Judging

By Darrell Conley
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There is one passage of scripture that is known by every reprobate and enemy of Christianity. They may know nothing else of the Bible, but be assured they know this one: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). It is used as a weapon by the worldly, the lukewarm, trouble-makers, unbelievers, and false teachers in an attempt to disarm faithful children of God. We are told that condemning sin is judging. Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is judging. Preaching and practicing the Bible doctrine of separation from the world is judging. Refusal to bid God- speed to false teachers is judging. Attempts to obey Bible teaching on church discipline is branded as the most shameful judgment of all. What does the Bible teach about judging?

The primary meanings of the words commonly translated judge, *krino, anakrino,* and *diakrino* are respectively "separate, select, choose; examine, investigate, question; separate throughout, discriminate, discern." Sometimes *judge* denotes "sinful action," but sometimes it means "permitted or even required action." As always, the context will enable us to determine how the word is being used.

In the first few verses of Matthew 7, it is clear that the Lord is not condemning all judging, rather a particular kind of judging. Verses 3-5 show the Lord is condemning hypocritical or self-righteous judging.

> *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye*

(Matt. 7:3-5).

What right do we have to condemn another when we are guilty of the same sin, perhaps to a greater degree? Paul makes it clear what our attitude should be in attempting to restore another: “Brethten, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Self-righteous and hypocritical judging is also condemned in Romans 2:1-3, 17-23.

The context of Matthew 7:1-5 proves that coming to a negative conclusion about someone is not necessarily unrighteous judging. In verse six Jesus warns against casting pearls before swine and giving that which is holy to the dogs. Since it is obvious he is talking about two-legged swine and dogs, it is necessary for us to come to a conclusion about who are swinish and who are doggish. This constitutes a necessary and righteous judgment. We are also forbidden to judge things we cannot know such as the motives and secret thoughts of others. “Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God” (1 Cor. 4:5). No one has the right to draw conclusions without sufficient evidence. To do so is to violate what Paul commanded. But he did not forbid all manner of judging. In the next chapter Paul says that he had judged the fornicator in the church at Corinth and commanded the Corinthians to do the same. Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians what Christ said in John 7:24: “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

The Bible also forbids judging a man a lawbreaker when there is no law to be broken. When we make laws where God made none, we are guilty of sinful judging. This is the kind of judging Paul condemned in Romans 14:3 ASV: “Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth

not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." The same kind of judging is mentioned in Colossians 2:16-17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day; which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body *is* Christ."

The word *judge* is sometimes used to mean "to pronounce and execute sentence; to condemn." It is used in this sense in John 12:47: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." We as Christians certainly have no right to pronounce eternal judgment on anyone. We do have the right and the obligation to withdraw our fellowship from ungodly church members. Such is called "delivering them to Satan" (1 Cor. 5:3-5, 9-13).

These, then, are the kinds of judging that are condemned in the Bible:

1. Hypocritical or self-righteous judging
2. Judging without sufficient evidence
3. Making a law where God made none
4. Pronouncing eternal condemnation on another

As was pointed out above, some of the meanings of the words translated *judge* are "select, choose, examine, and discern." Judging is examining evidence and drawing conclusions or making choices. It is possible to do this in unfair or ungodly ways. Such judging is wrong. However, certain kinds of judging are commanded. "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Since righteous judgment is judging according to reality, we have no right to prejudge, but we do have the right and obligation to draw conclusions about people or doctrine that are warranted by the evidence. If it is always wrong to draw conclusions about people, how could we obey the following commands?

> *Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine (Matt. 7:6).*

> *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).*

In the same context Christ said:

> *By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:20).*
>
> *Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision (Phil. 3:2).*
>
> *Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear (1 Tim. 5:20).*
>
> *For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).*
>
> *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1).*

We are commanded to preach the gospel, to contend for the faith, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort (Mark 16:15-16; Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2). To obey these commands in an uncompromising, but kind way is not to be guilty of unrighteous judging. To teach truths from the Bible that imply that some will be lost is not ungodly judging. It is not sinful to arrive at conclusions based on what the Bible teaches and to hold fast to those conclusions. The Bible says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

We are commanded to judge those church members who are ungodly and will not repent. Such judging is not only not sin but is positively required of us. Paul said he had already judged the fornicator in the Corinthian church and urged the church at Corinth to do the same (1 Cor. 5:3-5). The word *judge* as used by Paul here means "not only to reach a conclusion, but to act upon that conclusion" by withdrawing from an ungodly brother.

“For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked men from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:12-13).

Let us be careful that we are not guilty of prejudging, self-righteous judging, or hypocritical judging, but do not let false teachers and ungodly brethren intimidate us from boldly preaching the gospel and steadfastly standing for the truth. Let us “judge righteous judgment.”

Limited Atonement?

By Dr. John Hobbs

The third cardinal doctrine in Calvinistic Theology is the doctrine of “Limited Atonement.” It is the “L” in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Most Calvinists prefer the term “Particular Atonement” or “Definite Atonement.”

What Calvinists Believe About Limited Atonement

> *The Canons of Dort, article 8, states, ‘It was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and only those, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.’*
>
> *Henry Fish, a Baptist wrote in 1850, ‘Did the atonement, in its saving design, embrace more then the elect? The elect only; for whatever he designed he will accomplish, and he saves only his people from their sins.’*

David Steele and Curtis Thomas wrote, 'But He came into the world to represent and save only those given Him by the Father. Thus Christ's work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others.'

WJ. Seaton said, 'Christ died to save a particular number of sinners.'

Lorraine Boettner said, 'The value of the atonement depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of the person making it; and since Christ suffered as a Divine-human person the value of His suffering was infinite … The atonement, therefore, was infinitely meritorious and might have saved every member of the human race had that been God's plan.'

Ralph Gore wrote, "Christ died for the elect. The extent of the atonement is identical with the intent of divine election."

Paul Enns wrote, 'If God is sovereign (Eph. 1:11) then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved then God's plan is frustrated.'

R. B. Kuiper said, 'God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, will be saved.'

The question may be put this way: When Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved? Calvinists would answer the latter group.

Wayne Grudem wrote: The term that is usually preferred is particular redemption, since this view holds that Christ died for particular people (specifically, those who would be saved and whom he came to redeem), that he foreknew each one of them individually (cf. Eph. 1:3-5) and had them individually in mind in his atoning work.

The Foundational Basis for Limited Atonement

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is based on the concept of double jeopardy (trying a person twice for the same crime). The argument goes like this: If Jesus died for the sins of all men, then the sins of all men are paid for and one has already been judged for those sins. On the Day of Judgment, if God would bring a man into judgment and commit him to hell even though Jesus had already paid for his sins, God would be putting that person in double jeopardy. God would be unjust – something he is not (Deut. 32:4).

The argument is: Since we do not permit double jeopardy in our own legal system, surely we would not expect God to do something we would not do.

Calvinists argue therefore – Jesus actually died only for the sins of the elect, the chosen, the saved.

However, just because there is an analogy from a human viewpoint, this does not prove that it coincides with the truth of God's word.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs 14:12 states, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." We are warned: "Lean not upon thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

We do not formulate doctrine by analogies or examples. They may illustrate doctrine, but they do not prove doctrine. We

must determine truth from the Word of God and not human reasoning. There are some great truths of scripture which are beyond our comprehension and we accept because the Bible teaches them (such as, the Trinity, God's love, nature of sin, and such like), and therefore are not proved by reason, but are known by revelation.

Scriptures Used by Calvinists to Support Limited Atonement

> *Matthew 1:21 states, "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins."*
>
> *Jesus "loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25).*
>
> *Romans 4:25 reads, "Who was delivered up for our trespasses."*
>
> *Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*
>
> *Romans 5:10 reveals, "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son."*
>
> *Romans 8:32 declares, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."*
>
> *Acts 20:28 states, "To feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."*
>
> *In John 10:15 Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep."*
>
> *2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be [a] sin [offering] on our behalf."*
>
> *Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave himself for our sins."*
>
> *Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."*

Titus 2:14 states, "Who gave himself for us."

Calvinists use the above Scriptures as proof texts that Christ died "only" for the elect.

Christ died for his people. That is the main point of these verses! However the Bible does not teach Limited Atonement – that Christ died "only" for the elect, "only" for a limited class.

Calvinists "twist" and "pervert" other plain Scriptures that clearly teach that Christ died for all men. They do so unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). When we come to the Bible, we must take all of it to arrive at total-saving truth. Psalms 119:160 states, "The sum of all thy word is truth." Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It takes all of Scripture for the man of God to be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Christ died for all men. Christians appreciate the fact that Christ died for them. The verses used by Calvinists emphasize that point. Unbelievers do not appreciate that fact and therefore do nothing about it.

A True Story Concerning Hebrews 2:9

In 1980, I took second year New Testament Greek through Wheaton College at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. My professor was Dr. John Werner, an outstanding world-recognized Greek scholar. But, he was a Calvinist through and through. One day we were reading the book of Hebrews in class. When it came my time to read, I was to translate Hebrews 2:9. I translated the verse, "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with

glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death *only for the elect."*

My professor and the class laughed. After the laughter subsided, I added, "Excuse me – that should be – for *every* man."

Brethren, if the grammar makes sense, anything else is nonsense. To deny that Jesus tasted of death "for every man" is to deny the plain and clear teaching of Scripture! Dr. Werner agreed that the verse should be translated "for every man." But, he denied that is what it meant. He believed that it meant "every redeemed man" even though that is not what the text says!

We should not base biblical doctrine on "feeling" or "thinking." Biblical doctrine is based on God's Word!

If the Holy Spirit wanted to say that Christ died only for the elect, he could have easily done so. But, he did not do so. There is no "specific" passage in the entire Bible that teaches Limited Atonement.

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, says, "Hebrews 2:9 is best understood to refer to every one of Christ's people, every one who is redeemed."

Grudem is reading the Bible with his rose colored glasses on and sees what he wants to see instead of what is really there! The text does not say that Christ tasted of death for every "redeemed" man. Grudem is reading into the text something that is not there. This is something that God's Word explicitly forbids (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8-9; 3:15; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 4:4; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2; 12:32).

The words *every man* in Hebrews 2:9 are translated from the Greek word *pantos* (in form it is a genitive masculine or neuter singular word from the adjective *pas, pasa, pan* meaning "all" or "every").

Bruce says:

> *So far as the form goes, pantos might be masculine ("everyone") or neuter ("everything"); but since our author's concern is with Christ's work for humanity, and not with cosmic implications of His work, it is more probable to be taken as masculine.*

Alford says, "The singular brings out, far more strongly than the plural would, the applicability of Christ's death to each individual man." Jesus died for each individual person (which equals all mankind). The singular *pantos* emphasizes his care and love and concern for every human being!

This fact is a strong factor for each individual person to give his life back to him and live a holy God-fearing life (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

This same Greek word, *pantos,* is found in Matthew 13:19 and is translated "when any one." It is obvious in Matthew 13:19 that the Greek word refers only to lost human beings.

It is interesting that the Greek New Testament uses the word *pantos* at least once specifically to refer "only" to condemned human beings. Calvinists say that the word *pantos* in Hebrews 2:9 refers "only" to saved "redeemed" people. If the word *pantos* in Matthew 13:19 refers only to lost people who will spend eternity in hell, does that mean that in Hebrews 2:9 that the same group is being considered? No!

Can the word *pantos* refer to all mankind including those who appreciate Christ's death for them? Of course! Christ "tasted of death for every man." It is important to understand that the meaning of *pantos* will have to be determined by the context. Therefore, we can conclude that in Hebrews 2:9, the Greek word *pantos* refers to all humans period – not just the saved, not just God's special people. Jesus died for all humans – those who are lost and those who are going to heaven.

Calvinists deny the plain teaching of God's Word and add to it when they say Jesus tasted of death for every "redeemed" man.

An Examination of God's Word and Limited Atonement

The Bible is very clear that Jesus died for the sins of "all men" and not just for "the elect."

Consider these passages as to who Jesus died for:

1. John 1:29: "the one that taketh away the sin of the world" – i.e. all mankind
2. John 3:16: "the world" – i.e. all mankind
3. John 4:42: "This is indeed the Saviour of the world" – i.e. all mankind
4. John 12:47: "I came … to save the world" – i.e. all mankind
5. Romans 5:6: "Christ died for the ungodly"
6. Romans 5:8: "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
7. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "he died for all"
8. 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" – i.e. all mankind. Those who believe in Limited Atonement say this refers to "the world of the elect." Again, they are adding to the Word of God.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"
10. Timothy 2:6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all"
11. 1 Timothy 4:10: "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe"
12. Titus 2:11: "bringing salvation to all men"
13. Hebrews 2:9: "He should taste of death for every man."
14. 2 Peter 2:1: "Denying the Master that bought them" – Christ provided redemption for the false prophets but

they refused to accept it.

15. 1 John 2:2: “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” – i.e. all mankind
16. 1 John 4:14 “The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” – i.e. all mankind

A Study of 1 John 2:2

One passage that must be the focus of our attention is 1 John 2:2. Here John wrote, “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

Vine defines “propitiation” as “a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.” The text is very clear that sin covering has been provided “for our sins” – that is, Christians’ and “for the whole world,” or all humanity. If there was ever a verse in the Bible that taught the possibility of unlimited salvation – this is it!

Brown says that the word “world” is the “sphere of human beings and of human experience.” The apostle John uses the word “world” several times to refer to all humanity (John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:46-47; 1 John 4:14).

It is sad that some people “twist” the scriptures from their true meaning (2 Pet. 3:15-17). The same basis for forgiving one man’s sins is also the same basis for forgiving the sins of all men – the death of Christ.

It is not implied or taught that sins are forgiven unconditionally. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of Universalism, i.e. all men will be saved. The Bible does teach that only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:10; 7:14).

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, writes, “The preposition ‘for’ [in

> *1 John 2:2] is ambiguous with respect to the specific sense in which Christ is the propitiation "for" the sins of the world.*
>
> *The Greek word translated "for" in this verse is peri, and means 'concerning' or 'with respect to." It does not define the way in which Christ is the sacrifice with respect to the sins of the world.*
>
> *It is consistent with the language of the verse to say that John is simply saying that Christ is the sacrifice available to pay for the sins of anyone and everyone in the world."*

There are several problems with Grudem's twisting of Scripture:

(1) Grudem does not deal with the word *world* in his defense of Calvinism. It is obvious that John uses the word "world" in the verse and in the other verses cited to refer to all humanity. Jesus died for all mankind.

(2) It is true that the word *for* in the phrase *for the whole world* is the Greek word *peri*. I agree that it means "concerning" or "with respect to."

Robertson says that *pen* has a sense similar to *hyper* in the verse. The word *hyper* means "in behalf of." It must be pointed out that the word *for* in the phrases *for our sins* and *not for ours only* in 1 John 2:2 is translated from the Greek word *peri*.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to use the Greek word *peri* three times in 1 John 2:2. This word is sufficient to define the way Christ is the sacrifice "for our sins" but not "for the sins of the whole world."

Grudem says that the preposition *peri* "is ambiguous." He is straining the gnat and swallowing the camel in order to avoid accepting the clear truth. Grudem would say that its third use

in the verse is ambiguous but not its first and second uses.

The emphasis in the verse is on Christ's "propitiation" – not the preposition "for."

John says Christ's propitiation is "for our sins" and "not for ours only" but also "for the sins of the whole world."

A Study of 1 Timothy 4:10

Paul wrote, "For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe."

This verse is important to the discussion. Here the apostle clearly states the salvation of all men. He does not teach Universalism. But, he does teach that salvation has been provided for all men, i.e. all humanity. However, that salvation is appropriated and appreciated by those who believe. All men are potentially saved by Christ's death, but only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved.

Grudem says:

> *He [Jesus] is referring to God the Father, not to Christ, and probably uses the word 'Savior' in the sense of 'one who preserves people's lives and rescues them from danger' rather then the sense of 'one who forgives their sins,' for surely Paul does not mean that every single person will be saved.*

Grudem misses it again.

(1) No, Paul is not teaching that every single person will be saved. No New Testament writer ever taught that.

(2) There is no problem with taking the word *Savior* as referring to God the Father. He is the Savior of all men in that He sent Jesus to die for all men (John 3:16; 1 John

4:10). The Father and the Son are one in purpose, aim, plan, and design (John 10:30).

(3) For Grudem to say that the word *Savior* does not refer to "sins" shows his theological bias. In Matthew 1:21, the child is to be called Jesus. Why? Because he will save his people from their "sins." The word "Jesus" means "Savior." Grudem does not want 1 Timothy 4:10 to refer to "sins," so he denies it.

(4) God desires "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). Salvation for "all men" has been provided (1 Tim. 4:10). However, this salvation is "specially" for those who "believe." This word does not imply that all will be saved. The Greek word *malista* translated "specially" is also translated "particularly" or "especially" in 1 Timothy 5:17 and "above all" or "especially" in 2 Timothy 4:13. Paul is saying that God is potentially the Savior of all men. For the individuals who "will" to come to the Lord, these individuals "will in no wise be cast out" (John 5:40; 6:37).

J.W. Roberts wrote, "He is the savior (potentially) of all men, but especially (or actually) of believers."

Dr. J. C. Davis states, "God is the potential Savior of all men (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is the actual Savior of believers" (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 2:10).

J. N. D. Kelly wrote, "Paul is no doubt giving expression to his conviction that the certainty of salvation belongs in an especial degree to those who have accepted Christ." True!

1 Timothy 4:10 is like Galatians 6:10. Christians are to "work that which is good toward all men and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." We have an obligation to do "good toward all men" (even the ones who have not named the name of Christ). But, we have a special obligation to help those who are Christians. Christ died for all men but

especially for those who believe.

An Invitation Is Given to All Men

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The church, the bride as it is called, and the Holy Spirit perpetuate that invitation as shown by John in Revelation 22:17:

> *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

The invitation is given to all men. Why offer salvation to all if that is not possible? The text says “whosoever” will.

God Desires All Men to Be Saved

In (2 Peter 3:9) we read:

> *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

God wants “all” to come to repentance! Boettner, a Calvinist, denies that it is God’s plan for all to be saved. Seaton, a Calvinist, asks, “The over-riding question must always be the Divine intention; did God intend to save all men, or did He not?”

The fact that God desires that “all” should come to repentance implies that God has provided provisions for “all.” Christ died for all men. This verse teaches that if a man is lost, it is against God’s will because he wants “all” to come to repentance and be saved.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul wrote, “Who would have all men to be

saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Here again God's Word is clear. God desires that all men be saved.

In (Ezekiel 33:11) we read:

> *As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

God desires that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. God does not want or wish that any person be lost.

Paul Enns, a Calvinist, wrote, "If God is sovereign then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved, then God's plan is frustrated."

God is sovereign, but his plan involves the free will of man. His plan is that those who by their free will elect to believe and become obedient will be saved.

God is "frustrated" or "grieved" when men do not respond to his saving grace (Gen. 6:5-6; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41; Eph. 4:30).

God's desire and will is frustrated when men are lost. God wants "all" to come to repentance and "all men" to be saved. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9).

But, some will perish – not because Jesus did not die for them. He died for each individual person to show his intense love. If an individual is lost, it is because he has rejected God's intense love. God does not desire it that way. But, he respects the right of a person to make his own decision.

Pardon for Sins Can Be Rejected

It is possible for pardon and salvation to be offered and rejected. In 1829 two men, Wilson and Porter, were apprehended in the state of Pennsylvania for robbing the United States mail. They were indicted, convicted, and sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the scheduled execution, President Andrew Jackson pardoned one of the men, George Wilson. This was followed by a strange decision. George Wilson refused the pardon! He was hung because he rejected the pardon.

Today, God has provided eternal salvation and pardon for all men. He has accomplished this by sending his one-of-a-kind Son to die for the sins of each and every individual person. However, this salvation can be refused.

If one chooses not to appropriate the blood of Christ over his sins initially and continually, he is refusing and rejecting the salvation which has been provided for him by God Almighty. While we can recognize the foolishness of such a decision, we must be aware of the fact that the majority of mankind will refuse their pardon (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). How sad!

Why Did God Create Man?

A lady asked me, “Why did God create man if he knew so many would be lost?”

This is a thought-provoking question. I answer this with two thoughts:

(1) Whatever God does is right and just. We may not understand what he does but that is because we are human and finite while he is divine and infinite (Isa. 55:8-9). Deuteronomy 32:4 states, “For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he.” God himself asked Job, “Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?” Job attacked

and condemned the present righteousness of God. Job sinned by doing this. Job later repented Job 40:35; 42:1-6).

(2) I think the answer to this tough question is that God respects our free moral agency. If a man is lost, it will be his fault – not God's! God has done everything possible for the salvation of each person. God will not overtake one's will and force him to obey. Life is what we make it! We can avail ourselves of God's love or we can spurn it and reject it. The choice is ours (Deut. 30:11-15; Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:37, 40).

Seaton, a Calvinist, said, "If it was God's intention to save the entire world, then the atonement of Christ has been a great failure, for vast numbers of mankind have not been saved."

Seaton misses it. Christ's death was not a failure. The failure is man's free moral will. Man by his own free will chooses not to obey. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9; cf. John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

On the Day of Judgment if a person is cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity, it will be his own failure – not God's! The failure lies with man not with God.

Calvinists say they focus on God's sovereignty while we focus on man's free will. I say it is not an either/or situation; it is a both/and situation. Both of the these concepts are respected in the scriptures. We must accept both.

Conclusion

To deny the Bible teaching that Christ died for all is to make God a respecter of persons – unjust and unmerciful. The doctrine of limited atonement is false. All men are potentially saved. If a person refuses pardon, death is not the fault of the one who offered mercy, but of the one who

refused to accept it.

> *(Editor's Note: The word atonement means to cover or conceal. It is an Old Testament word and is not found in the New Testament. The sins of people before the cross could be atoned, but after the cross the sins of the obedient believer were forgiven. There is a dramatic difference. Under Moses there was a remembrance made of atoned sins year by year [Heb. 10:3 – the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins]. The blood of animals could cause God to overlook sins while remembering them year by year, but could not remove the sins. This was atonement. The blood of the Lamb of God is able not to merely cover or bypass sins, but to remove every transgression and disobedience. To receive the forgiveness available in the blood of the cross, one must obey [Heb. 5:7-8].)*

Inexcusable Excuses

By Terry R. Townsend
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Have you ever thought about what folks might say to God at judgment for their failure to obey him? It's sobering, isn't it, to know there's a coming judgment – a day in which all men will give account of themselves to the Lord! Paul writes, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Let's consider a few inexcusable excuses.

Without question, millions of people will blame their lack of obedience on preachers. Unfortunately, millions today put more

faith in mortal man than they do God. Yet, the Bible is abundantly clear that one must be a doer of the word and not a hearer only (James 1:21-25). False teachers are deceiving millions into thinking they have "peace and safety," when in reality they're on a collision course with destruction (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Thus, it behooves us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Blaming false teachers at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

There will be many on the Day of Judgment blaming the weather for their lack of involvement in the Lord's work. When asked why they fail to participate in spiritual activities, many blame mother nature – too hot in summer, too cold in winter, too wet in spring, too windy in fall, etc. If truth be told, people will do whatever their hearts so desire! Inclement weather does not negate one's responsibility to serve God (1 Cor. 15:58). Blaming the weather at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

Undoubtedly, millions will blame their parents at Judgment for their failure to do God's will. How often have I heard non-members say the following in a Bible study, "I see what you're saying, but if what I believe was good enough for dad and mom, it's good enough for me!" But what if dad and mom were wrong? Will God still grant you entrance into Heaven despite your failure to obey that which you knew to be true? The Bible says that one must obey Christ above all else, including family (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-35). In matters of faith, who should we ultimately listen to? Parents or Christ? Obviously, the answer is Jesus (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-3). Putting the blame on parents for your lack of obedience will be an inexcusable excuse.

Others at Judgment will use the excuse of profession for their failing to do the Father's Will. I'm sure some will say, "I would have obeyed and served you Lord, but my job wouldn't allow it." Truth be told, millions are more interested in money than they are in God. Paul had it right when he penned,

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Tim. 6:9-10 ESV). Jesus said that we’re to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). To blame one’s profession at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

I’m sure that on Judgment Day some will use their lack of earthly substance (poverty) as an excuse for their failing to do the will of God. Some will probably say, “Lord, I wasn’t as blessed as others; thus, I didn’t do all I could.” I wonder if God will have standing beside Him the widow who gave two mites as an example to those making such excuses (cf. Mark 12:41-44)? The Lord expects us to do what we can with what we have (Matt. 25:14 ff). Blaming our lack of service on poverty will be an inexcusable excuse.

Another excuse many will make at Judgment will be that of persecution. I can hear some now, “Lord, I would’ve served You, but I didn’t because I feared persecution.” But didn’t he tell us in his word that Christians would be mistreated on occasion (cf John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Didn’t he assure us his presence, protection, and panoply to help us overcome (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6; Eph. 6:10 ff)? Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Thus, fear of persecution as a defense for failing to obey God will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Finally, millions will offer unto God the excuse of procrastination; that is, many will say, “I wanted to obey You Lord, but I simply ran out of time!” I wonder if Felix will be among the masses who will make such an excuse (Acts 24:25)? The Lord is patient, and he gives men ample time to obey (cf.

2 Pet. 3:9-14); thus, to use procrastination as a reason for failing to obey will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Simply put, we can make all the excuses we want to as to why we fail to do God's Will; however, on the Day of Judgment, God's answer to such excuses will be this:

"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!"

Cotham's Comments on the Holy Spirit

By Perry B. Cotham
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A misconception of the Holy Spirit and his work for man's salvation leads to all kinds of religious errors. All that we can ever know about the Spirit and his work comes from the Scriptures. It is tragic to see some turn away from what the Bible teaches in favor of an inner, mystical longing, which they mistake for information about God.

The Holy Spirit is a person. There are three beings in one Godhead (Acts 17:29; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), but three beings possess the divine nature.

The Holy Spirit gave us the Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Eph. 6:17). The apostles were guided by the Spirit into all of the truth (John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:3). In conviction, conversion, and edification the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of man only through the inspired Word of God (Psa. 19:7; Psa. 73:24; Psa. 119:50, Psa. 119:93, Psa. 119:105, Psa. 119:130). "The Gospel … is the power of God unto

salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Spirit operates through the words of revelation, which are spirit and life (John 6:63).

The Bible plainly says that the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians. Paul wrote, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

How does the Spirit indwell the child of God? He indwells directly or indirectly. There is a difference in stating the fact and in stating the method (the how) of the Spirit's indwelling. The Bible does not teach that the Spirit dwells in Christians apart from the inspired Word. Many religionists have the idea of a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. They think the Spirit gives the believer extra help besides the Word of God. This, of course, denies the all-sufficiency of God-breathed writing to make the man of God complete. Of course, this belief leads to all kinds of "experiences" and "feelings."

Let us note some things: (1) God dwells in Christians (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 4:12-16). Does God dwell in his children directly or indirectly? It is indirect, through obedience to the word: "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him" (1 John 3:24). (2) Christ dwells in Christians (Col. 1:27). But how does Christ dwell in us? Paul explains, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17). "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). (3) The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. The Spirit is in each faithful member of the church the same way that God and Christ are in the saved. Neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit dwells directly, personally, in Christians. As the Christian obeys the Spirit's message, the Spirit's influences are in him, and he brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Comparing Ephesians 5:17-19 with Colossians 3:16 shows how the Spirit is in the child of God. To be "filled with the Spirit" is to let the "word of Christ" dwell in you richly. There is no statement of Scripture saying the Holy Spirit dwells literally, directly, and personally in the child of God. If Jehovah the Father and Jesus the Son can indwell Christians indirectly and figuratively, the Holy Spirit can do the same.

Children of God cherish the Spirit's message and live by it, and in this way the Holy Spirit dwells in them and in the church. The teaching that the Spirit works directly – separate and apart from the Word of God in the heart of the alien sinner or the child of God, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God … that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We have the Bible and it is sufficient to make us what God wants us to be.

Anti-Christs (antichrist)

By A. B. Gregoreo
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No other term in the Bible stirs the imagination and fires such wild speculation as that of "antichrist." The speculation is extreme among those religious teachers holding the various premillennial theories. It is the stuff of scary movies and novels that attract multitudes of superstitious worldlings. In their ignorance, authors weave a web of error. God's word provides the light that will help us understand the who and what of "antichrist."

The term is a combination of "anti' and Christ. "Anti" has two basic meanings: (1) "over against," hence one who puts himself

in the place of Christ; (2). “opposition to,” i.e., one who stands in opposition to Christ.

From first to last, the story of the Bible is that of Satan’s attempts to take the place of God, and his opposition to the Creator’s rule and will. This was first displayed in heaven in the misty past when certain angels, not content with their position, sinned and were cast down to hell (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan then appeared in Eden to corrupt the only creatures made in God’s image (Gen. 3:1-6).

In Noah’s day he nearly succeeding in snaring all of humanity in his vile net (Gen. 6:9-12). In Egypt, Satan’s man enslaved the Hebrews and slaughtered their male children. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, crushed God’s people and demanded that they worship his image (Dan. 3:1-5).

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to foresee Satanic efforts to hinder and even destroy God’s cause. From the broken Grecian Empire he saw a “little- horn that rose up to persecute God’s people (Dan. 8:9-14; 23-25). This represented the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164). He hated the Jews and their religion. Their temple he robbed. He placed an image of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. A swine was sacrificed on the sacred altar and the temple defiled with its blood. He forbade circumcision. Every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures that could be found was destroyed. He tore down the walls of Jerusalem. Truly he was anti-God.

Daniel also saw yet another little horn that persecuted God’s people. It sprang from the Roman Empire and most likely represented the vicious emperor Domition (Dan. 7:23-26). From Nero onward most of the Roman emperors were antichrist.

Jesus was confronted by antichrist forces of evil. At his birth, wicked Herod the Great sought to have him murdered. When his ministry was launched, the Jewish hierarchy waged an ongoing war against him and his teaching. Ultimately they

secured his death. The Master warned his disciples of imposters who would claim to be Christ, i.e. messiah (Matt. 24:5). With deceitful signs they would lead many astray, even among the elect (Matt. 24:24).

Paul warned of a coming "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:1-12) – described as the "son of perdition." He would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or worshiped. He would sit in the temple of God and set forth himself as God. His coming would surely be a work of Satan. He would use lying signs and wonders to deceive people. This malevolent spirit of anti-Christian iniquity was already at work in Paul's day.

The apostle John wrote of "antichrists," not just one single evil individual. In his day there were already many antichrists. They formerly had been among the faithful churches but they have gone out from them because them were no longer with them in heart and mind (1 John 2:18-19). They were liars because they denied that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22). They denied his Sonship to God. They were false prophets. In their teaching they denied Jesus had come in the flesh, i.e., his incarnation. They were actively at work in John's day and he warned the brethren to reject and avoid them. They were deceivers (2 John 7). Because they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, they had not God (2 John 9). There is an attitude or spirit held by certain false teachers then and now which John labels "anti-Christian" (1 John 4:1-3).

Antichrists are of two varieties. There are those yet within the church. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). He likewise warned Timothy that "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Such antichrists seek to corrupt the faith and practice of the church. They seek power and control over congregations.

Some create their own churches that compete with Christ's church for the souls of men. These are counterfeit churches that do great damage to Christianity. We see popes who put themselves in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Of similar nature are the founders and heads of denominations. Founders and leaders of all the cults that pervert the message of the Master seek to situate their "church" in the place of Christ's sacred body as antichrist. Most prominent in this class of antichrists are those theologians and "pastors" who have embraced one of the many varieties of religious skepticism. Claiming to be Christians, they deny Jesus existed from eternity, that he is God, that he was virgin born, that he worked genuine miracles, that his death secured for- give of humanity's sins, and that he arose and ascended back to heaven. Occupying positions in seminaries and churches, these unbelievers are against Christ and his holy Cause.

Then there are those antichrists who in no way are associated with Christianity. They are unbelievers of every stripe who hate Jesus, his church, his word, and his disciples. Their hatred drives them to make war against the saints (Rev. 12:13-17). This warfare can be violent, physical persecution such as Rome and Jews employed in the early years. Modern examples of this violent anti-Christian spirit are seen in Russia under Communism, China, Cuba and most Muslim nations.

The opposition of unbelieving anti-Christians can be ideological such as presently prevails in academia, the media and the entertainment industry. They ignore the existence of Christianity, or they marginalize Christians. They subject them to ridicule and continual assaults on their faith. This opposition can take the form of legal harassment. Anti-Christian organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State use every legal trick to hinder, hobble, and undermine the influence of Christianity in America.

Imagining antichrist to be some horrid supernatural enemy who is to come at the end of our age, many are ignorant, blind, and unaware of the antichrists working in their very midst!

Paul describes the end of all such anti-Christian enemies, “Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). In the day when the Christ returns, “every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God “ (Phil. 2:10-11). This will certainly include every person who has set himself in the place of Christ or worked against his cause!

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