

S T U D Y G U I D E



The Cross of Christ

by R.C. Sproul



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The Need for an Atonement

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Ask 10 people what the purpose was of the life and death of Jesus Christ and you are likely to get 10 different answers. This entire series of lectures is designed to show that the Cross of Jesus is central to His life and ministry—indeed to the whole Bible. The aim of this lecture is to underscore the necessity of an atonement. Without an atonement there is no possibility of reconciliation between sinful people and a holy God.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To show the central importance and necessity of the Atonement to biblical Christianity
2. To examine the apparent indifference which exists in the culture and the church toward the Atonement
3. To survey the main views of the Atonement in the history of the church
4. To introduce the ways in which sin is described in the Bible

QUOTATIONS

The centrality of the Cross originated in the mind of Jesus Himself.

—John R. W. Stott

If the Cross of Christ is anything to the mind, it is surely everything—the most profound reality and the sublimest mystery. . . . The more unbelievers deny its crucial character, the more do believers find in it the key to the mysteries of sin and suffering.

—Samuel Zwemer

The emphasis in redemption is on our sorry state—indeed our captivity in sin—which made an act of divine redemption necessary.

—John R. W. Stott

Christ is to us just what His Cross is. All that Christ was in heaven or on earth was put into what He did there. . . . Christ, I repeat, is to us just what His Cross is. You do not understand Christ till you understand His Cross.

—P. T. Forsyth

To deny the necessity of atonement is to deny the existence of a real moral order.

—J. Gresham Machen

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. A subdivision of theology is Christology: The person and the work of Christ.
 - A. The universal symbol of Christianity is the cross.
 - B. The Cross of Christ crystallizes the essence of the ministry of Jesus.
 - C. Because the Cross of Christ is of central importance, it is essential that Christians have some understanding of its meaning in biblical terms.

- II. Within the church today, the significance, centrality, and necessity of an atonement is widely challenged.
 - A. Often people say they are not concerned about Christianity because they are not persuaded of the personal need of atonement.
 - B. Our culture does not understand that individuals are ultimately accountable to God for their lives.
 - C. If people knew these two things, they would break the doors down to get into our church, asking, “What must I do to be saved?”
 1. There is a holy God.
 2. Sin is an offense against a holy God.
 - D. The prevailing notion today is that justification is by death.

- III. There are three kinds of theology historically: Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, and Augustinianism.
 - A. Semi-Pelagianism and Augustinianism have been and continue to be debated issues within the church.
 - B. Pelagianism, Socinianism, and modern liberalism are essentially non-Christian because of their denial of the Cross of Christ as an atoning act.
 - C. Take away the Cross and you take away Christianity.
 - D. In Pelagianism there is no salvation, savior, or atonement because none is necessary.

- IV. There are three basic views of the necessity of the Atonement.
 - A. Absolutely unnecessary
 - B. Hypothetically necessary: a view that God chose to do something, and having chosen the Atonement, was compelled to follow through with it

- C. Absolutely necessary: biblical mandate that because of sin, God had to act if anyone was going to be saved
1. The heart of the issue has to do with the nature of the character of God and of sin.
 2. There are three distinct ways that the character of human sin is described biblically.
 - a. A debt
 - b. An expression of enmity
 - c. A crime

CHECK YOURSELF

1. What key notion is no longer agreed to by the vast majority of people?
2. Circle the three basic types of theology mentioned in the lecture.

a. Presbyterian	e. Calvinistic
b. Pelagian	f. Arminian
c. Lutheran	g. Augustinian
d. Semi-Pelagian	
3. The prevailing notion is that justification is by _____.
4. Pelagianism is non-Christian because of its denial of the Cross as an _____ act.
5. The Bible clearly teaches that the Atonement is _____.
6. Name the three views of the Atonement discussed in the lecture and briefly describe each.
7. What two key ideas are at the heart of our understanding of the Cross?
8. Define three ways in which sin is described in the Bible.

ANSWERS ARE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS LESSON.

BIBLE STUDY

In his book *The Cross of Christ*, John Stott provides an insightful analysis of the New Testament accounts of the centrality of the Cross. The following Bible study relies upon work he did in the first chapter of that book.

The fact that a cross became the Christian symbol, and that Christians stubbornly refused, in spite of the ridicule, to discard it in favour of something less offensive, can have only one explanation. It means that the centrality of the Cross originated in the mind of Jesus Himself. It was out of loyalty to Him that His followers clung so doggedly to this sign. What evidence is there, then, that the Cross stood at the centre of Jesus' own perspective? (*The Cross of Christ*, p. 25).

1. Listed below are passages from the Gospels which reveal Jesus' perspective about the centrality of the Cross. Parallel accounts are sometimes included. Read and discover the purpose that Jesus taught concerning His own crucifixion.
 - a. Jesus' predictions of His own death:
 - Mark 8:29-32
 - Mark 9:30-32; Matt. 17:22-23
 - Mark 10:32-34
 - Matt. 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13; Luke 9:44
 - Mark 10:35-45; Matt. 20:20-28
 - Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19
 - Matt. 26:2
 - Mark 14:3-9
 - Luke 22:14-20
 - Matt. 26:47-56
 - b. Peter and Paul taught extensively about the Cross. Read each passage below in light of Jesus' understanding of His death. Note any way in which the apostles altered, emphasized, or elaborated upon Christ's teaching. How do you account for differences and distinctions?

PETER

Acts 2:22-24
 Acts 3:12-20
 Acts 4:8-12
 Acts 5:29-32
 Acts 10:34-43
 1 Peter 3:18

PAUL

Acts 13:16-41
 Acts 14:15-17
 Acts 17:2-3, 22-31
 Acts 28:23-31
 Rom. 3:21-25
 Rom. 5:9-10
 Rom. 6:3
 1 Cor. 1:18-25
 1 Cor. 2:1-2
 1 Cor. 15:1-5
 Gal. 3:13-14
 Gal. 6:14
 Phil. 2:6-8

- c. The differences and distinctions can be accounted for by: _____

2. Read the following passages and write a short summary of each. What do you learn from them about the absolute necessity of the Atonement?
Matt. 5:17
Acts 13:38-39
Rom. 5:8-10
2 Cor. 5:19
Gal. 2:16
Heb. 9:14-16
3. For further study, read John's account in Revelation of the Lamb who was slain as a sacrificial victim in order to redeem His people. (John makes 23 references to the Lamb and His role in providing the necessary atonement.)

THINK ABOUT IT

1. To what extent does the pluralism of our society affect our view of the necessity and centrality of the Cross?
2. Why do most people not see the need for an atonement?
3. What are the effects of a failure to understand adequately the Atonement in the church?, in the culture?
4. Is it fair to assert, as Dr. Sproul does, that Pelagianism and liberalism are essentially non-Christian? Discuss.
5. What reasons do people give when denying the necessity of the death of Jesus?
6. Is it possible to hold a defective view of the Atonement and still be a Christian? Why?
7. Christians believe that Christ is the only way to salvation. Why do people consider that narrow-minded? Do you think it is?
8. How would most people react to the idea that we cannot be accepted by God apart from the death of Jesus Christ?
9. How would you respond to a person who felt no need for Jesus Christ?
10. Read the statement of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and Galatians 6:14. Why is the Cross central to the preaching of Paul? How is the Cross central to your life?
11. Do you think of yourself as a sinful person? Why or why not?
12. Dr. Sproul suggests that there are at least two ways for God to respond to sin. If God did not care about sin, what would that indicate about His nature and character?
13. The more God is removed from the culture, the less the weight of sin is felt. Sin becomes redefined; it is no longer an offense against a holy God. What are the modern views of sin that dominate our culture (movies, radio, television) and our thinking (psychology, sociology, ethics)?

14. Respond to this statement made in the lecture: “Take away the reconciling action of Christ from the New Testament and you have nothing but moralisms which are anything but unique and hardly worthy of persuading people to give 10 percent of their take-home pay to.”
15. Based upon what you have learned about the nature and character of God, why is the Atonement absolutely necessary for salvation?
16. How would culture and society change if people did pursue their need for atonement? Do you know of any biblical time periods when this was so? Do you know of any periods in church history when this occurred?

APPLICATION

1. This week, talk with two Christian friends and ask them what the death of Jesus means to them personally. In addition, ask two non-Christians to answer this question: What was the purpose of the life and death of Jesus Christ?
2. Consciously record how frequently the cross comes into your awareness during the day. How frequently do you see it as jewelry, in church architecture, and on bumper stickers? How do you account for its widespread popular imagery, considering that it evokes such little response from people in the culture?
3. Visit both a Christian and a secular bookstore. Analyze what is available in both stores in light of the absolute necessity of the Cross in redemptive history. What do you have in your own personal library that relates to the Cross of Christ? Refer to the bibliography on page 75 for further study suggestions.

“CHECK YOURSELF” ANSWERS

1. The idea that every person will be held accountable by God for his life.
2. b, d, g
3. death
4. atoning
5. absolutely necessary
6. a. Absolutely unnecessary. According to this view, the death of Christ is seen as an act of heroism or self-sacrifice, but it is not necessary.
b. Hypothetically necessary. According to this view, God could have redeemed sinful people by a variety of methods or means, but He chose to redeem us through the death of Christ.
c. Absolutely necessary. According to this view, redemption could be accomplished only in the manner revealed in the New Testament.
7. The nature and character of God and the nature and character of sin.
8. a. Debt: the failure to do what we are obligated before God to do
b. Enmity: the hostility and broken relationship which results from a failure to live in obedience and submission to God
c. Crime: the violation of the law of God

2

The Drama of Redemption

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

What makes the Atonement necessary is the human predicament. This lecture elaborates upon the nature of human sin introduced in the previous lecture. The aim of this lesson is to define sin and to highlight the character of God. The lecture also helps us better understand the role Christ plays in our redemption.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To reaffirm the extent of human sinfulness as presented in the Bible
2. To understand man, God the Father, and Jesus Christ in relation to sin and redemption
3. To clarify the transactions and complexity of forgiveness and redemption

QUOTATIONS

In Christianity faith in the Mediator is not something optional, not something about which, in the last resort, it is possible to hold different opinions, if we are only united on the “main point.” For faith in the Mediator—in the event which took place once for all, a revealed atonement—is the Christian religion itself; it is the “main point”; it is not something alongside of the centre; it is the substance and kernel, not the husk.

—Emil Brunner

Forgiveness is to man the plainest of duties; to God it is the profoundest of problems.

—Carnegie Simpson

In the Christian theology of history; the death of Christ is the central point of history; here all the roads of the past converge; hence all the roads of the future diverge.

—Stephen Neill

Nothing superficially seems simpler than forgiveness. . . . Nothing if we look deeply is more mysterious or more difficult.

—B. F. Westcott

LECTURE OUTLINE

To aid you in understanding this lecture, please refer to the following chart during Dr. Sproul's presentation and group discussion.

MAN	GOD	CHRIST
<i>debt</i>	<i>creditor</i>	<i>surety</i>
<i>enmity</i>	<i>injured/offended party</i>	<i>mediator</i>
<i>crime</i>	<i>governor/judge</i>	<i>priest/victim</i>

- I. To understand sin as debt, enmity, and a crime, we must introduce three actors in the drama of redemption: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and man.
- II. To consider debt as sin, we must consider God as Creator and Sovereign over the universe.
 - A. God intrinsically has the right and authority to impose obligations.
 - B. If God imposes on us obligation, and we fail to perform, we incur a debt.
 - C. We are debtors who cannot pay our debt.
 - D. Christ is our surety, the One who backs up our indebtedness.
- III. We are at enmity with God and disobey Him because we have an inborn hostility toward Him.
 - A. God is the injured or offended party because we have violated Him.
 - B. The role that Christ plays in our redemption is that of mediator reconciling the broken relationship between God and man.
 - C. Reconciliation presupposes a prior relationship which has become estranged.
 - D. As the injured party, God the Father is angry at our sin.
 - E. Scripture portrays reconciliation as a joint effort, originating with the Father sending the Son (John 3:16).
- IV. Man's sin must be considered a crime.
 - A. In the Atonement, God the Father functions as governor and judge, while Christ functions as priest and victim.
 - B. It is necessary to distinguish between pecuniary debt and penal debt.
 - C. The only way my penal indebtedness can be paid to God is if He first decides to accept a substitute payment for my indebtedness.

- D. In the Atonement, God accomplishes perfect justice and mercy and in no way negotiates His justice.
- E. If you take away the substitution, you take away the grace of God.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. The three players in the drama of redemption are _____.
2. Dr. Sproul suggests that Scripture portrays God the Father in three roles with respect to redemption and the Atonement: _____
3. God the Son is also portrayed through three roles in Scripture in His capacity as our Savior: _____
4. God, as Creator and Sovereign, has the right and authority to impose _____.
5. Enmity describes:
 - a. God's alienation from fallen mankind
 - b. Mankind's alienation from God
 - c. Both a and b
6. Is mankind's debt penal or pecuniary? Explain.
7. The amazing truth of reconciliation is that God as the injured party is the One who chooses to send a _____.

ANSWERS ARE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS LESSON.

BIBLE STUDY

The human predicament of sin has been described by Dr. Sproul as debt, enmity, and a crime. Unfortunately, the strength or force of the biblical language has been greatly reduced in our time both within and outside the church so as to minimize our understanding of sin. Therefore, our personal unrighteousness has not always confronted us with sin's consequences or with the questions of how we can stand in the presence of a holy God. Man must come to realize that he is alienated from God because sin has provoked His wrath.

If there is ever to be reconciliation between man and God, forgiveness must occur. This forgiveness, as we are seeing, necessitates the atoning death of Christ on the cross. Forgiveness is such a costly solution because sin has created an overwhelming debt. Read the following remarks by John Stott from his book *The Cross of Christ*, then complete the Bible study section which follows.

“In particular, our insistence that according to the gospel the Cross of Christ is the only ground on which God forgives sins bewilders many people. ‘Why should our forgiveness depend on Christ’s death?’ they ask. ‘Why does God not simply forgive us, without the necessity of the cross?’ As the French cynic put it, [‘The good God will forgive me; that’s His job.’] ‘After all,’ the objector

may continue, 'if we sin against one another, we are required to forgive one another. We are even warned of dire consequences if we refuse. Why can't God practice what He preaches and be equally generous? Nobody's death is necessary before we forgive each other. Why then does God make so much fuss about forgiving us and even declare it impossible without His Son's "sacrifice for sin"? It sounds like a primitive superstition which modern people should long since have discarded.'

"It is essential to ask and to face these questions. Two answers may be given to them immediately. . . . The first was supplied by Archbishop Anselm in his great book *Cur Deus Homo?* at the end of the eleventh century. If anybody imagines, he wrote, that God can simply forgive us as we forgive others, that person has 'not yet considered the seriousness of sin,' or literally 'what a heavy weight sin is.' The second answer might be expressed similarly: 'You have not yet considered the majesty of God.' It is when our perception of God and man, or of holiness and sin, are askew that our understanding of the atonement is bound to be askew also.

"The fact is that the analogy between our forgiveness and God's is far from being exact. True, Jesus taught us to pray: 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.' But He was teaching the impossibility of the unforgiving being forgiven, and so the obligation of the forgiven to forgive, as is clear from the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant; He was not drawing any parallel between God and us in relation to the basis of forgiveness. For us to argue 'we forgive each other unconditionally, let God do the same to us' betrays not sophistication but shallowness, since it overlooks the elementary fact that we are not God. We are private individuals, and other people's misdemeanors are personal injuries. God is not a private individual, however, nor is sin just a personal injury. On the contrary, God is Himself the maker of the laws we break, and sin is rebellion against Him.

"The crucial question we should ask, therefore, is a different one. It is not why God finds it difficult to forgive, but how He finds it possible to do so at all. . . . In the words of Carnegie Simpson, 'forgiveness is to man the plainest of duties; to God it is the profoundest of problems.'

"The problem of forgiveness is constituted by the inevitable collision between divine perfection and human rebellion, between God as He is and us as we are. The obstacle to forgiveness is neither our sin alone, nor our guilt alone, but also the divine reaction in love and wrath towards guilty sinners. For, although indeed 'God is love,' yet we have to remember that His love is 'holy love,' love which yearns over sinners while at the same time refusing to condone their sin. How, then, could God express His holy love?—His love in forgiving sinners without compromising His holiness, and His holiness in judging sinners without frustrating His love? Confronted by human evil, how

could God be true to Himself as holy love? In Isaiah's words, how could He be simultaneously 'a righteous God and a Saviour' (45:21)? For, despite the truth that God demonstrated His righteousness by taking action to save His people, the words *righteousness* and *salvation* cannot be regarded as simple synonyms. Rather His saving initiative was compatible with, and expressive of, His righteousness. At the cross in holy love God through Christ paid the full penalty of our disobedience Himself. He bore the judgment we deserve in order to bring us the forgiveness we do not deserve. On the cross divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled. God's holy love was 'satisfied.'

"When. . . we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God, and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge what we are, namely 'hell-deserving sinners,' then and only then does the necessity of the Cross appear so obvious that we are surprised we never saw it before" (*The Cross of Christ*, pp. 87-89, 109).

1. Drawing upon the quote above and the survey of passages already completed, read 2 Samuel 6:1-9 and respond to the following questions.
 - a. What does the ark represent?
 - b. How do you explain God's requirement that man distance himself from the ark?
 - c. Read Numbers 4:5-6, 15 and Exodus 25:12-14. What did David fail to do in transporting the ark?
 - d. The Bible calls Uzzah's action "irreverent." What made it so?
 - e. Can you affirm the rightness of God's striking down Uzzah? Can you justify God's action to yourself? to others?
 - f. How does an understanding of this passage help your understanding of the Atonement?
2. Read Acts 5:1-11 and respond to these questions.
 - a. What was the lie and conspiracy committed by Ananias and Sapphira?
 - b. What, if anything, distinguished their lie from any other lie?
 - c. Why did God choose to exact immediate physical death in this case of lying?
 - d. Can you affirm the rightness of God's actions in this instance?
 - e. What effect do you think this situation produced within the early church?
 - f. How does an understanding of this passage help your understanding of the Atonement?
3. Considering what you have learned above, respond to the following questions.
 - a. Can you guess why God chose to act as He did with Uzzah, Ananias, and Sapphira?
 - b. How do you understand these passages in light of John Stott's comments regarding the need for forgiveness?

- c. If God's holy love had been satisfied on the cross, why did He take such drastic, punitive actions against His own people?
- d. What prevents God from reacting to your sin as dramatically and immediately as He did in these instances?
- e. Write a prayer of gratitude expressing your thankfulness for the grace that has been extended to you by the forgiveness of Christ.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why do people not feel the need for an atonement?
2. Does it bother you that God demands a bloody sacrifice as an integral part of atonement? Why?
3. Discuss this statement: If people understood the holiness of God and the depth of their sin, they would run to the church for comfort.
4. How does an understanding of God's holiness and our own sin create a sense of gratitude in our lives?
5. How do your non-Christian friends define sin? How do you think they would respond to the Bible's use of words such as *alienation*, *enmity*, *debt*, *crime*, and *hostility*?
6. What do you say to a non-Christian to deepen his awareness of sin?
7. At one point in the lecture Dr. Sproul indicated that our sin is criminal. What images come to mind when you hear the word *criminal*? Are these what the Scriptures intend to convey?
8. Is it right to attempt to show people their guilt before God? Is it manipulative?
9. What did Dr. Sproul mean when he said that we tend to be "unitarians of the second person of the Godhead"?
10. Analyze this statement: Only as we retain a sense of our own profound sinfulness can we retain a sense of the graciousness of grace.
11. At this point in your study, how would you define atonement?
12. How has this lecture helped you to understand better the relationship between God the Father and God the Son?

APPLICATION

1. Each day this week, read and meditate on one of the following passages. How do they inform your understanding of the nature and character of God and of yourself?

Monday: Ps. 139

Tuesday: Ex. 19

Wednesday: Isa. 6:1-8

Thursday: Ezek. 1

Friday: Dan. 7:8-15

Saturday: Rev. 1:9-20

2. Read Matthew 15:10-20. It seems clear that the problem of sin is internal and a matter of the heart just as much as it is external and a matter of behavior. Examine your own attitudes, desires, aspirations, and goals. After some honest reflection, does the Atonement seem more or less necessary to you?
3. Use a Bible dictionary (for example, *The New Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Douglas, editor) and read the articles on God, holiness, justice, atonement, and sin. Read the Bible passages referred to and answer the following questions.
 - a. How does this study change my view of God?
 - b. How does it change my view of myself?
 - c. How does this study deepen my appreciation of Christ's work in my behalf?
 - d. How can I begin to express my gratitude to God for the Atonement?

"CHECK YOURSELF" ANSWERS

1. God the Father; God the Son; man
2. Creditor; injured or offended party; governor/judge
3. Surety; mediator; priest/victim
4. obligations
5. c
6. Penal
7. mediator

3

Christ Our Ransom

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The first two lectures have established the necessity of the Atonement in light of the problem of sin. This lecture explains in detail what the death of Jesus Christ accomplished. The key ideas developed by Dr. Sproul include substitution, expiation, and propitiation. The aim of this lesson is to gain a biblical understanding of Christ's ransom on the cross while addressing erroneous views of the Atonement.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate what it means for Christ to have died in behalf of His people.
2. To distinguish the biblical terms *expiation* and *propitiation* as they explain the work of Christ in relation to God the Father.
3. To value Christ's work on the cross as a sacrifice that placates the wrath of a holy God.

QUOTATIONS

It is partly because sin does not provoke our own wrath, that we do not believe that sin provokes the wrath of God.

—R. W. Dale

Without a holy God there would be no problem of atonement. It is the holiness of God's love that necessitates the atoning Cross....

—P. T. Forsyth

Whatever is due to the law is due to the law because it is the law of God, and is due therefore to God Himself.

—Nathaniel Dimock

Out of the wealth of his resources, God has paid debts which were no concern of His.

—J. A. Motyer

Christ discharged the debt of sin. He bore our sins and purged them. He did not make a token payment which God accepts in place of the whole. Our debts are not cancelled; they are liquidated.

—John Murray

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. As He prepared to enter into His grand passion, Christ stated the purpose of His ministry: “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).
 - A. The use of *ransom* in the New Testament is at the root of the broad concept of redemption.
 - B. The concept of ransom is built upon the idea of losing something or setting something free that is held captive.
 - C. An inaccurate theory of the Atonement portrays Jesus paying ransom to Satan, who holds mankind in bondage.
 1. Jesus came to conquer Satan’s power over us, but the ransom is not paid to Satan.
 2. If Christ paid a ransom to him, Satan would be the victor by forcing God to pay it.
 - D. Biblically, the ransom is paid to the One who is owed the price for redemption—the offended party in the process of sin: God the Father.
 1. Jesus, as the servant, offers Himself as payment to the Father for us.
 2. Jesus’ own self-understanding is located in the refrain “in behalf of.”
- II. To properly understand the Atonement, the terms *expiation* and *propitiation* must be distinguished.
 - A. Expiation has to do with the act of removing or taking away our guilt by way of paying the penalty for sin to God.
 - B. Propitiation has to do with that which brings about a change in God’s attitude, whereby we are restored to fellowship and favor with Him.
 - C. Expiation is what Christ did on the cross. The ransom is paid which results in propitiation—a change of God’s disposition toward us so that we are reconciled to Him.
- III. Expiation and propitiation involve an act of placation.
 - A. The essence of salvation has to do with placating and appeasing the wrath of a holy God (1 Thess. 1:10).
 - B. The only hope of escape from the wrath of God is to be covered by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.
 - C. To be saved means there is no wrath for those whose sins have been paid.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. Behind the concept of ransom is the biblical notion of _____.
2. According to this lecture, to whom must the ransom be paid?
 - a. Satan
 - b. God the Father
 - c. God the Son
3. Who pays the ransom?
 - a. Satan
 - b. God the Father
 - c. God the Son
4. What are the two key terms which we must understand if we are to appreciate the Cross? Briefly define each.

ANSWERS ARE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS LESSON.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Writing in an article on redemption, B. B. Warfield lamented that the definition and understanding of the biblical word *ransom* had become diluted and the deliverance won by Christ had been cheapened. He went on to say that we are assisting at the death bed of a word. “It is sad to witness the death of any worthy thing—even of a worthy word. And worthy words do die, like any other worthy thing—if we do not take good care of them. Sadder still is the dying out of the hearts of men of the things for which the words stand” (namely, the gratitude to Him who paid the ransom).

In order to revitalize the understanding of redemption, a survey of its usage throughout the Scriptures is included below. Beside each verse write out the central idea that relates to redemption through the payment of a ransom.

OLD TESTAMENT

Possessions

Ex. 34:20

Jer. 32:6-8

People

Ex. 13:13-15

Ex. 21:28-32

Lev. 25:25-27, 47-54

Num. 3:40-51

Ruth 4:1-12

Job 19-25

Prov. 23:10-11

Israel

Ex. 6:6; 15:13

Deut. 7:8

2 Sam. 7:23
Ps. 78:35
Isa. 35:10
Jer. 31:11; 50:33-34

Sin

Ps. 49:7-9; 130:8
Isa. 44:22-23; 59:19-20

NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 10:45
Luke 2:38; 24:21
Rom. 3:24-25
Rom. 8:23
1 Cor. 1:30
1 Cor. 6:20
1 Cor. 7:23
Gal. 3:13; 4:5
Eph. 1:7
Eph. 4:30
Col. 1:13-14
1 Tim. 2:6
1 Peter 1:18-19

In summary of the biblical doctrine, John Stott writes:

“What then, first, is the human plight, from which we cannot extricate ourselves and which makes it necessary for us to be redeemed? We have seen that in the Old Testament people were redeemed from a variety of grave social situations such as debt, captivity, slavery, exile, and liability to execution. But it is a moral bondage from which Christ has ransomed us. This is described now as our ‘transgressions’ or ‘sins’ (since in two key verses ‘redemption’ is a synonym for ‘the forgiveness of sins’), now as ‘the curse of the law’ (namely the divine judgment which it pronounces on law-breakers), and now as ‘the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.’ Yet even our release from these captivities does not complete our redemption. There is more to come. For Christ ‘gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness,’ to liberate us from all the ravages of the Fall. This we have not yet experienced. Just as the Old Testament people of God, though already redeemed from their Egyptian and Babylonian exiles, were yet waiting for the promise of a fuller redemption, ‘looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem,’ so the New Testament people of God, though already redeemed from guilt and judgment, are yet waiting for ‘the day of redemption’ when we shall be made perfect. This will include the ‘redemption of our bodies.’ At that point the whole groaning creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and be

brought to share in the freedom of the glory of God's children. Meanwhile, the indwelling Holy Spirit is Himself the seal, the guarantee and the first fruits of our final redemption. Only then will Christ have redeemed us (and the universe) from all sin, pain, futility, and decay" (*The Cross of Christ*, p. 178).

2. A biblical understanding of the "wrath to come" is essential to clarify the penalty that God commanded regarding sin. It is from this penalty that Christ has redeemed us. Read the following passages and list the penalties which were due.

Rom. 6:23

Rom. 8:20

Gal. 3:10

Eph. 2:3

Eph. 4:18

THINK ABOUT IT

1. At this point in your understanding of the Cross, comment on this statement: Without the Cross there is no Christianity.
2. Explain in your own words why both expiation and propitiation are necessary to reestablish fellowship and intimacy with God.
3. The first question in the Heidelberg Catechism is this: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" The answer reads, "That I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood.
4. How does the idea that "there is no wrath for those whose sins have been paid" affect you? Is this idea too good to be true?
5. Why is the phrase "in behalf of" so crucial to our understanding of the Cross?
6. In the lecture Dr. Sproul said that if Satan can secure a ransom payment, "he laughs all the way to the bank." Explain this statement.
7. Placating the wrath of God is a key idea mentioned in this lecture. Respond to the statement that the essence of salvation has to do with placating the wrath of a holy God.
8. "Bumper sticker theology" summarizes God's message to mankind by saying, "Smile, God loves you."
 - a. Is this a distortion of God's summary message to mankind? Based upon the lecture, what is missing?
 - b. Can this be declared to all people indiscriminately?
 - c. If it can be applied indiscriminately to all mankind, what are the implications? If it cannot be, what must be added to correct the imbalance and omission?
 - d. If God already loves everyone, what motivation (or need) would there be for you to witness to them?
 - e. Taking into consideration this lecture, how would you summarize God's

essential message to mankind?

9. How do you respond to the idea that if you are a believer, all of your sin—past, present, and future—is forgiven?
10. Read Colossians 2:13-15. How is Christ's death a triumph over Satan?

APPLICATION

1. The death of Jesus fully achieves the redemption without which no sinner can be saved. Read the following passages and list the benefits which the believer enjoys through Christ's death.
 - Rom. 5:1-5
 - Rom. 6:1-11
 - 2 Cor. 5:17-21
 - Gal. 3:26-4:7
 - Eph. 2:1-7
 - Col. 2:13-15
 - Heb. 4:14-16
2. The redeemed person has had the ransom for sin paid for by Christ. Condemnation is removed, the wrath of God has been diverted, and the power of sin has been broken. The guilty conscience is cleansed. During the upcoming week prayerfully reflect upon your life and consider where the power of a guilty conscience may still be operative. Through confession of sin receive the forgiveness of Christ and restoration to full fellowship (1 John 1:9). By His shed blood and atoning death, Christ paid the ransom for you to enjoy the health and freedom that is available in a clear conscience.

"CHECK YOURSELF" ANSWERS

1. redemption
2. b
3. c
4. a. Expiation has to do with the act of removing or taking away our guilt by way of paying the penalty for sin to God.
b. Propitiation has to do with that which brings about a change in God's attitude whereby we are restored to fellowship and favor with Him.

4

Justification by Faith

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The death of Jesus Christ makes possible reconciliation between a holy, just God and sinful man. Justice has been served in both the life and death of Jesus. By imputation, the righteousness of Christ is credited to the account of the believer, and the sin of the believer is credited to the account of Christ on the cross. The believer has not only forgiveness but the positive righteousness of the Son of God. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). The aim of this lesson is to understand how the doctrine of imputation makes reconciliation possible.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To affirm our corruption in sin and the judgment we deserve
2. To understand that the righteousness of Christ and His death on the cross are both necessary to gain us acceptance in the sight of a holy God
3. To be convinced that the only way to be justified before God is through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross

QUOTATIONS

There is a perpetual and irreconcilable disagreement between righteousness and unrighteousness.

—John Calvin

No sin, no need for justification; no grace, no possibility of it.

—Tom Wright

Christ’s first concern and revelation was not simply the forgiving love of God but the holiness of such love.

—P. T. Forsyth

If He hides the sin, or lesseneth it, He is faulty; if He leaves it still upon us, we die. He must then take our iniquity to Himself, make it His own, and so deliver us; for thus having taken the sin upon Himself, as lawfully He may, and lovingly He doth, it followeth that we live if He lives; and who can desire more?

—John Bunyan

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins.” Why is it that God hath not dealt with us after our sins? Is it not because He hath dealt with another after our sins? Another who took our sins upon Him; of whom it is said, that “God chastened Him in His fierce wrath”? and why did He chasten Him, for our sins? O gracious God, Thou art too just to take revenge twice for the same faults; and therefore, having turned Thy fierce wrath upon Him, Thou wilt not turn it upon us too; but having rewarded Him according to our iniquities, Thou wilt now reward us according to His merits.

—Sir Richard Baker

There is no death of sin without the death of Christ.

—John Owen

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. How does Christ’s life and death on the cross relate to me?
 - A. The problem is how to resolve the conflict between a just, holy God and a fallen, unjust people.
 1. The degree of our sinfulness is such that when judged by the standard of God’s perfection and holiness, we are totally corrupt.
 2. Total depravity means that the extent of the power, influence, and inclination of sin affects the whole man (Rom. 3:9-20).
 - B. Biblically, a good deed not only externally keeps the law of God but proceeds from a heart that wants to honor and love Him.

- II. How can an unjust person be justified or made just?
 - A. God would have to sacrifice His justice to overlook our injustice.
 - B. Jesus is the Lamb of God, without sin or blemish.
 1. Jesus had to live a just and obedient life for His death to mean anything.
 2. Forensic justification means that we are formally declared to be just when the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth says we are just.
 - C. Biblically, the way an unjust person is justified is through imputation.
 - D. There is a transference of our sins, whereby Christ takes upon Himself our unrighteousness and lack of justice.
 1. Transference of our sin can make us innocent, but it cannot make us just or righteous.
 2. It is righteousness (merited reward), not innocence, that gets us into the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20).

- E. Not only is our sin imputed to Christ but the righteousness of Christ is transferred to our accounts, so that in God's sight we are now clean.
 - 1. Through our union with Christ, He is our Savior because He is the source of our righteousness.
 - 2. There is a real union with Christ that takes place through imputation.
 - 3. We must have this double transfer for God to declare us just.
- F. The good news is that in Christ we are at the same time just and sinner—*simul justus et peccator*.
- G. The only way we can ever receive the merit and righteousness of Christ is by faith and trust in His work of obedience.
- H. Justification by faith alone really means justification by Christ alone.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. What two elements make an act good in the sight of God?
2. Which statement reflects the teaching of the Bible?
 - a. Total depravity means that man is as bad as he could possibly be.
 - b. Total depravity means that the whole person (body, mind, and spirit) is affected by the power and presence of sin.
3. The central issue in this lecture is how an _____ person can be made _____.
4. An unjust person can only be justified through _____.
5. What transference must occur for us to be declared innocent?
6. What transference must occur if we are to be positively righteous in the sight of God?
7. It is not _____ but only _____ that provides entry into the kingdom of God.
8. The Christian is at the same time _____ and a _____.
9. We can only be justified by _____, not by any of our _____.

ANSWERS ARE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS LESSON.

BIBLE STUDY

1. A classic passage which portrays the idea of imputation is 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Read this passage and write down observations and questions you may have. Then read from two or three commentaries to compare insights. Conclude by answering the following questions.
 - a. What is the basis for reconciliation with God?
 - b. What does "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin" mean?
 - c. What does the phrase "that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" mean?

- d. What is Paul teaching when he says that we are new creatures in Christ, and that the old has passed away and the new has come?
 - e. How does an understanding of these ideas make it possible to understand Paul's desire to be an ambassador for Christ?
2. The Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 53 has been consistently applied to the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ. Nearly every verse of this passage has been used by the New Testament authors to demonstrate how Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus used this passage on numerous occasions to identify Himself with the Suffering Servant.

The following are the New Testament passages which either directly quote from Isaiah 53 or make strong allusions to it. Write out the pertinent portion and indicate which verse of Isaiah 53 is being referenced. Several summary questions follow.

Isaiah 53

John 19:9

John 12:38

1 Peter 2:22-25

Acts 8:30-35

Matt. 8:17

Mark 2:20

Mark 9:12

Luke 11:22

Luke 22:37

John 19:11, 15, 17

Luke 23:34

Mark 14:8

- a. Do you find any portions of the Isaiah 53 passage which are not fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
 - b. Do you find the doctrine of double imputation taught in Isaiah 53? If so, where?
 - c. Can you discover other key theological terms and concepts which Dr. Sproul has developed that are taught in Isaiah (for example, ransom and substitutionary atonement)? Using all the tape outlines as a review, compile a list of terms whose concepts are taught in this passage.
3. Christ's righteousness imputed to the sinner is also part of the double transfer required by God. Study the following passages and list key truths regarding this part of the transaction.
- Rom. 4:5-8
Rom. 5:17-19
2 Cor. 5:21
Titus 3:5-7

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why is God not free to dismiss sin?
2. The notion that we are totally depraved may offend our sensibilities. From Scripture and your own experience, discuss this doctrine. Is it true? Why or why not?
3. Why is forgiveness alone insufficient for salvation?
4.
 - a. Reflect upon the idea that the righteousness of Christ has been transferred to you in the act of justification. What implications does this have for you? How does it alter your understanding of a relationship with God?
 - b. What prevents our righteousness from being a “legal fiction” if, in fact, we do not become within ourselves fully righteous at the time of the imputation transfer?
5. Find several passages which support the idea that a good deed proceeds only from a heart which loves God.
6. Why was it necessary for Jesus to have lived a life of perfect obedience in order for His death to have value for us?
7. Explain what the phrase *simul justus et peccator* means. Read Romans 7:14-25 in light of this phrase. Are you able to identify personally with Paul’s struggle?
8. Dr. Sproul suggests that the phrase *simul justus et peccator* is actually good news. Why is this so?
9. Who do you know (individuals or groups) that would be offended by hearing Paul say, “There is none that is righteous, no not one”? Why would this provoke them?
10. Discuss this statement: The prevailing understanding of justification is “justification by death.”
11. How does justification by faith give comfort in the midst of trials?
12. How does imputation help you gain greater assurance as a believer?
13. Consider for a moment that individuals might have actually retained an “island of righteousness” that was not subject to the effects of sin. Answer the following questions.
 - a. Who among mankind has had such an island of righteousness?
 - b. Where in their being is it found (body, mind, heart, soul, etc.)?
 - c. How has it escaped pollution?
 - d. What scriptural support allows for this conclusion?
 - e. Why would such a doctrine gain widespread acceptance?
 - f. How would you refute such thinking?
14. How does this lecture on justification help your understanding of the Atonement?

APPLICATION

1. What motivates you? During the next week assess your motivations to see if they are virtuous in God's sight. Elevate your motivations to a more conscious level and subject them to the norms of Scripture.
 - a. Search for patterns that have become pleasing to God. How frequently are you motivated by love, mercy, compassion, patience, zeal for God's kingdom, etc.? How much impact has your faith made in this area? Where has the most development of character and growth in grace occurred?
 - b. Are you able to discern patterns that have become habits of sin—motivations due to jealousy, greed, pride, anger, etc.? Ask God to replace sinful motivations with ones pleasing in His sight and to redouble your zeal to perform the truly good works which God has prepared for you to fulfill (Eph. 2:10).
2. The good news of the Gospel is that God has declared us to be righteous through imputation.
 - a. Consider how confident you would be of your salvation if you were dependent upon yourself to achieve a certain measure of righteousness.
 - b. What measure of freedom and confidence do you sense because of the certainty that comes through being declared righteous?
 - c. Read 1 John and discover the multiple assurances contained in that book.
 - d. If you have any doubts about the assurance of your salvation, speak with your pastor concerning your uncertainties.

"Check Yourself" Answers

1. a. The external deed
b. The internal desire of the heart
2. b
3. unjust; just
4. imputation
5. My sin must be transferred to Christ.
6. Christ's righteousness must be transferred to me.
7. innocence; righteousness
8. just; sinner
9. faith; works

5

Blessing or Curse?

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The death of Jesus Christ involved His being utterly forsaken by His Father. This lecture places the death of Jesus in the context of the sanctions of the covenant, with its blessings and its curses. Jesus' forsakenness means that all of the blessings of His relationship with the Father were removed and replaced by the curses associated with sin and judgment. The aim of this lesson is to see exactly how Jesus' death met the sanctions of God's covenant with man, including its blessings and curses.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To study the Atonement in light of the Old and New Testament teaching of the covenant
2. To comprehend that the greatest blessing for the Jew is the presence of God and that the greatest curse is the removal of that presence
3. To contemplate that when Jesus bore the curse of God in His death, it made possible our experiencing the blessing of the presence of God in its fullness

QUOTATIONS

The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished. . . . Reconciliation. . . . is not something which is being done; it is something which is done.

—James Denney

No reason of man can justify God in a world like this. He must justify Himself, and He did so in the Cross of His Son.

—P. T. Forsyth

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. It is important to understand the atonement of Christ in the broader framework of God's covenant in the Old and New Testament.

- II. In the Old Testament, the reward for keeping the covenant was called a blessing, and the penalty for violating the contract was called a curse (Deut. 28).
 - A. The Hebrew benediction portrays blessing as the receiving of supreme favor from the hands of God (Num. 6:24-26).
 1. Blessedness has to do with nearness to the presence of God.
 2. For the Jew to be blessed was for God to draw near (Ps. 46).
 - B. Conversely, the curse of the covenant was to be cut off from the presence of God, which was symbolized on the Day of Atonement by the scapegoat being driven outside the camp into the outer darkness.

- III. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul teaches that Christ became a curse for us with the penalties and sanctions of the Law bound up in Him (Gal. 3:13).
 - A. The intricacy of the drama of the crucifixion of Jesus involves very detailed fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.
 - B. During the Crucifixion, in the midst of intense darkness, Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).
 - C. If Jesus was not really forsaken on the cross, then all Christians are still in their sin.

- IV. The Old Testament sign of circumcision signified both blessing (being set apart for holiness) and curse (being cut off from God's presence).
 - A. The Cross became the supreme circumcision when Jesus took the curse upon Himself.
 - B. When Jesus was bearing our sin in His human nature, He was actually forsaken by God the Father.
 - C. Totally separated from all blessedness of the Father, Jesus became a curse for us so that someday we will be able to see the face of God.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. The broader framework for understanding the Atonement is God's _____ .
2. Sanctions were always twofold, containing _____ and _____ .
3. The supreme blessing for the Jew is the _____ of God.
4. What did the Old Testament rite of circumcision signify?
5. Why does Dr. Sproul call the Cross the "supreme circumcision"?
6. What did Christ experience on the cross?

ANSWERS ARE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS LESSON.

BIBLE STUDY

The death of Jesus parallels and fulfills in remarkable detail the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement and Old Testament prophecies. The following Bible study should help you see their relationships.

1. Read Leviticus 16:1-34 and answer the following questions regarding the observation of the Day of Atonement.
 - a. What is the significance of the blood?
 - b. What is the significance of the sacrificial goat?
 - c. What is the significance of the scapegoat?
 - d. Why does the high priest perform the detailed rituals he does before offering the sacrifice?
 - e. Why does the high priest place his hands on the scapegoat as he confesses the sins of Israel?
2. Read Hebrews 9:6-12 and list the similarities between it and the Leviticus passage.
3. Discuss how the key terms *imputation*, *expiation*, *propitiation*, *ransom*, and *substitution* are fulfilled first through the Old Testament sacrificial system and then through the death of Christ on the cross.
4. Read Psalm 22 and the crucifixion and burial accounts in each of the Gospels (Matt. 27:32-61; Mark 15:21-47; Luke 24:26-56; and John 19:17-41). Make a chart of the details predicted in Psalm 22 and fulfilled in Jesus' death.

PSALM 22
(*predicted*)

GOSPEL ACCOUNTS
(*fulfilled*)

5. Examples of Old Testament curses and blessings are found in Deuteronomy 27-30. These were Moses' last words to the people before they crossed over the Jordan River into Israel. Contrast them to Jesus' words in Matthew 5:1-16 and 23:13-39.
 - a. Which of these passages are applicable for believers today? Why?
 - b. Where and in what ways do you see God carrying out His blessings and curses?
 - c. How are the realities of heaven and hell related to the teaching found in these passages?

THINK ABOUT IT

1. a. Dr. Sproul says that redemptive history reaches its apex in the Cross. What does he mean?

- b. Have you ever heard the Atonement developed in light of the Old and New Testament covenant curses and blessings prior to this lecture? If not, can you speculate why?
 - c. To what extent will this lecture illumine your reading of Scripture, enlarge your gratitude for Christ's atoning death, and lead you to a greater anticipation of the blessings of heaven?
2. How does the presence of God represent the supreme blessing of the covenant?
3. Why was it necessary that Christ be forsaken by the Father on the cross? What did Christ experience in the forsaken condition? Was it the absence of God or the active presence of Him in wrath?
4. Dr. Sproul indicates that on the cross, Jesus was left in the wilderness. How is that shown in the details of His death? Where was He crucified? Who crucified Him? What happened at His death?
5. Why is the essence of forsakenness based upon an understanding of blessing and curse?
6. Discuss what the words *blessing* and *curse* convey to you.
7. What was the attitude of the Father toward His Son as Jesus bore the sin of the world?
8. What was the attitude of the Son?
9. Sometimes in our use of the word *blessing*, we are inclined to believe that health and prosperity are the real indicators of God's favor. Discuss this notion in light of Dr. Sproul's comment on blessing.
10. Read 1 Timothy 6:3-10. How does this passage serve to balance our tendency to believe that money, possessions, and health are the most significant blessings?
11.
 - a. Explain what the cry of Jesus, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" may have meant for Him.
 - b. During the Easter season, why do you hear so much regarding nails and scourgings but little or nothing concerning Jesus bearing the curse of God's wrath?
12. Prior to this lecture, how would you have responded to the question, "What is the greatest blessing you can imagine?"
13. A. W. Tozer writes, "Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking." Discuss this statement in light of this lecture.
14. Anticipation of pain generally increases apprehension and anxiety. Read Luke 22:39-44. What do you think caused Jesus such great anguish? How complete would Jesus' foreknowledge of His pain and suffering have been?

APPLICATION

1. As covenant lawbreakers, each individual in the world is liable to the curse of God. Either the individual will bear his own curse or, through faith in Christ's atoning work, the individual will trust that Jesus has already experienced the curse for him. What are you motivated to do on behalf of those who, not knowing Christ, will have to bear the curse of God? How well equipped are you in sharing your faith with another person? How committed is your church to evangelism and foreign missions? How, through your church, can you work to fulfill the Great Commission?
2. Dr. Sproul suggested that the Beatific Vision is the greatest blessing one can desire. Read of Moses' desire to see the face of God (Ex. 33:12-34:9), of Jesus' promise that only the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8), and John's hope to see God (1 John 2:28-3:3).
 - a. What things in your life compete with the presence of God as the highest blessing of the Christian life?
 - b. Ask God this week to stimulate your desire for purity (without which no one shall see God) and a longing to experience a greater sense of His presence in your life.

"CHECK YOURSELF" ANSWERS

1. covenant
2. blessings; curses
3. presence
4. It signified being set apart for holiness or being cut off from God's presence.
5. Christ was completely cut off from the presence of God.
6. He experienced the unmitigated wrath of God.

6

Securing Our Faith

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The death of Jesus does not simply make salvation possible—it makes it certain. This means that believers may have confidence that the death of Jesus Christ has indeed saved them from the wrath of God and has delivered them into a secure and eternal standing as the children of God. The aim of this lesson is to teach the definite and limited design of the Atonement and how salvation is secured through it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To appreciate the intention and design for the death of Jesus Christ
2. To define limited atonement
3. To affirm that God has accomplished what He intended to accomplish: The salvation of His people through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross

QUOTATIONS

Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him and say “Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am Your sin. You took on You what was mine; yet set on me what was Yours. You became what You were not, that I might become what I was not.”

—Martin Luther

God doth justify the believing man, yet not for the worthiness of his belief, but for the worthiness of who is believed.

—Richard Hooker

The nature of the atonement settles its extent. If it merely made salvation possible, it applied to all men. If it effectively secured salvation, it had reference only to the elect.

—Lorraine Boettner

Christ did not die for any upon condition, if they do believe; but He died for all God's elect, that they should believe.

—John Owen

It cannot be overemphasized that we have not seen the full meaning of the Cross till we have seen it. . . as the centre of the Gospel, flanked on the one hand by total inability and unconditional election and on the other by irresistible grace and final preservation.

—J. I. Packer

Christ's blood has value enough to redeem the whole world, but the virtue of it is applied only to such as believe.

—Thomas Watson

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The issue of God's design and purpose for the work of Christ on the cross is focused in the Reformed doctrine of limited atonement (particular redemption).
 - A. For whom did Christ die? What is the design and purpose of the Cross?
 - B. Limited atonement is an integral part of the five points of Calvinism (TULIP).
 - C. Limited atonement was a major focus of debate between Augustine and Pelagius in the fourth century.
- II. Classical Augustinianism, or limited atonement, embraces these views:
 - A. The atonement of Jesus Christ is sufficient for all men. It possesses enough value and merit to cover the sins of every person.
 - B. Jesus' death was not efficient for all people. Not everyone is saved by the death of Christ.
 - C. The atonement of Jesus Christ is to be offered to all men.
 1. The Calvinist knows that not everyone will respond to the Gospel.
 2. Some will definitely respond, however.
 - D. The intent and design of the Atonement is the key issue in debate.
 1. The Arminian teaches that God intended and designed the Atonement for all men, while the Calvinist holds it was only for the elect.
 2. In the Calvinist understanding, neither the Architect of salvation nor the Savior experience frustration.
- III. Every single person for whom Christ died is saved.
 - A. In Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of intercession, He is not praying for everyone in the world but only for the elect (John 17:6).
 - B. The atonement made by Christ is effective only for everyone for whom it was intended to be effective.
 - C. If, in the Atonement, expiation and propitiation really occur, then it must be restricted only for those intended or universalism will result.
 - D. Limited atonement portrays God the Father and Christ the Son actually

accomplishing what They set out to accomplish.

- E. From all eternity, God had determined that He will, in fact, redeem all His people through the work of Christ.
 1. When the Bible says Christ died for the whole world, it means He is the Savior for every tongue, race, and nation numbered among the elect.
 2. Our salvation has been accomplished by a Savior who actually saves us.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. The key doctrine related to the design and purpose of the work of Christ is _____.
2. What two key theologians debated this matter in the fourth century?
3. There are essentially two schools representing two views of the Atonement. Circle the correct answer.
 - a. Roman Catholic and Arminian
 - b. Presbyterian and Roman Catholic
 - c. Protestant and Catholic
 - d. Arminian and Calvinist
 - e. Lutheran and Anabaptist
4. Classical Augustinianism believes the Bible to teach that the death of Jesus is _____ for all men but not _____ for all men.
5. According to Dr. Sproul, who will be redeemed by the Father through the death of Jesus Christ?
6. True or false: If the Atonement is not limited, we become universalists.

ANSWERS ARE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS LESSON.

BIBLE STUDY

Particular redemption is especially difficult for many Christians to accept as biblical theology. In his lecture Dr. Sproul contended that Christ's atoning death did not merely make salvation possible; rather, He secured salvation for His elect. Redemption and the Atonement are definite in their design and intention.

In this Bible study, we will survey those passages which affirm that salvation was secured and made definite for particular people, and we will assess those passages which seem to teach otherwise. Begin by reading the following summary taken from *The Five Points of Calvinism*:

Historical or mainline Calvinism has consistently maintained that Christ's redeeming work was definite in design and accomplishment—that it was intended to render complete satisfaction for certain specified sinners and that it actually secured salvation for these individuals and for no one else. The salvation which Christ earned for His people includes everything involved

in bringing them into a right relationship with God, including the gifts of faith and repentance. Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners as to whether or not Christ's work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed Himself will be saved infallibly. Redemption, therefore, was designed to bring to pass God's purpose of election.

All Calvinists agree that Christ's obedience and suffering were of infinite value, and that if God had so willed, the satisfaction rendered by Christ would have saved every member of the human race. It would have required no more obedience, nor any greater suffering for Christ to have secured salvation for every man, woman, and child who ever lived than it did for Him to secure salvation for the elect only. But He came into the world to represent and save only those given to Him by the Father. Thus Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others, but it was not limited in value for it was of infinite worth and would have secured salvation for everyone if this had been God's intention.

The Arminians also place a limitation on the atoning work of Christ, but one of a much different nature. They hold that Christ's saving work was designed to make possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death in itself did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone.

Since all men will not be saved as the result of Christ's redeeming work, a limitation must be admitted. Either the atonement was limited in that it was designed to secure salvation for certain sinners but not for others, or it was limited in that it was not intended to secure salvation for any, but was designed only to make it possible for God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe. In other words, one must limit its design either in extent (it was not intended for all) or effectiveness (it did not secure salvation for any)" (David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 39).

1. In his lecture, Dr. Sproul contended that Christ's atoning death secured salvation for His people, fulfilling the necessary work of actual reconciliation, justification, and sanctification. Read the following passages which confirm this and record key observations.

Matt. 1:21

Rom. 3:24-25

Rom. 5:10

Gal. 1:3-4

Eph. 5:25-26

Col. 1:21-22

1 Tim. 1:15

- Titus 2:14
Titus 3:5-6
Heb. 9:12
Heb. 13:12
1 Peter 2:24
1 Peter 3:18
2. The following passages speak of Christ's atoning work being applied to particular individuals or to groups of people designated by the particular words *sheep*, *church*, *elect*, etc. Read each passage and confirm whether you agree with this interpretation.
- Matt. 1:21
Matt. 20:28
Matt. 26:28
John 6:35-40
John 10:11, 14-18
John 10:24-29
John 11:50-53
John 17:1-11, 20, 24-26
Acts 20:28
Eph. 5:25-27
Rom. 8:32-34
Heb. 2:17
Heb. 3:1
Heb. 9:15
Heb. 9:28
Rev. 5:9
3. Dr. Sproul mentioned several passages which seem to teach that Christ died for all men, and that His death was intended to save the entire world. If the passages actually taught this, a clear contradiction would develop with the passages listed in question 2 above. One or the other must be true, but not both, as Scripture would compromise its message and authority. Read the following passages and answer the questions below.

Those passages which contain the word *world*:

- John 1:9
John 1:29
John 3:16-17
John 4:42
2 Cor. 5:19
1 John 2:1-2
1 John 4:14

Those passages which contain the word *all*:

Rom. 5:18

2 Cor. 5:14-15

1 Tim. 2:4-6

Heb. 2:9

2 Peter 3:9

- a. Do you conclude that these passages must mean “each and every” person of the world and “all” in the world without exception? Why?
 - b. What theological problems result if these passages literally mean “each and every” in “all” the world?
 - c. John’s gospel in particular has numerous examples where the language appears at times exclusive and at other times inclusive. How would you account for this seeming contradiction which must have been evident even to him?
 - d. One principle in the science of biblical interpretation is that Scripture interprets Scripture, and the clear must always interpret the less clear passages. How might this principle help solve this apparent contradiction?
4. Two passages are included below which may help resolve this situation. After reading them, refer to your notes on the above passages to see if their insight has helped resolve the interpretation of the problematic passages.

“An objection to limited atonement is sometimes made on the fact that the Bible explicitly says in several passages that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), that He is the Savior of the world (John 4:42), that He takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), that ‘He died for all’ (2 Cor. 5:14-15), and that He gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6). If He died for all, it is reasoned, then He did not die for a limited number.

“The answer to this objection is that often the Bible uses the words *world* or *all* in a restricted limited sense. They must always be interpreted in their context and in the light of the rest of Scripture. We must do this in any normal reading. For example, if a newspaper should report that a ship was sunk, but all were rescued, it is obvious that it means that all that were on the ship were rescued, and not all that are in the world.

“The same is true in the Bible. When Luke records that Caesar commanded that ‘all the world’ should be enrolled and that ‘all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city’ (2:1-2), it is clear that all is not all. For the Japanese, Chinese, and Anglo-Saxons did not enroll themselves.

“When Paul twice asserts that ‘all things are lawful’ for him (1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23), it is obvious from the rest of his writings that all things are not lawful for him. It is not lawful for him to sin.

“When Jesus says, ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself’ (John 12:32), it is plain that all is not all. For millions of heathen have not even heard of Jesus, let alone been drawn to Him. And many other millions who have heard of Jesus, rather than having been attracted by Him, have been repelled at the very thought of Him. Jesus may have meant one of two things: All the elect would be drawn to Him, or all kinds of men—Gentiles as well as Jews, Hottentots as well as Swedes—would be drawn to Him. But one thing is clear: All men have not been drawn to Him. All is not all.

“Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 15:22 Paul writes in seemingly universal terms when he says, ‘As in Adam all died, so also in Christ all will be made alive.’ Although it is clear that every person in the world died in Adam (Rom. 5:12), it is equally clear that everybody has not died in Christ. There are many people who have not been crucified in Christ. They hate Him.

“In the light of so many passages (and these could be increased) where all does not mean all in the sense of every individual that lives, it is impossible to make an offhand appeal to these universalistic passages to prove that Christ died for everybody. The context must be carefully studied. When we did that with Romans 8:32 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, it was clear from the context that Paul was asserting that Christ died for all the elect. In the other places the words *world* and *all* simply refer to all the believers, the whole church, and the international world far beyond Israel. In 1 John 2:2, for example, we read that Christ ‘is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.’ This means that Christ died for the sins not only of Jews, but also of Dutchmen, Italians, and Swedes—in fact, for the whole world. It does not mean for every single Jew, Dutchman, Italian, and Swede” (Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pp. 52-53).

The apostle Peter clearly states that God is not willing that any should perish.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

“How can we square this verse with predestination? If it is not the will of God to elect everyone unto salvation, how can the Bible then say that God is not willing that any should perish?

“In the first place we must understand that the Bible speaks of the will of God in more than one way. For example, the Bible speaks of what we call God’s sovereign efficacious will. The sovereign will of God is that will by which God brings things to pass with absolute certainty. Nothing can resist the will of God in this sense. By His sovereign will He created the world. The light could not have refused to shine.

“The second way in which the Bible speaks of the will of God is with respect to what we call His perceptive will. God’s perceptive will refers to His commands, His laws. It is God’s will that we do the things He mandates. We are capable of disobeying this will. We do in fact break His commandments. We cannot do it with impunity. We do it without His permission or sanction. Yet we do it. We sin.

“A third way the Bible speaks of the will of God has reference to God’s disposition, to what is pleasing to Him. God does not take delight in the death of the wicked. There is a sense in which the punishment of the wicked does not bring joy to God. He chooses to do it because it is good to punish evil. He delights in the righteousness of His judgment but is ‘sad’ that such righteous judgment must be carried out. It is something like a judge sitting on a bench and sentencing his own son to prison.

“Let us apply these three possible definitions to the passage in 2 Peter. If we take the blanket statement, ‘God is not willing that any should perish,’ and apply the sovereign efficacious will to it, the conclusion is obvious. No one will perish. If God sovereignly decrees that no one should perish, and God is God, then certainly no one will ever perish. This would then be a proof text not for Arminianism but for universalism. The text would then prove too much for Arminians.

“Suppose we apply the definition of the perceptive will of God to this passage? Then the passage would mean that God does not allow anyone to perish. That is, He forbids the perishing of people. It is against His law. If people then went ahead and perished, God would have to punish them for perishing. His punishment for perishing would be more perishing. But how does one engage in more perishing than perishing? This definition will not work in this passage. It makes no sense.

“The third alternative is that God takes no delight in the perishing of people. This squares with what the Bible says elsewhere about God’s disposition toward the lost. This definition could fit this passage. Peter may simply be saying here that God takes no delight in the perishing of anyone.

“Though the third definition is a possible and attractive one to use in resolving this passage with what the Bible teaches about predestination, there is yet another factor to be considered. The text says more than simply that God is not willing that any should perish. The whole clause is important: ‘But is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.’

“What is the antecedent of *any*? It is clearly *us*. Does *us* refer to all of us humans? Or does it refer to us Christians, the people of God? Peter is fond of speaking of the elect as a special group of people. [In fact the letter repeatedly

addresses believers; see 1:1-4, 10; 3:1] I think what he is saying here is that God does not will that any of us (the elect) perish. If that is His meaning, then the text would demand the first definition and would be one more strong passage in favor of predestination.

“In two different ways the text may easily be harmonized with predestination. In no way does it support Arminianism. Its only other possible meaning would be universalism, which would then bring it into conflict with everything else the Bible says against universalism” (R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, pp. 195-197).

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Does God love all mankind? How can that statement be misleading?
2. What does “particular redemption” mean?
3. Explain limited atonement in your own words.
4. How do you respond to the idea that Christ did not die for all people?
5. Can the gospel be offered universally if Christ’s death is not effective for all people? Why?
6. For the Calvinist, limited atonement means Christ has died to secure the salvation of a specific number of people, His elect. If their salvation is secured, why must we preach the gospel?
7. What does Dr. Sproul mean when he says the death of Christ is sufficient to cover the sins of all people?
8. What does Dr. Sproul mean when he says the death of Jesus is not efficient for all people?
9. A Calvinistic view of the teaching of the Bible understands the Atonement to be an aspect of the redemptive purpose of God related to His purpose in election. Study Ephesians 1:3-12 and discuss how the Atonement fits in God’s purpose in election.
10. Read Matthew 11:25-30 and John 10:14-18. How do these passages affect your view of the Atonement?
11. How does Dr. Sproul’s presentation of the Atonement affect your view of the assurance of salvation?

APPLICATION

1. Dr. Sproul charges that some people are quite content with theological inconsistencies. Are there areas in your life where you see theological inconsistencies that should be reconciled? Do you see inconsistencies between faith and practice? Name one area of inconsistency and commit yourself to the study and action necessary to resolve it.

2. Read John 17:6-26 each day this week. Christ, in His High Priestly Prayer, includes believers from all times in His prayer to the Father. Personalize it by including your name where appropriate when Jesus prays for His people. At the end of each day's reading, write out a truth you have discovered regarding the certainty of your salvation and love in Christ.

"CHECK YOURSELF" ANSWERS

1. limited atonement
2. Augustine and Pelagius
3. d
4. sufficient; efficient
5. His people, the elect
6. true

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Note: Each of these works attempts to understand the significance of the Atonement from a more or less technical vantage point. The work by Stott is technical but very readable and is an excellent place to start. *The Cross*, by Lloyd-Jones, is a collection of sermons on the subject and is not technical but very helpful in understanding the practical implications of the death of Christ. The works by Murray, Morris, Packer, and Warfield are extremely important but will require patient and thoughtful reading. *Life by His Death* is an abridged version of John Owen's classic treatment of the extent of the atonement, which answers the question, "For whom did Christ die?" The articles in the *New Bible Dictionary* entitled "Atonement," "Expiation," "Forgiveness," "Propitiation," "Reconciliation," and "Redeemer and Sacrifice" will provide important information as well as additional resources.

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