THE DEATH OF DEATH IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST

ABRIDGED AND UPDATED
FOR THE MODERN READER



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Salvation of the Elect, Through the Blood of Jesus
or,

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

Abridged and Updated for the Modern Reader

by **John Owen**
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A Treatise on Redemption and Reconciliation Through the Blood of Christ:

Its Merit, Its Satisfaction, and Its True Purpose

In this work, I set out to establish with clarity the true and definite purpose for which Christ died. I will also identify the immediate effects and blessings that flow from His death, and to whom they apply. Central to this discussion is the question of the **extent** of the atonement: *Did Christ die for all people without exception, or only for those whom the Father gave Him—the elect?*

This treatise is divided into four parts:

1. **The purpose of Christ's death:** What was God's intent in sending His Son to die?

2. **The effects of Christ's death:** What was actually accomplished on the cross?

3. **The scope of Christ's death:** For whom did He die?

4. **A full examination of the controversy surrounding universal redemption:** Is it consistent with Scripture and reason to say that Christ died for all?

The central argument is this:

The death of Christ was a real, effective atonement for all those whom the Father chose and gave to the Son. It actually secured their redemption, reconciliation, and salvation—not merely made it possible.

This assertion stands in direct opposition to the doctrine of universal redemption, which claims that Christ died equally for all people, even though not all are saved. I will demonstrate that such a view not only undermines the efficacy of Christ's work but contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture.

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Book I,

Chapter 1

The Purpose of Christ's Death as Taught in Scripture

When we speak of the "end" or purpose of Christ's death, we mean two things:
First, what God the Father and Christ Himself intended to

accomplish by it;
Second, what was truly and effectively achieved through it.

Both of these are clearly revealed in Scripture.

I. The Intent of Christ and His Father

If you want to know why Christ came into the world, ask Him. He, who knows His own mind and the will of His Father, tells us plainly:

> "The Son of Man came to save the lost" (Matt. 18:11; Luke 19:10).

Paul confirms this:

> "This is a trustworthy saying, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).

But who are these sinners Christ came to save? He tells us in Matthew 20:28:

> He came "to give His life as a ransom for many."
> Elsewhere, they are called "us"—that is, believers, those set apart from the world.
> "He gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal. 1:4).

That was God's will: that Christ would give Himself for *us*, to rescue and sanctify us.

> "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, to sanctify and cleanse her… so that He might present her to Himself in splendour… holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25–27).
> "He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

The aim of Christ's death is unmistakable:
To save us, deliver us from the evil of the world, cleanse us, make us holy and fruitful, and bring us near to God.

> "Through Him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand" (Rom. 5:2).

II. The Effects of Christ's Death

Not only is Christ's purpose clearly revealed, but the *results* of His death are also explicitly taught.

1. Reconciliation with God

By His death, Christ removed the enmity between God and sinners:

> "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10).
> "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19).
> "He abolished in His flesh the hostility… reconciling both to God through the cross" (Eph. 2:15–16).
> "He Himself is our peace" (v. 14).

2. Justification

Christ's death secured the forgiveness of sins, delivering us from guilt, wrath, and curse:

> "By His own blood He entered the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12).
> "He redeemed us from the curse… being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).
> "He bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).
> "Justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus… through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:24–25).
> "In Him we have redemption… the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14).

3. Sanctification

Through His death, Christ purifies us and renews us by His Spirit:

> "The blood of Christ… cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14).
> "The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).
> "By Himself He purged our sins" (Heb. 1:3).
> "To sanctify the people with His own blood, He suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12).
> "He gave Himself… to sanctify and cleanse the church" (Eph. 5:25–27).

Faith itself is one of the gifts secured by His death:

> "To you it has been granted for Christ's sake… to believe in Him" (Phil. 1:29).

> "God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing" (Eph. 1:3).

4. Adoption and Gospel Privileges

By His death, we are made sons and daughters of God:

> "God sent His Son… to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption" (Gal. 4:4–5).

5. Eternal Glory

Finally, Christ's death secures not only grace in this life, but glory in the life to come:

> "We have obtained an inheritance… a possession purchased" (Eph. 1:14).
> "He is the mediator of a new covenant… so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

III. The Clarity of Scripture and the Challenge of Universal Redemption

The teaching of Scripture regarding the purpose and effects of Christ's death is so full, clear, and direct that one might expect all to understand it at once. As the prophet says, *"that he may run who reads it."* And yet, among all the doctrines in the Christian faith, few are more disputed than this—though it is a most fundamental truth.

A widely held belief asserts that Christ offered a **general ransom**—that He died not only for His Church, His elect, but **for every individual descendant of Adam**. According to this view, Christ intended to redeem *all and every one*.

But those who hold this opinion are not unaware of the implications. If the biblical end and effect of Christ's death are truly as we've already shown—if it **actually secures** reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and glory for those for whom it was offered—then only two conclusions are possible:

1. **Either** God the Father and Christ the Son failed in their purpose. That is, they intended to save all people, yet failed to accomplish it—implying that Christ's death was an insufficient or ineffective means to its end.

   > This would be a blasphemous claim. It dishonours the **wisdom**, **power**, and **perfection** of God, and undermines the **worth and efficacy** of Christ's death.

2. **Or**, if Christ truly did achieve what Scripture says He did, then **all people**—every single human being—must be saved, cleansed, sanctified, and glorified.

   > But no one dares to claim this seriously. The Scriptures themselves and the evident destruction of countless souls throughout history contradict it.

To avoid these unacceptable conclusions, proponents of universal redemption are forced to adopt a different position. They deny that God or Christ had any **definite** or **effectual** aim in the shedding of Christ's blood. They claim that no specific blessing—such as pardon,

grace, or reconciliation—was actually obtained or purchased by Christ's death for anyone in particular.

According to them, **nothing was truly accomplished** at the cross except a general offer of salvation made equally to all. No benefit arises directly from Christ's death for any soul—not even one—unless an individual produces faith (which, notably, was **not** secured for them by Christ's death, since not all have it).

But this notion deeply weakens the true power and value of Christ's satisfaction. It robs the cross of its divine purpose and effectiveness. And more than that—it lays the foundation for a **dangerous, uncertain, and comfortless doctrine**, which stands in direct opposition to the gospel's assurance.

Therefore, with God's help, I will now present what Scripture clearly teaches on both sides of this issue:

- What we assert to be the true, effectual purpose of Christ's death;
- And the claims made by those who oppose it.

May the Lord, by His Spirit, guide us into all truth, give us understanding in these things, and—as Paul writes—if anyone is otherwise minded, may the Lord reveal the truth to him also.

Book 1, Chapter 2

On the Nature of an "End" and Some Distinctions Regarding It

I. What Is Meant by an “End”?

The *end* of a thing refers to what the agent or doer intends to accomplish by their action—what they aim to achieve because they regard it as good or desirable in their present condition.

Take Noah, for example. His purpose in building the ark was to preserve himself and his family. In obedience to God, he constructed the ark with that goal in mind:

> “Noah did all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22).

The things done in order to achieve a particular end are called *means*. These, along with the end itself, make up the whole rationale behind any action carried out by a rational being—that is, someone who acts by choice.

For instance, Absalom desired to take the throne from his father. His goal was the crown. To reach that end, he gathered chariots, horses, and an escort of fifty men (2 Sam. 15:1). He flattered the people and stole their loyalty (v. 6), then used the pretext of a sacrifice at Hebron to launch his conspiracy (v. 12). All these were *means* to secure his goal.

II. The Relationship Between End and Means

There is a vital connection between *end* and *means*—they are, in different ways, causes of one another.

- The *end* is the **primary, motivating cause** of the entire work. It is *why* the agent acts in the first place. Without an end in view, a person would have no reason to act in one way rather than another.

We see this illustrated after the flood. The people wanted unity, stability, and perhaps safety from future judgment. So they said:

> "Let us build ourselves a city and a tower… let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered across the earth" (Gen. 11:4).
> They first defined their goal, then set about the work using means that would accomplish it.

So it is clear: the **reason and order** behind all thoughtful action arises from the end in view. In intention and planning, the *end* comes first—even though, in time, it is the *last* thing to be accomplished.

- The *means* are all the things used to reach the desired end.
    - Food preserves life.
    - Ships carry people across the sea.
    - Laws preserve the peace of society.
      These are the **working causes** of their corresponding outcomes.

The *existence* of the means is for the sake of the end, and the *end* arises out of the means—either:

1. **Morally**, as what the agent *deserves* or earns under a moral rule,

2. **Naturally**, as what the means *produce* by their very nature.

In the Moral Sense:

When we consider the means and end in light of God's moral law, the means are seen as *deserving* their end.

- If Adam had remained sinless and obeyed God perfectly, the reward—the end—would have been eternal life.

- But because of sin, the end now is death—the curse of the law.

In the Natural Sense:

When viewed purely in terms of cause and effect, the means are the *instrumental cause* of the end.

- Joab intended to kill Abner, so he struck him under the fifth rib with a spear, and he died (2 Sam. 3:27).

- Benaiah killed Shimei by Solomon's command; the wounds caused his death (1 Kings 2:46).

In this regard, the act of murdering an innocent person and executing a criminal are no different *naturally*—both actions bring about death. But **morally**, they are entirely different. One is an act of justice; the other, a crime. The end follows the moral worth of the action, measured against the standard of righteousness—and between those two, there is a great gulf fixed.

III. Two Kinds of Ends: The Work and the Worker

Because of the flaws and moral corruption in some agents (i.e., people), there is often a distinction between two kinds of "ends":

- the **end of the work itself**, and
- the **end of the worker**—that is, the act and the intention of the one acting.

When someone uses means that are not suited to the goal, or acts contrary to the rule they are meant to follow, the intended outcome and the actual result can differ dramatically. For example, Adam desired to be like God. That became his goal. To reach it, he ate the forbidden fruit. But what followed was *guilt and condemnation*—an outcome he did not intend.

However, when someone acts rightly—when their goal is proper and fitting to their calling, and they pursue it through appropriate means—then the **end of the work and the end of the worker are the same**.

- Abel, desiring to worship God, offered a faithful sacrifice that was accepted.
- A man, desiring salvation through Christ, seeks union with Him by faith.

This difference exists because humans, as **secondary agents**, have ends assigned to their actions by God, who gives them a moral law to govern all they do. That law stands over them whether they acknowledge it or not. But **God**, whose own will is the rule for all His

outward works, **can never fail**, deviate, or produce an unintended result. His actions are always in perfect accord with His purpose.

IV. Ends Can Be Either What Is Done, or Why It Is Done

When a rational being acts freely, their *end* may refer either to:

- **what they achieve**, or
- **why they seek to achieve it**.

For example:

- A man builds a house to rent it out. The house is what he achieves; the income is why he does it.
- A doctor heals a patient; his deeper motive may be the payment he expects.
- Judas, when he went to the priests, made a deal, led soldiers to the garden, and kissed Jesus—all to betray Him. That was his immediate aim. But the reason behind it all was his desire for the thirty pieces of silver: *"What will you give me, and I will deliver Him to you?"*

In like manner, we can speak of God's purpose in the death of Christ:

- **What was accomplished**: the satisfaction of divine justice.

- **Why it was done**: ultimately, for God's own glory; and, in a subordinate sense, for our salvation.

V. Two Types of Means

Means, or instruments used to achieve an end, come in two forms:

1. Some have intrinsic goodness, though we use them as means.

These things are noble in themselves, but when we use them toward an end, their goodness becomes relative. For example:

- *Study* is a noble exercise of the mind, but when we pursue it for the sake of knowledge, we value it not for itself, but for what it leads to.
  Otherwise, it can be wearisome:

"Much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Eccl. 12:12).

2. Others have no goodness in themselves—they are only useful for the result they bring.

They gain all their value from the goal they serve. In themselves, they may be undesirable, even painful:

- Amputating a limb to save a life,
- Drinking a bitter medicine for health,
- Throwing cargo overboard to keep a ship afloat.

These things are not good in themselves—but their usefulness makes them necessary.

> **The death of Christ** falls into this second category. It was not desirable in itself, but rather necessary and effective for attaining a glorious end—as we will show later.

VI. Applying These Principles to the Work of Redemption

Having laid down these general truths, we now move on to apply them to the central topic before us: the **redemption of sinners through Christ**.

To understand this work rightly, we must carefully and in order consider:

1. The **agent** who acted,
2. The **means** by which the work was accomplished, and
3. The **end** that was achieved.

These three must be examined distinctly and in proper sequence, so that we might form a clear and accurate understanding of the whole.

With God's help, we begin with the first—**the agent of redemption**—in the next chapter.

Book I, Chapter 3

The Agent or Chief Author of the Work of Redemption, and the First Act Ascribed to the Father

I. The Triune God as the Author of Redemption

The **author of our redemption**—the one who initiated and carried out this great work—is the **blessed Trinity**, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All the outward works of God are *undivided*, belonging equally to each person of the Godhead, though each acts according to His distinct manner of subsistence and role in the divine order.

It is true that there were various **secondary, instrumental causes** involved in Christ's suffering (or passion). Yet the work of redemption **cannot rightly be attributed to them**.

- Regarding **God the Father**, the actions of Christ's enemies had results entirely contrary to their own intentions. In the end, they only did what **God's hand and plan had already determined would happen** (Acts 4:28).

- Regarding **Christ**, they were powerless to take His life. He willingly laid it down of His own accord (John 10:17–18). Their violent actions did not compel Him; He gave Himself freely.

Therefore, these human agents are excluded when we speak of who truly accomplished the work of redemption.

Still, Scripture speaks of **distinct actions** carried out by each person of the Trinity in this united work. According to our human limitations, we must consider these actions **separately** and in order. We begin with those acts that Scripture ascribes specifically to **the Father**.

II. Two Key Acts Ascribed to the Father

There are **two distinct actions** in the work of redemption that are properly attributed to the **Father**:

1. **The sending of His Son into the world** to accomplish redemption.
2. **The laying of our punishment upon Him** in the place of sinners.

1. The Father Sends the Son

God the Father, moved by love, **sent His Son** to save sinners:

> "He sent His Son into the world so that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16–17).
> "God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3–4).
> "God set Him forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:25).

> "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son… to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4–5).

This action of **sending** is mentioned over twenty times in the Gospel of John. Jesus Himself often describes His own mission with the words: *"Him whom the Father sent"* (John 10:36). And He identifies the Father as: *"He who sent Me"* (John 5:37).

This act was foretold in God's promise:

> "He will send them a Saviour, a great one, to deliver them" (Isa. 19:20).

And confirmed in Christ's own words:

> "From the beginning I have not spoken in secret… and now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me" (Isa. 48:16).

Because of this divine action, **the Father Himself is sometimes called our Saviour**:

- "According to the command of God our Saviour" (1 Tim. 1:1).

  (Some manuscripts read "God *and* our Saviour," but this likely arose from a mistaken assumption that only Christ bears the title "Saviour.")

- This same phrase appears again in Titus 1:3:

  "According to the commandment of God our Saviour,"
  where the grammatical structure leaves no room for separating the title from the Father.

- In Luke 1:47, Mary sings: *"My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."*

- In 1 Tim. 4:10, we read:

  > "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe."
  > This reference does not concern redemption through Christ directly, but God's general providence in preserving all people.

The title of "Saviour" is frequently given to the Father in Scripture, in connection with the **sending of Christ**. Examples include:

- Titus 2:10; 3:4
- Deut. 32:15
- 1 Sam. 10:19
- Ps. 24:5; 25:5
- Isa. 12:2; 40:10; 45:15
- Jer. 14:8
- Mic. 7:7
- Hab. 3:18

Most of these texts refer to **God's redemptive act** in sending His Son.

This sending of Christ by the Father involves **three distinct aspects**, unfolded in order in the following sections.

The Father's Role in Appointing Christ as Mediator

(1) The Authoritative Appointment of the Son to the Office of Mediator

The first aspect of the Father's work in redemption is His **authoritative appointment of Christ** to the office of Mediator. Christ accepted this willingly, taking the office upon Himself voluntarily. Although He was *"in the form of God,"* He humbled Himself and submitted to this calling (Phil. 2:6–8). In this role, the Father exercised a kind of **official superiority** over the Son—not in essence, but by **dispensation**, according to the order of redemption.

This act of appointment may be seen in two parts:

[1] The Eternal Counsel and Purpose of God

Before time began, God purposed to appoint His incarnate Son to the office of Mediator:

- *"You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance"* (Ps. 2:7–8).
- *"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"* (Ps. 110:1).
- *"The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"* (Ps. 110:4).

- He made Christ *"heir of all things"* (Heb. 1:2), and *"Judge of the living and the dead"* (Acts 10:42).

- He was *"foreordained before the foundation of the world"* (1 Pet. 1:20), *"declared to be the Son of God with power"* (Rom. 1:4), and *"predestined to be the firstborn among many brethren"* (Rom. 8:29).

Although this eternal purpose is not part of the temporal events of Christ's ministry, it is the **fountain and source** of all that follows. As it is written:

> *"Known to God are all His works from the beginning of the world"* (Acts 15:18).

Though this purpose is eternal, it is common in Scripture to speak of God's plan together with its execution. So, for clarity's sake, we include it here.

[2] The Actual Inauguration of Christ into His Office

This refers to the **formal setting apart** of Christ for His mediatorial work—God's public confirmation of His mission.

- *"The Father committed all judgment to the Son"* (John 5:22).

- *"God made Him both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36).

- He *"appointed Him over His whole house"* (Heb. 3:1–6).

- This is the *"anointing of the Most Holy"* (Dan. 9:24), God *"anointing Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows"* (Ps. 45:7).

This *anointing* language recalls how the Old Testament types of Christ—the ark, the altar, and other holy objects—were consecrated by anointing (Exod. 30:25–28). Christ's consecration was the fulfilment of all these shadows.

Christ's Inauguration in Three Distinct Acts

If we separate the stages of this setting apart, we can identify **three major acts**:

1. **The proclamation at His birth**:
    - God *"prepared a body"* for His Son (Heb. 10:5), bringing *"the Firstborn into the world,"* saying: *"Let all the angels of God worship Him"* (Heb. 1:6).
    - Angels announced His birth to the shepherds:

      > *"Unto you is born this day… a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:10–11).

    - A multitude of the heavenly host responded:

      > *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men"* (v. 14).

2. **The anointing by the Spirit at His baptism**:
    - The Spirit descended visibly in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16), marking Him as the one empowered to carry out the work.
    - A voice from heaven declared:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

3. **The glorification of Christ in His resurrection and ascension**:
    - He was *"crowned with glory and honour"* (Heb. 1:3).
    - God set Him as King on Zion (Ps. 2:6).
    - *"All authority in heaven and earth"* was given to Him (Matt. 28:18).
    - *"All things were put under His feet"* (Heb. 2:7–8).
    - He was *"highly exalted"* and given a name above every name (Phil. 2:9–11).

God confirmed this publicly through a variety of witnesses:

- **Angels** (Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10),
- **The dead raised to life** (Matt. 27:52),
- **The apostles** (Acts 2:32),
- And **over five hundred brethren** who saw Him at once (1 Cor. 15:6).

Thus Christ was gloriously installed into His office as Mediator, step by step, in this divine sequence.

> *"It is too small a thing," says the Lord, "that you should raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel. I will also make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth"* (Isa. 49:6).

Between These Acts: Two Great Promises

Between Christ's eternal appointment and His actual public inauguration, we find two key **promises**:

1. **The promise of a coming Saviour**, rooted in God's eternal purpose:
    - *"The seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head"* (Gen. 3:15).
    - *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah… until Shiloh comes"* (Gen. 49:10).

    This promise was reinforced by countless types, sacrifices, and prophecies:

    > *"The prophets… testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"* (1 Pet. 1:10–12). These things were revealed to them *"not for themselves, but for us."*

2. **The promise to apply redemption to believers in due time**:
    - God promised Abraham: *"In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen. 12:3).
    - And Abraham *"believed the Lord, and it was counted to him as righteousness"* (Gen. 15:6).

These promises relate more directly to the **application** of Christ's work—equally relevant before and after His earthly ministry.

(2) The Father's Furnishing of the Son for His Office

The second great act of the Father in sending His Son was this: He **fully equipped and furnished Him** with every spiritual gift and grace needed to fulfil His role as Mediator—suitable to the office He was given, the work He was to undertake, and His charge over the household of God.

There were, in fact, **two kinds of fullness** in Christ:

First, the Divine Fullness of His Deity

As the eternal Son of the Father, Christ possessed in Himself the **absolute perfection of the divine nature**. This fullness was not granted or bestowed—it belonged to Him **essentially and eternally** as God.

- His glory was *"the glory of the only-begotten of the Father"* (John 1:14).
- He was *"in the form of God,"* and did not consider it robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6).
- He is the *"fellow of the LORD of hosts"* (Zech. 13:7).

Isaiah saw this glory in his vision of the Lord on His throne (Isa. 6:3–5), which John affirms referred to Christ: *"Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him"* (John 12:41).

Yet, for the sake of His mission, Christ **emptied Himself**, humbling Himself to take on the form of a servant and suffer death (Phil. 2:7–8). He **veiled** His divine glory for a time, taking on a human appearance *"without beauty or majesty to attract us"* (Isa. 53:2).

This divine fullness, however, is not the subject here. It was not given to Him, but inherently belonged to Him as the eternal Son of the Father.

Second, the Communicated Fullness Given by the Father

The second kind of fullness in Christ was one **graciously bestowed** by the Father. This was a **dispensational** gift—given to equip Him in His role as **Mediator**, the *"man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim. 2:5). Though He is the Lord of Hosts, He took on humanity and stood in our place as *"Emmanuel, God with us"* (Matt. 1:23), the *"Child born, the Son given… the Prince of Peace"* (Isa. 9:6), with government upon His shoulders.

This was a **fullness of grace**—not the essential, infinite fullness of divine being, but the **infused, habitual grace** poured into His human nature, united personally to His divine person.

Though not infinite in the same way as His deity, this fullness was:

- **complete in every kind of grace**, and
- **perfect in every degree of grace**.

There was **no grace lacking** in Christ, and every grace He had was present in its **fullest possible measure**—bestowed on Him by the Father specifically for the work of redemption. While not strictly infinite, this fullness was **boundless, bottomless, and never failing**—like light flowing from the sun, or water from a living fountain.

He is the golden **lampstand**, from which the **golden pipes pour out oil** (Zech. 4:12) to all His people. He is:

> *"The beginning, the firstborn from the dead… in all things having the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell"* (Col. 1:18–19).

In Him are hidden:

> *"all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col. 2:3),
> and *"the fullness of the Godhead bodily"* (Col. 2:9).

And from this fullness, *"we have all received, grace upon grace"* (John 1:16)—a continual outpouring.

Christ's Conscious Equipping for His Mission

When Christ stepped into His public ministry, He understood this anointing as essential to His mission:

> *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives…"* (Isa. 61:1–2).

This was His anointing with the **"oil of gladness"** above all others (Ps. 45:7)—a consecration so abundant that it is said to flow *"from His head down to His beard, even to the skirts of His garments"* (Ps. 133:2), so that all who are clothed in His righteousness might partake of it.

Upon Him rested:

> *"the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord"* (Isa. 11:2).

Unlike us, who receive grace in **measure** and in **degrees**, Christ received **the Spirit without measure** (John 3:34). Although He grew in wisdom and stature during His human life (Luke 2:52), the **endowment of grace** was complete—sufficient for every task and trial of His calling.

To this grace was added:

- **"All authority in heaven and on earth"** (Matt. 28:18),
- **"Power over all flesh, to give eternal life to those the Father had given Him"** (John 17:2).

While we could list many specific gifts and powers included in this, it is enough for now to say that this **comprehensive furnishing** is the **second great act** of God the Father in sending His Son to accomplish our redemption.

(3) The Covenant Between the Father and the Son

The third act of the Father in sending His Son was this: He **entered into covenant** with Him concerning both the **work to be undertaken** and the **outcome to be accomplished**. This covenant between the Father and the Son contains two parts.

First: The Father's Promise of Help and Support

The Father pledged to **uphold and assist** His Son throughout the entire work of redemption. Upon the Son's willing acceptance of this mission, the Father committed Himself to provide everything necessary for its full accomplishment:

- Strength in suffering,

- Endurance in trials,
- Courage against temptations,
- And comfort in the midst of sorrow.

Without this divine assistance, the weight of the work would have been unbearable. For the Son was called to undertake nothing less than becoming the **Saviour of His people**, and to be afflicted in all their afflictions (Isa. 63:8–9). Even though He was the *"fellow of the LORD of hosts"*, He would be struck down by the sword of divine justice as the **Shepherd for the sheep** (Zech. 13:7). He would tread the winepress of God's wrath alone until His garments were stained red (Isa. 63:2–3).

The demands of this work were extreme:

- To be **stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God**,
- To be **wounded for our transgressions**,
- **Bruised for our iniquities**,
- To **make His soul an offering for sin**,
- To **bear the iniquity of many**,
- And to be **forsaken**, crying: *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Ps. 22:1; Isa. 53).

It is no wonder, then, that God promised such abundant support. He would:

- Make His Son's mouth like a sharp sword,

- Hide Him in the shadow of His hand,
- Prepare Him as a polished arrow, and
- Call Him *"my servant, in whom I will be glorified"* (Isa. 49:2–3).

Even if kings and rulers rose against Him (Ps. 2:2), the Lord would laugh and set Him as King on Zion (Ps. 2:4, 6). Though rejected by the builders, He would become the **cornerstone**, marvellous in the eyes of all (Ps. 118:22–23; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11).

The Father would lay Him as:

> *"a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation"* (Isa. 28:16),
> and those who opposed Him would be broken to pieces (Matt. 21:44).

Christ's Confidence in the Covenant

This **divine engagement** gave Christ great assurance in His earthly ministry. Confident of His Father's faithfulness, He embraced His suffering without shrinking back:

> *"I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from shame and spitting"* (Isa. 50:6).

But what gave Him strength? Listen to His words:

> *"The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I am not disgraced. I have set my face like flint, and I know I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near… the Lord GOD helps me; who will condemn me?"* (Isa. 50:7–9).

With this assurance, He went silently to the cross—*"as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before its shearers"* (Isa. 53:7). When reviled, He did not retaliate; when suffering, He did not threaten, but **entrusted Himself** to the One who judges righteously (1 Pet. 2:23).

This **covenantal promise of divine help** was the solid ground of Christ's boldness and perseverance. It strengthened Him to endure the cross, and stirred Him to exercise the fullness of grace He had received.

The **second part** of the covenant between the Father and the Son was the **promise of success**—a guaranteed, fruitful outcome from Christ's suffering and work. This is the most directly relevant part of the discussion, though it depends on the previous considerations.

Whatever the Father **promised would result** from the Son's work, we can be sure that **this was the very goal Christ Himself pursued**. It was the end He set His heart on and the reward He expected upon completing His mission. That goal—and that goal alone—is what He claims upon fulfilling His Father's will.

The Promises Made to the Son

We find this divine promise clearly expressed in Isaiah 49:

> *"You shall be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth… Kings shall see and arise, princes shall bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful"* (vv. 6–7).

God promises:

- **Preservation** of the Son's mission,
- **Effectual calling** of Jews and Gentiles alike,
- A **covenant community**, a people to inherit the desolate places,
- **Release for captives**,
- **Spiritual nourishment and safety**, and
- An unstoppable gathering of a redeemed people from every direction (vv. 8–12).

These vivid promises commit the Father to **gather a redeemed church** through Christ—a people saved, sanctified, and spiritually refreshed by the living water that flows from God in Christ for their eternal good.

This is precisely what the Son aimed at:

- To gather the children of God,
- To bring them to the Father,
- And to lead them to eternal salvation.

This covenant promise, rightly understood, **destroys the notion of a general or universal redemption**, as I will later argue in full.

Isaiah 53: The Father's Specific Guarantees

In Isaiah 53, the Lord is even more explicit about what He guarantees to the Son:

- *"When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand."*
- *"He shall see the result of the anguish of His soul and be satisfied."*
- *"By His knowledge He shall justify many."*
- *"He shall divide the spoil with the strong"* (vv. 10–12)

These promises include:

- A **spiritual seed** gathered through His atonement,
- The **success** of His mission,
- The **justification of many**,
- And a glorious reward.

How this fits with the claim that **Christ could have died and none be saved** is hard to fathom—though some have dared to say so. In fact, everyone who supports **universal redemption** is forced to **quietly concede** this contradiction when they define the actual results of Christ's death.

The New Testament Confirms This

The "pleasure of the Lord" which prospers in Christ's hand is described in Hebrews 2:10 as:

"bringing many sons to glory."

Similarly, in 1 John 4:9, we read:

> *"God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him."*

Christ's Own Prayer: The Fruit of Fulfilled Promises

Perhaps the clearest evidence of what the Father promised—and what the Son intended—is found in Jesus' **high priestly prayer** in John 17.

Jesus says:

> *"I have glorified You on earth; I have finished the work You gave Me to do"* (v. 4).

And what does He request in return?

- The restoration of His eternal glory (v. 5),
- The full outpouring of the Father's love and grace upon those the Father had **given Him**,
- Their **sanctification** (vv. 17–19),
- Their **unity** and **communion** with God and one another (vv. 20–21),
- And their **final glorification** in His presence (v. 24):

  > *"Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, to behold My glory."*

These requests are all **directly grounded** in the covenant promises made by the Father to the Son. And notably, **not a single word** is spoken about all humanity in general. In fact, quite the opposite is stated in verse 9:

> *"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me."*

Summary of the First Great Act: The Sending of the Son

This completes the first major act in the Father's work of redemption: **the sending of His Son**, which includes:

1. His authoritative appointment to the office of Mediator,
2. His full equipping and anointing with every grace,
3. The covenant between Father and Son—
    - promising help and protection,
    - and guaranteeing a successful outcome: the salvation of His people.

This great compact is the foundation of the entire redemptive work. It frames everything that follows.

Book I, Chapter 4

The Role of the Son in the Work of Redemption

The Son's Voluntary Undertaking

Secondly, the **Son** was an active and willing agent in the work of redemption. He **voluntarily undertook the office** laid upon Him. When God rejected the old sacrifices and offerings as insufficient, Christ responded:

> *"Here I am… I have come to do Your will, O God"* (Heb. 10:6–7).

No other way could accomplish the work—so Christ stepped forward, the one **in whom the Father was well pleased** (Matt. 3:17). He repeatedly affirmed that He came **not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him** (John 6:38). Fulfilling the Father's will was His **sustenance and purpose** (John 4:34).

Even from childhood, His focus was fixed:

> *"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"* (Luke 2:49).

And near the end of His earthly ministry, He declared:

> *"I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the work You gave Me to do"* (John 17:4).

All of this was done in accordance with the commission previously described. This willing participation of the Son can be summarised in

three key actions, the first of which also serves as the foundation of the others.

1. His Incarnation

The first and foundational act was His **incarnation**—His taking on human flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14). This is referred to in Galatians 4:4 as being *"born of a woman,"* and is the great mystery of godliness:

> *"God was manifested in the flesh"* (1 Tim. 3:16).

In doing so, He did not assume a particular individual, but the entire **human nature**, joining it personally to Himself. As Hebrews 2:14 says:

> *"Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death—that is, the devil."*

Christ took on human nature not because **all humanity** was in that condition, but because **His children**—those given to Him by the Father—were. *For their sakes* He sanctified Himself (John 17:19).

This **humbling of Himself**, this *"emptying"* of the divine appearance, was an act **proper to the Son alone**. The Father and Spirit did not assume flesh but approved and ordained this through eternal counsel.

2. His Oblation (Self-Offering)

The second act was His **oblation**, or **offering of Himself**:

"He offered Himself without blemish to God to cleanse our consciences from dead works" (Heb. 9:14).
"He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5).
"Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25).

He took the **cup of wrath** from His Father—wrath that was due to us—and drank it fully. As Daniel 9:26 says, He was *"cut off, but not for Himself."*

This offering of Christ is what the entire system of **Old Testament sacrifices and ordinances** anticipated. When they came to their end, Christ declared:

"Here I am… I have come to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:9).

While Scripture tends to highlight Christ's **sufferings** in this work, the emphasis here is His **voluntary willingness**. Without it, His sacrifice would have had **no value**. The **will of Christ** was essential to the effectiveness of His atonement.

"He was led like a lamb to the slaughter… yet He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7).
"I lay down My life… No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord" (John 10:17–18).
"He loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

A true **gift** must come from a **free and willing heart**—and Christ's sacrifice was exactly that:

"Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God—a fragrant aroma" (Eph. 5:2).

His resolve was cheerful and unwavering:

"Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:9).

Thus He:

"bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

This **oblation or offering** of Christ should not be limited to a single action or moment. Rather, it encompasses:

- His **entire earthly ministry**,
- Every act and suffering in the days of His flesh,
- His **prayers, tears, and cries** (Heb. 5:7),
- His obedience **unto death**,
- His final offering on the cross, and
- His entrance into the **heavenly sanctuary**, where He appears before God **on our behalf** (Heb. 9:24).

It includes all He accomplished **until He gave His life as a ransom for many** (Matt. 26:28), and *"by Himself purged our sins"* before sitting down *"at the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Heb. 1:3), waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool (Heb. 10:13).

As for His **present intercession**, or His **appearing before the Father sprinkled with His own blood**, some have considered this as a **continuation** of His oblation, which we shall address in due time.

3. Christ's Intercession for Those He Died For

The **third aspect** of Christ's work is His **intercession** for all those for whom He offered Himself as a sacrifice. He did not suffer for them and then withhold His prayers. He did not perform the greater work of dying and neglect the lesser work of pleading. The price of redemption is too precious to be left without effect or care for its outcome.

This too was part of the task given to Christ—accompanied by a promise. As the Father said:

> *"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance, the ends of the earth as Your possession"* (Ps. 2:8).

Accordingly, Jesus assured His disciples that His work on their behalf would continue in heaven:

> *"I go to prepare a place for you… I will come again and take you to Myself"* (John 14:2–3).

This parallels the Old Testament high priest who entered the Holy of Holies *"not without blood"* to make atonement for the people (Heb. 9:7). Christ, our great High Priest, *"by His own blood entered once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us"* (Heb. 9:11–12).

Christ Appears in Heaven for Us

What is this holy place? Not an earthly temple—but *"heaven itself, where He now appears in the presence of God for us"* (Heb. 9:24). And why does He appear there?

To act as our **advocate**, applying the benefits of His sacrifice to those for whom He died. As John writes:

> *"If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous"* (1 John 2:1).

And why is He our advocate? Because:

> *"He is the propitiation for our sins"* (v. 2).

His **intercession is grounded in His atonement**. These two aspects—sacrifice and intercession—are directed toward the same people. Christ does not intercede for those He did not redeem.

Christ Does Not Intercede for the World

Jesus Himself draws this line in His high priestly prayer:

> *"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me"* (John 17:9).

Why not pray for the world? Because He **did not die for them**. His intercession flows from His death—it is not independent of it.

We also know that the Father **always hears the Son** (John 11:42). Therefore, if Christ interceded for all people, all would be saved. But Scripture says:

> *"He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:25).

The Intercession of Christ: Powerful and Particular

This is why Paul can say with confidence:

> *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us"* (Rom. 8:33–34).

From this, it is clear that **those for whom Christ died are the very ones He intercedes for**, and **none of them will be condemned**. This **destroys the notion of a general ransom**, for under that view, Christ supposedly died for many who:

- Have no part in His intercession,
- Have their sins still laid to their charge,
- And perish eternally.

The Nature of Christ's Intercession

We must also understand that Christ's intercession is not a **lowly, pleading request**, as if He were begging. That would not suit His exalted position at the Father's right hand.

Rather, His intercession is an **authoritative presentation of Himself**, now glorified, before the throne—**sprinkled with His own blood**—to secure for His people all the blessings His sacrifice obtained.

As He prays:

> *"Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am, to see My glory"* (John 17:24).

In this, He appears **on behalf of all those for whom He suffered**, presenting the merit of His satisfaction to the Father.

The Foundation: The Father's Promise

Remember also what the Father **promised the Son** when He undertook the work of redemption: that He would be the **captain of salvation**, bringing **many sons to glory** (Heb. 2:10). It is for *this* and this alone that Christ intercedes—nothing beyond what the Father covenanted with Him.

Because of this, **we can draw near with confidence**:

> *"By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"* (Heb. 10:14).

This completes the threefold work of the Son:

1. **His incarnation**,
2. **His oblation**,
3. **His intercession**—all for **the same people**, all in perfect unity and purpose.

Book I, Chapter 5

The Distinct Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption

Thirdly, we now consider the work of the **third person** of the blessed Trinity, the **Holy Spirit**, who contributes distinctly and powerfully to every essential part of the work of redemption. His involvement can be grouped under **three main headings**:

1. The Spirit's Role in the Incarnation and Earthly Life of Christ

The Holy Spirit was instrumental in the **incarnation of the Son** and His **ministry on earth**.

- Christ's conception was *"by the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 1:18).
- When Mary asked how this could be, the angel answered:

> *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you"* (Luke 1:35).

This "overshadowing" evokes the image of birds warming their eggs—life brought forth by the Spirit's power, as at creation's dawn. The conception of Jesus was not through any natural means, but entirely by the **creative, life-giving work of the Spirit**.

As Jesus grew, He was **filled with the Spirit**, and **strengthened by Him** (Luke 1:80). Eventually, He received the Spirit **without measure**, being fully equipped with every spiritual gift and grace for the mission before Him.

2. The Spirit's Role in Christ's Sacrifice

The Holy Spirit was also active in Christ's **sacrificial death**—or His **oblation**.

> *"By the Eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself without blemish to God"* (Heb. 9:14).

Whether this refers to His bloody death on the cross or His ongoing presentation of Himself before the Father, the point is the same: it was **through the Spirit** that Christ willingly and perfectly gave Himself as a sacrifice.

This **willing self-offering** was animated by the Spirit—He was the **eternal fire beneath the altar**, making the offering acceptable to God.

Some argue that "Eternal Spirit" here refers to Christ's **divine nature**. But there's no strong reason to take it that way. Some early Greek and Latin manuscripts even read *"Holy Spirit"* instead. And Scripture elsewhere supports this view:

- Christ was *"declared to be the Son of God… according to the Spirit of holiness"* (Rom. 1:4).
- He was *"made alive by the Spirit"* (1 Pet. 3:18).

If the Spirit was active in Christ's **resurrection**, it makes sense that He was also active in His **offering**.

3. The Spirit's Role in Christ's Resurrection

Finally, the Holy Spirit was the divine agent in **raising Christ from the dead**.

> *"If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit"* (Rom. 8:11).

The resurrection, like the incarnation and crucifixion, was a **Trinitarian work**—each person acting in harmony, the Spirit exercising His power to raise the Son.

Summary: One Work, Three Persons

We have now seen the distinct yet united work of the **Father**, the **Son**, and the **Holy Spirit** in our redemption:

- The **Father** sends, furnishes, and covenants;
- The **Son** becomes incarnate, offers Himself, and intercedes;
- The **Spirit** conceives, empowers, offers, and raises.

Though these actions can be distinguished, they are never divided. Each belongs to the one divine nature shared equally by all three persons.

Together, they not only **began** this work of redemption, but they continue to **apply** it until its full and final accomplishment.

As Paul says:

> *"Give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit (by His Spirit) to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has*

delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12–14).

Book I, Chapter 6

The Means Used by the Father, Son, and Spirit in the Work of Redemption

Having examined the agents of redemption—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—we now move to consider the **means** by which the work was accomplished. Though these means are, in essence, the same actions we have already reviewed, we now view them **not as distinct acts**, but as a **coherent, divinely ordained path** leading to a definite end.

In this chapter, we follow the **order of execution** (what actually took place), not the **order of intention** (what was eternally decreed). And since the actions of the Father and the Spirit were all directed toward Christ and fulfilled in Him, it is **Christ alone**, and His actions, that we now consider as the **means** of redemption. The role of the Father and the Spirit is assumed as the necessary foundation and accompaniment.

The Entire Mediation of Christ as the Means

The divinely appointed means for accomplishing redemption is **the entire economy of Christ's mediatorial work**. It is because of this full work that He is rightly called our **Mediator**. As mentioned previously, His mediatorial office can be viewed in **two primary parts**:

1. **His Oblation (offering)**
2. **His Intercession**

1. Christ's Oblation

By **oblation**, we mean not only Christ's particular act of offering Himself on the cross—as the spotless Lamb of God bearing our sins—but also **His entire state of humiliation**:

- His **voluntary obedience** to the law, being made under it (Rom. 10:4),
- His **subjection to suffering and curse**, throughout His earthly life and especially in His death on the cross.

No part of His mediatorial work is excluded from this—**every act of obedience and suffering** contributed to the total means of redemption.

2. Christ's Intercession

By **intercession**, we do not mean merely His present ministry in heaven, applying the blessings of His death to believers. It includes:

- All that followed His resurrection: His ascension, exaltation, and reigning at the right hand of God,
- The **application of all the good things** secured by His oblation to those for whom He died.

His **resurrection** is especially noteworthy here, for it forms the **foundation** of all that followed.

As Paul says:

> *"If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins… we are of all people most to be pitied"* (1 Cor. 15:17, 19).

But:

> *"He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25).

Here, **resurrection** signifies the beginning of His exalted ministry and continual intercession in heaven. As Peter declares:

> *"God raised up His servant Jesus… to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness"* (Acts 3:26).

The Death of Christ as a Means, Not an End

This **entire mediatorial dispensation**, especially His death and shedding of blood, is the **means** we are speaking of. It must be understood properly—as something **not desirable in itself**, but

instrumental in achieving a glorious end: the **manifestation of God's grace** and the **salvation of His people**.

There was **nothing desirable in itself** about:

- Herod and Pilate gathering with Jews and Gentiles to kill Christ (Acts 4:27),
- The Son of God being made sin and curse,
- His being bruised, afflicted, and subjected to divine wrath,
- A death so dreadful that creation itself trembled to witness it.

In themselves, these events were **horrific and without beauty or appeal**. Their worth lies only in what they **accomplished**.

Their value arises from the **glory of the end** they secured. As Peter declares:

> *"He was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God"* (Acts 2:23).
> *"They did what Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place"* (Acts 4:28).

The nature of this divinely determined end will be further explained later.

The Inseparable Union of Christ's Oblation and Intercession

Though the **oblation** (Christ's sacrificial offering) and **intercession** (His ongoing priestly work in heaven) are **distinct**

acts, and though each has its own **immediate effects and results**, they are **never to be separated**.

That is, the one is **never directed toward any person or thing** that the other does not equally concern. The two acts are bound together by a profound and inseparable unity. This union can be described in **three ways**:

1. A Shared Purpose and Goal

Both the oblation and the intercession of Christ are aimed at the **same ultimate end**: the **effectual salvation of many sons**, brought to glory for the praise of God's grace (Heb. 2:10).

That end is **not divided** between the two acts; it is **one and the same**.

2. A Shared Scope of Persons

The **same people** are the objects of both Christ's death and His intercession.

> *"He was delivered over for our offences, and raised for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25).

Whoever is included in the saving benefits of His death is also included in His intercession—and no one else.

Christ Himself declares:

> *"For their sake I sanctify Myself [as an offering], that they also may be sanctified in truth"* (John 17:19).

In other words:

- For **all** and **only** those for whom Christ died,
- He also **intercedes**,
- Applying the benefits of His death through ongoing priestly mediation.

3. Intercession Depends on the Offering

The **offering of Christ** is the **foundation** of His intercession. Everything Christ pleads for as our Advocate was **purchased by His death**.

The very **purpose** of His death was that its benefits might be **applied** to those for whom it was offered.

The two acts form **one unified means** to achieve the same effect. If the blessings obtained by His death were **not applied**, the death itself would fail of its intended end—which cannot be.

So we cannot say that Christ's death secured blessings for more people than His intercession applies them to. That would divide what God has joined.

But:

- Christ intercedes for all He died for.
- He is always heard by the Father.
- Therefore, all for whom He died **must** receive the blessings He obtained—justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

A Crushing Blow to Universal Redemption

This truth is **devastating** to the doctrine of a **universal atonement**—the idea that Christ died for all people without exception.

For if He did die for all, and also intercedes for all with infallible success (which Scripture affirms), then **all must be saved**—a conclusion plainly contradicted by Scripture and experience.

We must briefly pause here to establish this further. The **full proof** will come in the next section, where we discuss the **actual end and effect** of Christ's death. For now, however, we can note a few independent reasons supporting this claim.

Book I, Chapter 7

Reasons Why Christ's Oblation and Intercession Form One United Means and Have the Same Personal Object

I. The Testimony of Scripture

The first reason for affirming that Christ's **oblation (sacrificial offering)** and **intercession (priestly pleading)** are one united

work with one common goal and object, is the consistent testimony of Scripture. These two aspects are **almost always joined together**, revealing that they are **inseparable** in both intent and effect.

Consider Isaiah 53:11:

> *"By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."*

Here, the **justification of sinners** (the fruit of intercession) is directly tied to His **bearing of iniquities** (His sacrificial death). In verse 12, this connection is made unmistakable:

> *"He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors."*

He intercedes for those **very same transgressors** whose sin He bore.

Even our complete healing is said to be the **fruit of His suffering**:

> *"By His stripes we are healed"* (Isa. 53:5).

Likewise, Paul writes:

> *"He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25).

He died **for our sins**, and He rose again **for the justification of the same people**. If He died for all, then all must be justified—or else the purpose of His death and resurrection fails. To claim such failure would be **blasphemous**.

Instead, let us echo Paul:

> *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, who was raised, who is even at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us"* (Rom. 8:33–34).

The **same people** are the objects of:

- Christ's death,
- His resurrection,
- And His intercession.

The **scope is identical**. If He died for you, He intercedes for you. If He intercedes for you, **you will be saved**—for He cannot fail in His intercession.

II. Both Acts Belong to Christ's Priestly Office

Offering and interceding—**sacrifice and prayer**—are both essential to the **priestly office**. If Christ did only one of these for someone, He would not be a faithful High Priest on their behalf.

But Christ **is** a faithful High Priest. As John writes:

> *"If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 2:1–2).

He is **both** advocate (intercessor) **and** propitiation (sacrifice). These two functions must go hand in hand.

This is also the clear teaching of the **Epistle to the Hebrews**:

- *"When Christ appeared as High Priest… by His own blood He entered the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption"* (Heb. 9:11–12).

- Just as the high priest of old entered the holy place with blood to intercede for the people, so Christ, having shed His blood, entered heaven to apply its power.

His **entrance into heaven** is not merely a reward for His sacrifice —it is the **continuation of His priestly work**, applying all that He purchased.

This is why Hebrews 7:24–25 says:

> *"He holds His priesthood permanently… He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them."*

And so we are told:

> *"We have boldness to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus"* (Heb. 10:19).

In short, if Christ is a priest for someone, He must:

1. **Offer for them**, and

2. **Intercede for them**.

To do one without the other would be to **fail in His priestly office**, which is unthinkable. Therefore:

- **Everyone for whom He offered Himself**—He also intercedes.
- **The scope of each act is equal**.
- **They cannot be separated.**

A Challenge to the Opponents of Definite Atonement

Let me ask those who deny this truth:
Does Christ intercede for all people?

If you say **no**, then you make Him **only half a priest**.
If you say **yes**, then either:

- All people must be saved (which is false), or
- Christ **fails** in His intercession (which is blasphemy).

But Scripture assures us:

> *"The Spirit intercedes according to the will of God"* (Rom. 8:27),
> And *"If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us"* (1 John 5:14).
> Christ Himself said: *"Father, I thank You that You always hear Me"* (John 11:42).

If the Father **always** hears the Son—even **before** the cross—how much more now, as He sits at His right hand, having **finished** His

saving work?

Therefore, Christ cannot intercede in vain. He intercedes for those **for whom He died**, and **all for whom He intercedes will be saved**.

III. The Nature of Christ's Intercession Proves Their Unity

The very nature of Christ's **intercession** makes clear that it cannot be separated from His **oblation**.

Now that His priestly work is **perfected in heaven**, Christ's intercession is not some **humble pleading** with cries and tears, as during His earthly ministry. It is not even properly vocal, like a human entreaty. Rather, His intercession is a **real and continual presentation of Himself**—the One who was sacrificed—**before the throne of God**.

As Hebrews 9:24 declares:

> *"Christ has not entered holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."*

His intercession consists in **appearing before the Father** in His glorified body—the very body in which He suffered and shed blood. Just as the high priest in the Old Testament entered the holy place with the blood of animals on behalf of the people, so Christ enters heaven with **His own blood**, so that His past offering might have **perpetual power and effect**.

His intercession is, in essence, **His oblation continued**.

He is:

> *"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev. 13:8).

Before He died in time, He interceded **based on the certainty of His coming sacrifice**. After His death, He intercedes **based on the completion of that sacrifice**.

Thus, His intercession is nothing more than the **ongoing application** of His finished oblation. It is the living, priestly act of **declaring and presenting** His sacrifice to the Father for the sake of those for whom He died.

So, how could His intercession extend to people **for whom He did not offer Himself**? If intercession is just the presentation of His sacrifice, then it cannot be for **any more** than those for whom the sacrifice was made.

IV. The Purpose and Foundation of Intercession Are Grounded in the Covenant

If Christ's **death** purchased every good gift that is **actually bestowed** through His intercession, then the purpose of both acts is the **same**, and they must share the same scope.

This truth becomes clear when we remember the **covenant agreement** between the Father and the Son—discussed earlier in Chapter 3. When the Son voluntarily undertook the work of redemption, the Father made specific **promises** to Him:

- Promises of a people,

- Promises of success,
- Promises of reward for His suffering.

And these very promises are what form the **basis of Christ's intercession**.

What is Christ's intercession grounded upon? If He asks for something from the Father—whether we think of it in terms of speech or action—on what basis does He do so?

Surely, it is on the basis of the **promises made to Him**—for example:

> *"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance"* (Psalm 2:8).

But why was this promise made? Verse 2 tells us—it was **in light of His sufferings**, as the kings and rulers conspired against Him (as fulfilled in Acts 4:27–28).

So then:

- The **promise** is made in view of His **sacrifice**,
- The **intercession** is based on that promise,
- And the **blessings granted** are the very things He **purchased by His death**.

Therefore, it is impossible to say that Christ intercedes for any more (or fewer) than those for whom He died. His intercession is **based on His oblation**, and the benefits He asks the Father to bestow are the **fruits of His sacrifice**.

Until those benefits are **actually given**, the effects of His death are **not complete**.

To claim that Christ's death purchased blessings that are never granted is to **contradict both Scripture and reason**—as will be shown more fully later.

V. What Christ Has Joined, Let No Man Separate

Let us be clear: **what Christ Himself has joined**, no one has the right to divide.

We may distinguish between His **oblation** (His sacrificial offering) and **intercession** (His ongoing priestly pleading), but we may **never separate them**. They are **united by Christ Himself**.

Consider **John 17**—Christ's great High Priestly Prayer. There He **both offered Himself** (in full commitment and intention, verse 4) and **interceded** (praying for those given to Him, verses 9, 20–24). In that moment, before the cross, He **offered Himself as fully** in will and purpose as on Calvary, and **interceded as perfectly** as He does now in heaven.

Who, then, can lawfully divide what Christ united?

Moreover, Scripture tells us that **without His intercession**, Christ's death would have been **ineffective** for our redemption. As Paul says:

> *"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins"* (1 Cor. 15:17).

And the writer of Hebrews adds:

> *"He entered once into the holy places… having obtained eternal redemption"* (Heb. 9:12).

Without His entrance into heaven (intercession), His death would not have secured our salvation.

VI. To Divide the Death and Intercession of Christ Destroys Christian Assurance

To separate Christ's **death and intercession**—especially in terms of **who they apply to**—is to destroy the very foundation of our **comfort** and **assurance**.

This is one of the greatest problems with the teaching of a **general ransom**—the idea that Christ died for all people, without securing salvation for any in particular. Such teaching **undermines true assurance** and **drains comfort** from the gospel.

Let me explain how.

The **strong consolation** that God desires His people to enjoy flows from this truth:

> That Christ, by His death, **obtained** every good thing for His people—and by His intercession, He **ensures those blessings are applied**.

He never abandons the sins He died for; He **follows them** into every courtroom of God's justice until they are **fully pardoned** (Heb. 9:26). He is able to **save to the uttermost** those who come to God through Him (Heb. 7:25).

But if His death and intercession are separated—either in intention or in result—**what comfort is left**?

Christ's **death without His resurrection and intercession** would **profit us nothing**. As Paul says, if Christ has not risen, our **faith is futile**, and we are **still in our sins** (1 Cor. 15:17).

It is the **union** of His death and intercession that forms a **solid foundation** for the soul to rest on.

> *"What good is it for me to believe that Christ died for my sins, if those same sins might still rise to condemn me, and Christ will not intercede on my behalf?"*

If I ask with Paul,

> *"Who is he that condemns?"*

Can I answer:

> *"It is Christ who died"*?

Not unless I also add:

> *"Yea rather, who is risen again, and is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us"* (Rom. 8:34).

The full assurance comes **not only from His death**, but from the fact that He now **appears for us**, and none of our sins or accusers can appear against us **where He appears**.

This alone gives **firm and lasting comfort**.

Objections to this glorious passage (Rom. 8:34) will be addressed in due time. For now, we conclude with confidence that:

> **The same people for whom Christ died are the very people for whom He intercedes**.

To separate these two is to **tear apart the very fabric of our hope**.

Book I, Chapter 8

Answering Objections to the Unity of Christ's Oblation and Intercession

In the last chapter, we demonstrated that Christ's **oblation** (His once-for-all sacrificial offering) and His **intercession** (His ongoing priestly ministry) are equal in **scope and purpose**. They are two aspects of a **single, unified work**, directed toward a common goal: the certain salvation of all for whom He died.

Before we go on to define that great end, we must clear the path by answering a few **objections** that have been raised against this truth. As Scripture says, we must remove such things *"as a man removes dung until it is all gone"* (cf. Mal. 2:3).

A Shared Argument: Christ's Offices Are for His Church Alone

Some have objected with a variation of our earlier argument, which they themselves attempt to answer. It goes like this:

> *"Christ's ransom and mediation are no broader in scope than His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. But these offices belong to His Church and His chosen people only. Therefore, His ransom applies to them alone."*

This argument aligns closely with our own. It simply affirms that Christ did not offer Himself for any for whom He is **not a priest**, and He is not a priest for those for whom He does **not intercede**.

Now, those opposing definite atonement try to weaken this line of reasoning in order to appear as though they have **overcome** it. But let's examine their reply.

The Objector's "Sober Objection"

The answerer concedes that this is a *"sober objection."* At first, this may seem like an admission that the argument is solid and reasonable. However, his actual response is neither sound nor satisfying.

He claims the objection does not deny that Christ **died for all**, but only that He **ransomed and mediates for all**. But this is a contradiction.

Christ Himself said:

> *"The Son of Man came to give His life as a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28).

To say Christ **died for all**, but **did not ransom all**, is to **split apart** things that Scripture never separates. The **very meaning** of Christ's death is that it is a **ransom**—the payment of a price to free from bondage. To die without ransoming is to **die in vain**.

Moreover, those who promote universal atonement often insist that the **ransom** is just as wide in scope as anything else Christ did or secured. Are they now suggesting new layers of distinction—that:

1. Christ **died** for some,
2. Ransomed **fewer**, and
3. **Intercedes** for even fewer still?

This would mean Christ died for a group **broader** than those He ransomed, and ransomed for more than those He intercedes for. It is a confused and **unscriptural scheme**.

But we must proceed, since the argument here is not difficult. In such an **easy cause**, it would be shameful to take cheap shots or evade the core issue.

One objector claims that the **mediation of Christ** must be understood in **two ways**:

- A *general* sense, as the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim. 2:5),
- And a *special* sense, as "the mediator of the new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

To support this, he appeals to 1 Timothy 4:10:

> *"He is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."*

He argues that in **each of Christ's offices**—Prophet, Priest, and King—there is something general and something specific. He

concludes that Christ may have **paid a ransom for all** in His role as a *general* mediator, even though He intercedes only for *some* as a *special* mediator.

Answering the Distinction

At first glance, the objector calls this a *"clear and plain answer from Scripture."* But he leaves it to others to apply the argument to the issue at hand.

So let's trace the logic:
He seems to say that Christ paid a ransom for everyone **as a general mediator**, but intercedes only for some **as a special mediator**. If that's his meaning, it is difficult to describe just how confused and unbiblical it truly is.

The language is obscure, and the idea itself is **unfounded and dangerous**. It suggests that Christ is somehow a *mediator* in more than one way—perhaps even for people outside of the new covenant. But that is contrary to all biblical teaching.

No Mediation Apart from the New Covenant

To say that Christ is a *"general mediator between God and men"* in a way that is **not connected** to the new covenant is a **nonsense assertion**. It was **never heard of in Scripture** that Christ is mediator in any sense **apart from being mediator of the covenant of grace**.

- **All mediation requires a covenant.** A mediator stands between two parties to bring about reconciliation.

- **Christ's mediation is defined by the new covenant**—the covenant of grace, sealed by His blood (Heb. 7:22; 9:15).

To say that He mediates for those who are still under the covenant of works—or no covenant at all—is to **undermine the very gospel**. Scripture never presents Christ as a mediator of a **cancelled covenant**, nor as one who acts in such a fragmented, divided way.

Refuting the Appeal to 1 Timothy 2 and 4

It seems the objector borrowed this confused idea from **Arminian teachers**, though poorly expressed. Let's deal briefly with the **texts** he appeals to:

- In **1 Timothy 2:5**, Christ is called *"the one mediator between God and men."* But the context concerns how people are **to be saved**, not how all people are automatically placed under Christ's priesthood. This verse supports the **exclusive sufficiency** of Christ for those who are saved—not a universal, ineffectual mediation.

- **1 Timothy 4:10** says, *"He is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."* But this refers to **God's providential goodness**, not to Christ's redemptive priesthood. God is the Preserver of all in a general sense—but the **salvation** that comes through Christ is **only for believers**.

Christ's Work Is for His People Alone

Let's consider what the **Bible actually says** about the **scope** of Christ's work—His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession:

- **Incarnation**: He took flesh because *"the children shared in flesh and blood"* (Heb. 2:14), not because all mankind did so.
- **Oblation**: *"For their sakes I sanctify Myself,"* He said—speaking of those the Father gave Him (John 17:19).
- **Resurrection**: He was *"delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25).
- **Ascension**: *"I go to prepare a place for you"* (John 14:2)—not for the whole world.
- **Intercession**: He *"is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him"* (Heb. 7:25)—not those who reject Him.
- And He said plainly: *"I do not pray for the world, but for those you have given Me"* (John 17:9).

There is **not a single verse** that speaks of Christ mediating—whether by sacrifice or intercession—for any beyond His elect.

1 Timothy 2:5 – "One Mediator Between God and Men"

The first verse cited is:

> *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1 Tim. 2:5)

But what does this verse actually prove? Can we leap from the fact that Christ is a mediator **between God and men**, to the conclusion that He must therefore mediate **for all men**?

Certainly not. Are not the **elect men**? Are not **believers**, and the **Church**, and the **children of God**, also men?

To draw a **universal conclusion** from an **indefinite statement** is both **logically and theologically invalid**. Christ could have been mediator for His apostles alone and the statement would still be true.

Therefore, this verse proves **nothing** about the extent of His mediation—only its nature: **Christ alone** stands as mediator between God and humanity.

1 Timothy 4:10 – "Saviour of All Men"

The second verse is:

> *"The living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe."* (1 Tim. 4:10)

This is often cited to support a **universal mediation**, but let us look closely.

First, **who** is called the "Saviour" in this verse?

Not Christ explicitly, but **"the living God"**—God the Father—as the flow of the passage makes clear. This is confirmed by the phrase that introduces it:

> *"We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour…"*

The title “Saviour” here does not refer to Christ’s **mediating work of redemption**, but to God’s **providential care**—His preserving power over all creation, especially His Church.

Psalm 36:6 says God *“saves man and beast”*—that is, He **preserves** all things. In this way, He is the **Saviour of all**, but **especially** of believers, toward whom His care is **fatherly and eternal**.

So this passage speaks of:

- **God’s providence**, not **Christ’s atonement**, and
- **Preservation of life**, not **purchased salvation**.

The context supports this: Paul is urging Timothy to press on in ministry, despite affliction, because **God watches over all things**, and **especially keeps His own**—they are the “apple of His eye” (Zech. 2:8).

To interpret this as proof that Christ saves those who are **never saved**, who **never hear the gospel**, and for whom He **does not intercede**, is to stretch the passage beyond all reason—and Scripture itself explicitly refutes such a view (see John 17:9).

A Fourfold Refutation of the “Universal Saviour” View

Let’s make this plain. If Christ is truly the Saviour in the redemptive sense, then:

1. **He saves from sin** (Matt. 1:21)—but many never experience this.

2. **He brings the gospel**—but many never hear it.
3. **He is not a Saviour in two senses**—one for all, and another for believers.
4. **He does not save based on a condition (faith) that He does not Himself grant.**

To say that Christ is the "Saviour" of those He **never saves**, never **gives grace to believe**, and **does not intercede for**, is an empty and meaningless claim.

In truth, **to all whom Christ is Saviour**, He saves to the uttermost:

- From **unbelief**,
- From **disobedience**,
- With the **grace of salvation now**, and the **glory of salvation hereafter**.

That is **real redemption**.

Refuting the Claim of a General Intercession for All People

Another attempt has been made to **support universal mediation** and **weaken the argument** we've previously established. It comes in the form of this claim:

> *"Christ, in some sense, intercedes for all transgressors—even for those still in the world—that the Spirit may bless and unify*

believers, and through their witness and gospel proclamation, unbelievers might be convinced and drawn to believe."

They appeal to texts like Isaiah 53:12, Luke 23:34, and John 17:21–23, suggesting that Christ's intercession includes a kind of **general prayer** for all people—that the world might be convinced and believe through the ministry of His people.

From this, they propose **two kinds of intercession**:

1. A **general intercession** for all sinners—so they might believe.
2. A **special intercession** for believers—that they may be saved.

Our concern is with the **first claim**, and it deserves a careful response.

What Kind of Intercession Is This?

Let us examine what they mean by this "intercession in some sort." We must ask:

- Is it **direct** or **indirect**?
- Is it grounded in Christ's **shed blood** or not?
- Is it offered with a true **intention** to obtain faith for all, or not?
- Is it for **every person** without exception, or only for those who live under the gospel?
- Is faith requested as a **guaranteed result**, or only as a **possibility**?

- And if faith is requested, is it **absolutely desired**, or **conditionally offered**?

These questions must be answered clearly before we can even understand this idea of "general intercession."

Is the Intercession Direct or Indirect?

The claim seems to be that Christ prays **not directly for the world**, but rather that God would bless **believers**, so that their **faithful witness** might influence the world and lead some to believe.

In that case, the **unbelieving world** is not the direct object of Christ's prayer at all. It is merely **indirectly affected** by Christ's intercession for His own people.

So then, is this supposed intercession actually for the world? Or is it merely a **secondary effect** of Christ's prayer for the Church? If so, then we cannot honestly say Christ intercedes for the world, any more than we say He intercedes for the devil, just because believers resist him.

And if the goal really is the world's salvation, why is that **goal not achieved**? Has Christ chosen **insufficient means**? Or does He lack the power to carry out His will?

Is This Intercession Based on His Atoning Work?

Next, we ask: is this intercession **founded on Christ's death**? If it is—if He intercedes for all on the basis of His blood—then He is

asking the Father to grant **faith to all**, since that is the outcome desired.

But if Christ prays for all to believe **based on His atonement**, then faith must be something He has **purchased** by His death. That contradicts the entire system of **universal redemption**, because they admit that not all receive faith.

If His death purchased faith, and He intercedes for faith, why is it not granted? Surely the **joined power of His death and intercession** should be enough to secure it.

On the other hand, if this "intercession" is **not based on His blood**, then what kind of mediation is this? How can He be said to intercede **apart from His priesthood**, which always involves the presentation of **His atoning sacrifice**?

We are left with a notion of "intercession" that has **no biblical warrant**, and no foundation in His mediatorial work. It is something entirely **foreign to Scripture**.

The Contradictions in a Supposed "General Intercession" for All

Let us now follow the logic of this claim that Christ intercedes for **all people**, that they might **come to faith**. Does this assertion hold up under scrutiny?

1. Does Christ Truly Desire That All Believe?

If Christ intercedes for all with a **true desire** that they should believe, then **why do they not all believe**?

If He **does not truly desire it**, then such intercession is a mockery—an empty form of pleading for something He has **no intention to grant**.

But if He **does desire** that all come to faith, and yet **they do not**, then are we to believe that His intercession **fails**?

Yet He said, *"Father, I know that you always hear me"* (John 11:42). It is **impossible** that Christ should ask for saving faith for anyone, and **fail to obtain it**.

2. Does He Intercede for All Humanity, or Just Some?

Is this supposed intercession made for **every person in the world**, or only for those who live within reach of the Church and gospel?

- If only for **some**, then it **is not truly general**, and the whole argument collapses.
- If truly for **all**, then how can His prayer possibly refer to those who **never meet a Christian**, **never hear the gospel**, and **never receive any light**?

Are we really to suppose Christ prays that such people would believe through the witness of believers they will **never encounter**?

3. Is This Intercession Absolute or Conditional?

If Christ intercedes for faith, does He do so:

- **Absolutely**, with full intention that it be granted?
- Or **conditionally**, depending on something else?

If absolutely:

Then all **must come to faith**—but they do not. That would mean His prayer **fails**, which cannot be. The Father always hears the Son.

If conditionally—on God's part:

Then either:

- Christ is **uncertain** of the Father's will, which is unthinkable for the glorified Son who sits at His right hand, or
- Christ is merely **submitting** to the Father's will, which doesn't change the fact that His intercession remains **absolute** in its intention.

If conditionally—on man's part:

Then what is the condition?

Some say, "If they allow the Spirit to work." But what does that mean? To **submit to the Spirit** is nothing less than to **believe**.

Then Christ is said to pray that they may believe, **on the condition that they believe**—which is sheer nonsense.

Others claim the condition is a "right use of the means of grace." But:

1. To rightly use the means is to **submit to them**—that is, to **believe**. So again, we are back where we started.

2. Many never receive the means of grace at all.

3. If Christ prays that people may rightly use the means of grace, is He praying for **faith** or not?

- If He is, then we face the same issue: is it **absolute** or **conditional**?

- If He is not, how can He be said to pray that they may **believe**, when belief is precisely the right use of the means?

This line of argument quickly collapses under its own weight. The idea of a **general intercession** of Christ for all people to believe is not only **unsupported by Scripture**, but riddled with **logical contradictions** and theological confusion.

Scripture Texts Allegedly Supporting a "General Intercession" Considered

Isaiah 53:12

"He made intercession for the transgressors."

Answer: Who are these "transgressors"? They are either:

1. **All those for whom Christ suffered**, as indicated earlier in the chapter (v.6), or

2. **Only those who participated in His suffering**—His crucifiers.

If the first, then this proves our point: Christ intercedes for all those for whom He offered Himself. If the second, then the prophecy was **fulfilled at the cross**, which leads to the next passage:

Luke 23:34

> "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

This text is often used to argue for a **general intercession for all people**, that they might believe. But let us examine the logic of such an inference.

1. Christ's Prayer Here Is Not for All Humanity

Jesus was praying specifically for **a small group of Jews** involved in His crucifixion. To leap from this to a claim that He prays for **every person in history** is a stretch beyond reason.

2. Even Among His Crucifiers, This Prayer Has Limits

He clearly prays only for those acting **in ignorance**—"for they know not what they do." Acts 3:17 confirms that **some rulers acted**

ignorantly, but not necessarily all. And we know **some of them were converted** later.

3. He Is Not Praying That They Would Believe

He asks for **the forgiveness of one specific sin**—His crucifixion—not for their full conversion or faith. To argue from that specific request to a general plea for the salvation of all is illogical.

4. The Prayer Applies Only to Those Present

Jesus prays for those who were **physically present at His death**. Many were likely drawn by curiosity, not hatred. It is hardly just to infer from this a universal intercession.

5. Christ Would Not Pray for the Finally Impenitent

Jesus **knew what was in man** (John 2:25). He knew **who would not believe** (John 6:64). And Scripture tells us *not* to pray for those who sin unto death (1 John 5:16). Christ would not violate this rule by praying for such.

6. This Prayer Was Likely Effectual

There is every reason to believe this prayer **was answered**. In Acts 2 and 3, we see that **many of those who had demanded**

Christ's crucifixion were later converted—some five thousand in all (Acts 4:4). Even many priests believed (Acts 6:7). This shows the prayer was **specific and successful**, not general and ineffectual.

7. Christ's Prayer Here Was as a Private Man, Not as Mediator

We must distinguish between two kinds of prayer Christ offered:

- As **Mediator**, fulfilling His priestly office on behalf of His people, in which He is **always heard**.
- As a **private person**, under the law, modeling for us what He commands—such as praying for our enemies (Matt. 5:44, Lev. 19:18).

This prayer on the cross was the latter—**not a mediatorial intercession**, but an example of love and forgiveness under personal suffering.

Conclusion

This famous prayer—"Father, forgive them"—does **not** teach that Christ intercedes for every person who ever lived, nor that He prays for all to be saved. It was:

- **Limited in scope**,
- **Focused on a specific sin**,
- **Offered as a private act of obedience**,
- And, most importantly, **heard and answered**.

It supports, rather than contradicts, the truth that **Christ intercedes only for those He offered Himself for—His**

people, **His sheep**, **His elect**.

On More Alleged Proofs for a "General Intercession" of Christ

John 17:21–23 – "That the world may believe…"

Some argue from this prayer that Jesus intended **the whole world** to believe through the unity of His followers. But this claim does not hold up when examined in context.

1. If Jesus Intended the Whole World to Believe…

Then surely He would have prayed that the gospel would be **preached to everyone**, since it is the **ordinary means** God uses to bring people to faith. But there is no such prayer here, nor any promise of that in Scripture. In fact, Jesus **thanks His Father** for not revealing the truth to all, but only to some (Matt. 11:25–26).

2. This Cannot Contradict What Jesus Already Said

Just a few verses earlier (John 17:9), Jesus clearly said:

> *"I pray not for the world."*

If verse 21 meant that He prayed for the world to believe in the saving sense, it would **flatly contradict** what He had just said.

3. “The World” in This Passage

Some argue that “the world” here refers to the **world of the elect**, scattered across every nation. Others take it as referring to the **world of unbelievers** who observe the church. But either way, “world” is clearly **not used universally** to mean every individual.

4. What Kind of Belief Is Meant?

Jesus isn’t praying here that the world would come to saving faith. The words "believe" (v.21) and "know" (v.23) can also mean **acknowledging or being convinced** that Jesus is truly from God. This is not saving faith, but **a recognition** of His divine mission—often for the **vindication of His people** and the **glory of God**, not the salvation of all.

This broader use of “believe” is common in Scripture and is **not equivalent** to salvation (cf. John 2:23–25).

5. Matthew 5:14–16 – “Let your light shine…”

This passage is cited to support the idea that the lives of believers are meant to bring **the whole world** to faith. But this completely misses the point. Christ is simply urging His disciples to live in such a way that others may be drawn to **glorify God**—not a proof of **general intercession** for the salvation of all people.

6. John 1:9 – “The true Light, which gives light to every man…”

Some render this as “Christ enlightens every man in some measure.” But that’s **not what the text says**, nor what it means. It states that **Christ is the source of all true spiritual light**. Every person who is enlightened—**truly** enlightened—receives that light from **Christ alone**.

There is no “natural light” of saving truth apart from Him. This verse doesn't teach a **universal inward light** given to all people for salvation. Rather, it emphasizes Christ as the **exclusive fountain of spiritual illumination**, not that **every single person** receives that light.

Conclusion: A Vanished Defense

All these Scripture texts, when examined in context, **do not support** the idea of a **general intercession**—a supposed plea of Christ for the salvation of all people. They are either misapplied, misunderstood, or misinterpreted.

Christ’s intercession is:

- **Definite** – for those the Father has given Him
- **Effectual** – always heard by the Father
- **Saving** – not for mere acknowledgment, but for complete salvation

Thus, the foundation of this “general intercession” is shown to be **entirely unfounded**.

Objections Against the Equal Extent of Christ's Oblation and Intercession Answered (Part III)

III. Another Attempt at a Distinction

Some argue:

> "As a priest, Christ had different ends. In respect to one end—propitiation—He offered sacrifice for all men (Heb. 2:9; 9:26; John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). But in regard to all the ends—propitiation, sealing the new covenant, and testifying to the truth—and especially the final goal, He did so only for His called and chosen ones (Heb. 9:14–15; Matt. 26:28)."

Let's examine this claim.

1. Confused and Contradictory Language

This statement is deeply confusing. What exactly does it mean to say Christ offered sacrifice:

- *"In respect of one end,"*
- then *"of all the ends,"*
- and then *"of the uttermost end in all"?*

What is this "uttermost end"? Is it the final and highest purpose of God in Christ's death—His own glory? If so, none of the verses cited (Heb. 9:14–15; Matt. 26:28) say anything about that.

In fact, the *very things* they do mention—**redemption** and **forgiveness of sins**—are usually recognized as the **first ends** of the atonement, not the last. These are the **immediate fruits** of Christ's death, not its ultimate goal.

So, the argument here **confuses** the beginning and end of Christ's work. It tries to build a system on the idea that **Christ's death had different purposes for different groups of people**, some for all and all for some. But this statement ends up contradicting its own framework.

2. Scripture Is Twisted to Support a Weak Distinction

The verse from Hebrews 9:26 speaks of Christ putting away sin by the **sacrifice of Himself**—which is the same idea as **Matt. 26:28**, where He says His blood is **"shed for the remission of sins."** There's no meaningful difference between these. Yet this objection treats one as the *first end* of His death and the other as the *last*!

What's the difference? None. Both refer to the **core, saving purpose** of His sacrifice.

3. Vague Words, Questionable Theology

Saying "He offered sacrifice in respect of one end—propitiation for all men" is an empty phrase unless it is explained. If one understands what the words *sacrifice* and *propitiation* mean, this statement falls apart. **Propitiation** refers to **the satisfaction of divine justice** and the turning away of wrath for sin.

Are we really to believe that Christ **satisfied the wrath of God for every person**—even those who perish in unbelief? That would mean God's justice is doubly executed, once on Christ and once on the sinner. This cannot stand.

4. The Objection Is a Mere Assertion, Not an Answer

What this objection tries to do is simply **restate the very claim we deny**—that Christ had one purpose for all people and another for the elect. That's not an answer; it's just the position being asserted again. Our argument from Christ's priesthood is that:

- Christ is a **faithful High Priest**,
- who both **offers sacrifice** and **intercedes**,
- and He does both for **the same people**.

So when someone replies, "No, He does one for all and the other for some," they haven't answered—they've only disagreed.

5. Cited Verses Don't Prove the Point

Some Scripture references are given—like Hebrews 9:26 and John 1:29—to support this view. But they don't actually teach what the objector claims. They contain **indefinite** statements about Christ bearing sin or taking it away, but nothing that proves He did so **equally** for all people.

Even John 1:29, which speaks of Christ as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," **refers to typology**, drawing from

the Passover lamb—whose benefits applied only to the **covenant people of Israel**, symbolizing God's **elect**.

6. Summary and Vindication of the Argument

Therefore, we find:

- The objection rests on **confusion** and **contradictions**.
- It uses **Scripture imprecisely**, sometimes **irrelevantly**.
- It simply **repeats the disputed claim** without real defense.

We have defended the biblical truth that:

> **Christ's atoning sacrifice and His ongoing intercession have the same extent.**
> He offered Himself for, and prays for, **the same people**—His elect.

This is the **unified work of the triune God**, using ordained means to accomplish a definite and glorious purpose: the **certain salvation of all those the Father has given the Son**.

What that **purpose** is, and how Christ's work accomplishes it, is what we now turn to in the next book.

— End of Book I —

Book 2,

Chapter 1

Some Preliminary Considerations Before Defining the True Purpose and Result of Christ's Death

The central issue in the entire debate about the death of Christ—the point upon which everything turns and the most weighty matter in the controversy—is now before us. Everything we've said so far has been aimed at preparing for this key discussion. The question is this: **What is the proper purpose of Christ's death?** Whoever can rightly define and clearly explain this purpose will be well positioned to settle the entire debate.

If the true end of Christ's death is what many of our opponents claim it is, then we will not deny that Christ died for all people without exception. But if the end is what we assert it to be, then it cannot be extended beyond the elect—those who believe. This is the heart of the issue. And those who hope to defend the truth must settle this matter clearly and convincingly.

We stated earlier that the purpose of Christ's death is to bring sinners near to God. That is a general expression which includes the entire work of recovering and restoring sinners—from a condition of alienation, guilt, and wrath—into a state of grace, peace, and everlasting fellowship with God.

Now, in any work, there is a twofold "end" to consider:

1. The **intent** of the person doing the work (the agent),

2. And the **effect** that the work actually produces.

And we've already shown that, unless the worker either (1) lacks wisdom in choosing proper means to achieve his goal, or (2) lacks the power and skill to make those means effective—then the result will always match the intention. In other words, **a wise and powerful worker will always accomplish what he sets out to do**.

In our case, the worker is the blessed Trinity—the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. The means they used to accomplish their purpose were the death (or offering) and the intercession of Jesus Christ. These two cannot be separated, and they are aimed at the same outcome, as we have previously demonstrated.

So unless we want to **blasphemously** suggest that the triune God lacked wisdom, power, or skill, or that the death and intercession of Christ were somehow unfit or insufficient for achieving the intended goal, then we must affirm this:

> **Whatever the triune God intended to accomplish by Christ's death and intercession was actually accomplished.**
> **Whatever we see Scripture attributing to Christ's death as its fruit, we must conclude that God meant to produce that very thing.**

Therefore, there is no need to examine Christ's death and intercession separately—except when we want to argue from one to the other. For instance, when something is said to be a result of Christ's death, we may rightly conclude that **God intended** to bring about that result through it. And the same logic applies in reverse.

So then, when we speak

Two-Fold Purpose of Christ's Death

As we now turn to define the true purpose and effect of Christ's death, it is important to distinguish two aspects of that purpose—one ultimate, the other intermediate and subordinate.

1. The Ultimate Purpose: The Glory of God

The highest and most ultimate end of Christ's death is the glory of God. In everything God does, He ultimately aims to magnify His own nature and attributes—His holiness, justice, mercy, grace, wisdom, and power. He is the supreme good, in and of Himself. Unlike created beings, God's goodness is not derived from anything else, but exists in Himself, fully and eternally. And so, in all His works—especially in this greatest work of redemption—God first and foremost intends the display of His own glory.

Scripture is full of this truth:

- "The Lord has made everything for its purpose—even the wicked for the day of trouble" (Proverbs 16:4).
- "It is all for your sake, so that as grace extends… it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15).
- Even Christ himself is said to be "God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23)—meaning, he serves the glory of the Father in the full administration of redemption that was entrusted to him.

- All of God's choosing, redeeming, and blessing of His people is aimed at "the praise of the glory of his grace" (Ephesians 1:6, 12).

- The fruit of our salvation, including righteousness and sanctification, is "to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:11), and ultimately "every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

In Romans 9, Paul emphatically states that God's sovereignty and freedom are displayed in all His dealings with humanity—He acts according to His own will, for His own glory, without depending on anything outside Himself.

And at the end of all things, this will be universally acknowledged when every creature proclaims:

> "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13).

2. The Subordinate Purpose: The Salvation of the Elect

There is also a subordinate—but still essential—purpose to Christ's death: **the salvation of His people**. This is not an end in opposition to the glory of God, but one that serves it, and through which God's glory is displayed most fully. This is the purpose that directly concerns us: **bringing us to God** (1 Peter 3:18).

Even though the death and intercession of Christ serve one unified purpose, we can still distinguish two key aspects in how this goal is accomplished:

- One is the **means** (the way to the end), and
- The other is the **end** itself (the goal reached by the means).

This distinction is based on how God has designed the plan of salvation. He has established a connection between **grace** and **glory**, **faith** and **salvation**, in such a way that the one leads infallibly to the other. In God's plan, some things (like faith) are **means** and **conditions**, while others (like eternal life) are the **rewards** or **results**. But both are equally and effectively purchased by the death of Christ.

Here's what this includes:

- **Faith** and all other saving graces (like repentance, love, hope).
- The **preaching of the gospel** and the **sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit**.
- All the benefits of being in Christ, such as **justification, adoption, sanctification**, and every spiritual blessing in this life.
- And finally, the full and everlasting **glory** of eternal life—perfect communion with God in the life to come.

These are not just made *possible* by Christ's death, but are **effectively and certainly secured** for all those for whom He died. Christ's death is not a general offer, but a powerful act of redemption. It actually **purchased a right** to these blessings for the elect, and in due time they will **certainly** and **infallibly** receive them.

Put simply:

> The purpose of Christ's death was to obtain grace and glory from the Father—not as a vague possibility, but so that they would truly be given to *all* those for whom He died. Some of these gifts (like eternal life) are conditioned on faith, but even **faith itself** was purchased by Christ, and is given unconditionally.

So then, to everyone for whom Christ shed His blood, these things are secured:

- They shall believe.
- They shall be justified.
- They shall be sanctified.
- They shall persevere.
- And they shall be glorified.

We will further confirm and expand on this point after we clear away some false ideas about the purpose of Christ's death.

Book II, Chapter 2

Removing Mistaken and False Claims About the End of Christ's Death

That the death, offering, and blood-shedding of Jesus Christ was intended as a means to accomplish a specific and appointed end has already been made abundantly clear. It is also plain that this was not

a desirable means in itself, but only as it served to attain that end. Since the end of anything must be something good (for *the good and the end always go together*), the intended result of Christ's death must have been either for the Father's good, Christ's own good, or our good.

I. The Death of Christ Was Not Intended for His Own Good

It is plainly evident that Christ did not die for his own benefit. In his divine nature, he has eternally and essentially shared in all the fullness and glory of the Godhead. Though that glory may be revealed to us in greater or lesser ways, in itself it is perfect, infinite, and unchanging. In fact, when Christ was finishing his earthly ministry, he prayed for the same glory he had with the Father *"before the world was"* (John 17:5). He wasn't seeking something new—he simply longed to return to the glory he never ceased to possess in his divine person.

As for his human nature, it had been predestined from all eternity to be personally united with the divine Son from the moment of conception. There was never any foresight of sin or lack in him. Being entirely sinless and legally righteous, he had no need to suffer or die for himself. And even as he endured the cross and despised the shame, the joy that was set before him was not primarily his own exaltation, but rather the salvation of many sons and daughters—bringing them to glory, as promised to him by the Father (Heb. 2:10).

Of course, Christ was exalted after his sufferings. He was given authority over all flesh and appointed Judge of the living and the

dead. But we deny that this exaltation was *earned* by his death, as if it were the goal or reward of his suffering. His dominion over all things rests not on his death, but on his eternal Sonship and divine appointment. As it is written:

> "He is the heir of all things and upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:2–3),
> and,
> "He has been set over the works of God's hands, and all things have been put in subjection under his feet" (Heb. 2:7–8).

These things are drawn from Psalm 8, which the New Testament applies to Christ. But did Christ die for all the things mentioned there—for sheep, oxen, birds, and fish? Certainly not. And yet he rules over them.

Did he die for angels? Of course not. Yet he exercises authority over them. Angels, both good and fallen, are subject to him. At the final judgment, Christ will even judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3). Still, Scripture clearly teaches that the angelic nature was not assumed, nor was a redemption purchased for them:

> "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16).

Even the Lord's installation of Christ as King on Zion, to shatter his enemies and rule them with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:6, 9), is not presented as the result of his death for those enemies. Rather, this universal authority is grounded in the love of the Father for the Son:

> "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (John 3:35; cf. Matt. 11:27).

That divine love and eternal appointment, not his atoning death, is the foundation of Christ's dominion.

But suppose, for the sake of argument, we grant what cannot be proved—that Christ obtained this judging power *by* his death. Would that support the idea of a general atonement? Not at all. This judicial authority includes not only the right to save but also to condemn.

> "The Father has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).
> "He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man" (v. 27).

At the last day, all who are in the grave will rise—some to life, and some to judgment and condemnation (John 5:29; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Now ask this: could Christ have died for someone in order to redeem them, and yet also have died so that he might condemn them? Would that not be a contradiction? If he truly intended to redeem you by his death, then condemning you could never have been one of his goals. And if he did intend to condemn you, then redeeming you could never have been the aim of his suffering.

Therefore, the idea that Christ died merely for his own glory or exaltation is plainly false. His death was not for himself, but for others—for the salvation of those given to him by the Father.

II. Nor, secondly, was the death of Christ primarily for the Father's good.

Here we must be careful and precise. I am not speaking of the *ultimate and supreme end* of Christ's death here, which, of course, is

the eternal glory of God—"to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:6). That final end stands firm. Rather, I am addressing the *immediate and proper effect* of Christ's death: that which it directly aimed to accomplish. In that respect, it was not to benefit God the Father by obtaining anything for him, but rather to secure all spiritual good from him *to us*.

Now, the Arminians and other Universalists of our day argue differently. They teach that the end of Christ's death was to make it *possible* for God to save sinners. They claim that by dying, Christ satisfied divine justice and thus removed the obstacle preventing God from forgiving sin. God, according to them, had a general desire to show mercy to fallen humanity—but his justice stood in the way. Christ's death, they say, opened the path so that God could then pardon sins *if* he chose to—on *whatever conditions* he saw fit.

As Arminius himself put it, **"Integrum Deo fuit"**—meaning, "It was fully within God's freedom," after Christ died, whether to save anyone at all, and if so, on what terms—faith, works, or any other requirement. In this view, Christ's death merely restored a sort of judicial possibility, or hypothetical opportunity, for salvation to be offered. He did not actually secure salvation for anyone, but simply removed legal barriers to mercy.

Now, because this idea is held up as the chief (if not the sole) end of Christ's atonement by such men, we must carefully examine and refute it. And this we can do clearly and decisively with several reasons, which we will now proceed to give.

1. This idea assumes something Scripture never teaches—namely, that God *could not* show mercy to sinners unless Christ died. Now, we freely admit that given God's *own* decree to save sinners through a mediator, it became *necessary* that Christ die (since God

never changes his eternal plan, James 1:17). But to say that God, absolutely and apart from any such decree, *could not* forgive without satisfaction is to speak without warrant. Scripture never affirms this. And we do better to say with Augustine: "Though God could have saved us by other means, the way he chose is best, because it is the way he took."

2. This view makes Christ's death the result of a vague general love, a kind of divine wish to do good to all people, rather than the deliberate and loving plan of the Father to redeem and save his elect. That, as we shall later show, is contrary to the entire thrust of Scripture.

3. This would mean that Christ died, not to free us from sin and death, but to give God the *freedom* to save sinners—that the Son came to redeem *liberty for the Father*, not *life for the sinner*. In this view, the primary benefit of Christ's death is not directed to us, but to God himself—to give him a right he previously lacked. But Scripture never speaks that way. It says, "He came to save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21), not to save his Father from a legal restriction. It says, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son," not "God loved himself so much that he secured permission to forgive."

Even if we grant, for argument's sake, that Christ somehow gave God a right to forgive, that still wouldn't amount to salvation. It would only mean God *could* forgive—if he wanted to. But merit means more than that. True merit secures a right—not just that a thing *may* be done, but that it *ought* to be done. "The laborer is worthy of his wages" (Luke 10:7). Do we say, "Now his wages *may* be paid"? No—we say, "Now they *must* be paid." If Christ merited anything by his death, then those for whom he died must receive what he purchased. Otherwise, it is not true merit at all.

4. This view makes it possible that Christ's death could be utterly fruitless. According to the Arminian scheme, Christ purchased a right for God to save everyone, yet he is not bound to save *anyone*. It would have been entirely consistent with this view for no one to ever be saved. He might prescribe an impossible condition. Or he might simply choose not to save at all. In that case, Christ's death could be perfectly successful *on their terms*, and yet not a single soul be redeemed. But is that the Savior of Scripture—the One who came "to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)? Could he pray, "Father, I will that those whom you have given me may be with me where I am" (John 17:24), if his death didn't *actually secure* their salvation?

This false view reduces Christ's work from a powerful redemption to a mere *possibility* of redemption. Instead of securing *forgiveness*, it only opens the *opportunity* for forgiveness. Instead of obtaining *peace*, it merely opens a *door* toward peace. That is not what Scripture teaches. And we will offer more arguments as we go on to explain the true, proper end of Christ's death.

The Covenant, the Death of Christ, and the Misunderstanding of Conditional Application

Now ask these Universalists, "What exactly does God do—what can He now do—because Christ died?" They tell us this: that because Christ has satisfied justice, God is now free to enter into a *new covenant of grace* with sinners. According to them, this covenant says that if people fulfill the required condition (usually, faith), then the benefits of Christ's death will be applied to them.

But this idea cannot stand under the light of Scripture.

First, **Christ himself is the great promise of the covenant**, not merely the means by which it is offered. From the very beginning—Genesis 3:15—the promise of salvation is wrapped up in the person and work of the Son. He is not just a door opened by the covenant; he *is* the covenant promise. So it is not correct to say that Christ's death merely *procures* the covenant. He *is* the covenant sealed in blood.

Second, this view misunderstands the **nature of the covenant of grace**. It treats the covenant as if God were saying, "I will give you salvation if you meet this condition," when in fact, **even the condition itself is a gift promised in the covenant**! The very faith and obedience that the covenant calls for are themselves secured and given to the elect by Christ. Read Jeremiah 31:33—God promises, *"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts."* So, to treat faith as a human contribution that activates the benefits of the cross is to confuse the gift with the Giver.

No doubt, Christ's death had a proper and glorious end in respect to the Father—namely, **to manifest his glory**. God calls him "my servant, in whom I will be glorified" (Isaiah 49:3). And this glorification was chiefly seen in Christ's bringing many sons to glory—so that God's electing love would shine out to the ends of the earth, and his name would be exalted in grace as much as in justice.

This is what Paul teaches in Romans 3:25–26: "God set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, so that he might be *just*, and the *justifier* of the one who has faith in Jesus." That's the key—**Christ's death was never meant to give God permission to do what he already desired to do**, but rather to reveal how God could gloriously

display both mercy and justice in saving sinners through a crucified Substitute.

So what was the end of Christ's death, in relation to us? It was not to say, "Now God *may* save you, if he chooses." Rather, it was to say, "God *shall* save you, according to his covenant promise." Christ's death was the fulfillment of a covenant agreement made before the foundation of the world between the Father and the Son. That compact guarantees that all those whom the Son represented and for whom he died will receive every spiritual blessing that his death secured.

And it is that glorious end—grace secured, not merely made possible—that we now turn to consider in the next section.

Book II, Chapter 3:

The Immediate End of Christ's Death, and How Scripture Declares It

Having already explained the biblical teaching on the death of Christ and what we believe to be its true purpose, we now turn to a more focused examination of Scripture itself. What do the Scriptures say about the *immediate* end of Christ's death? That is our task in this chapter.

Here is the heart of our claim:

> **Jesus Christ, according to the will and counsel of the Father, offered himself upon the cross to purchase all**

the blessings of salvation for his people. And he now continually intercedes with the express intention that all those blessings—secured by his death—will be actually and infallibly applied to every person for whom he died, just as God decreed.

This truth is found in many places throughout Scripture. For clarity, we'll group these verses under three headings:

I. The Will and Purpose of God and Christ in Redemption

1. **Matthew 18:11 and Luke 19:10** – "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost."
   In Matthew, these words introduce the parable of the lost sheep; in Luke, they follow the salvation of Zacchaeus. In both, they declare Christ's mission: to do the will of His Father by recovering lost sinners. Whether as Zacchaeus, who was saved by conversion and brought into God's covenant, or as the lost sheep carried home by the Shepherd—unless Christ recovers what He came to save, He fails in His mission. But we know He does not fail.

2. **Matthew 1:21** – "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."
   This declaration by the angel sets forth the purpose of Christ's incarnation and, by implication, all His sufferings. It is not a partial or potential salvation, but a complete deliverance of His people from their sins. To claim He merely made it possible falls far short of Scripture's testimony.

3. **1 Timothy 1:15** – "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
   Not to merely make salvation possible, or open a path for those who might choose to walk it—but to actually save. This includes delivering from the guilt and power of sin, and from God's wrath. If that outcome is not achieved, then His mission has failed—a conclusion no believer should accept. As we saw in Isaiah 53:10–12, Christ was promised a faithful people ("His seed") as the fruit of His offering. This was the goal: that through His death He would secure a believing people.

4. **Hebrews 2:14–15** – "Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."
   Here we see clearly: Christ took on flesh and died in order to destroy the devil and deliver the children given to Him. There is no mention of purchasing a "possible deliverance" for everyone. Not all are delivered—therefore not all were the intended recipients of His work.

5. **Ephesians 5:25–27** – "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify her… that He might present her to Himself in splendor…"
   Titus 2:14 – "He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works."
   These texts speak as plainly as possible. Christ gave Himself *for the church*, to redeem and purify *a people*. If He died for all people alike, then why aren't all sanctified, all purified, all glorious and without blemish? Unless we are willing to say that

Christ fails in His purpose, we must say that He died for those whom He intended to redeem—and for them only.

6. **John 17:19** – "For their sake I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."
   Who are the “they”? In verse 6, He tells us: "The men whom You gave Me out of the world." Not the world itself (v. 9—"I do not pray for the world"), but His own people. His sanctifying Himself—setting Himself apart for sacrificial death—had as its purpose their sanctification. This is not a vague or general aim. It is definite and personal. And we know He accomplishes all He intends (Rom. 11:26).

7. **Galatians 1:4; 4:4–6** – Jesus "gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of God and our Father."
   This will is further clarified: "God sent forth His Son… to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons." His purpose was not hypothetical. Adoption, redemption, the sending of the Spirit—these were God’s aims in sending Christ. And they are actually achieved for all who belong to Him.

8. **2 Corinthians 5:21** – "He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."
   Why did God make Christ to be sin? So that those for whom He was made sin would be made righteous. If they are not made righteous, then the purpose is not fulfilled. But God does not purpose in vain. He does not intend what He does not accomplish. Christ was made sin only for those who, in Him, would be made righteous.

From all this we can draw a simple but powerful argument:

Whatever the Father and the Son intended to accomplish in and for those for whom Christ died— that **is** without doubt fully and certainly achieved.
(And if anyone wishes to deny this, by God's grace I am ready at any time to defend this truth.)

But as we've already shown, the Father and the Son intended—by the death of Christ—to redeem, cleanse, sanctify, purify, and deliver from death, from Satan, and from the curse of the law; to remove all sin; to make righteous in Christ; and to bring near to God **all those for whom Christ died**.

Therefore, we conclude:
Christ died only for those in whom all these saving effects are actually accomplished.

And whether that includes *every single person without exception*—or only *some*—I leave to the judgment of all who have any understanding of these things.

II. Scripture Texts That Reveal the Actual Accomplishment and Effect of Christ's Death

Now we turn to a second group of Scripture passages—those which clearly set forth **what Christ's death actually accomplished**, what it truly produced in and for those for whom he offered himself. These verses show that the atonement was not a vague or potential work, but an effective, powerful, and saving act of redemption.

Take, for example, **Hebrews 9:12, 14**:

> "By his own blood he entered once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us… How much more

> shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Here we see two effects of Christ's death:

- **Toward God**: He obtained eternal redemption—he purchased it.
- **Toward us**: He purges our consciences—he cleanses us for holy service.

So, then, justification before God (by redemption from guilt and wrath), and sanctification within us (cleansing from sin) are the immediate and actual results of Christ's blood. This is no mere possibility—it is what his death **accomplishes**.

Likewise, **Hebrews 1:3** tells us that "when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." This was already finished *before* he ascended. Again, **Hebrews 9:26** confirms, "He appeared once for all to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

As the old sacrifices under the law brought outward purification to the flesh, so Christ's offering truly brings **spiritual cleansing** for those for whom he died. His death effects *everything* that the types and shadows only pointed to—actual sanctification and forgiveness.

Then there is **1 Peter 2:24**:

> "He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

This verse quotes directly from **Isaiah 53**, which also teaches that Christ bore the iniquities of his people. What was the effect of his sin-bearing? That we would be healed—that is, spiritually restored and made righteous. He bore our sins so we wouldn't have to bear them ourselves.

This truth is also revealed in **Galatians 3:13**:

> "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us."

There is a **real exchange** here—a **substitution** in suffering and curse-bearing. Christ took what we deserved so that we might go free.

Next, we consider the effect of his death in terms of **peace and reconciliation**. Look at:

- **Colossians 1:21–22** – "You, who were once alienated… he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death."
- **Ephesians 2:13–16** – "You who were far off are brought near by the blood of Christ… that he might reconcile both [Jew and Gentile] to God through the cross."

All that separated us from God—our sin, guilt, and enmity—has been removed. Reconciliation is not offered as a possibility, but accomplished as a fact.

Furthermore, **Romans 5:8–10** teaches that we are not only **justified by his blood**, but also **saved from God's wrath**. It is by his death that Christ secures our peace with God.

He purchased his church with his own blood, Acts 20:28. And for all whom he has redeemed, they can say with full assurance:

> "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died…" (Romans 8:33–34)

Could all people say this? Clearly not. And yet, this is **true of all for whom Christ died**.

Revelation 5:9–10 gives us a beautiful picture of the redeemed in glory:

> "You were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and made them a kingdom and priests to our God."

This is not a universal redemption, but a definite, effectual one—resulting in worship and dominion.

As **Daniel 9:24** puts it, Christ came "to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." This is what his atonement accomplishes.

And as for **life itself**, we see the same effect.

- **John 6:33** – "The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."
- **John 10:15, 28** – "I lay down my life for the sheep… I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."
- **2 Timothy 1:10** – "He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

- **Romans 5:6–10** – "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

Where Christ gives his life, **life is actually given**. Not merely offered, but secured.

Final Argument:

Let us now summarize the force of all these Scriptures with one clear statement:

> If the death of Christ actually sanctifies, purifies, justifies, redeems from wrath, reconciles to God, gives peace, and secures eternal life for all those for whom it was offered…
> Then Christ died only for those who are in fact sanctified, justified, redeemed, reconciled, and saved.

But not all are saved.

Therefore, not all were the objects of Christ's saving death.

This conclusion is firmly based in Scripture, plainly confirmed by experience, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, stands on solid theological ground.

III. The Scriptures Identify the Specific People for Whom Christ Died

There are many passages in the Bible that explicitly identify those for whom Christ died, showing that they were peculiarly chosen to be the beneficiaries of His redeeming work, according to the sovereign purpose and design of God. Let's briefly review some of them.

In some places, they are simply called **"many."**

- **Matthew 26:28** – "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
- **Isaiah 53:11** – "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."
- **Mark 10:45 / Matthew 20:28** – "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- **Hebrews 2:10** – "To bring many sons to glory, it was fitting that he… should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering."

Now, it's true that the word **"many"** by itself doesn't necessarily restrict the atonement to only some people, because "many" is sometimes used for "all," as in **Romans 5:19**. But these same "many" are elsewhere clearly described in ways that *do* restrict the reference—ways that obviously do *not* apply to every human being without exception.

Who are these "many"? Scripture describes them as:

- **The sheep** for whom Christ lays down his life (**John 10:15**).
- **The children of God** who were scattered abroad and gathered into one by his death (**John 11:52**).
- **The brothers** of Christ (**Hebrews 2:11**).
- **The children God gave him**, partakers of flesh and blood (**Hebrews 2:13–14**).

- **Those given to him by the Father**—those for whom he prays, not for the world (**John 17:2, 6, 9, 11**).
- **His elect** (**Romans 8:33**).
- **His people**, whom he came to save from their sins (**Matthew 1:21**).
- **The redeemed people** whom the Lord has visited (**Luke 1:68**).
- **Those foreknown by God** (**Romans 11:2**).
- **Those who were already his people before their conversion**, by virtue of election (**Acts 18:10**).
- **Those he suffered for "outside the gate," to sanctify** (**Hebrews 13:12**).
- **His church**, which he "purchased with his own blood" (**Acts 20:28**).
- **The church he loved and gave himself for** (**Ephesians 5:25**).
- **The "many" whose sins he bore** (**Hebrews 9:28**).
- **Those included in the covenant he established by his death** (**Daniel 9:27**).

These "many," then, are identified in Scripture by characteristics that are true only of the elect—those whom the Father chose and gave to the Son, and for whom Christ effectively died.

So it is crystal clear: **Christ died for a particular people**, not for every individual in the world.

Answering Objections: "What About the Word 'Many'?"

Now, some try to escape the force of this biblical teaching by attacking the argument with harsh language rather than careful reasoning. One well-known opponent (in *The Universality of Free Grace*, p. xvi) describes this argument as "weak and of no force, equivocal, subtle, fraudulent, false, ungodly, deceitful, and erroneous." All of that!

But what is this long string of insults really telling us? Likely, it reveals how little the author is able to **refute** the actual argument. When people don't have a solid answer, they often resort to name-calling. As the Pharisees, unable to answer Christ's wisdom, resorted to saying, "He has a demon and is a Samaritan" (John 8:48). As the saying goes, *empty barrels make the most noise*.

It reminds me of the Scythian proverb: "The dogs that bark the loudest are the ones that bite the least." So, instead of being intimidated by loud accusations, let's calmly examine the response and see what real weight—if any—it carries.

> "Let's hear, then, what argument is 'worthy' of so grand and dramatic a rejection…"

Response to the Objection: "The Word *Many* Sometimes Means *All*"

Objection:
This argument from the word *many* is weak, because *many* can sometimes mean *all* and may simply be used to express a large number—like in **Daniel 12:2** and **Romans 5:19**, where "many" is understood by Christians to refer to all people.

Response:

1. The argument isn't based on the word *many* alone.

If our entire case rested only on the word *many*, this objection might carry some weight. But that's not the issue. We are arguing not just from the term *many*, but from how the *many* are described in the context. These "many" are said to be sanctified, justified, ransomed, purified, and saved. These descriptions do not and cannot apply to *all people*.

Let me illustrate: Suppose someone divides the population of London into two groups—rich and poor—and then says, "I will give financial aid to many in London: to the poor." It's immediately understood that the aid is being given only to the poor, not to all Londoners. In the same way, when Scripture speaks of Christ giving his life for "many" and then defines them as his sheep, his people, his church, etc., the limitation is obvious and intentional.

2. The passages cited don't prove what the objector claims.

In **Daniel 12:2**, the word "many" doesn't mean all without exception. The text speaks of the resurrection: "Many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The word *many* here is simply used in both parts of a divided statement—*many to life* and *many to*

shame. It doesn't mean “all to both,” which would be absurd. It’s a Hebraic way of speech, not a universalizing statement.

In **Romans 5:19**, even though the “many” seem to parallel “all” (as in Adam’s disobedience affecting all, and Christ’s obedience affecting many), the passage is contrasting *two representative heads* and their effects, not doing a strict numerical comparison. Paul is emphasizing the nature of the effects (condemnation vs. justification), not the size of the groups. There is no intent here to say the same number are in both groups.

As for other passages allegedly supporting the view that “many” means “all,” we strongly doubt they exist in any persuasive way. These are the standard proof texts used by Arminians, but even if more were brought forward, they would not overturn our main point: the *description* of the “many” in key passages clearly distinguishes them from “all people.”

Answer to the Further Objection: “Your Argument is Equivocal and Deceptive”

Objection:
This argument is deceitful because when Christ is said to die for “all,” it’s only about his death as a ransom. But when he’s said to die for “many,” there are multiple ends in view. So the “many” passages go beyond just atonement and include other benefits, while the “all” passages refer only to the ransom, not to sanctification, justification, etc.

Response:

1. **The premise is false.**
   There is **no** place in Scripture where it is clearly stated that Christ died for "all men" or "every man" in the way the objector assumes. That claim is simply asserted, but never proved. We reject it outright.

2. **The separation of ransom from its fruits is unbiblical.**
   The objection tries to create a strange separation between *the ransom itself* and *the fruits of the ransom*. But what is the ransom **for** if not to actually accomplish redemption, forgiveness, sanctification, reconciliation, and eternal life? The fruits of the atonement are not optional add-ons—they are its very purpose. You cannot have a meaningful ransom that doesn't save.

When someone earns wages, we don't say, "He has the right to be paid if the employer wants to." No—we say, "He has a right to his wages." So also with Christ's death: it merits actual results. The benefits purchased by Christ's blood are owed to him and to those for whom he died—not as a matter of merit from us, but as the fulfillment of God's gracious covenant.

3. **This response actually concedes our point.**
   The objector admits that in passages where "many" is used, more fruits of Christ's death are mentioned than in the "all" texts. That only **strengthens** our argument. If more benefits are described for the "many" than the "all," then clearly "many" and "all" are not the same group. The objector ends up contradicting his own earlier claim that "many" just means "all."

4. **The argument is plainly inconsistent.**
   For example, in **Matthew 20:28**, Jesus says he came "to give his life a ransom for many." This is exactly the same kind of

language used in **1 Timothy 2:6**, where he is said to give himself as a "ransom for all." There is no meaningful difference between these statements in terms of the kind of death being spoken of—they're both referring to the atoning, redeeming work of Christ. So the proposed distinction falls apart.

Furthermore, the objector's own book contradicts his claims. In Chapter 1, he quotes passages where Christ dies for people who are referred to in the first or second person—like "us," "our sins," etc. (**1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; Isaiah 53:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 3:13**). Yet in Chapter 10, he tries to argue that in all redemption passages, the people Christ died for are spoken of in the third person—like "all the world." This internal inconsistency undermines his whole case.

Objection 3: "Your Argument Is False and Ungodly"

Objection:
The argument is not only weak but false and irreverent. Scripture never says Christ died *only* for many, or *only* for his sheep. Therefore, it is adding to God's Word to conclude that he died for his sheep alone and not for others.

Response:

Let us pass over the charitable tone of the author's accusations for now and grant him a small allowance of misunderstanding, just to keep the conversation moving. Then:

First,

When Scripture explicitly says that Christ died for *his sheep* (John 10:15), and for *his church* (Eph. 5:25), and that he laid down his life for *many* (Matt. 20:28), and at the same time it affirms that *not all* are his sheep (John 10:26), or his church, or among the many, it follows by **sound and necessary inference** that Christ did **not** die for those who are **not** his sheep, his church, or the many.

To draw that conclusion is not adding to the Word of God; it is expounding it. If this is "adding to Scripture," then no one who ever explains the Bible is innocent. But surely, explaining Scripture by Scripture is the very task of every teacher and pastor.

Second,

Look again at John 10. In verse 15, Christ says, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Then, in verse 26, he says to others, "You are not of my sheep." That is not a minor observation—it is a built-in contrast. The very passage makes the distinction that this objection denies.

If Christ lays down his life for the sheep, and some are **not** sheep, it is plainly wrong to say that he laid down his life for those who are not sheep. The exclusion is built into the text itself.

Third,

Though we might be tempted to point fingers and accuse in return, we restrain ourselves for the sake of the truth—not to trade insults, but to bring clarity.

Fourth,

Now let's consider the bulk of this reply. It tries to dismiss the force of John 10 by saying: "Jesus isn't distinguishing between those he died for and those he didn't; he's just distinguishing between believers and unbelievers." But this evasion doesn't hold.

Here are a few specific problems with that reasoning:

- **1. It ignores the clear connection between Christ's death and his sheep.**
  In John 10:15, Christ **does** say whom he dies for: "I lay down my life for the sheep." Then he contrasts them with those who "are not of my sheep." To act as though that doesn't mean he dies for the sheep **only** is to disregard the very structure of the passage.

- **2. It wrongly claims the chapter is only about gospel ministry, not atonement.**
  But in John 10, Christ **explicitly** speaks about his death as a **sacrifice**—"I lay down my life." It is a deliberate and personal giving of himself as a ransom, not merely an example of love. Verse 11 calls him the "Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for the sheep. This is no vague metaphor—it is language of substitution, of atonement.

- **3. It tries to dilute the clear fruit of Christ's death.**
  The objector says that the chapter is not about those who benefit from the ransom, but only those who believe. But this is precisely the point: those who believe are his sheep—and he lays down his life **for them**. Faith, then, is not the cause of Christ's dying for someone; rather, being his sheep is. And that status is given by the Father (John 10:29), not earned.

- **4. It tries to remove the exclusivity from Christ's death.**
  The objector says Christ wasn't trying to show that he died for

some and not others, but only to show how great his love is. But that love is shown precisely in its specificity—he lays down his life **for the sheep**, not the wolves. The whole beauty of the Shepherd's love is that it is effectual, sacrificial, and secure—for *his own*.

Final Reflection:

The objection is a fog—a haze of words meant to obscure the power of a plain truth. But clarity emerges when we simply follow Christ's own words:

> "I lay down my life for the sheep."
> "You are not of my sheep."

If we cannot conclude from that that Christ did not die for all, then we can conclude nothing from Scripture. No argument is more clearly built into the fabric of the biblical text than this one. To deny it is not to preserve the Word, but to empty it.

Response to the Objection Concerning John 10 and the Sheep

I begin, then, with the following clarifications:

First,

That the "many" for whom Christ died are **his sheep** has already been clearly established. The passage in **John 10** is not misused or twisted. On the contrary, our Lord **plainly sets forth a difference** between those **for whom he died**—called his *sheep*, verse 15—and

others, **for whom he did not die**, who are *not* his sheep. These sheep are further described in verse 28 as those to whom he **gives eternal life**, and in John 17:9 as those who were **given to him by the Father**.

This is not speculation; it is Christ himself who draws this distinction. Our argument is not from some supposed overarching intent in the passage, but from the very **words he uses**, and the **truths he reveals**. The purpose is the **consolation of believers**—those who know they belong to Christ.

Second,

The objection claims there is a difference between those Christ died for "so and so" and others he died for "so and so." But this is wordplay, not serious exegesis. We deny that Christ's death was applied in different "ways" to different people. He died **the same way and for the same end** for all those for whom he died. The nature of the atonement does not change from person to person.

Third,

It is not accurate to say that Christ is merely contrasting believers with unbelievers in John 10. Rather, he is contrasting the **elect and the non-elect**, the **sheep and the not-sheep**. Believing and hearing his voice (v. 27) are not causes but **results** of being one of his sheep. In verse 26, he says to the unbelieving Jews, "You do not believe because you are not of my sheep." Note that: **they are not sheep**, and *therefore* they do not believe. The status of being a sheep is grounded in the eternal counsel of God, not in foreseen faith.

Thus, the **foundation** for this distinction lies in the differing conditions of people according to **God's eternal purpose** and **Christ's particular love**. Christ's death flows from that love and purpose.

Fourth,

Whether or not Jesus here describes the privileges of his sheep is not the point. The **central issue** is *for whom* he says he **lays down his life**—and he says it is **for the sheep**, *not* for the world, nor for the goats. As for the repeated phrase "so and so," it serves only to confuse the reader, not clarify the argument.

Moreover, we outright deny that Christ died for any **except** those who shall certainly come to him through the preaching of the gospel. The ones **for whom he died** are the **same ones** who are **brought to him**. They may differ in various graces and levels of maturity, but they are not different **people**.

Fifth,

This entire argument is not about the *purpose* of Christ's speech in John 10, but about the **people** for whom he died. And those people are expressly identified as **his sheep**, and it is equally clear from verse 26 that **not all are his sheep**. Therefore, **not all were the object of his death**.

Sixth,

The love and faithfulness of Christ in his **gospel ministry** is most fully demonstrated in this: that he **laid down his life** for his sheep. This is not merely an example of love (though it is that too, as we see

in John 15:13), but a **substitutionary act**, a **ransom**. And in John 10, there is **no hint** that his death is being portrayed only as a moral example. The focus is clearly **redemptive**, not exemplary.

Someone objects, "But the contrast in John 10 is not between the elect and non-elect, but between called Jews and uncalled Gentiles."

Response: The text itself makes clear that the contrast is between *sheep* and *not sheep*, and this is rooted not in their outward calling but in their election. If the "not sheep" are meant to be the uncalled Gentiles, this directly contradicts verse 16, where Jesus calls those Gentiles "other sheep" who are *not yet* in the fold—but who certainly will be. And if the "called" are the Jews, then what of verse 26? Many Jews, though called outwardly, are said to be *not* his sheep. Evasions like this—twisting the Word of God so openly—are no small offense before the Lord whose glory it seeks to obscure.

Another claim is made: "There's a difference in Scripture between *sheep*, and *sheep of his pasture*, and in John 10, Jesus speaks only of the latter."

Response:

1. This is an artificial distinction with no warrant from the text.

2. If any distinction is to be made, it would be between the sheep *given* to Christ by the Father from eternity (John 17:2, 6) and the sheep who have *already come* to Christ by the Spirit's effectual calling. But both groups are Christ's sheep. He died for both, and he gives eternal life to both (John 10:15, 28).

Then it is said, "The sheep mentioned in verses 4, 5, 11, 15 are not all for whom he died, but only those brought to faith by his ministry,

who receive the Spirit."

Response:

1. This implies that the sheep = believers. But verse 16 explicitly calls "sheep" those who had not yet believed, nor yet been gathered into the fold.

2. Verse 15 directly says, "I lay down my life for my sheep." To say these sheep are not the ones for whom he died is to contradict Jesus.

3. There's no difference between those for whom Christ died and those who are effectually brought to him. They may differ in experience or stage of life, but they are the same persons—his sheep. This argument tries to smuggle in the very point in dispute.

Someone continues, "The sheep here are those who believe and enjoy the benefits of Christ's death."

Response: That's only half the picture. The very *act* of bringing someone to believe is itself a benefit of Christ's death—a fruit of the atonement. If one is not brought to faith, he cannot be saved at all. Therefore, Christ's death, which procures faith, cannot be said to be for those who never receive it.

It is added, "There are more ends to his death here than just ransom or propitiation. Yet it is not said, 'only for his sheep.' And where his death is said to be a ransom or propitiation, it is said to be 'for all men.'"

Response:

1. Every fruit and benefit of Christ's death comes through his being a ransom and a propitiation. These are not separate ends but the very means by which his love and grace reach us.

2. If other benefits are named that don't belong to all, then this confirms that "his sheep" must be a limited group.

3. As to the supposed universal passages ("he gave his life a ransom for all"), the word *ransom* is never actually used in a context where "all men" is clearly affirmed. But when Jesus says he gave his life a *ransom*, it's in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45—where he explicitly says he gave it for "many," not all.

Conclusion of the Section:
Anyone reading this with even a fair mind can see how weak the arguments are against the clear biblical teaching. And yet, having failed to deal with the actual reasons drawn from Scripture, Mr. More invents a new objection he attributes to his opponents. He says that those who deny universal redemption argue that the general terms in Scripture (like "world" or "all") meant something different at the time of Christ and the apostles—something more fitting to that era.

But this is a straw man. No serious opponent of universal redemption ever made such a claim. It's an argument no one holds, invented only so Mr. More can show off his rhetorical flourishes by refuting it with loud exclamations and cries of "error" and "blasphemy." But when a man sets up his own shadow just to knock it down, we see clearly what kind of swordsman he is.

And this sort of empty arguing—claiming victory over objections no one made—is what fills much of Mr. More's book. It proves nothing, answers nothing, and should persuade no one.

Book II, Chapter 4

On the Distinction Between Impetration and Application

— Its Use, Abuse, and the True State of the Controversy

I am setting aside, for the moment, further arguments that would confirm what we've previously discussed, so that I may first deal with one of the main defenses commonly raised by those who argue for a general atonement. This response is their all-purpose answer, a kind of universal antidote, which they apply to every Scripture passage brought against their view. They believe it strong enough to uphold their entire position, no matter how hard it is pressed.

I. Their Main Argument: A Distinction Between Impetration and Application

They argue that when it comes to Christ's work—his offering of himself and the benefits he procured by it—we must distinguish between two things:

1. **Impetration**, or the obtaining of blessings by Christ's death.

2. **Application**, or the bestowing of those blessings on particular people.

They explain the matter this way:

- Christ **impetrated** or obtained redemption, reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, and every good thing from the Father **for all people universally**.

- However, these blessings are only **applied** to those who believe—which ends up being relatively few—because faith is the condition on which the blessings are granted.

- And since only a few believe, only a few actually receive the benefits Christ purchased.

So, they conclude, all the Scripture texts that teach limited atonement must be interpreted as referring to the **application** of redemption, not to the **impetration** itself. In other words, they say Christ died for all in obtaining redemption, but it is applied only to some.

This distinction is put forward in various ways by different groups, adapted to suit their particular theological systems.

1. The Arminian View

Some say that Christ, by his death and passion, absolutely and fully purchased from the Father—according to his intent—remission of sins and reconciliation with God for **all people**. That is, he restored the whole human race to a position of favor with God. However, this only becomes beneficial to individuals **if they believe**. The effect of

the atonement is suspended until someone meets the condition of faith.

2. The Hypothetical Universalist View (e.g., Camero and French Reformed Divines)

Others refine this position slightly. They say that Christ died for all people **conditionally**, and for some—namely the elect—**absolutely**. That is, he obtained salvation for all, if they would believe (even though they cannot believe without grace), but he secured salvation unconditionally for those whom God has chosen and to whom he will give faith and grace. This way, the impetration is universal in intent, but the application is limited by God's choice.

3. The Twofold Reconciliation View

Others distinguish between two types of reconciliation:

- One is a reconciliation **accomplished by Christ for humanity before God**, and this is general and universal.
- The other is reconciliation **worked in people's hearts**, bringing them into actual peace with God—and this is particular, only for the elect.

Various other views exist, but they all come down to this central idea: **Christ obtained redemption and reconciliation for all (impetration), but it is only applied to those who believe (application).**

That is the core of the position held by those who argue for a general atonement: a universal impetration, and a limited application.

II. The Misuse of the Impetration–Application Distinction

The arguments that are often given to support a universal ransom and general reconciliation will be addressed later. For now, I want to focus only on the **distinction itself**—its real meaning, and how it has been wrongly applied. This will be clear if we first look at the true nature and proper use of the distinction.

1. What We Mean by Impetration and Application

We do not reject the use of the distinction between **impetration** (the obtaining of salvation) and **application** (the actual bestowing of it). Properly understood, it's biblical. Whether you speak of Christ *impetrating* or *procuring* salvation on the one hand, and then *applying* or *working reconciliation* on the other, the point is sound.

- **Impetration** means that Christ, by his obedience and death, merited and purchased every good thing from the Father—reconciliation, redemption, forgiveness, grace, glory—for those he represented.

- **Application** means that those blessings are actually bestowed on us, as we are brought to believe.

Think of it like this: If someone pays a ransom to free captives, the **payment** corresponds to impetration; the **actual release** of the captives corresponds to application.

Now, observe a few important things.

First, this distinction applies only to the blessings purchased, not to the intention of Christ.

Christ did not intend to simply earn blessings and leave their enjoyment up in the air. No, the purpose for which he obtained them was to **actually give them** to his people. His end goal was not only to make salvation possible, but to save—to deliver his own from evil and to bring them into the enjoyment of all good.

So, the distinction is not between two separate intentions of Christ, but only between two aspects of the same work: one in relation to the **price paid**, the other in relation to the **gift received**.

Second, God's will in this matter is not conditional.

The Father did not send Christ to the cross just to make salvation a possibility *if* we would believe. Rather, he absolutely willed that Christ would obtain all spiritual blessings—and that these blessings would be actually given to those for whom Christ died. Yes, some blessings are **given on condition**, such as salvation being given upon faith. But **even the condition**—faith itself—is part of what Christ obtained for his people.

Third, some blessings are given absolutely, and others conditionally—but the condition itself is also a purchased gift.

- Christ obtained **forgiveness and eternal life** for us, which we receive on the condition of faith.
- But he also obtained **faith itself**, which is not given on condition—it is given absolutely.

If faith had to be earned or met by us before Christ could give it, we'd fall into a hopeless circle: you must believe to be saved, but you can't believe unless you're already saved! This error will be addressed more fully later.

Fourth, Christ died for the same people to whom the blessings are applied.

The people for whom Christ died—those for whom he obtained all spiritual blessings—are **the very same people** who actually receive those blessings. He did not purchase blessings for people who never enjoy them. For everyone Christ reconciled to God by his death, he also reconciles them to God in their hearts.

The circle of **impetration** (purchase) and **application** (enjoyment) are exactly the same. Christ did not die for more people than will be saved.

Proofs of This Doctrine

Let me briefly confirm this with some reasons:

1. The end goal of Christ's purchase was its application.

The blessings were not obtained just for the sake of obtaining them. They were obtained so they would be **given**. If they were never applied to anyone, Christ's death could be considered successful even if not a single soul was saved! That would be absurd.

Would the Father have sent his Son to die without any clear intent that the redemption be **applied** to anyone? Would he appoint Christ as Savior without choosing who would be saved? Was the cross just a vague provision for possibilities? God forbid. That would reduce the Father's design to uncertainty and strip it of purpose.

2. What Christ obtains for anyone becomes theirs by right.

If Christ has purchased anything for you, then by right it must be yours. And God will see to it that it is **actually bestowed**. Otherwise, the purchase is in vain. Christ's intercession in heaven is the guarantee that everything he bought will be applied (Rom. 8:33–34).

3. Christ intercedes for those he died for—and is always heard.

This intercession is for the **application** of the very blessings he **impetrated**. The Father always hears him (John 11:42). Therefore, none for whom Christ died will miss out on the blessings he purchased.

We see this clearly in passages like:

- John 10:10 – "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly."

- 1 John 4:9 – "God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."
- Hebrews 10:10 – "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."
- Hebrews 10:14 – "By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."

These show clearly that the people for whom Christ died are the same people to whom the blessings are applied. There is no gap between impetration and application.

SECONDLY. What Universalists Mean by the Impetration–Application Distinction

Let us now consider how those who argue for a universal redemption misapply this distinction between *impetration* and *application*, and how they use it to support their teaching.

They say: “Christ died for all people. By his death, he purchased reconciliation with God and forgiveness of sins for everyone. But these benefits are only *applied* to some. That is, only some people are actually reconciled to God and have their sins forgiven. Others, though Christ died for them, perish in their sins because they remain unreconciled.”

They go on to say: “This application of redemption is not something that Christ purchased. If it were, then—since he died for all—all would be reconciled and forgiven and saved. Instead, this application happens only when certain conditions are met—specifically, the condition of believing.”

At this point, views begin to differ:

- Some say that people can believe by their own power (though they are reluctant to admit this outright).
- Others admit that faith must be given by God.

Now, when the Scriptures say that Christ has reconciled us to God, redeemed us, saved us by his blood, bore our sins, and made satisfaction for them—they say that **none** of those benefits are actual unless we meet the condition of faith. Christ merely did something that *might* lead to those benefits, if we fulfill our part.

To be fair, they ascribe many glorious things to Christ's death. But with one hand they give, and with the other they take away. They make everything depend not on Christ's finished work, but on a condition we must fulfill—a condition, they say, that Christ himself did not purchase.

In short, they teach that the *real* purpose of Christ's death was simply to make it **possible** for God to save sinners—if he so chose, and on whatever terms he pleased. Christ's death opened a door, they say, not to actual salvation, but to the *possibility* of salvation.

To expose the deep errors in this teaching, I'll lay out the core points of their view in plain assertions, so that we may clearly see what it is we are opposing.

Assertion 1: "God, seeing that all mankind had fallen from the favor in which they were created—having broken the covenant of works—was, out of his

infinite goodness, inclined to desire the salvation of every person. He wished that all people, without exception, might be saved and brought back to himself. This desire to save all is called his *universal love* or *antecedent will*, and it was this that moved him to send Christ."

Response:

Observation 1:
We reject the idea that God has a natural or necessary inclination—by virtue of his goodness or any other attribute—to save mankind. Whatever God does toward us is a matter of his free and sovereign will, not of any inward necessity in his nature. To say otherwise undermines his freedom and majesty.

Observation 2:
To claim that God has an "antecedent conditional will"—a desire to save all people, dependent on whether they choose to believe—is to insult his sovereignty and omniscience. It suggests that God's will can be thwarted by human choice, which contradicts Romans 9:19, "Who has resisted his will?"

Observation 3:
The idea of a general, vague "love for all" does not reflect the intensity and purposefulness of the love spoken of in Scripture—the love that moved God to send his Son. The Bible describes that love as rich, determined, and particular:

- **John 3:16** – "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."
- **Ephesians 1:9** – "According to the purpose of his will."
- **Colossians 1:19** – "It pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell."
- **Romans 5:8** – "God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

We will, if the Lord allows, fully unpack these texts and others in the second part of this work.

Observation 4:
We deny that all of humanity was the object of that particular love of God that moved him to send his Son to die. Scripture is clear:

- God "made the wicked for the day of trouble" (**Prov. 16:4**).
- He "hated Esau before he was born" (**Rom. 9:11,13**).
- Some were "long beforehand marked out for condemnation" (**Jude 4**).
- Others are "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (**Rom. 9:22**).
- They are "born to be caught and destroyed" (**2 Pet. 2:12**).
- Appointed not to salvation, but "to wrath" (**1 Thess. 5:9**).
- Like Judas, they go "to their own place" (**Acts 1:25**).

Further Examination of the Misuse of the Impetration–Application Distinction

We now turn to how universalists build their case on this distinction between *impetration* and *application*, in order to uphold a doctrine of general redemption. Here's what they say:

> "The justice of God was offended by sin. Unless something were done to satisfy that justice, God's general love for all people could never be acted upon. It would remain locked within his own heart, unable to produce any actual benefit."

Observation 1:

This view—that God was **completely** unable to save sinners unless his justice were first satisfied—is not supported by Scripture or by sound reason. Yes, once God *decreed* that he would save sinners through the satisfaction of his justice in Christ, it became a fixed necessity that it must be done that way. But in itself, apart from that decree, God's infinite power and wisdom mean he could have saved sinners in any way that did not violate his holy character. So this view improperly limits God's sovereignty.

Observation 2:

To claim that God has a sort of *built-in desire* (a "velleity") to do good to sinners, but is unable to act unless an external work is done, is to lower the majesty of God. It presents him as needy or incomplete, dependent on circumstances outside himself—which is utterly inconsistent with his blessedness and self-sufficiency.

Next, they say:

> "Therefore, in order to express this universal love and good-will in a way that would please him, and to remove the obstacle of his justice, God sent his Son into the world to die."

Response:

We will fully refute this claim when we examine what Scripture really teaches about the *love* that sent the Son. But even here, the flaw is evident: they make Christ's death a reaction to God's general love, rather than a purposeful expression of his *electing* love.

Then they add:

> "The immediate aim and purpose of God in sending his Son to die for all people was so that he might, in any way he chose, save sinners—now that his justice was satisfied and no longer stood in the way." (Arminius says God might *save them*; Corvinus says God might *will to save them*.)
> And the intention of Christ, they say, was simply to satisfy justice enough that he might gain for himself the power or ability to save sinners, depending on whatever conditions the Father chose to require."

Observation 1:

Let the reader judge: Was this really the purpose of the Father in sending the Son? Did he merely aim to give himself the *possibility* of saving us—if he chose to do so later? The Scriptures plainly teach otherwise. God's purpose in sending Christ was to secure *actual*

salvation for his elect. He didn't merely open a door—he brought his sheep all the way home.

Observation 2:

To say that the **entire** purpose of Christ's death was to make salvation *possible*—depending on a condition that *we* must meet—is a doctrine too cold and barren to comfort any soul that knows the weight of sin. For "tender spirits," such a view fails to reflect the power and certainty of Christ's love.

Observation 3:

This idea that Christ died to "gain the ability to save," depending on what conditions God might later impose, does not match the clear purpose Jesus himself gives for his death: "to save his sheep," "to give eternal life," and to "bring many sons to glory." The Scriptures do not speak of *possibility* but of *certainty*.

They go further:

> "Christ obtained for all people reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation—but not so that they would actually receive these things. Rather, now that justice no longer prevents it, God may give them to whoever meets the conditions he sets, like faith or repentance."

This is where their distinction between *impetration* and *application* does its heavy lifting. But even here, they are deeply divided:

- Some (like Borrhaeus and Corvinus) say all people are, through Christ's death, brought into a *new covenant*, just like they were

once included in Adam under the *old covenant of works*. All people, they claim, are thus "restored" in Christ.

- One recent author (John More) even dares to say that all are **already** reconciled, redeemed, saved, and justified in Christ—though, notably, he doesn't explain how this can be so.

Others, however—particularly some in France who still hold to the necessity of grace—are more cautious. They say:

> "By nature, we are still all under wrath. Until we come to Christ by faith, the wrath of God abides on us. So reconciliation is not *actually* applied to anyone until they believe."

Some have gone even further, saying that Christ's death, by satisfying divine justice, removed original sin from every person without exception. As a result, they conclude that all infants—whether born to Christians, Muslims, or pagans—are saved if they die in infancy, even outside the covenant of grace. Why? Because the inherited guilt and alienation from Adam's fall has, in their view, been erased for all through Christ's satisfaction. Therefore, God is now free to save all people under a new condition.

Others, being more cautious, point out that Scripture says the blood of Christ cleanses us from *all* sin (1 John 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; Isa. 53:6). But they still maintain that Christ died for all sinners in the same way—*absolutely* for none, but *conditionally* for all. Some of them even argue that after Christ made satisfaction—or even in God's foreknowledge of that satisfaction—it remained totally undetermined what condition would be required for salvation. In other words, God could have chosen to return us to the covenant of works. This is the view of Corvinus.

Others, like Thomas More, claim that part of the benefit purchased by Christ's death was the *introduction* of a new way of salvation, based on faith. So we have a variety of views, but a common thread: they make Christ's death conditional in its benefits, and thus uncertain in its effect.

Even more confusing is their disagreement about whether people can meet the condition of faith by their own power. Some say yes—that faith can be performed by natural strength, with the help of common grace that God gives to all people at all times and in all places. Others deny this and affirm that special, effectual grace—flowing from divine election—is necessary to believe. So on one side, you have the defenders of free will, trying to make their universal redemption work. On the other side, you have those who affirm the necessity of grace, even though it undermines the universalism they wish to maintain. This is the confused position of Amyraldus, Camero, and others.

To complicate things further, some argue that the love of God shown in sending Christ is *equal* toward all people. Others raise the stakes, claiming that even though God sent Christ to die for everyone, there are still *degrees* of love in God—that he loved some more than others. Yet the apostle Paul says that the greatest expression of God's love is this: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all…" (Rom. 8:32). If Christ's death is the fullest display of God's love, how can it be equal and unequal at the same time?

To support these theories, they invent endless distinctions—better called *extinctions*, since they blot out the plain meaning of Scripture. Men like Testardus and Amyraldus, and others like Thomas More (whose writings are easy for anyone who can read English to examine), turn the simplicity of Christ's work into a tangle of

confusing categories. They multiply the supposed *ends* of Christ's death: some they claim are the fruit of his ransom, others are undefined abstractions. Christ, they say, died for some people "in one way," and for others "in another way." They fill their arguments with so many foggy, technical terms that it's nearly impossible to understand what they mean—let alone evaluate their reasoning.

But in at least one thing they all agree: they *all deny* that faith itself is a gift purchased or merited for us by the death of Christ. In this, they are consistent with their system. For if faith were obtained by Christ's death, it would entirely destroy the foundation of universal redemption. Yet when it comes to identifying the *cause* of faith, they fall into deep disagreement again.

Some say that God sent Christ to die for all people *conditionally*—meaning that Christ died only for those who *would* believe. But this turns everything upside down, making Christ's death *depend* on our belief. If you believe, then Christ died for you. If you don't, he didn't. In other words, belief determines the object of faith—a clear contradiction.

Others say Christ died *absolutely* for all, securing every good thing for all humanity. But those benefits won't be given until a person fulfills the condition that God has prescribed (usually, faith). Yet even so, they all agree on this: in his death, Christ had *no more regard* for the elect than for others. He was, in their view, a representative for all mankind—no more, no less.

III. Final Reflections on the Result of Christ's Death

When it comes to the *result* of Christ's death—what it actually achieved—people have expressed themselves in all sorts of different ways. Some say it resulted in God's **power** to save. Others say it resulted in God's **will** to save. Still others describe it as merely **opening a door of grace**, or granting God a **right to save whomever He chooses**. Some even go so far as to say that Christ had *no specific end* in view with respect to us at all—that the entire human race could have perished even after Christ had done everything He came to do.

Others attempt to assign **various and distinct ends** to Christ's death, depending on the kind of person for whom he died. They concede that these people are distinguished by a prior decree of God, but they can't seem to explain why God would send His Son to die for those whom He had already resolved *not* to save—those whom He would ultimately pass over and leave to just condemnation. To me, such a purpose is utterly inconceivable. I also find no biblical basis for the idea of a two-tiered divine intention—one where God aims to save some but still sends Christ to die for all.

The truth of God, by its very nature, exposes and scatters all these inconsistent opinions. Those who refuse to submit to the plain teaching of Scripture will inevitably end up in confusion and error. But the doctrine of particular redemption—what Christ actually accomplished—is not wrapped up in complicated theories or evasive language. It doesn't need clever distinctions or philosophical gymnastics to make its case. It stands firm on plain, biblical ground. The whole truth may be simply summarized as follows:

> **God, out of His infinite love for the elect**, sent His beloved Son—promised from the beginning of the world and made effectual through that promise—to die and pay a ransom of

> infinite worth. This was done in order to purchase eternal redemption and to bring to Himself *all and every one* of those whom He had already chosen to inherit eternal life, all to the praise of His glorious grace.

So, every aspect of our salvation—our deliverance from evil and our enjoyment of every spiritual blessing—is the direct and certain result of Christ's death. That death is the *meritorious cause* of every part of our passage from death to life, from wrath to glory. This can be further broken down into a few clear affirmations:

First, the Source of Christ's Death

The **eternal love of God for the elect** is the source and fountain of His sending Christ. This love is exclusive to the elect. I will say more on this in the next major section of this work.

Second, the Worth of Christ's Ransom

The **value and worth** of Christ's sacrifice—His giving Himself as a ransom and paying the price with His own blood—is infinite. It is entirely sufficient to accomplish any purpose God intends and to save *every one* of those for whom it was offered, even if their number were millions more than all who have ever lived.

- *"God purchased the church with His own blood"* (Acts 20:28).
- *"You were redeemed… with the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18–19).
- *"As the Father gave Me commandment, so I do"* (John 14:31).

- *"Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 13:38–39).
- *"God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:20–21).

This offering perfectly satisfied the Father and matched the design of His eternal plan.

Third, the Purpose of the Father

The Father's **purpose** in this great work was to bring "many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10). These are the **elect**, chosen by sovereign grace from every kind of person and place. They were taken into a **new covenant**, since the old covenant (as it relates to them) has been abolished. Jesus Christ is the **chief promise** of that covenant, and He has obtained for them every spiritual blessing it contains. All other benefits flow from Him.

Fourth, the Effects of Christ's Death

The **actual benefits** procured by Christ's death—benefits that will certainly come into the possession of all for whom He died—include:

- Forgiveness of sins
- Deliverance from wrath and the curse of the law
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Reconciliation with God

- Eternal life

The **Father's will**, in sending the Son; the **Son's intention**, in laying down His life; and the **truth of His purchase** form the foundation of Christ's intercession. That intercession began on earth and continues in heaven. And Christ—whom the Father always hears—*asks that every blessing He purchased be actually applied to each and every one of those for whom He died*.

Summary

So the doctrine we affirm in this great matter is clear and compelling. It is not filled with confusing distinctions or tangled philosophies. It is not contradictory or evasive. It is simple, biblical, and profound.

> **God loves His elect. Christ died for them. Christ purchased their salvation. He applies that salvation to all for whom He died. And in this, the Triune God is glorified.**

This is the doctrine we will continue to affirm and defend in what follows. But first, because the entire case for a so-called universal redemption hangs on the shaky foundation of the *impetration/application* distinction we addressed earlier—and because that foundation is presented in many forms by different authors—we will give a little more attention to it before turning to our arguments and responses.

Book II, Chapter 5

On the Relationship Between Christ's Purchase and Its Application

We've already shown in earlier chapters how this distinction between *impetration* (Christ obtaining blessings for us) and *application* (us actually receiving those blessings) can be used in a sound and biblical way. We also exposed the many errors that arise when this distinction is misused—especially in the hands of those who promote universal redemption. Since this misuse is truly the **foundational error** (*proton pseudos*) of their system, I'll strike it one more time in hopes of laying it finally to rest.

Let me plainly state the matter: Though *impetration* and *application* can be distinguished in thought, they **must never be separated in reality**. That is, whoever Christ truly obtained salvation for will certainly receive it. All whom Christ reconciled to God through His death **will actually be reconciled to God** in due time.

It is deeply flawed to imagine Christ's death as a kind of **medicine in a bottle**, sitting on a shelf, equally available to anyone who might happen to come and use it—its effect depending not on God's purpose but on chance or human choice. That would mean that Christ obtained every good thing for people without securing whether they would ever actually possess it. That's the Arminian view: Christ purchased forgiveness, reconciliation, and salvation for everyone, but most of those people still perish in their sins—and always will.

Now, let me offer several reasons why this false gap between impetration and application is unreasonable, unbiblical, and ultimately impossible.

1. It Violates Common Sense

In everyday speech, when someone "obtains" something for you, it means it now belongs to you. If a friend secures a job on your behalf, it's now your position by right, even if you haven't started it yet. The same is true of Christ's purchase. If He obtained redemption for someone, then by right it belongs to them. To say, "He obtained it, but they may or may not receive it," is to speak nonsense—it's to say it's theirs and not theirs in the same breath.

2. It Contradicts Divine Intention

God's will that Christ should die *for someone* necessarily includes the will that Christ's death should be *applied to them*. Otherwise, we would have to say that God intentionally purposed that Christ die for someone—and at the same time, purposed that the person never benefit from it. That is absurd. In the biblical sense, to say Christ died *for* someone is to say His death is *theirs by design*. But in the universal view, Christ's death is supposedly for all, and yet its fruits are never even made known to the vast majority of people.

3. It Denies the Power of the Ransom

Christ's death is called a **ransom** in places like *Matthew 20:28*—a payment made to secure the freedom of captives. And this ransom was paid according to the will of God the Father, who promised to

release those for whom the ransom was paid. To say that this ransom was fully paid, yet the captives remain forever in bondage, is to rob the cross of its power and make God's promise void. It's like claiming the price was paid in full, but the purchased goods were never delivered. That would be a strange and unworthy outcome for the work of Christ.

4. It Contradicts the Scriptures

Finally, this false separation between Christ's purchase and its application simply cannot be reconciled with the Word of God. We have already shown in detail that the Bible presents the death of Christ as **effectual**—not merely making salvation possible, but **actually purchasing and securing** salvation for His people. Those for whom Christ died *will* be saved. His sheep *will* hear His voice. His people *will* be justified, sanctified, and glorified.

As we'll demonstrate further in Book III, Chapter X, Scripture repeatedly testifies that **impetration and application go hand in hand**—one necessarily leads to the other.

Of the Conditional View of Redemption, and the Inseparability of Christ's Purchase and Its Application

Our opponents try to dismiss all that we've argued by appealing to a simple distinction—what they think is a clever solution to all the weighty objections raised against their view. Here it is: they say, *"It's true that anything obtained absolutely and unconditionally for someone becomes theirs immediately. But if it's obtained on the basis of a condition, it's not theirs until the condition is fulfilled. Christ purchased all good things for all people—but on the condition*

of faith. Unless people meet that condition, they have no right to or share in what Christ obtained."

Some define this condition as simply *not resisting the gospel*. Others call it a *yielding* to the offer. Most plainly just call it *faith*. Well, let's grant for a moment that Christ purchased blessings for all people, conditional upon their believing. Then I say the following:

1. The Condition Must Be Revealed to All

If Christ truly purchased salvation for all, but made it conditional upon faith, then surely the condition must be clearly revealed to all people for whom he died—*especially since only he has the power to make it known*. But this is obviously not the case. Suppose I paid a doctor to heal anyone who comes to him—but then I never told people about it, and no one else could. Can I sincerely claim to desire their healing? No. That's precisely what the universal redemption view entails.

2. Is the Condition Within Man's Power or Not?

Either all people have the power to fulfill the condition (faith), or they don't.

- If they do, then all people can believe in Christ—and we know that is **false**.
- If they don't, then God must either give them the ability to believe, or not.

    - If He does, why doesn't everyone believe? Why are not all saved?

    - If He does not, then what is the point of saying Christ died for them "for their good"? Is it truly good news to say: *"Christ died for you—if only you do something you are completely unable to do, and God won't help you"*?

That's not salvation. That's a trap. It's like telling a blind man he can have a fortune—*if only he can see it*.

3. Is Faith Itself Purchased by Christ or Not?

Either faith is one of the blessings Christ died to purchase, or it's not.

- If it's not, then **the most essential part** of salvation is left out of his work.

    - That diminishes the glory of Christ,

    - contradicts Scripture (Titus 3:5–6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:3; Phil. 1:29),

    - and severs the condition of salvation from the Savior who provides it.

- If faith **is** a fruit of Christ's death, then why isn't it given to all, if he died for all? Their answer must be: *"Faith is given to those who don't resist grace."*
  But that would imply all who don't resist the gospel are saved—including pagans, infants, and all to whom the gospel never came. That's absurd.

4. This View Reduces Christ to a Half-Mediator

If Christ obtains salvation, but not the means necessary to receive it, then he is not a full Savior. He starts the work, but cannot finish it. He makes salvation possible, but not certain. That is not the Mediator of the new covenant revealed in Scripture.

Therefore…

Even after their exception and distinction, the truth we've defended remains firm: **What Christ obtained by his death is infallibly applied to all for whom he died.** The two cannot be separated.

Summary of Our Position

Let us close Book II with this clear affirmation:
Christ did not die for any on the condition that they believe. He died for the elect of God in order **that they would believe**, and through faith inherit eternal life.

Faith is not a condition they must fulfill in their own strength before Christ's death becomes effective for them. It is one of the chief fruits and blessings purchased by Christ's blood. We do not say, *"If you believe, then Christ died for you."*
We say, **"Christ died for you, and that is why you will believe."**

Yes, salvation is bestowed on the condition of faith—but **faith itself is secured absolutely** for the elect through the cross of Christ.

With the foundation laid, and the false view exposed, we now proceed to build up the positive arguments that confirm this truth, and refute the objections brought against it. But before we do, we urge the reader to keep in mind the core principles we have established so far. Without those, the arguments to come cannot be rightly understood.

– End of Book II –

Book 3,

Chapter 1

Arguments Against the Universality of Redemption

Argument 1: From the Nature of the New Covenant and Its Application

Our first argument against universal redemption comes from the very **nature of the new covenant**, which was **established, ratified, and confirmed by the death of Christ**. Jesus Himself called His blood "the blood of the new covenant" (Matt. 26:28), because in His death He sealed that covenant as its Testator.

Now here is the key point: **the benefits of Christ's death do not extend beyond the reach of this covenant**. If Christ's blood sealed this covenant, then those for whom He died are the same as

those who are in covenant with God. But this new covenant is **not universal**—it was never made with every individual in the world. Rather, it is made particularly with **God's people**, His elect.

Biblical Witness to the Covenant

This is clearly taught in Jeremiah 31:31–34 and reiterated in Hebrews 8:9–11:

> "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts... No longer will they teach their neighbor... for they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

Notice what distinguishes this covenant: **God does not merely require obedience—He promises to create it**. He **puts His law within**, He **writes it on the heart**, and He **guarantees** that those in the covenant will know Him. It is not based on our performance—it is rooted in **His promise to transform**.

This is what sets the new covenant apart from the old:

- Under the old covenant, God said: *Do this and live*.
- Under the new, God says: *I will cause you to walk in my ways*.

If this inward transformation—faith, repentance, love—is not present in a person, then that person is **not in the covenant**. And since all do not believe, **all are not included** in this covenant.

A Covenant with the Elect, Not the World

But someone may object: “Yes, God promises to write His law on hearts—but only if we believe.” But that makes no sense. God would be saying: *If you have my law written on your heart, then I will write my law on your heart.* That’s circular reasoning and makes the promise meaningless.

Faith is not the condition we must fulfill in order to enter the covenant—**faith is the result of the covenant**. The covenant itself promises to create the very faith it requires.

Moreover, how could God be said to make this covenant with people who have **never heard the gospel**, or who die in darkness, ignorance, or rebellion? God made the covenant of grace with **Adam**, and Adam knew it (Gen. 3:15). He **renewed it with Noah**, who proclaimed its promise. He **reaffirmed it with Abraham**, along with the promise that through his seed all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12). In all these cases, God **revealed the covenant** to those with whom He made it. But it is absurd to say that God entered into covenant with people who never heard of it or never received any grace to believe it.

Even in Genesis 3:15, God makes a clear **distinction**: the **seed of the woman** and the **seed of the serpent** are set apart. Will anyone dare to say that God entered into a covenant of grace with the serpent’s seed?

The Blood of Christ Is for the Covenanted People

The new covenant is therefore a **distinguishing mercy**, limited to those whom God foreknew and loved from eternity—His elect. The

blood of Christ, being the **blood of this covenant**, was shed specifically to secure the blessings promised in the covenant.

Jesus is called the **surety** (guarantor) of this covenant (Heb. 7:22)—He stood in for its members and bore their guilt. He had no obligation to represent others outside the covenant. It would be **inconceivable** to say that His death was intended for those not included in that very covenant His blood sealed.

Argument II: From the Necessity of Revelation for Faith

If God truly intended that Christ's death should procure pardon and reconciliation for all people—provided they believe—then it follows that this goodwill and intention, along with the benefits Christ purchased, must be made known to them through the Word. As Paul says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). If these truths are not revealed to all those whom God supposedly intends to save by Christ's death, then only two possibilities remain:

1. Either people can be saved without faith in Christ, which is unbiblical and impossible, since Christ is the only way to the Father;

2. Or God's intention and Christ's work are ultimately in vain for those who never hear of them. It would be no benefit to them, nor could it be used to condemn them, for how can they be judged for not receiving what they never knew existed?

Would it align with God's wisdom to send Christ to die for sinners with the intent that they be saved through faith, yet never cause the message of salvation to reach them? Would it be fitting for Christ to secure redemption for people who will never so much as hear of it? Is

it credible that He would open a fountain for cleansing and then hide it from the vast majority of those for whom He supposedly opened it?

This would be as if a prince declared he had ransomed a group of captives, provided they would come and receive their freedom, but never informed them that they had been ransomed, or even gave them the means to find out. Or as if a physician had a cure for a deadly disease and promised to heal all who would take it, yet never told most of the sick about the remedy.

Yet this is exactly the case if Christ died for all, while multitudes live and die without ever hearing of Him. Both Scripture and experience testify that God has not made known His covenant of grace to all nations or all people. Under the Old Covenant, God revealed Himself primarily to Israel—"He declares His word to Jacob… He has not dealt thus with any other nation" (Ps. 147:19–20). "In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel" (Ps. 76:1).

And even now, under the New Covenant, despite the gospel reaching many nations, large parts of the world remain unreached. The Holy Spirit even forbade the apostles at times from going to certain places (Acts 16:6–7). God still allows many nations to walk in darkness, as He did in times past (Acts 14:16). Millions today live and die never hearing the name of Christ. Can we seriously claim that Christ died for all these, yet God never intended that they should hear of Him?

Let any objector say what they will—this fact remains: countless multitudes have never had Christ or the gospel revealed to them. How then can it be said that God intended Christ to save them on condition of faith, when He never granted them the means to believe?

Therefore, the doctrine of universal redemption fails. It contradicts both Scripture and the clear testimony of history. The gospel has not been universally proclaimed, and therefore Christ's death cannot have been intended for all alike.

Book III, Chapter 2

Containing three other arguments.

Argument III: From the Necessity of the Condition Being Procured

If Jesus Christ died for all people—that is, if He purchased and secured for them, in accordance with God's will, all the benefits of His death (summed up in the phrase "eternal redemption")—then He did so either **absolutely** or **conditionally**.

If absolutely, then all people without exception must certainly receive eternal redemption, since nothing could prevent them from enjoying what God absolutely intended and Christ fully purchased for them.

But if conditionally—meaning these blessings are only for those who fulfill some condition—then we must ask: did Christ also purchase that condition for them, or not?

If He **did** purchase the condition (such as faith), He either did so **absolutely** or **on some further condition**. If absolutely, then

again, those for whom He died must certainly believe and be saved, because the condition for salvation was secured as certainly as salvation itself.

This is what we affirm: Christ purchased salvation for His people to be received by faith—but He also absolutely purchased that very faith for them. Therefore, the condition is secured, and salvation is guaranteed.

However, if Christ only purchased the condition (faith) **on another condition**, the question simply repeats itself—what was that further condition? And so we are caught in an endless loop unless we fix upon a definite point. Eventually, it must either be absolutely procured or not procured at all.

On the other hand, if Christ **did not** purchase this condition (faith) for those for whom He died, then we are faced with even more problems:

1. **Then the condition must be revealed to all** for whom He died, as shown in Argument II.

2. **Either all people are able to fulfill the condition (faith), or they are not.** If they are, then salvation ultimately depends on man's free will, which contradicts Scripture. If they are not, then either:

    - God **intends** to give them the ability to believe, or

    - He **does not** intend to do so.

If He does intend to give all people faith, why do not all believe? Why do not all possess faith, since God's purpose cannot fail?

If He does **not** intend to give them faith, then the result is this: God sent His Son to die for all people, on the condition that they believe—but He never intended to grant them the ability to believe, without which they can never be saved.

Is this not absurd? Would God intend to offer salvation on a condition He knows they cannot meet, and which He Himself will not enable them to meet?

Would it not be like offering a blind man a reward on condition that he sees, knowing full well he cannot open his eyes? Or offering liberty to captives on the condition that they break their own chains —though they have no strength to do it?

Would Christ say, "I will secure eternal life for all men on condition that they believe—but I will not reveal that condition to many, and I will not grant them faith, which I know they cannot produce on their own"? What kind of purpose is that?

It is no purpose at all—it is a mockery. To offer redemption to those who cannot believe, and to refuse to grant them the faith required, is not a true offer but a cruel illusion.

In short, **to intend to do someone good on condition of something you know he cannot do—and you will not help him do—is not a genuine intention to do him good**. It is a vain flourish, void of truth and mercy.

Therefore, to say that Christ died to procure eternal redemption for all people, but only on condition that they believe—and yet not to secure faith for them—is to make His death unprofitable for them and unworthy of His purpose.

Finally, if God intends to save all if they believe, but Christ did not purchase faith for them, and they cannot believe by themselves—how then is anyone saved at all?

Some might object, “God gives faith to some and not to others.” I respond: Was this distinguishing grace—this gift of faith—purchased by Christ for those who receive it, as compared to those who do not?

If **yes**, then it is clear Christ did **not** die equally for all. He died to give faith to some, but **not** to others. And since no one can be saved without faith, He effectively did not die for those who never receive it. That is, He did not intend for His death to result in their salvation.

But if **no**—if Christ did **not** purchase faith for those who are saved—then those who are saved have no more to thank Christ for than those who are damned. This would be absurd and would contradict the testimony of Revelation 1:5–6:

> "To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and his Father..."

For my part, I believe that Christ **fully accomplished** salvation for His people—not merely on the condition that they would receive it, but in such a way that they would certainly receive it. He purchased salvation to be given to those who believe, and also **purchased faith itself** so that they **would** believe.

It cannot be objected that, in our view, God requires something from people—namely faith—that they are unable to do.

First, the **commands** of God (like “believe in Christ”) do not reveal what God intends to bring about, but rather what is our duty. He

may command something even if we are unable to perform it. The command reveals our responsibility, not God's secret intention.

Second, the **promises** that are presented with the command to believe do not mean:

1. That God intended Christ to die for a person **if** they would believe (as if belief determines for whom He died—which would be absurd, because the object of faith must exist **before** we are called to believe in it); nor,

2. That Christ's death is only **potentially useful**, depending on whether we believe (as if Christ's death gains its power from our decision), which we've already disproved.

Rather, the promises show that **faith is the appointed means to salvation**. Everyone who believes will certainly be saved, because **faith and salvation are inseparably joined**. This connection is not arbitrary—it is God's appointed way of bringing His people into the blessings Christ purchased for them.

Argument IV. Distinctions in God's Eternal Purpose Prove Christ Did Not Die for All

If God, by His eternal purpose, has divided all people into two distinct groups—clearly identified and described in Scripture—and if Christ is said to have died for only one of those groups, then it necessarily follows that He did not die for every individual. He died for all within one group, and for none in the other.

Now, Scripture does show such a distinction: between those whom God **loves** and those He **hates** (Romans 9:13); those He **knows** and those He **does not know** (John 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:19; Rom. 8:29; Matt. 25:12); those who are **chosen**, **foreknown**, and **appointed to life**, and those who are **rejected**, **ordained to condemnation**, or **fitted for destruction** (Eph. 1:4; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:30; 1 Thess. 5:9; Rom. 9:18–21; Jude 4; 2 Pet. 2:12; Matt. 25:32). Scripture describes them variously as **sheep and goats**, **children of promise and children of the flesh**, **God's church and the world**, those whom He **prays for** and those He **does not** (John 17:9), those whom He **shows mercy to**, and those whom He **hardens** (Rom. 9:18).

These distinctions are consistently attributed to God's sovereign will and eternal purpose. For example, Romans 9:11–13 speaks of God's choice before birth, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand." Similarly, Romans 8:28–30 outlines the unbreakable chain of God's purpose—from foreknowing, to predestining, calling, justifying, and glorifying.

Now, Christ is clearly said to have died **for His people** (Matt. 1:21), **His sheep** (John 10:11, 14), **His church** (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25), **His elect** (Rom. 8:32–34), and **the children given to Him by the Father** (Heb. 2:12–13). Never once is He said to have died for those whom He never knew, whom He hardens, to whom He will not show mercy, who were ordained to condemnation, or for whom He refused to pray. He did not die for the reprobate or the world in that sense.

Some object that although Scripture says Christ died for His sheep, His people, His elect, it never explicitly says He died for "them only." But this objection carries no weight. Common sense and standard

language make clear that if Scripture distinguishes two opposite categories—like sheep and goats—and then says Christ died for the sheep, it is equivalent in meaning to saying He died for the sheep **only**. Scripture doesn't always use the word "only" when the meaning requires it. For instance, when Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), He doesn't say "only," but we rightly understand that no one else can be the way. The sense is self-limiting.

Therefore, this argument stands firm: Christ died only for those whom the Father gave Him—His sheep, His elect—not for all humanity without distinction. This argument could be strengthened even further by a fuller explanation of election and reprobation, showing that Christ's death was appointed as a means for saving only the elect—not those whom God decreed to leave in their sins. More on that will follow, God willing.

Argument V. The Language of Scripture Does Not Teach Universal Redemption

We should not affirm anything about Christ's work that Scripture does not clearly teach. But Scripture nowhere states that Christ died for **all people**, much less for **each and every individual**—which is a stronger claim still.

It is true that Christ is said to give His life as "a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6), but **nowhere** is He said to die "for all men" in the absolute sense. And many other passages speak more specifically: that He died for **many**, for **His church**, for **those who believe**, for **the children given Him by the Father**, and for **us**—that is, believers. This includes the vision in Revelation 5:9–10, where the

redeemed are from “every tribe and language and people and nation,” but not **every individual** from all nations.

Therefore, if someone insists that Christ died for all men without exception, they must prove from Scripture that such universal language (like “all”) cannot be limited to “all the elect,” “all believers,” “all of His church,” or “all sorts of people” (which is how the term is often used). Until they do, the claim of universal atonement cannot be maintained.

If people would carefully examine the texts and prove that “all” must mean every individual without exception—and not simply all kinds of people or all the elect—then the debate would be easier to resolve. But as it stands, Scripture does not support the claim that Christ died for every single person.

Book III, Chapter 3

Two further arguments based on the representative role Christ took upon Himself

Argument VI: Christ Died as a Substitute —But Not for All

For everyone Christ died for, He died **as a substitute**, in their place —as Scripture clearly teaches:

- **Romans 5:6–8**: “While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly… God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- **Galatians 3:13**: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”

- **2 Corinthians 5:21**: “He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

These passages show a clear **exchange**—Christ took the place of others so that they might be freed from the penalty He bore. If He stood in their place, then two things follow:

1. **They must be freed from the punishment He bore in their place**. That is the entire point of substitution: the substitute suffers so the one represented does not. This is the very nature of Christ being our surety (Heb. 7:22), bearing our chastisement and iniquities (Isa. 53:5–6), and being made sin for us that we might be made righteous (2 Cor. 5:21).

2. **But not all are freed from wrath or reconciled to God.** Scripture says that **those who do not believe** are still under wrath (John 3:36); God’s anger **remains** on them, not that it comes upon them anew. That means it was **never removed** by Christ’s death. The gospel for such people is “a fragrance from death to death” (2 Cor. 2:16), bringing only greater condemnation because of their rejection.

Some have argued that **Christ redeemed and justified all**, even making them righteous in Him. But such claims don’t just misinterpret Scripture—they directly contradict it. Scripture never says this.

Furthermore, if Christ died for all, then He must have made **satisfaction to God's justice for all sins**—because that's why He died. But this can't be true, for two reasons:

First, if He satisfied God's justice for someone's sins, then God's justice is satisfied—there is no more punishment to be given. If anyone still suffers eternal punishment, then either:

- **Christ's satisfaction was insufficient**, which is **blasphemy**; or
- **God requires double satisfaction**—from Christ and the sinner—which contradicts justice.

But many are punished eternally. Therefore, Christ did not satisfy God's justice for their sins.

Jesus' satisfaction cannot fail in its goal. To say He made atonement for someone, but they still perish, is to say His work failed to save them. That is **unthinkable**.

Second, Christ did not suffer for anyone unintentionally.

He didn't accidentally die for sins He didn't mean to bear. Satisfaction was a deliberate act, rooted in **His intention and the Father's purpose**. And He did not intend to make atonement for those who were already in hell at the time of His death. It would

make no sense for Christ to offer Himself for those whom He knew had already perished and could never benefit from His death.

Would Christ die for Pharaoh or Cain, centuries after they had been condemned? Would He shed His blood for those He knew would never be redeemed? That would make His blood purposeless for them—**a vain offering**.

Some object: "Yes, but if they had believed, Christ's death would have saved them." But:

- Most of them **never heard** of Christ or any such condition.
- Christ **knew** they never would believe, and that they were beyond any hope.
- Therefore, it would be meaningless to say He died for them **knowing** they would never be saved.

Others say: "Well, Christ died for those already saved—it wasn't necessary for them. So why not for the already damned?" But this misses the point. Those already saved were saved **on the basis of the coming death of Christ**. God counted it done, and their salvation was built on that sure foundation. The condemned had no such foundation.

A simple example: Suppose a man sends word to a prison, promising to pay a ransom for the release of the captives. Some respond and go free; others ignore the message or never hear it. When the man finally pays the price, did he intend it for those who never heard—or who already died in their cells? Obviously not. His ransom was for those whom he intended to set free.

Third, if Christ died for all, did He die for all their sins, or only some?

- If only some, then **none can be saved**, because some sins remain.
- If for all their sins, then **why are they not saved**?

The answer is usually: “Because of their **unbelief**.” But is unbelief a sin, or not?

- If unbelief **is not a sin**, then how can it condemn?
- If it **is a sin**, did Christ die for it, or not?

If He did **not** die for their unbelief, then He didn’t die for **all** their sins. If He **did** die for their unbelief, then how can unbelief **prevent** salvation?

This is the great contradiction of universal atonement: Christ died for all, including their unbelief—but they are lost **because of their unbelief**? How can that sin, already atoned for, still damn them?

The only way around this is to say Christ died for their unbelief **on the condition** that they are not unbelievers. That’s nonsense.

If Christ died **in the place of sinners**, as Scripture teaches, then all for whom He died must be saved. Otherwise, He failed as their substitute. But not all are saved. Therefore, He did not die for all. The idea that Christ would make atonement for those He knew would never believe, whom the Father never intended to save, whose hearts would remain hardened—is completely **inconsistent with His wisdom, power, and purpose**.

Argument VII: Christ Is Mediator Only for Those for Whom He Died

Whoever Christ died for, He also acts as **mediator** for them. This is clear because one of the central acts of Christ's mediation is His **offering of Himself to God**—His sacrificial death. But Scripture and experience both show that **Christ is not the mediator for all people without exception**.

Here's the reasoning:

- As mediator, Christ is also a **priest**. And what does a priest do? As shown earlier, a priest both **offers sacrifice** and **intercedes**—he obtains blessings for others and applies those blessings to the ones for whom the sacrifice was made (see Hebrews 9).

- But Christ does **not intercede or apply blessings** to everyone. He **does not act as priest for all**. Therefore, He is **not mediator for all**, and consequently, **He did not die for all**—since His death was a priestly, mediatorial act.

This isn't a point needing much debate: we see it plainly in the Bible and in experience. Not all are reconciled, saved, or blessed through Christ's priestly work. Scripture is full of testimonies to this.

Some try to dodge this truth by saying Christ is a mediator for all in **some respects**, but only a mediator for the elect in **other respects**. But this is no solid defense—it's just an evasive tactic. To suggest that Christ is a **partial mediator**, or a **half-mediator**, is both unbiblical and dishonoring to His office. Scripture never teaches that Christ performs some mediatorial acts for everyone and

others only for some. His mediatorial work—sacrifice, intercession, and the application of redemption—is always done for the **same group**: **His people**.

This argument has already been demonstrated earlier and stands firm.

Book III, Chapter 4

Of sanctification, and of the cause of faith, and the procurement thereof by the death of Christ.

Argument VIII: The Death of Christ Produces Sanctification

If the blood of Christ actually cleanses, purifies, and sanctifies those for whom it was shed—if it effectively produces holiness in those for whom He was a sacrifice—then it follows that Christ died only for those who are in fact cleansed and sanctified. But clearly, not everyone is sanctified, as **faith is the beginning of sanctification** (Acts 15:9), and "**not all have faith**" (2 Thess. 3:2). Faith belongs to "**God's elect**" (Titus 1:1). Therefore, Christ did not die for every single person.

This conclusion is unavoidable. And we'll prove the premise in two ways: first, from **the Old Testament types** (or symbols) of Christ's sacrifice, and second, from **direct statements in Scripture** about the power and purpose of His death.

1. The Typology: Old Testament Sacrifices Point to the Reality

The ceremonial sacrifices for sin under the old covenant prefigured the true sacrifice of Christ. In **Hebrews 9:13**, the apostle says, "If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctifies them so that their flesh is purified…" This means that even the symbolic sacrifices truly accomplished outward cleansing under the law.

Now, the **antitype**—the reality pointed to by the type—is **Christ's sacrifice**. And so, verse 14 continues, "How much more will the blood of Christ… cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God?" In other words, if the symbol had real, though limited, effect, then the true sacrifice must have a far greater spiritual effect.

Some, like the Arminians, attempt to evade this by saying that it's not the offering itself, but the **application** of the blood that sanctifies. But that's no answer. Our whole point is that **Christ's death and its benefits are inseparable** for those for whom He died. His blood is applied to all those for whom it was shed. The type and the antitype must correspond: just as the ceremonial offering sanctified, so the sacrifice of Christ sanctifies in reality.

2. Direct Teaching: The Death of Christ Sanctifies

Scripture plainly teaches that **Christ's death actually produces holiness** in those for whom He died. For example:

- **Romans 6:5–6**: "If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."

This passage says that if we share in Christ's death, we also share in His resurrection life—and why? Because our sinful nature ("the old man") was crucified with Him. His death effectively destroys the dominion of sin in our lives. That is sanctification.

So, to be united with Christ in His death is not merely to have an opportunity for salvation, but to be **actually freed from the power of sin**, which is the essence of sanctification. And this freedom is **not given to all**, but only to those who are truly united to Christ. Therefore, Christ's death cannot have been intended for everyone, but only for those who are in fact sanctified.

Argument VIII (continued): Sanctification and the Effects of Christ's Death

The apostle Paul teaches in **2 Corinthians 1:20** that *"all the promises of God are in him [Christ] yes, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us."* That is, all of God's promises are made firm, confirmed, and irrevocably established in Christ. And when were they confirmed? In His death—through the shedding of His blood, which ratified the New Covenant. As the author of **Hebrews 9:16** says, the testament (or covenant) is confirmed by the death of the testator. Christ, as the **guarantor** (Heb. 7:22) of this better

covenant, established it by being "cut off" for many, as **Daniel 9:26–27** foretold.

Now, what are these promises that were secured by the blood of Christ? The essence of them is found in **Jeremiah 31:33–34**, and restated in **Hebrews 8:10–12**—promises that include both **sanctification** (vv. 10–11) and **justification** (v. 12). Among these are the promises of God to give new hearts, to circumcise our hearts, and to put His Spirit within us (cf. **Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:26**). All of this is the direct result of Christ's death—our sanctification, justification, and reconciliation with God are secured by His blood.

Indeed, **Hebrews 9:23** says that the heavenly things are purified by Christ's sacrifice. We have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (**Col. 1:14**). By His death, He "destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," and freed those who were in lifelong slavery due to fear of death (**Heb. 2:14–15**).

Two especially clear passages support this:

- **Titus 2:14** – *"[He] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession."*
- **Ephesians 5:25–26** – *"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her."*

In both texts, **the purpose of Christ's death is stated to be sanctification**—therefore it must certainly accomplish that end.

One more place worth mentioning: **1 Corinthians 1:30**, where it says Christ has become for us *"wisdom from God—righteousness and sanctification and redemption."* He was made all this for us by

God, because God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood (**Rom. 3:25**). So our **sanctification**, along with every other blessing of free grace, is the **direct and guaranteed result** of Christ's death.

To summarize: **Sanctification and holiness are the certain effects of Christ's death for all those for whom He died. But not everyone is sanctified**—not all are made holy or cleansed. Therefore, Christ did not die for all.

Objection Answered: Isn't the Spirit and Faith Also Involved?

Some object: "Christ's death is not the only cause of sanctification. The Spirit's work and our faith are also involved." We reply:

1. **Yes, many kinds of causes can work together**, each in its own way. The Spirit is the **efficient cause**—He actually produces holiness in us. Faith is the **instrumental cause**, receiving Christ's righteousness. But these do not exclude Christ's death as the **meritorious cause**—the legal ground and moral cause of all these blessings. In fact, both the Spirit's work and our faith depend entirely on the death of Christ. They wouldn't exist at all without it.

2. Think of it like this: A man is held captive. Another pays a ransom to free him. Then a judge issues an order that the prisoner be released, his chains removed, and new clothes given to him. Can anyone say the ransom wasn't the cause of his release? Of course not. Though other steps followed, **they all resulted from the ransom being paid**.

So too with sanctification. Yes, the Spirit works in us. Yes, we must believe. But **these are themselves fruits of Christ's death**.

Preview of Next Argument

To completely refute the objection, we add one more vital point: **Faith itself is a direct and certain result of Christ's death**, given to all for whom He died.

If that is true (which I will prove in the next argument), then the idea of Christ dying for all people—many of whom never believe—must be false. If it's not true, I'll abandon the whole debate.

Let me know when you're ready to continue to **Argument IX**, which focuses specifically on Christ's death procuring **faith** itself.

Argument IX: Faith Is a Fruit of Christ's Death—Therefore, Not All Are Redeemed

Before stating the argument itself, I must lay down a few necessary points:

1. Everything given to us in and through Christ—especially spiritual blessings—is entirely the result of His death.

Nothing is bestowed on Christ's people except what He purchased by His blood, as Peter teaches: *"You were ransomed…with the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18–19). The covenant between the Father and the Son, in which all spiritual blessings were promised to Christ's people, rested on the condition that *"he shall make his soul an offering for sin"* (Isa. 53:10). Thus, everything given to us through Christ flows from His merit—especially faith.

2. Faith is absolutely essential for salvation.

This is universally admitted: without faith, no one can be saved under the new covenant. Whatever God has done in sending His Son, and whatever Christ has done in His death and intercession, if not joined with faith in us, it brings no benefit, but rather aggravates our

condemnation. For as Scripture says: *"He who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).

Now, if faith comes from our own power, and if our act of faith makes the love of God and the death of Christ effective for us, then it follows that it lies in **our power** to make Christ's redemption apply to us. That is an astonishing claim—yet many of our opponents have openly admitted it. But if faith is truly so necessary, then the **cause of faith** must also be the **primary cause of salvation**, because it brings salvation to pass.

3. Let our opponents answer this question clearly and honestly:

Did Christ, by His death and intercession (which are inseparable), **purchase or procure faith for us** or not?

That is the heart of the matter. And I ask them to give a plain, straightforward answer—**no obscure terms, no evasive distinctions.**

Now, if they answer **yes**—that Christ did indeed procure faith by His death—then let them tell us:

- Did Christ procure faith **absolutely** for those He died for, or only **on condition**?

If **absolutely**, then all for whom He died **must believe**, without fail. For what is absolutely obtained is certainly applied. Yet this cannot be: Scripture says plainly, *"Not all have faith"* (2 Thess. 3:2), and that faith is for *"the elect of God"* (Titus 1:1).

But if they say He procured faith **conditionally**, then let them clearly identify this **condition**. This is a matter of eternal importance—souls hang in the balance. What is this condition upon which faith depends?

Some say, *"If they do not resist the grace of God."*
But what does that mean? Not resisting is obeying, and what does it mean to obey the gospel? **To believe**. So the condition of faith is… faith! Christ procured faith for them, on the condition that they believe? That is circular reasoning—and absurd.

Others try to suggest a different condition. Fine—then let them clearly state what it is. If it's something **Christ did not procure**, then we're back to square one: the cause of faith lies in **ourselves**, not Christ. He is not the **author and finisher** of our faith. If they say Christ **did** procure this condition, then we ask again: was that condition purchased absolutely or conditionally? And the questioning continues.

In the end, they are trapped in a hopeless cycle—**unable to identify a condition that avoids placing the ultimate cause of salvation in man himself.** Until they can clearly tell us what this condition is, and whether it too was purchased by Christ, their argument collapses.

Let them draw a line where they can stop and stand: **depinge ubi sistam**—draw the line, show us where to stand. But until then, their case cannot hold.

But second, if they answer **no**—that is, they deny that Christ procured faith by His death (which, if they are consistent with their own principles, they **must** do)—then the following consequences are unavoidable:

1. They must affirm that faith is purely an act of our own will.

They must say it is something we produce from ourselves—not something graciously worked in us by God. And yet we have already shown that **nothing** is freely given to us in Christ unless it was purchased by His death. So if faith was not purchased, then faith is not a gift. But this directly contradicts:

- **The clear teaching of Scripture**, repeated in many places, which we won't list again here;
- **The very nature of the new covenant**, which does not merely call for obedience, but **works it** in those who are part of it (see Jer. 31:33–34; Ezek. 36:26; Heb. 8:10–11);
- **The doctrine of free grace**, which they now replace with **free will** in a fallen state—a position that diminishes grace and exalts man;
- **The doctrine of original sin**, which teaches that we are naturally unable to do any spiritual good. To say that fallen man can believe without grace is to overthrow this fundamental truth;
- And even **right reason**, which clearly sees that a natural power cannot produce a **spiritual act** without being elevated and enabled. As Paul says, *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him"* (1 Cor. 2:14).

2. They must admit that the ultimate cause of salvation lies in man, not in God.

Everything that the Father has done—His love, His sending of the Son—and all that Christ has done in offering Himself as a sacrifice, **has no saving effect** unless we believe. But since, according to them, **Christ did not procure faith**, nor does God necessarily grant it, then whether or not we believe is **entirely up to us**.

So it all comes down to this: we have the final, decisive say in our salvation. God and Christ may do everything else, but **we** make it effective—or we don't. That is, **we decide whether God's love and Christ's death are of any use to us.**

Now let the reader judge: does this not make us the authors of our own salvation? Does this not put the crown of our glory on our own heads, rather than on Christ's?

With these things in mind, I now proceed to briefly prove the point that has been denied—namely, that **faith is a gift purchased by the death of Christ**, and therefore, **Christ did not die for all people**, since *"all men do not have faith"* (2 Thess. 3:2). The proof comes by way of several reasons:

1. Christ's death purchased sanctification—and faith is part of sanctification.

As shown in Argument VIII, Christ's blood purchased holiness and sanctification for us. But **faith** is one of the chief graces of the Spirit, and therefore **part of that sanctification**. It follows, then, that **faith too was purchased by Christ**.

If anyone objects and claims that Christ only purchased **some** of the Spirit's graces—like love, hope, or meekness—but not **faith**, then I ask:

- **What biblical warrant** do they have for such a distinction between the graces of the Spirit?
- **Are we more able by nature to believe than to love or hope?** What ground do they have for that?

There is no reason to divide the graces of sanctification this way.

2. All the fruits of election were purchased by Christ—and faith is one of them.

We are chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4), and **all the blessings that flow from election** come to us **through Him**, the one in whom the Father blesses us for the praise of His glorious grace. Now, **faith is a fruit of election**. It is by God's purpose and calling that any believe (Rom. 8:30), and it is the elect who obtain faith, while the rest are hardened (Rom. 11:7). As Acts 13:48 puts it: *"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."*

Clearly, then, **faith flows from election**, and all that election intends is **secured by Christ's death**. Therefore, faith must also be included in the purchase of His cross.

3. All blessings of the new covenant were procured by Christ—and faith is one of them.

The blessings of the new covenant are granted to us **in Christ**, in whom the promises are "Yes" and "Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). These promises were ratified by His blood, as the "death of the testator" (Heb. 9:16), and Christ is the surety of that covenant (Heb. 7:22).

But what are the promises of this covenant? In short: justification, sanctification, and a new heart (Jer. 31:33–34; Heb. 8:10–12; Ezek. 36:25–27). These include **faith itself**, which is the very first act of a renewed heart. Therefore, if Christ's blood confirmed these covenant promises, and **faith is one of them**, then faith is surely among the blessings purchased by His death.

4. Whatever is necessary for salvation must be procured by Christ.

If something is absolutely necessary for our salvation, then **Christ must have purchased it**, since He is said to save us **completely** (Heb. 7:25). But **faith is absolutely necessary** for salvation (Heb. 11:6; Mark 16:16). Therefore, if Christ saves to the uttermost, He must have also secured **faith** for His people.

Otherwise, He would be said to accomplish full salvation, while leaving out the one thing that makes all the rest effective—an absurdity.

5. Scripture explicitly says that faith is God's gift—for Christ's sake.

Look at Philippians 1:29: *"It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake."* Faith is a **gift**, and it is **given for Christ's sake**—therefore, it was

purchased by His death. Also consider Ephesians 1:3: *"God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ."* If faith is a spiritual blessing—and it surely is—then it is ours **in Christ**, and **because of Christ**.

And if it is not a spiritual blessing, then it is not even worth debating in this context.

For my part, I look to Jesus as **the author and finisher of our faith** (Heb. 12:2). I have no reason to look elsewhere.

Many more arguments could be added, but these should suffice. The summary is this:

> If Christ's death truly **purchased** all the saving graces given to believers—and if **faith is one of those graces**, which it is—and if not all people have faith, then Christ **did not die for all**.

Argument X

From the Old Testament types to Christ's antitype: proving Christ died only for the elect.

We now argue from **the type to the antitype**—that is, from what was symbolized in the Old Testament to its fulfillment in Christ. This connection clearly limits Christ's atoning work to **God's elect**.

In the Old Testament, the people of **Israel** were, in all their major historical events, **a type** or figure of the true church. As the apostle Paul teaches plainly in 1 Corinthians 10:11, the things that happened to them were examples, written down for our instruction. Their ordinances—priests, sacrifices, temple worship—were all **shadows of gospel realities**, pointing forward to Christ.

- Their **priests, altar, and sacrifices** foreshadowed Christ's priesthood and sacrifice.
- Their **Canaan**, the promised land, symbolized **heaven** (Heb. 4:3, 9).
- **Jerusalem** and **Mount Zion** pointed to the **heavenly Jerusalem**, the church (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22).
- The entire nation of Israel, especially as delivered from Egypt and brought into Canaan, was **a type of God's chosen people**, the elect church.

This is why Israel is often called God's "holy people" and "royal priesthood," terms that Peter directly applies to **believers** in 1 Peter 2:5, 9. God's elect, throughout the New Testament, are referred to as **"Israel"**—not according to the flesh, but spiritually (Heb. 8:8; Rom. 9:6). A "true Israelite" is a **true believer** (John 1:47), and the real Jew is one inwardly (Rom. 2:29).

So then, the people of Israel—delivered from bondage, drawn near to God, brought into the promised land—**typify the spiritual redemption of the church**, the elect of God.

From this we reason:

> **Only those are truly redeemed by Christ**—those for whom His atonement is spiritually effective—**who were represented and prefigured by the people of Israel** in their redemption from Egypt.

Why? Because there is **no reasonable basis** for believing that Israel's deliverance was a type of salvation for the entire world, including those who perish. The types and figures in Scripture always

point to realities in Christ, but they never symbolize benefits for **those who remain outside of Him**.

Would it make sense to say that Israel's redemption from Egypt prefigured the salvation of the **seven Canaanite nations** whom they destroyed? Or the **Egyptians**, who perished in judgment? Or **unbelieving Gentiles** who hated God? Not at all.

Hebrews 9:10 explains that the Jewish ordinances were imposed only until the time of reformation—meaning they were **designed for a particular people**, not universally symbolic. Their entire system of worship was a **figure of gospel blessings**, but only **for God's chosen people**.

Therefore, we conclude: based on the required correspondence between **type and fulfillment**, the **death of Christ**, which is the antitype of Israel's redemption, **is limited to the elect**. Only the elect were typified by Israel. Only the elect are truly redeemed.

Book III, Chapter 5

Being a continuance of arguments from the nature and description of the thing in hand; and first, of redemption.

Argument XI

From the nature of redemption: Universal redemption is incompatible with Scripture's teaching on the meaning of redemption.

The doctrine of universal redemption cannot be true because it does not fit the biblical meaning of **redemption itself**, nor the words and expressions used to describe it in Scripture. In fact, when examined closely, the idea of Christ redeeming **every person** directly contradicts what redemption actually means.

Let's begin with the basic definition of *redemption* (Greek: *lutrōsis*, more often *apolutrōsis*): it refers to a **deliverance** from bondage or misery by means of **paying a ransom price**. In biblical theology, the **ransom** is the **blood of Christ**, which he calls a "ransom" (*lutron*) in Matthew 20:28, and Paul calls an "equivalent ransom" (*antilutron*) in 1 Timothy 2:6. It is a price paid for our release.

Now, in both civil and spiritual contexts, the point of paying a ransom is **to actually free those for whom it is paid**. That's the whole point. You don't pay to redeem captives and then leave them in chains. In spiritual redemption, the captives are bound under sin and its punishment. When Christ pays the ransom, he frees them from **guilt and punishment**.

That's why Scripture connects redemption with **justification** and **forgiveness**:

- *"We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 3:24).
- *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

Redemption means actual freedom. If a man paid the full price to redeem a friend from slavery, and the friend were not released, that would be absurd. Yet universal redemption says Christ paid for all, but many remain in bondage—and worse, perish eternally. That turns redemption into a broken promise.

However, spiritual redemption is even **greater** than earthly examples. Consider three unique aspects:

1. **God both provides and receives the ransom.**
   Christ is the ransom to satisfy God's justice, but it is God himself who sent Christ to be that ransom (Rom. 3:25). God's love provides the price; his justice receives it. It's unlike human redemption, where the one who receives the ransom has no role in providing it.

2. **We're not just freed from God—we're reconciled to him.**
   In earthly redemption, a slave is freed from his master. But in spiritual redemption, we are freed *from wrath* and at the same time *brought near* to God in grace and favor (Eph. 2:13). It's not mere release—it's restoration.

3. **The devil is conquered as well.**
   Christ didn't just satisfy God's justice; he also destroyed the power of the devil, who had tyrannized us through sin. When Satan attacked the sinless Christ, he lost his grip on all who are united to Christ (Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15). The "strong man" was bound, and his house plundered.

In a few ways, our spiritual redemption is distinct from civil or earthly forms of redemption—but in the essential meaning of the word, they are alike. Redemption, in ordinary speech, refers to

freeing someone from bondage or misery by paying a ransom. Scripture uses the word in exactly this way. Sometimes Christ is said to die *for our redemption*, and sometimes *for the redemption of our transgressions*. Both expressions point to the same truth.

For example, Hebrews 9:15 speaks of Christ's death "for the redemption of the transgressions." Some interpret this as a figure of speech—putting "transgressions" for "transgressors." Others take it more directly: a price was paid so we might be delivered from the penalty of our sins. Similarly, Ephesians 1:7 and other texts speak of our redemption through Christ's blood, using words like *lutron* and *apolutrōsis*—terms that clearly mean a ransom paid or a price given in exchange for release. The word *antilutron* in 1 Timothy 2:6 is even stronger, unmistakably referring to a ransom paid in place of others, a substitutionary payment.

With that clear definition in mind, let's now consider whether such redemption can be said to be *universal*.

If redemption means purchasing someone's freedom through a ransom, then surely justice demands that the person be set free. If I pay a large sum to redeem someone from captivity, and the one who holds him accepts that price, wouldn't it be a terrible injustice if the captive is not released? Could anyone say that the man is "redeemed" if he remains imprisoned?

And yet, that's what universal redemption claims: that Christ paid the ransom for all, but only a few are actually delivered. That the price was given for everyone, but most still perish. That God's justice was satisfied, Satan's power was broken—and yet the captives are not freed. This is impossible.

To speak of *universal redemption*—while acknowledging that multitudes perish—is as contradictory as calling something both *Roman* and *Catholic*. If all are redeemed, then all must be freed from the guilt and punishment of sin, whether virtually or actually. And if they are truly redeemed by the ransom of Christ's blood, why are they not saved?

In short, the very nature of redemption—full deliverance from misery by the payment of a ransom—cannot be made to fit the theory of universal redemption. It is, by its nature, particular and effectual. Therefore, the idea that Christ redeemed *all people* contradicts the plain meaning of the word and the consistent teaching of Scripture.

Book III, Chapter 6

On the Nature of Reconciliation, and the Argument from It

Argument XII.
Another benefit commonly attributed to Christ's death—and agreed upon by all to apply to those for whom he died—is *reconciliation*. Scripture speaks of reconciliation in two related ways: first, God being reconciled to us; and second, we being reconciled to God. Both are usually tied directly to the death and bloodshed of Jesus Christ. For example, "You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, he has now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Colossians 1:21–22). And surely, these two aspects of reconciliation

—God to man and man to God—go hand in hand. Wherever God is reconciled to a person, that person is also reconciled to God. For if either side remains unreconciled, how can there be peace?

Indeed, to suppose that God is reconciled to someone who is not himself reconciled to God—when God has the power to change the heart—is unreasonable. Likewise, it makes no sense to say a person is reconciled to God while God remains alienated. True reconciliation must be mutual. Therefore, to claim that God is reconciled to all people—even those who remain in unbelief and rebellion—is to deny what reconciliation really is.

Let's examine this more closely. Reconciliation, both in Scripture and common language, refers to the restoration of peace and friendship between parties formerly at odds. It involves a mutual change: the offender is restored, and the offended party is appeased. In the case of sin, man is the offender and God the offended. Man is alienated in his heart and affections, while God, though holy and good, is alienated in terms of his judicial wrath—the just penalty for sin.

The Greek word for reconciliation, *katallagē*, comes from a root meaning "to change" or "exchange." It implies a change of condition, turning enmity into peace. This concept requires mutual resolution: both parties must be reconciled. If one remains hostile or the offense remains unresolved, reconciliation is incomplete. Our Lord emphasized this in Matthew 5:23–24 when he taught that a man must first be reconciled to his brother before offering a gift at the altar—meaning, the one offended must be appeased and the relationship restored.

So, we reject both the Socinian view—which claims reconciliation is simply our conversion to God, without any satisfaction made to divine justice—and the view of some others who claim that God is

reconciled to everyone, while only a few are reconciled to him. Both ideas are flawed. Reconciliation requires mutual restoration, not one-sided peace.

Before Christ reconciled us, Scripture describes the condition of both parties. We were enemies to God—hostile and rebellious (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21). God, in turn, was opposed to us in justice and wrath (Ephesians 2:3). His wrath remains on unbelievers (John 3:36), which proves that reconciliation has not been made in such cases. Complete reconciliation through Christ, then, must involve both turning away God's wrath and turning our hearts back to God.

And both of these are clearly said in Scripture to be effects of Christ's death.

1. First, Christ turned away the wrath of God from us. This is the reconciliation of God to us through Christ's death: "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10). That this refers to God's reconciliation to us—specifically, the turning away of His wrath—is obvious. It is presented as the main way in which God demonstrates His love to us, namely through the forgiveness of sins and the removal of His anger. This is further supported by the end of the same verse, which contrasts reconciliation with being saved from God's wrath—showing that God's wrath is removed in reconciliation. Also, verse 11 says that "we have received this reconciliation" (translated "atonement" in some versions), which cannot refer to our turning to God—since we are not said to *receive* our own conversion—but rather to God's turning to us, which we do receive through faith.

2. Second, Christ turns us away from our enmity toward God. He reconciles us by "the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20)—that is, He secures this reconciliation through His death, meriting it and

purchasing it for us. Then, by His Spirit, He actually brings it about in due time. Both aspects—God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God—are found together in 2 Corinthians 5:18–20. First, God is reconciled to us in Christ by not counting our sins against us (verses 18–19), which is the basis of the gospel message. Second, we are called to be reconciled to God (verse 20), which is the purpose of that message. Ephesians 2:13–15 teaches the same thing. So the full reconciliation Christ accomplished through His death includes both the turning away of God's wrath and the turning of our hearts to Him, both purchased at once ("simul et semel") by Christ, and applied in time through the gospel.

Scripture speaks plainly that this full reconciliation is the immediate result of Christ's death: "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10); "He has reconciled you in the body of His flesh through death" (Colossians 1:21–22). These verses make it undeniable that reconciliation is the direct effect of Christ's death.

Now, how can this doctrine of reconciliation be consistent with the idea of universal redemption? If reconciliation is the proper result of Christ's death—as all agree—then if He died for all people, several impossible things would follow:

- **First,** why is God not reconciled to all? Scripture teaches that His wrath remains on some (John 3:36), but reconciliation is the removal of wrath.

- **Second,** why are not all people reconciled to God? Yet by nature, we are all "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), and many spend their lives accumulating more wrath (Romans 2:5).

- **Third,** how can there be reconciliation between God and all people, if God is not reconciled to them, and they are not

reconciled to Him?

- **Fourth,** if God was reconciled to all by Christ's death, when did He become unreconciled to those who perish? What changed—His will or His nature?

- **Fifth,** if all were reconciled at the cross, how are people born still under God's wrath? When did they become unreconciled?

- **Sixth,** Scripture teaches that God's reconciliation consists in His no longer imputing sin (2 Corinthians 5:18–19), which is what justification means—and those to whom sin is not imputed are "blessed" (Romans 4:6–8). So if God is reconciled to all, why are not all justified and blessed?

The defenders of universal redemption must invent a kind of reconciliation where no one is actually reconciled—just as they teach a redemption where no one is actually redeemed. I leave them to answer these contradictions.

In conclusion:
The reconciliation brought about by Christ includes the full restoration of peace between God and man. It involves God's wrath being turned away, sins no longer being counted against us, and our own hearts being changed to love and obey God. This is the kind of reconciliation Christ accomplished by His death. Therefore, He cannot be said to have died for any except those in whom this reconciliation is truly and fully brought about. Whether that can be said of every person, let every person judge.

Book III. Chapter 7

On the Nature of the Satisfaction of Christ, and Arguments Drawn from It

Argument XIII. A third way the Bible describes the death of Christ for sinners is through the concept of **satisfaction**—that is, by His death, Christ satisfied God's justice for the sins of those for whom He died, so that they might go free. It's true, the specific term *satisfaction* doesn't appear in our English or Latin Bibles in reference to Christ's death. In fact, it's only used twice in the Old Testament (Numbers 35:31–32), and not at all in the New. However, the idea itself—the reality behind the word—is found everywhere in Scripture, attributed clearly and repeatedly to Christ's death. There are also many other biblical terms in the original languages that express this same concept.

Now, that Christ made satisfaction for sins—truly paying the debt owed—is widely accepted among professing Christians, except for the Socinians, who reject this doctrine (but they aren't our focus here). So let's first understand what satisfaction is, and then show how it directly contradicts the idea of universal redemption.

What Is Satisfaction?

The word *satisfaction* comes from legal language. Originally it applied to things—like payments—and then was extended to people. At its core, satisfaction is the full repayment of a debt. If someone owes a debt, then the person to whom the debt is owed is the *creditor*, and the one who owes it is the *debtor*. The debtor is under obligation until the debt is legally canceled—which happens only

when the creditor receives full compensation. That compensation is satisfaction. For example, if I owe someone £100, I remain obligated until that debt is fully paid and the bond is canceled.

This idea applies not only to money but also to personal offenses. If someone commits a wrong or an injury, that person becomes liable to punishment. The one wronged is, in a sense, the *creditor*, and justice requires that satisfaction be made—unless he chooses to forgive.

Now, satisfaction can happen in one of two ways:

1. **Exact Payment** – The debtor pays exactly what is required, either personally or through a substitute. For example, if I owe £20 and a friend pays it for me, the creditor is fully satisfied.

2. **Equivalent Payment** – The creditor accepts something else in place of the original debt, something of equal worth. The obligation is then canceled, not by necessity, but by the creditor's grace and acceptance of that substitute.

Applying This to Christ's Work

In the case of salvation, the satisfaction made by Christ is understood as follows:

- **First**, mankind is the debtor. We owe an incalculable spiritual debt—like the "ten thousand talents" of Matthew 18:24.

- **Second**, the debt itself is sin: "Forgive us our debts," Christ teaches us to pray (Matthew 6:12).

- **Third**, the payment required is death: “In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17); “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

- **Fourth**, the binding obligation—the thing that enforces the debt—is the law of God (Galatians 3:10; Deuteronomy 27:26), the justice of God (Romans 1:32), and the truth of God’s word (Genesis 3:3).

- **Fifth**, the *creditor* is God Himself—as the offended party, the righteous Judge, and the sovereign Lord of all.

- **Sixth**, the thing that breaks the obligation and sets us free is the ransom paid by Christ: “God set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Romans 3:25).

I won’t offer a lengthy discussion of the whole doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction, but I will explain enough to clarify its place in the issue at hand. Two key points must be made:

1. That Christ **actually made** this kind of satisfaction, and what it consists of.

2. What **response from God** toward sinners necessarily follows this satisfaction.

1. Christ Truly Made Satisfaction for Sin

As previously noted, the word *satisfaction* itself doesn’t appear in Scripture in this context—but the reality it refers to is found throughout. Satisfaction, in this sense, means that Christ fully bore the punishment our sins deserved, thus compensating God on our behalf. This is the kind of satisfaction required when sin is the debt.

That Christ did this is clear. Scripture says:

- "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).
- "He shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11).
- Verse 12 adds that he "bore the sin of many," using a Hebrew word that implies lifting and carrying away guilt—exactly what we mean by *satisfaction*.
- Peter uses a Greek equivalent that expresses the same idea: Christ bore our sins, meaning he took upon himself their punishment.

To bear sin in the Bible is always to undergo the punishment due to it (see Leviticus 5:1). This is what we mean by satisfaction. Isaiah 53:5 clarifies that this happened when Christ was "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities." That is, "the punishment that brought us peace was upon him." This *chastisement* cannot refer to correction or instruction—Christ needed no such discipline—but must refer to the punitive justice that our sins deserved. That's how our peace—our freedom from punishment—was secured.

2. Biblical Terms That Confirm This Meaning

The New Testament often uses words that show exactly what we mean by satisfaction. For example:

- Christ is said to have "offered himself" (Ephesians 5:2), just as the sacrificial system typified this (Hebrews 9:13–14). The same idea is captured in Isaiah 53:10 and Leviticus 7:2, where he is described as a *guilt offering* (Hebrew: *asham*).

- Paul says Christ was made “sin” for us (2 Corinthians 5:21)—that is, he took the punishment sin deserves.
- John calls him a “propitiation” (1 John 2:2), meaning one who turns away wrath through a sacrifice.
- In Genesis 31:39, the Hebrew word *chitte* is used for making restitution or covering a loss—again, the idea of bearing the debt.

All of these terms refer to the same thing: Christ took the full punishment due to our sins. He did this as a sacrifice that pleased God more than He was displeased by the sins for which Christ suffered. This is the very essence of satisfaction: God’s justice is not only met but more than met.

We can illustrate this with a human example: Imagine a group of rebels who have offended a good and just king. Justice demands their punishment. But the king’s son comes forward, offering to pay the penalty in their place. If the king accepts this, justice is fully satisfied, and the rebels are pardoned—not by mere mercy alone, but by justice satisfied through a worthy substitute.

This is what Christ did. He is the scapegoat—the *goat for Azazel*—who bore all the sins of God’s people, fell under their weight, and yet broke the bonds of death to rise again.

What Kind of Satisfaction Did Christ Make?

Recall that there are two kinds of satisfaction:

- **Exact payment (solutio ejusdem)** – paying precisely what was owed.

- **Accepted equivalent (solutio tantidem)** – paying something else of equivalent value, accepted by the creditor.

So which of these did Christ offer? That's the next question I will explore.

A well-known legal scholar, Grotius, widely respected for his expertise, argues that the payment Christ made for sin was *not* the exact thing required by divine justice—what we call *solutio ejusdem* (payment of the same thing in the obligation). Instead, he claims it was *solutio tantidem*—a different kind of payment accepted by God in place of what was due. He gives two main reasons:

1. **If Christ had made the exact payment (solutio ejusdem), then actual release from guilt would immediately follow** for all, since the obligation would be fully discharged.

2. **If that exact payment had been made**, there would be **no room for forgiveness**, because pardon would not be needed—justice would already be satisfied. But Grotius says Christ's payment was of a different kind, which God could either accept or not, and thus, if accepted, it would still count as an act of grace.

But these arguments aren't convincing.

Response to the First Objection

Grotius says that if Christ had truly paid the exact price of sin, then everyone he died for would immediately be released from their guilt. But that assumes something we don't grant—namely, that actual freedom must be instantaneously perceived or possessed. In truth,

Christ's death did *actually* deliver his people from the curse of the law:

- He set us free by becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13).
- He nailed the "record of debt" to the cross (Col. 2:14).
- We are said to have died and risen with him (Rom. 6:4–6).

The benefit is real and already secured for all the elect. The only reason they don't experience it immediately is that they haven't yet received the knowledge of it. Like a prisoner in a foreign land, whose ransom has been paid—he's legally free, but won't experience that freedom until the news reaches him and the official release is issued.

Response to the Second Objection

Grotius also claims that if Christ made full satisfaction, then there's no need for pardon or grace. But this misunderstands the nature of God's grace in the gospel.

Grace isn't opposed to *Christ's* merit—it's opposed to *ours*. Everything in salvation is still of grace, because:

1. **The Father freely willed** that Christ should offer himself (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9).
2. **God graciously accepted Christ's satisfaction** on our behalf.
3. **The application of Christ's work to us is also by grace**, through faith.

In other words, God's pardon doesn't contradict Christ's full satisfaction—it flows from it. God did not withhold any part of the debt from Christ—he did not "spare his own Son" (Rom. 8:32). So the pardon we receive is not because the debt was waived, but because it was *fully paid*—just not by us.

Forgiveness, then, doesn't require a lesser satisfaction, but only that the satisfaction be made by another. That's exactly what Christ did. He removed the curse by being made a curse (Gal. 3:13). He dealt with sin by becoming sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He endured death so we could be delivered from it. The curse of the law was our debt—Christ took the entire burden of that curse.

We find no biblical mention of God simply "relaxing" the punishment due to sin—only of him transferring it to Christ. This substitution is clearly stated: "God condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). In other words, God punished sin in the human nature of his own Son, who stood in our place.

This was a real satisfaction, a true reparation of the dishonor done to God by our sin. His justice, offended by sin, was fully vindicated by Christ's death (Rom. 3:25–26). His law, broken by us, was fulfilled by Christ, "the end of the law for righteousness" (Rom. 10:4). Our disobedience provoked God; Christ's perfect obedience delighted him (Rom. 5:17; Matt. 3:17).

Summary

Christ's satisfaction was a **real and full compensation** to God's justice for all the sins of all those he represented. He bore the very punishment they were obligated to bear—equal in weight and

severity, though not in duration (for he could not be held by death permanently).

Now the pressing question is this: *Can it be just for any of those for whom Christ made this complete satisfaction to perish eternally?* That's what we must examine next.

The Second Aspect of Satisfaction: God's Role and Actions

Now we must consider what **God** actually does—either toward us or toward Christ—in the work of satisfaction. It is universally agreed that **God is the one offended by our sin**. Sin violates his law, dishonors his name, and casts shame on his glory. As God says in Malachi 1:6, *"If I am a father, where is my honor?"* The law of nature and justice demands that the one who is offended must be repaid or satisfied when wronged by another.

God, then, must be seen in two distinct roles:

1. **In relation to us**, he is our **creditor**. We are all debtors, owing him the "ten thousand talents" (Matt. 18:24). Christ teaches us to call our sins "debts" (Matt. 6:12), and God requires this debt to be paid in full.

2. **In relation to Christ**, God is the **supreme Lawgiver and Judge**, who laid our punishment upon his Son. He transferred our guilt to Christ, requiring from him the payment due for our sin. As Lord of life and death (James 4:12), God alone had the authority to insert Christ, the surety, into the place of sinners and to exact from him the full penalty of the law.

From this, we must observe two critical actions of God in Christ's satisfaction:

1. God's Act of Justice

God, acting as a just creditor, demanded the full debt be paid. In the case of sin, this meant full punishment. Christ bore that punishment, satisfying God's justice by restoring what had been violated.

Now, in strict terms, **a creditor doesn't "punish"**—justice punishes, and the state upholds justice for the good of society. But in this case, the **punishment also served as a price**, a ransom, and so it must be "paid" to someone—and that someone was **God**. Therefore, Christ is said to have come to do the will of the Father (Heb. 10:9), to satisfy God (John 6:38). So the punishment Christ bore is rightly viewed as a payment to God's justice.

2. God's Act of Sovereignty

God also acted **as sovereign Lord**, transferring the penalty due to sinners onto the surety he himself appointed. Out of sheer grace, he did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all (Rom. 8:32). In this, God used his sovereign right to substitute Christ in our place, and to accept his suffering as full satisfaction for the law's demands.

Some have argued that **God cannot, as creditor or sovereign**, rightly demand punishment. A prominent legal scholar made this argument, saying:

> "The right to punish belongs to the lawgiver or ruler, and that right exists not for his own sake, but for the good of the

> community. But the rights of a creditor or a sovereign are for their own benefit—so they cannot be the basis of punishment."

But this argument fails when applied to God.

First, **nothing God does is for the good of others in a way that undermines his own glory**. God is all-sufficient (autarkeia), and nothing he does is ultimately for the sake of creatures, but rather for the display of his own honor. Even what benefits his people does so only as it serves the greater purpose of glorifying himself.

So when someone says that punishment exists "for the good of the community," we answer: the **highest good of the universe** *is* the **glory of God**. The "community" benefits when God's justice is upheld—and God himself is the one glorified in that justice. Therefore, the supposed distinction collapses when applied to God.

Secondly, the scholar argues:

> "Punishment is not desirable in itself, but only for the sake of the public good. But the rights of a sovereign or creditor are desirable in themselves."

But again, this logic fails. While punishment isn't *pleasant* in itself, it is *desirable* and *right* in God's eyes when it upholds his righteousness. The real point is not whether punishment is intrinsically pleasing, but whether it is just—and God's justice is never separated from his glory.

Answering Grotius's Objections About God's Justice and Dominion

Let us now examine and respond to Grotius's reasoning that seeks to deny that God punishes sin as a creditor or in the exercise of supreme dominion. His arguments are subtle but not sound.

Objection 1: The Comparison Is Misplaced

Grotius argues that punishment and dominion cannot be equated, because punishment is not inherently desirable, while dominion is.

Answer:

1. **The comparison is faulty.** It is not fair to compare *punishment itself* with *the right of dominion*. The proper comparison is between the *right to punish* and the *right of dominion*—both of which concern authority and obligation. To compare the act of punishment with the possession of dominion is to confuse categories.

2. **God desires nothing for any reason outside of himself.** For God to desire some good apart from himself would be an intolerable notion. Every good is desirable to God only as it serves his own glory. So, if punishment serves to display God's justice and holiness, then it is, in that sense, desirable.

3. **Some acts of dominion are themselves no more desirable than punishment.** For example, annihilating an innocent creature—something Grotius himself admits God could do—is hardly "desirable" in and of itself. So his distinction proves nothing.

Objection 2: God Must Punish Some Sins and Therefore Cannot Forgo His Right

Grotius says God cannot “let go” of punishing some sins, as he must punish the impenitent.

Answer:

1. **God can forgo punishment without injustice** by his sovereign will. The same God who imputed sin to Christ (where there was none) and punished him, can also choose not to impute sin where it does exist. Both acts rest on his will. If God can punish the innocent in our place, he can certainly choose not to punish the guilty when the guilt is already borne by another.

2. **Justice does not compel God apart from his will.** God's obligation to punish sin arises not from any necessity in nature but from his own free decree to do so. If he wills to remit punishment, that is not injustice.

Objection 3: Punishment Is Praised as an Act of Justice, Not Dominion

Grotius argues that because Scripture calls God “just” in punishing sin (Rev. 16:5), and not simply exercising his own rights, punishment must not arise from dominion or creditorship.

Answer:

1. **With God, justice and dominion are inseparable.** God's will is the very standard of justice. So when he punishes sin or exercises his rights, it is *just* because he wills it. His actions cannot be judged by human standards of dominion or obligation.

2. **We do not argue that punishment is an act of dominion alone.** Rather, it is an act of justice in exacting a debt. But placing Christ in the debtor's place *was* an act of dominion—God's sovereign will assigned him to bear the debt.

Objection 4: Forgiveness Is an Act of Clemency, Not Creditorship

Finally, Grotius claims that to forgive is to be *merciful*, while to waive a debt is to be *liberal*. Therefore, punishment can't be the exacting of a debt, but something else.

Answer:
Grotius confuses categories. The act of *not exacting payment* can be motivated by various virtues, depending on the case. For example, if someone has injured my reputation, and I have a moral right to demand reparation, but I don't—that's not "liberality" (as if I were giving away money). That might be *clemency*, or something else entirely—perhaps an act of gospel grace for which moral philosophy has no proper category. So when God chooses not to punish a sinner, it may indeed be a gracious act—but that does not undermine his justice when he does exact payment from a surety, namely Christ.

The Sovereignty of God in Requiring Satisfaction

The second central point in the satisfaction of Christ is this: **God, in the exercise of supreme authority and dominion, required the punishment of Christ** to fully meet the demands of the law and satisfy the obligation that stood against us. This is clearly taught in Romans 8:3 and 10:4.

Natural Consequences of This Doctrine

From the truth of Christ's satisfaction, several necessary consequences follow:

1. **The entire debt of all those for whom Christ stood as surety has been fully paid**—completely and precisely, according to every demand of God's justice.

2. **God, being a just creditor, is bound in righteousness to cancel the debt** and cease all legal action or condemnation against those whose debts have been paid.

3. **The payment Christ made was not partial or selective—it covered all the sins** of those for whom he died, as taught in 1 John 1:7.

4. **To demand a second payment from anyone whose debt has already been fully paid is unjust** and inconsistent with the justice God displayed when he set forth Christ as a propitiation, Romans 3:25.

5. **Just as a debtor is owed a release from further claims once full payment is made**, so too God—having accepted Christ's satisfaction on behalf of the elect—**must, by his own gracious promise, issue a discharge to all for whom Christ died**.

6. **Because the law's penalty has been fully executed upon Christ**, it can no longer bring condemnation against those for whom he died. It is as if they themselves had perfectly obeyed the law in every respect (Romans 8:32–34).

The Inconsistency of Universal Redemption

Now consider how this view of satisfaction undermines any claim that Christ died for all people without exception:

- **If Christ fully paid the debt for all people**, why do so many remain eternally imprisoned under God's judgment? If the price was paid in full, why no release?

- **If God is a just creditor**, why does he still pursue and pour out wrath on those whose debt has been paid? The claim that it's because they don't "walk worthy" is no answer, since that very failure is part of the debt Christ bore.

- **Would God demand a second payment** from sinners for whom he already received full and sufficient satisfaction in Christ? Would he call in the debt again, as though he forgot it was already paid? This is unthinkable, especially in light of Romans 8:32: "He did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

- **Why are multitudes never given a discharge or pardon**, even though Christ supposedly paid their debt?

- **Why do some souls live and die under the condemning power of the law**, as if nothing had been done on their behalf, if Christ satisfied the law for them as completely as if they had obeyed it themselves?

Let others try to solve these contradictions—**I cannot**. The feeble distinctions offered by universalists to explain this have already been

refuted.

And so, we conclude this chapter: **The satisfaction of Christ, rightly understood, is completely incompatible with the idea of a universal redemption**. Christ's death was a true and just satisfaction made to God for specific persons—the elect—and not for all indiscriminately.

Book III, Chapter 8

A Digression: A Discussion on Christ's Satisfaction

While I was working on the previous chapter about Christ's satisfaction, a man (whose name I will withhold out of respect for his character and humility) came to the place where I live. In a private address on Christ's sufferings, he presented ideas that seemed to undermine—or even deny—Christ's satisfaction. Concerned about the dangerous implications, I responded publicly to clarify the truth. Later, at his request, we had a respectful and thoughtful debate on the subject.

During that conversation, it became clear to me what he believed and where his misunderstanding lay. His error stemmed from this idea: that God's eternal and unchanging love for the elect places them in such a secure condition that they cannot be said to need satisfaction. Since the purpose of satisfaction is to remove wrath and make atonement for sin, and God has always been pleased with his elect, then—so the argument goes—they have no need of satisfaction.

Instead, what they need is a clearer understanding of that love to relieve the guilt and fear brought about by Adam's fall and their own lack of assurance.

In this view, Christ came not to satisfy God's justice but simply to reveal God's eternal love—to take away our sins by removing the misunderstanding and fear that clouded our consciences. In short, this position turns **election** into a denial of **redemption**.

How our debate ended is for the judgment of those who heard it, as it was intended for their benefit. But because the issue is weighty—blending truth with serious error, affirming some necessary doctrines while denying others—I believe it's worth summarizing and correcting here. I'll begin with the doctrine of God's eternal love for the elect and what it actually implies.

Clarifying the Eternal Love of God

1. This is not a new teaching—but an old objection.
What is now presented by some as a "fresh insight" into God's grace is actually a recycled error. The idea that election makes satisfaction unnecessary was raised long ago by the Pelagians against Augustine. Calvin answered the same objection in his *Institutes* (Book 2, Chapter 16), and even the medieval scholastics dealt with it (see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, III, Q. 49, A. 4). Despite its obvious flaws, this argument was revived by the Arminians at the Synod of Dort as a key objection to Christ's definite redemption of the elect. Now, some today are not merely raising it as a challenge—but embracing it as truth. In their hands, the logic becomes this: if election is true, then satisfaction is unnecessary.

2. Election and reprobation stand or fall together.
If God's decree of election means the elect are already justified and saved, needing only a clearer awareness of that fact, then the same must be said of the reprobate: that they are already damned, only waiting for it to be revealed. But that contradicts everything we see in God's dealings with mankind. The elect are not saved until they believe (John 3:18), and the reprobate are not damned apart from sin and unbelief (2 Thess. 2:10–12).

3. God's eternal love is not a changeable emotion.
God's love is not a fluctuating passion like human affection. He is unchanging in his essence (James 1:17). His eternal love is not an emotional reaction but an act of his sovereign will. Scripture calls it his "good pleasure" (Matt. 11:26), his "purpose according to election" (Rom. 9:11), and "the foundation of God" (2 Tim. 2:19).

This eternal purpose of God **does not itself change anything in the creature**. It is an inward act of God's will, not an outward action. It doesn't create actual justification or salvation until God works outwardly by his Spirit to bring it about.

Take this example: God eternally purposed to create the world, but the world did not exist until he actually made it. Similarly, he has purposed a day of judgment—but that day has not yet come. In the same way, though he has eternally purposed to justify certain individuals through Christ, they are not justified until he brings them to faith.

So yes, God has eternally loved his elect. But this love does not mean they were eternally justified. Rather, they are brought to justification in time, by the Spirit applying Christ's satisfaction to them.

First, God's eternal love for his elect is nothing other than his sovereign purpose—his good pleasure—an eternal act of his will. It is his determination to do certain things for them in his appointed time and manner.

Second, no purpose or eternal decree of God in itself brings about any outward effect. It does not change the nature or condition of the person or thing concerned. What it does is make the eventual outcome certain, but it does not create any present change until God acts to carry out that purpose.

Third, when Scripture speaks of God's wrath or anger against sinners, it doesn't mean that God experiences emotional agitation like we do. Rather, it refers to the actual consequences and judgments that follow from sin—guilt, bondage, condemnation, and so forth.

Fourth, even though God has eternally purposed to save the elect, that eternal purpose does not automatically remove them from their fallen state. Until God takes some decisive action in time—some gracious intervention—they remain under wrath and judgment just like all others.

To illustrate this: God holds all humanity in his hand, like clay in the hands of a potter. He determines to make some into vessels of honor for the praise of his grace, and others into vessels of dishonor to reveal his justice. He allows them all to fall into sin and guilt, so that by nature, all are liable to wrath and condemnation. His purpose to save some does not, in and of itself, change their fallen condition. That purpose must be acted upon by some distinct work of grace—some historical, temporal act—that draws them to himself.

This point can be further clarified with a few arguments:

1. If all that sinners need is a better understanding of God's eternal love, then justification becomes nothing more than realizing that God has chosen them.

But that's not what Scripture teaches. Justification is not simply God revealing his election. Nor is it merely our realization that God loves us. There is no biblical support for the idea that God's act of justifying a sinner is the same as him disclosing his eternal purpose.

It's true that believers can and do gain assurance of God's eternal love, as in Romans 5:5—"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us"—but that happens **after** they have been "justified by faith" and have "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1). In 2 Peter 1:10, we are told to make our calling and election **sure**, not that we are justified **by** it.

In Scripture, justification is God's legal declaration that an ungodly person, upon believing in Christ, is absolved from guilt and accounted righteous through Christ's perfect obedience. God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), by granting them Christ's righteousness (Rom. 3:22). Nowhere does Scripture define justification as simply the manifestation of God's eternal purpose.

2. Scripture clearly teaches that all people, before they are reconciled to God, are in the same fallen condition.

Until God's grace makes a distinction, all are equally lost. "There is none who does good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12). Jews and Gentiles

alike are “under sin” (v.9). All the world is “guilty before God” (v.19), liable to judgment.

Even those who later believe and are saved are, by nature, “children of wrath, just like the rest of mankind” (Eph. 2:3). What makes the difference is not God’s eternal decree in itself, but his actual, in-time work of grace in the sinner’s life.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “What do you have that you did not receive?” That’s because all distinguishing grace is the result of God’s action, not our condition.

So, here’s the question: Do those who are reprobate lie under God’s wrath while they are in sin? Of course they do.

But what about the elect—do they lie under wrath while still unconverted? If not, what real, actual difference exists between them and the reprobate while they’re in the same sinful state?

There is none—until grace makes the difference.

So then, if the wrath of God abides on the one, it must also abide on the other, **until** God in time brings about the effect of his eternal purpose.

Unless someone can point to a real and present difference between the elect and the reprobate **while still in unbelief**, the argument falls apart.

3. Answering the Error That the Elect Are Never Under Wrath

Let’s consider what it means, according to Scripture, to be under the effects of God’s wrath—and then ask whether the elect are truly

delivered from this condition before they are actually called to Christ.

The Bible describes this condition in several ways:

1. **Alienation from God**—So much so that even their religious acts are offensive to him: *"The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord"* (Prov. 28:9).

2. **Unsanctified Enjoyments**—They cannot enjoy any blessing in a holy way. *"To the defiled, nothing is pure"* (Titus 1:15).

3. **Dominion of Satan**—They are under Satan's power. *"The spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience"* (Eph. 2:2).

4. **Bondage to Death**—They live in fear and slavery. *"Through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery"* (Heb. 2:15).

5. **Under the Curse of the Law**—They bear its condemning power (Gal. 3:13).

6. **Liable to Judgment**—They are guilty and deserving of eternal condemnation (Rom. 3:19).

7. **Slaves to Sin**—They live under its rule (Rom. 6:19).

All these are the effects of God's wrath.

Now, tell me: What more do the reprobate suffer in this life than these things? Are not the elect themselves in this exact condition—until they are actually reconciled to God in Christ?

Let's walk through this:

- Are their prayers acceptable to God? No. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). But if they had faith, they

would already be reconciled.

- Are their daily blessings sanctified to them? No. Without faith, nothing is sanctified (1 Cor. 7:14).
- Are they free from Satan's power? No. If they were, there would be no need for Christ to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). But he came to do just that (Heb. 2:14).
- Are they free from bondage to death? No. Until they are redeemed, they live in fear and servitude to death (Heb. 2:15).
- Are they not under the law's curse? Paul tells us they are, and Christ became a curse for them to redeem them from it (Gal. 3:13).
- Are they not under judgment? Paul says *"all the world is guilty before God"* (Rom. 3:19), and that Christ came to save us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10).
- Are they not slaves to sin? Paul thanks God that his readers were once slaves to sin until they obeyed the gospel (Rom. 6:17).

In short, Scripture overwhelmingly teaches that the elect remain under the guilt and misery of sin, like all others, until Christ sets them free.

Now, some try to escape this conclusion by saying that all of this is true only in their own **perception**—that the elect merely *feel* as if they are under wrath, but in reality they are not.

But if this is only perception, why does the Bible speak in the same terms of **all people**, with no distinction between elect and reprobate in their natural state? If it's all just a misapprehension, then let's fix

the whole world by changing their perception—and just tell them sin is imaginary, the Bible is a scare tactic, and God's judgment is just a myth. That would be nonsense. Such teaching eats away at truth like a cancer.

4. Let me add one more Scripture, though many could be given:

"Whoever does not believe the Son, the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36).

Notice: it *remains*. It doesn't just come upon them; it is already there and continues, unless and until they believe. But once they believe, it is removed.

Now, someone might ask, "Isn't it God's love that frees us from his wrath?" Yes, of course. But does that mean we are already free just because God *intends* to free us?

Is an apprentice a free man simply because his freedom is promised at the end of seven years? Just because God has purposed to deliver his elect in due time, does that mean they are already free before he actually does it?

"But aren't we in Christ from eternity?" Yes, in a sense—we were *chosen* in Christ from eternity (Eph. 1:4). But how? Not actually, but by God's purpose. Are we eternal? No—we were not yet born. Our eternal election does not mean we were already justified or reconciled before we existed. Just as we are not actually eternal beings, so we are not actually in Christ until we are united to him in time.

So to conclude: it is absurd to argue that because God has eternally elected someone, that person never truly stood in need of Christ's atonement. Such reasoning undermines the very foundation of the gospel.

In fact, the truth is the opposite: God's purpose to save sinners is what *requires* Christ's satisfaction. Election doesn't eliminate the need for redemption—it *guarantees* it. God not only chose the people, but also ordained the **means**: Christ's sacrifice. *"It pleased the Lord to crush him… and the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand"* (Isa. 53:10).

So, while the argument from election to deny the need for Christ's satisfaction is deeply flawed, the reverse argument holds firm: If God has purposed to save sinners, then he has purposed that Christ must satisfy justice on their behalf. This eternal decree encompasses both the **people** to be saved and the **Savior** who would save them.

Book III, Chapter 9

Continuing the Former Digression: Arguments to Prove the Satisfaction of Christ

I will now present several tightly reasoned arguments defending the truth that Jesus Christ made full satisfaction to God's justice on behalf of sinners. Here is the first:

Argument 1: Christ Bore Our Sins and Their Punishment in Our Place

If Christ truly took upon himself our sins—sins that God laid upon him—and bore the punishment they deserved in our place,
then he made satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf so that we might go free.

But Christ did indeed do this.
Therefore, he made full satisfaction for our sins.

Let's break this down into three parts to prove it clearly:

1. Christ Took and Bore Our Sins

Scripture repeatedly affirms this:

- *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29).
- *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree"* (1 Pet. 2:24).
- *"He shall bear their iniquities"* (Isa. 53:11).
- *"He bore the sin of many"* (Isa. 53:12).

And again, the Bible teaches that **God** laid our sins upon Christ:

- *"The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:6).
- *"He made him to be sin for us"* (2 Cor. 5:21).

2. Christ Bore the Full Punishment for Our Sins

What punishment did our sins deserve? The answer is clear:

- The curse of the law (Deut. 27:26).
- Death itself (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23).
  These include all forms of divine punishment.

Christ endured both of these:

- *"By the grace of God, he tasted death for everyone"* (Heb. 2:9).
- *"God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all"* (Rom. 8:32).
- *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us"* (Gal. 3:13).
- *"It pleased the Lord to bruise him"* (Isa. 53:10).
- *"He condemned sin in his flesh"* (Rom. 8:3).

3. Christ Suffered in Our Place (Substitution)

This is also plainly taught:

- *"The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28).
  The word **anti** ("for") in Greek always implies a substitution—one thing in place of another.
- *"Christ suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous"* (1 Pet. 3:18).

- *“I paid what I did not steal”* (Ps. 69:4) — a prophetic reference to Christ paying our debt.

And Romans 8:34 affirms that because Christ died in our place, we are no longer condemned.

Conclusion:
Christ bore our sins. He endured the punishment they deserved. He did it all as our substitute.
Therefore, he truly satisfied God’s justice for those sins.

Argument 2: Christ Paid a Ransom as Our Surety

If Christ, as our substitute, paid a full and sufficient price to the Father for our sins,
then he made satisfaction to God's justice and bore the punishment we deserved.
But he did pay such a ransom.
Therefore, the conclusion follows.

There are four elements to prove here:

1. Christ Paid a Ransom

Jesus said this explicitly:

- *“The Son of Man came… to give his life as a ransom (lutron) for many”* (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

- Paul calls it an **antilutron**—a ransom “in the place of” others (1 Tim. 2:6).

- *"We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 3:24).
- *"You are bought with a price"* (1 Cor. 6:20)—a price which is his **blood** (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

2. The Ransom Was Paid to the Father

A ransom must be paid to someone. It's blasphemous to say it was paid to Satan—he is not owed anything, but defeated.

Rather, Scripture clearly teaches that God is the one whose justice must be satisfied:

- *"The wrath of God remains on him"* (John 3:36).
- *"God has shut up all under sin"* (Gal. 3:22).
- *"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who settled accounts with his servants"* (Matt. 18:23–35).
- God is the "lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12).

Also, Christ's death is described as a **sacrifice** and **offering** (Eph. 5:2; Isa. 53:10). But sacrifices are always directed to God. So, the ransom price was offered to the Father.

3. Christ Paid This as Our Surety

This is clear:

- *"Jesus was made the surety (guarantor) of a better covenant"* (Heb. 7:22).

- *“I paid what I did not steal”* (Ps. 69:4) — pointing to Christ satisfying a debt that was ours, not his.

4. He Did It to Set Us Free

This follows from the nature of ransom. He paid the price in our place **so we could go free**.

III. Atonement and Reconciliation Require Satisfaction

If Christ, by his death, made atonement for sin and reconciled God to sinners,
then he made satisfaction to God’s justice.
But Christ did, in fact, make such atonement and reconciliation.
Therefore, he made satisfaction to God’s justice.

This is straightforward. The very meaning of atonement (propitiation) and reconciliation implies a satisfaction of divine justice. Paul says we are *“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood”* (Rom. 3:24–25). The Greek word here, *hilastērion*, refers to the atoning mercy seat—the place where God's wrath is turned away.

So also, Hebrews 2:17 says that Christ was made a *“merciful and faithful high priest… to make propitiation (atonement) for the sins of the people.”* This reconciliation is not merely us being changed, but God being appeased—his wrath removed, peace restored. Romans 5:11 confirms this when it says, *“We have received*

reconciliation" (Greek: *katallagē*, sometimes translated "atonement").

And this is all said to be accomplished by one righteous act—Christ's satisfaction—not our obedience or faith, but his death (Rom. 5:18). Without this, we could never be freed from sin's penalty, as Romans 8:3 explains.

IV. Christ's Priesthood on Earth Involved Satisfaction

If Christ's priestly work on earth consisted of bearing sin's punishment, making atonement, and reconciling God to sinners by satisfying divine justice,
then these things cannot be denied without falling into serious, even damnable error.
But this was, in fact, the nature of his priestly work.
Therefore, to deny these truths is a grave theological error.

This is demonstrated:

1. **From Old Testament Types**: All the Levitical sacrifices were designed to show that sin requires atonement through a substitutionary offering. Christ fulfilled and surpassed these types.

2. **From the Nature of the Priesthood**: A priest offers sacrifice. Christ, as high priest, had only one offering—his own blood. *"He offered himself without blemish to God"* (Heb. 9:14).

3. **From Scripture Itself**: Hebrews 10:10–12 makes it clear: *"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus*

Christ once for all." No further sacrifice is needed.

Christ Bore the Wrath of God

Some question whether Christ actually bore the wrath of God in his death. But Scripture and reason confirm it:

1. Punishment for Sin Is God's Wrath

- *"The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness"* (Rom. 1:18).
- *"Children of wrath"* (Eph. 2:3).
- *"The wrath of God remains on him who does not believe"* (John 3:36).

But Jesus bore that punishment:

- *"He was made sin for us"* (2 Cor. 5:21).
- *"The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:6).
- *"He bore our sins in his body on the tree"* (1 Pet. 2:24).
  Therefore, he endured God's wrath.

2. The Curse of the Law Is God's Wrath

The law brings a curse on all who break it (Deut. 27:26).
But *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us"* (Gal. 3:13).
This curse is not abstract—it is the wrath of God falling on

lawbreakers.
Christ endured it in our place.

3. Christ Died the Death That Sinners Deserve

Sinners deserve death because of sin. Christ *tasted that death* as our substitute:

- He is our **surety** (Heb. 7:22).
- He gave his life as a **ransom for many** (Matt. 20:28).
- He experienced fear (Heb. 5:7), agony (Luke 22:44), distress (Mark 14:33), abandonment (Matt. 27:46), sorrow and heaviness (Matt. 26:37–39).

These are not merely human emotions; they reflect the weight of divine judgment and curse pressing upon his soul. He stood in our place, and he bore the wrath we deserved.

V. Denying Christ's Satisfaction Destroys Gospel Faith and Comfort

Any teaching that undermines gospel faith and removes the foundation of our deepest comfort cannot be true, nor can it be in harmony with the gospel. But this is precisely what happens when people deny that Jesus Christ satisfied divine justice and bore the wrath of his Father in our place.

Let me explain.

Imagine the soul under conviction—awakened to its guilt, and stripped of self-righteousness. It begins looking for refuge, scanning heaven and earth for a place to rest. But all it sees is a storm of divine wrath—a flood of judgment pouring down from heaven upon all ungodliness. There's no place for the soul to land, no peace to be found. It cannot soar up to heaven by its own strength, and it dreads to fall into the abyss of hell.

In that moment of desperation, if Jesus Christ does not appear as the ark—floating above the floodwaters, having borne their full force—what hope is left? There is none.

During the great flood, many mountains towered high above the land. They looked secure. But when the waters came, they were swallowed. Only one vessel rose above the flood: the ark. So too, in spiritual things, many imagine they are safe atop the high hills of self-righteousness or vague notions of God's mercy. But when God's wrath truly falls, those false refuges are overwhelmed. Only Jesus Christ—upon whom the flood of wrath truly fell—remains secure above it all. Only those who are in him are safe.

Let me ask you this, dear soul—especially if you've ever been tossed about by fears of God's wrath—where did your heart finally find rest? Was it not here: that *God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all* (Rom. 8:32)? That *he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us* (2 Cor. 5:21)? That all the sins of the elect were poured into the cup that Jesus drank? That the wrath you feared was poured out on him—and now he has risen above it like Noah's ark, offering safety to all who come into him?

Wasn't that your one place of peace?

The storm fell on him so that you could rest. Like those inside the ark stayed dry while the ark bore the storm, you are safe because Christ bore the judgment in your place. If not for this truth—or something like it—you have built on a shaky foundation.

So I ask: what would it mean for someone to strip away this ark from under your feet? To tear away Christ's satisfaction and hand you some soggy piece of driftwood—some old, rotten idea of works or generic mercy—to float upon while the judgment of God surges all around?

It's too late for such lies. God's Word and your own conscience have already told you the truth: *"The wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). Wherever sin is found, someone must die for it. And if it was not Christ, it must be you.

So, let me be plain: **if Jesus did not satisfy God's justice, then we must. If he did not bear wrath, we will—forever.** Take this doctrine from me, and you take away my only hope. You rob me of my only pearl.

Denying Christ's satisfaction is not just a theological error—it *destroys* the very foundation of faith and comfort.

VI. Christ's Suffering as Our Substitute: Scripture Affirms His Satisfaction

Let me offer one final argument in defense of Christ's satisfaction, drawn from several key passages of Scripture. These are a few among many, but they are sufficient.

“He made him to be sin for us” — 2 Corinthians 5:21

Paul writes, *“He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.”* What does this mean?

It can’t mean that God made Christ a sinner in himself—perish the thought. Scripture affirms repeatedly that he was *“a Lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Pet. 1:19), that he *“did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth”* (1 Pet. 2:22). So what does it mean?

It means this: by divine arrangement and Christ’s own willing consent, God laid on him the guilt of all the sins of the elect. Though Christ never committed a single sin, he stood in our place—our substitute, our surety. As a surety bears the whole debt of another, so Christ bore ours. And when God’s justice required payment, Christ was “sued,” so to speak, and executed the full payment in our stead. He was treated as if our sins were truly his.

You might object: *“But wasn’t the Father always pleased with the Son? How could he pour out wrath on him?”* Yes—he was always infinitely pleased with the Son’s perfect obedience, holiness, and righteousness. But he was not pleased with the sins that Christ bore. Isaiah says, *“It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief”* (Isa. 53:10). The Son was pleasing in himself, but our sin was not—and when that sin was laid upon Christ, justice demanded punishment.

Some may say, *“But the elect never really lay under wrath, so how could Christ bear it for them?”* That’s simply not true.

First, Christ bore not only the wrath that the elect actually experienced (which is none, thanks to him), but also the wrath they *would have experienced* had he not intervened. He delivered them from *"the wrath to come"* (1 Thess. 1:10).

Second, before they come to Christ, the elect are under wrath in terms of guilt and desert—even if they never endure the punishment. The debt is real, though the payment is remitted.

So the conclusion holds: *"He was made sin for us, who knew no sin."*

"He was wounded for our transgressions" — Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah writes, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."*

Here we see clearly the principle of substitution.

- *"The chastisement of our peace was upon him"*—He was punished so that we could have peace.
- *"He was bruised for our iniquities"*—Our sins were the cause of his suffering.
- *"All we like sheep have gone astray… and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* (Isa. 53:6)

Peter interprets this plainly: *"He bore our sins in his own body on the tree"* (1 Pet. 2:24). Not by simply *declaring* we were sinless, as some say, but by actually *bearing the punishment due to our sin*. He carried the curse, the death, the divine wrath we deserved.

To interpret “bearing sin” as meaning “revealing we were always righteous” is not just a mistake—it’s a corruption of God’s Word. Everywhere in Scripture, to “bear sin” means to suffer the punishment due to it (cf. Lev. 5:1). That is what Christ did.

Any theology that tries to explain this away is nothing more than a clever trick—*“a cunning gamester,”* —trying to cheat the believer of their only true foundation.

Conclusion of the Digression

Though I could multiply texts and arguments, I have pressed the point far enough for a mere digression. I won’t attempt now a full response to every objection—though I’m aware of those raised in the debate that sparked this discussion. They were so weak and ineffective that I fear repeating them might lead some to suspect I invented straw men just to defeat them easily.

But let me say this: those who deny the satisfaction of Christ are striking at the very heart of the gospel. They are not merely rearranging doctrines—they are removing the only shelter we have from the wrath to come.

Without Christ as our substitute, bearing our sin, suffering our penalty, and drinking the cup of wrath for us, there is no peace, no pardon, and no gospel.

Book III, Chapter 10:

Christ's Merit—Its Nature and Implications

Argument XIV

The fourth truth the Bible ascribes to Christ's death is this: **merit**—the infinite worth of his obedience and suffering, by which he earned and secured every saving blessing for all those for whom he died.

Though the word "merit" isn't used in the New Testament (at least not in any Greek manuscript or faithful translation), the *reality* it describes is found everywhere. Roman Catholics sometimes point to Hebrews 13:16 in the Latin Vulgate, where the word *promeretur* appears, but even there it's an awkward and inaccurate rendering of the original word (*euaresteo*), which simply means "pleasing." In fact, no word in either biblical language directly means "merit" in its native, legal sense. But the *concept* is unmistakably biblical.

For example:

- **Isaiah 53:5**: *"The chastisement that brought us peace was upon him, and with his wounds we are healed."*
  His suffering accomplished, or merited, our peace and healing.

- **Hebrews 9:12**: *"By his own blood he obtained eternal redemption."*
  That word "obtained" (*heuramenos*) points to a purchase—something earned and secured.

- **Acts 20:28**: *"He purchased the church of God with his own blood."*
  That language of *purchase* is the heart of what we mean by

"merit." Christ's death didn't just make salvation possible—it acquired it.

These ideas—merit, purchase, impetration (securing a benefit)—are interchangeable in this context. Romans 4:4 gives the clearest definition: *"To the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due."* In other words, merit is the accomplishment of a work that obligates a reward according to justice.

Now, virtually all Christians (except perhaps the Socinians) affirm that Christ's death accomplished something real and definite—that it purchased salvation for sinners. So we may safely treat this principle as settled.

What Did Christ Merit?

Christ, by his death, merited **every spiritual blessing** for those he died to redeem. We can group these blessings under two headings: what he delivered us *from*, and what he secured *for* us.

I. What He Delivered Us From (Privative Blessings)

1. **The hand of our enemies** – Luke 1:74
2. **The wrath to come** – 1 Thess. 1:10
3. **The power of death** – Heb. 2:14
4. **The works of the devil** – 1 John 3:8
5. **The curse of the law** – Gal. 3:13
6. **Our vain way of life** – 1 Pet. 1:18

7. **The present evil age** – Gal. 1:4
8. **This world and its condemnation** – Rev. 14:3–4
9. **The guilt of our sins** – Heb. 1:3

II. What He Secured For Us (Positive Blessings)

1. **Reconciliation with God** – Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16
2. **Propitiation and peace** – Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2
3. **Salvation itself** – Matt. 1:21
4. **Adoption, sanctification, eternal life**, and every grace, as summarized in Ephesians 1:3–4 and Philippians 1:29

All of this Christ purchased for those for whom he died. And because he merited it by his obedience and blood, God is not merely free to give these blessings—he is **justly bound** to do so.

It was pure grace that moved God to send his Son. It was pure grace that determined whom he would save. And it is pure grace that applies salvation to any of us. But—here's the key—**once God appointed Christ to merit these things for a specific people**, and **once Christ fulfilled that work**, then God, in his justice, must give what Christ purchased.

To deny this is to deny either the sufficiency of Christ's merit or the faithfulness of the Father.

What Does This Mean for "Universal Redemption"?

Now we see how impossible it is to reconcile universal redemption with the true doctrine of Christ's merit.

Let me ask one simple question:

> **If Christ truly merited grace and glory for everyone—if he died for all people—why aren't all people saved?**

Where does the failure lie?

- Did **Christ's merit** fall short?
- Has **God's justice** failed to honor the purchase?
- Or must we say, as some do, that Christ's death only purchased *a possibility* of salvation, not salvation itself?

But if even **faith itself** was part of what Christ merited for his people—as Scripture teaches (Eph. 1:4; Phil. 1:29)—then no condition remains unmet. Everything necessary for salvation has already been purchased by Christ, and it must be applied.

So if Christ died for all, and yet all are not saved, then either:

- Christ **did not** truly merit salvation for all, or
- God **does not** honor the merit of his Son.

Both conclusions are blasphemous.

No—the truth is better:
Christ died for **his people**, and for **them only**. And for them, he secured **every blessing of salvation**, including their very faith, repentance, and final glory. The justice of God demands that all

Christ merited must be bestowed upon those for whom he died. That is the power of his cross, and the foundation of our assurance.

Argument XV: Christ Died in the Place of Sinners—Not for All

Another decisive argument comes from the very language Scripture uses to describe Christ's death—phrases like **"dying for us," "bearing our sins,"** and being our **"surety."** All these expressions, rightly understood, make it impossible to hold to the idea that Christ died equally for every person without distinction.

What Does It Mean That Christ "Died for Us"?

In Scripture, to "die for" someone clearly means to die **in their place**—to take their place in judgment, so they might go free.

- In **Genesis 44:33**, Judah pleads with Joseph to let him stay as a slave *instead of* Benjamin. He offers his own life to take the place of another. That's the essence of a **surety**—someone who steps in, bears the obligation, and suffers the consequences meant for another (see Heb. 7:22).

- David, mourning over Absalom, cries out: *"Would God I had died for thee!"* (2 Sam. 18:33)—meaning, "in your place."

- Paul echoes this understanding in **Romans 5:7**, alluding to rare acts of self-sacrifice even among men: *"One will scarcely die for a righteous person… yet perhaps for a good man one would dare even to die."* Dying "for" another is plainly substitution.

- The ancient world even had examples of such substitutionary deaths—those like the Roman Decii, or Menoeceus in Theban legend—who willingly perished for the sake of their people.

So when the Bible says *"Christ died for us,"* it is speaking of **substitution**, not vague benefit. Christ died **in our place**, under the sentence we deserved.

What About the Word "For"?

Some object that the Greek word used in many of these texts—**huper** ("for")—does not always require a substitutionary meaning. For example, they point to **Hebrews 2:9**, *"He tasted death for every man,"* and argue that this only means "for the benefit of," not "in the place of."

But this objection falls flat.

That same word—**huper**—clearly indicates **substitution** in many other places:

- **Romans 9:3**: Paul says he could wish himself *accursed from Christ for (huper) his brothers*—clearly meaning "in their place," not just "for their benefit."

- **2 Corinthians 5:20**: "We are ambassadors *for* Christ"—clearly *in his place*, representing him.

- **1 Corinthians 1:13**: *"Was Paul crucified for you?"* The implied answer is a strong **no**. But if "for" only meant "for your benefit," then it could be true—Paul suffered much for their good. But the word clearly implies substitution.

Even more strongly, consider the Greek word **anti**, which is used in **Matthew 20:28**: *"The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for (anti) many."* That word **always** means substitution—one thing or person *in place of* another.

- **Matthew 2:22**: Archelaus reigns "instead of" (anti) his father.
- **Matthew 5:38**: "An eye *for* an eye."
- **Luke 11:11**: "A serpent *instead of* a fish."

So when Scripture says Christ gave his life a ransom **anti many**, it means without doubt that he died **in their place**.

What Does This Imply?

If Christ died in the *place* of certain people—as their **surety** (Heb. 7:22), **bearing their sins** (1 Pet. 2:24), **made a curse for them** (Gal. 3:13)—then several serious questions follow:

1. **Did Christ die in the place of all people?**
   That is, did he truly substitute himself for every single person—Cain, Pharaoh, Judas, and all the rest? Even those already condemned to eternal death long before he died? If so, how can they still perish?

2. **Can God justly require punishment from both the surety and the sinner?**
   If Christ bore their sins and endured God's wrath for them, how can they be punished as well? What sort of justice demands **double payment**?

3. **Is it equitable to punish someone for whom a full satisfaction has been made?**
   If Christ, as surety, paid the full debt, then justice demands that those he died for go free. Otherwise, the payment is meaningless.

4. **Was Christ crucified in the place of the reprobate?**
   Did he die for those who never believe, who persist in unbelief, who are never regenerated, and never justified? If so, what did his death actually accomplish for them?

5. **Did Christ endure all that was due to those he died for?**
   If yes, why are not all saved? If no, how can we say he died *in their stead*?

These are not minor questions. To affirm that Christ died for all without exception, and yet that many perish under the wrath of God, is to gut the cross of its power. It turns Christ's death into a mere offer, not a saving act. It gives us a *general redemption* that secures *no actual redemption*.

Conclusion

To say Christ died for everyone without exception is the quickest path to the conclusion that he died effectively for **no one**—that his death actually *saves* no one. It aligns more with the heresies of **Socinianism** than with the truth of the gospel. For if Christ died for all, and many perish, then his death is not substitutionary, not effectual, not saving. It is a mere moral example or general gesture of goodwill—an ark that floats, but saves no one.

Let us not abandon the solid hope of the gospel—that **Christ died for his people**, and for them alone, and that his death **actually saves** those for whom it was offered. He bore their curse, stood in their place, and purchased their freedom. That is the heart of Christian assurance.

Book III, Chapter 11

The last general argument.

Argument XVI: Scripture Itself Distinguishes Between Christ's People and the World

We come now to our final general argument, drawn from **clear and compelling portions of Scripture** that decisively prove Christ did not die for every person without exception. There are many texts that could be cited, but I will focus on a few that are especially strong and fitting for our conclusion.

1. Genesis 3:15 – The First Gospel Promise Already Divides Humanity

The first mention of Jesus Christ in the Bible is found in **Genesis 3:15**, immediately after the fall:

> *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

Here we see the first revelation of God's saving purpose in Christ—and it is already **particular**, not universal. Humanity is immediately divided into two opposing lines:

- **The seed of the woman**: This refers ultimately to **Christ**, and by extension to **all the elect**, his spiritual offspring and body (Gal. 3:16, 29; Rom. 16:20). Christ is their head; they are united to him.

- **The seed of the serpent**: This refers to **Satan and all the reprobate**—those who remain in rebellion against God. Jesus calls them *"a brood of vipers"* (Matt. 3:7), *"children of the devil"* (John 8:44), and *"sons of disobedience"* (Eph. 2:2). They are the enemies of Christ and his people.

The key point is this: **The first promise of Christ is a promise of conflict—not reconciliation—with the seed of the serpent.** It is a declaration of **enmity**, not of universal salvation. The Savior is promised **not to the world in general**, but to the elect—the seed of the woman. He was not given to the reprobate. No promise was made to them. Christ did not die for the seed of the serpent.

2. Matthew 7:23 – "I Never Knew You"

Consider also the terrifying words of Jesus at the final judgment:

> *"Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"* (Matt. 7:23)

Here Christ speaks of a group of people he **never knew**—not "I once knew you, but you fell away," or "I used to love you, but now I do not." No, he **never** knew them. They had no saving relationship with him. And yet, many of these very people **expected** to be received! Why? They had done many things "in his name." But they were never his.

Now consider what Scripture says about those Christ **did** die for:

- *"I know my sheep… and I lay down my life for the sheep."* (John 10:14–15)
- *"The Lord knows those who are his."* (2 Tim. 2:19)
- *"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price."* (1 Cor. 6:20)

Christ knows those for whom he died. He lays down his life **only** for his sheep. But if he never knew these rejected ones, how could he have died for them?

Imagine the scene. Suppose someone Christ "never knew" were to say:

> *"Lord, did you not die for me? Was your soul not sorrowful unto death for my sake? Were not your hands and feet pierced for me? Did you not suffer wrath and bleed for my sins? And now you say you never knew me?"*

What answer could possibly be given?

If Christ truly bore the wrath of God in their place, **how can they still bear that same wrath themselves?** How can the Father demand **double payment**—first from the Son, and then from the sinner?

If Christ died for them, then *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?"* (Rom. 8:33). But clearly, they are **charged and condemned**. Therefore, they were **not among the elect**, and Christ **did not die for them**.

3. Matthew 11:25–26 – The Sovereign Hiding and Revealing of the Gospel

> *"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will."*

Here Jesus praises the Father for sovereignly hiding the truth of the gospel from some, while revealing it to others. He rejoices in this very discrimination as an expression of the Father's will.

Now ask: **Did Christ die for those from whom the gospel is intentionally hidden?** For what purpose would the Father send his Son to die for people he has decreed never to reveal Christ to—neither outwardly through preaching nor inwardly by the Spirit? If they are to be **eternal strangers** to grace, what good would the cross be to them?

The Father and the Son are not at cross-purposes. The Son dies for those the Father gives to him and reveals himself to them. There is

no wasted atonement on those whom God has judicially blinded and left in their darkness.

4. John 10:11–29 – The Shepherd Dies Only for His Sheep

> *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* (v.11)

This entire passage offers crystal clarity. Christ lays down his life **for the sheep**—not for everyone, but for those given to him by the Father. Let's walk through it.

- In verse 26, Jesus says to some unbelievers, *"You do not believe because you are not among my sheep."* Their unbelief doesn't make them non-sheep; rather, **they don't believe because they never were his sheep.**

- In verse 16, Jesus speaks of "other sheep" not yet called—but they are still **his** sheep. Their identity is determined by **election**, not by their present belief.

- He says he lays down his life *as a shepherd* for *his sheep* (v.11). He does not lay down his life for wolves or goats. He lays it down for those whom the Father **gave him** (v.29; cf. John 6:37).

If he lays down his life **for his sheep**, and not for those who are not his sheep, then he **did not die for all**. Only those who are given to him by the Father—only those whom he knows—are the objects of his saving death.

Let the sheep of Christ cling to these words. If you are his, if you hear his voice and follow him, you are among the sheep for whom he died—and no one can snatch you out of his hand.

5. Romans 8:32–34 – Christ's Death Guarantees Salvation for the Elect

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

This passage is one of the clearest statements in all of Scripture that Christ's death is **not** general, but particular—and that it **secures** everything necessary for salvation.

- Paul is writing to **believers**, those who are justified by faith. He says that God's **supreme act of love** was not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up **for us all**. Now, if that's true, surely he will give us everything else that we need—faith, repentance, perseverance, glory.

- But if Christ was delivered up for **everyone**, this promise loses its power. If God gave his Son for those who are now in hell, then how is this a comfort? The point is that **the same people** Christ died for are the ones who will surely receive all other graces.

- In verse 33, Paul identifies these people: they are **God's elect**. For them, no charge can stand. Why? Because Christ died for them (v.34), rose for them, and now **intercedes for them**.

Here are two **irrefutable conclusions**:

1. **Christ's death frees from condemnation**. If he died for you, you will not be condemned. Therefore, he did not die for those who perish.

2. **Christ intercedes for all whom he died for**. But he only intercedes for believers (Heb. 7:25). Therefore, he only died for believers—**the elect**.

6. Ephesians 1:7 – Redemption Is Found Only in Union with Christ

> *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."*

If Christ's blood was shed for every person without exception, then every person should share in the redemption and forgiveness that his blood obtains. But clearly, **not all are forgiven**, nor redeemed. Forgiveness belongs only to those who are **blessed**—as it is written, *"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven"* (Rom. 4:7). But this blessing, Paul tells us, comes only upon the **spiritual offspring of Abraham**, those united to Christ by faith (Rom. 4:16). Therefore, Christ's death cannot have been for all without exception.

7. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – Substitution Guarantees Righteousness

> *"He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

Christ was made sin for us—that is, a sin-offering in his death. Now ask: **For whom he was made sin, must they not be made**

righteous in him? Isaiah says, *"By his stripes we are healed"* (Isa. 53:5). There is no gap between his substitutionary death and the actual healing and righteousness of those for whom he died.

Christ himself says: *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). If laying down his life is the **greatest expression of love**, and he did so for **all**, then why doesn't he do **everything else necessary for salvation** for all? Why doesn't he intercede for all? Why doesn't he save all to the uttermost? (Heb. 7:25). The answer is plain: he lays down his life **only** for his friends—those the Father has given him.

8. John 17:9, 19 – Christ Prays and Sanctifies Himself Only for the Elect

> *"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me."*
> *"For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."*

Here our Lord Jesus draws a firm line between **those the Father gave him**—his elect—and **the world**, from which they are distinguished. For **them alone** he prays; for them alone he sets himself apart in sacrificial death.

If he **did not** intercede for the world, but only for the elect, yet died for the world, it would mean his **greater act** (dying) was for all, but his **lesser act** (praying) was for some—a contradiction of divine consistency. But since his prayer and death serve the **same people**, it follows plainly that he died only for those the Father gave him.

9. Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28 – Christ Gave Himself for His Bride, the Church

> *"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."*

This is one of the clearest declarations of Christ's intent in dying: he gave himself **for the Church**—his bride, his chosen people. Just as a man is to love his own wife exclusively and sacrificially, so Christ's love and death are directed solely toward **his own**.

If Christ died equally for all, then his love is not uniquely directed toward his bride. That would leave room for a man to love other women in the same way he loves his wife—which is absurd and entirely contrary to the analogy Paul is using.

Final Thoughts: The Case Is Clear

I had originally intended to present additional arguments, aiming to provide a full and final treatment of this controversy. But upon review, I am persuaded that what has already been said is sufficient for those who are willing to be persuaded by Scripture and reason.

To those who desire truth, these arguments will shine with light and power. To those who are determined to resist, no further reasoning will move them.

So here, with humble confidence, we draw this argument to a close.

> **The death of Christ was not wasted.** It was not uncertain. It did not merely make salvation possible—it actually accomplished redemption for all for whom it was intended.

And who are they? The elect—the Church—those given to the Son by the Father, for whom Christ lived, died, rose again, and now intercedes with infallible success.

—End of Book III

Book 4,

Chapter 1

Preliminary Considerations Before Answering Objections

In various places throughout Scripture, the atonement and reconciliation accomplished by the blood of Christ is described using **general and indefinite language**. Sometimes, it even appears that Christ died for people who ultimately **fail to benefit** from his death because of their own unbelief and rebellion. Additionally, we find **universal invitations, promises, and exhortations** to believe in Christ, addressed even to those who never actually receive him.

These observations have led some to conclude—with great confidence—that Christ died **equally for all people**, without distinction, and that our position (which teaches Christ died specifically and effectually for the elect) is **impossible to reconcile** with such passages.

In truth, every argument against the effectual, particular redemption of the elect can be traced back to **three sources**:

1. **General or indefinite statements** in Scripture about Christ's death.

2. **Perceived failure or lack of success** in the application of that death to some.

3. **Universal offers, promises, and invitations** to come to Christ, addressed to all, including those who do not believe.

These three areas form the **entire foundation** of the objections raised against the doctrine of particular redemption. But I maintain that each of them can be **rightly understood** without having to adopt a doctrine of **universal atonement**. In fact, their true meaning is best understood **within the framework of Christ's effectual redemption of the elect**.

Before answering specific texts or objections, I will first lay out **some basic principles**—truths drawn from Scripture and consistent with sound theology—which **explain** why the Bible sometimes uses general language, offers salvation to all, or records apparent failure in its application.

These principles will serve three purposes:

1. **They will show that general and indefinite expressions in Scripture** do not prove universal redemption, but can be properly explained in another way.

2. **They will help us distinguish between truth and false consequences**, clarifying our doctrine from the caricatures or misrepresentations often attributed to it.

3. **They will prepare the way** for a clearer, more fruitful examination of specific objection texts in later chapters.

So, before engaging the objections themselves, we begin by laying a solid foundation—one which fully supports the truth of **Christ's effectual atonement for the elect** and also accounts for the Bible's broader language and invitations.

Section 1 – The Infinite Worth of Christ's Death and Its Relevance to the Gospel Call

The first foundational truth we must establish concerns the **infinite worth, dignity, and value** of the death and blood of Jesus Christ.

This truth must be preserved and defended at all costs. Any teaching that even appears to undermine it should be regarded with deep suspicion—and if upon examination it truly does so, it must be **completely rejected**. To diminish the merit of Christ's death is to **injure his glory** and the very heart of the gospel.

Scripture consistently exalts the excellence of Christ's sacrifice. It refers to his blood as **"the blood of God"** (Acts 20:28), due to the unity of his divine and human natures. His offering is said to be made **through the eternal Spirit** and is **without blemish** (Heb. 9:14). It is far more precious than silver, gold, or anything else that perishes (1 Pet. 1:18). It provides justification and forgiveness in ways the law never could (Acts 13:39).

Now, the sacrifice of Christ is not only precious in itself—it was **intended by God to be so**. It was God's purpose that his Son should offer a sacrifice of such **infinite worth** that it would be

sufficient to redeem every person in the world, if God had so desired. Indeed, it would be sufficient to redeem **a thousand worlds** if God had created and chosen to save them.

This **sufficiency** rests on two things:

1. **The infinite dignity of Christ's person**—God the Son made flesh.

2. **The weight and greatness of his sufferings**—whereby he bore the full curse of the law and wrath of God due to sin.

This gives his death **an inherent, infinite sufficiency**—a real, internal value. However, for that death to be **applied** to anyone in particular, or to be considered the **actual payment of their ransom**, requires something external: **the will and intention of God**. That is, the death of Christ was fully sufficient to be a ransom for all, but it becomes an actual ransom only for those whom **God intended to redeem by it**.

The **schoolmen** of old used a distinction: that **Christ died for all in terms of sufficiency**, but not in terms of **efficacy**. Some Protestant theologians accepted this formulation, though others rightly rejected or modified it. The more accurate statement is that **Christ's death was sufficient to have been made a ransom for all**, but it was **not actually a ransom for all**—because **God did not intend it to be**.

In short, Christ's death did not become a ransom for anyone until it was **purposely applied to them by God's intention**. To say otherwise is to claim that God failed in his purpose or that Christ's ransom was not accepted as sufficient payment—both of which are blasphemous.

Why This Truth Matters

Those who promote a **universal atonement** often undermine the true value of Christ's sacrifice. Though they claim that Christ died for all people, they deny that his death **actually secured salvation** for any. According to them, Christ merely **opened a door**—but no one walks through unless they meet conditions they must supply themselves. The benefits of Christ's death are made contingent on something outside of Christ—such as faith or repentance—not as fruits of his work, but as added requirements.

They even go so far as to say that, even after Christ died, **God could have still condemned every person**—and that **faith and sanctification were not purchased** by his death. In other words, Christ's death secured **nothing definite** for anyone.

This is a gross **undervaluing of the cross**. It reduces the infinite sacrifice of Christ to a mere potentiality, robbed of its power and certainty.

In contrast, we affirm that the death of Christ—because of who he is and what he suffered—is of such **infinite value** that it could have saved all sinners in the world, had God so willed. This truth upholds the **glory of Christ**, while also providing the right foundation for two important realities:

1. The Gospel Should Be Preached to All People

Because the death of Christ is sufficient to save all, the gospel can rightly be **proclaimed to all nations** and to **every creature**

(Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). There is enough in Christ to heal and save everyone, if only they will come to him by faith.

This removes a common objection: that if Christ did not die for all, then the gospel should not be preached to all. But that conclusion doesn't follow. The gospel must be preached because:

- God has **his people among every nation** (Acts 18:10).
- In the New Covenant, the gospel is to go out **without distinction** to all people (Acts 17:30).
- Faith in Christ is the **only appointed way** to obtain salvation, and people must be called to it.

Moreover, when God commands people to believe the gospel, he doesn't first ask them to believe **that Christ died for them personally**. He calls them to believe that **there is no other name by which they may be saved** than Jesus Christ. Those who respond in faith will find that **Christ indeed died for them**.

2. Gospel Preachers Can Urge All to Believe

Because preachers don't know who the elect are, they are right to call **all people** to believe, with the **full assurance** that anyone who does believe will be saved. They can do this confidently, knowing that the **death of Christ is sufficient** for all, and that **every believer will surely receive its benefits**.

We leave the secret counsel of God to God. Our part is to proclaim Christ **indiscriminately** to all, trusting that his death is fully

sufficient for every sinner who comes, and that **God will draw his elect** through this means.

This foundational truth—**the infinite sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice**—when properly understood, **dismantles many of the objections** raised against particular redemption. And in what follows, we will see this worked out more fully.

Section 2 – The New Covenant and the Global Scope of the Gospel

The second truth we need to carefully consider is the **way God now administers the New Covenant under the gospel**, especially in light of the **expansion of Christ's kingdom** after his incarnation. When Christ came in the flesh, he **broke down the wall of division** that had long separated Jew from Gentile. The old distinctions—such as nationality, circumcision, and ceremonial law—were removed. The promise given to Abraham, that he would be **heir of the world** as the father of the faithful, now began to reach full expression.

This change in administration—moving from a limited, national covenant with one people (Israel) to a **global call to the nations**—explains many of the **general and broad terms** used in Scripture, such as *"all," "all men," "all nations,"* and *"the world."* These expressions do **not** mean that **every individual without exception** is included in Christ's saving work. Instead, they emphasize that the old restrictions are gone: Christ's kingdom is no longer confined to one ethnic group or nation.

God now calls people from **every nation, language, tribe, and people group**. He has **elect individuals** scattered among all these

peoples, and he will draw them to himself as the gospel is preached across the globe. The purpose of these "universal" terms in Scripture is not to teach that Christ died for all people individually, but to declare the **worldwide scope** of the gospel and the **gathering in of the elect** from every corner of the earth.

For instance, when the Bible speaks of Christ **redeeming people out of every tribe and nation** (Rev. 5:9), it's clearly describing a **distribution** of redeemed people throughout all groups—not a **universal inclusion** of every person within them.

This understanding helps us rightly interpret verses like:

- **Joel 2:28** – "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh," which Peter applies to the **diverse nations** gathered at Pentecost (Acts 2:17).
- **Romans 1:5** – Paul says he received apostleship "to bring about the obedience of faith among **all nations**."
- **Romans 1:16** – The gospel is the power of God to salvation for "the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
- **Colossians 3:11** – In Christ, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision… but Christ is all and in all."

This expansion of Christ's visible kingdom gives a clear explanation for the Bible's "universal" language without requiring a **universal atonement**. It explains why the gospel is now preached to all nations: to gather in the **elect among them**, "the fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25).

So when people point to words like "world" or "all men" to argue for a universal redemption, they are **misreading** the purpose of those

expressions. They **fail to see** that these terms mark the **removal of Jewish exclusivity** and the **opening of the covenant** to all peoples—not an intention of Christ to redeem every person without exception.

Section 3 – The Difference Between God's Commands and His Purposes

A third key truth is that we must **carefully distinguish between God's revealed commands (our duty) and his secret will (his eternal purpose)**. These two things are not the same, and **we cannot reason from one to the other**.

Just because God commands all people to repent and believe doesn't mean it is **his eternal purpose** to give every person saving faith. His command tells us what we **ought** to do; his purpose reveals what he himself **intends** to do. There is no contradiction here—only a confusion of categories when people fail to make this vital distinction.

This is especially important when it comes to the ministry of the gospel. Pastors are not told to concern themselves with **whom God has elected** or **for whom Christ died** in particular. That is **not their business**, and they are forbidden from prying into the secret things of God (Deut. 29:29). Their duty is to **proclaim what God has revealed**: that Christ is the only Savior, and that all who come to him by faith will be saved.

So, while ministers offer Christ to all people, they are not saying, "It is God's purpose that you be saved," or "Christ died for you specifically." Rather, they declare, "This is God's **command**: repent and believe the gospel." Every person is obligated to obey this call,

and the offer is **sincere and sufficient**, even though it is not a revelation of God's specific intent to save every individual.

Therefore, two things follow:

1. God Always Has a Saving Purpose in Sending the Gospel

Wherever the gospel is preached, **God has chosen some to be saved** among that people. The minister may not know who they are, but he is to preach to all with **hope and earnestness**, praying that those whom God has chosen will respond in faith.

2. The Offer of the Gospel Is Not Emptied of Meaning

Some ask, "What is the point of offering Christ to people if he did not die for them?" But that question misunderstands the offer. It is not a statement about God's **intentions**, but about **man's duty**. In gospel preaching, God reveals:

- What sinners **ought to do** (repent and believe).
- That there is a **sufficient Savior** for all who believe.
- That there is an **unbreakable connection** between believing and being saved.

Whoever comes to Christ will be received—none will be cast out (John 6:37). The **invitation is genuine**, and the **sufficiency of Christ** is complete. The **efficacy**, however, belongs only to those whom the Father draws and for whom the Son laid down his life.

Section 4 – Jewish Exclusivism and the Use of Universal Language in Scripture

Another important consideration is the **deeply ingrained error held by the Jewish people**—an error that even influenced the apostles for a time. This was the belief that **salvation through the Messiah belonged only to them**, as physical descendants of Abraham. They imagined that the promises of God were **exclusive** to their nation, and they **excluded all others**—especially Gentiles—regarding them as "uncircumcised dogs" and cursed outsiders.

This widespread Jewish assumption is key to understanding **why the apostles and evangelists often used broad, general expressions** like "all," "world," "every creature," and "all nations" when speaking of Christ's redemption. These expressions were used **not** to teach that Christ died for every individual, but to **correct the false belief that salvation was only for the Jews**. They serve to **emphasize the inclusion of Gentiles**, and to demonstrate that God's grace extends far beyond the borders of Israel.

We see this clearly in **Acts 13**, where, when the Jews saw crowds of Gentiles coming to hear Paul preach, they were filled with jealousy and began to oppose the message (Acts 13:45–50). Paul later describes them as those who "displease God and oppose all mankind, by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved" (1 Thess. 2:15–16). The very idea that God would turn from Israel and bring in the nations enraged them—just as it had when Jesus himself warned them that the vineyard would be taken from them and given to others.

Even the apostles themselves were not free from this mindset at first. Though Jesus had commanded them to make disciples of **all**

nations (Matt. 28:19) and preach the gospel to **every creature** (Mark 16:15), for a time they seemed to think their mission extended only to **the lost sheep of Israel**. In Acts 11:19, even after Pentecost, we find them preaching **only to the Jews**. It wasn't until God powerfully revealed the inclusion of the Gentiles—by the conversion of Cornelius and his household, and the pouring out of the Spirit—that they finally declared, in wonder, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18).

This shift was not easy for them, because it involved the unfolding of what Paul later calls **"the mystery hidden for ages"**—namely, that the Gentiles would become **fellow heirs**, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel (Eph. 3:5–6). Once this was made clear by the Spirit, the apostles worked diligently to **proclaim this expansion of grace**, so that no Gentile believer would imagine himself excluded from the people of God, and no Jew would boast in his heritage.

This explains **why** the New Testament writers—especially the Apostle John—frequently use broad, general terms like "world," "all," and "every." They are **not** asserting that Christ died for every individual without exception. Rather, they are correcting the false Jewish exclusivism by declaring that Christ died for the **children of God scattered throughout the whole world**—not only for Israel.

Take, for instance, John 11:51–52, where the inspired commentary on Caiaphas' prophecy says:

> "He prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."

This helps us understand John's words in 1 John 2:2:

> "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

That is, **not only for believing Jews**, but also for the elect Gentiles scattered across the nations. The emphasis is not on a **universal ransom**, but on a **global inclusion**—a body made up of people from every tribe, language, and nation.

Summary

The universal language of the New Testament is used **not to teach that Christ died for every single person**, but to show that his redemption is **not limited to one nation**. It is for **God's elect among all peoples**. These general expressions—*world*, *all men*, *every creature*—are **antidotes to Jewish exclusivism**, not affirmations of universal atonement. The Scripture is emphasizing **the diversity of those redeemed**, not the universality of individuals included in redemption.

Thus, when we understand the **historical context** of Jewish pride and exclusion, and how the early church was grappling with the **radical expansion of the kingdom**, we can rightly interpret these general terms. They speak of **a people gathered from all nations**, not **a redemption purchased for all without exception**.

Section 5 – On the Meaning of General Terms in Scripture: "The World" and "All"

When discussing the scope of Christ's redemption, it's vital that we **carefully consider how the Bible uses general terms** like *"the world"* and *"all"*. These words often appear in arguments for universal redemption, as though they irrefutably prove that Jesus died for every single individual. Once these terms are quoted—*"the world," "the whole world," "all men,"* and the like—it can seem, at first glance, as though the case for universal atonement is settled.

But when we press further—asking people to read these words in their context, consider the surrounding passages, examine how the same terms are used elsewhere, and apply basic principles of biblical interpretation—we're often met with a refusal to go deeper. Some insist, *"Just let the words speak for themselves!"* Yet ironically, this very approach undermines sound theology. If we accept bare words without context, then we would also be forced to believe that God has hands, feet, or wings (as some medieval heretics did), or that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper literally become Christ's body and blood. Clearly, **words require interpretation**, and **context must govern meaning**.

And so, for the sake of the truth, we must not be silent. Let us show that these general terms, when used in Scripture, do **not support the doctrine of universal redemption**, whether in the form of an absolute or conditional atonement.

1. The Word *"World"* in Scripture

The word *"world"* (Greek: *kosmos*) is often misunderstood. It has many meanings in Scripture, and it **does not always refer to every individual person who has ever lived**. Sometimes it refers to the physical creation; other times to the people in it; sometimes to the elect, and other times to the ungodly system

opposed to God. Before we can make any claim based on the word *"world,"* we must first determine **how it is being used in context**.

Here's a brief guide to the ways *"world"* is used in the Bible:

I. Subjectively – referring to the created world:

- **Universally**: The entire universe—heaven, earth, and all that is in them.
    - *Example*: Acts 17:24 – "God… made the world and everything in it."
- **Partially**: Either
    - **(1)** the visible heavens (*Psalm 90:2*), or
    - **(2)** the habitable earth (*Psalm 24:1; John 1:9*).

II. Adjunctively – referring to the people or moral condition of the world:

A. *The Inhabitants of the World*

1. **Collectively**: All people, generally speaking.
    - *Example*: 1 John 5:19 – "The whole world lies in wickedness."
2. **Distributively**: Representing people from every group or kind.
    - (1) **Any person** from any group (*John 3:16* rightly understood).

- (2) **Many**, but not necessarily all (*John 1:29*).

3. **Specifically**:
    - (1) The **elect**, God's chosen people (*John 6:33; John 3:17*).
    - (2) The **reprobate**, those under judgment (*John 7:7; 1 John 5:19*).
4. **Indifferently**: In a general, non-specific way (*John 12:19* – "The world has gone after him").
5. **Restrictively or Synecdochically**: Used to refer to a **subset**, but described by a larger term:
    - (1) The **chief or prominent part** of the world (*Romans 11:12*).
    - (2) The **Romans**, or another particular group (*Luke 2:1* – "all the world" taxed under Caesar).

B. ***The Moral Condition or State of the World***

1. In reference to **corruption**:
    - (1) The **state of sin** and fallenness (*2 Peter 1:4*).
    - (2) The **place of sinful habitation**, i.e., fallen mankind.
    - (3) The **earthly condition** subject to vanity and futility.
2. In reference to **divine judgment**: the world as **under a curse**.

Summary and Theological Implication

This overview shows just how **flexible and varied the term "world" is in Scripture**. Without careful attention to context, one might easily distort its meaning and build an argument on a faulty foundation.

When our opponents of particular redemption argue that Christ died for "the world," they often assume that *"world"* means every individual without exception. But as we've seen, the Bible uses the term in many different ways. The **burden of proof** lies on those who claim that it always refers to all people without exception.

In fact, the **general rule of interpretation** requires us to **understand words in context**, especially when they have multiple meanings. The Scripture does not contradict itself, and so the meaning of "world" in any given text must be consistent with the rest of biblical teaching, particularly with the clear declarations that Christ died for **his people**, **his sheep**, **his church**, and **his elect**.

So then, let us not be swayed by loud claims based on misunderstood vocabulary. We affirm wholeheartedly the **infinite sufficiency** of Christ's death for the whole world—but we must also affirm its **particular intention and effect**, namely, to redeem all whom the Father has given to the Son.

Clarifying the Term "World" in Scripture

In continuing our careful study of the word *"world"* (Greek: *kosmos*), we must recognize how **frequently misunderstood** this term is—especially when used in discussions about the atonement. A strong argument for universal redemption is often built on a shallow

reading of this word, assuming that "world" always means *every individual person without exception*. But a deeper look at the biblical usage shows that this is **simply not the case**.

The word *"world"* appears throughout the Bible in a variety of ways, and the meaning must always be determined by context. Let's consider the main categories.

1. "World" Referring to Humanity in General

Sometimes *world* refers to people—and even then, the meaning varies:

(1) Universally – meaning every single human being

- *Romans 3:6, 19; 5:12* – In the context of the guilt and condemnation of sin, *world* sometimes refers to all mankind without exception.

(2) Indefinitely – meaning people in general, without stating exactly who

- *John 7:4; Isaiah 13:11* – These uses speak broadly of humanity, without indicating how many or which ones specifically.

(3) Exegetically (explanatory) – meaning *many*, but not all; often the most common use

- *Matthew 18:7; John 4:42, 12:19, 16:8, 17:21; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Revelation 13:3* – These texts use "world" to describe a large

portion of people, or representative people from many places—not necessarily every single person.

(4) Comparatively – meaning a large part of the world in contrast to a smaller group

- *Romans 1:8; Matthew 24:14, 26:13; Romans 10:18* – The gospel going "into all the world" is describing its broad reach, not exhaustive universality.

(5) Restrictively – referring to a specific group, often within the Roman Empire

- *Luke 2:1* – "All the world" being taxed clearly means the Roman world, not every land or people group globally.

(6) With respect to moral or spiritual distinction:

- **(a) The Elect or Believers**:
    - *Psalm 22:27; John 3:16, 6:33, 51; Romans 4:13, 11:12, 15; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:6; 1 John 2:2*
      These passages speak of "world" in reference to God's redeemed people—those among all nations whom He saves.
- **(b) The Reprobate or Ungodly**:
    - *Isaiah 53:11; John 7:7, 14:17, 22, 15:19, 17:25; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 11:32; Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 2:5; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 13:3*
      These show the "world" as those in rebellion against God, under judgment, or in contrast with the church.

2. "World" as a System of Corruption

Sometimes *world* refers not to people but to the **corrupt moral condition** of human society:

- *Galatians 1:4, 6:14; Ephesians 2:2; James 1:27, 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17; 1 Corinthians 7:31, 33; Colossians 2:8; 2 Timothy 4:10; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 1:20–21, 3:18–19*

In these places, “the world” means the sinful, fallen system of values and desires that stand in opposition to God and holiness.

3. "World" as Earthly Status or Condition

Here *world* refers to the **earthly condition or temporal state** of people or things:

- *Psalm 73:12; Luke 16:8; John 18:36; 1 John 4:5*
  This usage highlights the transitory, earthly nature of human affairs—often contrasted with the eternal kingdom of Christ.

4. "World" as Under Divine Judgment and Satanic Influence

Scripture also describes “the world” as that which is **under God’s curse and Satan’s dominion**:

- *John 7:7, 14:30, 16:11, 33; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12*

This “world” is not to be saved but overcome. It is the domain in rebellion against God, in which believers are rescued from darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).

Conclusion: Meaning Must Be Determined by Context

These varied uses make one thing abundantly clear: **you cannot build a doctrine of universal atonement simply by appealing to the word "world."** Without careful interpretation, based on grammar, context, and the broader testimony of Scripture, such arguments quickly fall apart.

In fact, many of the texts that use the word *world* speak not of universal redemption, but rather of:

- God's people *from all nations*,
- the removal of *Jew-Gentile distinctions*,
- or the *sinful condition of fallen mankind*.

To claim that *“world”* means *every individual without exception* in every text is not only careless but contradicts clearer passages that show Christ’s death to be effectual, specific, and limited to those given to him by the Father (John 10:15; Romans 8:32–34).

The key principle is this: the mere presence of a general term does not prove a general intention. The love of God, the sufficiency of Christ’s death, and the scope of the gospel proclamation are all glorious—but the death of Christ was never purposeless, and it was never wasted on those who perish.

Let us now address the claim often shouted loudly and confidently: “The Bible says Christ died for the world! The world! The whole world!” This refrain is used to unsettle the weak and confuse the ungrounded. But what is it really grounded on? The argument depends almost entirely on a **misunderstanding of a single word**.

Those who promote a universal atonement rest their whole case on the repeated use of *“world”* in Scripture—assuming without examination that it must mean *every individual person without exception*. But if the strength of their position lies in the ambiguity of an **equivocal word**, then their cause is built on sand. A shaky foundation cannot stand before the searching light of truth.

We have already shown that the word *“world”* has **multiple meanings in Scripture**, and that its meaning always depends on the context. So let us now make a few critical observations that will strengthen our understanding and protect us from error.

Observation 1: Words May Be Repeated with Different Meanings

It’s a basic rule of language—even within the same sentence, a word may be used twice with completely different meanings.

- *Matthew 8:22* — “Let the dead bury their dead.” Clearly, the first “dead” means the spiritually dead; the second, those physically dead.
- *John 1:11* — “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The first refers to his own creation; the second, to the Jewish people.

- *John 3:6* — "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Here, "Spirit" is the Holy Spirit; "spirit" refers to the new spiritual life.

Likewise, the word *"world"* can appear multiple times in a single passage, but refer to **different things** each time.

- *John 1:10* — "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."
    - First use: the physical location where Jesus walked.
    - Second use: the universe, created by Christ.
    - Third use: unbelieving humanity that rejected Him.

To force all three uses to mean the same thing would be to twist the passage—and miss its depth.

- *John 3:17* — "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."
    - First: the realm where the Son ministered.
    - Second: not every single human, but the elect—those whom He came to save.
    - Third: God's people from every nation, not only the Jews.

If we insist that *"world"* means *every person without exception* in all three cases, then we must conclude that Christ came to save every person—yet many are not saved. That would mean **Christ failed in his mission**, and we dare not say that.

Observation 2: Repetition Does Not Require Universality

No interpretation of any verse can rest solely on the surface meaning of a phrase when the same phrase is used elsewhere in a clearly different sense.

For example:

- *John 1:10* — "The world knew him not." If this meant *every person*, then no one ever believed in Christ—which contradicts the very next verse (John 1:12).
- *Luke 2:1* — "All the world should be taxed." Clearly, this means the Roman Empire, not the whole globe.
- *John 8:26* — "I speak to the world…" Christ spoke to the Jews present, not every human alive.
- *John 12:19* — "Behold, the world has gone after him." Did the whole world follow Christ? It was just a large crowd from one region.

So also, *1 John 5:19* says, "The whole world lies in wickedness." If *"whole world"* means every person without exception, then believers themselves are still in wickedness—which Scripture plainly denies (John 15:19; 17:14).

Even the phrase "all nations" must be carefully considered:

- *Romans 1:5* speaks of obedience to the faith *among all nations* —meaning not every single person, but *peoples from every nation*.

- *Revelation 18:3* shows that *"all nations"* can mean *many nations*, not every individual.

Thus, when *"world"* or *"all the world"* is used, especially in connection with redemption, it often refers to:

- **The elect among all peoples**, not all people without exception;
- Or **all kinds of people**, Jew and Gentile alike;
- Or a **broad and indiscriminate scope**, without implying universal effectiveness.

If Scripture teaches us to interpret these terms with care in non-redemptive contexts, **how much more** should we be cautious when building entire doctrines on them?

Let us never build our theology on a single word lifted from its context. Scripture does not contradict itself. And when Jesus says He lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:11), and that His death actually secures eternal life for those He died for (John 6:37–40), we must not undo His words by importing a meaning into *"world"* that makes His cross ineffective or His intentions frustrated.

The term *world*, as used in discussions of redemption, **does not mean all individuals universally**, but **people from every tribe, tongue, and nation**, whom Christ has truly redeemed.

Understanding the Word "All" in Scripture

Much of the argument for a universal atonement depends on how people understand a single word: **"all."** It's often used in connection with redemption—Christ giving himself a ransom "for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). Those who believe in a universal redemption usually take this to mean Christ died for every individual person who has ever lived.

But is that what Scripture really teaches?

We agree that the word *all* can sometimes mean *everyone without exception*. But that is **not always** the case—nor even most often the case. In fact, Scripture commonly uses *all* to mean *all kinds* or *all without distinction*, rather than *all without exception*. It often refers to a wide and diverse range of people, not necessarily every individual.

This is especially important when talking about who Christ came to save.

1. Distributive vs. Collective "All"

The word *all* in Scripture usually functions **distributively**, meaning "all kinds" or "people from every category," rather than **collectively**, meaning "every single person." This is a common feature of both biblical and everyday speech.

For example:

- **John 12:32** – Jesus says, *"I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself."*
  If this means *every individual without exception*, then all people would come to Christ and be saved. But Jesus teaches elsewhere that only those drawn by the Father come to Him

(John 6:44), and that He loses none of them.
So "all" here must mean **all kinds of people**—Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, male and female, from every nation and walk of life.

- **Revelation 5:9** confirms this: *"You have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."*
  Not every individual was redeemed, but people from every kind of group. That's the "all" Christ draws to Himself.

2. Every Kind, Not Every Individual

Even our English Bibles interpret *all* this way in some places:

- **Luke 11:42** – Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for tithing *"all manner of herbs."* The Greek says literally "every herb," but obviously it means **all types of herbs**, not every single leaf and sprout.

- **Luke 18:12** – The Pharisee boasts that he tithes *"all that I possess."* He doesn't mean every individual item without exception, but rather *all that is required* or *everything of importance*.

- **Acts 2:17** – "I will pour out my Spirit on *all flesh*." Does this mean every person without exception receives the Holy Spirit? Clearly not. It refers to **people from all backgrounds**, as the following verses describe—sons and daughters, young and old, male and female, servants and free.

- **Romans 14:2** – "One believes he may eat *all things*." Not literally every substance on earth, but *all kinds of food permissible under the gospel.*

3. Examples from 1 Timothy 2

Let's look specifically at the chapter where many point to support universal redemption:

- **1 Timothy 2:4** – *"[God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*
  Does *"all people"* mean every single person who has ever lived? If so, then either all will be saved (which contradicts Scripture), or God's desire is thwarted (which contradicts His sovereignty).

  But just four verses later, in **verse 8**, Paul says:
  "I desire that in every place men should pray."
  Surely this does not mean that prayer must happen in **every physical location in the universe**—the Sahara desert, the moon, the bottom of the sea! It simply means **all kinds of places**, that prayer should not be limited to one nation or temple.

So again, the context shows that *"all"* means **every kind of person**, not every person without exception.

4. Other Clear Examples

- **Matthew 9:35** – Jesus healed *"every disease and every affliction."* Does this mean He healed **every disease in every person in the world**? No—it means He healed **all types of diseases** among those who came to Him.

- **Acts 10:12** – Peter sees a vision of *"all kinds of animals."* The Greek literally says "all animals," but obviously it refers to **various kinds**, not every individual animal in the world.

This pattern is consistent throughout Scripture. The word *"all"* is often **inclusive of categories**, not **exhaustive of individuals**.

A Loving and Sovereign Redeemer

Here's why this matters: If we insist that *"all"* always means every single individual, we're forced to conclude that **Christ died for many who are not saved**, and that **God's will to save is often frustrated**. This dishonors the sufficiency and sovereignty of Christ's work.

But if *"all"* means *all kinds of people*—as Scripture so often shows—then everything fits beautifully:

- God's grace reaches the **nations**, not just Israel.
- Christ's redemption is **effectual**, actually securing salvation.
- The gospel invitation can be preached to **all**, knowing that among them are **God's elect**, whom the Spirit will draw.

So let's read Scripture carefully. Words like *"all"* and *"world"* are used with great richness—but also great precision. If we treat them loosely, we risk misrepresenting God's design and Christ's finished work.

The truth is simple and beautiful: **Christ died for all His people—from every tribe, language, and nation—and He will not lose one of them.**

"He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:11)
"All that the Father gives me will come to me." (John 6:37)
"He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness." (Titus 2:14)

Sundry other instances might be given to manifest that this is the most usual and frequent signification of the word all in the holy Scripture; and, therefore, from the base word nothing can be inferred to enforce an absolute unlimited universality of all individuals to be intimated thereby. The particular places insisted on we shall afterward consider. I shall conclude all concerning these general expressions that are used in the Scripture about this business in these observations:--

First, The word all is certainly and unquestionably sometimes restrained, and to be restrained, to all of some sorts, although the qualification be not expressed which is the bond of the limitation: so for all believers, I Cor. 15:22; Eph. 4:6; Rom. 5:18, "The free gift came upon all men to justification of life:" which "all men," that are so actually justified, are no more nor less than those that are Christ's,--that is, believers; for certainly justification is not without faith.

Secondly, The word all is sometimes used for some of all sorts, Jer. 31:34. The Hebrew word kowl is by Paul rendered all, Heb. 8:11; so John 12:32; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; which is made apparent by the mention of "kings," as one sort of people there intended. And I make no doubt but it will appear to all that the word must be taken in one of these senses in every place where it is used in the business of redemption; as shall be proved.

Thirdly, Let a diligent comparison be made between the general expressions of the New with the predictions of the Old Testament, and they will be found to be answerable to, and expository of, one another; the Lord affirming in the New that that was done which in the Old be foretold should be done. Now, in the predictions and prophecies of the Old Testament, that all nations, all flesh, all people, all the ends, families, or kindreds of the earth, the world, the whole earth, the isles, shall be converted, look up to Christ, come to the mountain of the Lord, and the like,, none doubts but that the elect of God in all nations are only signified, knowing that in them alone those predictions have the tenth of their accomplishment. And why should the same expressions used in the Gospel, and many of them aiming directly to declare the fulfilling of the other, be wire-drawn to a large extent, so contrary to the mind of the Holy Ghost? In fine, as when the Lord is said to wipe tears from all faces, it hinders not but that the reprobates shall be cast out to eternity where there is weeping and wailing, etc.; so when Christ is said to die for all, it hinders not but that those reprobates may perish to eternity for their sins, without any effectual remedy intended for them, though occasionally proposed to some of them.

Clarifying Difficult Passages: Why Some Who Are "Said" to Be Redeemed or Elected Still Perish

When people object to particular redemption, they sometimes point to Bible verses that seem to say someone “redeemed” by Christ may still be lost—or that someone “elect” may fall away. But if we read these passages carefully, we’ll see that such objections are built on misunderstanding how the Bible speaks in human terms and how the gospel is preached.

Let's walk through a few key principles that will help us interpret these passages properly.

1. The Bible often speaks of people as they appear outwardly—not as they truly are inwardly

This is very important: Scripture often talks about people the way they *seem* to be, based on how others would naturally judge them, not necessarily according to their actual spiritual condition.

For example:

- **Jerusalem** is called *"the holy city"* in Matthew 27:53, though at that time it was more like *a den of thieves*.
- In **2 Chronicles 28:23**, wicked King Ahaz is said to have sacrificed to the *gods of Damascus who smote him*—even though only God had the power to do that. The Holy Spirit records it from Ahaz's idolatrous perspective.
- Even **Jesus** is accused of breaking the Sabbath in John 5:18—not because He truly did, but because that's what the Pharisees *thought* He did.

So when the Bible refers to someone as redeemed, saved, holy, or elect, it is sometimes reflecting how they appear to others—how they are seen in the *visible church*, not necessarily what they are in the secret counsels of God.

2. Sometimes privileges of God's people are spoken of as belonging to all in the visible church

It's also common in Scripture for blessings that truly belong only to the elect to be spoken of as belonging to all within the visible church—those who share in the outward covenant blessings.

But many in that group may still be *"aliens to the grace of the covenant"*. That is, they share the *external privileges* but not the *internal reality* of salvation.

So when the Bible speaks of people who are "redeemed" or "elected," and yet some of those people fall away, we must ask:

> Was this a judgment made according to outward appearance and Christian charity?

If so, their perishing is no argument against Christ's actual accomplishment of redemption for His elect. They were never truly redeemed in God's sight, though they may have been regarded that way by others.

3. Judging by charity is not the same as God's certain knowledge

When apostles or pastors call believers "holy" or "elect," that language flows from a charitable assumption, not an infallible knowledge.

Take a few examples:

- **1 Peter 1:1–2** calls believers scattered across various regions *"elect according to the foreknowledge of God."*
- **1 Thessalonians 1:4** – Paul says, *"We know, brothers beloved by God, that He has chosen you."*
- **2 Thessalonians 2:13** – *"God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved."*

Were *all* of these people truly elect in God's hidden decree? Not necessarily. Paul himself says in **Philippians 1:7**, *"It is right for me to feel this way about you all."* That's a statement of pastoral love and hopeful judgment—not of divine certainty.

So if we later find that some of these professing believers fall away, it doesn't mean God's elect can perish. It only proves that human charity can be mistaken.

✨ If this logic is acceptable when someone is called "elect," why should it not also apply when someone is said to be "redeemed"?

In both cases, the terms reflect human charity based on outward profession—not necessarily God's eternal decree.

4. The gospel promises life to all who believe—and that promise is *real*, even if not all believe

God has established a firm and unbreakable connection between **faith and salvation**:

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." —Mark 16:16
"Whoever does not believe will die in his sins." —John 8:24
"Everyone who believes in the Son has eternal life." —John 3:36

This connection between belief and salvation is what the gospel holds out to every hearer. It's a **real offer**, and a sufficient foundation for real faith—even though not everyone will believe.

So when God commands people to believe, or when He makes promises to those who do, He's not revealing His secret purpose about **who the elect are**. He's revealing His **universal will**—that all who believe will be saved. This is true, trustworthy, and glorious.

The False Notion of a Conditional Will in God Toward the Non-Elect

Some people mistakenly imagine that whenever God commands someone to believe the gospel and offers eternal life upon faith—even if that person is one of those who will certainly perish—God still has a *conditional will* to save them. That is, they claim God intends to save every person *if only* they will believe. But this idea is fundamentally flawed, both biblically and theologically.

Let's look at why.

1. God's will is not conditional like human plans are

God's eternal will is **absolute**, not suspended on human choices. The so-called *condition* of faith does not make God's will uncertain

or flexible. It merely reflects the connection **between** salvation and faith—a connection which God Himself has sovereignly appointed.

When God says, *"Believe and you will be saved,"* He is not revealing His secret plan to save that specific person. He is revealing the only path to salvation that exists.

So it is mistaken to say, *"As is God's offer, so is His intention."* Just because He offers salvation to all who believe does **not** mean He intends to save everyone.

2. God does not offer salvation equally to all people

First of all, the gospel has **not** been preached to every person in the world, even today—much less in all generations past. A massive portion of humanity has lived and died without ever hearing of Christ at all.

So how can we say God intends the salvation of *all*, when He never gave many even the opportunity to hear the offer?

3. God's commands and promises reveal our duty—not His secret decree

Take the example of Pharaoh. God commanded him, *"Let My people go."* But had not God already told Moses that He would **harden Pharaoh's heart** so that he *wouldn't* let them go?

God's commands show what we *ought* to do—not necessarily what He *intends* to bring to pass in every case. His promises, likewise,

show what is true **for those who believe**—but they don't declare His intention to give faith to all.

So when He offers life to anyone who believes, He is showing the only way of salvation. But He is **not** saying He intends to bring everyone to saving faith.

4. A "conditional intention" to save those who will never believe is not meaningful

Some claim, *"Well, God intends to save them—if they believe."* But let's examine that.

- Did God know whether they would believe or not?
    - If not, then He is not all-knowing.
    - If yes, then He knew they *would never believe*.
- Could they believe without God giving them faith?
    - No.
- Did God intend to give them faith?
    - No, in this case we are speaking of those whom God has **not chosen** and will **not regenerate**.

So what kind of "intention" is this?

Would we credit a human being as sincere if he offered a gift on the condition someone provide something he knows they do not have—and refuses to give it to them?

Imagine a man says, *"I'll give you my daughter in marriage if you give me this precious jewel,"* knowing full well the man has no such jewel, cannot obtain it, and he himself has decided never to give it to him. Would anyone say he truly intended to give his daughter?

Such a "will" is hollow and insincere—and not worthy to be attributed to the holy and wise God.

5. The real purpose of gospel preaching to all

The true message of the gospel, when preached even to unbelievers, is not a declaration that *God intends to save every individual.* Rather, it is a public proclamation of the **connection between faith and life**:

> "Whoever believes will be saved."
> "Whoever does not believe is condemned already."

The truth is this: the death of Christ is **sufficient** to save every person who believes. And the gospel calls all to believe. But only those whom God draws and regenerates will believe—and these are the ones for whom Christ died.

That's why it is a **false and dangerous notion** to say, *"The gospel cannot be preached to all unless Christ died for all."*

This is nothing more than a recycled version of old Arminian arguments—long ago refuted—based on ignorance of Scripture and a failure to rightly divide between God's revealed will (our duty) and His secret will (His sovereign decree).

God’s intention is not frustrated by human unbelief. He does not offer salvation with an empty hand, nor does He will to save those He has not chosen to draw to Christ.

The gospel is genuinely and freely offered to all. Christ is **sufficient** for all. But Christ is **effectively given** only to those whom the Father has **given to the Son** (John 6:37–39). In them, and them alone, the purpose of God in Christ will stand.

Why Christ Is Offered to Those for Whom He Did Not Die

One reason Christ is preached to people who ultimately reject Him—and for whom, in the end, His blood was not shed—is because of how God's elect and the reprobate are **mixed together** in the world and within local churches.

In every congregation, there are both believers and unbelievers. God, in His sovereign purpose, has chosen not to visibly separate the elect from the reprobate in this life. The wheat and the tares must grow together until the harvest (cf. Matt. 13:30). And because the **ministers of the gospel**—who are stewards of the mysteries of Christ and bearers of the word of reconciliation—**do not know who the elect are**, they must preach the gospel to everyone.

Preachers are not given insight into God’s secret purposes. They must proclaim the same message—call all to repentance, extend the same promises, and offer Christ to all—**so that the elect may believe**, and the rest, through their unbelief, may be hardened and held accountable.

Now, because of these two divine arrangements:

1. That elect and reprobate are mingled together in the world until the end,

2. That gospel ministers are ignorant of God's eternal decrees concerning individuals,

…it follows that two things are absolutely necessary:

First, the promises of the gospel must be expressed in **general terms**. They cannot be restricted or qualified according to God's secret decree—because we do not know it. So the offer of salvation must be made broadly to all without respect to class, nation, or any outward distinction.

Second, this general offer will necessarily go out to many who, in God's hidden purpose, were **never intended** to receive saving grace. These individuals are not given faith, which is necessary to receive Christ, and so they never truly have a share in the benefit of the promise—even though it is **outwardly** offered to them.

So we conclude: just because the gospel is offered to a person does **not** mean Christ died for that person. The **reason** for the general offer lies in the **external administration** of the gospel, not in any supposed universal intent in the atonement.

The Bottom Line:

- God has entrusted His gospel to be preached by men who cannot see into His eternal counsels.

- They must preach to **all**—a mixed group of elect and reprobate—because they cannot tell the difference.

- The gospel offer, therefore, is **indefinite** and **general**, not universal in the sense of applying to every individual as one for whom Christ died.

- Since Christ can only be received by faith, and since God gives faith to whomever He wills, it is **clear** that He never intended Christ to be received by those to whom He **will not** give faith.

The free offer of the gospel stands. But it is **never** an indication that Christ died for everyone who hears it. Rather, it is God's appointed means for drawing His elect to Himself, and for leaving the reprobate without excuse.

The Orderly Acts of Faith

and the False Objection That Christ Must Have Died for All

Some object: *If Christ did not die for every person, how can the gospel call all people to believe in Him? Doesn't this mean that some are commanded to believe what is not true for them?* They claim that if Christ didn't die for someone, then there is no proper object for their faith, and thus the gospel offer is meaningless for them.

But this objection rests on a serious misunderstanding of what the gospel actually **commands people to believe**, and in what **order** that faith unfolds. Faith has different acts, and it progresses in a proper sequence. Not everyone is called, from the very start, to believe that *Christ died for them personally*. That is not how the gospel presents the truth.

Let us walk through the order of saving faith, and we'll see that everyone called by the gospel has a sufficient object for their faith at each stage. There is nothing lacking in the message preached, even if Christ did not die for every single individual.

First, the gospel calls all sinners to believe this foundational truth:

> *You cannot save yourself.*
> You are a sinner, guilty before a holy God. You have fallen short of His glory. No works of the law can justify you.

This is the apostolic message in Romans 1–3. But how many people even believe this basic truth? Countless people—Jews and Gentiles alike—reject it outright. According to Romans 10:3–4, even most of the Jewish nation would not believe this first step.

So if someone will not even believe **this**, their unbelief is already damning, and they cannot go on to believe more.

Second, the gospel teaches:

> *God has provided salvation in a promised Savior.*

There is a way to be saved—salvation is found in another. Christ was ordained to be the Redeemer of all who believe. But here again, vast multitudes do not believe this. They reject the very idea that salvation is through a Mediator. Many stumble and fall here.

Third, the gospel proclaims:

That Jesus of Nazareth is this promised Savior.

He is the Christ, the Son of God, the only name under heaven by which we must be saved. This is where the Jews especially stumbled, refusing to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Their great sin of unbelief was not failing to believe He died for them, but **denying that He was the promised Redeemer at all**.

Fourth, the gospel calls us:

To trust and rest in Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Savior.

To believe that in Him there is plenteous redemption, and that He can save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him. This faith rests in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice—not in a knowledge of whether He died for me in particular.

This step demands deep conviction of sin, a sense of helplessness, an understanding of God's justice, and a glimpse of His grace. It's no wonder so few ever come this far. Without the Spirit of God, no one can reach even the earlier steps, much less this.

Fifth, and only after the former acts of faith are real and active in the soul:

The believer is called to lay hold of Christ personally—
*To trust that He died for **me**, and that in His blood there is redemption for **my soul**.*

And now we can say this with confidence: **Everyone who has come this far in true faith can be assured** that Christ died for them. Why? Because **faith itself** is a gift of God, and He gives it only

to His elect. So no one ever truly believes in Christ who was not first chosen and for whom Christ did not die.

So then, there is **never a point** in gospel preaching where someone is commanded to believe a lie. No one is ever called to believe "Christ died for you" before they have been brought, by the Spirit, through the steps of gospel conviction, trust, and surrender. And all who are brought to this final step can rest assured that **Christ did, in fact, die for them**.

Even the **Apostles' Creed**, the ancient summary of Christian belief, follows this order: the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting are last. Before those come the truths about God, Christ, and the gospel.

Therefore, the claim that people have *no object of faith* unless Christ died for all is plainly false. The gospel offers real, sufficient truth to be believed at every stage. The failure lies not in the object, but in the unbelief of the hearer.

Conclusion:

This structured understanding of faith will guide us in answering the objections that follow. Once the nature and order of saving faith are rightly understood, the truth of Christ's definite atonement for His elect will be seen to shine all the more clearly.

Book IV, Chapter 2

Answering the Objections to Christ's Definite Atonement

We now come to examine the **objections** that are commonly raised against the doctrine we have clearly confirmed from Scripture—that Christ died only for the elect, and effectually secured their salvation. These objections are made with much noise and boldness, and we'll now begin to answer them directly.

But before we go any further, I want to offer **three cautions**:

First, a Personal Note of Caution

If it were up to me, I would **prefer never to mention** these objections at all. Not because they're difficult—far from it—but because I would rather not give any attention to arguments that aim to tear down the truth of God. They deserve to be buried in silence.

However, in **times like ours**, where error spreads freely and many people are deceived, I believe it's necessary to **expose these arguments** so that believers may be guarded against them. Like a physician who shows a sample of poison in order to offer the antidote, I will lay out the arguments and then refute them by the light of Scripture.

Second, Don't Be Swayed by Mere Words

When you hear one of these objections, don't let the wording alone influence your thinking. Don't let it **imprint itself on your mind** until you've carefully weighed the text and the reasoning.

Remember how **strongly and repeatedly** the truth of Christ's definite atonement has been proven—from many Scriptures and with clear argumentation. So be patient. Evaluate everything carefully. And as Paul exhorted:

> "Test all things; hold fast what is good." (1 Thess. 5:21)

Third, Stay Focused on What Matters

As we move through the objections, be alert to the **real heart of the debate**. Don't be distracted by clever words or rhetorical flourishes. Many arguments are filled with "big talk" and showy language, but have little or no substance. Stay focused on the **actual disagreement** and what really matters in the controversy.

Two Kinds of Objections

The objections made against the definite atonement of Christ fall into **two main categories**:

1. **Objections from Scripture (misinterpreted)**
2. **Objections from Reason (misused)**

We'll start with the first, which are **objections from Scripture**—passages that are misapplied or misunderstood to argue that Christ died for all people.

Even our strongest opponents (such as the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort) group these objections into **three main categories**:

1. Passages that Speak of "the World"

These include any verses where it is said that **Christ died for the world**, or where the word *world* is used in the context of redemption. These are often cited to suggest a universal atonement.

2. Passages That Speak of "All" or "Every Man"

These are verses that refer to **Christ dying for all**, or God **desiring all to be saved**. They are used to support the idea of a general or unlimited atonement.

3. Passages That Seem to Say Christ Died for Those Who Perish

These are perhaps the most commonly used by our opponents—verses where it appears that **Christ bought or died for people who end up lost**. They are used to argue that the atonement was not effectual or limited to the elect.

From these three categories, the universalists draw **three main arguments**, or rather, **sophisms**—clever but unsound lines of reasoning. With the Lord's help, we will now walk through them carefully and thoroughly, considering each Scripture used to support them, and **clearly showing why they do not teach what our opponents claim**.

I. The First Objection: Christ Died for "the World"

This objection is based on the use of the term **"world"** in Scripture and is put forward with great confidence, especially by those who have not thought deeply on these matters.

The argument usually goes like this:

> "Christ is said to be given because of God's love for the world (John 3:16); he gave his life for the life of the world (John 6:51); he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2); he takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29); he is the Savior of the world (John 4:42); God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). Therefore, Christ died for all people, every individual without exception."

This is often followed by the bold claim that there is no adequate answer to this from those who affirm particular redemption.

But while they may be eager to boast, we are not at all intimidated. We **deny the conclusion**—that Christ died for every individual—**and we will show why** this conclusion cannot follow from the premises.

The defenders of universal redemption try to prove their case in two ways:

1. **By appealing to reason and logic**
2. **By appealing to the specific use of the word "world" in Scripture**

We will examine both.

1. The Logical Argument from the Word "World"

Their reasoning often follows this structure:

Major premise: The world includes all people, every individual without exception.
Minor premise: Christ died for the world.
Conclusion: Therefore, Christ died for all individuals.

Answer: This is logically flawed due to **equivocation**—that is, the word "world" is being used with **two different meanings** in the argument. In the first premise, "world" refers to the **world as a container**—the entire planet or human race. In the second premise, "world" refers to the **inhabitants within it**. This creates four terms in the syllogism, violating the rules of logic and rendering the conclusion invalid.

Unless they want to conclude that Christ died for **the physical earth itself**—which would be absurd—this line of reasoning falls apart.

Therefore, the argument must be reframed not on the bare meaning of the word "world," but on its **specific usage in the Scriptures**, particularly in those texts that mention Christ's death. The new form would be:

> "The word *world* in Scripture always means 'every individual without exception.'
> Christ is said to die for the world.
> Therefore, Christ died for every individual."

Answer: The first premise is either **universal**—meaning "*world* always means all individuals"—or **particular**—meaning "in some places it means all individuals."

If they mean **always**, then the premise is **false**. Scripture uses the word *world* in **many different senses**, as we have shown earlier.

If they mean **sometimes**, the syllogism becomes:

> "In some places, *world* means all individuals.
> In some places, Christ is said to die for the world.
> Therefore, Christ died for all individuals."

This is even worse. It concludes something **universal** from **particular** premises. This kind of argument has no logical force.

Therefore, to make a serious case, they would need to demonstrate this:

> "In every passage where Christ is said to die for the world, the term *world* unquestionably means every individual person."
> If that were true, their conclusion would follow.

But we **deny this outright**, and we are ready to test this claim by examining **each of those key passages in context**.

The burden of the universalist's argument rests entirely on **how the word "world" is used in a handful of passages**. But unless it can be proven that *world* in those passages means every person without exception, their argument fails. And as we shall see, in none of those key passages is that what the word means.

Therefore, the assertion that Christ died for all simply because he died "for the world" is a **logical fallacy**, a **misreading of**

Scripture, and a **misunderstanding of the biblical use of language**.

Answering the First Argument for Universal Redemption: John 3:16

We now come to the first and most popular argument for universal redemption, based on the word **"world"**—an argument often used with great confidence, especially by those who have caught hold of the term and assumed the rest follows. But if you ask them to actually explain their reasoning, they often have little more to say than "the world means everyone," without truly understanding what they claim.

Let us then examine the strength of this argument—such as it is—and consider how it stands up to careful reasoning and close attention to Scripture.

The Argument

The universalist argument can be summarized like this:

> *Christ is given out of the love God has for "the world" (John 3:16); he gave his life for the life of "the world" (John 6:51); he is the propitiation for the sins of "the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Therefore, Christ died for all people without exception.*

The conclusion they draw is that God has such a love for every single person that He sent His Son to die for them all equally. They claim this is self-evident and beyond dispute.

But in fact, this argument is weak and misleading. Let us look at **John 3:16**, which they take as their chief proof, and examine its meaning.

John 3:16: A Text for Universal Redemption?

> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This is the text most often used to support the idea that Christ died for every individual. Yet we are persuaded that this passage, rightly understood, supports the very opposite: it upholds the particular and effectual redemption of God's elect.

To make this clear, I'll lay out two paraphrases of the verse:

1. The Universalist's Interpretation (in summary):

> "God had a general love or goodwill—a kind of natural inclination—toward all people, including every individual ever born or who will be born, whether they are in heaven or hell. Because of this universal love, He gave His Son—not with a definite intention to save anyone in particular, but simply to make salvation possible—so that whoever, from among this universal group, would believe in Him, might be saved."

Key features of this interpretation:

- **God's love** is seen as a general affection or goodwill toward all.
- **The world** is taken to mean every single individual.
- **Christ's giving** is not intended to actually save anyone in particular, but merely to make salvation available.
- **"Whoever believes"** is viewed as a universal invitation, not tied to election.
- **Eternal life** is not the intended goal of God's action, only a possible outcome if someone believes.

This interpretation makes Christ's death **non-effectual** for anyone unless they meet the condition of belief, and even that belief is not secured by the atonement itself. It removes God's eternal purpose and places all the weight of salvation on man's response.

2. The Biblical and Reformed Interpretation:

> "God the Father so loved the world—that is, not just Israel, but sinful people from every tribe and nation, Jews and Gentiles alike—**that He gave His only Son**, sending Him into the world to accomplish a definite work of redemption. He did this to secure salvation for all who believe—**that is, the elect**—so that none of them would perish but would have everlasting life."

Key features:

- **God's love** is not a vague goodwill, but a definite saving love for His chosen people.

- **The world** refers to people from every nation and class, not just the Jews. It is a **universal in scope**, but not **universal in individual application**.
- **The giving of the Son** is not just an offer—it is a mission with a purpose: to save the people the Father gave Him (John 6:37–39).
- **"Whoever believes"** is not a broad condition inviting all equally to save themselves, but the description of those to whom God gives faith (Phil. 1:29). It is the **means** by which the elect come to enjoy what Christ has purchased.
- **Eternal life** is the very reason the Son was given—not a possibility, but the intended and certain outcome for all who believe.

Why This Matters

The text is not saying that God loved every individual alike and sent His Son in the hopes that some might believe. It is saying that **God loved His people across the nations**—the elect scattered throughout the world—and, because of that love, He **gave His Son to save them**. The goal of this giving was not to make salvation a mere possibility, but to **actually secure eternal life** for those who believe—whom He foreknew and chose from before the foundation of the world (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:4–5).

The Universalist claim that John 3:16 teaches that Christ died for every individual without exception collapses under careful examination. The term "world" does not necessitate "every single person." And even if it did, the text still limits salvation to **those**

who believe—and we know from elsewhere that **only those whom the Father draws will come** (John 6:44), and **only those appointed to eternal life believe** (Acts 13:48).

Therefore, **John 3:16 is not a text for universal redemption, but a glorious summary of God's saving purpose toward His elect among all nations**.

Clarifying the Meaning of John 3:16

A Reformed Explanation of God's Love, the World, and the Purpose of Christ's Death

To rightly understand John 3:16 and its bearing on the extent of Christ's atonement, we must take careful note of the key terms and phrases. Each word is rich in meaning and crucial to rightly grasping the mind of the Holy Spirit in this verse.

1. What is the "love" of God?

When the passage says, *"God so loved the world,"* it refers not to a general affection or vague benevolence toward all people, but to a **definite act of God's will**—a purposeful love which moved Him to give His Son for the salvation of sinners. This is the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever known: *"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

Now, we must be precise here. We do not say that God's purpose in sending Christ is **entirely subordinate** to His love for the elect, as though His love for them were the *ultimate* end and Christ's mission a mere means to that end. Rather, both Christ's mission and God's

love for the elect serve **one supreme purpose**: the glorification of God through mercy and justice displayed in redemption. But in terms of how we perceive and understand this relationship, God's love led to the gift of Christ.

> **True love is to will the greatest good for another**—and God willed the greatest good for His people in giving them His Son.

2. What does "the world" mean?

Here we affirm that "the world" refers to **God's elect**—not viewed here as the elect explicitly, but rather as lost and perishing sinners **scattered throughout the world**, in every nation and people group, Jew and Gentile alike.

This usage of *"world"* emphasizes that **God's saving love is not confined to one nation** (as Israel believed), but is global in its scope. He has a people chosen from *all tribes, languages, peoples, and nations* (Rev. 5:9), and Christ was given for them, wherever they are found in the world.

> In short, *"the world"* refers to **the elect viewed in their lost condition**, scattered across the nations—not to all humanity without exception.

3. What does "whoever believes" mean?

This phrase is often misunderstood. It is not a **condition** that makes God's love effective, nor does it divide the "world" into believers and non-believers, as if belief is the deciding factor in the intention of God.

Rather, *"whoever believes"* is a **description** of those for whom Christ was given. They are the ones in whom God works faith (Phil. 1:29), the ones drawn by the Father (John 6:44), and given to the Son (John 6:37). God's intention in giving His Son is to **save believers**—and only believers.

> This is not a statement of who may believe, but of **who shall receive the benefits of Christ's death**: those who believe.

4. What is the intended result: "should not perish but have everlasting life"?

This phrase tells us the **certain and specific purpose** of God in giving His Son: that all those who believe (i.e., the elect) will not perish but will absolutely have eternal life.

God's design in giving Christ was not to merely make salvation possible for all, but to **actually secure** salvation for those He had purposed to save. Christ did not die to create a hypothetical chance at life, but to **accomplish life** for those given to Him.

> Eternal life is not a possible outcome—it is the *guaranteed result* of Christ's death for those who believe.

Here, then, is a faithful and biblically grounded understanding of John 3:16:

> *"God the Father, in His infinite and sovereign love, purposed to save a people for Himself from among the ruined mass of humanity. These He called 'the world'—not limited to Jews, but drawn from every nation. In love, He gave His only Son to live, die, and rise again for them, that all who believe (those whom*

He enables to believe) would not perish in their sins, but would inherit eternal life as the sure result of His redemptive work."

This understanding holds together the **grace of God**, the **definite purpose of the atonement**, and the **certainty of its effect**. It also preserves the glory of Christ's death—not as an ineffectual offer to all, but as a powerful redemption for many (Matt. 20:28).

The First Key Issue: What Kind of "Love" Is This?

The first and most critical question in understanding John 3:16 is this: **What is meant by the love of God**? Everyone agrees that God's love is the cause of sending His Son, but there is deep disagreement over the nature of that love.

The Universalist View:

Those who advocate for universal atonement claim that the love mentioned here is a **natural affection or general disposition** in God toward all people. It is, they say, a kind of innate kindness or benevolence that moved Him to provide a possible remedy for mankind's sin—making salvation available to everyone if they will believe.

The Reformed View:

We believe this interpretation is mistaken. When the text says, *"God so loved the world,"* it refers **not to an emotional affection or**

natural inclination, but rather to a **sovereign act of God's eternal will**—His **deliberate and effective purpose** to do good to sinners. It is this divine love—*"to will the good"*—that led to the actual giving of the Son for the salvation of those He loved.

> **This is not general compassion. It is God's sovereign, saving love.**

Why We Reject the Notion of a "Natural Affection" in God

There are several serious reasons why we cannot accept the idea that God has a universal, undirected emotional love or natural inclination to save every human being.

1. Such a Natural Affection Would Imply Imperfection in God

If God had a natural desire to save all people—a desire that is never fulfilled in the vast majority—it would mean His love is frustrated and unaccomplished. But **God lacks nothing**. He is **perfectly blessed** and **infinitely satisfied** in Himself. To suggest that He eternally desires something He never accomplishes is to rob Him of His glory and self-sufficiency.

> A frustrated desire in God implies weakness, not strength.
>
> Yet our God *"does all that He pleases"* (Ps. 115:3). His love never fails.

2. If God Desires to Save All, Why Doesn't He Do So?

If God truly loves every person in the same way—and sent His Son with the desire to save them all—why is salvation not universal?

Our opponents respond, "Because God, in His wisdom, chooses not to exercise His power to bring them all to faith."

But then we ask: **What kind of love is this that desires what His wisdom refuses to accomplish?** Would any of us call that perfect love?

> If God loves all equally and Christ died for all, then the failure of so many to be saved must mean either that God's love fails or that His purpose in Christ is thwarted. Neither of these can be true.

3. The Bible Nowhere Attributes This Kind of Universal Love to God

Scripture never teaches that God has a **natural emotional affection** toward every person in exactly the same way. On the contrary, it always speaks of God's love as **free, sovereign, and discriminating**—*"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy"* (Rom. 9:15). Every act of mercy and grace comes not from natural inclination, but from **the sovereign will of God**.

If God's love for sinners were a mere natural response to misery, then:

- He would love **devils** just as much as humans;

- He would love the **damned** just as much as the **redeemed**;
- And He would owe grace to all, removing its very nature as a gift.

But God's mercy is not owed—it is **free and sovereign**, as taught throughout the entire Bible.

The True Meaning of God's Love in John 3:16

Therefore, we affirm that the **"love"** spoken of in John 3:16 is:

- **Not** a universal, emotional inclination to every human being;
- **But** a deliberate, sovereign act of God's eternal will,
- Rooted in His purpose to save His people through Jesus Christ.

It is the kind of love the Bible elsewhere describes as particular and effectual:

> *"Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her"* (Eph. 5:25).
> *"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated"* (Rom. 9:13).
> *"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"* (John 13:1).

This love is **not common to all** but is **redemptive, powerful, and saving**.

We've already shown that the love referred to in John 3:16 is not a general emotion or vague goodwill, but rather a purposeful, saving love. Here, we go further to prove that this love is **God's special,**

electing love, not a universal affection extended to all humanity without distinction.

1. This Is the Greatest Love God Has Ever Shown to Sinners

The love spoken of in this verse is **the most exalted, most remarkable expression of divine love** in all of Scripture. That's why the verse begins with the emphatic words: *"God so loved…"* The Greek word translated "so" doesn't mean *how much* but *in what way*—in this manner, in this astonishing way.

Now observe the details:

- **"God"** – This is the self-sufficient, sovereign Lord, under no obligation to save anyone.
- **"Loved"** – This is not sentimental affection, but the settled purpose of God to do eternal good to undeserving sinners.
- **"The world"** – Not the world of universal humanity, but those whom God chooses out of the world, scattered in every tribe, tongue, and nation.
- **"That He gave…"** – God did not merely speak or send a message. He *gave*—and what did He give?
- **"His only begotten Son"** – Not just a prophet or angel, but His eternal Son, His unique and beloved One, who is Himself God of God, Light of Light.

And what was the aim of this giving?

"That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

This is not general goodwill. This is sovereign love with a saving purpose, and it is aimed at actual, eternal salvation—not just a possibility, but a certainty.

If this is indeed **the highest expression of God's love**, then surely it cannot be the same love He supposedly has for all people without distinction, many of whom perish forever. The love that leads to eternal life is of a different kind—**a love that saves**.

2. Scripture Says This Is the Love God Commends to Believers

God doesn't commend a vague general love to our attention. He points us to the love that **actually saves**, as in:

- **Romans 5:8** – "God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- **1 John 4:9–10** – "In this the love of God was made manifest among us… He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

These passages make clear: **God's love is displayed in real salvation**, not in a general desire that never comes to pass. The love of John 3:16 is this very love—not a possibility of love, but a redeeming act of love.

3. Love Is Revealed in God's Will to Do Good—Not in a Mere Desire for Good

God's love is always effective. It is not an emotion. It is His will to bless—and it always accomplishes that purpose. As theologians say, *"To love is to will good to another."*

So here's the key: **Only those who actually receive the eternal life promised in John 3:16** can be said to be the true objects of this love.

Christ did not come merely to make salvation possible; He came *to save* (Luke 19:10). And so this love cannot be general—it is particular and effectual.

4. The Love That Gave Christ Also Secures Every Other Good

Paul says in **Romans 8:32**:

> *"He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?"*

So then, **the love that gave Christ also gives everything else necessary for salvation—faith, repentance, perseverance, and glory.**

If John 3:16 referred to a love God has for all people, then everyone should receive these blessings. But clearly, not all do. Therefore, **the love in John 3:16 must be limited to the elect**, who receive these gifts.

5. The Word for Love Here Means a Settled Delight and Purpose

The Greek word *agapaō* refers to a purposeful, covenantal love—not a shifting emotional impulse. It means to so love someone that you are committed to their good and rest in that love.

This makes it utterly incompatible with the idea that God loves some whom He eternally wills not to save. **How can God "so love" the world, and yet will not to give saving grace to the vast majority of mankind?**

A love that fails to save is not the love of John 3:16.

Who Is the "World" That God Loved in John 3:16?

The next point of disagreement in the interpretation of John 3:16 is over the **object of God's love**, which is described by the word *"world."*

What Do Universalists Say?

Those who advocate for universal redemption insist that "world" here means **all people without exception**—every individual who has ever lived or ever will live. They believe this universal love moved God to send Christ with the intention of saving all.

But what do they offer in support of this interpretation?

Very little—other than the word *world* itself. That's their entire case. No compelling proof is ever offered from the **context of the verse**, or from the **surrounding doctrines of Scripture**, or from any meaningful analysis of how the word *world* is used elsewhere. Their

interpretation of the word stands isolated, unexamined, and unjustified.

This is weak reasoning. As shown earlier, the word *world* in Scripture has many different meanings, and it rarely—if ever—means "every individual without exception."

What Do We Say?

We affirm that the *world* here refers not to **every person**, but to **God's elect**, viewed as scattered across the nations of the world—Jews and Gentiles alike.

We do not say that the elect are here considered *as elect*, in the strictest theological sense. Rather, the word *world* highlights the **grace of God breaking out of the boundaries of Israel** to reach sinners everywhere, even those once excluded from the promises.

This interpretation aligns perfectly with the purpose of John's Gospel: to show that Christ is the Savior not just of Israel, but of God's people everywhere.

Answering the Weak Objections

Now, what arguments do our opponents raise against this interpretation?

Surprisingly, **they don't even attempt to prove their own claim**—that *world* must mean "all without exception." Instead, they try (unsuccessfully) to discredit the idea that *world* could refer to the elect.

Let's walk through their three common objections:

Objection 1: "If *world* means *elect*, then putting the word *elect* into the verse would create absurd consequences."

They suggest that if we substitute *elect* for *world*, the text would read like this:

> "God so loved the elect, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish."

Then they say: "See? That must mean some of the elect might not believe, and therefore might perish."

Answer: This is a distortion of what we're actually saying.

First, it is not our position that the elect are here considered as elect, but as **sinners in the world**, in need of saving. Second, even if we read it as they suggest, no absurdity follows. For all the elect **will** believe—God ensures that they do by giving them faith. There is no hint in the verse that any of the elect might fail to believe.

So the so-called "absurd consequence" vanishes as soon as you understand how God's grace actually works.

Objection 2: "But the word *whosoever* is distributive—it separates the world into believers and unbelievers."

They argue that if God loved the *world*, and *whosoever believes* is a subset of that world, then some must be excluded from the benefits of that love—therefore, the love must have been universal.

Answer: Not so. The word *whosoever* in this verse **does not define who God loves**, but **reveals the goal of His giving Christ**—namely, that believers (whoever they are) should not perish.

Put simply:

> The verse does not say that God loved every single person, but that God so loved the world (His people among the nations), that He gave His Son to save **believers** out of that world.

Whosoever believes defines the means by which God's saving purpose is fulfilled—not the extent of His original intention.

What the Verse Actually Says

- **God's love** in this verse is **not universal good-will**, but **sovereign, saving love**.
- The **world** is not all without exception, but **God's people among all nations**, previously excluded from covenant privileges.
- The **purpose** of sending the Son is not to create a bare possibility of salvation, but to **actually secure eternal life** for believers.

Positive Defense of Our View

Let us now affirm, with clarity, the strength of our own interpretation:

1. **The word "world" here is meant to emphasize the global scope of God's purpose**, in contrast to the former narrowness of covenant blessings being restricted to Israel.

2. The "world" signifies **those elect sinners whom God has purposed to save**, though they are scattered across the nations. This is how Christ speaks elsewhere:

   > "I came to gather the children of God scattered abroad" (John 11:52).

3. There is no contradiction or absurdity in reading the verse as:

   > "God so loved His people in all the world, that He gave His Son, that all who believe might be saved."

4. The intention of God in giving His Son is perfectly fulfilled. The elect will believe, and they will not perish. **There is no failure in God's purpose.**

Let the reader remember: **Context governs meaning.** The word *world* in John 3:16 does not override the countless places in Scripture where Christ is said to die for **His sheep**, **His people**, **His church**, and **those given to Him by the Father**.

John 3:16, rightly understood, is no friend to universal redemption. Rather, it beautifully declares the **sovereign, saving love of God**, in sending Christ not merely to make salvation possible, but to **secure it certainly** for all His believing people across the whole world.

1. The Nature of God's Love in This Verse Excludes a Universal Application

We've already shown that the love described here is no vague or general goodwill. It is the **highest and most glorious expression of divine love**—an eternal act of God's will, the very cause for which He gave His Son, and the sure source of salvation to those who are loved.

If that's true, then this love **cannot be toward every person**. Otherwise, we would be forced to conclude that all people are saved—which contradicts the rest of Scripture.

The *world* God loves here must be the world of His people—the world of those whom He saves. It cannot mean "all without exception."

2. The "World" in Verse 17 Clearly Refers to the Saved—So It Must in Verse 16 Also

Look at the very next verse:

> "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

Here we learn what the *purpose* of God's love was in sending Christ: **salvation**. But if *world* here includes those who perish, then God's saving purpose has failed—something Scripture never allows.

This confirms that the "world" in verse 16 refers to **those who are actually saved through Christ**—His people scattered across the nations.

3. Scripture Often Uses "World" as a Way of Referring to God's Elect

It's not uncommon for the Bible to use the word *world* or similar universal expressions—like "all flesh," "all nations," or "all people"—to refer specifically to **the elect**. Why?

Because the elect are found throughout the whole world. Let's look at some examples:

- **John 4:42** – Jesus is called the "Savior of the world." But is He the Savior of those who perish? No—He is only the Savior of those who are saved.
- **John 6:33** – Jesus gives life "to the world." Yet elsewhere He says He gives eternal life only to His sheep (John 10:27–28).
- **Romans 4:13** – Abraham is called "heir of the world," which is clearly explained to mean the **father of the faithful**, not of unbelievers.
- **Romans 11:12** – The fall of the Jews brings "riches to the world," meaning the **Gentile believers** now brought into God's covenant.
- **Colossians 1:6** – The gospel is bearing fruit "in all the world," meaning among the elect from every nation.
- **2 Corinthians 5:19** – "God was reconciling the world to himself," which must refer to those whose sins are not counted against them—*only believers*, as Romans 4:8 teaches.

So it is no stretch to read *world* in John 3:16 as referring to **God's chosen people** among all nations.

Why would Scripture use such broad terms to describe them?

- To contrast **redeemed humanity** with the fallen angels, who are not redeemed (Heb. 2:16).
- To silence **Jewish exclusivism**, which wrongly assumed that God's blessings were for Israel alone.
- To show that the new covenant breaks through all national boundaries.
- To magnify the grace of God, who chose and loved a people who, in themselves, were just as worldly, sinful, and lost as the rest.

4. If God So Loved All People, Why Does He Not Reveal Christ to All?

This is a vital question.

If God truly loved **every individual** so much as to give His Son for them, why does He leave so many in complete ignorance of Christ?

Multitudes have never heard the gospel, even though God ordains when and where every person lives (Acts 17:26). Would a loving Father withhold from His children the knowledge of the One He gave to save them?

It is unthinkable that the God who "so loved" should leave the vast majority of people without even the opportunity to hear of that love. This fact alone disqualifies the universalist interpretation.

5. To Say God Loves All Equally Leads to Absurd and Unbiblical Conclusions

Let's assume, for argument's sake, that "world" means every person ever born. Then we must accept the following consequences:

- That God **loves people whom He also eternally hates** (cf. Mal. 1:2–3; Rom. 9:13).
- That the **love of God fails**, being fruitless in countless cases.
- That **Christ is given to people who never hear of Him**, and therefore perish without any benefit from His death.
- That **God gives His Son** to people without giving them **faith** to receive Him.
- That God's love is **mutable**—either changing over time, or continuing eternally toward those in hell.
- That **Romans 8:32** is false, which says God gives "all things" with His Son to those for whom He gave Him.
- That **God does not know who will believe**, or else that He intends salvation for people whom He knows will never believe and whom He has no intention to save.

To accept these conclusions is to overthrow the character of God and the plain teaching of Scripture.

What Does "Whoever Believes" Mean in John 3:16?

The third point of disagreement in the interpretation of John 3:16 concerns the words, *"that whoever believes in him."* What do these words actually mean, and what do they tell us about the scope and purpose of God's love in giving His Son?

We believe that this phrase—*"that whoever believes"*—**describes the way in which God's elect come to enjoy the benefits of His love and the redemption Christ provides**. It does not define or limit the group of people God loves, but instead reveals the **means** God has appointed for salvation: **faith in Jesus Christ**.

Why "Whoever Believes" Does *Not* Mean "Anyone and Everyone"

Some argue that this phrase indicates a universal offer and intention—that God gave His Son for every person, and now leaves it to each individual to choose whether or not to receive Him.

But this interpretation cannot stand for several reasons:

1. If the Love of God Aims at Saving All, but Only Some Believe, What Determines the Outcome?

Let's assume that God loved *everyone* and sent Christ for *everyone*, but only some are saved. Then we must ask: **What makes the difference?** Is it something in the individual person—some quality, choice, or effort?

If so, then **people are making themselves to differ** from others by their own will or ability. But Scripture explicitly denies this:

"What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7)

The only alternative is that the difference comes from **God's will**—that He freely chooses whom He will bring to faith and salvation. If that is the case (and it is), then we must admit that **God never intended the salvation of everyone**, but only of those whom He would bring to faith.

So the universal interpretation collapses on itself. It either undermines grace, or contradicts God's sovereignty.

2. These Words Describe *the Way* the Elect Are Saved—Not *the Extent* of Christ's Mission

"Whoever believes" simply means that **God saves all who believe**, and that **faith is the means** by which salvation comes. It does **not** imply that God loved every person or intended to save everyone. Rather, it reveals the method He has ordained: **He gives eternal life to believers**—and *only* believers.

But who will believe? Those whom the Father draws (John 6:44), those who are appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48), those for whom the Son laid down His life (John 10:15–16).

This means that God's love, in giving His Son, is **intentionally directed toward those who will believe**. And since faith itself is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29), this affirms that His redemptive love is **particular**, not general.

3. The Fruit of God's Love Is Eternal Life —Which Is Not Given to All

Jesus says that the result of believing is **"eternal life."** But if Christ was given equally for those who never believe and those who do, then His death must have been **in vain** for many. Is this the love of God—to send His Son for countless people and then leave them in darkness, never granting them faith or salvation?

That would make God's love **ineffective**, His plan **uncertain**, and Christ's death **ultimately fruitless** for most.

But the true gospel teaches the opposite:

> "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep… and they shall never perish." (John 10:11, 28)

Therefore, It Follows That:

- God **did not give His Son** for those who never believe.
- He certainly **did not give His Son** for those who never hear the gospel and thus never have the opportunity to believe.
- He **did not give His Son** for those whom He has determined not to draw to Christ by the power of the Spirit.

All of this reinforces the biblical truth that **God's love is particular and saving**, not general and ineffectual. The love that gives Christ results in eternal life for those who believe—and those who believe are **those whom God draws to His Son**.

Final Appeal to the Reader

So, dear reader, weigh carefully these interpretations. Ask yourself:

- Is the love described in John 3:16 **a vague goodwill** that can result in the eternal ruin of those "loved"?
- Or is it the **sovereign, effectual, saving love** of God toward His elect, by which He gives His Son to accomplish and secure their salvation?

If the latter is true—as Scripture clearly teaches—then the idea of a **general ransom** for all, which fails for most, is shown to be **an empty claim**, unsupported by the very text most often used to promote it.

The glorious truth is this: **God so loved His people**—lost, undeserving, and scattered throughout the world—that He gave His only Son for them. And through faith, which He Himself grants, they shall not perish but have everlasting life.

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ… just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:3–4)

Book IV, Chapter 3

Clarifying the Remaining Scriptures Often Used to Support Universal Redemption

After John 3:16, the next verse most often cited to support the idea that Christ died for everyone without exception is **1 John 2:1–2**, which says:

> *"If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."*

Many who argue for a universal atonement place great weight on this verse. Their interpretation hinges on this one line: *"Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."* They claim this clearly proves that Jesus died for all people, without exception. Their argument comes in two parts:

1. **Plain language**: They say, "What else could 'the whole world' possibly mean except everyone in the world?"

2. **Contrast**: They argue that the verse first refers to believers ("our sins"), and then expands to include everyone else ("the whole world"), implying a universal scope.

At first glance, this seems convincing. But let's look more closely, and in doing so, we'll show how this interpretation misunderstands the text, its context, and the biblical use of the phrase *"whole world."*

A Brief but Sufficient Response

Even if we answered in the simplest way possible, we could say that the phrase *"the whole world"* doesn't need to mean "every individual without exception," but rather "people from all over the world"—from every tribe, language, and nation—not just from one group, such as the Jews. In this sense, it mirrors the language of **Revelation 5:9**, where Christ is said to have redeemed people "from every tribe and language and people and nation."

That answer alone would be enough to undercut the misuse of the verse. But because this verse is often held up as the strongest support for universal redemption, we'll look more closely to understand its true meaning.

To Understand the Verse, We Must Consider Three Things:

1. **Who is John writing to?**
   He is writing to believers—those who have trusted in Christ, as is clear from the opening of the letter (1 John 1:1–4).

2. **What is his goal in this passage?**
   John's purpose here is *pastoral assurance*. He wants to comfort believers who may fall into sin. He reminds them that Jesus Christ is their advocate before the Father, and that He has made full satisfaction for their sins.

3. **What do the key phrases mean?**
   Let's look at the two main phrases:

   - **"Propitiation"** means a wrath-bearing sacrifice. Christ is the one who, by His death, turned away God's righteous wrath from sinners.

- **“The whole world”**—what does that mean here? Is it meant to signify all people without exception? Or is it pointing to something else?

Making Sense of “The Whole World”

We argue that *“the whole world”* here refers not to every individual, but to God’s people scattered throughout the whole world—not just to Jewish believers like John and his immediate readers, but also to Gentile believers in every nation.

John is saying this:

> “Jesus is not only the wrath-bearing sacrifice for our sins (we Jewish believers), but also for those of the whole world (believers everywhere else—Gentiles included).”

This fits the context and the language used throughout the New Testament. Consider:

- In **John 11:51–52**, the death of Jesus is said to be for the children of God “scattered abroad.”
- In **1 John 5:19**, the “whole world lies in the power of the evil one”—clearly not every single person without exception.
- In **Revelation 5:9**, the redeemed are those “from every tribe and language and people and nation”—not all people, but all kinds of people.

Why This Verse Does Not Teach Universal Atonement

1. **The love of God spoken of here is a saving love**—the kind that sent Christ to actually atone for sin, not merely to make salvation a possibility. But not all are saved, and not all benefit from His atonement.

2. **The intention of the passage is assurance for believers**—not a statement about God's general disposition to the world.

3. **If Christ is the propitiation (i.e., actual atonement) for every single person,** then all would be saved—because God's wrath would be satisfied for them all. But Scripture and experience teach that this is not the case.

4. **"World" is used in Scripture in many different ways**, as already shown—sometimes for the elect, sometimes for the wicked, sometimes for Gentiles in contrast to Jews. The context must guide us.

Clarifying 1 John 2:2: To Whom Was the Epistle Written?

To rightly understand any passage of Scripture, especially one as contested as *1 John 2:2*, it helps immensely to know **to whom the letter was first addressed**. While all Scripture is written for the benefit of the whole Church, many books in the Bible were originally directed to particular people or churches with specific needs or circumstances. This background helps us grasp the author's intent more clearly.

In the case of **1 John**, we're not explicitly told who the first audience was. But we can deduce with strong probability that the letter was

primarily written to **Jewish Christians**, believers from among the **circumcision**. Here's why:

1. John's Apostolic Focus Was to the Jews

According to **Galatians 2:9**, John, along with Peter and James, was commissioned especially to minister to the **circumcision**—that is, to Jewish people. Just as Peter and James wrote letters to Jewish Christians scattered abroad (James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1), it is highly likely that John did likewise.

2. He Writes to Those Who Heard from the Beginning

John often refers to his readers as those who "heard from the beginning" (see 1 John 2:7). This strongly suggests that they were among the earliest hearers of the gospel—those who first received it in Jerusalem and Judea before it spread to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 1–10; Romans 1:16).

3. He Draws a Distinction Between "Us" and "The World"

In 1 John 2:2, John says Christ is the propitiation "for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." By "our sins," he refers to himself and his fellow Jewish believers. "The world" here is not the entire human race without exception, but rather the full number of God's elect scattered throughout the nations (cf. John 11:51–52)—Gentiles as well as Jews. This was a crucial truth for early Jewish believers to grasp, especially given their historic hostility toward Gentiles and assumption that salvation belonged exclusively to Israel.

4. The Warning Against False Teachers

John repeatedly warns his readers about false teachers and antichrists—many of whom, especially in the early church, arose from within **Jewish Christian circles**. "They went out from us," he writes (1 John 2:19), revealing that these deceivers once belonged to the Jewish Christian community before departing from the truth. This supports the view that his original audience was primarily Jewish.

The Real Meaning of "The Whole World" in 1 John 2:2

With this context in view, we can now understand the verse rightly. When John writes, *"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,"* he is not contrasting **believers and unbelievers**, nor is he teaching that Christ died for every individual without exception.

Rather, he is correcting a common **Jewish misunderstanding**—the belief that Messiah's redemption was for the Jews alone. John is saying, in effect:

> "Jesus is not just the atoning sacrifice for us Jewish believers, but also for all others whom God has called to Himself throughout the world."

This is a **universalism of scope**, not of individuals. The gospel is not limited by geography, ethnicity, or language. It reaches beyond the borders of Israel to gather in God's elect from every tribe and tongue.

Understanding 1 John 2:1–2: Christ, Our Advocate and Propitiation

(2) The Purpose of This Passage: Comfort for Sinful Believers

The apostle John writes these words with a clear aim: **to encourage and comfort believers who fall into sin**. His audience is not the world at large, but the church—the "little children" who know the Father (1 John 2:1, 12–13). When he says, *"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,"* he is offering hope to those already united to Christ by faith.

Let's be plain: **this is a word of consolation for Christians**, not for the unbelieving or unrepentant world. Why?

- **First**, only believers have Christ as their Advocate. He does not intercede for the world but for His own (John 17:9).
- **Second**, **consolation is for those who are in Christ**, not for those who remain under God's wrath (John 3:36).
- **Third**, the context is unmistakable: John is addressing those whose sins are already forgiven "for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12), those who already "know the Father."

This means we must read *"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* in a way that preserves that pastoral purpose. If the verse were meant to teach that **Christ died for everyone without exception**, including those who ultimately perish, how would that bring comfort to the

believer? What comfort is it to know that Christ died for those who go to hell?

There is no consolation in knowing Christ died for people who receive no saving benefit from His death. That kind of "redemption" would offer no more hope than what the damned already possess.

But if we understand "the whole world" to mean **believers scattered throughout all nations**, not just Jews (as John, a Jewish apostle, might be expected to clarify), then this passage strengthens the assurance of all God's people, wherever they are found. The point is not the **universality of redemption** in every individual, but the **global extent of the church**.

(3) What Does It Mean That Christ is Our *Propitiation*?

The word John uses here—*propitiation*—is rich in Old Testament meaning. In Greek, the word is *hilasmos*, a rare term found only here and in 1 John 4:10. It points us back to the sacrificial system where the wrath of God was turned away through atonement.

Closely related is the word *hilasterion*, used in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5. There, it refers to the **mercy seat**—the golden covering of the ark of the covenant, overshadowed by cherubim. This mercy seat symbolized how God's wrath against sin was covered through the shedding of blood.

In fact, the Hebrew word for mercy seat, *kapporeth*, comes from a verb meaning "to cover." The covering wasn't merely symbolic; it pointed forward to the **real and effectual atonement made by Christ**. When Paul says that Jesus is the *hilasterion*—the true mercy

seat—he means that Jesus alone covers our guilt and turns away the wrath of God (Romans 3:25).

So what does it mean that Christ is the **propitiation** for our sins?

- It means **He bore the wrath that we deserved**.
- It means **He satisfied divine justice** fully and finally.
- It means **the grounds for our peace with God is Christ's blood alone**, not our performance or penance.

To call Christ our *propitiation* is to declare that God is not only willing but fully **reconciled** to His people in Christ. There is no anger left for those whose sins have been laid on the Lamb of God.

So What Does "Whole World" Mean?

The claim that *"whole world"* must mean every person without exception simply cannot stand when measured against the text's purpose and theological substance.

John is not offering universal consolation to unbelievers. He is strengthening the assurance of **believing Jews** by reminding them that **Christ's atoning work is not limited to their nation alone**, but extends to believers throughout the earth.

That's the true pastoral heart of this passage: **God's love and Christ's sacrifice are not restricted by ethnicity, location, or background—but they are effectual only for those who believe**. His blood truly atones, His intercession truly avails, and His redemption truly saves.

Christ the Propitiation: 1 John 2:2 Unfolded

What Does *Propitiation* Mean?

The key word in this verse is *propitiation*—a rich and vital biblical term that tells us what Christ accomplished by His death. The Greek word used is *hilasmos*, which appears only here and once more in 1 John 4:10. Its verb form, *hilaskomai*, appears in Hebrews 2:17, where Christ is said to have made "reconciliation" for the sins of the people. It is also used in Luke 18:13, where the tax collector cries out, "Be merciful to me," that is, *"Be propitious to me"*—asking God to show mercy by forgiving sin through a sacrifice that satisfies His justice.

This word group has deep Old Testament roots. It corresponds to the Hebrew word *kaphar*, meaning "to cover," as seen in the mercy seat (the *kapporeth*) which sat atop the ark of the covenant. This was where the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement to *cover the law*, satisfying God's justice and reconciling Him to His people.

In the New Testament, we are told that **Jesus Christ Himself is the true mercy seat**—the place where God's wrath is turned away and mercy is poured out (Romans 3:25). He doesn't just bring a sacrifice—**He *is* the sacrifice**, the One who fully satisfies divine justice for His people.

To say Christ is the "propitiation for our sins" means this:

- He has satisfied the wrath of God for our guilt.

- He has fully covered our sins with His blood.
- He has reconciled us to the Father.
- He has secured our pardon.
- He has silenced the law's condemnation forever.

So then, the text teaches that Christ has **effectively removed God's wrath and reconciled sinners to Himself**. And not in theory or in possibility, but in **actual saving application**.

Can This Apply to Every Person Without Exception?

Now we must ask: **Can this reality of propitiation be applied to every single person in the world?**

If Christ is the propitiation for all, then:

- Have the sins of every individual been truly expiated?
- Is God reconciled to all men without exception?
- Are all sinners forgiven?
- Will no one face condemnation for breaking the law?

If the answer to these questions is "yes," then why are not all saved?

The biblical answer is clear: **This is only true of believers**. The apostle John does not say that Christ is a potential propitiation, or a propitiation if people believe. He states it as a fact—Christ *is* the propitiation for our sins. But Scripture also tells us that this benefit

comes **through faith** (Romans 3:25), and that **faith is the gift of God given only to His elect**.

"The Whole World" — Who Are They?

John says Christ is not only the propitiation for "our sins," but also for the sins of the "whole world." Does that mean every individual?

No. The phrase *"whole world"* here refers not to every person without exception, but to **believers throughout the world**—not only among the Jews (to whom John primarily writes), but among all nations.

This is how John uses similar language in his Gospel (John 11:51–52), where he speaks of Christ dying to gather together the children of God who are "scattered abroad." Likewise in Revelation 5:9, Christ's redeeming work gathers people from "every tribe and language and people and nation."

The meaning is this: **Christ is the propitiation not only for us Jewish believers**, but also for **Gentile believers across the globe**. He died to save His people from every corner of the earth.

The Meaning of "The Whole World" in 1 John 2:2

One of the most cited texts for universal atonement is *1 John 2:2*:
"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

Our task is to understand what John means by "the whole world." At first glance, it may seem to imply every single individual without

exception. But when we weigh the phrase carefully, especially how Scripture itself uses it elsewhere, a very different picture emerges.

Let's examine it in three steps.

1. The Phrase "Whole World" Rarely Means Every Individual

The phrase "whole world" (or similar expressions like "all the world") is used multiple times in the New Testament. Yet in almost every instance, it clearly **does not mean every single person on earth**. Here are just a few examples:

- **Colossians 1:6**: Paul says the gospel "has come to you, as indeed in the whole world." But clearly not every person on earth had received the gospel.
- **Romans 1:8**: Paul says the Roman Christians' faith is "proclaimed in all the world." This doesn't mean every human being was talking about it.
- **Luke 2:1**: Caesar's decree that "all the world should be taxed" referred to the Roman Empire, not every single human.
- **Revelation 3:10**: A coming trial is to "come on the whole world," yet believers are promised preservation from it—so it can't refer to every person.

So, unless there is a clear contextual demand, we cannot force the phrase to mean *all without exception*. It more naturally means *people throughout the world*, without restriction to one people group.

2. “Whole World” Often Means Believers from Every Nation

When Scripture speaks of “all the world,” “all nations,” or “all flesh,” it often refers **not to everyone without distinction**, but to **all kinds of people without exception**—especially believers spread across the globe.

Look at these examples:

- **Psalm 22:27**: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD.” Is this everyone? No, it’s believers among the nations.
- **Joel 2:28 / Acts 2:17**: “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” But Peter applies this only to those who repent and believe.
- **Titus 2:11**: “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” But Paul immediately specifies who he means—those who renounce ungodliness and live godly lives (v.12).

So when Scripture says “all nations” or “all flesh,” it often describes the **global extent of the church**, not the universal inclusion of every person. These are **gospel garments** worn by the elect. The same principle applies to “the whole world” in 1 John 2:2—it refers to **God’s people spread across the world**, not all people without distinction.

3. “Whole World” Can Even Refer to the Ungodly—So It’s Context-Dependent

Scripture sometimes uses “whole world” to describe the **world of unbelievers**:

- **1 John 5:19**: “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” contrasted with believers who are “of God.”
- **Revelation 12:9**: The devil deceives “the whole world,” meaning the unbelieving world.

If the phrase can refer to *the ungodly world*, why can’t it, by the same logic, sometimes refer to *the godly world*—God’s elect scattered throughout the nations?

The key is that **the meaning depends on context**, not the bare phrase itself.

Christ the Propitiation for the Whole World: Who Are Meant?

We now come to the heart of the matter: Does *1 John 2:2* teach that Christ is the atoning sacrifice for every single person who ever lived? The answer, when carefully weighed in the light of Scripture and sound reason, is no.

Let’s walk through the reasons plainly.

1. This Verse Speaks of Application, Not Purchase

John tells us that **Christ is the propitiation**, not that he could be, or merely made one available. But Christ becomes our propitiation—

our sin-bearing substitute—not in theory, but **only through faith**, as Paul says in *Romans 3:25*:

> "Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

So this verse deals not with the **accomplishment** of redemption, but its **application**—how sinners actually receive the benefits of Christ's death. And since no one claims that redemption is applied to every single person, it follows that "the whole world" here **cannot** mean every individual.

2. The Consolation Offered Here Is Only for Believers

John's purpose is to comfort troubled consciences. He writes to believers:

> "If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father."

This comfort is not for the unconverted, but for those who already know the Father (cf. verse 13). What comfort would it bring to know Christ died for people who perish anyway? None at all.

The verse, then, must be understood as assuring **believers** that Christ's death is fully sufficient and effectual for their sins—and not just for those within their own nation or background, but for believers throughout the world.

3. The Phrase "Whole World" Cannot Mean "Every Individual"

As already shown, expressions like *all the world*, *all men*, *every nation*, or even *all Judea* rarely, if ever, mean every person without exception. For example:

- *Matthew 3:5* says "all Judea" went out to hear John the Baptist, yet we know the Pharisees rejected him.
- So too in *1 John 2:2*, "the whole world" cannot mean all individuals. Rather, it denotes all kinds of people, from all nations—not all people of every kind.

4. Other Clear Passages Use Similar Phrasing with the Same Meaning

Scripture consistently uses similar expressions to describe **God's elect gathered from all nations**. For instance:

- *John 11:51–52* speaks of Christ dying "not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."
- *Colossians 1:6* describes the gospel bearing fruit "in all the world"—that is, among believers throughout the world.

These passages help interpret *1 John 2:2*, showing that the "whole world" means **believers scattered among the nations**, not all people without distinction.

5. A Universal Propitiation That Fails to Save Cannot Comfort Anyone

If Christ is said to be a propitiation for those who are ultimately lost, what comfort is that to those who believe? Saying Christ *could* save but *might not* is like Joseph telling his starving brothers that there's plenty of grain in Egypt, but offering no guarantee that they'll receive it.

Atonement without application brings no hope. But believers are not left to chance. Christ is their Advocate and their actual Propitiation. His sacrifice covers their guilt and assures their standing before God.

So, Who Is the "Whole World"?

In short, the "whole world" in this passage refers not to every human being, but to **all God's people scattered across the world**—Gentiles as well as Jews, people of every nation and tongue. It is a glorious affirmation of the global scope of Christ's saving work—not in potential, but in power.

This verse, far from supporting a general and ineffectual atonement, confirms the **definite redemption of God's elect** throughout the world.

> *"Christ is the propitiation for our sins"—not for ours only, as Jewish believers, but for all those whom God is gathering from the ends of the earth.*

Objections Considered and Answered

Even after careful explanation, some raise objections against our interpretation of *1 John 2:2*. But, as we have shown, these objections either misunderstand the passage's intent or misapply its language. A few deserve brief attention.

Objection 1

"The apostle writes to comfort people in their fears and doubts. But anyone in the world may be afraid of judgment. Therefore, he must be speaking to all people without exception, that they all might be comforted."

Answer:
True, the apostle's aim is comfort—but **comfort to whom?** Only to those who have an Advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ the righteous (v. 1). That is, only **believers**. Comfort belongs not to all mankind in general, but to the "little children" (v. 1) who know God, who have sins forgiven, and who trust in the Mediator.

A general message of comfort to the unconverted would be both hollow and false. For those outside of Christ, **Scripture never offers assurance**, only a call to repentance and warning of wrath (John 3:36).

So then, the fears and doubts in view are those which **arise in the hearts of believers**—who know their sin and long for assurance of

peace with God. It is to them, and them alone, that Christ is said to be a propitiation.

Objection 2

"All believers are included in the phrase, 'for our sins,' so when John adds, 'for the sins of the whole world,' he must be referring to unbelievers too."

Answer:
This does not follow.

1. In the first phrase, "for our sins," John speaks specifically of **Jewish believers**, with whom he identifies: "we have an advocate." He is addressing believers from the Jewish nation, to whom Christ was first revealed.

2. When he adds "not for ours only," he does not extend the propitiation to unbelievers, but to **other believers**—especially **Gentiles**, scattered throughout the world. It's an expansion in scope (Jews and Gentiles), not in kind (believers and unbelievers).

Even if one were to include **all believers then living** under "our sins," the extension would still only reach to **those yet to believe** in distant places and future times—those Christ prayed for in *John 17:20*:

> "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."

The "whole world," then, refers not to all mankind without exception, but to all God's elect without distinction of nation, age, or class—

those who will believe across all generations and regions of the world.

Christ Gave His Flesh for the Life of the World

John 6:51 – *"The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

This verse is often quoted to argue that Christ intended to give Himself for every person without exception. But notice carefully what Jesus is saying: He gives His flesh—that is, He offers Himself in death—for the life of the world. His purpose is **life**, not mere possibility. His aim in dying is that those for whom He died would receive eternal salvation.

Now ask: Can it be said that Christ gave Himself for the life of those whom He eternally knew would never live—those under the just decree of wrath, already fixed and irreversible? Can it be true that He gave Himself for those who perish in unbelief, contrary to the very life He said He came to give?

Clearly, the "world" here cannot mean every single human being. It must instead refer to God's elect scattered throughout the world—His sheep from every nation, not only the Jews (John 10:15–16). Even if we had no other example, this text alone would prove that "world" in Scripture often means **people from every nation**, not **every person in the world**.

God Reconciling the World to Himself

2 Corinthians 5:19 – *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them."*

Thomas More, among others, appeals to this verse to support the idea of universal redemption. But this is a misreading, as several observations show.

1. The Context Defines the World as Believers

In verse 18, Paul says, *“God reconciled us to himself through Christ.”* In verse 21, he describes these same people as those for whom Christ was *"made sin,"* and who are *"made the righteousness of God in Him."* These cannot be all people universally, for most remain in unbelief and condemnation.

So who is the "world" that God reconciles to Himself? It is the same as the "us" of verse 18—the elect, the believing church, reconciled and justified through Christ.

2. Reconciliation Means Non-Imputation of Sin

This reconciliation is described as *“not counting their trespasses against them.”* That is the very definition of justification (see Rom. 4:6–8). And justification is never said to belong to the whole world without exception. Only those who are in Christ by faith receive this blessing.

If God does not count the sins of the world against them, and this world means every person, then all must be saved—which we know is

not true. But if it means the reconciled people of God, the elect, then the language makes perfect sense.

3. Is This Reconciliation Conditional?

If someone argues that this reconciliation is offered on the condition of faith, we must ask:

- Why is no condition mentioned in the verse?
- Is the condition faith? Then either:
    - God reconciled *believers* to Himself—which is obvious and doesn't need stating.
    - Or God reconciled *unbelievers* to Himself *on condition that they believe*—but this is nonsensical. It would mean, "God reconciled you if you are reconciled."

Reconciliation, in this verse, is **an accomplished fact**—not a possibility depending on human response.

4. The Logical Conclusion

If Christ truly reconciled the world to God, and if reconciliation includes full forgiveness of sins (even unbelief, if it is sin), then the whole world must be saved. But the text is clearly speaking of **the justified people of God**, not every individual in the world.

More's Objection: Two Kinds of Reconciliation?

Thomas More argues for a "double reconciliation":

1. God is reconciled to man through Christ.

2. Man is reconciled to God by the Spirit.

We agree that these two aspects exist—but they are **inseparable and part of the same work**. God does not reconcile people to Himself in Christ without also drawing them to Himself by the Spirit. Everyone for whom God does not impute sin (v. 19), He also makes righteous in Christ (v. 21). There is no halfway reconciliation.

Thus, this passage affirms, rather than denies, that the "world" refers to **the redeemed from every nation**—not every person universally.

Misused Texts in Support of Universal Redemption

We now examine further passages commonly cited to support the idea that Christ died for all without exception. Chief among these are *2 Corinthians 5:14–21* and *John 1:9*. Thomas More, in *The Universality of Free Grace*, builds much of his case upon these, but a closer look shows how fragile his conclusions really are.

1. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself..."

(*2 Corinthians 5:19*)

More argues that this "world" must mean every human being, because in the surrounding context, they are called "men" (v. 11), who must appear before Christ's judgment seat (v. 10), were once "dead" (v. 14), and "ought to live" to Christ (v. 15). From this, he deduces a universal scope to the reconciliation Christ achieved.

But consider:

- **Are not God's elect also "men"?**
  They too will appear before Christ's throne, were dead in sin, and are called to live unto Him. So unless one can prove that God's elect are *not* men, this argument collapses.
  You cannot prove Christ died for all just by proving He died for men—His elect are men too.

More also claims:

- **"Only some are reconciled to God,"** citing verse 18.
  This is plainly false. The text states that God has reconciled **us** to Himself by Christ—without any limiting language. The "us" clearly refers to believers.

- He adds, **"Some are not reconciled,"** citing verse 11.
  But no such statement appears in the text, nor is it implied. This is reading into the text what is not there.

In sum, the passage clearly refers to an actual, effectual reconciliation—a true, accomplished peace with God. It does not describe a potential salvation for all, but the certain justification of believers, the elect.

2. "The true light, which gives light to every man coming into the world..."

(*John 1:9*)

More uses this verse to argue that Christ provides saving light to every person, thereby supporting universal atonement. But again, his reading distorts the intent of the text.

First, the term "world"

Here, the phrase *"every man coming into the world"* is a common Jewish expression meaning *"every person born."* The *world*, in this context, refers to the **habitable earth**, not the totality of mankind in a redemptive sense.

Second, the true light

There's a better reading of the verse:

- *"The true Light, who coming into the world, enlightens every man."*
  This aligns with other Johannine language:

- *"Light has come into the world"* (John 3:19),

- *"I have come into the world as light"* (John 12:46).

So it is **Christ Himself**, the Light, who has entered the world. And He enlightens *every man*—not universally and effectually, but in the sense that He is the only source of spiritual light. Any illumination anyone receives is from Him alone.

> The verse does **not** teach that all people are actually enlightened unto salvation. Rather, it asserts that **Christ is the only light**, and all who are truly enlightened are enlightened by Him.

If anyone argues that "every man" means all without exception, we reply:

- **Does every person receive saving light?**
  Clearly not. Countless remain in darkness, never hearing of Christ or rejecting Him.

- **Then this must refer to those who are actually enlightened**, that is, *believers*. The passage, then, speaks not of universal grace, but of Christ's sufficiency and singularity as the Light of the world.

Alternate interpretation (not opposed):

Some interpreters take this illumination to refer to **natural reason or understanding**, in which case Christ, as the Logos, is the light that gives life and reason to all people as creatures. This interpretation sees the verse as referring not to saving light, but to the light of human conscience and rationality. Even so, it does not support the idea that Christ died savingly for all.

1. John 1:29 – *"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Answer:
Even if *world* were taken to mean "the world in general," this does not prove that Christ died for every individual. Rather, the verse highlights Christ's sufficiency and office: He is the Lamb who truly atones for sin—not just for Israel's, but for the world's. That is, He removes the guilt of sin for all those whose sin He bears.

But to say that He actually takes away the sin of every person without exception is simply false—unless we are prepared to say that every person is forgiven, justified, and sanctified. That cannot be. Christ takes away the sin of His people through justification, sanctification, and glorification—not universally, but savingly.

2. John 3:17 – *"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

Answer:
Here again, *world* is used in different senses within the same verse—

just as in John 1:10. First, it may refer to the geographical region where Jesus lived and ministered. Then, in the second use, it may point to mankind in general. But finally, when it speaks of the world that God sent His Son to *save*, it can refer only to the elect—God's people scattered throughout the world.

Why?

1. Because **not all are saved**, and God's purpose does not fail: *"My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose"* (Isa. 46:10).

2. Because **many at the time were already condemned**—would God send His Son for those whose judgment had already been sealed?

3. Because Scripture teaches that Christ was *appointed for the fall and rise of many* (Luke 2:34), not for the salvation of all.

4. Because **God does not act contrary to His eternal decrees**—and He has decreed the condemnation of some for their sins. Christ's mission, therefore, is perfectly aligned with the Father's will.

So the *"world"* that Christ came to save is not the whole mass of humanity, but **His elect from every tribe and tongue**, across the earth.

3. John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; John 6:51 – *"Savior of the world"*

Answer:
These titles mean either:

1. That **Christ is the only Savior** given for anyone in the world (there is no other); or,

2. That **He saves every single person in the world**.

If the second meaning is intended, then Thomas More and the universalists win. But if the first (and obvious) meaning is true, then these verses prove nothing for their cause.

Christ is the *Savior of the world* because:

- He is the only Savior for anyone in it,
- And He saves His people scattered throughout it,
- Jew and Gentile alike.

4. John 12:46 – *"I have come into the world as light…"*

Answer:
This verse is often cited, but it's irrelevant to the argument. Christ is indeed the Light of the world—but not all men see the light. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (John 1:5).

Final Reflections

I conclude that the entire argument for universal redemption, when all is said and done, rests on **the misuse of one word: *world***. But that word is used in many different ways in Scripture. Unless we are willing to wrest it from context and twist it to suit our preferences, it cannot bear the weight of this doctrine.

In every case, the *world* Christ saves is His **people throughout the world**—not every individual without exception, but all His sheep, scattered across every nation and generation.

> Let the Christian reader heed the apostle's command: *"Test all things; hold fast to what is good."*
> (1 Thess. 5:21)

Book IV, Chapter 4

Answer to the Second General Argument for Universal Redemption

Texts that mention "all men" and "every man"

The second major argument raised in defense of universal redemption is based on passages where Scripture speaks of "all men" or "every man" in the context of salvation or Christ's death. These texts are often repeated with great confidence—as if the mere sound of the words could settle the matter. But while such expressions are loudly proclaimed, they are rarely carefully studied.

The core of the argument goes like this:

> "If God wills all men to be saved, then Christ must have died for all men.
> But 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God wills all men to be saved.
> Therefore, Christ died for all men."

This may sound persuasive on the surface, but the entire weight of the argument rests on the word **"all"**—which is commonly misunderstood.

The Word "All" in Scripture

The word **"all"** is frequently used in Scripture, but not always in the same sense. It can mean:

- All people universally, without exception.
- All kinds or sorts of people, without distinction.

To assume it always means the first is to ignore the rich and varied use of language in the Bible. There are hundreds of examples where "all" clearly does not mean "every individual," but rather "people of all kinds, ranks, and nations."

So, what do we do with these texts? We must ask two key questions:

1. What Is the *Will of God* in 1 Timothy 2:4?

> "God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

What does this will of God mean?

Scripture speaks of God's will in different ways:

- **His sovereign, decretive will** – what God actually brings to pass. *"My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose"* (Isa. 46:10).

- **His moral or preceptive will** – what God commands or approves, even if it is not fulfilled (e.g., the command not to sin).

In this passage, the word **"will"** refers to God's **preceptive will**—what is pleasing and desirable in itself, not what He has decreed will certainly come to pass. For if God had decreed the salvation of all men without exception, then all would certainly be saved. But we know this is not the case.

So, the passage teaches that God approves and commands the salvation of all kinds of people—not that He decreed to save every individual.

2. Who Are the *All* in 1 Timothy 2?

We must pay close attention to the context of the passage.

Paul has just instructed Timothy to offer **prayers for all men** (v.1), and then immediately explains what he means: **kings and all in high positions** (v.2). Why?

Because the Jewish mindset at the time was narrow. It assumed salvation was largely restricted to their own nation and religious elite. But Paul insists that God's saving purpose extends to **all sorts**

of people—not only to the poor, but even to kings; not only to Jews, but to Gentiles.

So when Paul says Christ gave Himself as a ransom "for all," it means:

> He died for **all kinds of people**, in every station of life—not only the familiar or expected ones.

This understanding also makes sense of verse 6, where Christ is said to be a ransom "to be testified in due time." The preaching of the gospel across nations is the testimony that God's saving purpose includes **people of every kind**, from all over the world.

God's Will and the Salvation of "All Men"

(1 Timothy 2:4, continued)

I now turn to examine the nature of God's will in this passage. When Scripture says that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4), what exactly does that mean?

We must understand that the **will of God** in Scripture is spoken of in more than one way. It refers either to:

1. **God's will of command** – what He commands and approves; or

2. **God's will of purpose** – what He has sovereignly decreed and will certainly bring to pass.

These are distinct. Let's apply both senses to this passage and see what follows.

1. If "God wills all to be saved" refers to His will of command:

This would mean that God commands, invites, and approves of all people seeking salvation by the means He has appointed. In other words, God is pleased when people pursue salvation through Christ and calls all to do so.

If that's the case, then Paul is saying nothing more than what we find elsewhere in Scripture:

> "God commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

But note this critical point: **God's command to seek salvation does not imply that Christ died for each individual in particular.**

Rather, God's command arises from the connection He has established between **faith and salvation**. Christ's death is fully sufficient to save every believer—but the promise of salvation is attached only to faith, and not all believe.

So if this is the correct reading of God's will in 1 Timothy 2:4, it does not support the claim that Christ died for every individual.

2. If "God wills all to be saved" refers to His will of purpose:

If this speaks of God's sovereign intention—His eternal and effectual will—then the conclusion must be:

> **All whom God purposes to save shall indeed be saved.**

There is no failing in God's sovereign will:

- *"He does according to His will… none can stay His hand"* (Dan. 4:35).
- *"Whatever the Lord pleases, He does"* (Ps. 115:3).
- *"Who has resisted His will?"* (Rom. 9:19).

If the “all” in this passage truly refers to **every single person without exception**, then one of two impossible conclusions must follow:

1. **God fails to save some whom He intends to save**, which is contrary to His power and nature; or
2. **All people will certainly be saved**, which contradicts the whole witness of Scripture.

Therefore, to avoid these unacceptable conclusions, we must consider a third question:

Who Are the “All” in 1 Timothy 2?

Paul is not speaking of all individuals, but rather of **all kinds of people**—people from every class, race, and nation.

This interpretation fits both the **context** and the **language** of the passage:

- Paul has just called for **prayers to be made for all people** (v. 1), and explains that to include **kings and those in high positions** (v. 2).
- This was a radical idea in a time when many believers thought salvation was mostly for the Jewish people or for the poor.
- Paul is affirming that **God desires the salvation of all kinds of people**, not just one kind.

Thus, in verse 4, when he says God “wills all to be saved,” it must be understood as:

God intends to save a people from **every kind of background**, and not just one nation or group.

Who Are the "All" in 1 Timothy 2:4?

Paul writes, *"[God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4). Those who argue for a universal atonement claim this proves that Christ died for every individual without exception. But let's look more closely.

What does "all people" mean?

According to the context and the plain sense of the passage, **"all people" refers to all kinds of people**, not every single person without exception.

This is not only consistent with how the Bible often uses the word *all*, but also flows directly from Paul's purpose in the passage. He is urging believers to pray for **all sorts of people**—especially for those in high authority—because the grace of God is no longer confined to one nation (Israel), but now extends **promiscuously and indiscriminately** to people of **every class, race, and position** in the world.

Even the Arminian theologian Arminius admitted that Paul is speaking here of "all kinds of men," especially those living under the gospel in the New Testament era.

Why "all sorts" makes better sense than "all individuals"

Let's consider five reasons why this is the right understanding:

1. The word *all* in Scripture often means *many of all kinds*

It's common in the Bible for *all* to refer not to every individual, but to people from every category. For example:

- Jesus healed *"every disease"*—not meaning every possible disease in every person, but **all kinds of diseases** (Matt. 9:35).
- The Pharisees tithed *"all herbs"*—not literally every herb in existence, but **herbs of many kinds** (Luke 11:42).

So unless the context forces a universal interpretation, the natural reading of *all* is *all types or classes*.

2. Paul himself explains what he means

Paul's own clarification is decisive. In 1 Timothy 2:1–2, he says:

> "Pray for all people, for kings and all who are in authority."

He explicitly applies *all* to **different ranks and classes** of people. He does not mean *every individual*, but *every kind*. This is further confirmed by examples like Jeremiah 29:1–2, where *"all the people"* taken into exile are shown to be *some of all ranks and vocations*.

Paul is saying: *Now that the gospel is going to all nations, pray for all kinds of people—including those in high places—because God is calling out his people from every class and corner of the world.*

3. We're not commanded to pray for everyone without exception

Paul is calling the church to pray for all kinds of people—not for **every individual**. Why? Because there are some whom we are expressly told **not** to pray for (see 1 John 5:16)—those who have sinned the sin unto death. That is, God has not appointed prayer for those who are reprobate and hardened.

We are to align our prayers with God's revealed purpose—not praying for what He has not promised.

4. God's will is always accomplished

If God truly intended every individual to be saved, then every individual would be saved. For **who can resist His will?** (Rom. 9:19). But Scripture is clear that not all will be saved—some will be condemned (Matt. 25:41–46). Therefore, **"all" cannot mean every single person**, or else God's will would fail.

But God's will does not fail. He accomplishes all He pleases (Ps. 115:3). So the "all" whom He desires to be saved must mean something else—**namely, His elect, from all nations and ranks**.

5. Coming to the truth and being saved go hand-in-hand

Notice that Paul says God wills all to be saved *and* to come to the knowledge of the truth. These are parallel ideas—equal in scope. But has God revealed the truth to everyone in the world? Clearly not.

- God revealed His word to **Israel**, not to other nations (Ps. 147:19–20).

- In earlier ages, He allowed **the nations to walk in their own ways** (Acts 14:16).
- The gospel was hidden from ages past (Col. 1:26) and not revealed to all.
- Jesus himself said that the Father hides truth from some and reveals it to others, *"for so it seemed good in His sight"* (Matt. 11:25–26).

If God does not will everyone to come to a knowledge of the truth, neither does He will everyone to be saved. But He does will to save **His people from every tribe, tongue, and nation**, and **they shall come to the truth**.

Christ Gave Himself as a Ransom for All (1 Timothy 2:6)

Paul writes that Christ “gave Himself as a ransom for all.” Some conclude from this that Jesus died for every single person in the world. But when we consider this verse in its proper context, we find that “all” means **all kinds of people**—not every individual without exception.

A ransom implies deliverance

A ransom is not a vague offer—it’s a price paid that sets someone free. The language used here implies an **actual effect**: those for whom the ransom is paid are released. Therefore, this verse teaches not a general possibility of salvation, but the actual redemption of a definite people.

If Christ truly paid a ransom for every single person, then all must be set free. But Scripture and experience alike show that not all are. Many remain lost and under judgment. This proves that the “all” for whom Christ gave Himself must be **those who are truly set free**—the elect, drawn from all nations and ranks, as Revelation 5:9 makes clear.

The objection from universal language

Some insist that since we are to pray for all (v.1), and Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all (v.6), then "all" must refer to every person. But this relies on a misleading use of the word “all.”

In truth, Paul is highlighting the universal **scope** of the gospel—not its individual application to everyone. Christ did not die for one race or class, but for all sorts of people: rich and poor, rulers and servants, Jew and Gentile. That's the good news we now proclaim to the world.

If "all" meant every individual, then:

- Everyone would be ransomed.
- None could be lost.
- The ransom would fail in its purpose—which is unthinkable.

So we affirm that Christ gave Himself for "all" kinds of people, **not all people without distinction**.

“Not Willing That Any Should Perish” (2 Peter 3:9)

Peter writes, *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise… but is patient toward you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

This is often taken to mean that God desires **every person** to repent and be saved. But Peter makes it plain that he’s speaking to believers—those he calls *“beloved”* (v.1) and who have received *“precious promises”* (1:4). So when he says, *“not willing that any should perish,”* he means **not willing that any of us**—his chosen, believing people—should perish.

Who is the “you” and “us”?

The entire letter is addressed to Christians. Peter is not speaking abstractly about the entire human race, but **pastorally** about God’s patient love for His people. He delays final judgment so that **all of His elect** may be gathered in repentance and faith. As Jesus said, *“This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed… and then the end will come”* (Matt. 24:14).

To argue that God wills every single person to be saved because He delays judgment is to ignore the very audience Peter is addressing.

Can this verse support universal redemption?

Not at all. Consider:

- If God truly willed every person to repent and be saved, then all would be.
- But we know that not all are saved.
- Therefore, this must refer to those whom God has purposed to save—the elect.

If "all" meant every individual, then we would have to conclude that God is frustrated in His will, unable to accomplish what He desires—which contradicts all of Scripture:

> *"Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases"* (Ps. 115:3).

God's patient purpose

God's patience is not weakness. It's the mercy by which He waits for all His chosen people to come to repentance. He withholds final judgment so that not one of His sheep will be lost.

- God is not willing that **any of His people** should perish.
- He is willing that **all His people** come to repentance.
- And He will accomplish this purpose fully.
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Hebrews 2:9 — “That He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

This verse is often cited to support the claim that Christ died for every single person. But when carefully examined, it teaches something far more precious and particular.

The phrase “for every man” (or, more literally, “for all”) needs to be understood in context. Scripture often uses universal language in a **limited sense**—not to mean *every person without exception*, but *every person within a specific group*.

Consider these examples:

- In Colossians 1:28, Paul speaks of *“warning every man”*—yet he plainly refers to everyone **to whom he preached**, not the whole human race.

- In 1 Corinthians 12:7, the Spirit is said to be given to *“every man”*, meaning **every believer gifted by the Spirit**, not all mankind.

Likewise, in **Hebrews 2**, the context clearly identifies the “every” for whom Christ tasted death. They are not all people without distinction, but rather **all of God’s elect**, those chosen for salvation.

Let’s walk through the reasons why.

1. Christ's death is substitutionary and effective

To say Christ "tasted death" is to say He fully drank the cup of judgment that was due to sinners. He didn't merely sample it—He drank it dry. And He did this **on behalf of others**, so that they would never taste condemnation themselves.

But here's the key: if Christ drank the cup for you, **there is none left for you to drink**. That is the beauty and power of substitution. If He died for you, then your death is conquered. But we know that many do die in their sins. So Christ did not taste death for them. He only died in the place of those who will never face God's wrath—His **people** (Matt. 1:21).

2. The phrase "for every" fits the apostle's purpose

The writer to the Hebrews is addressing Jewish believers who were tempted to think that the benefits of Christ were for **them alone**—for Jews only. He uses the word "every" or "all" here not to teach a universal redemption, but to **emphasize the wide scope of God's grace**—that Christ died for **all of God's elect**, whether Jew or Gentile.

The apostle is not teaching that Christ died for everyone, but that the **benefits of His death** extend beyond the borders of Israel to God's people throughout the world.

3. The context of Hebrews 2 defines the "every" as the elect

If we let the passage explain itself, we find that those for whom Christ died are:

- *"Many sons"* brought to glory (v.10)
- Those who are *"sanctified"* and *"brethren"* of Christ (v.11)
- The *"children God has given Him"* (v.13)
- Those *"delivered from the fear of death"* (v.15)

Can these things be said of all people? Surely not. Christ is not "Captain of salvation" for those who reject Him. He is the Savior of those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9)—those in whom God works faith and sanctification.

The "every" here, then, is not every person without exception, but **every one of God's chosen children**, whom Christ redeems and leads to glory.

2 Corinthians 5:14–15

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”

This passage is often cited to prove that Christ died for every individual. But a careful reading shows that the “all” Christ died for is a specific people—those who are made alive by His death and live unto Him.

Let’s consider the key arguments and examine them in light of Scripture and sound reasoning.

1. Does “all” in verse 14 mean every single person?

Some argue that the two uses of “all” must refer to the same group—that is, Christ died for all people because all were dead. But that’s not what the apostle actually says. He does **not** say, “All who were dead, Christ died for,” but rather the opposite: **“If Christ died for all, then were all dead.”**

In other words, the “all” who were dead are the same “all” for whom Christ died—not vice versa. The scope of the second “all” is governed by the first. He’s speaking not about all humanity, but about a particular group—those whom Christ died for, and who, as a result, are dead to sin.

2. Does “living unto Christ” apply to all people?

It is claimed that because all people ought to live unto Christ, therefore He must have died for them all. But the text doesn’t say that all people **ought** to live unto Christ; rather, it says that **those for whom Christ died** actually **do** live for Him.

This is not an abstract moral obligation. It’s the **effect** of His death applied to them. These are the people who, by union with Christ, have died to sin and now live for His glory. That does not describe the world at large, but believers—those made alive by grace.

3. Does “all must appear before the judgment seat” mean Christ died for all?

Verse 10 of this chapter does indeed say that all must appear before Christ's judgment seat. That is true: every human being will stand before Him. But Paul is not referring to that “all” here in verse 14. The context makes it clear he’s speaking about **believers**, especially gospel ministers, who are constrained by the love of Christ. He says “the love of Christ controls **us**.”

So again, “all” here is limited by the group Paul is discussing—**all who are united to Christ and made alive in Him**.

4. Christ’s death is effective, not hypothetical

Christ did not die for people with the vague hope that they might respond. He died **to redeem**, to rescue, to secure eternal life for His people. That's exactly what this text affirms. The result of His death is that "those who live" (the same "all" He died for) now **live for Him**.

His death didn't merely make salvation possible—it actually **brought about** spiritual life. As Romans 6:5–8 says, all who are "united with Him in death" are raised to "newness of life." This is not true of every human being, but of those who are born again.

5. The "death" in verse 14 is death to sin, not spiritual death in Adam

When the apostle says, "Then were all dead," he is not referring to the universal fallen condition of mankind, but to the **death to sin** that results from union with Christ. Even Arminian scholars like Grotius and Vorstius admit this.

This death is the beginning of new life. It's the death of the old self, the crucifixion of sin, the death that leads to sanctification. Christ's death is **effectual** for this result. It causes those for whom He died to become "new creations" (v. 17), to receive forgiveness (v. 19), and to become "the righteousness of God" in Him (v. 21). These blessings do not belong to all humanity, but only to the elect.

5. 1 Corinthians 15:22

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This verse is often quoted to support the idea that Christ's work brings life to every single human being, just as Adam's sin brought death to all. But the comparison Paul makes here is not universal in extent—it is **covenantal** in nature. He is not addressing every human being without exception, but every person **in union with Christ**.

Paul is writing in this chapter specifically about the **resurrection of believers**. His arguments and illustrations are aimed at encouraging those who trust in Christ with the certainty of resurrection glory. The whole chapter focuses on the **resurrection of the godly**, not the general resurrection that includes the wicked.

We can tell this from the nature of the resurrection he describes: it is a resurrection to **glory** (v. 43), to **imperishability** (v. 42), to **victory over death** (v. 54). That cannot refer to the resurrection of the wicked unto judgment.

Even if one grants that all die in Adam—something Scripture elsewhere teaches—the phrase "in Christ shall all be made alive" is limited by the context. It refers only to those **who are in Christ**, who are **His**, as verse 23 makes plain: "Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Him." He is not the firstfruits of the damned.

In sum: this text teaches that **all who are in Christ**—united to Him by faith and by the Spirit—will be raised to eternal life. It does **not**

teach that Christ's work applies equally to all humanity.

6. Romans 5:18

"Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

At first glance, this verse might seem to suggest a symmetrical universality—condemnation came to all through Adam, and justification comes to all through Christ. But a closer look reveals that Paul is **not** teaching a one-to-one parallel between all descended from Adam and all saved by Christ.

Let's consider the flow of Paul's argument.

In verse 14, Paul says that Adam was a **type** of Christ. But Adam was not a type by design—he became a pattern by how his sin affected those he represented. So also, Christ stands as the **covenantal head** of His people. Both Adam and Christ act as representatives for those **in union with them**—Adam by nature, Christ by grace.

That's the heart of the comparison: **representative headship**. All who are "in Adam" by natural descent receive condemnation. All who are "in Christ" by spiritual union receive justification.

The "all" in both halves of verse 18 refers to the **entirety of the group represented by each head**, not to the entire human race universally. This is confirmed by the surrounding verses:

- In verse 17, those who receive the "abundance of grace" and "the gift of righteousness" are the ones who reign in life.

- In verse 19, it is those who are "made righteous" by Christ's obedience.

- These cannot include those who are lost, unbelieving, or under God's wrath.

If we interpreted the "all" in Christ as every human being, we'd be forced to conclude that **every person is justified and made righteous**—which directly contradicts the rest of Scripture. Some do not believe (2 Thess. 3:2), and the wrath of God remains on them (John 3:36). Clearly, then, Paul's "all" must refer to **all of those whom Christ represents**—His elect.

So, in Romans 5, Paul is not comparing the **number** of people affected by Adam and Christ, but the **power** and **effect** of each one's representative act. Adam's one sin brought condemnation to his race; Christ's one act of obedience brings justification to His own.

Response to Thomas More's Use of the Adam–Christ Analogy

In *The Universality of Free Grace*, chapter 8, Thomas More bases one of his primary arguments for universal redemption on Paul's comparison of Adam and Christ. He claims that as Adam was a representative head for all humanity, so also Christ was a public representative for all humanity in His obedience and death. More asserts that Christ stood in the place of every single person, without exception, just as Adam did.

Let us examine this.

1. Was Christ a Public Person for All Mankind?

We fully agree that **Adam** was a federal head—he stood as a public person representing all his natural offspring. His sin brought guilt and corruption upon all his posterity. In this, he serves as a type of Christ.

We also agree that **Christ** is a federal head, a public person. But for whom? Not for all humanity without exception, but for all His people—those given to Him by the Father (John 6:37, 17:2). These are the elect. He stood in their place. He bore their guilt. He satisfied divine justice on their behalf.

To say, as More does, that Christ stood in the place of every person—including those eternally reprobate, some of whom were already under condemnation before Christ even died—is to make Christ's

mediatorial work ineffective for multitudes, and His intercession void. It is to say that He suffered and obeyed for people who will still suffer under God's wrath forever. This is not only unbiblical—it is a serious theological error that undermines the very efficacy of Christ's atoning work.

How can Christ be a substitute and surety for those whom He never knew (Matt. 7:23), whom He did not intercede for (John 17:9), and who, according to the Father's purpose, were never appointed to salvation (Rom. 9:22)? To suggest that Christ stood in their place is not a doctrine of comfort or gospel hope—it is a monstrous distortion of divine justice and grace.

2. Examining More's Seven Reasons

More attempts to defend his claim with seven arguments. Let us review each:

(1) ***Adam lost not election, therefore Christ did not die only for the elect.***

Answer: While Adam was not entrusted with the election of individuals, his fall indeed condemned the elect along with the rest of mankind. But Christ came precisely to redeem those same elect—those lost in Adam. The point is not that Adam "kept" election, but that the elect were lost in Adam and redeemed in Christ (Rom. 5:17–19).

(2) ***If Christ didn't die for all, He failed to match Adam as a type.***

Answer: The comparison between Adam and Christ in Scripture (Rom. 5:14–21) is not about the **extent** of those represented, but the **efficacy** of their actions. Adam's sin truly condemns all he represents; Christ's obedience truly justifies all He represents. Christ's work is not lesser than Adam's—it is greater. But He does not represent the same people.

(3) *Hebrews 2:9 says Christ came to restore all lost in Adam.*

Answer: No, it says that Christ tasted death for "everyone," which, as shown earlier, must be understood within the context of those He sanctifies, brings to glory, and calls His brothers (Heb. 2:10–11). "All" does not mean every individual, but all His people.

(4) *Christ took on flesh, was under the law, and bore the sins of mankind.*

Answer: Indeed, Christ took on flesh to save His people. But why? Hebrews 2:14 answers: "Because the children share in flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same." He took on human nature **not** for the sake of humanity in general, but for the sake of the **children given to Him** (cf. John 6:37–39; Heb. 2:13).

(5) *Romans 14:9 and Philippians 2:8–11 show that all mankind was once given to Him.*

Answer: Neither passage says this. Christ is Lord over all by right of creation and exaltation, but not Redeemer of all. In John 17:6, Jesus clearly distinguishes between the world and those the Father gave Him. He gave eternal life only to the latter (John 17:2).

(6) ***He is called the "last Adam."***

Answer: Yes, but the meaning is **not** that He represents all humanity. Rather, as the first Adam was head over all his natural descendants, so the last Adam is head over all His spiritual offspring—those united to Him by faith.

(7) ***Christ is a public person in the room of all, as since the first Adam, 1 Cor. 15:45.***

Answer: That text teaches that Christ is the head of a new creation. He gives life to those who are His (1 Cor. 15:23), not to all humanity. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive"—**but only those who are "in Christ."**

3. More's Dangerous Claims

More asserts that Christ's death delivered all from the death of Adam. But the death Adam brought was spiritual death—dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). If Christ freed **all** from this, then all must be spiritually alive. But Scripture and reality contradict this. Many remain dead in sin.

Even more troubling, More claims the ultimate goal of Christ's death was that He might present **Himself** alive and justified before the Father. This is plainly contrary to Scripture. Paul tells us the purpose of Christ's death was **to redeem and sanctify the church**:

> "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her… that He might present her to Himself in splendor…" (Eph. 5:25–27)

The goal of Christ's death was not simply self-vindication, but the salvation of His beloved bride.

A Refutation of the False Parallels Between Adam and Christ

Thomas More, in continuing to argue for universal redemption, attempts to draw **further parallels** between Adam and Christ. He insists that Christ stood as a public representative for all humanity in the same way Adam did. But upon inspection, these comparisons are not only **irrelevant** to the matter at hand, but **deeply confused**, **doctrinally dangerous**, and at times **blasphemous**.

Let me give the reader just a sample of these claims so they can judge their worth—without spending undue time or energy on what is so clearly unworthy of serious attention.

1. A Shocking Assertion of Universal Satisfaction

More claims that when Christ died, rose, offered Himself as a sacrifice, and made satisfaction, this entire work was, in God's sight, the death, resurrection, satisfaction, and redemption of *all people*, individually and collectively.

In other words, according to More:

- God accepted Christ's work as the redemption of every single person.
- Christ's death was, in God's account, *their* death.
- His resurrection was *their* resurrection.

Let’s pause here.

What could be more contradictory and offensive to the gospel?

If Christ’s death was accepted by God **as the death of every person**, then what are we to say of those who are now suffering eternal death? Did God accept a full satisfaction for them—then send them to hell anyway? Did Christ bear the penalty for their sin—only for them to bear it again forever?

This is not merely an error—it is a *blasphemous distortion* of divine justice.

2. The Impossible Implications of More's View

If what More teaches were true, then the following would also have to be true:

- **Those already in hell when Christ died** (such as Cain, Pharaoh, Ahab) would have been accepted by God as having died, risen, and made satisfaction with Christ—even while they were already under God's eternal judgment.
- **Those who are eternally lost** would have had satisfaction made on their behalf, yet they would still be punished for the same sins Christ supposedly paid for.
- **Those who never believe** would have their debt fully paid by Christ, yet still be held liable for it.

Such claims are **contradictory**, **absurd**, and **utterly incompatible** with both Scripture and common sense.

3. The Death of Christ Is Effectual for the Elect Alone

The Bible never teaches that Christ made satisfaction for the sins of all men universally. Instead, it teaches that He gave Himself for His sheep (John 10:11), for His church (Eph. 5:25), for His people (Matt. 1:21), for those given to Him by the Father (John 17:2, 9).

If Christ stood in your place, then your debt is paid. If He died your death, you will never die eternally. To claim otherwise is to deny the sufficiency and efficacy of His substitution.

4. The Judgments of God Are Hidden

That such shocking views would be published and promoted under the name of Christianity is, indeed, cause for trembling. It is no surprise, for the apostle Paul warns of this very thing:

> "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth…"
> *— 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12*

Sometimes God gives men over to their delusions as a judgment. We tremble to think of it.

Christ Did Not Die as a Public Representative of All Humanity

In the **third part of his parallels**, Thomas More takes yet another step toward error by claiming that Christ's obedience and its effects—just like Adam's disobedience—applied to all people without exception. He argues that just as all of Adam's descendants fell into sin and death, so **all people are redeemed, restored, made righteous, and justified by the obedience of Christ**. He even cites *Romans 3:22* to support this, but notably **removes the essential qualifier** in the verse: *"the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."*

By omitting *"for all who believe,"* he distorts the passage to make it sound like righteousness automatically applies to everyone, whether they believe or not. This is not just sloppy—it's a **willful corruption** of the Word of God, akin to how Satan twisted Scripture when tempting Christ (Matthew 4).

Let's consider what this view implies:

- That people are **restored**, yet still lost.
- That they are **made righteous**, yet remain wholly wicked.
- That they are **justified**, yet remain under God's condemnation.
- That unbelievers possess the **righteousness of God**, though they perish in their sins.

These are **not only contrary to Scripture**, but are **logical absurdities**. More attempts to rescue his view with a few vague cautions, but they cannot resolve such clear contradictions.

Frankly, to linger further in this theological wreckage would be a waste of the reader's time. Those who **refuse to love the truth** may feast on these husks if they choose, but the true sheep of Christ will not.

Seven Reasons Christ Did *Not* Die in the Place of Every Person

Let us now reverse the argument and offer **seven clear reasons** why Christ was not a public representative for all people indiscriminately, but rather **for the elect alone**—those given to Him by the Father:

1. The Seed of the Woman Does Not Represent the Seed of the Serpent

Christ is the *seed of the woman* (Genesis 3:15), appointed to crush the serpent's head. But **the reprobate**—those eternally hardened in sin—are called the *seed of the serpent* (John 8:44). Christ was **not appointed** to redeem Satan's offspring, but rather to conquer them.

2. Christ Set Himself Apart Only for Those Given to Him

In John 17:19, Jesus says, *"For their sakes I sanctify Myself"*—speaking of those given to Him by the Father (John 17:6). He was set apart to be their representative—not the world in general, but His chosen ones.

3. Christ Was a Surety Only for Those in the Covenant of Grace

Hebrews 7:22 calls Jesus the *"guarantee"* (or *surety*) of a better covenant. But not everyone is in that covenant. It is made only with those who are effectually called and regenerated. Christ cannot be a surety for those who reject Him and perish in unbelief.

4. Christ Made Satisfaction Only for Those Who Will Not Be Condemned

Isaiah 53:5-6 makes clear that Christ bore the punishment for those whose sins He carried. But Romans 8:33-34 says, *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?"* Christ's intercession and atonement are effective only for those who will never be condemned.

5. Christ's Work Is Never Wasted

Jesus did not die in vain. He said, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). If He had died for the damned—those already in hell when He suffered—then His work would have been **pointless and ineffective** for them. But the Son of God does nothing in vain.

6. God Was Not Pleased with the Reprobate in Christ

Ephesians 5:2 says that Christ's offering was *"a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* But if He represented reprobates like Cain and Pharaoh, then God would have to be pleased with them in Christ—yet Scripture plainly says *He hates all workers of iniquity* (Psalm 5:5).

7. The Testimony of Scripture Is Clear

Numerous texts testify that Christ died for a particular people, not the entire human race:

- *John 10:15*: “I lay down my life for the sheep.”
- *John 17:9*: “I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me.”
- *Matthew 1:21*: “He will save His people from their sins.”
- *Acts 20:28*: “The church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.”
- *Ephesians 5:25*: “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

Book IV, Chapter 5

Answer to the Final Argument from Scripture for Universal Redemption

We now turn to the **third and final argument** drawn from Scripture, often cited by **Arminians and others** who promote the idea that Christ died for every single person in the world. This time, their appeal is not merely to the word *all*, but to passages that appear to teach that **some people for whom Christ died nevertheless perish eternally**, and that **his blood is shed in vain** for many.

They are eager to paint the **atonement of Jesus as ineffective**, using poetic language and dramatic flair to emphasize how little his death seems to accomplish—especially if many for whom he died are still lost. They even speak of *bought, purged, and reconciled* sinners who ultimately perish. According to this view, **Christ's blood is both precious and powerless**.

But dear reader, let me assure you—**that blood is not so worthless in the eyes of the Father** as to be poured out **in vain**, not even for **one soul**. Rather, it fully accomplishes the salvation of every single person for whom it was shed. And if we must defend this truth, we do so **gladly**, for it magnifies the glory of Christ our Redeemer.

The Arminian Argument

Their argument goes like this:

> "If Christ died for those who perish, then he must have died for all people—because we agree he died for the saved. But since he also died for the lost (the reprobate), then Christ died for everyone."

Our Response

We **deny the second claim**: that Christ **died for those who perish**—if we are speaking of his death as an intentional act of **substitution and satisfaction**, according to the will of the Father. That is to say, we deny that Christ laid down his life **with the intention** of bearing the sins of those who are eternally lost.

Yes, his blood is **sufficient in worth** to save all, but it was never God's purpose that it should **actually redeem** any except the elect. As Jesus himself declares, *"I lay down my life for the sheep"* (John 10:15)—not for the goats.

The Texts They Use

To support their claim, they appeal to four main texts:

1. **Romans 14:15**
2. **1 Corinthians 8:11**
3. **2 Peter 2:1**
4. **Hebrews 10:29**

They believe these passages show that Christ died for some who ultimately perish. But as we shall demonstrate, **none of these verses actually prove that Christ died for the reprobate** in the saving sense.

In the following sections, we will examine each passage carefully and in context to show that the **death of Christ is not in vain**, nor does it fail in its purpose. We must resist every attempt to reduce the cross to a frustrated, ineffective gesture of goodwill. The blood of Jesus **secures what it was meant to secure**: the eternal salvation of those for whom it was shed.

Let us now turn to these texts one by one.

Christ Did Not Die in Vain: The Misuse of "Perishing" Passages

Our opponents often appeal to a handful of verses that seem to suggest Christ died for those who perish. These texts are sometimes dressed in emotional language to argue that **Christ's death was ineffectual** for many. In this chapter, we begin to address these supposed proofs of a **universal atonement**, showing that none of them demonstrate what they claim.

1. Romans 14:15 – "Do not destroy the one for whom Christ died"

> "But if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy the one for whom Christ died by what you eat."

At first glance, this might appear to suggest that someone **for whom Christ died** could be **destroyed**. But look closer.

Paul is writing to **mature believers** in Rome, urging them not to use their liberty in a way that would **grieve** or **cause spiritual harm** to their weaker brethren—namely, those who still struggle with matters of conscience, such as eating food that had been offered to idols.

These weaker Christians are called **"brothers"**, because they profess faith, are members of the church, and should be treated as those for whom Christ died. That's the language Scripture uses to describe believers and church members—*"saints," "brethren,"*

"redeemed," etc.—and so they are to be **esteemed as such** by others, unless they openly depart from the truth.

But now, does this verse prove that **Christ died for all reprobates**, including those who never heard the gospel?

Certainly not.

Paul is **warning against actions that lead others into sin**, not making a theological assertion that Christ's atonement fails. When he says *"destroy not the one for whom Christ died,"* he means: do not lead your fellow believer into ruin through your careless behavior. **The warning is real**, but it does not imply that the redeemed can finally perish. We are often exhorted not to do what in God's providence cannot ultimately happen, yet our actions may still be morally blameworthy and harmful.

Also, even if the warning were taken hypothetically, the destruction in view is **moral ruin**, not eternal damnation. Even then, it would prove nothing about universal redemption.

So what's the argument our opponents are trying to make? It's this:

> "Because Paul warns believers not to destroy someone for whom Christ died, Christ must have died for all people, including the reprobate."

But this logic fails. It's as if someone said:

> "Because a soldier failed to break Jesus' bones, even though he thrust a spear into his side, therefore bones cannot break."

The reality is: **the warning is valid, the danger is real**, and yet the elect are never finally lost. We may fail grievously, and others

may cause us to stumble. But God is faithful. The blood of Christ is not shed in vain.

2. 1 Corinthians 8:11 – "By your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died"

Here again, Paul is warning mature believers about how their behavior affects the weak. He says that through the misuse of their knowledge—eating food offered to idols in a way that emboldens others to sin—**they may cause a weaker brother to fall**.

> Does this mean Christ died for people who end up in hell?

Let's take a closer look.

The word **"perish"** here refers to **spiritual damage and moral danger**, not necessarily eternal condemnation. Every sin is, by nature, worthy of death—but not every sin leads to final ruin. And those who are truly in Christ will never perish (John 10:28).

Moreover, the person described is called a **"brother"**—meaning a professing believer, someone in the visible church. **We are to esteem such people as those for whom Christ died**, because they walk in faith and confession. But does that mean every one of them is elect? No.

> *"They went out from us, because they were not of us."* (1 John 2:19)

So Paul, speaking **pastorally**, tells believers not to abuse their liberty in a way that might spiritually harm someone who **appears**

to be a brother, and whom they ought to treat as one.

This is not an argument for universal atonement. It's a call to **loving responsibility** within the body of Christ.

Again, what's the flawed argument of our opponents?

> "Paul warns that a brother for whom Christ died may perish. Therefore, Christ died for everyone, including the reprobate."

This is like saying:

> "Because someone might stumble over a stone, every person in the world must walk the same road."

No. Paul is calling believers to **love**, not proposing a theology of atonement. He's saying: *Treat every professing believer with such respect that you would not dare endanger their soul, even indirectly.*

And yes, **some may perish**, eternally, who once walked as visible members of the church, and were to be treated accordingly. But that does not mean Christ's atonement fails, or that it was ever intended for those whom the Father never gave to the Son (John 17:9).

Did Christ Die for False Teachers?

A Closer Look at 2 Peter 2:1

> *"There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction."*
> **— 2 Peter 2:1**

This verse is often raised as a chief proof of universal redemption. Our opponents say, “See! These false teachers were ‘bought’ by Christ, and yet they perish. Therefore, Christ must have died for all, even the reprobate.” But a closer look reveals the argument is far from solid. In fact, almost every point required to prove their case is **uncertain**, while the text, when properly understood, **does not support universal redemption at all**.

Let’s walk through this carefully.

1. Is “the Lord” in this verse definitely Christ?

The Greek word used here is **Despotes**, meaning “Master” or “Sovereign.” In the New Testament, this term is **rarely, if ever, used of Christ** in His mediatorial role. It is **almost always used of God the Father**, as in:

- *“Sovereign Lord (Despotes), now you are letting your servant depart in peace.”* – Luke 2:29
- *“Sovereign Lord (Despotes), who made the heaven and the earth…”* – Acts 4:24

Christ is usually referred to as **Kurios** (“Lord”), not **Despotes**. Even if this word were once applied to Christ elsewhere, that wouldn't prove it must be Christ here.

Moreover, in the **rest of the chapter**, Peter speaks exclusively of **God’s judgment**, not Christ’s atonement. There's no mention of His cross, blood, or priestly work. The focus is on God's sovereign rule and judgment against apostates.

2. Does “bought” mean redeemed by Christ’s blood?

The Greek word for “bought” is **agorazo**, which in the New Testament can mean “redeem,” but also **simply to deliver or purchase** in a general sense. In this passage, there is **no mention of blood, atonement, sacrifice, or redemption**, as we find in texts that clearly speak of Christ’s saving work (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:20; Rev. 5:9).

What kind of “purchase,” then, is meant here?

Peter gives us the answer in verse 20:

> *“For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ…”*

These false teachers had **escaped the world**—not through spiritual rebirth, but by receiving a kind of **outward knowledge** of Christ. They had been **externally delivered** from paganism or Judaism into a visible profession of Christianity. This is a **temporal deliverance**, not eternal redemption.

It’s as if God had **purchased them out of idolatry and ignorance** into the visible church and gospel light. But they later denied Him—not necessarily by outright atheism, but by rejecting His authority through their heresies and immoral lives.

So, the word "bought" here refers not to saving atonement, but to **God’s claim of ownership** over them by virtue of their **external profession** and **participation in the church**.

3. Are these teachers said to be truly redeemed?

Not necessarily. Scripture often speaks of people **according to their profession**, not their inward reality. Those who visibly belong to the church are regularly called:

- **Saints** – though some prove false (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 11:13)
- **Redeemed** – because they appear to be
- **Brothers** – by outward association (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 8:11)

So when Peter says they "deny the Master who bought them," he is speaking **according to their claim and standing within the church**, not stating that they were truly and effectually redeemed.

It's like saying, *"They denied the God who delivered them,"* because they **once professed Him**, received gospel light, and lived among the redeemed. Their sin is worsened by their proximity to truth, not because Christ actually shed His blood for them.

4. Would universal atonement even help the argument?

Ironically, even **if** the false teachers were truly redeemed, our opponents still face a problem.

> How can the fact that Christ died for everyone make this sin **especially heinous**?

If **all people** are equally redeemed, how does that intensify the guilt of these false teachers in particular? It doesn't.

But if they were professing Christians, ministers even, claiming to be bought by Christ—**that** makes their apostasy more grievous. Their judgment is worse because they trampled not just truth, but truth they **once claimed to love**.

Summary of the Argument's Flaws

To make this verse teach universal redemption, one would have to prove:

1. That "the Lord" refers specifically to Christ as Mediator – **uncertain**
2. That "bought" means atonement by His blood – **unsupported**
3. That the false teachers were truly redeemed – **not stated, and contradicted by their destruction**
4. That Christ's true redemption can fail and end in damnation – **contradicts Scripture (e.g., John 10:28; Rev. 14:4)**
5. That their sin is aggravated because Christ died for all – **makes no sense if everyone is equally redeemed**

Was Christ's Blood Shed for Those Who Perish?

A Closer Look at Hebrews 10:29

> *"How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?"*
> **— Hebrews 10:29**

This verse is often cited by those who argue for **universal atonement**, claiming that it speaks of someone who was **sanctified by the blood of Christ** and yet ultimately **perishes**. "Surely," they say, "if this man was sanctified by Christ's blood, then Christ must have died for people who end up in hell."

But a careful reading of the passage, in context, shows that it teaches **no such thing**. The apostle is not teaching that Christ's atoning work can fail or that the elect can be lost. Rather, he is giving a **severe warning** against apostasy—falling away from an outward profession of the gospel—especially among those who once enjoyed its light and benefits.

Let's unpack what the passage actually says.

1. What Is the Aim of the Passage?

The entire **epistle to the Hebrews** is written to professing Jewish Christians who were tempted to abandon Christ and return to the old covenant. The apostle's aim here is to **warn them of the terrible consequences** of willfully rejecting Christ after having received knowledge of the truth (v. 26). This is not the ignorant or momentary sin of a struggling believer, but the **deliberate and defiant turning away** from the gospel.

To illustrate how serious this is, he compares it to **willful rebellion under the old covenant**, which led to **death without mercy** (see Numbers 15:30–31). Then, by a "how much more" argument, he warns that those who reject Christ under the gospel commit a **far worse sin**, and will suffer **far greater punishment**.

So the point of the passage is to show the **severity** of apostasy—not the extent of the atonement.

2. What Does "Sanctified by the Blood of the Covenant" Mean?

This is the key phrase. Our opponents say it means the person was **truly saved**, but later lost. But Scripture is clear: those who are **truly sanctified by Christ's blood**—set apart in truth and cleansed inwardly—**will never perish** (John 10:28; Hebrews 10:14). So what does the phrase mean here?

There are two possible explanations—**both consistent** with the rest of Scripture and the Reformed understanding of redemption:

A. Sanctified By Profession, Not Regeneration

In the visible church, **all who profess faith in Christ are called holy**, sanctified, redeemed, etc., even if their hearts remain unchanged. For example:

- Paul calls the Corinthian believers "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2), even though some proved false.
- In 1 Corinthians 7:14, unbelieving spouses are called "sanctified" by their connection to believing partners—not spiritually, but

relationally, outwardly.

- Judas shared in gospel ministry and was treated as one of Christ's own, yet was "a devil" from the beginning (John 6:70).

So too here. The apostate had **been part of the visible church**, claimed Christ, received baptism (the sign of cleansing), and publicly identified with the new covenant. He was "sanctified" **in that outward sense**—but never inwardly changed.

B. "He" May Refer to Christ, Not the Apostate

Some interpreters, including several in the Reformed tradition, have taken "by which *he* was sanctified" to refer **not to the apostate**, but to **Christ Himself**—as in *He was set apart for His priestly work by the blood of the covenant*. This would make the phrase a reference to Christ's own consecration as our Redeemer, aligning with Hebrews 9:12–14 and 10:10.

Even if one rejects this reading, the first explanation still stands: the apostate was **outwardly sanctified**, but never truly converted.

3. The Sin Described Is Especially Heinous—Why?

Because the apostate:

- **Trampled the Son of God underfoot** – treated Christ with contempt
- **Profaned the blood of the covenant** – considered the gospel and its blessings worthless

- **Outraged the Spirit of grace** – resisted the Holy Spirit who once convicted him

These phrases describe someone who once stood near the gospel, **claimed its benefits**, and **deliberately turned away**.

But again, nothing here implies that Christ's atonement was truly applied to him. The warning is about how close someone can come to grace, and yet reject it to their ruin. It is a **sobering word to hypocrites**, not a denial of the effectiveness of Christ's death.

4. Why This Text Does Not Support Universal Redemption

To say that this verse proves Christ died for all people, even those who perish, requires a string of unsupported assumptions:

1. That "sanctified" must mean saving union with Christ – **not necessarily true**
2. That Christ's blood was shed for this person as a true atonement – **not stated in the text**
3. That true redemption can fail – **denied throughout Scripture**
4. That this proves Christ died for all humanity – **a massive leap from one isolated example**

In contrast, the consistent testimony of Scripture is that Christ's blood **perfectly secures salvation** for those it was shed for (Heb. 10:14; John 17:2; Romans 8:32–34). It is **never ineffectual**, never wasted, and never trampled underfoot by those truly redeemed.

Hebrews 10:29 is a **terrifying warning**—not about Christ failing to save, but about sinners **rejecting the only hope of salvation** they've been shown. It calls us to **persevere in faith**, to treasure Christ, and not to treat the gospel lightly.

This verse does not teach that Christ died for all without exception. Rather, it warns that **some, though outwardly sanctified, may still fall away**—proving they were never truly His.

Did Christ Die for Apostates?

A Clear Reading of Hebrews 10:29

> *"How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?"*
> **— Hebrews 10:29**

This verse is frequently cited by those who argue that Jesus died for **everyone without exception**, including those who ultimately reject the gospel. They say, "Look! This man was 'sanctified by the blood of the covenant,' and yet he falls under judgment. So Christ must have died for all." But as we've seen repeatedly, a closer look reveals **no such thing**.

Let's walk carefully through the passage, and we'll see that it **does not support universal redemption**, nor does it suggest that those truly redeemed can finally fall away.

1. The Passage Speaks Only of Professing Believers

The person being described was clearly someone who **once professed faith in Christ**, was **part of the visible church**, and **walked for a time among the saints**. He:

- Received gospel knowledge
- Confessed Christ as the Son of God
- Was outwardly set apart by baptism and church membership
- Was counted among the sanctified by other believers

But this describes **only a few**, not "all people without exception." So even if this person had once been counted among the sanctified, it **proves nothing** about the atonement being universal. The example is far too limited in scope.

2. The Text Is a Warning, Not a Declaration of What Actually Happens

The apostle is **not saying** that truly sanctified people can lose their salvation. He's using a **warning**, a hypothetical, to stir up vigilance and perseverance.

In verse 26, he says, *"If we sin willfully…"*—not because he expects true believers will do so, but to show how dangerous and serious apostasy is. The warning is meant to keep the church alert, just as Paul warned the sailors in Acts 27 that they would die if the ship's crew abandoned it—even though God had already promised safety.

Warnings like this are **God's means** of keeping His people secure. Though the elect cannot fall away, these solemn threats are **used by God** to preserve them in the faith.

So this text describes what would happen **if** someone truly sanctified were to fall away—but **God ensures that will never happen** to His elect. This is a warning, not a declaration of possibility.

3. The Apostate Was a Professed Believer—Not a True One

Those described here **made a public confession** of Christ. They were:

- Baptized (baptism was sometimes called "enlightenment" or "sanctification" in the early church)
- Part of the visible church
- Considered, in the judgment of charity, to be saints and brothers

But none of this proves they were **inwardly born again**. Many who walk outwardly with the church are **not truly united to Christ**.

Think of Judas: called, chosen, a companion of Christ—and yet he was a devil from the start (John 6:70). So too, some walk among the sanctified but never belong to Christ in truth.

4. The Apostles Spoke of Church Members According to Their Profession

It was common for the apostles to refer to all church members as "sanctified" or "saints." They judged by what was visible—public faith and baptism.

So when the apostle speaks here of someone "sanctified by the blood of the covenant," he is **speaking in the language of church fellowship**. He describes the person not as he was inwardly, but as he was understood to be by the church.

This doesn't mean the man was ever truly cleansed by Christ's blood—it means he **claimed to be**, and was treated as such until his apostasy exposed him.

5. If the Text Meant True Sanctification and Real Apostasy, Grave Errors Would Follow

If we take this verse to mean that someone **truly sanctified and born again** could still **fall into eternal ruin**, two serious errors would follow:

1. That sanctification and saving faith are **not** fruits of God's eternal election.

2. That believers can fall away and be **finally lost**.

These are the core teachings of Arminianism—not of the gospel. And even many who argue for universal redemption are not willing to take it this far.

6. The Word “Sanctified” Has Several Meanings

Even the word “sanctified” in Scripture has a **variety of uses**. It can mean:

- Truly and inwardly cleansed (as in Hebrews 10:14)
- Outwardly set apart, or consecrated to God (as in Leviticus 16:4)
- Claimed as holy based on visible standing in the church

Given the context, it’s best to understand it here in this **external sense**. These people were **visibly sanctified**—set apart by baptism, by profession, and by participation in the covenant community. But they were never inwardly transformed.

Conclusion

The warning in Hebrews 10:29 is serious and sobering. It teaches us:

- That some people may **look holy**, and even share in gospel blessings, while still being unconverted.
- That turning from the gospel after professing Christ is an act of **deep contempt** for His blood.
- That such apostasy leads to terrifying judgment.

But it does **not** teach that Christ’s atonement was ineffective. Nor does it prove that He died for all people without exception. This verse, rightly understood, is a call to **hold fast to Christ**, not a case for universal redemption.

Book IV, Chapter 6

An answer to the twentieth chapter of the book entitled, "The Universality of God's Free Grace," etc., being a collection of all the arguments used by the author throughout the whole book to prove the universality of redemption.

Responding to the First Argument for Universal Redemption

Does the Bible Teach That Christ Died for Every Individual?

Thomas More begins his summary of arguments for universal redemption by appealing to what he calls “plain Scripture.” His reasoning is as follows:

1. What Scripture plainly and often teaches in clear words is certainly true and must be believed.

2. Scripture often and plainly teaches that Christ died for every man (as he claims was shown in chapters 7–13 of his book).

3. Therefore, the belief that Christ died for every man is certainly true and should be embraced.

Let's walk through this argument step by step.

1. The First Premise: "What Scripture Plainly Teaches Is True"

This is absolutely right—**with one important clarification**. When we say the Bible teaches something "plainly," we must always seek the *true meaning of the words*, not just their surface form. That is, we interpret Scripture by:

- Paying attention to context
- Comparing Scripture with Scripture
- Understanding figures of speech, literary forms, and how language works

It's not enough to lift a phrase like *"every man"* off the page and assume it means *"every person who has ever lived."* Scripture itself shows that such expressions often carry more nuance.

If we ignore this and insist on the most literal and surface-level reading of all biblical phrases, we'll fall into serious error—like the old heresy that says God has a human body, just because the Bible mentions His "eyes" and "hands." Or we'll end up accepting the Roman Catholic error of transubstantiation, just because Jesus said, *"This is my body."*

So yes, we must believe what Scripture teaches. But we must seek to understand *what it actually means*.

2. The Second Premise: "Scripture Teaches That Christ Died for Every Man"

Here is where we disagree—strongly.

It is simply **not true** that the Bible "plainly and often" teaches that Jesus died for *every individual*. The phrase that Christ *"tasted death for every man"* occurs only once, in **Hebrews 2:9**, and even that phrase is open to careful interpretation.

Let's look more closely at it:

> *"By the grace of God He might taste death for every man."* (Heb. 2:9)

Three Key Observations:

1. **The phrase "every man" does not always mean "every single person."**
    - In Colossians 1:28, Paul says, *"We warn every man"*—but obviously, Paul did not personally warn every individual in the world.
    - So the term often means "every kind of person," or "everyone within a particular group."
2. **The Greek text of Hebrews 2:9 doesn't say "every man."**
    - It simply says *"for every"* (Greek: *huper pantos*), with no noun. Translators supply "man," but it could just as easily mean *"every believer"* or *"every child of God."*

3. **The context limits "every" to those Christ brings to glory.**
    - Verse 10 speaks of *"bringing many sons to glory."*
    - Verses 11 and 13 describe these people as Christ's *"brethren,"* and *"the children God has given him."*
    - These are the elect—the redeemed. Not all people.

So, to claim that this verse proves Christ died for all people is simply not honest with the text. It proves that Christ truly died for *all those He came to save*—but says nothing about the reprobate, the unbelieving, or those who perish.

3. The Conclusion: Does This Prove Universal Redemption?

No, it does not. In fact, More seems aware that his syllogism (logical argument) is weak. So he tries to *add extra proof texts* after the conclusion to make it stronger.

This is poor reasoning. A conclusion should stand on the strength of its premises. If you have to add unrelated verses to support your conclusion, it usually means your logic is broken.

It's like trying to patch a sinking boat with wet paper.

Final Thoughts

Thomas More's first "reason" for universal redemption fails in several ways:

- He misuses the principle of plain Scripture by ignoring context and sound interpretation.
- He assumes that “every man” must mean “every individual,” despite evidence to the contrary.
- He relies on one passage (Hebrews 2:9) and misunderstands it.
- He then adds verses that have no connection to the argument in order to bolster a weak conclusion.

This is not how Scripture teaches us to think. Let every Christian strive to be *“a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

Response to the Second Argument for Universal Redemption

Does the Bible Say Christ Died for "All Men"?

Thomas More’s second argument goes something like this:

1. Christ and His apostles clearly and plainly teach that Jesus came to save, died for, and is a propitiation for sinners, the world, the unjust, the ungodly, and for all men—without any qualification or restriction.
2. Therefore, Christ died for all men, without exception, and is the propitiation for their sins.

Let's walk carefully through this.

1. Interpreting "All" in Light of Scripture

It's essential to say up front: **We do not deny** that the Bible says Christ died for "sinners," "the world," "the ungodly," and "all." We affirm those passages wholeheartedly.

What we *do* deny is that these words—like "all" or "world"—**must always** mean every individual in the human race without exception. Scripture doesn't use those words that way, and this is the **fatal flaw** in More's argument.

Let me illustrate: in one place, the Bible says Jesus died for "all." In another place, it tells us who the "all" are—His "church" (Eph. 5:25), His "people" (Matt. 1:21), His "sheep" (John 10:15), His "elect" (Rom. 8:33). That's not contradicting the first passage—it's explaining it. One Scripture interprets another. This is how we discover the true meaning of these texts.

So we're not saying one part of Scripture cancels out another. We're saying: *One passage helps clarify another*.

2. A Closer Look at the Scriptures Quoted

More gives a long list of verses. But when we examine them, we find that **not one** of them actually proves what he wants them to prove—that Christ died for all people without exception.

Let's consider a few of the texts he references:

- **1 Timothy 1:15** says Christ came into the world to save sinners. That's true—and praise God He did! But it doesn't say *He died for every sinner without exception*. It's an **indefinite statement**, not a universal one.

- **Romans 5:6** says He died for the ungodly. Amen—but again, not *every ungodly person*, as if His death had saving intent toward all equally.

- **1 Peter 3:18** says Christ suffered "the just for the unjust." Again, general, not universal.

- **Hebrews 2:9** speaks of Christ tasting death "for every" (Greek: *huper pantos*). But we've already shown that "every" in that context refers to **every one of His brothers**—those He brings to glory (Heb. 2:10), not every human being who has ever lived.

- **1 John 2:2**, which says Christ is the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," we have already explained to refer to **all His people throughout the world**, Jews and Gentiles alike—not to every individual indiscriminately.

- As for Romans 3:10, 19–23, Ephesians 2:1–3, and Titus 3:3, those only prove that all are sinners—which we gladly affirm. But **they say nothing about Christ dying for all sinners**.

So we say to our friend: you've listed many verses, but none of them clearly teaches what you claim. You've **confused indefinite language for universal declarations**.

3. The Core Error: Turning "Some" into "All"

This is the **heart of the mistake**. The argument assumes that because Scripture says Christ died for "sinners," or "the ungodly," or "the world," then He must have died for **every** sinner, every ungodly person, and everyone in the world.

But that's not how language works. Consider the following:

- Romans 4:5 says God "justifies the ungodly." Would you say, then, that every ungodly person is justified? Of course not.
- John 1:10 says, "The world knew him not." Does that mean no one at all knew Him? No—His disciples certainly did.
- 1 John 5:19 says "the whole world lies in wickedness." Does that mean every person in the world is wicked? That would contradict the previous verse, where believers are called "of God."

Just because a word like "world" or "all" is used doesn't mean it includes **every single person**. It often means **all kinds of people**—from every nation, tribe, and tongue—or **all within a certain group** (e.g., all believers, all who trust in Christ, all the elect).

4. Summary of the Flaws

Let's sum up what's wrong with this argument:

- **It treats general statements as universal promises.**
- **It ignores the interpretive principle that Scripture interprets Scripture.**

- **It offers a long list of verses that either don't apply or say nothing about universal atonement.**
- **It assumes what it needs to prove—namely, that "all" always means "every individual without exception."**

Final Word

Yes, Christ died for sinners. Yes, He died for the ungodly. Yes, He is the Savior of the world.

But He is not the Savior of all *without exception*—He is the Savior of all *without distinction*. His atonement is not scattered broadly and ineffectually. It is **particular, powerful, and purposeful**—accomplishing exactly what the Father gave Him to do: *to save His people from their sins* (Matt. 1:21).

Answer to the Third Argument for Universal Redemption

Does Christ's Universal Lordship Prove He Died for All?

Thomas More's third argument goes something like this:

1. The Bible teaches that one of the purposes of Christ's death and resurrection was to make Him the Lord and Judge of all.

2. Therefore, Christ must have died for all people.

This might sound impressive at first, but it falls apart upon closer inspection. Let's walk through it step by step.

1. Confusion in the Form of the Argument

Let's begin with the **logic** of the argument itself. Unfortunately, it is deeply flawed. The structure is confused, and the terms are mixed together in a way that makes the whole thing hard to follow. For example:

- The major premise talks about the *exaltation* of Christ—His being made Lord and Judge of all.
- But the conclusion suddenly jumps to His *dying for all*—which is a completely different topic.

This is not just a small oversight. It's a fundamental error. It's as if someone started an argument about the king's authority to rule and then concluded that he therefore must love every citizen equally. It simply doesn't follow.

2. Being Judge of All Does Not Mean He Died for All

The core idea is this: *Because Jesus is Lord and Judge of all, He must have died for all.* But that just doesn't make sense.

Think about it:

- Christ is also Lord over **angels**, and He will judge them (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). But no one would argue that Christ died for angels.

- Christ is Lord over **the entire human race**, including those who never hear the gospel. But are we to say He died for those who perish without ever knowing Him?

The office of Judge is about **authority**, not **atonement**. Christ's right to judge the world flows from His obedience, death, and resurrection (cf. Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:9–11). But that does not mean His death was intended to **redeem every person** over whom He rules.

This distinction is crucial. Jesus has **universal authority** over all creation, but His **atoning work** is applied only to His people—His sheep, His church, His elect (Matt. 1:21; John 10:11, 15; Eph. 5:25).

3. Romans 14:9 and the Misuse of Dominion Texts

More heavily leans on **Romans 14:9**: "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

Yes, the verse teaches that Christ's death and resurrection brought Him into the full exercise of His sovereign dominion. But here's what it **does not** say: that He died to redeem all the dead and living. There is a vast difference between **attaining dominion** and **atoning for sin**.

In context, Paul is urging believers to walk in love and not judge one another, because Christ is Lord over all and we will all appear before

His judgment seat (Rom. 14:10–12). Paul is saying: *Live like people who will give an account to the Lord.* He is not saying: *Christ died to redeem every person.* That idea is **read into** the text, not drawn from it.

4. A False Conclusion from a Misunderstood Premise

Let's say it plainly: Just because Christ is exalted as Lord over all does **not** mean He died for all in a saving way.

Otherwise, you'd have to affirm things like:

- Christ died for those who never hear the gospel and perish in ignorance (Rom. 2:12).
- Christ died for the reprobate, whom God eternally passed over and left to their sins.
- Christ died for the devils—because He will also judge them.

None of these are true. Yet they follow logically if we accept the argument that Christ's death must be as wide as His dominion. But dominion and redemption are **two different things**.

5. The Real Meaning of Christ's Death

Scripture is clear: Christ died **to save His people from their sins** (Matt. 1:21), to **give His life for His sheep** (John 10:15), and to **redeem His bride, the church** (Eph. 5:25). These are the ones for whom He intercedes, for whom He bore wrath, for whom He accomplished redemption.

His death was **not general and indefinite**, hoping for some fruit. It was **specific and effectual**, accomplishing all that the Father gave Him to do.

Conclusion

This third argument rests on a **basic confusion** between Christ's universal authority and His particular redemption. His kingship over all does not imply a death for all.

To say Christ died for all simply because He will judge all is to confuse **His office as universal King** with **His work as Redeemer of the elect**.

So we reject this argument. Not because we question Christ's lordship—God forbid! But because we dare not diminish the glory of His atoning work by making it common and ineffectual. His blood is not wasted on those who will never be saved. He did not suffer for those He will righteously condemn.

Response to Argument IV

"Christ Died for All, Because the Gospel Invitation Is for All"

The argument is this:

1. Whatever the Bible teaches as a truth for all people—that if anyone believes in Christ, they will have eternal life—must

certainly be believed.

2. The Bible teaches that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, and that whoever believes in Him will be saved (John 3:16–18).

3. Therefore, Christ was sent to be the Savior of all people.

Now, at first glance, this sounds right. But here's where the problem lies.

1. The Obvious: Christ Is Sufficient for All

Yes, it's true that whoever believes in Christ will be saved. That's a glorious gospel truth! The death of Christ is of infinite value. It is sufficient to save any sinner who comes to Him in faith. And yes, God's Word does offer this promise to everyone who hears the gospel.

But here's what **does not** follow: that because salvation is offered to all, Christ **intended** His death to save all.

The universal **call** of the gospel is not proof of a universal **atonement**. Christ's death is proclaimed to all, but it was offered **in purpose** for His elect alone. The gospel invitation flows not from a general intent to save all, but from the sovereign command of God to proclaim salvation to every nation, tribe, and tongue (Matt. 28:19; Acts 17:30).

2. The Word "World" Does Not Mean "Every Individual"

The text most often quoted here is **John 3:16**. But as we've seen earlier, "God so loved the world" does **not** mean "every individual who has ever lived." It means God's love is no longer limited to the Jewish people, but is extended to people from every nation. Christ is the Savior of **all kinds of people**, not every single person.

So yes, **whoever believes** shall not perish. But the verse doesn't say that **Christ died for every person**—only that salvation is promised to all who believe. And who are those who believe? The ones the Father has given to the Son (John 6:37).

3. The Real Takeaway

What this argument actually proves is that **the death of Christ is sufficient to save anyone who believes**. It's a real, true, and free offer of life to every sinner who comes to Christ. But it doesn't prove that Christ **intended** to die for everyone.

His death was sufficient for all, but **efficient only for those who believe**—and those who believe do so because they were **chosen** by God and given to the Son (John 17:2, 9).

So, we agree with the conclusion in its correct form: that Christ is the Savior of the world, meaning people from all nations; and that all who believe will be saved. But this says nothing about the scope of the atonement.

Response to Argument V

“Every Tongue Will Confess Jesus Is Lord —Therefore, He Died for All?”

The next argument runs like this:

1. Whatever God causes everyone to confess must be true, because God never glorifies lies.

2. The Bible says every person will one day confess that Jesus is Lord.

3. Therefore, Jesus must have died for all, and has the right of Lordship over all—even over those who reject Him.

Let’s address this carefully.

1. Lordship Does Not Mean Redemption

It is certainly true that **Jesus is Lord of all** (Phil. 2:10–11). And yes, **every knee will bow**—even unbelievers will one day be forced to confess His Lordship.

But here’s what’s false: that Christ must have died for every person just because He is Lord over every person.

The Lordship of Christ includes both **Savior** and **Judge** (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1). He is not only Lord of His sheep—He is Lord over the wolves too. Being Lord over all does not mean He **shed His blood** for all. As we’ve said before, Jesus is also Lord over **angels and demons**, yet He did not die for them.

So yes, all people will one day confess that Jesus is Lord. But this proves His authority, not the **intent** of His atonement.

2. Where the Argument Fails

The argument smuggles in a false premise: that the death of Christ is the reason He is Lord of all. But that's not what the Bible says. In **Philippians 2**, Paul says that Christ's **humiliation**—His obedience unto death—is the reason for His **exaltation**.

That's different from saying He died for all. It simply means He obeyed the Father perfectly, and because of that, God has exalted Him above all (Phil. 2:9).

So while it's true that Christ is Lord over all and will judge all, it does **not** follow that He died for all. If it did, we'd have to say He died for Satan and the fallen angels too—because He will judge them also.

3. A Final Word of Clarity

Let's be clear:

- Christ **died for His people**, His sheep, His elect (John 10:15; Matt. 1:21).
- Christ **rules over all**, even those who reject Him.
- Every person will **confess** His Lordship—either as a willing worshiper or as a condemned rebel.

So while this argument proves the **authority** of Christ, it says nothing about the **design** or **extent** of His atonement.

Response to Argument VI

"Christ Gave Himself for All—Proved by Plain Scripture"

Argument Summary:

1. Whatever the Bible teaches directly or can be rightly concluded from it is true and should be believed.

2. The Bible teaches that Christ gave Himself for all men and tasted death for every man.

3. Therefore, this must be a truth to be believed.

Let's deal with this step by step.

1. Yes, Scripture Is the Standard of Truth

We fully agree with the first premise. God's Word is true. Any doctrine that is **plainly taught** or **rightly inferred** from Scripture must be believed. We gladly stand with the psalmist who says, "The words of the Lord are pure words" (Ps. 12:6).

But the key is this: the **meaning** of the words—not just the words themselves—must be rightly understood. That's why Paul says we must "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). If someone quotes a verse but twists the meaning—by ignoring context or misapplying words—then they haven't upheld truth, even if they quote Scripture word-for-word.

So yes, we affirm that what Scripture says plainly, or implies by sound reasoning, must be received. But **it must be rightly interpreted.**

2. Yes, Christ Gave Himself "for All"—But Who Are the "All"?

The second point claims that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all, and tasted death for every man. Again, **we don't deny the words**. That's not the question.

The question is: **who does "all" refer to?** That is where our disagreement lies.

Does "all" mean every single individual who ever lived—elect and reprobate, believers and unbelievers alike? Or does it mean **all kinds of people**, from every nation, tribe, and tongue—those given to Christ by the Father?

When Scripture uses the word *all*, it often refers to all within a group—not every individual in the world. Paul said he preached to "every man" (Col. 1:28), but clearly, he didn't mean every human on the planet. He meant all types, wherever he went.

So we affirm that Christ gave Himself for "all"—but the "all" refers to **His elect** (John 10:11), the **church** (Eph. 5:25), those **given to Him by the Father** (John 6:37–39), not every single person ever born.

3. What's Actually Being Argued?

Let's be clear: the **real assertion** being pushed here is not just that Scripture uses the word "all." The real claim is this:

> "Christ died to redeem every human being—elect and reprobate, saved and damned—and intended to bring salvation to all equally."

That is the claim we reject, because Scripture does not teach it—**not in plain words, and not by any necessary consequence**.

The Bible never says Christ died for Judas in the same way He died for Peter, or for Pharaoh in the same way He died for Moses. His blood was poured out for **His people**, not for all people without exception (Matt. 1:21).

Now, Let's Consider the First "Proof" of Argument VI

Scripture Cited:

- John 3:16–17 – God so loved the world.
- 1 John 4:14 – Christ the Savior of the world.
- John 1:4, 7 – Light that gives life to all.
- 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:15 – God desires all to be saved.
- Proverbs 1:23, 8:4–5 – A general call to wisdom.

Does This Prove That Christ Died for Everyone?

No, and here's why:

(1) "World" Doesn't Always Mean Everyone Without Exception

When the Bible says Christ is the "Savior of the world," it doesn't mean **every individual** will be saved—or that He even died for all. It means He's the Savior of **people from all nations**, not just the Jews.

The word "world" in John 3:16 refers to the **world in contrast to Israel**. God's love is not confined to one nation, but reaches across boundaries—to Gentiles as well. That's the marvel of it!

And remember, the same passage says that whoever believes in Him will be saved—not that all will believe or be saved. God's saving love is **effective only for those who believe**—and those who believe are those the Father gives to the Son (John 6:37, 44).

(2) God's "Desire" for All to Be Saved (1 Tim. 2:4)

Yes, God "desires all people to be saved." But again, who are the "all"?

Paul is urging prayer for **all kinds of people**—including rulers and kings (1 Tim. 2:1–2). In that context, "all" means **all types**, not every

individual. The gospel isn't restricted to Jews or the poor or the oppressed—it's for **kings and servants**, **men and women**, **Greeks and barbarians**.

And even if one were to argue that God desires the salvation of all in some sense, we must distinguish between God's **revealed will** (what He commands) and His **secret will** (what He decrees). Just as He commands all not to sin—yet ordains that sin occurs—He may call all to repent, yet intend to save only some.

(3) The Call of Wisdom (Prov. 1 & 8)

Proverbs speaks of wisdom crying out in the streets, offering truth to all. But this is a general call—not a promise that every hearer is intended to be saved.

Christ's call is real. It reaches many. But His saving grace reaches **only the elect**.

Refuting the First "Proof" of Universal Redemption from Argument VI

(Re: Christ dying for "all" and "the world")

Let's recall what the claim is:

> *Christ's death is for all because the Bible says He is the "Savior of the world," and that God desires all to be saved.*

Let's examine this proof carefully and biblically.

1. The Real Issue Is Not the Words "All" or "World" – It's What They Mean

The burden of proof is on our opponents to show that when Scripture speaks of "all" or "the world" in relation to Christ's death, it means every single person who has ever lived, without exception. Unless they can demonstrate this, all other efforts are futile.

But the texts they cite don't prove this claim. Instead, they assume the meaning of "all" without proving it. That's a critical misstep.

2. What Does It Mean That Christ Is the "Savior of the World"?

(1 John 4:14)

Yes, Christ is called the "Savior of the world." But what does that mean?

It means He is the Savior of **people living in the world**—specifically, His elect, drawn from every nation under heaven. That is, He is not the Savior of the Jews only, but of Gentiles also. In this way, "world" contrasts not with "some," but with "one group or nation."

This interpretation fits perfectly with the rest of Scripture. Nowhere does the Bible say Christ saves everyone in the world. In fact, it explicitly says the opposite: "You will call His name Jesus, for He will save **His people** from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

3. John 1:4, 7 – Does "All Through Him Might Believe" Mean Christ Died for All?

This verse is often misunderstood.

> "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the Light, **that all might believe through him**" (John 1:6–7).

At first glance, some think this means Christ was sent so that everyone in the world would believe through Him. But the grammar and context make it clear: the "him" in "through him" refers to **John**, not Jesus. John was the *instrument*—a witness—so that people might believe in Jesus through *his* (John's) preaching.

This is confirmed by the Syriac translation, and the way the New Testament speaks elsewhere. We never read of people believing **through** Christ, but always **in** Him. But people do believe **through** the witness of others (e.g., Acts 8:35, Rom. 10:14–17).

And as for the phrase "all might believe," are we really to suppose that refers to *every individual on earth*? John preached only in a small region of Judea, for a short time. Clearly "all" here must mean *all types of people who heard his voice*—not every person who ever lived.

4. John 3:16–17 – Does "World" Mean Everyone?

> "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

We affirm this glorious truth wholeheartedly. But it says nothing about Christ dying for *all without exception*. It says God loved the world, and that *whoever believes* will be saved.

Again, the "world" here does not mean "every individual," but humanity in general—not just the Jews. The purpose is not to describe the scope of Christ's atonement in terms of **individuals**, but in terms of **nations and peoples**.

5. 1 Timothy 2:4 – God Desires "All" to Be Saved?

This passage is often misunderstood:

> "[God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Let's ask: **What kind of "will" is this?** Is it God's eternal decree? His sovereign plan? Clearly not—because not all are saved. So what kind of will is this?

If it's a will that *fails* in the end, then God is frustrated, and His will is weak. But "who has resisted His will?" (Rom. 9:19).

The better interpretation is this: "all people" means *all kinds of people*. That's the context. Paul had just told Timothy to pray for "kings and all in high positions" (v. 2)—people whom the Jews thought were outside God's saving purposes. Paul is saying: Pray for all kinds of people, because God saves all kinds of people.

This agrees with other verses: "I will draw **all** to myself" (John 12:32)—that is, **Jews and Gentiles**, not every person universally.

6. The Pelagian Sting in the Tail

Finally, the argument concludes with this troubling statement:

> "God will not be lacking in sufficiency of help, if people allow themselves to be worked on and receive the light."

This is nothing less than **free-will theology**, dressed in pious language. It suggests that salvation hinges not on grace, but on man's cooperation—on whether someone "allows" themselves to be persuaded.

This is the very heart of **Pelagianism** and **Arminianism**—that man can respond to grace apart from the Spirit's regenerating power. It's foreign to the gospel, which teaches that we are **dead in sin** and must be **born again** by God's sovereign mercy (Eph. 2:1–5; John 3:3).

It's also alien to the doctrine of **particular redemption**, which says that Christ didn't make salvation merely possible—He actually accomplished it for His people.

- Words like "all" and "world" must be interpreted in context.
- "World" usually means "nations" or "people in general," not every individual.
- "All" often means "all kinds" or "all those to whom the message came."
- God's desire for salvation is not frustrated—He saves all whom He has chosen.

- The suggestion that grace becomes effective only if people "receive it" is a dangerous distortion of the gospel.

Let us then **magnify the grace of God**, not human will. Let us confess that:

> "Salvation belongs to the Lord" (Ps. 3:8),
> and that Christ has "obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12)
> for all whom the Father gave Him (John 6:37–39).

Proof 2 (Arminian Claim):

> "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save the world (John 12:47); to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); to take away our sins and destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:5, 8); to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29); and therefore died for all (2 Cor. 5:14–15); and gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6); to save the lost (Matt. 18:11). His propitiation was made for the world (2 Cor. 5:19), indeed the whole world (1 John 2:2). And all of this is plainly and fully taught in Scripture."

Answer:

Most of the verses cited in this so-called "proof" have already been addressed—particularly those involving the words "all" or "world": **John 12:47; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; 1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 John 2:2.**

We've already shown that these do not support the Arminian claim of universal redemption—in fact, properly interpreted, they refute it. I

won't weary the reader with repetition.

As for the other verses cited—**1 Tim. 1:16; Matt. 18:11; 1 John 3:5, 8**—I can't see how they offer any legitimate support for the doctrine of universal atonement. If anything, they reinforce the particularity of Christ's redemptive work. So we'll move on.

Proof 3 (Arminian Claim):

> "God, in Christ, gives some witness of his mercy and goodness—purchased by Christ—to all men, by one means or another (Ps. 19:4; Rom. 10:18; Acts 14:17). And through that witness, at some point, he stirs the hearts of all people by his Spirit, prompting them to repent and seek him, offering grace and salvation. And he does this sincerely, not merely in appearance, but with true goodwill, ready to bestow it upon them. All of this is confirmed in Scripture (Gen. 6:3; Isa. 45:22; Acts 17:30–31; John 1:19)."

Answer:

If the doctrine of universal redemption requires this kind of evidence to support it, it's clear it stands on very shaky ground indeed.

This argument introduces **universal vocation**—that is, the idea that God calls every person equally to salvation—as if this could somehow establish universal redemption. But it's simply **free-will theology in disguise**, a clever strategy where one weak doctrine props up another.

Let's address it plainly.

First:

It's true that, since the creation of the world, God has testified to all men about himself through creation—his eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:19–20; Ps. 19:1–2; Acts 14:17). But this is a testimony to **God as Creator**, not Christ as Redeemer.

Second:

After Christ's death and resurrection, the gospel was to be preached more widely—no longer just to Israel, but to the nations. The command to preach to "every creature" (Mark 16:15) was a means to call God's elect, scattered throughout the world (Rom. 10:18; Isa. 45:22; Acts 17:30–31).

Third:

But to say that **God, at all times and in all places, gives everyone the means of grace**—offering salvation through Christ to all people equally, accompanied by the inner stirrings of the Spirit—is not only **utterly without biblical foundation**, but also directly **contradicts Scripture**, historic experience, and the very doctrine of election.

It defies God's distinguishing mercy. It assumes the same striving of the Spirit with every individual, regardless of whether they ever hear the gospel—something that Scripture never teaches.

It is astounding that anyone would dare to assert such a thing—let alone present it as biblical proof.

Let the reader simply consider the plain witness of these verses, which speak directly to the matter:
Psalm 147:19–20; Matt. 11:25; Matt. 22:14; Acts 14:16; Acts 16:7; Rom. 10:14–15.
These texts demolish the notion of universal gospel grace or divine striving.

And with that, we move on.

Proof 4 (Arminian Claim):

> "The Holy Spirit, who comes from the Father and the Son, will convict the world of sin—specifically those in the world who currently refuse to admit they are under sin—because they do not believe in Christ. And how could it be their sin not to believe in Christ, and be judged for that sin, if there was not enough in Christ's atonement for them, nor any sincerity in God's offer of mercy to them, nor any will or power from the Spirit sufficient to enable them to believe at some point? Yet Scripture clearly says that their unbelief will be their great sin, the one that seals their condemnation (citing John 3:18–19; 8:24; 12:48; 15:22, 24; 16:7–11)."

Answer:

The argument here tries to prove that **unbelief is a damning sin**—and then concludes that this must mean Christ died for all. But let's break this down carefully.

The author says that for unbelief to be sinful, three things must be true:

1. Christ's atonement must have been made *for them*.
2. God's offer of mercy to them must be *truthful*.
3. The Spirit must have given them enough *power and will* to believe.

Let's take these one at a time.

1. "There must be enough in the atonement for them"

If you mean that **Christ's atonement had sufficient worth**, that it could have saved them *if* they believed—then yes, we agree. Christ's death is of infinite value. But if you mean that the atonement was *actually made for them*—that Christ intended to bear their sins and save them—then no, we deny it. There is no atonement for those who perish in unbelief.

2. "There must be truth in God's offer of mercy to them"

Certainly, everything God says is true. If we understand the gospel call as an offer to all who hear, inviting them to believe and be saved, we affirm that God will absolutely give eternal life to everyone who comes to Christ in faith. That's a true promise.

But this gospel call doesn't tell us *whom* God intends to save. The command to believe, with the attached promise, shows our **duty** and God's **general rule**—not his secret decree. As Paul asks, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?"

3. "There must be will and power from the Spirit to believe"

This is confused. First, it puts the “will” before the “power,” which is backward—man must first be made able. Second, we deny that a man must receive internal grace to be *held accountable* for rejecting Christ. Simply having the gospel preached to him is enough to make him guilty, even if he lacks both power and will to believe (which he does, by nature).

And third, to claim that someone can be *given* a will to believe and yet still remain in unbelief is absurd. If God gives the will to believe, a man *will* believe (cf. John 6:37, 44).

Now, just to expose how weak this reasoning is, let’s simplify the logic of the argument:

> “If the Holy Spirit convicts those who hear the gospel of sin—especially for their unbelief—then Christ died for *all people*, including those who never hear the gospel.”

But how does that follow? That’s like saying: “If the sun shines on a tree, then the roots of every tree everywhere are nourished by it.” It’s a non sequitur.

The Scriptures cited—John 3:18–19; 8:24; 12:48; 15:22, 24—teach clearly that **unbelief is a condemning sin**. But only in those **who have the gospel preached to them**. That doesn’t tell us anything about whether Christ died for all.

A Closer Look at John 16:7–11

This passage is used often, and badly. Let's look at what Jesus actually says:

> "I will send the Comforter. And when He comes, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment…"

What does this mean?

- Jesus is comforting his disciples, telling them that although he is going away, he will send the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit is called the "Advocate" or "Counselor"—one who pleads and testifies (cf. 1 John 2:1).
- The Spirit's work in this passage is focused on **vindicating Jesus** in the face of the world's rejection of him.

Here's the breakdown:

- **Of sin,** because they did not believe in Christ. This was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2), when Peter's preaching cut to the heart of those who had rejected Christ.
- **Of righteousness,** because Jesus went to the Father—showing that he was truly righteous, not a blasphemer.
- **Of judgment,** because Satan, the "prince of this world," has been judged. Christ's death was his defeat.

This passage primarily refers to the Spirit's work **through the apostles' witness**—beginning at Pentecost. It does *not* teach that the Spirit convicts every person in the world of sin. It says nothing about universal redemption.

So what does this have to do with the claim that Christ died for all people, elect and reprobate alike? **Nothing.** If someone thinks it does, let him try to prove it—he'll have a hard time.

Arminian Proof 5 (Claim):

> "God has testified, both by His word and by His oath, that He desires His Son to save the world—meaning that He has purposed redemption for all people. He also desires that all should come to the knowledge of the truth so that this redemption might take effect in them. This is shown in 1 Timothy 2:4 and John 3:17. Additionally, God says that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11). And who would dare say that God would testify to something—by oath no less—without sincerely meaning it? Surely, that would be blasphemy!"

Response:

Let's examine this carefully and biblically.

1. "God testified, by His word and oath, that He wills His Son to save all by working redemption for all."

This is a serious and unfounded claim. It is a **false appeal to God's testimony**. God never declared such a thing—neither by word nor oath. What He has clearly revealed is that His will is for Christ to **save to the uttermost all who come to Him** (Heb. 7:25)—not to work a redemption that merely *makes salvation possible* for all.

Scripture never speaks of Christ redeeming "so far" or "to a point." That is a human fiction, not a divine promise.

Beware of claiming divine testimony for what God has never said. God will not be a witness to lies.

2. "God wills that Christ should bring all to a knowledge of the truth so redemption may be wrought in them."

Again, this is a **gross distortion of Scripture**. God never said that Christ's mission was to bring **every individual** to the knowledge of the truth with the aim of applying redemption to them all. This is both **presumptuous** and **deceitful**.

3. What do the cited Scriptures actually say?

Let's examine the verses:

- **John 3:17** – "God sent His Son into the world… that the world through Him might be saved."
  This verse says nothing about a partial or potential redemption for every single person. The word *world* here, as often in Scripture, refers to **the elect scattered among all nations**, not every individual without exception. The goal is not a hypothetical salvation but actual salvation—"He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

- **1 Timothy 2:4** – God "desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."
  As shown earlier, this verse refers to **all kinds of people**—not every individual. Paul is urging prayer for kings and rulers (v. 1–

2), showing that God's mercy is not limited to Jews or the lowly, but includes the high and mighty too.

- **Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11** – "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? … Turn and live."
  These verses are not speaking of Christ's redemption at all. There is no mention of the Messiah or His atonement. Rather, they are about God's **temporal judgments** upon the house of Israel for their sins.

Let's be clear about this.

What is Ezekiel actually about?

Let's observe what the prophet is saying in context.

- **First**, these words are spoken **only to the house of Israel** (see Ezek. 18:25). They are not general statements to all humanity. God had entered into covenant with Israel. He sent prophets to them. He pleaded with them to turn from their wicked ways. These verses speak to **God's dealings with His covenant people**, not with all nations.

- **Second**, when God says He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," we must understand this carefully. Either:

  - God is saying He has decreed they shall not die—*which cannot be true*, because many do die in their sins; or,

  - He is saying He has **commanded them to repent**, that they might live. And this is true.

The meaning is this: **God takes no delight in judgment for its own sake.** He is not bloodthirsty. He calls sinners—especially those in covenant with Him—to repent, and if they do, He will pardon. But this is a **command and call**, not a declaration of a universal saving purpose.

So what's the bottom line?

- These verses from Ezekiel speak about **Israel's national judgment**, not eternal salvation.
- They have **no reference to Christ's death** or atonement.
- They are sometimes used to make it seem as if God has a **universal saving intention** toward all people. But this is a misuse of the text.

When someone takes these texts and uses them to build a case for "universal redemption," they are forcing them to say **what God never intended**. They twist the plain meaning of Scripture and then say, "Shall we accuse God of not meaning what He says?" But they are putting their **own words in God's mouth**, and then calling Him a liar if He doesn't mean what *they* say!

Such handling of God's Word is not just bad theology—it's dangerous.

Arminian Proof 6 (Claim):

"The very words and phrases used by the Holy Spirit in Scripture—when speaking of Christ's death, His ransom, and His atonement—clearly imply that it belongs to all people. Consider the following expressions: 'All nations' (Matt. 28:19–20), 'the ends of the earth' (Isa. 45:22; 49:6), 'every creature' (Mark 16:15), 'all' (2 Cor. 5:14–15; 1 Tim. 2:6), 'every man' (Heb. 2:9), 'the world' (John 3:16–17; 2 Cor. 5:19), 'the whole world' (1 John 2:2), 'that which was lost' (Luke 19:10), 'sinners' (Matt. 9:13), 'unjust' (1 Pet. 3:18), 'ungodly' (Rom. 5:6). And the Bible also says that whoever among these repents and believes will be saved (John 3:16, 18; Acts 10:43). Are we not twisting the plain language of Scripture if we try to limit the scope of these passages?"

Response:

Let's answer this carefully and biblically.

1. This is not an argument, but an assumption.

The author here simply **repeats the very point that's under debate**—that is, whether words like *all* and *world* always refer to every single individual. That's the issue we're discussing. So to quote verses with those words and then conclude that they must mean "everyone without exception" is to **assume what he needs to prove**. That's not an argument; it's just a repetition of a belief.

2. Verses about "sinners," "unjust," "ungodly," and "the lost" prove nothing about the scope of Christ's death.

- Yes, Jesus came to save sinners (Matt. 9:13), the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18), the ungodly (Rom. 5:6), and the lost (Luke 19:10). But that does not mean He came to save **every sinner**, or that His death was **equally intended** for all. It means that **only those in this category can be saved**, and **His elect are drawn from among them**.

These verses describe **the kind of people Christ saves**, not **the total number of those for whom He died**.

3. The universal language ("all," "world," "every man") has been addressed already.

- These expressions appear often in Scripture, but they do **not necessarily mean all individuals** without exception. They can (and often do) mean **all kinds** of people—Jews and Gentiles, rulers and servants, men and women—from every nation, not every person without exception.

We've shown already that context must determine how we understand these terms.

4. What about verses like Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15?

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…"
"Preach the gospel to every creature…"

These are commands about the **scope of gospel proclamation**, not the **intended extent of Christ's atonement**.

- First, **these commands were never fulfilled universally**. Not every nation or individual has heard the gospel, even to this day.

- Second, the command to preach to all does **not imply that Christ died for all**. The gospel is to be offered freely and indiscriminately, not because of the universal extent of the atonement, but because of its **infinite sufficiency** and **God's purpose to call His elect from all nations** (cf. John 10:16).

5. Isaiah 45:22 and 49:6 refer not to all people, but to the elect.

- *"Look to me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved" (Isa. 45:22)* is a call to the Gentiles—yes—but only **those who look** are saved. And who are they? The ones whom God effectually draws to Himself.

- Isaiah 49:6 says that Christ will be "a light to the Gentiles," and will bring **salvation to the ends of the earth**. But it also says in the same verse that He will **gather the preserved of Israel**—that is, the **elect remnant**, not every Israelite.

So, far from proving that Christ died for all without exception, these verses actually support the idea that **He died to redeem His elect from every nation**.

6. Ironically, these verses undercut the very point they're being used to support.

When you consider the **actual meaning** of these texts—especially Isaiah 45 and 49—they make it clear that the universal language used in Scripture is **qualified** by the **intention and effect** of Christ's death. The death of Christ is **saving** in nature, and **definite** in its purpose. He "gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness

and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14)—not to make all people savable.

Final Thoughts:

The author of this "proof" accuses others of pride and error for not interpreting *all* and *world* as literal universals. But Scripture itself interprets those words differently. And if we impose a meaning on Scripture that it does not support—**that is the real pride and error.**

To take language about *all nations*, *the world*, and *every creature* and force it to mean every individual without exception is not only poor interpretation—it actually **undermines** the very glory of the atonement, which is not general and ineffectual, but particular, powerful, and saving.

Arminian Proof 7 (Claim):

> *"There are certain high and special blessings that come by the Holy Spirit through the New Covenant—things like saving knowledge, regeneration, sanctification, and communion with God—which clearly belong only to the saints, the called and chosen. This is clear from places like Matthew 13:11, John 14:17, 21–23; 16:13–15; 17:19–20; Acts 2:38–39; 1 Corinthians 2:9, 14; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 2:9.*
>
> *But even though these privileges are only for the saints, Scripture sometimes mentions them **alongside** references to Christ's death and ransom—which is said to be for **all**. And*

*when that happens, the language used doesn't restrict the ransom only to the elect, but instead leaves room to understand it as being for all people. After all, Scripture says Christ died for His sheep and for many—but never says **only** for His sheep or **only** for many. So this leaves the door open to say that His death was for all, even if only believers enjoy its saving effects."*

Response:

The more I read this "proof," the less I can see what it's trying to establish. It's neither logically sound nor biblically persuasive—and it does nothing to support the idea of **universal redemption**.

Let's examine the reasoning behind it.

1. Of course, there are unique blessings that belong only to the elect—and Christ's death is one of them.

- No Christian denies that the New Testament promises many **special privileges**—saving knowledge, the indwelling Spirit, eternal life—and that these are **only for God's chosen people**.
- But the argument assumes a major error: it treats the **saving benefits of Christ's death** as distinct from the **death itself**. In reality, **His death and its benefits are inseparable**—He did not shed His blood to make salvation merely possible, but to actually purchase and apply it to His elect.

As Scripture says:

"He redeemed His church with His own blood" (Acts 20:28)
"He loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25)
"He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness…" (Titus 2:14)

Even in John 17:19, Christ sanctifies Himself—sets Himself apart unto death—for the sake of those the Father gave Him.

So yes, these spiritual privileges are **for the saints**—and the **ransom that purchased them** is also for the same people, and **no others**.

2. The claim that some texts "leave room" for universal application is unproven.

- The author says that when Scripture talks about the ransom alongside other spiritual blessings, it "leaves room" to apply the ransom to all people. But this is just **asserted without proof**.

- We are told to believe that unless Scripture explicitly says, "Christ died **only** for His sheep," then maybe He died for others too. But this is not how Scripture works. The consistent teaching of God's Word is that Christ laid down His life **for His sheep** (John 10:11), **for His people** (Matt. 1:21), and **for His church** (Eph. 5:25)—and never speaks of His atoning death for the reprobate.

This idea of "leaving room" is just a vague way of saying, *"It doesn't explicitly exclude others, so maybe it includes them,"*—but that's not how doctrine is built.

3. There is no difference in language between "many," "all," or "sheep" when describing the atonement.

- The author implies that some phrases (like “many” or “His sheep”) are exclusive, while others (“all” or “the world”) are open-ended.

But that’s simply not the case.

- “Christ died for many” (Matt. 20:28)
- “He laid down His life for the sheep” (John 10:11)
- “He gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6)

All of these phrases **must be interpreted in their context**. None of them tells us **exactly** how wide the atonement extends. That must be learned by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

What we do see is this: when Christ’s death is described as **effectual**—when it **redeems**, **sanctifies**, or **saves**—it is always tied to **the elect**, and never to the whole world without exception.

4. Christ’s death and its saving benefits are always connected—and always limited to the redeemed.

- Look at Revelation 5:9–10. There, Christ’s blood is said to have purchased people from every tribe, language, people, and nation—and made them kings and priests to God.

> *“You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”*

That’s not a general ransom for everyone. That’s a **particular redemption** for the elect **from among** all peoples. They are the ones Christ has redeemed—and they alone receive the inheritance.

This is the biblical pattern. The ransom is **never broader** than the redemption it achieves.

5. Finally, the "sheep and many" argument is empty.

The claim that Scripture never says "only for the sheep" or "only for many" is irrelevant.

- When Jesus says He lays down His life **for His sheep** (John 10:11), He also says there are **others who are not His sheep**, and **they do not believe** (John 10:26).
- In Matthew 20:28, He says He came to give His life **a ransom for many**, not for all—unless we redefine "many" to mean "all," which collapses the force of the distinction.

So it's simply false to claim that Scripture is vague on this point. In truth, the language used by the Holy Spirit is **discriminating**, **purposeful**, and **limited in scope**.

This so-called "proof" is built on shaky assumptions:

- That Christ's death can be separated from its saving benefits.
- That open-ended language means unlimited scope.
- That the absence of "only" leaves the door open for universal atonement.

But the entire witness of Scripture teaches otherwise. Christ's death is **definite** in its design, **effective** in its result, and **particular** in its intent. He died to save **His people**, and He did not fail.

Arminian Proof 8

Claim: The restoration accomplished by Christ for humanity is as extensive and powerful as the fall of Adam. Thus, Adam is described as a figure of Christ, the second Adam (Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15).

Answer:
First, it is certainly true that the apostle compares Adam and Christ in some of the cited texts, particularly in Romans 5:12, 18. But note carefully—the comparison concerns not the extent of their influence (i.e., how many are affected), but the intensity and efficacy of their actions. The apostle's intent is to contrast the effectual power of Christ's righteousness in justification with the condemning power of Adam's sin. Just as Adam's transgression brought condemnation upon all his natural offspring, so Christ's righteousness brings the free gift of justification to all who are His—His spiritual offspring, those given to Him by the Father.

Secondly, 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 refers specifically to the resurrection, and only of believers. Although verse 22 says, "in Christ shall all be made alive," verse 23 immediately qualifies this: "each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." The apostle is speaking not of the general resurrection, but the resurrection unto glory, which is the privilege of believers alone.

Thirdly, the comparison in verse 45 of that same chapter is about the kind of life each figure conveys. Adam was made a "living soul," possessing natural life which he passed on to his posterity. Christ, by contrast, is "a life-giving Spirit," who imparts spiritual life and grace to His people. Throughout Scripture, any parallel between Christ and Adam has a singular focus: they stand as two covenant heads or

representative roots. To those united to Adam by natural birth he communicates sin, guilt, and death; to those united to Christ by the Spirit, He communicates righteousness, peace, and eternal life. As for the number who receive these blessings, that is not the concern of the apostle's comparison.

Fourthly, while Romans 3:23 declares that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," the righteousness of Christ and the redemption He provides are explicitly said in verse 22 to belong "to all who believe." The gospel is universal in proclamation, not in effect. It reaches Jew and Gentile alike—without distinction—but only those who believe receive the benefits.

Arminian Proof 9

Claim: Christ commanded the gospel to be preached to all nations, and He promised salvation to all who believe and are baptised (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16). Therefore, His messengers must not have been sent with a lie when they offer salvation to all.

Answer:
The argument here lacks precision. Let us consider the facts.

First, it is true that Christ commanded His apostles to preach the gospel to every nation and to every person providentially brought under their ministry. They were to declare that "whoever believes shall be saved," without distinction of race, status, or nationality. They were to go wherever the Spirit permitted them (cf. Acts 16:6–7), calling all to repentance and faith.

Secondly, the apostles did indeed obey this command, preaching far and wide, beseeching men to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19–20; Rom. 10:18). They did not confine the message to the Jews but proclaimed it to all people wherever God opened a door. Of course, Christ did not send His ambassadors with a falsehood. They did not offer what God never intended to give.

Yet from this, the conclusion that Christ died for all men without exception does not follow.

Some may argue: “If Christ did not die for all, how can we sincerely offer Him to all?” But consider:

1. The gospel was never preached to every single individual in the world, nor is this claimed in the cited texts. You must also account for those who never hear the gospel. Will you say Christ died for them too?

2. What do preachers offer when they proclaim the gospel? They offer life and salvation through Jesus Christ—on the condition of repentance and faith. The truthfulness of that offer does not rest on a secret knowledge of who the elect are, but on the promise that *“whoever believes shall be saved.”*

3. The gospel offer is true because Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour. There is no defect in Him—He is able to save all who come to Him. Ministers are not charged with declaring God's secret purposes or eternal decrees, but with preaching His commands and promises.

To tell a man that “if you believe, you shall be saved” is no falsehood, even if the man refuses to believe and thus perishes. The promise

remains true, and the fault lies not in the offer, but in the unbelief of the hearer.

Proof 10: The Duty of Praying for All Men

Claim:
Believers are commanded to pray for all men—even for the unjust and their persecutors (Matt. 5:44–48; Luke 6:28). The apostle instructs us to pray for "all men," including kings and those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1–4), at a time when few rulers favoured Christianity. Since he does not say "some," but "all in authority," and because God "desires all to be saved," it follows that a door of life is opened to all. God does not tell His people to seek Him in vain (Isa. 45:19), nor would He have them pray for things in vain.

Answer:
The force of this argument rests on several flawed assumptions:

1. **That general or indefinite statements must be interpreted as applying universally**—a principle that is demonstrably false (see Romans 4–5).

2. **That "all" in 1 Timothy 2:1 must mean every individual,** not all kinds or classes of people. But the apostle explicitly enumerates various categories to clarify that he is referring to all sorts of men, not every man without exception.

3. **That we are obliged to pray for the salvation of every individual**—a notion that lacks:

    - Any scriptural command, rule, or example;

- Is contrary to apostolic instruction (1 John 5:16);
- Opposes Christ's own example (John 17:9);
- And conflicts with God's revealed purposes in election (Rom. 9:11–15; 11:7).

Scripture teaches us to pray for people of all types, not for every individual without exception, that those appointed to eternal life may come to faith.

4. **That the only legitimate reason to pray for anyone is their potential salvation through Christ**—which is plainly false. Jeremiah 29:7 instructs us to pray for the welfare of cities and peoples, even when their eternal state remains unknown or unrevealed.

5. **That we must be assured Christ died for each person we pray for**—a claim unsupported by Scripture. In Acts 8:22–24, prayer is urged even without such certainty.

6. **That our prayers must align with God's secret will and decree**—as if we are bound to conform to the hidden counsel of God rather than to His revealed commands.

Unless every one of these assumptions is proven (which is highly improbable), the argument collapses. To reason from our duty to pray for all men to the conclusion that Christ died for all men is fallacious. Our duty flows from God's revealed will, not His secret purpose.

Proof 11: God's Presence with His People in Gospel Ministry

Claim:
God promises to be with His people as they preach to all and pray for all, giving them confidence in both (Matt. 28:20; 1 Tim. 2:3, 8; Luke 10:5; Isa. 54:17).

Answer:
That God is present with His people in preaching and prayer, provided they act according to His will and their duty, is undoubtedly true. But this in no way supports the idea of a universal redemption. To assert so is a non sequitur—an irrelevant leap from a general truth to an unfounded conclusion.

Proof 12: Mercy Shown to All Sorts of Sinners

Claim:
God has already fulfilled His word by showing mercy to people from every kind of background and every type of sinner. This is meant to encourage all people to repent and believe, showing that none are excluded (Acts 2, 3, 8–11, 16, 19, 28; 1 Cor. 6:10–11; 1 Tim. 1:13–16).

Answer:
Had it been demonstrated that God saved *every* individual, your position would be secure. But instead, you affirm only that God has saved *some* from every kind of person and every class of sinner. This supports the contrary position: namely, that God saves a particular

number—His elect—from all nations, classes, and ranks, just as the Scriptures teach.

Thus, your assertion betrays your intended conclusion. You have proved not that Christ died for all without exception, but that God, through the blood of Christ, saves *some from every group*—which is precisely what your opponents maintain.

Proof 13: The Grace of God in the Atonement and the Salvation of the Elect

Claim:
Life and blessing have flowed from the doctrine of God's love for mankind. In particular, the gracious and spiritual revelation of God's love—seen in the ransom given and atonement made by Christ for all men, and the blessings flowing from it—has, first and foremost, drawn God's elect to believe and turn to Him (cf. Acts 13:48; Titus 2:11–13; 3:4–5).

Answer:
We gladly and fully affirm that the free grace of God and the surpassing greatness of His eternal love—shown in sending His Son to die for sinners and to deliver them from the power of sin and Satan—is a powerful and effective motive in the conversion of the elect. When applied by the Spirit of grace, this truth becomes the very means by which God draws His people to Himself. It is the joy of our hearts, the foundation of our obedience, and the cause of our gratitude.

However, we categorically reject the idea that the efficacy of this truth lies in the claim that this love is extended universally to all

men. We deny that such a supposed universality has ever been the true source of its power. For:

1. **It is false**—a distortion of God's Word, as we have already shown. No lasting spiritual good can come from a falsehood.

2. **It undermines the very power of this heavenly motive.** By turning the intense, particular love of God for His elect into a generalised wish or affection—a desire common to all but effectual for none—it strips the gospel of its effectual force. This sort of love, if true, could coexist with the eternal ruin of all humanity and would be entirely at odds with the very nature of God.

Now, regarding the Scriptures cited in support of this claim:

- **Titus 2:11–13** refers not to a common, ineffectual grace, but to the grace of God that *actually brings salvation*. It is the very grace that led Christ to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself *a peculiar people*, zealous for good works. Here, both redemption and sanctification are declared to be the *immediate purpose* of Christ's offering. That utterly opposes the idea of universal atonement.

- **Titus 3:4–5** speaks of the *kindness and love* of God as expressed in our regeneration by the Holy Spirit, justification, and adoption as heirs of eternal life (vv. 5–7). Can this be rightly described as a "common love"? Let all judge for themselves whether this is the universal benevolence of God toward all, or His effectual love toward the elect.

- **Acts 13:47** shows the expansion of God's mercy to the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel—nothing more. It fulfils

> Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 49:6), which foretells the gathering of God's people from all nations. Far from supporting universal grace, this is the same truth stated in John 11:52: that Christ would gather into one the *children of God* who were scattered abroad. It is about the extent of *the elect*, not the reach of a generalised love.

As for **Acts 13:48**, it plainly affirms the contrary of universal redemption: *"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* This is as clear a statement of particular grace as one could desire.

Proof 14: On the Rejection of the Gospel and the Supposed Universal Atonement

Claim:
When the gospel is preached and spiritual light comes, those who refuse to believe and turn aside to other things are said to "love darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). They follow lies, forsake their own mercies (Jonah 2:8), harden their hearts (Rom. 2:5), lose their souls (Matt. 16:26), and destroy themselves (Hos. 13:9). But how could these things be true unless Christ had secured life, made atonement, and provided means for their restoration? Surely God does not demand from men what He has not provided—He is no hard master, gathering where He has not sown.

Answer:
The core of this argument is that because some reject the gospel and so perish by their own fault, therefore Christ must have died for all people without exception. Although such reasoning seems scarcely worth answering, for the sake of clarity and for those less grounded in the truth, I will offer a few observations.

1. The Gospel Is Not Universally Preached

Not all people hear the gospel. In fact, throughout history, most have been left without the outward means of grace (Rom. 2:14; Acts 14:16; 17:30). Therefore, any conclusion based on the universal offer of salvation fails if even one soul was not included in the redemptive purpose. Universal redemption cannot stand if the gospel is not universally administered.

2. The Cause of Condemnation

It is not the failure to believe that *Christ died for every individual* that condemns, for such belief is nowhere commanded in Scripture. Rather, it is the refusal to believe in Christ's all-sufficient atonement, to embrace the mercy held forth in the gospel on God's terms. This has nothing to do with whether Christ intended to save each person, but concerns the sufficiency of His death for all who believe. He is the only true way, life, and light; there is no other name under heaven by which men may be saved.

The verse cited—John 3:19—says, *"They loved darkness rather than light."* The word *"rather"* (Greek: *mallon*) does not imply they loved both but preferred darkness more; it expresses opposition, not comparison. And though the passage speaks of *men* generally, the reference is clearly to those who had the gospel presented to them. Even among these, some believed and were made sons of God (John 1:12). So the "loving of darkness" applies only to those who actively reject revealed truth—not to all men universally.

As for interpreting *"love"* here to mean *"choose"*, the Greek will not bear such a translation (*egapesan* means *they loved*). Loving and choosing are not equivalent. The passage describes affection and

allegiance to the ways of darkness, not an intellectual decision between options. The love of darkness is not merely a passive preference, but a wilful rejection of the gospel's offer of peace, life, and immortality through Christ.

To conclude that *Christ died for all* merely because many rejected His preaching is flawed logic. If anything, one might more rightly infer the opposite: that He did *not* die for all, because belief itself is *not given to all* (Phil. 1:29).

3. On the Parenthetical Question: "How could it be, if no light were for them?"

If this means that God intended to give saving light to all, then we must decline such a claim, for God's purpose never fails (Isa. 46:10). His counsel stands forever (Ps. 33:11), and He does not change (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). To suggest He intended to enlighten all who remain in darkness contradicts His own Word and attributes.

If, instead, the phrase simply means there is light *available* in the preached gospel, just as the sun provides light to all though some are blind, then we agree. The fault lies in man's blindness, not in God's intention. But this does not advance the case for universal atonement—it merely shows man's guilt in rejecting the light that is set before him.

4. The Other Scriptures Cited

- **Jonah 2:8** refers to idolaters abandoning the true God and forfeiting the mercies they had already received—not proof of universal grace.

- **Romans 2:5** addresses Gentiles who hardened themselves despite the testimony of God's works and patience.

- **Matthew 16:26** and **Hosea 13:9** declare that sinners destroy themselves by their sin. But none of these passages teach that Christ died for all or that all are placed in a restored state.

5. The Implied Doctrine of Actual Restoration

The closing remarks seem to suggest more than a general offer of salvation—they imply that all mankind has already been *restored* by Christ to a state of grace, from which some fall again and so perish. The reasoning is this: men cannot be said to "lose themselves," or "harden their hearts," unless they were once enlightened or softened by Christ. But this idea of actual, universal restoration is deeply flawed.

Let me now respond briefly to that underlying claim.

Response to the Argument and the Assertion of Universal Restoration

First, the argument seems to run like this:
Because all men are guilty through original sin, they cannot further aggravate their condemnation by actual sins. Or, because men are born with hard hearts, they cannot make themselves harder by wilful rebellion. Or, since they are blind by nature, they cannot be said to reject the light—though in truth, it is because they are blind that they do so. Or again, that unless souls were already in a saved state, they could not be said to "lose" them.

This line of reasoning is put forth as plain and scriptural. But nothing could be more at odds with reason, with the testimony of Scripture, and with the basic principles of God's revelation. Surely no reader could be so naïve as to imagine that a wilful rejection of the offered remedy—accompanied by many other offences against God—is not sufficient to make one justly responsible for his own condemnation. I speak here particularly of those who live under the preaching of the gospel.

Second, regarding the assertion that all men have been *actually restored* by Christ to the same covenantal position Adam once held (though not in terms of original righteousness), I understand this to be the author's meaning—especially as he elsewhere affirms that all are *justified* in Christ, though he offers no explanation of how this could be.

To this I reply:

1. Scripture gives no support whatsoever to such a claim. There is not a single passage that even suggests such a universal restoration.

2. The claim contradicts:

- **(a)** Multiple clear texts that state we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1); that we "must be born again" to enter the

kingdom (John 3:3); and that apart from faith in Christ, “the wrath of God remains” on us (John 3:36). Scripture repeatedly describes all people as alienated from God until actual reconciliation is made through Christ.

- **(b)** The nature of the *new covenant of grace*, which is rooted in God’s free mercy toward His elect and marked by distinctive, effectual promises. It distinguishes the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent—not only in Christ the Head but in all His members. This covenant works powerfully in all to whom it belongs, and is consistently said to be made with God's people—not with all mankind. If all men were restored into covenant by Christ, none of these biblical descriptions could stand.

- **(c)** The doctrine of **election and reprobation**. The latter is God’s sovereign decree to leave some in their fallen state without redemption in Christ. This would be impossible if all were restored in Him.

- **(d)** This view leads to numerous *absurd and unscriptural consequences*, such as:

    - **[1]** That all infants dying before reaching the age of reason must be saved—meaning the children of idolaters, atheists, and persecutors would be in a better condition than apostles and faithful saints who, under this system, remain in danger of damnation. Yet Christ says no one enters the kingdom without being born again (John 3:3), and Paul says that the children of unbelievers are *unclean* (1 Cor. 7:14), and no unclean thing enters the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27).

- **[2]** That no more is required for salvation than simply remaining as one was born—that is, in the supposed covenant state restored by Christ. Yet the whole of Scripture insists that those who remain in that natural state will perish.

- **[3]** That every person who perishes has fallen from the grace of the new covenant. But this contradicts the covenant's promise: that none who are truly in it shall utterly fall away.

- **[4]** That only those who once had union with Christ and fell from it can come to Him, since all others, supposedly, already remain in Him.

Such conclusions are not only erroneous but destructive to the doctrine of **free and sovereign grace**. They inevitably flow from the false assertion of a universal covenantal restoration in Christ. Any discerning reader will see that such arguments, rather than proving the point, expose the **underlying falsehood** of the entire system.

Fifth, the final sentence of the proof deserves a brief reply:

"God is no hard master, to gather where He has not sown."

To this we answer:
Indeed, God sowed the seed of life in Adam and bestowed abundant temporal blessings upon all his descendants, and spiritual mercies upon some. From these benefits, God will rightly call unbelievers to account—not because He sowed gospel grace in all without

exception, but because some had Christ plainly offered and willfully rejected Him. As for others, judgment is rendered according to the light and opportunity they were given.

Proof 15: God's Expostulations with Sinners and the Claim of Universal Redemption

Claim:
God frequently contends with and pleads earnestly with those who ultimately perish. Examples include:

- *"Oh, that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me"* (Deut. 5:29);
- *"What more could I have done to my vineyard?"* (Isa. 5:4);
- *"What iniquity have your fathers found in me?"* (Jer. 2:5);
- *"Have I been a wilderness to Israel?"* (Jer. 2:31);
- *"Oh, my people, what have I done unto thee?"* (Mic. 6:3);
- *"How often would I have gathered you, and you would not"* (Matt. 23:37);
- *"Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me"* (Ps. 81:13);
- *"Because I have called and you refused"* (Prov. 1:24–31);
- *"They knew God, but glorified Him not"* (Rom. 1:21);
- *"You are inexcusable, O man"* (Rom. 2:1);

- *"You treasure up wrath for yourself"* (Rom. 2:5).

From these texts, the argument concludes: since God thus pleads with men, even with those who perish, no one can say God never intended good to them, or that Christ made no atonement for them.

Answer:

Let us consider several points in response to this collection of divine complaints and charges.

1. No Mention of Atonement or Ransom for the Perishing

None of these texts mention that a ransom was paid or an atonement made for those who perish—which is the central point being asserted. These passages speak primarily of *temporal mercies* and the *outward means of grace*. As we noted previously, God does not bring charges against sinners for not accepting a ransom that was never made for them. Nor will they on the last day claim that He failed to provide it.

This does not mean there is no cause for God to plead with sinners concerning the blood of Christ. Certainly, it serves to draw the elect to repentance and to make the wicked more inexcusable. But the texts cited here do not establish God's redemptive purpose in Christ toward the reprobate.

2. These Exhortations Are Directed Only to Some

Except for Romans 1:28 and 2:5—which refer to knowledge gained through creation and providence, not through Christ or the gospel—all the other passages apply to those who had the *external means of grace*. In the time these words were spoken, that group was a very

small fraction of humanity. Therefore, these texts cannot be used to deduce God's universal redemptive intention toward all people. As Psalm 147:19–20 affirms, God's Word and statutes were not made known to every nation.

3. All Who Enjoy God's Mercies Are Accountable

Every person who enjoys God's temporal or spiritual blessings—especially those under the gospel—receives enough mercy that God may rightly charge them with ingratitude and rebellion when they do not respond with obedience.

4. God Could Effectually Work Repentance if He Willed

All would agree that the things God charges sinners for lacking—repentance, faith, obedience—He could infallibly produce in them by His power, if He so willed. Therefore, these divine complaints are not revelations of His eternal purpose, for God never fails to accomplish what He purposes (Rom. 9:19).

5. Attributing Desires and Longings to God Is Improper

To ascribe emotional "wishings" to God—such as "Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me"—is to speak in human terms. God is not a man. Such language is not literal but accommodates human understanding. Just as God is said to have "eyes," "ears," or "hands," so also these expressions communicate God's moral will, not His eternal, sovereign decree. They do not imply frustration or failure in His purpose.

6. These Are Moral Appeals, Not Declarations of Universal Redemption

All these expressions are **pathetic appeals**—earnest expressions of God's moral will—designed to convict disobedient hearers under the outward administration of the covenant. They are declarations of duty, not revelations of God's secret will. They highlight man's guilt and God's righteousness, not a universal atonement.

To conclude from such passages that therefore *Christ died for all men* is a leap that has no basis in Scripture or reason.

7. Specific Texts of Greater Weight Have Already Been Answered

Several of the most commonly cited passages in this list (such as Matt. 23:37 and Deut. 5:29) have been addressed previously and shown not to support the doctrine of universal redemption.

In conclusion, these passionate divine appeals highlight human sin, underscore our duty under the gospel, and magnify God's righteous judgments. But they offer no foundation for the claim that Christ died for all without exception. Rather, they reinforce the truth that where grace is offered and rejected, guilt is intensified—not that redemption was universally intended.

Proof 16: The Language of Scripture Concerning Those Who Perish

Claim:
Scripture describes those who reject the gospel in severe terms. They "turn the grace of God into wantonness" (Jude 4); "trample underfoot the Son of God," and "profane the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified" (Heb. 10:29); they "deny the Lord who

bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1); they "perish for whom Christ died" (1 Cor. 8:11); they are "twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12–13); and they "bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). If Christ did not die for them, how could such things be said?

Answer:

1. **The key texts (Heb. 10:29; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Cor. 8:11) have already been addressed** at length. None support the claim that Christ died for all without exception. They have been misinterpreted and misapplied.

2. As for **Jude 4, 12–13**, the accusation that some "turn the grace of God into wantonness" means they abuse the doctrine of grace to excuse sin. But this is no proof that Christ died for them. In fact, Jude says they were "ordained to condemnation," which stands in direct opposition to God's redemptive love in Christ.

3. The other texts only affirm the guilt of those who misuse God's mercies or reject His truth. They do not establish that Christ offered atonement for those who perish. The weight of the argument rests on the aforementioned verses, all of which have been thoroughly refuted.

Proof 17: Christ as Judge According to the Gospel

Claim:
Christ, by virtue of His death, will judge all people by the gospel, even those who rejected it and perished. If He did not die for them,

how could He justly judge them according to that gospel? (Rom. 14:9–12; Phil. 2:7–11; Rom. 2:16; John 12:47–50)

Answer:

1. That Christ will judge all men is true and affirmed in Scripture. But this **does not imply He died for all**, unless we also conclude He died for the devils, who will likewise be judged by Him.

2. The claim that all will be judged **by the gospel**, even those who never heard it, contradicts Scripture: *"As many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law"* (Rom. 2:12). People are judged according to the light they possessed, not according to revelation they never received.

3. The expression *"Christ died the first death"* is foreign to Scripture. He died the death that was the curse of the law, not merely a physical death.

4. The idea that the gospel has no truth unless Christ died for all is plainly false. The gospel proclaims Christ as **Saviour of all who believe**, and **Lord of all**, whether to save or to judge. These texts speak of His exaltation and judicial authority, not universal redemption.

Proof 18: Contending for the "Common Salvation"

Claim:
Jude exhorts believers to contend for "the faith once delivered to the saints," a "common salvation" (Jude 3–5). Some abuse it, while others neglect it and fall away from salvation already wrought by Christ for all. This proves Christ died for all.

Answer:

1. The phrase **"common salvation"** does not imply it is common to all mankind, any more than *"common faith"* (Titus 1:4) implies all have faith. The faith is called common because it is shared among the saints—the elect. Likewise, the salvation in view is common only to believers.

2. The argument's remainder is filled with rhetorical flourishes but **lacks any firm scriptural foundation**. It implies that salvation accomplished by Christ is ineffective unless made so by human will—a position that **undermines the sovereign efficacy of Christ's atonement** and places the outcome of redemption in the hands of fallen men.

Final Evaluation of the Argument for Universal Atonement

These three final "proofs" are intended to summarise and reinforce the entire argument. The author calls them "plain and according to Scripture," claiming they prove that Christ paid a ransom for all people. But a careful reader will see:

- The expressions are often **ambiguous, confusing, and imprecise**;

- The reasoning is **shallow, forced, and logically flawed**;
- The interpretations of Scripture are **strained, misleading, and contrary to the text's context**.

In truth, the claim that **Christ died for all without exception** is not clearly taught in any of the passages cited. The inference drawn—that His atonement was made for every person—is **neither evident from the language nor consistent with the broader witness of Scripture**.

It remains for the careful Christian reader to discern whether the Scripture truly supports this doctrine—or whether, instead, it clearly teaches that Christ laid down His life for His sheep, His people, His bride, His elect.

- End of Book IV and End of Book -

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