

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE **(LESSON TWENTY-FOUR)**

THE ATONEMENT **(PART SEVEN)**

The doctrine of definite Atonement states that in the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ, God intended to achieve the redemption of every person given to the Son by the Father in eternity past, and to apply the accomplishments of his sacrifice to each of them by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Atonement was intended to **secure** the salvation of God's elect and that is exactly what it does. The Atonement was definite in its intent and it really does atone for the sins of every single individual whom God has elected unto salvation.

The surpassing excellence of the Atonement and the wonderful assurance that it provides is found in the personal pronouns that Paul employs in **Galatians 2:20**: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved **me**, and gave himself for **me**.*"

The lyrics of the popular gospel song, "When He Was on the Cross" seem to echo Paul's statement in **Galatians 2:20**:

*I'm not on an ego trip, I'm nothing on my own
I make mistakes and often slip, just common flesh and bone
But I'll prove someday just what I say, I'm of a special kind
For when He was on the cross, I was on His mind.*

*He knew me, yet He loved me
He whose glory makes the Heaven's shine
I'm so unworthy, of such mercy
Yet when He was on the cross, I was on His mind.*

Definite Atonement personalizes the death of Jesus Christ and deepens our appreciation of His love for us. Because the death of Jesus Christ satisfied God's justice and appeased His wrath, those for whom He suffered and died will not experience God's wrath on the future day of judgment. As far as His elect are concerned, the price has been fully paid, the law has been completely satisfied, and condemnation has been forever removed.

Augustus Montague Toplady was an Anglican cleric and hymn writer. He is best remembered as the author of the hymn "Rock of Ages." One of his lesser known hymns, "From Whence This Fear And Unbelief," appears to have been written following a time of trial in his life. Toplady, in common with every true saint of God, experienced seasons of doubt concerning the effectiveness of the Atonement as it related to him personally. This hymn is a celebration of the doctrine of definite or specific Atonement and seems to have had the effect of assuring Toplady of the efficacy of the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ on his behalf.

*From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hath not the Father put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?*

*Complete atonement Thou hast made,
 And to the utmost Thou hast paid
 Whate'er Thy people owed;
 How then can wrath on me take place,
 If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
 And sprinkled with Thy blood?
 If thou hast my discharge procured,
 And freely in my room endured
 The whole of wrath divine;
 Payment God cannot twice demand,
 First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
 And then again at mine.
 Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest!
 The merits of thy great High Priest
 Have bought thy liberty;
 Trust in His efficacious blood,
 Nor fear thy banishment from God,
 Since Jesus died for thee.*

In this Lesson, we will examine a few more passages of Scripture which appear to contradict the doctrine of definite Atonement so accurately and beautifully illustrated in Augustus Toplady's hymn.

We will look first at **1 Timothy 4:10**.

1 TIMOTHY 4:10

"For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

Some persons have interpreted this verse to mean that it is the desire and purpose of God for every human being, without exception, to be saved. In the case of many persons, however, God's desire and purpose is thwarted because of their obstinate unbelief. God is unable or unwilling to intervene since those persons are exercising their own free will. He is, therefore, the **potential** Saviour of all persons but the **actual** Saviour only of those who believe.

One difficulty with such an interpretation is that the text does not merely say that God desires and purposes to save all men, but that He is **actually** the "*Saviour of all men.*" **Philippians 1:29** indicates that saving faith is a gift from God: "*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,*" and yet, in **2 Thessalonians 3:2** we read that "*all men have not faith.*" If saving faith is a gift from God, why does not God give saving faith to every human being without exception, since it is His desire and purpose to save them all?

In the previous Lesson, we noted that the Greek word, translated "*all*" in **1 Timothy 2:1-6**, may also be rendered as "all manner of," or "all sorts of." It is possible that in **1 Timothy 4:10**, Paul wants to convey the idea that God is the Saviour of "all sorts of persons, not Jews only but both Jews and Greeks, with a particular reference to those persons who believe."

There is, however, another interpretation of this verse which I believe is the most credible one. It is arrived at by making a thorough study of the term "Saviour" in both its noun and verb forms in the context of the Scriptures and **1 Timothy 4** itself. The phrase in verse **10**, "*specially of those that believe*" clearly indicate that the term "Saviour" is here given a dual application. Of all men, God is the Saviour, but of some men, namely believers, He is the Saviour in a deeper, more glorious sense than He is of others.

This implies that when He is called the "*Saviour of all men,*" in verse **10**, this does not mean that He imparts everlasting life to every human being.

The term “Saviour,” then, probably has a meaning which we do not usually attach to it. In the Old Testament, the term “Saviour” often meant “deliverer,” both with reference to God and men. The passages set-out hereunder, support this:

2 KINGS 13:4-5

*“And Jehoahaz besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. (And the Lord gave Israel a **saviour**, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.”*

ISAIAH 19:20-21

*“And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a **saviour**, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it.”*

EXODUS 14:29-30

*“But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord **saved** Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”*

PSALM 34:6

*“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and **saved** him out of all his troubles.”*

JUDGES 3:9

*“And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a **deliverer** to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother.”*

JUDGES 3:15

*“But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a **deliverer**, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.”*

JUDGES 3:31

*“And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also **delivered** Israel.”*

JUDGES 10:12

*“The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I **delivered** you out of their hand.”*

In all of the passages, the words “saviour,” “saved,” “deliverer” and “delivered” are the translation of the same Hebrew word **yasha` (yaw-shah’)**. It will be noted that the words are not used in the context of salvation from sin but rather in reference to deliverance from trouble.

In **1 Timothy 2:14-15**, Paul writes, *“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be **saved** in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* The salvation spoken of here is not salvation in the ordinary sense of the word, as when a sinner puts his faith in the Lord Jesus and is saved from sin and becomes a child of God. The woman spoken of here is a Christian, for Paul speaks of her as continuing in faith and love and holiness. These things could not be said of an unsaved person. The word “saved” is a translation of the Greek word **sozo (sode¹-zo)**, which in the New Testament has a variety of uses. It is used in respect of the healing of a sick person in the sense that he is saved from illness and from death (**Mark 5:34** “made whole”).

It is also used in the sense of being saved from drowning in a shipwreck (**Acts 27:20**). It is clear that in **1 Timothy 2:14-15**, the word is used in the sense of being saved from something other than from an unsaved condition. He probably means that these believing women would be preserved during the process of child-bearing. The point we are making is that the word “saved” does not necessarily refer to the saving of a soul from sin.

What Paul is most likely saying then in **1 Timothy 4:10**, is that God is the “Saviour” of all human beings in the sense that He is the deliverer and the preserver of all persons in a general way, showering His blessings both on the just and on the unjust. In the case of “those who believe”, however, He is a deliverer and a preserver in a very particular sense. To such persons, He imparts salvation in the sense of everlasting life in all its fulness.

Let us now examine **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

These verses certainly appear to support the view that our Lord died for the entire human race and that the Atonement was not definite or specific. But is this in reality that the apostle Paul intended for us to understand?

When we read the phrase “if one died for all,” we may assume the word “all” refers to the entire human race without any exceptions. But the next phrase says, “then were all dead.” The word “then” is a translation of the Greek word **ara** which is a particle of inference. The word **ara** does not indicate progression as it relates to time, but rather, it refers to logical progression. Thus, it is more appropriately rendered “consequently” or “therefore” rather than “then” as it is rendered in the **King James Version**. What Paul is saying is that the death of “all” is a result or a consequence of the death of Christ. He is saying that the death of Christ has resulted in the death of “all.” Moreover, in the Greek text, the presence of the definite article in front of “all,” indicates that the “all” he is speaking of is a specific or definite “all.” Paul is arguing that the exact same “all” for whom Christ died are the exact same “all” who died as a consequence of His death. Their death was the result of Christ’s death! This understanding is supported by the following translations of the verse:

English Standard Version

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died.”

Holman Christian Standard Bible

“For Christ’s love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: if One died for all, then all died.”

The New English Translation Bible

“For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died.”

New International Version

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.”

New Living Translation

“Either way, Christ’s love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.”

We may illustrate what Paul is saying in **1 Corinthians 5:14-15** using the following table:

Christ's Action	The Result of His Action
He died for all	All died
He died for all	All no longer live for themselves. They now live for the One who died for their sake and was raised from the dead.

Brothers and sisters, those for whom Christ died have themselves also died in Christ. In the New Testament, the way of representing the relation of believers to the death of Christ is to say that Christ died for them. But Scripture also teaches that the believers died **in Christ**. This is what Paul argues in **Romans 6:3-11**:

3 *Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

4 *Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may live a new life.*

5 *For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united in the likeness of his resurrection.*

6 *We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*

7 *(For someone who has died has been freed from sin.)*

8 *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*

9 *We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he is never going to die again; death no longer has mastery over him.*

10 *For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

11 *So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

(New English Translation)

There can be no doubt that all for whom Christ died also died in Christ. For Paul says explicitly, *“one died for all, and therefore all died”* (**New International Version**).

The significant feature of this teaching of the apostle is that all who died in Christ rose again with him. Just as Christ died and rose again, so all who died in him rose again in him. To die with Christ is, therefore, to die to sin and to rise with him to the life of new obedience, to live not to ourselves but to him who died for us and rose again. The inference is inevitable that those for whom Christ died are those and those only who die to sin and live to righteousness. Now it is a plain fact that not every human being dies to sin and lives in newness of life. Therefore, we cannot say that every human being died with Christ. And neither can we say that Christ died for all men, for the simple reason that all for whom Christ died also died in Christ.

Perhaps now, we will be better able to appreciate Paul's statement, *“I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”* (**Galatians 2:20, New English Translation**).

The last passage we will deal with is **2 Peter 2:1**.

2 PETER 2:1

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

This verse appears to teach that the false teachers who Peter warned the believers would infiltrate the church and seek to lead the sheep astray, were beneficiaries of the Atonement, for the verse says that the Lord had *“bought them.”* But had the Lord Jesus really provided an Atonement for these false teachers?

We believe that such a claim is only valid for true believers.

It is important first of all for us to recognize that Peter's concern here is to warn the saints of the danger of false teachers rather than to advance a theory of the Atonement. It is also to be noted that the Greek word translated "*bought*", can be used to denote any kind of deliverance, and so does not necessarily indicate that the false teachers had been purchased by the blood of Christ. Based on the context, it may be best to understand the statement that the false teachers had been "*bought*" not as a reference to the Atonement of Christ, but a reference to some other act of deliverance. In verse **20**, Peter writes concerning the false teachers, "*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*" This verse is not referring to salvation, but to an outward reformation with no ultimate inward reality. These people were never transformed inwardly and therefore, their natures had not been changed. This is why Peter wrote the following about them in verse **22**: "*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*" It is quite possible that the word "*bought*" in verse **1** refers to the outward escape of these false teachers from the pollution of the world and not to the application of Christ's Atonement.

It is also possible that Peter uses the word "*bought*" not in the sense of the *reality* of a purchase, but rather according to the *appearance* of a purchase, based on the outward appearance and profession of the false teachers. Peter may be saying that these false teachers were denying the Lord who they claimed had bought them though this had not occurred in reality. We must remember that these false teachers would come from within the visible church. To speak of them as being "*bought*," would not mean that Christ had died to save them, but that they occupied a position that should only be occupied by those who have been really bought.

Now while these false teachers were not saved themselves, they were able to pass themselves off as being saved and rise to positions of prominence in the church. This reminds us of what Jude wrote in verse **4** of his epistle: "*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*" These false teachers were so convincing, that they persuaded others, even genuine disciples that they were actually saved.

Think about it for a moment. Do you think that if these "wolves" ever appeared to be who they really were, the saints would have followed them? Who would ever believe a teacher who admits that they are a false teacher, and also admits that they are unconverted? These false teachers would never openly admit that their heretical doctrines are, in fact, heretical. They would claim to be saved though their doctrines are false. They would claim to be servants and disciples of Christ, but they would only be professing Christians who are not saved at all! By teaching and practicing immorality, they despise the lordship of Christ and prove their profession to be false. They deny the One whom they have falsely claimed to serve as His precious possession.

Beloved ones, as we conclude our study as it relates to the Atonement, we want to state again that the Atonement of Jesus Christ was designed and intended for God's elect. Furthermore, the Atonement secured salvation for all the elect. The Atonement was not merely a potential work of redemption, it was actually an actual work of redemption. The Atonement was not a dive afterthought. The purpose of God in the Atonement of Jesus Christ was determined before the foundation of the world. The design was not a matter of guesswork but a matter of specific plan and purpose, a plan and purpose which Almighty God is sovereignly accomplishing. All for whom Christ lived and died will be redeemed by His sacrificial life and death.