 and verse 19 says this, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died." Now notice the substitution, "one died for all"; therefore it's not all possibly died; all did die. If the "all" refers to all men then everybody died. But not only that, "And that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." So not only do those for whom he died die, but they also live in resurrection. The atoning work of Jesus Christ is an effective work. The idea of being potential redemption, provisional, possibility, savability, these ideas are not found in the Bible at all. Notice verse 19, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Now if their trespasses were not imputed to them, they don't have any guilt before God, but it says the world.

Now if that's so then the Bible teaches universalism, but we know that's not so. We know the Bible does not teach universalism so the world here is obviously a reference to the elect who come from both Jew and Gentile from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation. He did not impute their trespasses unto them. Romans chapter 8 and verse 32, I'll just save what I was going to say about Romans 3 for Sunday in the message there, but in

Romans chapter 8 and verse 32, we have a text that I do not see how anyone can possibly explain except one who believes in particular redemption. Paul says, "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?"

Notice the scope of the sacrifice is the same as that of all things. 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?" If in order for a man to be saved he needs the atoning work of Christ, plus the work of the Holy Spirit in irresistible grace, how can it ever be said that he died for all men, but withheld irresistible grace and gave that only to the elect in the light of this text? "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?" If he gave us the greatest gift, Paul's argument is he will surely give us everything else. So how can you say he died for all, but he only gives irresistible grace to some, the elect?

When he says here, "He died for all", how shall he not with him give us everything? Don't you see it is absolutely demanded that all the rest of the blessings be given with the atonement which has been given for us. You cannot answer that. There is no answer for that. I've never known anyone to answer that text. If you find one, bring him to me, I'd like to see him. I'll put a crown on his head and say, "You have explained one verse that no one else has able to explain."

Now I know I've gone a few minutes over time. Let me just say what I had in mind here with this last part here. I may say a word about it next week, but here we have what I'm saying here is there are some theological reasons why definite atonement is biblical. First place, the nature of substitution, we've said it is a word that has to do with effective atonement; the word potential never found in the New Testament.

The Arminians actually limit the atonement. They're the ones who limit the atonement. They limit the efficacy of the atonement. They say, "He died for all men, but

all are not saved.” So the atonement they preach is a limited atonement in its efficacy. It is not able to save all because man frustrates the work of God.

The sovereignty of God is itself an argument for definite atonement, because we cannot have a frustrated deity when the Bible tells us that he accomplishes his will thoroughly in this universe. Many texts say that. What we would have if we had the Arminian doctrine is the Father would be electing some people, the Holy Spirit applying salvation to that same group of people, but Christ dying for all. We'd have the Father and the Spirit working toward one purpose and the Son working toward another. We would have confusion in the Godhead.

And finally, I was sitting at my desk about six months ago thinking about this, thinking up good arguments for my Arminian friends, and I thought of this argument. I'll just leave it with you. If it is God's will for all men to be saved as the Arminians say, as that young man said when he cited 2 Peter 3:9, incidentally, I'll explain that text next time, I was going to explain it tonight, but I don't have time. If it's God's will for all men to be saved then when we pray for all men, we would pray in God's will would we not?

Now does not the Bible teach that he answers prayer that is made in accordance with his will? Well, then why are not all men saved? You get it? All men are not saved because it's not his will that all men be saved. Jesus Christ came to die with the design of atoning for his elect. He secured their salvation and he secured the means by which that salvation would become theirs. We'll have to stop here. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this great topic. We pray that Thou wilt give us love for those who differ with us, but help us, Lord, to stand for that which we feel the Bible teaches...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]

“The Work of Christ as Priest: the Design of the Atonement” by S. Lewis Johnson
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