

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (Paul Wilson) 130299

God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility: Arminianism, Calvinism, and a Review of A.W. Pink's "The Sovereignty of God", Denial of a Ransom for All (5:14-15)

Let us notice what Mr. Pink further says: "On the cross the Lord Jesus gave Himself a ransom, and that it was accepted by God was attested by the open grave three days later; the question we would here raise is, For whom was this ransom offered? If it was offered for all mankind, then the debt incurred by every man has been cancelled" (p. 75). This is just so much human reasoning which sets aside the plain and emphatic statements of Scripture, but it all turns on Mr. Pink's not seeing, or being unwilling to see, the difference in the two goats and what they signify.

We are cognizant of the fact that Mr. Pink uses the words propitiation and substitution, and speaks of their being Godward and manward (p. 75), but he makes them coextensive and limits the work of Christ to bearing the sins of the elect. Words in themselves mean nothing unless that which is signified by them is admitted.

Mr. Pink rejects the correct rendering of 1 John 2:2 and uses the mistaken text of the King James Version: "Propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world." This only aggravates his confusion and mixes the truth of the two goats instead of retaining the careful distinction of God's Word. Christ is indeed the propitiation (or the efficacious sacrifice Godward by which God can and does offer peace and pardon to all) for the whole world, but to inject "the sins of" alters the sense and introduces error; it brings in substitution where it was not intended to be. But Mr. Pink by his confusion only compounds his difficulty, and so he then has to explain away "the whole world" (p. 74), instead of leaving out the erroneous "sins of."

Hebrews 9:26 also suffers from the same muddling at the hand of this author, for he makes "hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" to mean to put away the sins of the elect. He connects the same error with John 1:29 — "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" — and makes both scriptures apply to the actual guilt of the elect only, but this is very far short of the truth and shows how restricted his theology really is. Both of these verses contemplate the final and complete removal of sin and all its effects from God's creation. It certainly is not so now, but the work on which it will be accomplished is finished. At present the believer knows his sins forgiven; in the millennium there will be a greater display of the efficacy of that wondrous work, but only in the eternal state will its full meaning be known. To lose sight of the important truth taught by the goat of the Lord's lot is to narrow one's apprehension of Christ's work to only one phase of it and be guilty of disparaging His mighty work. It is sad indeed for one who does this, and worse still for those who teach others this human limitation of an infinite work. (Substitution is taught in verse 28 of Hebrews 9: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.")

Mr. Pink's dedication to defend an unscriptural idea brought him into trouble with 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and 1 Timothy 2:56. The former says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Now Mr. Pink labors to prove that these alls mean only all the elect, and then to bolster that point he makes "all were dead" to mean the elect believers died with Christ. This is not only far-fetched, but it is wrong from the very context. The all were in the place of death; that was the portion of all mankind because of sin. Then in grace the Lord Jesus came down and went into death for all — it is again the general thought as seen in propitiation. But the verse adds, "That they which live" might henceforth live "unto Him which died for them, and rose again." There is a contrast between the all being morally in the place of death, and death their allotted portion, and the "they which live" (not now all, but the saved who have life in Christ) who should now "live unto Him."

Here are the words of another: "Christ's death for all is the proof that it was all over for mankind. If He went down in grace to the grave, it was just because men were already there, and none otherwise could be delivered. . . . There is then life in Him risen, and this not in Him only, but for those who believe. He is our life. And such is the meaning of 'those who live'; not merely those alive on earth (though this be implied, of course), but living of His life, in contrast with 'all dead.' " After going into the meaning of the Greek words, this writer adds concerning those who live, "It is not as including all for whom He died, but as of some out of all, 'those that live' in contradistinction to all dead. . . . The reader will observe that Christ's resurrection is associated only with 'those who live.' This again confirms the special class of the living, as only included in, and not identical with, all for whom He died. Those who would narrow the 'all' for whom He died to the elect lose the first truth" — the judgment of death seen written on all, so that Christ's death becomes the ground of deliverance.

We will not take time or space to elaborate on Mr. Pink's justifying his same error in connection with 1 Timothy 2:56. The "ransom for all" is what it says — "for all." The Apostle by the Spirit had just stated that the mediator between God and men was the Man Christ Jesus, but man is reluctant to believe in God's grace to him even when One died and rose for his deliverance; "it is 'a ransom for all,' whoever may bow and reap the blessing, which those do who, renouncing their own proud will for God's mercy in Christ, repent and believe the gospel." Simply believing what God says, the way He says it, is very much better than raising objections to conform to a predetermined scheme and then having to explain away what the Word says.

We may well say with Mr. Pink's concluding statement, "The atonement is no failure" (p. 320). It certainly is not, but it is of far greater import and value than Mr. Pink ever imagined. It has so thoroughly glorified God's character and nature — light and love — that He is glorified in the vastness of Christ's work, so that He is justified in offering salvation, pardon and eternal life to all without limit. It has also proved that God was righteous in having passed over the sins of those who in Old Testament times had faith in Himself (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15).