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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Suffering Savior

"The Design of the Atonement: For Whom Did Christ Die? – IV"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we again turn Thee with thanksgiving for the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the light that they give to us. We also thank Thee for the difficult sections that require us to think upon Thy word. We pray that Thou will guide us and direct us. Enable us to understand.

We pray particularly concerning the very difficult subject that we are attempting to think through, that Thou will deliver us from the pit falls. Enable us to hue to that which is scriptural and honoring to Thee. We thank Thee for Jesus Christ and his death for us, and we praise Thee for the sufficiency of the atonement, for the redemption that we ourselves possess. And we desire, Lord, to honor him and glorify his saving work. So we commit this hour to Thee and pray that it may accomplish that purpose. For we ask it in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Now, our subject is, "The Design of the Atonement: For Whom Did Christ Die?" And this is really the fourth in our series on this particular topic, and what I would like to do again is review for a few minutes what we have been discussing, and then conclude our section on the history of the question and launch into our discussion of the answers both scriptural and theological for the problem, for whom did Christ die? The

question before us, remember is, did Jesus Christ die for the purpose of saving all men indiscriminately or for the purpose of saving his elect seed personally and definitely.

You remember in Isaiah chapter 53 in verse 10, in the great servant of Jehovah passage which we have looked at a few months back, reference is made that the Messiah shall see his seed, a reference to the fact that he would accomplish his saving work and that he would be successful in doing it. So, the question is did Christ die for the purpose of saving all men indiscriminately or for the purpose of saving his elect seed personally and definitely. Did Christ die with the intention of saving all or did he die with the intention of saving the elect.

Now, we have stressed the importance of understanding the true issue between the parties of the dispute. We have said that this question does not relate first, the sufficiency of the satisfaction of Christ for all men. Calvinists, who believe that Jesus Christ died for his elect seed, also believe that Jesus Christ's atonement was sufficient in value and merit to save all men. As a matter of fact, they think it was sufficient in value to save all men, and even the angels if that had been the intention of God. And second, the issue does not relate to the applicability of this satisfaction to man's need. In other words, those who believe in a definite atonement believe that what Jesus Christ did on the cross is applicable to every man's need. That satisfaction, which he rendered when he shed his blood, is applicable to the needs of every man. It is not suited only for the elect and not for the non-elect. It is suitable for all. And third, the issue does not relate to the actual application of this satisfaction.

Now, when we say application of the satisfaction we mean the application of the benefits of the death of Christ to individuals in the sense of bringing them to the place where they appropriate it for themselves. The actual application of the satisfaction is not in view. Universal atonement preachers with all their parade of its superior liberality admit that it fails to extend the benefits of atonement to one single soul beyond those embraced by a definite atonement. So, if I were having a discussion with my friend, and

he were to say to me, "Do you believe in definite atonement?" And if I were to say, "Yes, I believe in a definite atonement." He might then say, "You mean you think that Jesus Christ died for the elect alone?" And if he should reply, "I do." Then he might say to me, "Well, my atonement is a much wider, broader atonement than yours, because according to my atonement Jesus Christ died for all men."

Now, I'm saying that the issue does not pertain to the actual application of satisfaction, because I would immediately reply to him, "Then are all men saved?" And he would say, if he was anywhere near sound in the faith, of course if he was a total Arminian or if he was totally ignorant, then we cannot have an intelligent discussion at all. But if he is a thinking universal redemption or believes in the universal atonement he would say, "No, my atonement does not save all. It was simply for all, but only the elect believe." Then I would say, "Your atonement does not save any more people than mine does. As a matter of fact, my atonement secures the salvation of the elect. Your salvation which you say is intended for all, does nothing more than secure the salvation of the elect. So with all your parade of liberality, it's not any more liberal at all. You don't even get one more person into heaven by your atonement than I do by simply saying, by my atonement Christ died for the elect." So, the more liberal atonement conveys no advantage to the perishing.

The question at issue, the intention, the design of the atonement does not touch the actual application of those benefits; under either view the same people are saved. Then fourth, I said that the issue does not relate to the universal offer, in good faith, of salvation. Both believers in these systems of atonement believe that the gospel should go to all. Now, it's fair for me to say I don't think that you give your offer in good faith, and he is certainly justified in saying to me, "You say you believe that all men should be offered the atonement, but you really cannot do it in good faith." That is a legitimate criticism, and I'm going to deal with that later on, that criticism of definite atonement. But as far as the beliefs are concerned those who believe in definite atonement, believe in the

universal preaching of the gospel. Those who believe in an indefinite, or universal, atonement also believe in a universal preaching of the gospel. And fifth, the issue does not relate to the provision in Christ's death for benefits for all men. That is, the man who believes that Jesus Christ died for the elect also believes that there are benefits which extend to all men beyond the benefit of salvation. There are many other benefits. God's long suffering, which allows him to live here upon the earth, the blessings of common grace, the blessings of this earth upon which we live, blessing of rain, the blessings of sunshine, the blessings of prosperity; all of these things are benefits of God's common grace. So, it is true to say that through Jesus Christ's death certain benefits do apply to all men.

The issue does relate to this question, the intention of the Godhead in the saving work. What is the divine design? That is the issue. Did he die to make the salvation of all men possible and nothing more, or did he die to certainly and actually save through faith his elect people? That is the question. That is, does he die to save those he does save? Does he die to save those he does save or does he die to save some he doesn't save as well? Can I put it that way? Does he die to save those he does save or does he die to save those he does save plus others that he doesn't save? Is that unfair? I don't think so.

Well, we have largely concluded the history of the problem, discussing the solutions of Arminianism with its universal atonement, and Amyraldians or Calvinists with Hypothetical universal atonement. We talked last time about the Hypothetical Universalists who are Calvinists who believe that God had two wills or purposes regarding man's salvation. One will was to provide, through the cross, salvation for every individual, if they believe, but since its foreknown that this is universally and certainly impossible, man's sin making it so, God has a second will, and that is an absolute purpose depending solely upon his sovereign purpose to secure the salvation of a definite number

giving them all the gifts and graces to that end. Thus what we have is a synthesis of real a particularism with a merely ideal Universalism.

And this is quite commonly called four point Calvinism, Hypothetical Universalism. Jesus Christ died for all, but since it is foreknown that men will not believe unless God gives grace to believe because men are depraved, God has a second will, the will to save the elect through the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit. And we talked a little about that, how it was related to a man named Amyraldus or Moses Amyraut, his French name, and that is called Amyraldianism. I suggested at the conclusion of the hour, I think, that this is quite inconsistent as a position because God is represented as loving the non-elect enough to give his son to die for them, but not enough to give the Holy Spirit to bring them to faith in Christ. So, it has within it a contradiction that so far as I know, no one has ever been able to handle.

Now, we were just about at the end of our discussion. We were actually discussing the School of Saumur, and I want to say a few words now about the Marrow Men and one word about Ralph Wardlaw and some others before we launch into our discussion of the scriptural and theological side of this issue, the Marrow Men. A famous work, called *Marrow of Modern Divinity* was published in England in 1646. That is three hundred years ago. It was the work of unusual significance. It was published in Scotland in 1718 with a recommendation by a man named James Hogg. And I don't know whether the Hogs of Texas are descendants of this Hogg or not, but I have a good idea that they are. He was a biblical man, then in 1726 this book again, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, was issued with copious notes by Thomas Boston, another Scot.

Thomas Boston was one of the greatest theologians of his day. It became the occasion, this book, of a protracted controversy in the Church of Scotland. And it concerned the free offer of the gospel. The Marrow Men were Calvinists, they believed in a definite atonement, but they contented that while Christ did not die for all, nevertheless, to use their terminology, he was dead for all. That is, he was available for all if received.

They said the Father had made a deed of gift of Christ and of the benefits of his redemption to all men indifferently to be claimed upon the condition of faith. And they styled this general love of God as giving love, as distinguished from his electing love and his complacent love for the justified and sanctified. And this deed was the foundation upon which the general offer of the gospel rests. They said that we are able to preach the gospel to all, because God has made a general grant of love by which men may be saved if they believe.

Now, therefore they taught, the Marrow Men, a free offer of the gospel. They taught also a particular offer of the gospel. They said that it was possible for us to say, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, in verse 20, I'll just go ahead and cite it. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And on the basis of this grant, this deed, it was possible for us to say to individuals, "Be ye reconciled." They taught it was a real and sincere offer. They taught also that it was a commanding offer that is that God commanded men to repent. And further, that it was an urgent and solemn offer, and further it was man's only offer. So, the Marrow Men were, generally speaking, believers in definite atonement, but they also had this peculiar doctrine, it was peculiar, by which Christ, while he did not die for everyone, the fact that he did die has made available, salvation for all, if they claim it through faith.

So, other than this, they were very sound Calvinists. But the problem of their position eventually turned out to be this question of the giving love and the warrant of faith, which provided no provision for its application. So, again we come down to the same thing that we have in a four point kind of Calvinism. We have God providing something for men, but not providing the work of the Holy Spirit to apply it to individuals, so it became, again, a rather worthless kind of inconsistency. So, Jesus Christ died, not simply to remove legal obstacles out of the way of all sinners indifferently but to save his people from their sins through faith, the Calvinists insisted.

Ralph Wardlaw was a very well known theologian, and I just mention him, because he had a similar view, similar to the four point Calvinists of the School of Saumur, similar to the Marrow Men. And I mention him because Dr. Chafer, Louis Sperry Chafer, in his theology made a good deal of use of Ralph Wardlaw's systematic theology. And some time, if any of you are interested in theology, if you ever get to that stage where you are really interested, you ought to go over to Dallas Seminary and take out Wardlaw's theology and read it. It's an excellent theology. His position is essentially the position of the Hypothetical Universalists.

But now we want to turn tonight to the question, the theological and scriptural answers to the problem, and the one issue that I want to deal with tonight is one of the major issues, this is capita A, the universal offer demands a universal atonement. There are those who believe that if we offer the gospel to all men, then we must have a universal atonement. We cannot hold that Jesus Christ died for some and at the same time offer the gospel for all. So, you can see this is the argument for a universal atonement based upon the clear teaching of the Scripture that the gospel is to be preached to all.

Now, I frequently have people bring this objection to me immediately, if they hear that I'm even thinking about a Calvinistic interpretation of the New Testament. They will frequently say things to me like this. Number one, how can you preach the gospel? Or number two, how can you preach the gospel to everybody? Or number three, that we'll blot all missionary effort. Now, of course I always answer them very simply, by simply saying, since we don't have time to go into a long discussion of this issue, "The Bible says preach the gospel to every body." So, that's what I do, regardless of what I may understand about the intention of God in it. That's very clear. My commission is very plain. So, I must follow my commission, even though I may have some thoughts about God's purpose in doing it, he hasn't made his purpose as plain as he has made his commission. So, his commission is there, and I must obey. So, I must preach the gospel

to everybody. But I also say in connection with this, that I am justified in preaching the gospel to everybody, because the saving work of Jesus Christ is sufficient for all. And I also like to say that it does not hurt missionary effort at all, because I do not know who the elect are.

Now, if it were possible for me to know who the elect are, then I would be wasting my time in preaching to the non-elect. But unfortunately, I don't know. Now, I look at some of you in this audience, I would vote for your election. That is, if someone were to ask me, "Are you elect?" I would say, "I think they are. They wouldn't come to a theology class like this week after week if they weren't somewhat interested in spiritual things," because I'm not trying to tickle your fancy in any way. You have to think a little bit. So, I would say that perhaps you are, probably you are, but I don't really know whether you are among the elect or not. So, even if I should believe that Jesus Christ died for a very limited number, I don't believe that for one minute, I know that in the tribulation itself a "multitude shall come out of that which no man can number, of every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation." When we talk about election, we're not talking about the salvation of a few people. We're talking about the salvation of a multitude which no man can number, vast multitudes. And in fact, the whole world is going to be saved to use the language of the Apostle Paul. So, I don't know who they are, therefore my responsibility is to preach the gospel to everybody, regardless of how limited my idea of the atonement and its intention may be.

But now, we want to come to this question, and this is the nitty gritty of our problem. So, we're going to take the theological arguments first. The theological arguments that are against definite atonement, then we'll take the scriptural arguments against definite atonement. Now, these are somewhat intermingled and it's somewhat arbitrary for me to say this is a theological argument as over against this one being a biblical argument. But I am calling these at the beginning theological arguments. And capital A, the universal offer demands a universal atonement. If Christ did not die for all,

it is claimed, then the indiscriminant offer is an empty form, the offering of an atonement that has not been made. If Jesus Christ did not die for everybody, then when I preach the gospel to people, I'm just engaging in an empty form. I'm offering an atonement to people, an atonement which has not been made. "It has been occasionally said that the offer must be given with tongue and check and with some reservations." I am citing from another author. And finally it's claimed in this connection that such an atonement would therefore stultify gospel preaching.

In three respects a definite atonement is inconsistent with a free offer, it is said. First, if designed only for the elect, if the atonement is designed only for the elect, then God is inconsistent to offer it for all. That's first inconsistency. Second inconsistency, therefore there is no warrant for preachers, such as I am, to offer it. Third, there is no warrant for any man to rest upon an atonement intended for the elect unless he is certain that he is one of the elect. So, here are three inconsistencies, it is said, about this atonement, this limited kind of atonement.

Now, what shall we say to these things? Now, I'm going to take them up in a little different order. I want to take up the second one first, the warrant for preaching. Now, it is said there is no warrant for a preacher to offer a limited atonement, a definite atonement to all men. So, I want to answer that. I want to say that my warrant for offering the atonement is found in the great commission. As A.A. Hodge has said, "No matter what may be the nature of the design of the atonement, no servant has any right to go back of his commission and insist on understanding his master's secret purposes or aims." I do not have the right to ask that God explain to me all the reasons why he does things. The commission is the entire and all-sufficient warrant for the preaching of the gospel to all. And the Bible tells me preach the gospel to every creature. In the words of Matthew chapter 28, and verse 19, we read, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." There

is no question whatsoever that that commission is a commission to preach a universal gospel. So, I must follow the clear commission to preach the gospel to all.

Now, I want to answer the third, all of these are related, the third inconsistency, there is no warrant for any man to rest upon an atonement intended for the elect unless assured of his own election privately. Now, I want to say something about that. As for the claim that we must know the role of the elect before we trust, if we should see the Lamb's book of life and see our names there, do you think we would have more certainty of our salvation? Do you think if it were possible for God to let down the Lamb's book of life there would be a great scramble to get first look at it wouldn't there? [Laughter] I went to vote yesterday, and there were all these books with names in them. You should have seen how many Johnson's live in my little community. I can just imagine the people, and I don't think I would live long enough to find all the Johnson's that must be in the Lamb's book of life.

But anyway, if that book were let down, and you could see your name there in it, would you be more certain of everlasting life than you are when you read in the word of God, "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." Would you be more certain if you saw it in the Lamb's book of life? Would you be more certain if you saw it in the Lamb's book of life than if you saw written in the word of God, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Are you more certain? I'm not more certain. I don't have to see my name in the Lamb's book of life, if I have by the grace of God by the power of the Holy Spirit entrusted myself to Jesus Christ on the authority of the divine word of God that all who believe in him shall be saved. I cannot have any more assurance than that can I? The word of God plus the testimony of the Holy Spirit, what other assurance is there that I can have? Would sight of my name make me more certain? It wouldn't make me more certain. God has solemnly declared, whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely. He has also solemnly declared, "he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast

out." To demand any other warrant than that is not faith, but rationalism and rebellion. So, to say that there is no warrant in trusting a gospel message unless providing there are elect people, unless I know that I am one of the elect by some private information, is no objection for this preaching of the gospel as I understand it.

Now, as to God's inconsistency, coming back to number one; God is inconsistent to offer a salvation designed for the elect to all. As for God's inconsistency, let's ask the Arminian a question. I always think this is a good thing to do, let's accept your theories for a moment. Let me ask you a question. Suppose you are a person sitting in the audience, and you believe Christ died for all.

Now, we're going to be friendly in our discussion. We want to realize this is something within the family of God, and this issue, in my opinion, more of it has been made than should have been made. Because as I say, not one more person is going to get to heaven regardless of which one of these theories we hold. So, we should remember to hold it in perspective. So, let's just assume for a moment that you are an Arminian, and you believe in universal atonement. So, I want to ask you a little question. Is God's unconditional election and provision for the salvation of some any more inconsistent in your mind with a free offer? See we have the position of definite atonement. God unconditionally elects certain individuals, and provides for their salvation through the work of the spirit, and says that this should be preached to everybody. Is that any more inconsistent with a free offer than the Arminians admitted infallible foreknowledge of God?

Now, the Arminian says that Jesus Christ died for all men, but he also grants that God has infallible foreknowledge of who is owing to respond, and not one person can respond other than those that are infallibly foreknown to be responders. Now, is it any more inconsistent for me to preach my universal gospel knowing that God has elected some by his unconditional election and determined that they should be saved, is that more inconsistent than the other? I don't think it's more inconsistent. I could say to my

Arminian friend, "You say you believe in preaching the gospel to everybody?" "Yes." "Do you believe that only certain ones will respond?" "Yes." "Is it certain that they will respond?" "Yes. It's certain." "How is it certain?" "Why God has foreknown it." "Can God make a mistake?" "No." "Will someone believe whom God has not foreknown?" "No." "Will someone fail to believe that he thought was going to respond?" "No." "Well then, why preach a gospel to everybody when certain ones can possibly respond? The same certainty exists concerning the same people, and yet you say preach a gospel to everybody." If the other is inconsistent, I find that inconsistent too. How is that inconsistent with his supposed desire and labor to save all men alike to thus knowingly aggravate the condemnation of the majority he professes to desire to save by bringing them the gospel which brings them more judgment.

Now, let's ask our Calvinistic Universalist friend a question, because you may have been saying, I'm glad you embarrassed those Arminians because I don't believe what they believe. So I want to ask you a question if you are a Calvinistic Universalist. Now, all of this is in fun, you understand. I'm having the fun and you're not. [Laughter] But let's ask a question. Is the definite atonement plan more inconsistent than a plan in which God foreknew and intended that the condition upon which salvation is offered to all men should be impossible? Is the definite atonement plan, that it that God has determined through the death of Jesus Christ to save a certain number of people. Is that plan more inconsistent than a plan in which God foreknew and intended that the condition upon which salvation is offered to all men should be impossible? Because you see, remember, our Calvinistic Universalist believes the gospel goes to everybody, but nobody can respond. He admits nobody can respond. But the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit is not extended to everybody but only to some, and God knows of course, as you and I know, that no man can respond if there is not the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit. So, I repeat it again, is the definite atonement plan more inconsistent than a plan in which God foreknew and intended that the condition upon which salvation is offered to all men

should be impossible? Have you thought about this before? You think the other is inconsistent. That's inconsistent too, if the other is inconsistent.

Now, let me ask you a question by way of analogy, too. This is for all of us. Did Jesus Christ come to offer a kingdom to the Nation Israel? How many of you think that Jesus Christ came to offer a kingdom to the Nation Israel. Would you raise your hand? The rest of you are afraid too, or else you haven't studied the Bible very long. Almost everybody should have raised their hands. Jesus Christ did come to offer a kingdom to Israel.

Now, I ask you another question. Was it really offered? How many of you think it was really offered. Well, about the same number of people, and the same people. It was really offered. Now, was it foreknown that it would be rejected, this offer? Would you raise your hand? Now, put them down. More people believe that it was foreknown that they would reject it than believe that it was offered. Now, that was an inconsistency. More hands are going up. But anyway, I'm going to ask you another question now, a little more technical. Was it foreordained that they should reject it? How many of you believe that it was foreordained that they would reject it? Ah, now you said that a genuine offer is given by God, but at the same time you have said that it was foreordained that they should reject it, but you have said that it was a genuine offer. Now, I want to ask you another question. Could Israel have responded at the first coming? How many of you think Israel could have responded? Raise your hand. Well, practically no one raised your hand. Well, all I can say is if this is inconsistent, then you're inconsistent. But obviously you don't think you're inconsistent in holding these views.

And of course, in the case of Jesus Christ you have a great deal of support, because the Bible does say in connection with the Lord Jesus, in Acts chapter 2, and verse 22 it says concerning him, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him

in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Now notice, it's not just foreknowledge, its determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God. God determined that Jesus Christ should be delivered up on the cross. "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Men are responsible even in the midst of this divine foreordination. So, it was divinely foreordained that Jesus Christ would be crucified, and yet the kingdom was offered by him to Israel and to the Gentiles.

Now, that's a very interesting thing what you have said. I want now to ask and try to answer the question; I won't have time to do it completely. Why then should the gospel be universally offered? I'll give you five reasons tonight. Why then should the gospel be universally offered even if we should hold to a definite atonement? First of all, as we have pointed out, it is the divine command. It is the divine command. Acts chapter 17, in verse 30 says, "God commandeth all men, everywhere to repent." Further, the Matthew passage says that the Lord Jesus has told us to go into all the world and teach all nations. Now, that is definite and plain. If we have nothing more than that we should preach the gospel universally. No man is accepted.

Second, why should the gospel be universally offered? No offer but a universal offer is possible. A limited offer would require a revelation concerning the identity of the saved. I cannot know your election. And so consequently I have to preach a universal gospel. Mr. Spurgeon used to say something like this. He used to say, "I cannot preach anything but a universal gospel. If it were possible for us to know the elect, let us say," he said, "that God had put a yellow stripe down the backs of the elect. Then I should stop preaching and start lifting up shirt tails." [Laughter] We cannot know the elect. I cannot do anything but preach a universal gospel. I preach the gospel to all trusting the Holy Spirit to bring his own to faith in Christ.

Third, the atonement is sufficient in value for all. That is one reason why we offer it to all. The offer should be regulated by its nature and sufficiency, not by the objects or

obstacles that might prevent its efficacy. Let me read you something that one of our fine theologians has written on this point. "The atonement is sufficient in value to expiate the sin of all men indiscriminately, and this fact should be stated because it is a fact. There are no claims of justice not yet satisfied. There is no sin of man for which an infinite atonement has not been provided. All things are now ready; therefore the call to come is universal. It is plain that the offer of the atonement should be regulated by its intrinsic nature and sufficiency, not by the obstacles that prevent its efficacy. The extent to which a medicine is offered is not limited by the number of persons favorably disposed to buy and use it. It's adaptation to disease is the sole consideration in selling it, and consequently it is offered to everybody."

Fourth, God opposes not obstacle to the efficacy of atonement in the instances of the non-elect. Notice, he does not prevent them from trusting. There is no compulsion from external circumstances. As a matter of fact, the circumstances of most men favor trust in God. There are the great principles of common grace, the blessings of God which he has bestowed upon us. They favor trust in Jesus Christ. Further, special grace to the elect does not prevent the non-elect from believing. The fact that God bestows special grace upon you or me does not prevent the non-elect from believing. "The non-elect receives common grace, Shed points out, and common grace would incline the human will if it were not defeated by the human will." Now, you read in the Bible, for example, when Stephen preached, and the resisted. You read in the Bible of other objections as the gospel is preached. If there were no hostile action on the part of man, common grace, according to many theologians, would become saving grace.

Fifth, the gospel is offered indiscriminately, because God desires that every man believe. God should be guided by his own inner feelings, if I should use that term of God, not by those of sinful man. Why can he not say, as the Bible suggests, "Turn ye, turn ye. For why will ye die?" If a man has a kind and compassionate nature, it's unreasonable to require that he suppress it's promptings in case he sees a proud and surly

person who is unwilling to accept a gift. The fact that men are unresponsive does not mean that God should thereby not be compassionate. Good and kind offers may be offered and be sincere, even though those to whom they're given may be individuals of whom it is known that they will reject. The universal offer of the benefit springs out of God's will of complacency. The Bible says he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Further, God may properly call upon the non-elect to do a thing that God delights in simply because he does delight in it. The divine desire is not altered by the divine decree of preterition. Resistance does not diminish his desire. There exists in God the desire that men be saved. There exists in God the will, assuming this position, that the elect be saved. These, the will and the desire, exist simultaneously in God, and they do not contradict one another.

Now, we have a few minutes, and I want to read a statement by an outstanding southern theologian, and I think this explains about as well as I know how to explain the answer to the question, Is God sincere when he appeals to rebels? Listen to it. "If God makes proposals of mercy to men, who, he foresees, will certainly reject them and perish, and whom he immutably purposes to leave without effectual calling, how can his power and wisdom be cleared, save at the expense of his sincerity? Or his sincerity at the expense of his wisdom or power?" That's the question. "The occasion for calling in question either God's sincerity, or his wisdom, or power, upon the supposition of an unconditioned decree, arises from three classes of Scriptures. One is the indiscriminate offer of salvation. Another is the ascription of Christ's sacrifice to love for 'the world' as its motive, and the calling of him the 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,' 'giveth himself for the world,' etcetera." We'll take up these questions later. "The third is composed of those which present God as pitying all sinners, and even those who are never saved. Every reader's mind will suggest texts of each class. Now, it is notorious that these furnish the armory from which the Arminians equip their most pertinacious attacks on Calvinism; that it is on these texts the Calvinistic exegesis labors most and

displays the most uncertainty; and that the usual Calvinistic solutions of them are scornfully denounced as inadequate by their opponents. These facts, of course, do not prove that the Arminians are right; but they evince the occasion for, and utility of, more satisfactory discussion."

"The direction in which the answers are conceived to lie may be best indicated by an analogical instance. A human ruler may have full power and authority over the punishment of a culprit, may declare consistently his sincere compassion for him, and may yet freely elect to destroy him. A concrete case will make the point more distinct." Now you see what Dabney is trying to say is that it's possible for a human ruler to have compassion for a culprit, but at the same time to elect to execute the law against him. "Chief-Justice Marshall, in his Life of Washington, says with reference to the death-warrant of the rash and unfortunate Major André 'Perhaps on no occasion of his life did the commander-in-chief obey with more reluctance the stern mandates of duty and of policy.'"

In this historical instance we have these facts: Washington had plenary power to kill or to save alive. His compassion for the criminal was real and profound. Yet he signed his death-warrant with spontaneous decision. The solution is not the least difficult either for philosophy or common sense. Every deliberate rational volition is regulated by the agent's dominant subjective disposition, and prompted by his own subjective motive. But that motive is a complex, not a simple modification of spirit. The simplest motive of man's rational volition is a complex of two elements: a desire or propension of some subjective optative power, and a judgment of the intelligence as to the true and preferable."

Do you find this a little hard to follow? "The motive of a single decision may be far more complex than this, involving many intellectual considerations of prudence, or righteous policy, and several distinct and even competing propensions of the optative powers. The resultant volition arises out of a deliberation, in which the prevalent judgment and appetency counterpoise the inferior ones. To return to our instance

Washington's volition to sign the death-warrant of André did not arise from the fact that his compassion was slight or feigned; but from the fact that it was rationally counterpoised by a complex of superior judgments and propensions of wisdom, duty, patriotism, and moral indignation. Let us suppose that one of André's intercessors (and he had them, even among the Americans) standing by, and hearing the commanding general say, as he took up the pen to sign the fatal paper, 'I do this with the deepest reluctance and pity,' should have retorted, 'Since you are supreme in this matter, and have full bodily ability to throw down that pen, we shall know by your signing this warrant that your pity is hypocritical.' You can see how someone might speak to Washington that way, you say you have compassion for him but you have power to free him. If you sign his death warrant that proves your compassion is hypocritical. "The petulance of this charge would have been equal to its folly. The pity was real; but was restrained by superior elements of motive. Washington had official and bodily power to discharge the criminal; but he had not the sanction of his own wisdom and justice. Thus his pity was genuine, and yet his volition not to indulge it free and sovereign."

"The attempt to illustrate the ways of God by such analogies is too obvious to be novel. What, then, are the objections on which Calvinists have usually set them aside as unsatisfactory? In approaching this question it is instructive to notice the manner in which the extreme parties deal with the parallel case in God's government. Says the strong Arminian: 'Since God is sovereign, and also true and sincere, therefore I know that, when he declares his compassion for 'him that dieth,' he has exerted all the power that even omnipotence can properly exert on 'free-will,' to turn that sinner to life.' Thus this party sustain God's sincerity at the expense of his omnipotence." That's very important. He sustains God's sincerity at the expense of his omnipotence, because he in effect says man's free will is strong enough to overpower the omnipotent desire of God. "The two parties, while in extreme opposition, fall into the same error—the sophism of the imagined accuser of Washington. Their common mistake would, in the case of a wise

and good man, be exploded by explaining the nature of motive and free rational volition. The correct answer to the Arminian is to show him that the existence of a real and unfeigned pity in God for 'him that dieth' does not imply that God has exhausted his divine power in vain to renew the creature's 'free-will' in a way consistent with its nature, because the pity may have been truly in God, and yet countervailed by superior motives, so that he did not will to exert his omnipotence for that sinner's renewal. The other extreme receives the same reply; the absence of an omnipotent (and inevitably efficient) volition to renew that soul does not prove the absence of a true compassion in God for him; and for the same reason the propension may have been in God, but restrained from rising into a volition by superior rational motives." In other words, God may be compassionate and truly desire that all men be saved, but at the same time, due to his wisdom, his purpose and other aspects of his divine attributes, he may have deemed it necessary, and did deem it necessary to act as he did.

Well, we shall finish this and take up some more of those objections to definite atonement next time. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of considering such a question as this, and we pray that Thou will enable us to understand Thy purpose for us through Jesus Christ. And Lord, we do realize that we have a great command from a holy and sovereign God to preach the gospel to every creature, and we pray that the very assurance that there are elect individuals who belong to our family, the family of God, who may not yet have come to Jesus Christ. We pray that this very doctrine of the elect may motivate us to respond to the commission and be useful to a sovereign God in the gathering of those who shall bring honor and glory to the name of Jesus Christ, whose we are and whom we serve.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]