

For All Those Given to Him

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[0 : 0 0] and unilaterally forgives our sins without worrying about such quaint things as vindicating his righteousness and justice. This view has had a pervasive impact on the church and modern culture.

So we can't overlook God's justice. Because God is just, payment is necessary. God is a righteous, just judge. He's not just going to let sin go. He's not just going to overlook offense, turn a blind eye, and pretend that it didn't happen. That would be unjust of him. His justice must be satisfied. So what was the solution? God's own Son put forward to die in our place.

Listen to that substitutionary nature spoken of in Isaiah 53.5. But he was crushed for our transgressions. I'm sorry, he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed. And then verse 6 says, So payment must be made for sin. And so Jesus paid for our sins by dying. He stood in our place. He took the punishment that we deserved. And in doing that, he was acting as our mediator, as the go-between for us and God. John MacArthur helps us to see this when he says, Jesus' death was payment for sin, which became a bridge to God. His death then was the primary act of mediation that opened the way. And Jesus himself said, I am the way. So Jesus' death was necessary.

Without it, there's no bridge to God. Without his death, there's no satisfaction of God's justice. So we can't overlook the justice of God. Some people perhaps want to only focus on the love of God or the mercy of God at the expense of God's justice. But the truth is that we can't strip God of one of his attributes in favor of another. It is out of his love for us that he sent his son to die in our place so that his justice would be satisfied. So that's the first thing the confession helps us to see that Christ accomplished. By his death on the cross for our sins, Christ fully satisfies the justice of God. Let's look now at the second. Jesus obtained righteousness.

[2 : 4 5] This is also at the heart of his work as mediator. He is reconciling us to God and God to us. He is making us right with us. By his substitutionary death in our place, by his righteousness that's been given to us, we are now brought back into this restored relationship with God. We see this in Colossians 1, beginning in verse 19.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace. How? By the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled. How so? In his body of flesh, by his death. In order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. So do you see Christ's mediatorial work there in Colossians chapter 1?

All the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in a person, the man Jesus Christ. And through the God-man, man, man, reconciled to God. Through his mediatorial work, the God-man is reconciling God and man, acting as the go-between, making peace by the blood of his cross, making peace between us and God.

We who were once his enemies, now at peace with him. Romans 5 as well emphasizes this reconciliation that we have with God. Verse 1 says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through the mediatorial work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then again, verse 10 emphasizes the reconciliation through Christ. We read there, For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received what?

[5 : 13] Reconciliation. Over and over again, peace with God through whom? Our mediator, Jesus. Over and over again, reconciled to God through whom? Our mediator, the Lord Jesus. So he's the go-between. He's the link. He's the bridge, as MacArthur said. And because of his death, we have restored relationship with God.

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on Colossians 1, and he pleads with sinners to come to Christ, as Spurgeon so often does with such gusto and passion. And he points to the reconciliatory work of Christ, the reconciler. He says, come to him through Christ. Listen to how Spurgeon says it.

O sinner, will you not be reconciled to God through him, since all fullness is in him, and he stoops to your weakness and holds forth his pierced hands to greet you?

See him stretching out both his hands to receive you, while he sweetly woos you to come to God through him. Come unto him. O come with hasty steps, ye penitents. Come at once, ye guilty ones.

Who would not be reconciled unto God by such a one as this, in whom all the fullness of grace is made to dwell? So through Christ, we are reconciled to God. That's the second thing the confession helps us to see that Christ accomplished. And now the third, he has purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. The confession writers there, they cite for us Hebrews 9 verse 15, and this is what that verse says, Therefore he, that's Jesus, is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. There's much that we could unpack there in that verse, but for time we're just going to focus in on this one reality. A death was necessary to receive this eternal inheritance.

[7 : 25] That makes sense. Our world still operates in that way today. Inheritances are not given while someone is still living, more often than not. Inheritances are given at death, and a will is involved in distributing that inheritance. Well, guess what? The writer of Hebrews talks about a will in the very next verse. He goes on to say, For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established, for a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

So the benefits of a will given at death, and specifically here in Hebrews, whose death are we talking about? The death of Jesus Christ, our mediator. And what is one of the benefits that the author of Hebrews shares with us that comes in the reading of that will? The eternal inheritance that is ours, given to us through the death of Christ. We receive that benefit because Christ has died.

He has offered himself up to God through the eternal spirit. Remember that from Hebrews 9. So the one who offered himself up to God by the eternal spirit has secured us an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Now there's a future focus there, isn't there? This great hope, this sure hope that is held out to us. And yet what is the hope that's held out to us in the future tied back to? The sure certain death of Christ. That the will has been read. The inheritance is sure because Christ has died. He accomplished the eternal purpose of God as our mediator. He went to the cross.

He suffered in our place, having lived a perfect sinless life. And by his death, he purchased for us this glorious future. So three wonderful blessings, three benefits you could say given to us.

The justice of God satisfied. The reconciliation with God now obtained. And this everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven purchased. John Ruther ties all of these together. And I love how he does that.

[9 : 39] So listen for all three of these benefits in this quote from John Ruther. He says, they all relate to the condition of enmity that exists between God and man. A man is at enmity with God and needs to be reconciled to God. God is angry with a sinner and his wrath hangs over his head.

The mediator turns that wrath away, appeases God's anger, reconciles man to himself through the blood of his cross and welcomes redeemed man into his kingdom. That is what Christ has accomplished.

So we've considered now how Christ accomplished God's eternal plan. We've considered now what it was that Christ accomplished. And now finally, the third part, who Christ accomplished all of this for.

The recipients of these wonderful blessings that we've seen. And we see the recipients there, just that little phrase from paragraph five, for all those given to him by the Father. And you see there that John chapter 17, verse 2, is cited by the confession. There Jesus is praying to the Father. And I'll begin reading at the start of Jesus' prayer in verse 1.

Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him all authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. Jesus puts a real emphasis in his prayer on what the Father has given to him. Three times he speaks of what God has given to him.

[11 : 23] The Father has given him authority over all flesh. And with that authority, what can the Son then give? Eternal life. And to whom does the Son give that eternal life to? Not all people, but those given to him by the Father. Jesus says very similar words in John chapter 6, beginning in verse 37.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I lose nothing of all that he has given to me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that whoever looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. So a very particular people, given to the Son by the Father, those chosen by the Father, they're the same ones who are then given to the Son. And it is for those people given to the Son, those particular people, that the Son has laid down his life. John 10, 11, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Well, we might ask, who are the sheep? Jesus answers that beginning in verse 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life. There's the Son giving again. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. So those given to the Son are the ones for whom the Son has died. It is for them that the Son satisfies the justice of God. It is for them that the Son obtains reconciliation. It is for them that the Son has purchased an eternal inheritance. Now, we might naturally think of ourselves when we think of those given to the Son by the Father. We think of us as believers in this time in history looking back at the death and resurrection of Christ. We look back on his death, and we think we are the ones given to the Son, we who have trusted in Christ to be our Lord and Savior. That's true. We are included in the people that the Son has died for, but the confession helps us to also see it's not just those looking back who are given to the Son. It's also those who were looking forward to the coming of the Son.

It's Old Testament believers as well. That's what paragraph six is all about. It is helping us to see that Old Testament believers are included in those who belong to the Son. We'll read it again because it's been a while since we did first. The price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation. Yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit of it was imparted to the elect in every age since the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices that revealed him and pointed to him as the seed that would bruise the serpent's head and the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. So this paragraph is simply teaching us that Old Testament believers were saved in the same way as New Testament believers.

In the Old Testament, they were simply looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. And since the time of Christ's death in the New Testament, we are simply looking back at the Messiah having come.

[15 : 17] The R.C. Sproul says, the basic distinction between the Old Testament economy and the New Testament economy is the difference between promise and fulfillment. Now, it wasn't as though Christ's death was unexpected or as though his death came as a complete surprise, as though the Old Testament saints didn't have any notion that a Messiah needed to come to save them from their sins. No, they did.

They had reason for expectation that there would be a coming Messiah. They had promises, as the confession speaks of. They had promises that pointed forward to this coming Messiah. John Ruther says, the mediator does not appear unannounced or without preparation. The significance of the kind of death that Christ had to die needed to be systematically established before it took place. And God prepared the Israelites and the world for this in their everyday life and worship as God's chosen people.

So, the Old Testament saints, they had glimpses of this coming Messiah. They had glimpses of this coming mediator. They had pictures of the Messiah in the Old Testament. That's what the confession writers mean by promises, types, and sacrifices. These are all Old Testament pictures that pointed forward to Christ.

Like, take for example, the sacrificial system. The writer of Hebrews helps us to see that the Old Testament sacrificial system of killing animals was never intended to be sufficient for the forgiveness of sins. It was simply a picture that pointed forward to the coming of Christ. Every time they killed an animal, there was some sense in which they said, we need a better sacrifice. We need a lasting sacrifice.

So, the writer of Hebrews in chapter 10, he speaks of the law. And with the law, all of the accompanying sacrificial system with it, he speaks of the law as a shadow. So, listen as we read beginning in verse 1.

[17 : 28] For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? Since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. So, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the law as but a shadow. The Old Testament sacrifices were but a shadow. And this shadow anticipated the good things to come, the true form of these realities.

What is that? Or rather, who is that? It's Jesus. It's Christ. Because as the writer of Hebrews goes on to say, beginning in verse 11, every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting for that time until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. So, everything in the Old Testament was intended to reveal Christ and to point to him, to use the language of the confession, to reveal Christ and to point to him. Going all the way back to Genesis chapter 3 and going all the way forward to the book of Revelation, even into chapter 13.

You see, there are two references, there are two passages of Scripture they allude to. I think they were very intentional. Let's pick the first book of the Old Testament and let's pick the last book of the New Testament to remind ourselves that all of Scripture is pointing to Jesus. We see it there.

So, Genesis 3. Genesis 3 verse 15 is what the writers of the confession have in mind here. Genesis 3 verse 15, there is a promised Savior, the serpent crusher, the offspring of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. God makes this promise as he's speaking to the serpent who is Satan.

And he says there in Genesis 3 verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. That's the first indication in the Bible that God has a rescue plan in place for his people.

[20 : 23] Right there in Genesis chapter 3, just after the fall, sin and death had just entered into the world through the deception of the serpent who is Satan. And God would then send a Savior to crush the head of the serpent and thereby defeat sin and death. The Old Testament saints had that promise. They could see it there. They could hear it there as the Old Testament would be read in the synagogues. They were looking forward to that seed that would bruise or crush the serpent's head. They were looking forward to the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. That's from Revelation 13 verse 8. Now, the lamb was not yet actually slain at the foundation of the world. We see there the price of redemption, that's his death, was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation. So, he was not actually slain at the foundation, but the virtue, meaning the excellence, the pure quality of his sacrifice, the virtue, the efficacy, meaning the successfulness or the effectiveness of his death, and the benefit, meaning the salvation that we received because of his death. All of that was actually there from the foundation of the world.

If it wasn't, everyone who lived prior to Christ would be in a world of hurt. How would they be saved if we had to wait until the Savior actually arrived in the incarnation? And yet the confession is helping us to see the saving power of Christ's death. It applied to the Old Testament saints because, as Hebrews 13 verse 8 says, he is the same yesterday and today and forever. So, the Old Testament saints, they were eagerly awaiting the coming Messiah. They were looking forward to him. Jesus said, Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad. Abraham saw it from afar and he was glad.

A Messiah is coming one day. Looking forward to anticipating Christ. Well, we've covered a lot of ground this morning. Two paragraphs in the confession. We haven't done two yet and we did it. We were reminded of what Christ accomplished, of how he accomplished it, and for whom he accomplished it. John Ruther in his chapter says this in closing, Rejoice in every picture and promise of the coming mediator and marvel at the fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus. So, I was thinking as I was wrapping up my preparation for this, what would be one just clear takeaway for us as we finish this? We don't just want to learn of Christ.

We also want to say, what do I take and seek to implement into my life today? I think one takeaway would be read your Old Testament looking for Jesus. Look for how the Old Testament reveals him.

Look for how the Old Testament points to him. Rejoice in seeing him there in the Old Testament. And then as you read your New Testament, see how he's brought fulfillment. As our mediator, he's come.

[23 : 35] He has died in our place for our sins and we can rejoice in that. That the one who was promised in the old has come in the new and he is our perfect mediator. With that, we are dismissed.