

# The Sovereignty of God In Salvation

## Particular Redemption – What does the Bible say?

When considering whether or not God's work of redemption is **Universal** or **Particular**, we must consider the language of Scripture. Either it will bear out one or the other, for they cannot both be true. Surely we are aware of the overwhelming amount of Scripture which describes the benefits of the atonement being the **DEFINITE** possession of the believers, the Church in **PARTICULAR**, and the sufficient work of Christ which affords the elect Church of God all of the promises of Reconciliation and eternal blessing from God. Because of the merit of Christ's Atonement upon the cross at Calvary, all of this belongs in particular to the Church. [**Us, We, Our, They**]

**Matt 1:21** - 21 "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is **He who will save His people from their sins.**" NASB

**John 10:11** - 11 "I am the good shepherd; **the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.** NASB

**Acts 20:28** - 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God **which He purchased with His own blood.** NASB

**Romans 5:8-11** - 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward **us**, in that while **we** were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.** 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we** shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while **we** were enemies, **we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.** much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved** by His life. NASB

**Romans 8:31-33** - 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for **us**, who is against **us**? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but **delivered Him up for us all**, how will He not also with **Him freely give us all things?** 33 Who will bring a charge against **God's elect?** God is the one who justifies NASB

**2 Corinthians 5:21** - 21 He made **Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we** might become the righteousness of God in Him. NASB

**Galatians 1:3-4** - 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 **who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us** out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, NASB

**Galatians 3:13** - 13 **Christ redeemed us** from the curse of the Law, **having become a curse for us** — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" NASB

**Ephesians 1:7** - 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood,** the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, NASB

**Ephesians 5:25** - 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and **gave Himself up for her;** NASB

**Colossians 1:13-14** - 13 For He delivered **us** from the domain of darkness, and transferred **us** to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 **in whom we have redemption,** the forgiveness of sins. NASB

**Titus 3:5-6** - 5 **He saved us,** not on the basis of deeds which **we** have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He **poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ** our Savior, NASB

**Hebrews 10:14** - 14 For **by one offering He has perfected** for all time **those** who are sanctified. NASB

**1 Peter 2:24** - and **He Himself bore our sins** in His body on the cross, that **we** might die to sin and live to righteousness; for **by His wounds you were healed.** NASB

**1 John 1:7** - 7 but if **we** walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, **we** have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.** NASB

All of these verses, and many more, make it abundantly clear that Christ's work does **DEFINITELY** secure for the Church in **PARTICULAR**, all the benefits of Reconciliation to God. This fact is not normally disputed by anyone.

## Universal Atonement?

It is rather evident in Scripture that the benefits of the Atonement are NOT afforded to the unbeliever. It is only those who believe who are Justified.

**Romans 3:21-24** - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Surely salvation is given to those for whom God has purposed it from before the beginning of time and it is brought to pass in time and space through the Effectual Calling of the Spirit culminating in Regeneration.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, **to those who are called according to His purpose.** 29 **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

This activity of God brings the sinner to Repentance and Faith (being virtues given to them by God), and this results in Conversion, Justification and Imputation, and ultimately Sanctification and Glorification. Thus at the point of Repentance and Faith, the sinner is Justified having his/her sins Propitiated (God's wrath satisfied), and Expiated (our guilt removed), and the righteousness of Christ Imputed to them.

**Romans 3:25-28** - 25 whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation in His blood through faith.** This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and **the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.** 27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** NASB

These benefits which have been above described are afforded to the believer, who have the merits of the precious blood of Christ applied to them and are thus SAVED and JUSTIFIED.

**Romans 5:9** - 9 Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.** NASB

But how do we interpret passages of Scripture which seem to imply that the Atonement was Universal in its scope? Are we to believe that the benefits of the Atonement of Christ extend even to the unbeliever? Did Christ actually die for the specific sins of non-elect people? Let us look at these.

**John 1:29** - 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God **who takes away the sin of the world!**" NASB

If God has in Jesus Christ "**taken away**" **the sins of all non-elect people**, then how can He punish them in hell? Surely it cannot mean that He has taken away their sins, *it must mean something else*, for they will all be punished in Hell, and this at the perfect and good justice of God.

**1 John 2:2** - 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but **also for those of the whole world.** NASB

1 John 2:2 cannot mean that the **specific sins of the all the people** in the whole world have been "**propitiated**," for propitiation is the satisfaction of God's wrath for sin, and Scripture makes it very clear that apart from saving faith, sinners are doomed for the wrath of God. If one would take John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2 to mean the benefits of the Atonement extend to all people everywhere, then why is it necessary to preach the Gospel, because people would already have their sins "**taken away and propitiated**" and there would be no need for repentance and faith. Therefore, *it must mean something else* or have some other application which is consistent with all of Scripture.

**Hebrews 2:9** - 9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God **He might taste death for everyone.** NASB

If Christ has already "**tasted death for everyone**," then why is there any need at all for anyone to die. Is it not rather plain that this "tasting death" is not sufficient to cover or Atonement for the sins of

non-elect people, for they will actually “*taste death*” themselves. Hell is a reality which portrays that the Atonement is **not benefiting the non-elect in the same way** it is benefiting the elect.

**2 Corinthians 5:19** - 19 namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. NASB

**1 John 4:14** -14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be **the Savior of the world**. NASB

Here again we have Scriptures which some will say shows that Christ’s Atonement is for the “whole world.” But this is refuted in the simple question of what is implied but such foolishness. Is the whole world of people reconciled to God through Christ in a saving sense, so that they all go to Heaven and escape the wrath of God? Of course this is not true. Also, then, is Jesus the Savior of the whole world of people in the sense that they have received salvation from sins and are reconciled to God? Nothing could be further from the truth. It is evident then that all these passages *must* have some other meaning than the implied meaning that the specific sins of unbelieving people are atoned for by Christ’s physical death.

### **Sufficient but not Efficacious**

When we speak of how the death of Christ should be viewed concerning the sins of the non-elect, we must understand that the Bible *never* makes any statement that talks about the specific sins of unbelieving people has being atoned for by Christ’s death. Rather, it speaks of “*the sins of the whole world*” or “*the sins of the world,*” grouping all sin together in one heap. But when speaking of the elect, the Scripture affords all the benefits of the Atonement to them, specifically talking about the actual sins of each individual.

**Ephesians 1:7** - 7 In Him **we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of **our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace, NASB

This is because the benefits of the Atonement are afforded to the believers through their belief in the Gospel. And this is in fact the free offer of the Gospel that goes out into “*the whole world.*” The death of Christ becomes **EFFICACIOUS** for those who believe, but remains **non-effectual** for those who do not.

**Romans 3:22-24** - 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace **through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**; NASB

The passages which refer to Christ’s death as universal in scope clearly mean that His death was **SUFFICIENT** to atone for [all sins of all time of all people], but only becomes **EFFICACIOUS** or effectual for those who believe the Gospel and thus receive eternal salvation. Because of Christ’s perfect unblemished sacrifice, His death is *infinite* in its ability and strength to atone for “*the sins of the whole world,*” but this Atonement is only applied through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is clear that the **Bible plainly declares** that **REDEMPTION** is afforded in **PARTICULAR** to the elect Church of God only, and by God’s foreknowledge and predestination, they **ALL** come to this saving faith by the effectual calling and regeneration of the Spirit.

### **Particular Redemption can be reasoned from the Decree**

When God planned to redeem a people for his very own, and this through the Atonement, He definitely had the sins of the church in mind. This is in fact what the Covenant of Grace was. It was an agreement between the members of the Godhead to carry out the eternal plan of redemption through the role of each. The Father *planned* redemption(Election), the Son *purchased* redemption(Atonement), and the Spirit *applied* redemption(Regeneration). Thus the Church is saved by the **Decree** of the Eternal God.

**2 Timothy 1:9** - 9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, **but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity**, NASB

Consider a few questions when you think about God's plan to redeem and His subsequent Decree to save His elect.

- Does the atonement definitely secure salvation for the elect?
- Did God enable salvation for all men or accomplish it for His Church?
- Did God plan to redeem more than the elect number within the Church, those who have been called out?

God did in fact plan to save the Church as we have pointed out. This can be clearly seen in the outcome of all of History. In the end, the Church will be called effectually by the Spirit, fully redeemed and reconciled to God, and have fellowship with God in Heaven forever. This shows the exact purpose of the Decree of God from eternity past. This is because whatever comes to pass has been **eternally Decreed by God**. This means that God has **"approved"** of all of the events of History, (in the ultimate sense of permitting or preventing them). This we call **"Foreordination."** God has **"Fore"** (from before time began), **"ordained"** all that ever does come to pass in History. Consider how *Jonathan Edwards* has described this.... *"Whether God has decreed all things that ever come to pass or not, all that own the being of a God, own that He knows all things beforehand. Now, it is self-evident that if He knows all things beforehand, He doth approve of them or doth not approve of them; that is, He is either willing they should be, or He is not willing they should be. But to will that they should be is to decree them."*

When we ask the question, "who does finally get atoned for?", the answer is very clear, the believer in Christ.

Therefore, we see that in the end, the benefits of the Atonement are **EFFICACIOUS** for the believers **only**. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus is a **Particular Redemption**. This is clear from the outcome of History, which is equivalent to the original intention of God's plan, His eternal Decree by which He caused all things.

### Christ's Priesthood is Exclusive

It is plainly evident that Christ is not interceding for unbelievers. If He were, they would have an advocate with God and the benefit of this would be perfect mediation between God and man. But this is in fact NOT the case. The **Bible plainly declares** that Christ's sacrifice (the Atonement) benefits only the believer in Christ.

**Hebrews 10:10-15** - 10 By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**. 11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having **offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For **by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified**. NASB

When Jesus prays for the Church in His High Priestly prayer, He clearly does not pray for the world, or the unbelievers, but for "those whom you have given me" only. This is because this is a prayer of intercession which will in fact be answered by the Father absolutely and completely in the course of time.

**John 17:9-20** - 9 **"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me**; for they are Thine; 20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; NASB

Other verses also make this clear, that His intercession is for the believers only.

**Romans 8:33-34** - 33 **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **who also intercedes for us**. NASB

**Hebrews 4:14-15** - 14 Since then **we have a great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast **our confession**. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. NASB

**Hebrews 7:25** - 25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever **those who draw near to God through Him**, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**. NASB