

Saved By Grace VII – Atonement Accomplished: The Power of the Cross

Introduction – In our study of the Doctrines of Grace, we come to one of the most heated debates in modern Christendom. What was accomplished from the work of the cross? – or –

Why did Christ die? – This question focuses on the nature of the atonement.

For whom did Christ die? – This question focuses on the extent of the atonement.

We should consider the nature of the atonement first, for then we will know what we are talking about when we consider its extent or scope.

The Nature of the Atonement (Heb 2:17, 13:12) – As we consider this work of Christ, continue to notice whether the scriptures teach us that the possibility of salvation was created, or whether Christ actually saved people through His death.

Something Happened – That which God planned (Matt 1:21) in the Lord Jesus, Christ intended to accomplish (John 6:38-39), and in fact, He did accomplish it (“It is finished” – John 19:30).

He Redeemed Us (Gal 3:13-14) – Christ’s death on the cross did not provide the opportunity for redemption. Christ’s death redeemed us from the curse of the law. He came to be a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).

He Justified Us (Rom 3:23-24) – Christ did not die in order to provide the opportunity for justification. Christ’s death provided our justification, declaring us ‘right’ with God (Rom 5:8-9) and friends of God (v10), and so we see that also....

He Reconciled Us (Rom 5:10, and 1 Cor 5:18-19) – God was in Christ, not providing the possibility of reconciliation for us, but rather reconciling us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

He Made Propitiation for Us (1 John 4:10) – Christ did not die to leave the possibility that God might turn away His wrath from sinners. Christ died to be the propitiation for our sins. This is the love of God.

He Cleansed Us (Titus 2:14) – There is not the possibility of cleansing from Christ’s death. He died that He might purify for Himself His own special people.

The Extent or Scope of the Atonement – If Christ’s death actually secured the salvation of those for whom He died, and not all people are saved, then we must understand that Christ did not die for each and every man. The antithesis had been declared in the beginning between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15).

The Seed of the Woman (Gal 3:16) – The Seed, Christ, coming through Abraham’s line (that is, those with the faith of Abraham – Gal 3:29), and all those in Christ by faith, are the redeemed.

The Seed of the Serpent (John 8:44) – Jesus teaches us not to look for literal descendants of the devil, but we are to see a distinct group of people who are not redeemed.

“I lay down my life for my sheep” (John 10:15) – must be compared with

“You are not of my sheep” (John 10:26) – These verses must be considered in light of what we have learned about the efficacy of the atonement. Christ did not die for some – those He called ‘not my sheep’.

Objections and Accusations – There are strong objections to this doctrine, and as we saw in our study of election, Paul was no stranger to those objections (Rom 9:18-19). In these two verses we see the mercy of the atonement, and the hardening upon those who remain outside.

Limited: One Way or Another – Those who say that Christ died for each and every person have to limit the nature of the atonement, or else we have universalism. If Jesus died for every sin except the sin of unbelief we have another problem: how many of us were guilty of unbelief? Therefore, either we have a universal, but potential atonement, or we have an actual and efficacious, but definite atonement. The first leaves the work of salvation ultimately in the hands of men, the second, in the hands of our sovereign God.

The Partiality of God (Rom 2:11) – If Christ made atonement for many, but not for each and every person, is He not partial?

Romans 2 teaches God is not partial with regard to our sin problem. He overlooks no sin and all sinners are judged. But that is not to say that God is impartial in everything. Every good and perfect gift is from the Father, but we do not all have the same gifts, physically or spiritually. In addition, the scriptures do teach that our election is impartial with regard to us, which means God could not choose us on the basis of our future choosing of Him.

Our Joy in Such an Atonement – In the midst of the debate, the hard study, the need to think these things through, do not miss the amazing grace in God’s completed work of atonement.

Connections to our Election – That which the Father purposed (in the doctrine of election), the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit has applied to you. There is perfect unity in the Trinity and this means that Christ died on the cross for you particularly. And if He made atonement for you, ‘it is finished’. You can’t mess it up. That is real gospel rest.

An Unlimited Atonement (of sorts) (John 6:37) – No one who comes is turned back, even for the sin of unbelief. This atonement covers all of your sin – all of it. This is God’s perfect, amazing, and discriminate love targeted upon you and reaching His goal and purpose perfectly.

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