

August 28th, 2016

FROM HEAVEN HE CAME AND SOUGHT HER

John 10:11-21

The central work of the cross is Christ's *definite* salvation for His people. This is the church's one foundation of hope. As the old hymn says:

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.¹

This is beating heart of what Jesus did. He *did not* come to earth for an unspecified people. Jesus did not die randomly. He died for all those whom the Father had given Him.² "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life *for* the sheep...I am the good shepherd. I know *my own* and *my own* know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life *for the sheep*." (John 10:11, 14)

John 10:1-21 is broken up into three distinct parts.³ In v. 1-6, we see Jesus gathering together a flock. He's calling sheep out of the Jewish fold. v.3 says "To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." So in v.1-6, Jesus is gathering. In v. 7-10, Jesus tells us *why* He gathering His sheep. v.10 says "I came *that* they may have life and have it abundantly." We saw these first two parts last week. In today's passage, Jesus is explaining how He gathers and gives life to the sheep.

¹ Samuel J. Stone, 1839-1900

² John 6:37; 17:2, 6, 9

³ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/my-abandoned-life-for-your-abundant-life--2>

Namely, He gathers them by His death. v.11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life *for the sheep*.”

Christians are the most dangerous people to the kingdom of Satan, when they grasp this truth. Full atonement. Invincible salvation. Unstoppable mission. If Christ died for *actual* sinners—His own sheep, then not Satan, not the hordes of hell, not ISIS, not socialism, not our own insecurities, *nothing* can thwart His design. Jesus said “I *must* bring them also, and they *will* listen to my voice.” (v.16) That’s what the atonement of Christ accomplishes. This truth turns lambs into lions.

The Big Idea...

Jesus made a definite and deliberate atonement for His people, and this is what turns lambs into lions

- ☆ The Definite Atonement of Christ (v.11-16)
- ☆ The Deliberate Death of Christ (v.17-18)
- ☆ The Divisive Response to Christ (v.19-21)

I. The Definite Atonement of Christ (v.11-16)

The particularity of the Jesus’ sheep

Let’s first look at how particular Jesus is in speaking about His sheep. v. 11 says “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life *for the sheep*.” **What sheep are these?** Jesus already spoke of them in v.3-4 “...The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his *own sheep* by name and leads *them* out. When he has brought out all his *own*, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” Jesus led the man born blind out of the Jewish fold

into His own flock. Why? Because the man was one of *His sheep*, while the others who remained in the fold were not.⁴

We see Jesus constantly making this distinction between those sheep who are His and those who are not. In v.12, Jesus tells us that the hired hand flees precisely because he “...does not *own* the sheep.” In v.14, Jesus says “I know *my own* and *my own* know me.” v.16 “And I have *other sheep* that *are not* of this fold.” **Why is Jesus so emphasizing ownership of His sheep?** Because it answers the question: for *whom* did Christ die?

For whom did Christ die?

When we ask the question, “for whom did Christ die?” we are seeking to understand the nature of the atonement. The atonement of Jesus Christ is His sacrificial work on the cross for sinners. To atone means to reconcile, to forgive, to cleanse, to appease. In the history of the church, there has been two prevailing views regarding the atonement of Jesus Christ.

The first view of the atonement is called **universal atonement**. It is the view *that Christ died for the sins of everybody in order to make salvation possible*. This view doesn't actually secure the salvation of anybody. Rather it makes salvation a possibility. Christ died to make salvation available, but not actual. Most of American evangelicalism today holds this view, although this has not always been the case historically.

The second view of the atonement is called **definite atonement**.⁵ It is the view that *Christ died for the actual sins of the elect*. Meaning that Jesus died for

⁴ As v.26 says “...but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.”

⁵ This view is also known as limited atonement from the “L” in the mnemonic TULIP. However I agree with J.I. Packer's view on using the term definite atonement rather than limited atonement. He says “...limited is an inappropriate emphasis that actually sounds menacing. It is as if Reformed Christians have a primary concern to announce that there are people whom Christ did not die to save, whom therefore it is pointless to invite to turn from sin and trust him as Savior. Were it so, the logic of Reformed pastoral practice would seem to be: comprehensive evangelistic invitations to ordinary audiences should not be issued indiscriminately...I may say that in my view it is time to lay TULIP to rest, since the middle item does so much more harm than good.” *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, Ed. David Gibson & Jonathan Gibson, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2013), pg. 15-16

everyone whom the Father has given Him.⁶ In this view, the atonement does not just make salvation possible or potential, but certain and invincible.

So on the one hand we have the view of **universal atonement** which says that Christ died for the sins of everybody [universal], so that salvation is possible but not certain. On the other hand we have the view of **definite atonement** which says that Christ died for the sins of the elect, making salvation sure and certain [definite].

Jesus died *definitely* for His sheep

What does Jesus say? v.11 “The good shepherd lays down his life *for the sheep.*” Who are His sheep? **The elect.** Look at v.29 “My Father...has given *them* [the sheep] to me...” When Jesus speaks of the sheep, He is speaking of those whom the Father have given Him—the elect. At the same time, Jesus tells us about others who are not His sheep. Look at v.26, Jesus tells some of the Jews “...you do not believe *because* you are not among my sheep.” Their unbelief was not the *reason* they weren’t Jesus’ sheep. They didn’t believe because the Father did not give them to Jesus. So putting v.11 together with v. 26, we see that “Jesus lays his life down for a particular group of people (his sheep) in distinction from others (those who are not his sheep).”⁷

Next look at the end of v.15 “...I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep *that are not of this fold.* I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.” Jesus is speaking to Jews here. That’s what he means by “of this fold.” And He’s telling them that He has other sheep of a different fold, namely, the Gentiles. And He must bring them also. **Notice He calls them sheep before they ever believe.** This is future tense—“I must bring them also” — they haven’t come yet, they are not yet part of His fold. Jesus has sheep,

⁶ Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:2 “...you have given [Me] authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to *all whom you have given [Me].*”

⁷ *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, Ed. David Gibson & Jonathan Gibson, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2013), pg. 277

whom He laid down His life for (v.15), before they were even born or exercised faith in Him.

If we take a larger survey of John's writings⁸, we find the same truth.

In John 11, we find Caiaphas convincing the Jews that it would be better for Christ to die for the nation rather than the nation perish. And then John says in v.51-52 "He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year 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.**" Christ died for a particular group of people scattered throughout the nations.

This same truth is echoed in Revelation 5:9 when the saints in heaven sing to Jesus Christ: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and **by your blood you ransomed people for God from** every tribe and language and people and nation," Jesus ransomed (purchased) people *from* every tribe, not every single person in every tribe.

But perhaps the most clear place is in John 17. [Please turn there with me—pg. 903 in the pew Bibles] This is Jesus' high priestly prayer that He lifted up to His Father before He died. Now what I want us to see is how Jesus is speaking about the world and God's elect. (Picking up in v.6)

[6] "I have manifested your name *to the people whom you gave me out of the world*. Yours they were, and you gave *them* to me, and *they* have kept your word.
[9] I am praying for *them*. ***I am not praying for the world*** but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

⁸ **John 15:13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **Revelation 13:8** says "all who dwell on earth will worship it [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." God had a book before He ever made the world. That book was "the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." In other words, this was the book of atonement, the book of those whom Jesus died for actually.

Who is Jesus praying for? All those whom the Father gave to Him. The elect. Notice Jesus explicitly says His is not praying for the world. His prayers are particular. He prays for the elect, not those whom the Father did not give Him. Jesus prays for only those whom the Father sent Him to die for.

John Owen's argument

The Puritan John Owen wrestled deeply with this doctrine of the atonement. In his book "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ", he lays down an argument for definite atonement. Its basic summary is this:

If Jesus died for all men, then why are not all men saved? 'Unbelief is the answer. In order to be saved, one must believe the gospel.' But Owen presses back. Is this unbelief a sin? 'Yes.' Did Jesus die for it? Because if Jesus died for that sin, then why would an unbeliever go to hell? But if Jesus didn't die for it, and that is the one sin that he goes to hell for, then you don't believe in universal atonement because Jesus didn't pay for that sin.⁹

You see nobody really believes that Jesus died for all sins, unless they hold to universalism — the idea that everyone is eventually saved.¹⁰

What about the universal texts in John's gospel?

One of the reasons definite atonement is so hotly contested is because there are some texts in the Bible that seem to indicate a universal atonement. Two verses in particular **John 1:29** "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away *the sin of the world!*" And 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.*" Now I love these verses. These verses are the reason why I am saved. But these verses cannot be interpreted in a way as to contradict what we have already seen.

⁹ Additionally if Jesus didn't pay for the sin of unbelief then no one can be saved. If we have even one sin against us, we are guilty of the whole law (James 2:10).

¹⁰ If Christ did not reconcile actual people to the Father through His death, then we cannot say He made an atonement. Nor can we say that His work on the cross was redemptive.

So what does John mean? First, remember that John was a Jew. It was a prevailing thought amongst the Jews that the Messiah would be a Savior to Jewish people only. John's point is "No, he's not just a Jewish Savior but a savior for both Jews and Gentiles—that is a Savior for the whole world.¹¹ **Jesus is a Savior to all people without distinction (whether they are Jew or Gentile) not a Savior to all people without exception (to each and every single person).**

So these universal texts about Jesus being a Savior of the world actually affirm what we see in our passage. In v.16 Jesus says that He has "...other sheep that are not of this fold." Meaning He has Gentile sheep, He is "...the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" not just Jewish sins.

II. The Deliberate Death of Christ

For this reason the Father loves me

Now Jesus tells us how the atonement relates to the love that the Father has for the Son. v. 17 says "For this reason the Father loves me, *because* I lay down my life that I may take it up again." We shouldn't understand this to mean that the Father didn't love the Son until Jesus agreed to lay down His life and rise again. Rather, the emphasis is on the Father loving and delighting in the Son's obedience to die for sinners. Philippians 2:8-9 makes the connection between the Son's obedience and the Father's delight and approval.

And being found in human form, he [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming *obedient* to the point of death, even death on a cross. **Therefore** God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

God the Father delighted in the Son's obedient death on the cross. The Father loved the Son's obedience, *because* sinners were reconciled unto Him on account of it. In other words, the Father loved the death of His Son, because in His death we wouldn't have to die. What does this mean? **It means that God**

¹¹ see John 11:51-52

valued our eternal salvation more than the earthly happiness of Jesus. The Father counted it of more value to save us, than to spare His Son.

Christ volunteered [delighted] to die for sinners

And the emphasis in v.18 shows that Jesus agreed with His Father. v. 18 “No one takes it [my life] from me, *but I lay it down of my own accord*. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” No one on planet earth has the power to take the life of the Son of God! How can man kill God? Every time the Jews plotted to arrest Him or kill Him, Jesus evaded them. Why? Because they had no power over Him.

At Jesus’ trial “Pilate said to him, ‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’ Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above’ (John 19:10-11). Jesus said this to a governor of the most powerful nation on earth.

If that’s the case, then how was Jesus crucified? If neither the Jews nor the Romans, Caiaphas or Pilate had any power to take Christ’s life, then how did Jesus die? **He volunteered to die.** When it was His time to die, He wouldn’t let anyone stop Him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to take Him, Peter unsheathed his sword to fight for Jesus’ freedom. What did Jesus say? “Put your sword back into its place...Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” (Matthew 26:52-54)

Jesus stopped Peter from ‘saving’ him. Why? Because it was offensive to Christ that anyone should stop Him from dying for His people. It was His joy and delight to die for His people. **Hebrews 13:2** Jesus...who for **the joy** that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” That’s what Jesus means when He says “I lay it down on my own accord.” ‘I’m doing this deliberately, voluntarily,

delightfully. It rejoices my heart to deliver you from the misery of your sins and the wrath to come, even if that means my death.”

III. The Divisive Response to Christ

Is Jesus insane or is He God?

When Jesus finished his words, there was a divisive response among the crowd of Jews who were listening. Picking up in v.19

There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

This division is happening everywhere Jesus speaks through His Word. Many of these Jews thought that Jesus was a demon and therefore insane because He spoke of His future resurrection. He said in v.18 “I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” The first part of Jesus’ statement is easy to understand. Anybody can take their own life. People do it everyday. But no mere mortal man can say “I have authority to take it up again.” Mere mortals do not have the authority to undeath themselves. But Jesus said He did.

And so there was a division in the crowd. Some heard and were repulsed by what Jesus said, and others heard their Shepherd’s voice. This is what the gospel of Christ produces. Animosity or adoration. Your everlasting happiness or your everlasting misery depends on what side you end up on after hearing Him.

Unbelieving friend. How do you know if you are one of Christ’s sheep? Is Christ’s voice attractive to you? Do you hear beauty and rest and comfort when He says “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep?” If so then turn away from those false shepherds that will destroy your soul. (John 10:10) Jesus came from heaven to seek out His lost sheep.

And He loves them. This gospel was written so that his lost sheep would believe and be saved. **John 20:31** says “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” God has given you this gospel so that you would believe. So believe. Come into the fold of the good shepherd.

Application

Our Doctrine: Definite atonement decisively kills our sin

Perhaps the main reason why definite atonement is so offensive to our natural minds is because we simply don't believe that we are as bad as we think we are. Sin has ruined mankind. **Jeremiah 17:9** says “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” If your heart is deceitful above all things, do you trust it to make a right choice for God? Scripture tells us that it never will. “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:11-12)

Saving faith must be blood bought. You must be purchased by Christ entirely, otherwise you will never come to Him. Phillip Keller the shepherd turned pastor recalls how he purchased new lambs into his fold. He said this:

“I recall quite clearly how in my first venture with sheep, the question of paying a price for my ewes was so terribly important. They belonged to me only by virtue of the fact that I paid hard cash for them. It was money earned by the blood and sweat and tears from my own body during the desperate grinding years of the depression. And when I bought that first small flock I was buying them literally with my own body which had been laid down with this day in mind.”¹²

Beloved, that is the only way we become sheep. Not through our right choice, or through our right theology, or through our moral standing. We are brought

¹² Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pg. 20

into Christ's fold entirely because of the blood, sweat and tears from His own body. Definite atonement is not a doctrine that proclaims "look how special we are..." rather it's a doctrine that proclaims "look how bad we are...and look how good Christ is."

Therefore definite atonement ought not to only kill our pride at the beginning of our salvation, but throughout the rest of our lives. There are at least two types of self-righteous people. The self-righteous who feed upon their good works, and the self-righteous who feed upon their doctrine. As John Newton once said "...a man may have the heart of a Pharisee, while his head is stored with orthodox notions of the unworthiness of the creature and the riches of free grace."¹³ We can be a people who have Biblically right doctrines, with gross self-righteous hearts. How do avoid this? By the help of the Spirit, we need to see that it is the blood of Christ alone that purchases our salvation. Not our right choice, not our doctrinal adherence, not our skin color, not our nationality, not our bank account. Those things mean nothing. It takes the same amount of blood to save you and I as it does to save the native on the plains of Africa. The same amount of blood to save Moses as the thief on the cross.

Our Duty: Use the atonement to transform from lambs into lions

There was a Scottish missionary born in 1867 named Peter Cameron Scott. He desired to spread the fame of Jesus Christ to Africa. On his first visit, he contracted malaria, and was forced to return to Britain to be treated. But he was determined to return this time side by side with his brother John. Two brothers, one mission, great joy. But all that soon disappeared when John contracted malaria, only this time he didn't return. Peter Cameron Scott found himself burying his own brother. At his gravesite, he still desired to preach Christ and determined to stay. Only he soon got severely sick again and had to return to Britain utterly discouraged. (sheepishness)

¹³ *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, Ed. David Gibson & Jonathan Gibson, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2013), pg. 18

When he in London, God overcame all his discouragement in a visit to Westminster Abbey. There Peter visited the tomb of David Livingstone, the great missionary to Africa of an early generation. On his tomb was written the words from John 10:16 “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also,” These words acted like a lightning rod to Peter transforming in from a lamb into a lion. He returned to Africa for the rest of his life, and founded the African Inland Mission which is still calling God’s sheep into the kingdom to this day.¹⁴

We don’t ever cease being dependent sheep. However when Christ shows us what He accomplished in His atonement, paradoxically we also become lions. Let’s look closely at v.16 again to see how this happens.

First notice Jesus says “I **have** other sheep.” Focus on the certainty of that word “have.” Jesus “has” other sheep. He has possession of them before they ever come to him. Scattered throughout this city, and throughout the nations, there are sheep waiting to hear the voice of the good Shepherd.

Secondly, notice Jesus says “I **must** bring them also.” Why are you and I saved? Because we were included in this must. Oh the glory of that one word —must. Jesus’ mission cannot fail! All that the Father gave to Him, He died for. And it was an absolute **must** that they would come to Him.

Thirdly, notice Jesus says “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, **and they will listen to my voice.**” They will listen. Jesus does not say that they might listen. They will listen. His blood purchased ears for them to listen, and hearts for them to love Him. Meaning they will come. They will believe. This is the same type of rock solid confidence that Jesus gave to Paul when he was on his missionary journey. **Acts 18:9-10** “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, **for I have many in this city who are my people.**” ‘Keep on speaking Paul, because through your preaching, through your witness, my people will hear my voice. Why? Because they are mine. I must bring them, and they will listen to my voice.’

¹⁴ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-have-other-sheep-that-are-not-of-this-fold--2>

The reason that evangelism and world missions do not fail is because the atonement of Jesus Christ is definite! It cannot fail. And this turns lambs into lions. Look at the man born blind from the last chapter. What happened to him when God started stirring in his heart? He spoke as a lion to the Pharisees. And that is what happened to Peter Cameron Scott. And it can happen for you.

We need lambs to transform into lions for this city. There are sheep here, everywhere, waiting to hear the shepherd's voice. And the voice is heard through Christians bearing witness of the gospel. Don't settle for this fold only. That is what many of the Jews were guilty of. Even up until midway in the book of Acts, the Jews were unwilling to go to other flocks until God forced them out of Jerusalem. Open your eyes.

School teachers—Christ has sheep in your schools. They will hear his voice. Carpenters, salesmen, engineers, homemakers—Christ has sheep right where you are at. They will hear His voice. Boise is even importing sheep from other nations. I know that there are many people who are up in arms about all the refugees settling here. Politics aside, this is a great opportunity! God has sheep in those refugees! God has sheep with other skin colors, of different folds, our brothers and sisters and they are waiting to hear. Jesus already bought them, open your mouth and roar the gospel of Christ. This doctrine is meant to turn you into missionaries!

Our Delight: Definite Atonement is the Demonstration of Christ's Definite Love

When I first came to Reformed Theology I was suspicious about definite atonement. Even though I believed it, it sounded less loving than what I formally believed. But that is because I failed to apply it correctly. What Jesus does for His people is akin to what a husband does for his wife. This is how the Apostle Paul says it in Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, **as** Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," How does a husband love his wife? Does He love her the *same way* that he loves other women? Of course not, he loves

her in a unique and special way. He lays aside his rights for her unlike any other woman on the planet. This love is patterned after Christ! “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for **her!**” From heaven He came and sought her. This is why definite atonement is such a precious doctrine. As one pastor has said:

“What would it be like for a wife...to think that her husband only loves her the way that he loves all other women? It would be disheartening. He chose her. he wooed her. He took the initiative because he set his favor on her from all the others. He has a distinguishing love for her—a great love—that is unique. She is his own loved treasure like no other woman. And so God’s elect are his own loved and blood-bought people as none others are.”¹⁵

That’s why Jesus says in our passage “I am the good shepherd. I **know my own** and **my own know me**, *just as* the Father **knows me** and I **know** the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” This knowing is intimate knowing. Akin to marital intimacy. That’s why in Genesis 4:1, it says that Adam *knew* his wife. When Jesus says that He knows us **just as** the Father knows Him, He is highlighting the distinguishing love that He has for us. Yes it is true that God loves the world in a specific way (John 3:16), but the love that Christ has for His people is unique. He didn’t come down from heaven as our bridegroom and throw the wedding gown on the ground, and say ‘well whoever wants to be my bride can pick it up.’ No. Christ set His special love on us while we were still yet enemies, just like the rest of the world, and pursued us. Beloved, this unique love of definite atonement is meant to help you persevere. What will comfort you in your trials, and anxieties, and insecurities? What will give you strength when you have come to the end of yourself? What will give you hope when you feel like giving up? It will not be the idea that you chose God. All that will be stripped away. No. Your only comfort in afflictions is that the Father chose you and gave you to the Son. And then the Son definitely and deliberately died for

¹⁵ *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, Ed. David Gibson & Jonathan Gibson, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2013), pg. 640

you. You will invincibly go to heaven. Because Christ set His love on you because you are His own.