

Particular Redemption

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PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

Redemption is our subject and what a subject! The intellect of an angel is not equal to the comprehension of it! How much less man's! Yet when the Spirit of God has made poor man acquainted with the depth of his degradation, and pointed out to him the great Deliverer, though he cannot scale the heights or fathom the depths of redeeming love, though his intellect be weak, and the power of his imagination feeble, he feels that he ought to stand forth and say a word for his Lord, and tell the world what has been made plain to him by his God. Intellect God needs not to proclaim His truths. Excellency of speech is discouraged by the great apostle. Ordinary intelligence, then, so that it is sanctified, need not shrink from touching upon this glorious theme.

The subject of redemption is, I believe, very imperfectly understood. The general impression of it I conceive to be erroneous. Is it not this? viz.: That it is universal in its design and results, i.e., that Christ died for every man born of Adam?

I do not suppose that I misrepresent the views of the vast majority of professing Christians when I describe the work of redemption thus: It is a plan of God's to put to rights the fall of Adam: a way of escape for all from the consequences of sin: a bridge that spans the mighty gulf between earth and heaven, between man and God, — open to all the world.

But is this the truth as it is in Jesus? I think not. And I shall now attempt to prove that this view of redemption work is an ensnaring delusion. May the Spirit of God be with us in our effort!

1. I would inquire what is redemption, and what is its extent?
2. Prove my position by Scripture and argument.
3. Notice some objections.

1. What is redemption? What is its extent?

The word from which the term "redemption" is derived means to dismiss any one for a ransom paid. Hence redemption means deliverance, or liberation procured by the payment of a ransom. It is, in fact, expiation of sin upon payment of a price, or the re-purchase or recovery of that which was lost, or sold, or pledged to another. The words "redemption" and "redeem" I grant, are sometimes used in Scripture in a looser sense than that which they properly mean, e.g. Deuteronomy 7:8, 21:8; Psalm 106:10; Luke 21:28; but as God's redemption of Israel from the hands of their enemies was manifestly a type of the great and effectual, and eternal

redemption of a peculiar people, and as the redemption spoken of in Luke 21:28 is evidently in allusion to the realization of all the benefits secured by the work of Christ, this by no means weakens our position.

Redemption means deliverance procured by the payment of a ransom. Let me illustrate this for you. A person is seized by pirates or bandits, who put a price on his liberation. His friends get to know of his incarceration, and buy him off. Here is deliverance in consideration of a ransom. This would literally be redemption. The man is free. Or to take another figure: a gentleman is in need of a considerable sum of ready money, he mortgages his estate, and gets the sum he wants. When times mend he is enabled to pay back the money to the mortgagee, and thus redeems his estate. The estate is now free. This would literally be redemption. Now, man was taken captive by Satan, and held in cruel bondage by the devil, but God taking pity upon him, sent His Son to pay all demands that might be upon him, and thus was man redeemed. Or, man had mortgaged his estate, had contracted an enormous debt with God, so great a debt that if he were to live and work to eternity he could never pay it; but Jesus Christ came, and satisfied all the demands of justice, and thus redeemed man. Man is now free. He is "bought with a price", "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ", and consequently IS FREE FROM ALL CHARGES OR DEMANDS.

Your common sense will tell you that redemption can be nothing short of this. If men mean anything short of this when speaking of the work of Christ upon the cross, let them employ some other term than "redemption"; but let them not mislead as by confounding part payment with whole payment, an effort to rescue with a thorough rescue, good intentions with great facts and glorious deeds.

Now comes the question, what is the extent of this redemption—this noble, wondrous and amazing work?

If we are to believe the majority of the preachers of the day, it is universal and unlimited; in other words, Christ redeemed every man, woman, and child born of Adam.

But if this be true, I ask, why is not every man free? Why is not every man saved? For surely, if neither God nor Satan have a lien or mortgage upon man, he must be free, he must be saved.

Here, perhaps, I shall be told that the meaning of Christ redeeming every man is, that He paid the mortgage which original sin entailed upon every man, but that, having done thus much, He leaves man to work out his own salvation. But I want to know, does such a redemption free a man from sin? Does such a redemption render man "a new creation"? Does such a redemption make a man a "clean thing", and do away with the effects of the Fall? Come! let us have an intelligible answer!

If it does not, how can any man be saved? For if Adam in his innocence stood not, how can we, with our guilt and criminal inclinations stand? See you not the absurdity and untenableness of the universalists' position?

But to come back: if Christ redeemed every man, why is not every man free? Why is not every man saved? The answer is obvious: every man is not redeemed. Redemption as you may perceive by the text and context, is limited to those who were "chosen of God before the foundation of the

world". Election and redemption are evidently of the same extent. None but those given by the Father to Christ from all eternity are redeemed. And now to the proof.

2. Proof by Scripture and Argument that Redemption is limited to God's people.

Our text compared with the context proves this. Read Ephesians 1:7, and compare it with the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses. Those who had redemption through the blood of Christ were those whom God had chosen and predestinated, &c., before the foundation of the world. See Ephesians 5:25. It is the Church for which Christ died.

I have seen a very ingenious, and to my mind, a very pointed argument in favour of particular redemption, founded upon this passage and its context. It is this, viz.: Paul here is proposing the conjugal love of Christ for His Church as a pattern for the love of husband and wife. Paul would have all the love of the husband lavished upon the wife, after the fashion of Christ lavishing all His love upon the Church. Is not the limitation of Christ's love inferred? If Christ loved other than His own spouse, He would have been no pattern for an earthly husband.

I beg to call your attention to the following scriptures in further elucidation of the point, viz.: Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18, 19 compared with the 2nd verse; John 10:15, 17; Titus 2:14. You will observe in these scriptures that Christ's death is restricted to "the sheep", "the Church", "the people". Now if Christ meant everybody, why employ these restrictive terms?

I know that universal terms are sometimes connected in the scriptures with the atonement: but if these are to be interpreted in their widest sense, why would the sacred writers have employed the restrictive at all?

The universal terms I allude to may be readily made to harmonize with the restrictive: but no man can make the restrictive harmonize with the unlimited. Now to our arguments:—

1. Analogy proves the particularity of redemption, the legal sacrifices were offered only for Israel: their sins alone were laid upon the head of the scape-goat. These were "patterns of things in the heavens", and have their full fulfilment in the atonement offered for the true Israel.

The Israelites alone were the chosen people of God out of all the nations of the earth to serve Jehovah: and only some of them were saved: Why should it, then, be thought a strange thing that Christ should redeem only some out of every nation under heaven?

2. If all were redeemed, then the lost were redeemed; and then, it was a temporary redemption: but the redemption by Christ Jesus is eternal, Hebrews 9:12.

O think of the possibility of a redeemed soul being in hell! Could Christ be called the Saviour of such a one? Of one that is lost? Surely not! Suppose a man falls overboard from a ship, and I plunge after him, lay hold of him and buoy him up, but I am not able to retain my grasp of him owing to the fury of the waves and the violence of his death-struggles, and he sinks to rise no more; could I be regarded as the saviour of that man? Surely not. I attempted to be his saviour. I did my best to be his deliverer, but saviour I was not, or am not; for the man is lost!

Now I maintain that it is precisely so with Christ Jesus and the lost. He was

never a Saviour to them. He never redeemed them: for if He had they would now be in heaven singing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood," &c., Revelation 4:9. Why don't the damned in hell sing this? Because they were not redeemed. I say again, if men will insist upon different views, let them employ different terms to "Saviour" and "Redeemer"; for positively it is an outrage upon the propriety of language, it is a mockery of the understanding to call the Lord Jesus Christ my Saviour or my Redeemer, if He has not saved me with an everlasting salvation. But see Matthew 1:21.

3. Redemption is always described in scripture as something substantial and palpable. It is:

Redemption to God (Revelation 5:9).

Redemption from the earth (Revelation 14:3).

Redemption from among men (Revelation 14:4).

Redemption from bondage, death, and the grave (Psalm 103:4; Hosea 13:1-4).

Redemption from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).

Redemption from all iniquity (Titus 2:14; Psalm 130:8).

Redemption from our former vain conversation (1 Peter 1:18).

But universal redemption frees us from nothing, but leaves us where it found us, and only tantalizes us with a name.

The case of ineffectual redemption has been well illustrated thus:—Suppose a wealthy and philanthropic individual visits a prison. He approaches a dungeon in which a wretched captive lies bound with chains and fetters, and strongly secured within walls, and doors, and bars. He proclaims aloud to the captive that he has brought gold sufficient to purchase his ransom, on condition that the captive will liberate himself from his chains, burst open his prison doors, and come forth! "Alas!" exclaims the wretched captive, "your kindness does not reach my case; unless your gold can effect my deliverance, it can be of no service to me!" Here, brethren, is the use and power of general redemption: a thing that offers, and mocks whilst it offers,—far, far too weak to meet the desperate case of a lost sinner! How different is the salvation of God! (See Zechariah 9:11; Isaiah 42:6, 7; Luke 4:18).

4. The concurrence of the sacred Persons of the Trinity proves our point.

There can be no contrariety of design where there is unity of will, counsel, and mind. Jesus and the Father are one. The Spirit will not speak of Himself, but of what is the Father's and the Son's will. Now Jesus Christ came down to do His Father's will, which will was, not that everybody should be saved, and nobody lost, but that none should be lost of those given to Christ (John 6:39).

How then could Christ lay down His life for any but those given Him? Had He done so, He would have gone beyond His commission! He would have done what He had not seen the Father do! Can we, dare we, have such conceptions of Christ Jesus? God forbid!

In the tenderness of His humanity, Christ wept over the impending misery of Jerusalem, the terrible consequences of sin, but He could not go-beyond the councils of eternity to avert those calamities. The language of His heart was, "NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE!"

I commend this argument to the serious attention of you all. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit must, necessarily, all think and design alike. If there were any difference of intention amongst them, there would be an end to the unity in the Trinity. So, then, it follows that whom the Father chose, the Son redeemed; and whom the Son redeemed, the Holy Ghost undertook to regenerate. If it can be proved that the Father gave all men to Christ, it must follow that Christ redeemed all men; and if Christ redeemed all men, it must also follow that the Holy Ghost either has sanctified or will sanctify all men. But have all men been sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Nay! There are myriads who have never heard of the Holy Ghost, and myriads more who, having heard of Him, not only are uninfluenced by Him, but deny Him.

5. The vicarious nature of Christ's death proves our point. Vicarious, you know, means substitutionary, i.e. one put in the place of another. We read in the Scriptures that "Christ died for us", "Christ suffered for us", "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust". 1 Peter 2:21, and 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21, &c..

Now, competent scholars will tell you that the word "for", in the original, means instead of, in the place of. This is ordinarily the signification of the word. Hence it appears that Christ died in the stead of those for whom He died. He was smitten in their room, He was their substitute. "If", says the learned and acute Witsius, "there is any point in our divinity accurately proved and solidly defended against the exceptions of the Socinians, by illustrious persons in the Church, it is certainly this, viz.: that Christ satisfied the vindictive justice of God, not only for our good, but in our room, by enduring those most dreadful sufferings both in soul and body which we had deserved, and from which He, by undergoing them, did so deliver us, that they could not, with the wrath and curse of God as the proper punishment of our sin, be inflicted on us."

Hence I argue thus: If Christ vicariously suffered for you and me, God can have no claim upon us, no charge to bring against us, no wrath to manifest towards us. It is an impossibility that the sword of Justice should smite both the Shepherd and the sheep, the Substitute and the substituted, the Surety and those for whom He was bound. God cannot exact double payment, and consequently we are free, "whiter than snow", and may exultingly exclaim with the apostle in Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth, it is Christ that died"! But are all in this case? Surely not: for Christ will say to many, "Depart from me"! &c.. How then, I ask, could Christ's redemption have been universal?

6. The argument of the apostle in the 5th of Romans clearly leads to the doctrine of particular redemption. There is there a contrast between the two Adams. As the first Adam by sin had ruined all those who are born of him, so the second Adam was to save all those that are born of Him. The apostle insists upon the union of the first Adam with all his seed, so that when he fell, they all fell in him, because of their federal union with him; and as he was a figure or type of Him that was to come, as he and his seed stood and fell together, so it was to be with the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ and His seed, they were to stand or fall together. For as when the one federal head offended, the offence came upon all the men whom he

represented; so when the second Adam obeyed, righteousness came upon all the men whom He represented (Romans 5:12, 19).

I know of few scriptures more abused than this. The general idea seems to be that the work of Christ here spoken of was co-extensive with the work of Adam, i.e. that as Adam ruined all men by his disobedience, so Christ redeemed all men by His obedience. But how can these things be? If this were so, all men must be saved.

Let us reflect awhile. From the 12th to the 19th verse there is a comparison drawn by the apostle. The passage is full of antitheses. Those antitheses, or opposites, are Adam and Christ, sin and grace (or the offence and the free gift), and their consequences, viz., condemnation and justification, or death and eternal life.

Now if the work of Christ were co-extensive with the work of Adam, either of these two consequences is inevitable, viz.: either all men will be saved, or all men are put upon the same footing as Adam occupied before the fall. But we know that all men will not be saved. And we also know that we are not placed upon the same footing as Adam before the fall, for we bring sin along with us into the world.

There is, then, manifestly something wrong in the reasoning. What is it? The premises are false. Christ's work was not co-extensive with Adam's. The mistake lies in supposing the two Adams to have represented exactly the same family. This was not the case. Adam represented the entire human family: Christ represented the family given Him from eternity by the Father. And the apostle's drift is to show the triumphing power of Christ's work, the superabounding of grace over sin to all interested in it; for though one sin of one man brought death and condemnation upon a whole world, many offences on the part of any man interested in Christ's obedience cannot bring him into condemnation.

That there was some marvellously comprehensive and amazingly gracious revelation here made, is manifest from the anticipated abuse of it, which the apostle notices in the 1st and 15th verses of the 6th chapter. If the ordinary exposition of this scripture were the true one, viz., that the benefits of Christ's obedience will only be applied to those who work out their own salvation by duties, I hold that this question had never been put. In fact, it would have no point. But supposing the case to be as I have stated, nothing was more likely than that some careless or carnal listener would have jumped to the conclusion that he might now sin as he had a mind. "Ah, but", anticipates Paul, "shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we who are dead to (the dreadful consequences of) sin, live any longer therein?"

A very common, and apparently well founded objection is made to this view. It is this, viz.:—"This is to disparage Christ in making Him the representative of only a part of the human race, whilst Adam represented the whole."

To this we answer—"By no means; for as it is more to be a surety for a vast sum for one man who has nothing, and never can have anything to pay his debts, than to be surety for a hundred men who have abundance of their own, so it was more for Christ to contract and undertake for one helpless, hopeless sinner, than for Adam to contract for a righteous world."

Oh, dearly beloved in the Lord—redeemed family of God! Think of your glorious privileges! Your high destiny! Your unassailable security! "Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded!" Grace is so ample, so deep, so comprehensive, so efficacious, so perfect, that it has over-topped the most aggravated aboundings of sin. It is as if the apostle had said, Sin is terrible in its height, and depth, and breadth. It stands up as a huge monster, rearing its head to heaven; but the grace of God is higher, deeper, and broader. The giant creature is flung into the sea of Christ's blood, and is lost to sight for ever in the fathomless depths (Jeremiah 1:20; Psalm 103:12).

But enough. If Christ redeemed every man, then every man must be saved; but as every man will not be saved, it follows either that redemption means something else than what we hold it to mean, or that Christ did not redeem every one of Adam's race. I am content to abide by what I have spoken. If any opponent can scripturally and logically refute what I have advanced, I trust that the Lord will enable me manfully and ingenuously to confess my error.

3 I would notice a few objections, and answer them.

Objection.—It would be unjust of God to redeem some, and not all.

Answer.—Romans 9:20 supplies a sufficient reply to this, and all other objections of the kind; but I would suggest this important reflection to objectors—God has provided no redemption for devils, and why should He be thought unjust for not providing redemption for some men? Are devils inferior creatures to men? I trow not. As long as it is believed that there is an everlasting place of torment for the devil and his angels, let no man who wishes to support a character for rationality object to the reprobation of some men.

Objection.—But if Christ has redeemed only some, why then would He give such general invitations to come unto Him?

Answer.—Every attentive reader of those invitations will perceive that they are not general, but particular. It is to the "weary", the "heavy laden", the "thirsty", the "hungry", the "willing", they are addressed, and not to those who are unconscious of any want, or unwilling to be reformed.

Objection.—But what do you make of such expressions as "God so loved the world," "Christ tasted death for every man"?

Answer.—The context explains its respective text. That Christ did not die for every man has been proved, so that the objected passages cannot mean what they appear to mean; and as for the word "world", or "whole world", and the terms "all" and "every", the attentive reader of his Bible will at once see that they are often used in so vague and loose a way as to prevent any stable argument being built upon their employment. An acute writer, in answer to the first objected passage, asks, Did God love Pharaoh, or Moab, or Ammon, or Judas? or does God love the wicked, &c.? The meaning is,

God so loved Gentiles as well as Jews, &c..

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