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The Good News of Limited Atonement

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

The doctrine of particular redemption is worth defining and defending because it gets to the heart of the gospel.

In this episode of Life and Books and Everything, Kevin reads from the article he wrote for byFaith on the good news of limited atonement.

Transcript

Life and Books and Everything Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. Today I am reading an article I wrote for byFaith. ByFaith is the PCA, Denominational Magazine that comes out in print and also online and at least for this show.

At least for this year, for the last several months I've been writing a short theological article for each new issue, been doing that for two or three or four issues. So this last one is called The Good News of Limited Atonement, which just came out online by Faith Online a couple of days ago. The doctrine of limited atonement, the L in Tulip, teaches that Christ effectively redeems from every people only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation, quoting there from the canons of Dort.

As Ercinus explains in his commentary on the Haudebur catechism, Christ's death was for everyone, quote, "as it respects the sufficiency of satisfaction which he made, but not as it respects the application thereof." In other words, the death of Christ was sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world, but it was God's will that it should effectively redeem those and only those who were chosen from eternity and given to Christ by the Father. Particular redemption is often considered a more favorable term because the point of the doctrine is not to limit the mercy of God, but to make clear that Jesus did not die in the place of every sinner on the earth, but for his particular people. This is why John 6 says Jesus came to save those the Father had given to him and why Matthew 121 says he died for his people and John 15, 13 says for his friends in Acts 20, 28 says for the church and Ephesians 5, 25 says for his bride and Ephesians 1, 4 says for those chosen in Christ.

Doctrine of particular redemption is worth defining and defending because it gets to the heart of the gospel. Should we say Christ died so that sinners might come to him or Christ died for sinners? Did Christ work on the cross make it possible for sinners to come to God or did Christ work on the cross actually reconcile sinners to God? In other words, does the death of Jesus Christ make us savable or does it make us saved? If the atonement is not particularly and only for the sheep, then either we have universalism. Christ died in everyone's place and therefore everyone is saved, or we have something less than full substitution.

We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ Charles Spurgeon observed because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men or all men would be saved. On the contrary Spurgeon continued, we say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number 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. Christ does not come to us merely saying, I've done my part, I lay down my life for everyone because I have saving love for everyone in the whole world.

Now if you would only believe and come to me, I can save you. Instead he says, I was pierced for your transgressions, I was crushed for your iniquities. Isaiah 53.5, I've purchased with my blood men for God from every tribe and language and people in nation, Revelation 5.9. I myself bore your sins in my body on the tree so that you might infallibly die to sins and assuredly live for righteousness.

For my wounds did not merely make healing available, they healed you. Praise be to our good shepherd who didn't just make salvation possible, he sustained the anger of God and body and soul bore the curse and laid down his life for the sheep. That's my article and by faith the good news of a limited atonement.

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