

H.C. Lord's Day 15 – The Suffering of Christ for His People – Sermon Outline

Intro: For whom did Christ suffer and die? Do the non-elect receive any benefits from the death of Christ? How do we understand the Catechism here, and the author of it, Ursinus, when he says that “Christ bore in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race” since all are not saved?

Need: The extent and intent of Christ's atonement, the sufficiency and efficiency of it, all come into view. Christ died with the purpose to save only His elect, though His death does have benefits for the non-elect as well. But for the elect, through union with Christ by His Spirit and gift of faith, we are saved by His blood.

Theme: Christ Suffered God's Judgment & Curse for our Sin to Give His Righteousness & Life to us.

1. Christ suffered body and soul to redeem our body and soul from sin.
2. Christ was judged by Pontius Pilate to show the Father's judgment for our sin fell on Him in our place.
3. Christ was crucified on a cross to show He took on the curse we deserve for sin.

I. Christ suffered body and soul to redeem our body and soul from sin.

- A. H.C Question 37 says Christ bore in His body and soul God's wrath again sin for the whole human race.
 1. The proof texts given don't support an interpretation that says Christ atoned for every single person.
 2. Isaiah 53 says “*For the transgressions of My people He was stricken*” and that Christ the righteous Servant would justify “*many, for He shall bear their iniquities*” **Isa. 53:11**.
 3. **1 Pet. 3:8** and **2:24** clearly refers to the elect, those already regenerated, for it says Christ bore sin so that we have died to sins and live for righteousness, being healed/saved by His atonement.
 4. **1 Tim. 2:5-6** is more open to interpretation, as it speaks in universal terms, saying “*there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.*”
 5. V. 1-4 says to pray and give thanks for all men, “*including kings and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”
 6. Because Christ desires all men to be saved, He has given Christ to be a ransom for all men. Does all men here mean “all the elect” or “all mankind, including the non-elect/reprobate?”
 7. **Rom. 8:1-4**, indicates that salvation/freedom from condemnation is only for those who are “in Christ Jesus”. And we must be in Him in such a way that we do not live for sin, according to the flesh, but for God and His righteousness, by the Spirit. Christ condemned sin in His flesh, so that we would be righteous in Him, and live righteously by Him, fulfilling the requirement of the law by the Spirit.
 8. Today, our discourse and understanding has basically reduced the possibilities down to about 2 options. Either Christ atoned for all sinners, and it is up to man by their free will and own power to choose Him [Arminianism], or Christ died in any and every sense only for the elect.
- B. The latter view is regarded as the only Reformed or Calvinistic position. But historically that is not true.
 1. Some have held, like Calvin and others, going back to Augustine and Ambrose before him, down through the middle ages and popularized by Peter Lombard in the 12th century, that Christ's death is “**sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect**”.
 2. Meaning, Christ's suffering, being a man of infinite value and offering a perfect sacrifice for sin, is capable/sufficient of saving not only everyone in the world, but an infinite number of sinners that could possibly be. Yet, the atonement was offered not for all, but only for the elect to save them.

3. Then, there is the whole range of what is called the “hypothetical universalists”, who seem, to one degree or another, to say not only was Christ’s death sufficient for all, but it was actually, in some sense, offered up for all sinners, but, God’s purpose was to apply that atonement only to the elect.
 4. This latter view is much disputed as to whether it is really in the “Reformed” stream. But we must understand that there are various streams that have been Reformed. In fact, in my reading of Ursinus, who wrote the Heidelberg Catechism, he seems to come close to a hypothetical universalist position.
 5. In fact, the Westminster Assembly pastors/theologians who crafted the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, had much dispute on this point. Vines, for example, said the non-elect “have some fruits of the death of Christ and the benefits thereof” but whether it made them salvable, is uncertain.
 6. So some held that Christ made a conditional decree through Christ’s atonement, even with the non-elect, that Christ would save them if they would but repent/believe. Some even appealed to **John 3:16** for this universal love of God, (including **Ursinus**), even to the non-elect. A minority wanted the phrase **“foreordained to everlasting death”** removed, but the Assembly as a whole refused to do so.
 7. Robert Letham says these on the Assembly were not Amyraldians; their H.U. did not go as far as he did, and B.B. Warfield states that the clause was intended to exclude hypothetical universalism by ensuring each element in the ordo salutis/order of salvation was *intended* only for the elect.
 8. If you hold that there was a fore-ordination of reprobation, then salvation was only intended for the elect, in God’s decretive will, and wasn’t held out as a conditional promise or covenant to the non-elect, even though God’s preceptive will, what He commands and morally desires, is all to repent/believe.
 9. But Edmund Calamy and others on the Assembly held to their views, and while it was ruled out of bounds of the confession, they continued to be a part of the assembly, Calamy a prominent part.
- C. Of course, the Heidelberg Catechism was written by **Ursinus** some 80 years before the WCF.
1. From my reading of Ursinus’s own commentary on the H.C. that he wrote, he certainly seems to verge toward what would be called Hypothetical Universalism. On H.C. 37, he addresses potential objections:
 2. **“Obj. 4.** *If Christ made satisfaction for all, then all ought to be saved. But all are not saved. Therefore, he did not make a perfect satisfaction.*
 3. **Ans.** *Christ satisfied for all, as it respects the sufficiency of the satisfaction which he made, but not as it respects the application thereof; for he fulfilled the law in a two-fold respect. First, by his own righteousness; and secondly, by making satisfaction for our sins, each of which is most perfect. But the satisfaction is made ours by an application, which is also two-fold; the former of which is made by God, when he justifies us on account of the merit of his Son, and brings it to pass that we cease from sin; the latter is accomplished by us through faith. For we apply unto ourselves, the merit of Christ, when by a true faith, we are fully persuaded that God for the sake of the satisfaction of his Son, remits unto us our sins. Without this application, the satisfaction of Christ is of no benefit to us.”*
 4. **Ursinus** at one point says, *“The principal part of his sorrows and anguish were the torments of soul, in which he felt and endured the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind.”*
 5. It seems his view is that Christ really satisfied for every single person ever, enduring God’s wrath, but that suffering, that satisfaction, is only ours by application.
 6. Now it is true that Christ’s accomplished salvation at the cross, does not benefit us savingly until we are united to Him, by His Spirit, and our clinging to Him in saving faith. Even the unbelieving elect are under God’s wrath until they repent/believe in Christ, as John 3:36 says.

7. So Ursinus and others argue, if even the elect are still under God's wrath for sin, after Christ has atoned for their sin but prior to their coming into saving union with Christ, then why couldn't Christ have atoned for all, yet only the elect, via union with Christ by His Spirit and faith, benefit from the atonement?
 8. Well, when Christ ascended to the Father, did He go to the Father and present Himself a sacrifice for all sinners, and say to the Father, "Look Father, I have borne the sins of all humanity, be pleased with my propitiation for the sins of every single person in the whole world"?
 9. Nothing I read in Scripture demands such an interpretation, and other Scriptures seem to rule out the possibility of such an interpretation.
- D. To be crystal clear, Ursinus and Hypothetical Universalism is NOT Arminianism, that's simply false.
1. All these affirmed that man is dead in trespasses and sins, incapable of repenting and believing in Christ without the work the life-giving work of the Spirit. To use more modern language, they all affirmed that regeneration precedes faith, and only the elect are regenerate.
 2. Further, none on the Westminster Assembly, and Ursinus prior here with the Heidelberg Catechism, went as far as Amyrauldianism, sometimes called 4 point Calvinism. Amyraut held that God foresaw the fall and sent His Son to atone for the sins of everyone. God then also foresaw that none would accept the gospel, and so elected some to salvation.
 3. Edmund Calamy and others like him on the assembly, holding to English hypothetical universalism, believed the atonement was effective for the elect and conditional for the non-elect, God decreed election, but passed the rest by (no positive reprobation). One decree, not 2 like Amyrauldianism.
 4. Calamy and others on the assembly argued that God's love in John 3:16 was not for the elect only, but also the reprobate, though the reprobate damn themselves, as Christ's death was an administration of grace even to the reprobate, but they rejected Christ's satisfaction for their sin.
 5. His view was that if the Gospel was to be preached to all, and it is, then in some sense Christ redeemed all, both elect and reprobate, though God only purposed to apply that redemption to the elect, the rest reject redemption, do not apply it to themselves, and so that atonement is forfeited.
 6. Calamy, likely Ursinus here in the Heidelberg, and others are stressing the general, universal love of God, even for unbelievers, and take it further, saying therefore Christ atoned for them as well.
 7. They further would argue we cannot sincerely mean the promise of the Gospel to all, that they shall be saved because Christ died for them, unless Christ in fact did die for all sinners, not just the elect.
 8. I would urge that we do not tell unbelievers Christ died for them, because even if we acknowledge the reprobate receives some temporal benefits from Christ's death, they receive no saving benefits, meaning His atonement, to satisfy God's wrath for sin, was not made for them.
 9. We can say it was a sufficient atonement for them, and because we do not know who is elect and who is not, and because God commands all men everywhere to repent, Acts 17:30-31, we can say that if they repent and believe, Christ's atonement will save them; but we cannot say Christ's atonement included them and was intended for them, unless/until they repent and believe.
- E. So Christ's atonement was sufficient for all, but atoned only for the elect, and is applied only to them.
1. Heb. 10:12-14 says, "**But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**" It is evident that Christ's sacrifice for sin and being seated at the Father's right hand, was not to make all men potentially

salvable, and only the elect certain to be saved in application/union with Christ, but that Christ paid for sin and now is waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool, put under judgment, cursed/damned.

2. By Christ's offering He has perfected those who are being sanctified, in other words, those whom He died/atoned for, to sanctify them, having made them perfect in Himself, to be presented as so in glory.
 3. **QUESTION:** Can we say that all in the covenant/church, that Christ has died for them, since we know it is likely not all in the church are regenerate, and some will never be but will prove themselves reprobate: Yes, we can. Why? Because the new covenant is in Christ's blood, and all who are baptized into Christ, either being born in a covenant household, or by virtue of profession of faith, have a relationship to Christ, a covenant relationship, established in His blood, though it may not be salvific.
 4. **2 Cor. 5:14ff.:** *"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and **He died for all**, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation**. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"*
 5. Understand that "we might become the righteousness of God in Him" is not expressing doubt, like it might or might not happen. A better word would be we will or we shall become the righteousness of God, it makes it possible, and certain, that we will become righteous, in union with Him.
 6. So you have Christ as dying for all, God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their sin/trespasses, through the Gospel word of reconciliation. Obviously "world" here does not mean everyone in the world, else we would have to say all are forgiven of their sins/trespasses.
 7. So universal and absolute terms, like all and world, are used in Scripture to speak not of all or everyone in the world, but all the elect, all that are called and chosen for salvation in Christ.
 8. *The extent and intent of Christ's atonement is seen also in **John 17**, His High Priestly prayer, offered up just before He goes to the cross, showing us that He made Himself an offering for sin only for the elect, those the Father had given Him, those who would believe in Him: "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."*
 9. Christ goes on to say only the son of perdition, Judas is lost, in fulfillment of Scripture. Did Jesus pray for Judas? No. Did Jesus offer Himself to the Father as an atonement for Judas's sin? No.
 10. Christ did not offer Himself for all sinners, but all the sinners chosen by the Father, from all over the world, the elect from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Christ did pray for Peter, and Peter repented.
- II. **Christ was judged by Pontius Pilate to show the Father's judgment for our sin fell on Him in our place.**

A. Ursinus notes that Pilate found Christ innocent, as Christ truly was innocent, and yet was still sentenced, though innocent of sin, to die for sin. The Father offered His innocent Son to pay for His people's sin.

1. **John 19:4**, "Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." Christ was faultless, and found to be faultless by Pilate, representing the Father, yet Pilate will crucify Christ, wickedly, but the Father offers up Christ, lovingly, to glorify His Son, as we saw in John 17 above, but also to glorify us in Him, by His saving grace.
2. Once Christ was sentenced, Barabbas the murderer was set free. It is not possible for Christ to atone for sinners, and that atonement failed to be applied to all for whom Christ made Himself an atonement.
3. We, murderous sinners though we are, are set free. Yes, it doesn't happen until we are born of the Spirit, united to Christ in faith, but as Christ has said, none for whom He died are lost.

B. Christ was your substitute, so be certain that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

1. It is not possible that Christ could have atoned for some, whom He failed to bring into living, saving union with Himself. None are lost that He intended to save, and actually atoned for.
2. Many are lost who apostatize from the covenant in Christ's blood, and though His bloodshed had temporary benefits for them, He never had atoned to wash away their sins, that was never His offering for them, never His purpose, and so they do fall away, because of unbelief and no saving atonement.

III. **Christ was crucified on a cross to show He took on the curse we deserve for sin.**

A. As Christ took on our judgment, though innocent, He died on a cross, a tree, as the OT law indicated this was a sign of being cursed; Christ truly bore God's wrath/curse/punishment for our sin in judgment.

1. This wasn't a potential atonement, nor an atonement that could be forfeited, but actual atonement for the elect, that was sure to bring them in living union with Himself, just as Christ prayed in John 17.
2. Scripture and our confessions, perhaps minus the Heidelberg Catechism here, affirm this.
3. **Gal. 3:13**, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree', and that is a quote from **Deut. 21:23**.

B. If Christ was sentenced for you, cursed for you, nothing you can do can prevent your salvation, or undo it. Yes, you must repent and believe, but Christ's saving work assures you will repent and believe in Him.

1. Just as we are fallen in Adam without our consent, we are made alive in Christ without our consent.
2. We do confirm our fall by our own sinfulness, in our hearts, minds, words and deeds, and we do confirm our salvation and love for Christ in repentance and faith, clinging to Christ, and without such faith we would not be saved. But Christ has already begun His saving work in us by His Spirit when we do express saving faith. His saving work was accomplished 2,000 years ago, and He then gives Himself to us first by working faith in us, in our hearts by His Spirit, and union with Christ begins.
3. Union with Christ is enriched and deepened in Word, prayer, and Sacrament, the preached Word especially. These are means of Christ Himself communicating His life-giving self to us in covenant bond/union, which goes beyond our understanding.
4. By the Spirit and God's Word, you can know that Christ died for you, that He rose for you to give you new life, and He loves you and is working His eternal life in you day by day. So feed on Him in faith, faith that works through love, faith that lays hold of Him in Scripture, prayer, and sacrament. Let's pray.