

The World's Propitiation, #2

1 John

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We're so glad to have you all with us here this morning at Truth Community Fellowship, and we are teaching our way through the book of 1 John as we meet together and we've been doing that for several weeks now, and if you have a Bible, I would invite you to turn to the book of 1 John as we come to our final message on a deep and rich passage that we've spent several weeks on to be able to explore the depths of, it's 1 John 2:1 and 2. Let me read them for us together here this morning as we start and set the word of God that we are going to be looking at in our minds in a fresh way here this morning. The Apostle John wrote,

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Now, as we start this, I'm already going to take a little parenthesis and let you know what's coming up over the next few weeks in our pulpit ministry. I wanted to do that before I even read the Scripture. After today, we're going to take a little break from going through 1 John, just a short three or four week break and we're going to study the doctrine of divine providence, and that's just so very crucial for all of you. If you have any regrets about the past, if you have any fears about the future, if you have a sense of regret and questioning decisions that you've made in the past and wonder, "If only I had gone left when I went right, where would my life be today?"; if you know anything about those thoughts and questions in your mind, then the teaching that's going to come in the next few weeks is going to help you immensely. I can tell you without fear of contradiction that nothing has shaped my life so thoroughly and nothing has impacted the life of my family as much as going through the doctrine of divine providence when we did that a few years back. It's going to be a wonderful time. It's intensely practical. It's very comforting and it's what we're going to be looking at in the weeks to come and so I just invite you to consider that and try to make your way here because I trust the Lord that it's going to be a great encouragement to you to see the perfection of God's work in everything that happens in your life. Even when you fall short of him, even when you make decisions that you would otherwise regret, providence teaches us that God is at work in all of that in order to bring about what glorifies him and what is always good for

you in the end, and having that confidence and walking through life, frees you from worry about the future, it frees you from regret about the past, and we just have to see what Scripture says about it so that we could anchor our minds and live in that kind of peace. So that's where we're going in the next coming few weeks but for today, we are in 1 John 2 and those verses that we just read.

Now, this is the second of two messages. Last week we took our first look at that closing line at the end of verse 2 where it said, "Jesus is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Now, this is a very difficult passage. It requires some careful thinking. This is not a passage that you can accurately handle by throwing it out and in two minutes saying that this settles every theological debate that theologians have wrestled with over the past several centuries. No, it's not that simple and we need to think carefully, and there is something more important than even what this particular passage may mean or not mean that causes us to do that. As we come to the Scriptures, as we open a Bible, we are opening the very word of God. We are opening the word of a holy righteous God who has revealed himself to us in the pages of Scripture in a unique and in a special way. It is a holy righteous word. It does not belong to men. It belongs to God and he has commissioned to us as believers and commissioned to the church to be the pillar of truth, 1 Timothy 3 says. The church is intended to be the institution that protects and proclaims the word of God, and having received it from generations gone by in the past, we take the baton, we run the relay, we run our lap and we want to run it well. We want to run and defend the truth that has been handed down to us and so that means that we're careful when we do it. It means that we respect the teaching of God's word. We respect what it says, and if you respect the word of God, you're going to be careful with the way that you handle it. You're going to search it out. You're going to be careful lest you misrepresent what God has revealed in his word and so that undergirds, that conviction drives everything that happens in this fellowship and if you're a visitor here, especially a local visitor, you know what Truth Community stands for just in what I just said. We don't have a big agenda. We don't have a three year, five year plan of where we want to be. The only thing that we care about here is we want to open up the word of God and see what it says and what it means by what it says. It's real simple. We believe as we do that God will lead and to make us into what he wants this place to be and so there is no other agenda than to open up of God's word and treat it carefully and to teach it as accurately as we know how so that God would be honored and that you would be edified and built up through the teaching of God's word. That's our philosophy of ministry. It's pretty simple. So that is why we have taken our time and been careful going through these two verses because there are matters of great profound eternal importance to your soul wrapped up in here and in the way that you live your life. These two verses command you and call you to a holy life; to live righteously; to turn from sin and to take sin seriously and to separate yourself from it. That's a comprehensive thing that governs and impacts our life 24/7 and so if it impacts us 24/7, we want to be careful with it.

We've seen in this passage that Jesus is an Advocate for us in the heavens. In a place where we cannot see, in a realm that is too holy for us to enter on our own, we have a brother in heaven who represents us having satisfied the wrath of God against our sins.

That's really important. That means that we are represented in the throne room of the universe by name by our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, when I hear that and I think about that, I think I want to spend my time thinking about that; those are riches too great not to plunge and to try to explore. And now as we come to verse 2, in the past couple of weeks we've considered the idea of propitiation, and what we said about propitiation was it means that Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross in order to turn away the wrath of God against us; in order to satisfy the demands of God's law and to be able to turn away his wrath so that we could be reconciled to the Father. Well, listen, listen, if God truly is a wrathful God, a holy righteous God who has indignation against sin every day and you and I are sinners and we have fallen, we've broken his law and we realize how a holy God reacts to sin, then it's important for us to take the teaching carefully that says that wrath has been turned away. These are not matters, here's the point, these are not matters to tread on lightly. These are not matters to treat superficially. These things go to the very well-being of your eternal soul and so of course we're going to take them seriously. Of course we're going to treat them carefully. Why would you do it any other way when so much is at stake? When so much great truth is presented in such a compact form, of course we're going to treat it carefully and think carefully about it because that's what's best for the glory of God and it's what's best for your soul. That's why we do what we do.

Now, having said all of that and, you know, explained why we've gone through it like we have, we come to verse 2 where it says that, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." The only question that matters is not what other men have said about this over the course of time, the only thing that matters is not to try to respond to inflammatory rhetoric or people that get upset when you preach, we know a little bit about that here, the only thing that matters is what does this mean, and the surest way that you can be confident that you have arrived at an interpretation of a passage and you know what it means, you understand what God intended it to mean, is by comparing Scripture with Scripture. We compare Scripture. We look to other passages that speak to similar themes in order to find a divine consistency that gives us confidence that we are understanding the passage in the right way, and that means you treat a verse within its context and it means that you also look to other Scriptures to see what it means. You don't just take one verse out of isolation and pound the table a couple of times and then move on to a funny story as if that were seriously handling the Bible. It's not. These things are too important and so what we've tried to do and what we're going to do today is take our time and think. We need to think. Romans 12 talks about, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The teaching of Scripture is not addressed to your emotions, it's not meant to bring you to some supercharged emotional level that you live at 24/7; no, the teaching of Scripture is addressed to our mind. God gave us minds so that we would use them to the understanding of his word.

Now, with all of that introduction, last time we explained what this verse does not mean. We explained what it doesn't mean. When it says that "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world," we said that it does not mean that every man who ever lived will ultimately be saved. It does not teach universalism. It does not teach that everyone is going to be in heaven in the end. That's not what John teaches in this letter because he condemns false prophets as antichrists and

unbelievers as children of the devil as you go on and read, and so John even in the context of this letter, is bifurcating and creating a sense of "there are the Christians and there are those who are not Christians" and there are eternal consequences to not being a Christian. It's not teaching that Christ died to achieve actual salvation for every man without exception who ever lived. It doesn't teach that. It couldn't possibly teach that.

Now, secondly and where it gets a little bit more controversial you might say, this passage as we showed last time does not mean that Christ died in order to achieve potential salvation for all men. It does not mean that. It doesn't mean that Christ died and now it was possible but uncertain, there's the key word, possible but uncertain about who will ultimately be saved, and we saw a lot of reasons why that could not be the case. First of all, here in verse 2, it's the language of reality. This is not the language of potentiality. It says that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. He truly and in reality is the one who turned away the wrath of God from us. That's not talking about potentiality at all.

The other reason that this could not possibly be teaching potential salvation, that when Christ died he opened the gates but it was uncertain who would come in, the reason it could not possibly mean that is because of what the Bible teaches about the nature of man. The Bible teaches that man in sin is dead in sin. He is blind. He is hostile to God. He is under the wrath of God. And to say that Christ purchased a potential salvation means that we have to count upon that sinner who is hostile to God, who John 3:19 says does not want to come to the light lest his evil deeds be exposed, in fact he will not come to the light, to say there is a potential salvation and now it's up to the sinner to respond in faith is to completely misunderstand what the Bible says about the condition of men in sin. They are dead. They are hostile. They will not come to God. So to say that it's a potential salvation and now Jesus did his part, now it's up to you, when it's presented loosely and carelessly like that, is to misrepresent what happened on the cross and it is to misrepresent what men in sin are really like. We do not seek God. There is none who are righteous, it says, and to suggest that someone in that condition has the power within himself, unaided by anything outside him, to exercise faith in Christ and rescue his own eternal soul is not true. It's just not true. It's really silly when you start to take seriously what the Bible says about the condition of men in sin.

So, here's the question then: what does the passage mean? What does this passage mean then when John said, "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world"? It's us and then somehow it expands out into the whole world, what does that mean? What is he talking about? Well, let me give you a little summary so you'll know where we're going and then we'll come back and we'll unpack it all. Here's what this passage means: it means that Jesus Christ when he died on the cross, he died to achieve actual salvation for some men over the course of time, but not all. It is actual salvation. Listen very carefully, this is so important: it is actual salvation because the results of his death are certain. There is no uncertainty about what the results of Christ's death were going to be. It was certain. It was determined what was going to happen and that's what we're talking about. It's the difference between saying it's a potential salvation and who is going to be saved is uncertain, as if the sovereign mind of God would actually operate that way; it's the difference between saying a potential

salvation with uncertain results versus saying it's an actual salvation with certain results. That's the difference. That's what we're talking about. We are not talking about today how we preach the Gospel and how we call men to saving faith in Christ. That's not what we're talking about. That's an important issue, it's not the issue on the table today. What we're talking about is what did God intend to happen when Christ died on the cross? Did God intend anything to happen? When Jesus says, "It is finished," did he say it's finished to unleash a realm of uncertain potential? Does that sound like something's finished to you? It doesn't to me. To say it's finished means it's over. It means it's accomplished. It means it's actual. It's done. Well, what we're doing is saying, "Okay, what does it mean that it was finished?" And it means that Christ died to achieve actual salvation for some men but not all of them. And I want you to write, if you're taking notes down, this is the most important line in the sermon: it is actual salvation because the results are certain. There is no ambiguity. There is no doubt in the mind of God about what's going to happen as a result of the death of Christ. Christ actually intended to do something on the cross, not simply make it possible for something to happen. That's what the whole distinction about this discussion is based on.

Now, here's a quote for you. Charles Spurgeon said and I quote, "Christ so died that he infallibly secured their salvation who through Christ's death not only may be saved but are saved, must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved." What he's saying here and what we're saying here today is that when Christ died, he made the salvation of his elect certain. It guaranteed the outcome. There was no question about what was going to happen and as we go along, you're going to see this, I'll give you a little teaser for the end of the sermon, what that means is, if you're here today as a Christian, it means that Christ had you by name individually in mind in the whole plan of redemption. When he died on the cross, he was dying to secure you by name, not to simply make it possible for an uncertain mass of humanity to be saved. He guaranteed your salvation by name. If your name is Mark and you're a Christian, Christ died for Mark by name, not a faceless mass of humanity. That's what's at stake here. It has everything to do with how you view the work of Christ on your behalf.

Now, before the foundation of the world, God chose some people who would live throughout the earth geographically and across the span of the millennia chronologically to belong to him. God had chosen that and he had chosen these people to be a love gift to his Son, a redeemed humanity who would belong to Christ and whom Christ would reign over and God gave Christ, God the Father gave his Son a redeemed humanity to belong to Christ and to be his bride, and what the Bible teaches is that Jesus actually purchased forgiveness for those whom God had chosen. Listen, he literally put himself in our place and absorbed the wrath of God on our behalf. He actually did that. He was a real substitute. He paid the debt of our sin in full. We will never pay for sin because Jesus has already done so.

Now, what today's text does in 1 John 2:2, it helps us see the breadth of this work. It's not just individual and personal, we see the breadth of the work of Christ; we see the breadth of the magnanimity of God, the benevolence of God and how broad the benevolence of God is and there are three points here in this message that are going to help you follow

along and understand. The first point is this if you're taking notes, we'll ask this one in the form of a question: who is "the world" in 1 John 2:2? Who is "the world"? It says that "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Who is "the world" that he's talking about here? Now, summary statement and then we'll explain it. What John is saying here is that Christ is not only the propitiation for the Jews, he is also the propitiation for Gentiles, that is non-Jews who are scattered throughout the world who would one day believe in him. He was the actual propitiation for them just as much as he was for the Jews.

Now, who wrote this letter? You say, "God wrote it." Yeah, I know. I got that. It's God's word but God inspired the Apostle John to write this letter. It's called 1 John for a reason, it's because John was the apostle who wrote this letter. That is important and we're going to go slow here. I'm going to try not to get too fast on it so that you can stay with me. That is important because the Bible shows us and teaches us that the ministry of the Apostle John was focused on the Jews. It was focused on the Jews. This is really important. Remember, we're interpreting Scripture with Scripture here. That's what we're doing and if you turn back to the book of Galatians, I can show you something that is very helpful in this regard, Galatians 2:7. This is the Apostle Paul writing and he's writing about how he had to rebuke Peter because Peter had strayed and was holding himself aloof from the Gentiles and so there was a big confrontation about that, and here in Galatians 2:7, Paul is the one who is speaking and he said, "seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised," that is the non-Jews, the Gentiles, follow this, "just as Peter had been to the circumcised." Paul was entrusted with taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter had been entrusted with taking the Gospel primarily to the Jews. That's what he's saying here. "I went to the uncircumcised, Peter went to the circumcised." Verse 8, "for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles." Peter to the Jew, Paul to the Gentiles. Now, watch this, verse 9, "and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas," another name for Peter, "and John," there it is, uh-oh, this is getting important now, "who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we," meaning Barnabas and Paul, "might go to the Gentiles and they," James, Peter and John, "to the circumcised." John was going to the circumcised. That's where his ministry was primarily directed. Keep that important point in mind as you read 1 John 2:2.

Let's go back there to 1 John now and I'm not done making the point about the Jews and Gentiles distinction here. We're just getting started on this most important point. So here we are in 1 John 2:2. We've got the Apostle John who Scripture teaches us, his ministry was primarily directed to the Jews. It's as plain as it could be. He brought the Gospel to the Jews in the course of his ministry and with that in mind he says in verse 2, he says, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." He is expanding their notion of the greatness of salvation. Although Jesus was a Jew born in the Jewish lineage, he's saying, he didn't come only to save Jews. The Messiah came through the Jewish line but it wasn't only for the benefit of the Jews, God intended a blessing to go out through all the regions of the earth as well; that people who were not Jews, who had never known the Jewish law, who were not subject to its

regulations and the Sabbaths and all that, the people outside would be brought and embraced in the scope of salvation as well. That's what he's saying here. He is telling them that Christ's intentions were broader than our circle of Jewish believers. He came for Gentiles also and in that sense, he is the propitiation for the whole world. The world, no matter where you are in the world, there is only one place that you can look for for propitiation. Whether you live in America, whether you live in China, whether you live in Europe, whether you live in South America or wherever you live, there is only one place where you can look for salvation from your sins and that is to the work of propitiation that our Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross. That's what he's saying. One writer said this, "The contrast would therefore be between those Jews for whom Christ died and those Gentiles for whom Christ died, both of whom now make up or eventually will make up the church."

Now, we're not done yet, not by a long shot, but with that thought in mind, John's ministry was primarily to the Jews, now look at verse 2 again, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins." "Our," who? With pronouns, you've got to know who the antecedent is. You've got to know what the pronoun is referring back to. Well, John who is ministering to Jews, writing to a circle of Jews, says, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins. But before you get carried away with that thought, let me quickly emphasize this to you, my Jewish friends, it wasn't just for us, there was a breadth to the work of Christ that expanded beyond our racial lineage to include those who never knew anything about being a Jew." And he's talking in the language of actuality; that Christ actually is the propitiation for our sins, us Jewish believers that are gathered together, and understand that Christ did – get this – Christ did that same, in that one act, he was also acting in that same certain way for others who had nothing to do with Judaism whatsoever. That's the sense in which he is expanding it out there.

Now, this view, what we're talking about, the Jews versus Gentiles, is something that you and I take for granted today basically because, I don't know, maybe there's someone who is a converted Jew in the room here today but almost all of us are Gentiles in this room. We're not Jews and we didn't have anything to do with Judaism and we've grown up and we've never had to deal with that and we just assume that of course Christ died for the whole world; he opened the doors of salvation to those outside the Jewish race. We take it for granted because that's all we've ever known and we're Christians and so, of course, we just think of it naturally. You know, why is this even an issue? Well, here's what you need to see, beloved, and it's very very important for you to understand this point: you take it for granted today, back 2,000 years ago, this was a massive huge issue and that's why John had to explain it and I'm going to show you some passages here.

Turn to the book of Acts 10. I'm going to take you to four or five different passages here. Acts 10, beginning in verse 44. The point that we are showing right now is that the distinction between Jews and Gentiles was a huge issue in the church and the idea that salvation would be extended to the Gentiles as well was a foreign concept to them back then, even if it's not foreign to us today.

So look at Acts 10:44. Peter is explaining the work and showing his Christ to the Gentiles. Now, in verse 10:44, it says, "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message." Watch this, watch this, watch this closely, "All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also." This was something that those Jewish man did not expect. This was astonishing to them. They had thought of salvation being belonging only to the Jews and now they're seeing the Holy Spirit poured out on the Gentiles and they're saying, "This is astonishing but I can't deny it, it's right here in front of me." They are astonished that this is happening and the fact that you and I today take it for granted, the fact that you and I kind of shrug our shoulders maybe and say, "Well, what's the big deal? It's been like this for 2000 years." To them back then, this was profoundly revelatory to them. "The Gentiles are going to be included in the church? The Gentiles are going to receive the same Holy Spirit we did? I can't believe it. I'm amazed. I'm speechless. I'm stunned. I don't know what to do. This is astonishing. I can't believe it." So the measure of this is not how we respond to it today, the measure of the profundity of this change is measured in their own words who were there at the time.

Now, that's not the only passage. This is a big deal elsewhere in Scripture as well. Now, go down to chapter 11 in Acts, beginning in verse 2. Actually, we'll just start in verse 1. Acts 11:1, "Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea," the land of the Jews, "heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God." Oh, what's going on here? This is our salvation, and the Gentiles are receiving it? Verse 2, "And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, 'You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.'" This is absolutely unacceptable. What do you think you're doing? You're with Gentiles, you're a Jew. Do you see how important, how crucial this issue was to them?

We'll skip down to verse 15, let's say. Peter is describing to them what happened when he was preaching and he says, "as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon," those Gentiles, "fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning." He's saying, "Guys, you remember Acts 2 at Pentecost the Spirit came upon us and we started speaking in other languages that we had never studied before? Well, it was the exact same thing that happened to the Gentiles. It was the exact same thing. What happened to us, happened to them." He has to persuade them that he hadn't drifted off into some kind of heresy and basically what he's appealing to, "Look, this is the work of God. He did this work in us, he's doing this work in the Gentiles. Who am I to stand in the way of God? You guys have to set your objection aside. This is bigger than you are." Is what he's saying. He says in verse 16, "I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Therefore," verse 17, "if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" Guys, we are faced with something; this Jewish Gentile distinction has been broken down. Look at verse 18. How did his Jewish audience respond? "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'" God gave them salvation just like he gave to us. Salvation belongs to the Lord. I can't say anything about

it. I'm a Jew. I used to think this way but this is irrefutable. I can't argue with this. The Gentiles are receiving the same salvation we are. This is totally different from anything I've ever known. That's what they're saying in their minds. This is cataclysmically important to them. Everything they had built their life on, the separateness of the Jewish nation and the traditions and the festivals and the ceremonies that made them separate from the Gentiles suddenly had been overridden, had been fulfilled, and now the floodgates were being opened to the Gentiles. This is a colossal paradigm shift the likes of which you and I can't really understand. Big big deal. That's the point.

Now, you see that in the book of Acts, look at Romans 9. The Apostle Paul, kind of seeing it from the reverse angle here because Paul was ministering to Gentiles but now he's going to deal with this issue here. Look at Romans 9:22. As he's making the argument about the sovereignty of God in salvation, he says, "What if," bear with me here, hypothetically, "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" God passes over sin for a time in order to work out his plan of salvation. "And he did so," verse 23, "to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory." God prepared them for glory before they were even born. Now verse 24, "even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." There it is again. Because this was a prominent issue, Paul alludes to it. It's not just for us, it's not just for us Jews, it's for the Gentiles also.

Now, keep your finger in Romans 9 and just turn back for a moment to 1 John. We're still not done with this issue here. I have to show you the breadth of it, how many times it's referred to in Scripture so that you can see that I'm not making this up; that it's not a theological convenience to get by a verse that would destroy a certain kind of theology. Now, look at verse 2, 1 John 2:2, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Look back at Romans 9 now, verse 24, "not from among Jews only, but also from among the Gentiles." Not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles. Not for our sins only, but also for those of the whole world. It's a reference to Gentiles, not to every man without exception that he's referring to there.

One more from the book of Ephesians. Turn to Ephesians 2:8, he's talking about the nature of salvation and he says it's, "by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." You all know that passage. You know that verse. You've memorized it for evangelism purposes and whatever. He's talking about the great gift of salvation. It is a gift of God not from the works of our hands.

Now he says in verse 11, Paul writing to Gentiles because the Gentiles were the target of his ministry, in verse 11 says this, "Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh," let's stop right there. He's saying, "You guys, I want you to remember something, you were Gentiles. You are Gentiles and I want to talk to you about how to think rightly about this gift of God that has been given to you in salvation. I've got to clarify things so that you think rightly about salvation and therefore I want you to remember this, you Gentiles, you are called 'Uncircumcision,'" verse 11, "by the so-called

'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands," verse 12, you Gentiles, "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." You were totally outside the physical and spiritual lineage of the people of Israel and you had no hope. You, and listen, this applies to every one of us here today unless someone here is a Jew that I don't know about, understand that in salvation, in Christ's work of propitiation, if Christ hadn't done that, you were totally outside the promises of God. He had made promises to Abraham and to his seed and you were not in the lineage of that seed of Abraham and yet in the grace and mercy of God, he expanded the realm of salvation to bring people like you in. You had no physical lineage to claim the promises given to the Jews and yet God sent Christ and he was a propitiation that spilled over into the Gentiles as well. And what Paul is saying here is, "Don't get proud and boastful about you being in Christ and some of the Jews aren't. You need to understand that it was totally an act of mercy of God for you to be there because you had no claim on the promises whatsoever. He did not make those promises to you." Wow, this is really humbling. This is very sobering.

Look at what he says, verse 13, Ephesians 2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." That propitiating blood of Christ that turns away the wrath of God, that blood that was shed by a Jew on the cross was also shed for you. Praise be to his glorious holy name! And understand that if God in his intentions hadn't made it that way, you were without hope in the world. Jewish/Gentile distinction there in Ephesians 2, working itself out; Paul goes from those familiar verses about salvation and goes right into the distinction between Jews and Gentiles having been abolished at the cross. It's the exact same thing that John is doing in 1 John 2:2, beloved, he's using shorthand reference to that which had been established in the prior apostolic writings.

Go back to 1 John 2:2 with me now. John, an apostle to Jews, writing to Jewish believers who were beleaguered says, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins. Ours, us Jewish circles. But you Jewish circle, don't think it's exclusive anymore because it's not for us only. This certain propitiation is for the whole world. People from other tongues and tribes will partake and enjoy the same benefits of salvation that you do." So the Jew is humbled, his physical lineage doesn't give him a kind of preference that made him more likely to be saved than others, the Gentiles are humbled because they weren't heirs of the promise to begin with. Jews and Gentiles alike humbled at the foot of the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross. That's what has happened here. That's what he's talking about.

God's salvation is a certain blessing for some men. He would certainly save some men throughout the world but not all of them. When theologians talk about the doctrine of particular redemption, sometimes unhappily referred to as limited atonement, that's the idea that they have in mind, that Christ died to certainly save some, not to potentially save all, and we've seen why it couldn't be potential, now we understand why it must be certain and we've seen why John speaks as he did. It's not just for Jews, it's for Gentiles too. People throughout the four corners of the globe can have the Gospel freely

proclaimed to them, we can proclaim to sinners everywhere whether it's the arctic circle or the Antarctica continent, northern hemisphere, southern hemisphere, east and west, every country, every man, it is the same Gospel. Christ died for sinners just like you and if you come to him in repentance and faith, he will save you too. Come to Christ and be saved. Come to Christ, the Savior of the world. That's the idea and we proclaim to them not something potential, we proclaim to them a finished work that certainly saves.

Now, that was point 1. Point 1: who is "the world" in 1 John 2:2? We've said that the world is the Gentiles. He goes from Jews expanding out to Gentiles there. Now, second question and we start to work through in the rest of this message some of the objections to this concept. Point 2: why do only some receive salvation? Why do only some receive salvation and not all? Why are only some men saved? We saw last time and, look, regardless of what anyone thinks about this issue of particular redemption, everybody is left with the biblical reality that some men are saved and some aren't, right? Unless you're a Universalist which you can't be biblically, unless you're a Universalist, everyone believes that some people are going to hell. Christ didn't actually save every man who ever lived from hell. Why? Why is that? Well, it's not because of some limitation in the merit of Christ. Listen, Jesus Christ was of infinite merit. His righteousness was perfect. He was eternal God. His death was sufficient to save countless numbers of sinners who would come to him in faith. His death was of infinite value but it was not the intent to save every single man. Why is that? Why is it that only some receive salvation? Ultimately you have to come to this particular statement: it is because God designed it that way. This is what God wanted to do in salvation. If God had wanted certainly and infallibly to save every man, he would have, but he didn't. That's why we have a hell. Many men are going to be judged to eternal condemnation and it's not because God didn't have the power to carry it out, it's because he designed it that way. Write down this verse, Acts 2:23, it says, "Christ was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God." God had a plan in mind when Christ went to the cross.

You know, you hear the phrase sometimes when people are making false accusations, they are just throwing stuff up on the wall and see what will stick; you know, you throw Jell-O or throw spaghetti up against the wall and you see what sticks and the rest of it falls way. That was not how God was approaching salvation at all. He didn't take – listen – he did not take the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and then just throw it up against the wall to see if potentially someone would believe in him or not. He didn't treat the blood of his own Son that carelessly, that foolishly, to say, "Okay, Christ is going to shed his blood and now it's up to people who hate me and who only hate me, to believe in him." That wasn't the idea. God had a plan in mind. Acts 2:23 says that it was a predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. God – listen to me – intended to save a subset of all men in the world to be his own people. God has a special love for those whom he has chosen that does not apply salvifically to the rest of the world at large.

Turn to 1 Timothy 4. I want you to see if few verses here that will help. 1 Timothy 4:10. What we're doing here is I want you to see this subset that God chose some out of the world but not all. Chapter 4, verse 10 of 1 Timothy, "it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men,

especially of believers." Somehow there is a difference in the way in which Christ is a Savior for believers than he is for the world. He's a Savior of all men but especially of believers. We'll work out what that means in a little bit, but all I want you to see here is that somehow Christ is a Savior especially of believers that apparently is not true of all other men.

Look at Titus. Turn to your right just a little bit, after 2 Timothy, turn to Titus 2:14. He says in chapter 2, verse 14 that "Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession." Not every person belongs to Christ in this special way that believers do but believers are a people who peculiarly belong to Christ. They are people for his own possession, "that are zealous for good works." He redeemed us to make us a people all his own. A people all his own. Unbelievers are not a people of Christ in that way. We belong to Christ in a unique way that unbelievers do not.

Now, turn back to the Gospel of John. I think this verse in particular, John 17, is just especially clear and compelling on this issue. Jesus in his high priestly prayer on the eve of his crucifixion is praying for his disciples and look at verse 6, he says, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world." There was the world and there were men that you gave me out of the world. Some were pulled out. Some were separated out from that. "They were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." Now look at verse 9, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them." Look at that, verse 9, "I do not ask on behalf of of the world." Christ in his prayer to his Father on the eve of his crucifixion makes a distinction about who he is praying for and who he is not praying for, and he is praying for his disciples, he's praying for believers in a way that specially and peculiarly applies to them that does not apply to the rest of the world. In verse 20 he says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word." I'm praying for others who will believe in me in the future through the apostolic preaching that these disciples will send forth. For those who believe in me, not for everyone.

Now, let's say it this way. We're building up to a grand climax here that will hit you like a glorious ton of bricks so be ready. Jesus Christ did not die for a mass of indistinguishable people. God designed salvation to secure the salvation of some people but not others. He designed it that way and if you believe that God is sovereign, if you believe that God reigns over all, that God accomplishes his purposes in what he chooses to do, then you are drawn to that conclusion. You have to believe that, that God intended to secure the salvation of some but not others, otherwise – listen, and I know that some of you, you've always been brought up on that potential salvation view, listen – if God intended to save some people, Christ went to the cross intending to save some people but they ended up in hell anyway, then the purposes of God in the purpose of Christ was frustrated. He didn't do what he set out to do. And I want to tell you, that description of a frustrated God, unable to accomplish what he wants, at the mercy of stubborn sinners to have his plan of salvation accomplished, that is not the picture of the God of the Bible. That's the

problem. That totally compromises the view of God that is presented in the 66 books of the Bible. A frustrated God is not the holy God of the Bible. God did not throw the blood of his Son carelessly against the wall and say, "Let's see what happens." He loves his Son too much for it to be shed in vain. His purposes and his sovereignty are too great to bend before sinful men. God, accomplishes his purpose period.

Now, someone might well say, "Question: what about John 3:16? 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' What about that? God gave his Son. Now, gotcha." No. No. Even in the context of the Gospel of John, you can see that Jesus didn't mean that all men individually without exception would be saved. In the context of John that's not true, we just saw that in John 17. I, "I don't ask on behalf of the world, I ask for these that you have given to me." And you say, "Okay, what does John 3:16 mean then?" What you see in John: 3:16 is the description of the depth of God's love. You see how deep and great his love is. God loves even sinful humanity that rebels against him. God so loved the world, this world that in verse 19...turn to the Gospel of John 3:16. Even in the context of this verse you can see that distinctions are made. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," so that every man without exception, whoever lives should not perish but have eternal life. That's not what it says, is it? Even John 3:16 limits this saving intention of God to those who believe in him. It's not for humanity at large without exception. Verse 20 says, "everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." Verse 19, "men loved the darkness rather than the Light." Those distinctions are woven throughout that very passage of John 3.

So what you see in John 3:16 is a description of how great God's love is and, beloved, let's make it real personal, let's draw it right down to where you're at so that you understand what's being said. You need to think about how desperately sinful you were before you ever came to Christ. You were enslaved to various lusts, the Scripture said. You despised the Gospel. You suppressed the truth in unrighteousness, Romans 1 says. You were at enmity with God. You were hostile to God. Maybe you hadn't had time to live it all out but some of you even as youngsters were liars, and deceivers, and selfish, everything that is opposed to what Jesus Christ is, the unselfish, glorious Son of God. Your life before Christ was arrayed against everything that he stood for and everything that he was in his most blessed and holy character and now, to think that God loved you so much to send Christ to die for you like that gives you an idea of how vast and how great the love of God is. God so loved the world, not that he saved everyone who ever lived in it, but he so loved the world that he gave his Son even to redeem wretched humanity like that. So you walk away impressed not with the importance of the world, not with the importance of every man, but you walk away impressed by the great love of God for sinners; that he would intervene to save them from that very wretched state; to save those whom Romans 5 said, "while we were enemies, Christ died for us." That's a measure of how great the love of Christ is for us.

Someone might say, "What about 2 Peter 3:9? 'God is not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.' Okay, I'll grant you John 3. You got me there but what about 2 Peter 3:9?" Turn back to 2 Peter 3:9 and I just want to help you, I'm not going to go

through this verse in much detail here, but I just want you to see this. 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Uh-oh, I got it all wrong. No. No. No. When you come to a verse like that or when somebody makes an inflamed argument against the kind of teaching that I'm giving you here today and they throw one verse out, all you have to do is call a timeout, step back and look at the context and the context will make it clear to you whether it means what they say or not.

Now look, 2 Peter 3:3, "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'" Verse 5, "when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water." This doesn't sound too good for God hoping that everybody is going to be saved. He's got a track record of judging the world with death.

Verse 7, "But by His word," look, verse 7 for crying out loud. You don't even have to go to remote context. "By His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Then he says in verse 9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Listen, if verse 9 means that God has saving intention toward every man without exception whoever lived, then Peter is hopelessly self-contradictory in what he says. He had just said in verse 7 that God has reserved judgment for ungodly men and so whatever he's saying in verse 9 was not contradicting what he said in his last prior breath, right?

He says plainly, "There is judgment coming for ungodly men but God is patient toward you." Who is the "you"? What's the antecedent of "you"? You see, people are too quick to inject themselves into the middle of the promises of God when perhaps they don't belong to them. "It says 'you,' that means me." Well, wait a minute. I think you jumped over a dozen logical hurdles to get to that. You don't realize what you're assuming. Who is the "you"? He says it in verse 1 of chapter 1, "Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To," who is he writing to? He's writing "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." He's writing to a group of believers, not to the world at large, and in this realm of believers, he's saying, "God wants to make certain that all of you have time to come to faith and to bring forth the reality of salvation that he appointed you to." It's not a promise to every man who ever lived that God is going to save them without exception, and it's not a statement that God is somehow hoping with fingers crossed that all men are going to be saved. He already knows that's not the case and Peter said that he is specifically reserving destruction for ungodly men. So even the context of 2 Peter shows God is waiting to gather in all his sheep, those of us that belong to him, he's waiting, bringing them in one by one before he brings judgment on the goats.

Point 3. We've said who is "the world" in point 1, who is "the world" in 1 John 2:2? Why is it that only some receive salvation? We've said it's because God designed it that way.

Point 3 is this: but that's not fair! What do we say about that objection? "That's not fair! Why do some people get this and others don't? This is so unfair to those who aren't included in the plan of salvation. It's not fair that Christ wouldn't die for them too." Well, wait just a second. Wait just a second, whose blood was it that was shed on the cross? You can answer me, it's okay. It was Jesus' blood that was shed, right? That blood belonged to Christ. Your blood belongs to you, but that blood belonged to Christ. Isn't Christ thoroughly entitled to use his own blood however he sees fit? On what basis does a man come up to the cross and say, "That's not fair! You should shed it for everyone." On what basis do we approach God and make such outlandish statements of presumption and false privilege, to speak that way to one shedding his own blood voluntarily at his own initiative?

Let's go back to what we've been saying all along is the cornerstone of the way that we should think, the cornerstone of the message of 1 John and it's in verse 5, right? You've been here so many times you know what I'm going to say. "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." God is holy. God is righteous. God is true. Anything that God does by definition is true, right and holy because he always acts out of the reality of his own character. Be careful then, listen to me, beloved, if your heart is at all inclined to make that fairness argument, be very careful how far you take it because you don't go that road very far before you start to accuse the holy God of the Bible of being unrighteous in what he did. Your fear of God should forbid you from taking steps in that direction. If this is what God did, then it is righteous and fair by his standard, not by yours.

Look at Romans 9, turn back to Romans 9 again, and we still haven't gotten to the big climax of this yet. Romans 9:18 says that, "God has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." Verse 19, now Paul deals with a hypothetical objection, "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" He's saying, "Listen, you've got to remember where you fit in the order of the universe as you're thinking through this." The fundamental way you think about God and yourself is at stake here. You and I collectively, we are not, and humanity in general, you and I individually, collectively as this body and expanding out to humanity in general, we are not given the judgment seat to evaluate and come to conclusions the rightness or wrongness of how God chooses to act. That's a total overturning of the order of the universe. God is sovereign. God is righteous. God does what he wants and we respond to that, we line ourselves up under it, we don't presume to put ourselves in a position as though we are the judge of God and what he should or should not have done with the gift of salvation which exclusively belongs to him and was purchased by the shed blood of his own Son. We are not in that position. That is an unrighteous way to think. Your job and mine is to humble ourselves under that sovereign hand and honor and worship him, and if he has brought you in by grace into salvation, to feel a profound sense of gratitude and worship, not to accuse God of unrighteousness. Jonah 2:9, "Salvation belongs to the LORD." The blood of Christ belongs to Christ. What they want

to do with that is their prerogative and it is not for man to judge that and say it should be some other way. With truths like this on the table and animating our thinking, to the extent that you have any impulse of objection against it whatsoever, against what God has done, the best thing, your best friend becomes your right hand which you quickly, firmly place over your mouth and bow before the holy sovereign will of God to honor him and to not accuse him of unfairness or unrighteousness. You have to remember your place in the order of the universe. We all do.

Now, secondly. So, that's not fair! Well, no, that's not a good objection because salvation belongs to the Lord. Secondly, understand this, that sinners who go to judgment who are outside the saving intentions of God, are still the recipient of his love and blessing. Sinners live an earthly life where they experience human joy, they eat a good meal, they have loving human relationships, all the while being rebels against God. God still gives them common grace and shows them and allows them to enjoy a period of kindness, a respite from his judgment that is an expression of his grace toward them. Matthew 5:44 and 45 says that, "God sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike." God pours out blessing on humanity even when gratitude is not returned in response.

We can't question the love and goodness of God on those grounds. God blesses men even though they deserve immediate judgment, but in terms of eternal salvation, understand that it is not unfair for God to save some but not others. To the extent that that has any root in your thinking, you've got to banish it from your mind. You have to banish that from your mind for this reason: all men, you and me, all men have forfeited their claim to experience God's goodness. Every one of us has. We are all guilty sinners who have broken the law of God. On what basis does anyone claim a prerogative, a right to be entitled to the blood of Christ? No one can. No one has that prerogative. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There are none righteous. There are none who seek for God." The claim on God has been surrendered by your sin. The claim on God has been forfeited by a life of rebellion and what that reality, what that truth should do to you, if you're not a Christian, it should silence your objections and just make you start to tremble where you're sitting; to say, "Oh! Oh! The things that I've said, the thoughts I've had about God are all so desperately wrong and I have no claim on him!" The idea being that you would be humbled to the point of saying, "Jesus, have mercy on me, the sinner."

Now, there are deceitful men who have published books who create a straw man to try to make this doctrine look silly; who try to use emotional plays rather than scriptural argumentation to convince you to the contrary. Part of the deceit is this, sometimes maybe from a lack of understanding if it's somebody new but guys who have done any reading and continue to present this should be ashamed of themselves. They'll paint a picture of a sinner, a sinner longing for salvation. "Oh, I just want to be saved and I come to Christ and I say, Jesus, please save me!" And under this false scenario that they create, God turns them away and says, "No, salvation was never meant for you." And this person who wants to be saved, his shoulders slump and he slinks off into eternity, not having had the opportunity to salvation because an unfair God turned him away.

Now, what do we say about that? First of all, recognized that's a hypothetical, right? And also realize this: it's a totally false hypothetical. That's not grounded in any spiritual or biblical reality whatsoever because there is no sinner anywhere from the beginning of time till now and to the end of time, there is no sinner who has sought for God on his own. There is no sinner who is going to go to Christ like that because the Bible could not be any clearer in Romans 3, "there is none who seeks for God; no, not even one." It is not an argument against truth to posit a false, emotional, unbiblical hypothetical and say that disproves truth. There are no sinners like that. You and I, if you've come to Christ and you've truly been saved, you love Christ, 1 John 4:19, "because God first loved you. No man comes to Me," Jesus said, "except the Father draws him." The initiating act of coming in the first place is at the gracious initiative of God calling someone through the Gospel, calling them to himself, and the idea that a sinner would wake up and find himself, "Oh, I'd like to be saved," and that there is no influence of God on that, "I'll go to Jesus and ask him. What? I can't? No?" Look, there are men that have made a lot of money publishing junk like that but it's not true. The whole example is completely unbiblical and therefore not an argument against truth at all. The truth is what Jesus said is, John 6:44, actually, John 6:37 is what I'm thinking of, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Jesus Christ would never turn away a sinner that came to him. Never. That's how great and gracious he is.

Why does the sinner come then in light of everything we've said here? Jesus makes it plain in verse 44 of John 6, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." When you see a sinner coming to Christ, when you see a sinner that has been saved, you look around, you look at your neighbor sitting in the pew beside you and you see somebody who has been saved, you can step back and say, "Oh, do you know what? There was a hidden unseen reality at work in their salvation just like there was in mine." God in his particular redeeming love drew them to Christ; reached, as it were, with his hand and took their hand and gave them a new heart so that they willingly came to Christ. The fact that God saves anyone, beloved, proves his grace. God is not under obligation to save every man without exception simply because he chose to save some. If God had mercy on some but not on others, that's for him to decide, it's not for us to sit in judgment of. That is not the role that God gave to the creature. The creature does not stand in judgment of the Creator. Of all places on earth in this building, the Creation Museum, that argument should carry weight. The creature does not judge the Creator, it's the other way around. Salvation is his gift to bestow as he sees fit.

Now, people will say, "Doesn't that make it so you can't really preach the Gospel?" Not at all. Jesus said, "All who come to Me will be saved." Jesus said, "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The call of the Gospel goes out without distinction. We preach the Gospel freely to all men based on the finished work of Christ. We say, "Christ died for sinners. You're a sinner. Come to Christ and be saved." Again, it is falsely accused when you believe this that you don't preach the Gospel. Not true. Total fabrication and misrepresentation of shameful proportions to those who do it knowingly. No, Paul said in Romans 10, "How are they going to believe unless they hear? How are they going to hear unless someone preaches? How are they going to

preach unless someone is sent?" Of course we preach the Gospel. That's what God has appointed to be the means by which he draws men to himself. He draws men to himself through the spoken word, through the preached and proclaimed word of Scripture. Of course we preach the Gospel. Of course we appeal to sinners to come to Christ. And if you're a sinner here today, let me tell you, come to Christ. Jesus Christ never once turned away a sinner who came to him for salvation and he never will. "All who come to Me," he says, "I will certainly not cast out." If you're not a Christian, the only thing that you need to hear in this is that Christ died in his love for sinners and he calls you to come to him. Come to him to be saved.

Now, here's the grand finale of it all. This is what I've been promising to you over the past 10 minutes. That's how long I've been preaching, right, about 10 minutes? I really want you to listen closely those of you that know Christ. Those of you that perhaps have been brought up under teaching that opposes what I've said here today, I want you to listen really carefully to what I'm about to say because this changes everything. Properly understood, this reality of particular redemption brings you great joy that you cannot find anywhere else and I want to explain to you, I want you to think through this with me. You were not one part of an indistinguishable mass of humanity for whom Christ died. He died specifically with the conscious intention to save you by name. One writer said it this way, "Thank God we can say as we contemplate Christ upon the cross, not just that he died for the mass of humanity and how glad I am to be part of that mass." It changes your whole focus is what he's saying here. I'm breaking the quote up here. The potential salvation idea says that Christ died for humanity but now it's up to you; the initiating part on God's part was toward unnamed humanity and then you came along later and kind of plucked your part out of it. That wasn't the work of the cross. Going back to this quote from J. Gresham Machen, "Thank God we can say as we contemplate Christ on the cross, not just that he died for the mass of humanity and how glad I am that I am part of that mass, but I can say this: he loved me and gave himself for me. My name was written from all eternity upon his heart and when he hung and suffered there on the cross, he thought of me, even me, as one for whom in his grace he was willing to die."

Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul said, "He loved me and gave Himself up for me." Every true Christian can say that, not just Christ died for the world and then I added my faith to it; no, Christ died for me. And listen, going back to the language that we used at the start, Christ died for me to make my salvation certain. He did not leave it up to whether I would believe or not. He made my salvation certain when he died on the cross and he thought of me by name when he did his work of redemption. In the infinite mind of his sovereign omniscience, somehow in a way that I don't fully understand but I see revealed in Scripture, Christ died for me to make my salvation certain. So great was his love for you, dear Christian, that he had you in mind from before the beginning of time, and before you were even born, 2,000 years before you were born, Christ had guaranteed the certainty of your salvation and it was just a matter of seeing that play itself out in time as he orchestrated his providence to accomplish his eternal purposes in your life which most infallibly and certainly would be achieved without possibility of failure.

That is how great, that is how awesome, that is how massive, that is how personal the love of Christ is for you if you're a believer in him, and when you understand that from the Scriptures, you never want to go back to that other view. You never want to go back and say, "Christ made it possible and then folded his hands and waited to see how it would work out. No. No. Christ intended to save me on the cross and he did. He made sure I heard the Gospel at just the right time, as I heard the Gospel, the Holy Spirit worked in my heart, took away my heart of stone and replaced it with a heart of flesh and I willingly came in response to the particular personal love of God in my life."

Beloved, when Paul says, "Christ died for me and gave Himself up for me," you can say that very same thing. It was personal. It was individual. He was actually your personal substitute for your sins and what that should do to you as you think about Christ, is give you a depth of profound allegiance, love and gratitude toward him that never grows old. Christ died for sinners, we say as we preach the Gospel. As a Christian we say, "Christ died for me and I love him for it."

Bow with me in prayer.

Father, as we come to the close of this time, I would just pray to you on behalf of those who are here who do not truly know Christ. Help them to understand that nothing we've said today hinders them from coming to Christ at all. Father, you and you alone know the designs that you have. That's your business but when it comes to the proclamation of the Gospel, Christ calls you openly if you're here today and apart without him. Friend, if you're here, does hell cause you to tremble? Do you stagger under an accusing conscience and cannot find relief? Let me say to you without fear of contradiction: Jesus Christ today is calling you. Jesus Christ himself said, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." Christ calls you so come to him even today, even now, turning from sin and entrusting your entire soul to his good care, for he said, "All who come to Me, I will by no means cast out."

Father, for those of us that are Christians, I just ask that you would help us and strengthen and deepen our understanding of these difficult truths and lead us to that point where we see Christ in those personal particular terms. Lord Jesus, you thought of me. You died for me. You deliberately intended to offer yourself as a sacrifice for me and countless others just like me. It was direct. It was personal. It was on my behalf. While I was yet an enemy of yours, you had accomplished the work of reconciliation and made sure that it would be real in time so that I and all those for whom you died could by no means possibly be lost. We honor you and we love you for that work of redemption. We praise you and are just so grateful and humbled before you. We pray and ask that you would help us grow in this grace. Help us to grow in the knowledge of Christ and that you would shape this body into a collection of people who love you deeply, who honor your word and proclaim it wherever you lead us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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