

November 2, 1978

Pastor R. S.

Dear R,

Please excuse this long delay in replying to your good letter of July 22, 1978. All things considered, it takes a while for me to get some things accomplished.

In the meantime, I heard back from N.E. Pastor , and am also enclosing copies of that letter and my reply, as you requested. That may help answer some of your questions, in addition to this letter. Not that everything will necessarily be acceptable to you, but that it may all work to the end of us all mutually coming to the right conclusions, by God's grace.

I appreciate your comments and thank you for your advice and questions, as well as the encouraging agreement. To reply to some of your questions and remarks, I will re-state same and follow each with a reply as much as practical.

In answer to your question 1 - Page 2, first, I hope I did not imply that I think man is condemned because Christ did not die for him. In my book, I stated that man is condemned by original sin--in identification with Adam. And that instead of unbelief being itself a new cause of condemnation--though it may sound like it in certain scriptures--is confirming evidence of the inherited state of condemnation that all possess--except eventually the elect.

It may help to see a similar sense of this implication in such passages as Matt. 5:22, where it is stated that whosoever calls his brother a fool is in danger of hell fire. That, in itself, is no such singular sin with such grave consequences, but is the proof or evidence of the wickedness of heart, that the outward act demonstrates. It is similar to the irrevocability of condemnation which the apostate proves by his open blasphemy, denial, etc. per Heb. 6:4-6, 10:29, Mk. 3:29, II Pet. 2:1.

The idea of unbelief speaks more of the condition of unbelief than any particular act of not believing the Gospel, etc. The sense of being among the unrighteous, the wicked, the heathen, etc. as labels of the whole class of unregenerate mankind is the distinction, in contrast to the Christians (elect) being classified as believers, holy, saints, etc.

In the same paragraph, you ask, "if Christ did not die for the non-elect, how can they be justly condemned for their unbelief?" True, they couldn't. But even if he did die for the non-elect, how could they be condemned for unbelief--

when most importantly they are unable to believe without an inward transformation--or even aside from this, if they never hear the Gospel or have opportunity to believe? The problem is not solved for all, if the atonement is not followed by equal or adequate opportunity, and capacity.

In one summary answer so far, may we not trace down unbelief to (1) inability to believe, and inability to believe to (2) total depravity, and finally total depravity to (3) original sin in Adam, which then, is the real basis of condemnation? And then, tying non-belief to non-election is the explanation in John 10:26 that, "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep (elect ones)".

As a parallel comparison, to what may we trace back belief? Would it not be as follows: trace belief to (1) ability to believe, and ability to believe to (2) a regenerated nature, and a regenerated nature to (3) the grace of God (as His work)?

The same thing in chart form, may be easier to see, as to the comparative underlying sources, and contributing factors involved in the whole belief and unbelief question. Numbering of items is in reverse order to show sequence from point of origin, or basic cause.

Comparative Causes of Belief and Unbelief

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 4. Unbelief. | 4. Belief. |
| 3. Inability to believe. | 3. Ability to believe. |
| 2. Total depravity. | 2. Regenerated nature. |
| 1. Original sin. | 1. Grace of God. |

Comment - Page 2, as to "unbelief" being what men are condemned for in John 16:8-11 (esp. verse 9).

Reply - In connection to what I have been saying just previously, isn't the work of the Holy Spirit in the reference verse to prove or emphasize (1) sin, by the manifestation of (2) unbelief?

In other words, the symptom is unbelief, but the disease is sin. The passage also may be briefly summarized, or paraphrased in the following manner:

Remembering that one of the distinguishing ministries of each person of the triune Godhead is to point to the other two persons, and not himself, can we say that the work of the Holy Spirit toward the world (through the church) is:

verse 9 - to show the sin of man.

" 10 - " " " righteousness of Christ in contrast to that sin.

" 11 - to show the judgment of God in consequence of that sin.

Your reference to Rev. 20:13--as to the Great White Throne Judgment being for unbelief in the New Testament, and for works in the Old Testament:

Reply - with the other things described in Rev. 21:18, plus such passages as Matt. 5:29, "they that have done good, and they that have done evil" must mean all dispensations, and is works. The unbeliever always pleads works; the believer testifies to grace, which produces acceptable works as evidence. In Matt. 7:22 the false professors plead works, and Jesus casts them away referring to their works of iniquity--not only their unbelief. Also Rev. 20:13, which says "judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Question - Page 2, "How else can we obey the great commission if Christ's death not for all? It would be senseless to take a universal gospel to some where there has been no actual provision to start with, etc."

Reply - see letter to N.E. Pastor for reference to Noah preaching righteousness, and no one believing (or elected to believe?). God uses general preaching to call the elect to himself; we do not know who they are. As to their claiming an excuse for not being provided for--Rom. 1:20 says that they are already without excuse. Also, if they never hear the gospel--because of whatever reason--they would have that for an excuse, as good as no provision.

But with election, it is not essential that every man hear, any more than be provided for. And the preaching of the gospel to them--even as the preaching of righteousness to those in Noah's time--is not without purpose; similar to the parables and those who could not understand them, or the Holy Spirit reproving the world of sin, as previously noted; not that all will or can be converted.

Your item 2, Page 2 - referring to II Pet. 2:1, that the unregenerate, non-elect, false teachers were "bought" (agoradzo, redeemed, as a slave purchased in the market place).

Reply - Were the ones in II Pet. 2:1 actually redeemed, or was it a reference to their own profession only, as a hypothetical point? In other words, is the situation any different than the one in Heb. 6:4-6--of the Jewish professed believers who apostasize? The language is similarly very positive sounding in what it claims that they believed, or were partakers of--yet they fell away, irrevocably.

The best parallel of the point I am trying to make is seen by comparing Heb. 10:29, another example of apostasy, with the subject verse, II Pet. 2:1. Note that in Heb. 10:29, among other things, it says "wherewith he was sanctified". Surely this is not actual--or he would be saved, and could not apostasize. Again, it must refer to mere profession, including all the elements of that profession.

II Pet. 2:1 says, "denying the Lord that bought them". Is this any more positive than the 'sanctification' of the above reference? Why can not the false profession include as false, the redemption element as well as any other aspect of salvation?

Referring to what you said about the provisional aspect of atonement, and reconciliation, and that "certainly Christ's death in itself and of itself forgives no one", listen to something from Spurgeon on the purpose of God in election, and its fulfillment. (This is the same as included in reply to **NEIFCA Pastor** --but should be good for your consideration as to the preceding thought).

See, in these theologically beautiful words of Spurgeon, how the Father's plan of salvation is fulfilled by the Son, and the Spirit (noting just when and how): "The Father in planning, the Son in redemption, the Spirit in applying the redemption must be spoken of as the one God 'who hath saved us' (and that before he called us, per II Tim. 1:9). "So every man in Christ was saved in the second Adam when He finished His work (at the cross). But is a man saved before he is called by grace? Not in his own experience, not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes, but he is saved in God's purpose, in Christ's redemption, and in his relationship to his covenant Head; and he is saved, moreover, in this respect, that the work of his salvation is done, and he has only to receive it as a finished work (which, because of his election, he will)". Underlining, and notes in parentheses, mine.

Also from Spurgeon, "It is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of scripture, to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed, and that the lost in perdition were ever washed in the Savior's blood, or that His blood was ever shed with the intention of saving them". Further, "I believe that the efficacy of Christ's blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God"; and "I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed his blood in vain, or that God should exact first at Christ's hands the penalty of his sin (referring specifically to Judas--but as well to anyone who is never saved), and then at the sinner's hands again".

I hope these thoughts and quotations will be of value to you. The question of the necessity^{of} receiving the reconciliation, etc. is relieved in the context of being assured that what God has done in his plan and purpose, as finished in Christ on the cross--will be applied to, and received by the elect in fulfillment of God's objective.

Comment - Page 3, "Why is Paul beseeching the Corinthians ('regenerated people') to be reconciled to God?"

Reply - This particular injunction of verse 20, in view of part of the problem of the Corinthian church, with its Jewish legalizers, was the need to partake of the reconciliation made for them as believers together with the Gentiles, as taught in Eph. 2:11-22. Note especially verse 16, "And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross".

That is, with the great difficulty of so many of the Jews being unable to leave the old covenant, and accept the

new dispensation of grace, without lapsing back into law, etc. Paul and others in various passages of the New Testament spent much time in dealing with this problem. Even though it has the wonderful broad application to every believer, and surely refers to everything old, and everything new--consider the following more literal interpretation of II Cor. 5:17:

In the Jew-Gentile reconciliation context, may not the old things are passed away, and all things are become new have been a literal reference to the law and grace contrast? In other words, that was the case-in-point issue being addressed, but of course the principle has unlimited application to all things, as new vs. old.

And the same reasoning, or rule of interpretation, would apply to the ministry of reconciliation in verses 18-20. Is this helpful to you, or at least acceptable for consideration?

Mr. Chafer may well have been a fine Christian gentleman and an otherwise good theologian, but what I have read of him so far on the doctrine of election--if I may say so, as an honest criticism--reminds me of Spurgeon's negative reference to "the grand distinctions of the schoolmen", which in this particular case does more to explain away the truth of absolute election than to defend it. The "inexorable logic" that he claims for his illustrations of specific election references, not only escapes me as such, but is only a tangential treatment of the doctrine from the same ground of "moderate" Calvinism that Lightner's book is based upon (which I referred to in my manuscript). He (Lightner) quotes freely from Chafer; whose authority, or qualifications in the truth of the doctrine are very doubtful to me. I will try to read a little more of his writing, in the event that I may be prematurely prejudiced, but I don't expect much of a change.

I am not sure who or what Chafer was reacting to in his remarks which you quoted, Page 3, but they do not seem to address the validity, or non-validity of the real issue. Personal election references, or particular group, such as Israel, and the church do not interfere with the truth of the total application of the doctrine.

The essential fact must be that election determines the meaning of the word "world" (or any other objects) when used in connection with it; not vice-versa. Determine the priority of principles, or the order of the integral elements of God's design and work of salvation, and the meaning of certain terms (world, whosoever, etc.) becomes essentially relative, or qualified.

For example, election is exclusive of some, even a great number of mankind. The word "world" is normally inclusive of all mankind (at any one time, at least). But once the principle of limitation (to whatever degree) is established as a characteristic of the doctrine, any word ever used as an object of the subject is likewise limited in its meaning or scope. That is, limited in the sense of being qualified.

Comment - Page 3, on my comments on Eph. 2:1-10 (MS, Page 44).
Reply - Noting the development from Gentile reference in the early part of the chapter (vs. 1-13), to Jew and Gentile from vs. 14-22, I would still say that at least primarily the "us" of verse 4, and the "we" of verse 5, etc. are references to the process of Gentile salvation, which was after all a very new and surprising thing to the Jews. As you say, there is no real contention here, but I do believe the distinction is literally correct, and with corresponding significance.

Your item 4 - Page 3, would at least be somewhat replied to by what I said on Page 6, herein, 4th para., and elsewhere on the designed extent of the atonement (or what was God's purpose?, per Spurgeon's comments, etc.).

From the standpoint of human responsibility (hypothetically) there must be opportunity and ability equal to the responsibility. In Adam's test, he had the capacity to choose right, did he not? But does a sinner have such an inherent ability, or can it be acquired potentially? Is it sufficient grace, and how does that work? Does every man in this age have ample opportunity?

If we say that God makes salvation available to all (even in this age, or after the cross) don't we have an obviously serious problem with sufficient ability and opportunity? Adam was without excuse for his disobedience, and in our organic unity with him, we too are each as guilty. If he was able, we are able. When he fell, we fell.

Now moving up to the gospel requirement of belief, acceptance, etc. what else can we say of all men (in their natural fallen state) except that we are equally unable! What can change this universal state of incapability? Must there not first be a restored ability, at least proportionate to Adam's capacity to do whatever God asked, or commanded him to do? The scriptures give no record or evidence of any such miracle occurring, whereby man has been restored to such an intermediate potential, or capability.

Without belaboring the point too much for now, may I conclude by saying that the doctrine of election is fully established and complete apart from John 3:16. And that the true interpretation of election determines the meaning of whatever in John 3:16 is related to that doctrine, and not vice-versa? And yet, I admit that is not an easy conclusion to come to on the surface, or without considerable exercise of heart and mind in study and deliberation, especially because of traditional circumstances.

Well, brother, I feel I should end it for now, and as I said in the beginning of this letter, may we all continue to work toward mutual agreement, in these important matters; to the praise of His glory.

Sincerely,
Everett N. Falvey

Encs. (2 letters)