

Of the Objects of Redemption by Christ.

by John Gill

The objects of redemption by Christ are a special and distinct people, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, foreknown and predestinated, secured in calling, justification, and glorification.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:8, Matthew 20:28, Luke 1:68, John 10:15, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:32, Ephesians 1:4-7, Titus 2:14, Hebrews 2:10, Revelation 14:3-4

Topics: "Redemption", "Election"

Description

John Gill preaches on the specific objects of redemption by Christ, emphasizing that redemption is not universal but rather directed towards a distinct group of people whom God loves and has chosen. He explains that these individuals are described as a peculiar people, the elect, and the church, highlighting that Christ's sacrifice was made for them specifically, ensuring their salvation and purification. Gill argues against the notion of universal redemption, asserting that it undermines God's justice, wisdom, and love, and emphasizes that the redeemed are those who have a special relationship with Christ as His sheep and children. He concludes that the effectiveness of Christ's work is contingent upon the particularity of those for whom He died, reinforcing the idea that not all are redeemed, but only those who are called and chosen by God.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 6--Chapter 3

OF THE OBJECTS OF REDEMPTION BY CHRIST

Thirdly, the objects of redemption come next under consideration. These are a special and distinct people; they are said to be "redeemed from the earth"; that is, from among the inhabitants of the earth, as after explained, "redeemed from among men"; and one end of Christ's redemption of them is, "to purify to himself a peculiar people" (Rev. 14:3,4; Titus 2:14). The inspired writers seem to delight in using the pronoun "us", when speaking of the death of Christ, and redemption by it; thereby pointing at a particular people, as the context shows: "Christ died for us"; God "delivered him up for us all; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us; hath redeemed us unto God by thy blood" (Rom. 5:8; 8:32; Titus 2:14; Rev. 5:9).

They are many indeed for whom Christ has given "his life a ransom", a ransom price, the price of their redemption (Matthew 20:28). But then these are so described as show they are a peculiar people; they are the "many" who are ordained unto eternal life; the "many" the Father has given to Christ; the many whose sins he bore on the cross; the "many" for whom his blood was shed for the remission of their sins; the "many" who are made righteous by his obedience; the "many" sons, he, the Captain of their salvation, brings to glory.

That the objects of redemption are a special people, will appear by the following observations. 1. The objects of redemption are such who are the objects of God's love; for redemption, as has been observed, flows from the love of God and Christ; and which love is not that general kindness shown in providence to all men, as the creatures of God; but is special and discriminating; the favour which he bears to his own people, as distinct from others; "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated": and the love which Christ has expressed in redemption is towards his own that were in the world, whom he has a special right and property in, "his" people, "his" sheep, "his" church; as will be seen hereafter. 2.

The objects of election and redemption are the same; "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?--It is Christ that died!" died for the elect: so the same, us all, for whom God delivered up his Son, are those whom he foreknew, and whom he predestinated; and whose calling, justification, and glorification are secured thereby (Rom. 8:30-33), and the same us, who are said to be chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, have redemption in him through his blood (Eph. 1:4, 7).

Election and redemption are of equal extent; no more are redeemed by Christ than are chosen in him; and these are a special people: what is said of the objects of the one is true of the objects of the other. Are the elect the beloved of the Lord? and does the act of election spring from love? Election presupposes love: so the redeemed are the beloved of God and Christ; and their redemption flows from love. Are the elect a people whom God has chosen for his peculiar treasure? the redeemed are purified by Christ, to be a peculiar people to himself.

Do the vessels of mercy, afore prepared for glory, consist of Jews and Gentiles; even of them who are called of both? so Christ is the propitiation, not for the sins of the Jews only, or the Redeemer of them only; but for the sins of the Gentile world also, or the Redeemer of his people among them. Are the elect of God a great number, of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues? Christ has redeemed those he has redeemed unto God, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation.

Is it true of the elect, that they cannot be totally and finally deceived and perish? it is true of the ransomed of the Lord, that they shall come to Zion with everlasting joy; Christ will never lose any part of the purchase of his blood. 3. Those for whom Christ has died, and has redeemed by his blood, are no other than those for whom he became a Surety. Now Christ was the Surety of the better testament, or covenant of grace; and of course became a Surety for those, and for no other, than who were interested in that covenant, in which he engaged to be the Redeemer: Christ's suretyship is the ground and foundation of redemption; the true reason of the sin of his people, and the punishment of it, being laid upon him, and of his bearing it; of the payment of the debts of his people, and of redeeming them out of the hands of justice; was because he engaged as a Surety, and laid himself under obligation to do all this.

But for those for whom he did not become a Surety, he was not obliged to pay their debts, nor to suffer and die in their room and stead. Christ's suretyship and redemption are of equal extent, and reach to the same objects; they are the Lord's Benjamins, the sons of his right hand, his beloved sons, that Christ, the

antitype of Judah, became a surety for, and laid himself under obligation to bring them safe to glory, and present them to his divine Father, 4. The objects of redemption are described by such characters as show them to be a special and distinct people; particularly they are called, the people of God and Christ; "for the transgressions of my people", saith the Lord, "was he stricken"; that is, Christ was, or would be, stricken by the rod of justice, to make satisfaction for their sins, and thereby redeem them from them (Isa. 53:8), and when he was about to come and redeem them, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, at his birth said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel! for he hath visited and redeemed his people"; by sending Christ, the dayspring from on high, as he afterwards calls him, to visit them, and redeem them by his blood (Luke 1:68, 78).

Hence, also, the angel that appeared to Joseph, and instructed him to call the Son that should be born of his wife by the name of Jesus, gives this reason, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Now though all men are, in a sense, the people of God, as they are his creatures, and the care of his providence; yet they are not all redeemed by Christ; because those that are redeemed by Christ are redeemed "out of every people"; and therefore cannot be every or all people (Rev. 5:9), the redeemed are God's covenant people; of whom he says, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God": they are his portion and his inheritance; a people near unto him, both with respect to union and communion; a people given to Christ, to be redeemed and saved by him; of whom it is said, "Thy people shall be willing", &c. 5.

The objects of redemption; or those for whom Christ laid down his life a ransom price, are described as "sheep"; as the sheep of Christ, in whom he has a special property, being given him of his Father; and who are represented as distinct from others, who are not his sheep (John 10:15, 26, 29), and such things are said of them as can only agree with some particular persons; as, that they are known by Christ; "I know my sheep", not merely by his omniscience, so he knows all men; but he knows them distinctly as his own; "the Lord knows them that are his", from others; he has knowledge of them, joined with special love and affection for them; as he has not brothers, to whom he will say, "Depart from me: I know you not".

Likewise Christ is "known" by those sheep of his he has laid down his life for; they know him in his person, offices, and grace; whereas there are some that neither know the Father nor the Son; but those know the voice of Christ; that is, the gospel of Christ, the joyful sound; whereas the gospel is hid to them that are lost: and the sheep Christ has died for "follow" him, imitate him in the exercise of grace, of love, patience, humility, &c. and in the performance of duty; and this is said of the redeemed from among men; that they "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes" (Rev. 14:4).

It is also affirmed of those sheep, that they shall "never perish"; whereas the goats, set on Christ's left hand, shall he bid to go, as "cursed", into everlasting fire (Matthew 25:33, 34). 6. The objects of redemption are the sons of God; redemption and adoption belong to the same persons; according to the prophecy of Caiaphas, Christ was to die, not for the nation of the Jews only, but to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" throughout the Gentile world (John 11:52), and those who are predestinated to adoption by Christ are said to have redemption in him, through his blood (Eph. 1:5, 7), and the blessing of adoption, in the full enjoyment of it, in the resurrection, is called "the redemption of the body"; when redemption, as to the application of it, will be complete also (Rom. 8:23).

Now these sons, or children of God, are a peculiar number of men, who are given of God to Christ, to redeem; the seed promised to him in covenant, that he should see and enjoy; and to whom he stands in the relation of the everlasting Father; these are they on whose account he became incarnate, "took part of the same flesh and blood"; and these are the many sons he brings to glory (Heb 2:10, 13, 14). Now these

are not all men; "the children of the flesh", or such as are never born again, they are "not the children of God"; only such are openly and manifestly the children of God who believe in Christ; and this is owing to special grace, to distinguishing love; and is a favour that is only conferred on some (Rom. 9:8; Gal. 3:26; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1). 7.

The objects of redemption are the church and spouse of Christ; it is the church he has loved, and given himself as a sacrifice and ransom price for; it is the church he has purchased with his blood; even the general assembly, the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven; that is, the elect of God, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28), of that church of which Christ is the head and husband, he is the Redeemer; "thy Maker is thine husband; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel!" (Isa. 54:5).

This cannot be said of all communities and bodies of men: the whore of Babylon is not the spouse of Christ; nor sects under the influence of false teachers, though there may be "threescore queens, and fourscore concubines", of this sort; yet, says Christ, "my dove, my undefiled, is but one"; and who only is redeemed by Christ, and espoused to him (Song of Sol. 6:9). Now from all this it appears, that redemption is not universal, is not of all men; for though they are many for whom the ransom price is paid; yet though all are many, many are not all; and if the redeemed are such who are the objects of God's special love and favour, then not all men; for there are some of whom it is said, "He that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will show them no favour" (Isa. 27:11).

If they are the elect of God who are redeemed by Christ, and them only, then not all men; for all are not chosen; "The election hath obtained it"; and "the rest are blinded" (Rom. 11:7), if only those are redeemed for whom Christ became a surety, then not all men; since Christ did not engage to pay the debts of all men; and if they are the people of God and Christ, then not all; since there are some on whom God writes a "loammi", saying, "Ye are not my people; and I will not be your God" (Hosea 1:9).

And if they are the sheep of Christ, to whom he gives eternal life; then not the goats, who will go into everlasting punishment; and if they are the children of God, and the church and spouse of Christ; then not all men; for all do not bear these characters, nor stand in these relations. What may be further necessary, will be to produce some reasons, or arguments, against universal redemption; and to give answer to such scriptures as are brought in favour of it. It should be observed, that it is agreed on both sides, that all are not eventually saved: could universal salvation be established, there would be no objection to universal redemption; the former not being the case the latter cannot be true; Christ certainly saves all whom he redeems. 7a.

First, I shall give some reasons, or produce some arguments against the universal scheme of redemption. And, 7a1. First. The first set of arguments shall be taken from hence, that universal redemption reflects highly on the perfections of God; and what is contrary to the divine perfections, cannot be true; for God cannot deny himself, nor say, nor do anything contrary to his nature and attributes. 7a1a. The universal scheme greatly reflects on the love of God to men: it may, at first sight, seem to magnify it, since it extends it to all; but it will not appear so; it lessens it, and reduces it to nothing.

The scriptures highly commend the love of God, as displayed in the death of his Son, and in redemption by him; but what kind of love must that be, which does not secure the salvation of any by it? it is not that love which God bears to his own people, which is special and distinguishing; when, according to the universal scheme, God loved Peter no more than he did Judas; nor the saints now in heaven, any more

than those that are damned in hell; since they were both loved alike, and equally redeemed by Christ; nor is it that love of God, which is immutable, invariable, and unalterable; since, according to this scheme, God loves men with so intense a love, at one time, as to give his Son to die for them, and wills that they all should be saved; and afterwards this love is turned into wrath and fury; and he is determined to punish them with everlasting destruction.

What sort of love must this be in God, not to spare his Son, but deliver him up to death for all the individuals of mankind, for their redemption; and yet, to multitudes of them, does not send them so much as the gospel, to acquaint them with the blessing of redemption by Christ; and much less his Spirit, to apply the benefit of redemption to them; nor give them faith to lay hold upon it for themselves? Such love as this is unworthy of God, and of no service to the creature. 7a1b.

The universal scheme, highly reflects on the wisdom of God: it is certain, God is "wonderful in counsel", in contriving the scheme of redemption; and is "excellent in working", in the execution of it: he is the wise God, and our Saviour; and is wise as such. But where is his wisdom in forming a scheme, in which he fails of his end? there must be some deficiency in it; a want of wisdom, to concert a scheme, which is not, or cannot be carried into execution, at least as to some considerable part of it.

Should it be said, that the failure is owing to some men not performing the conditions of their redemption required of them; it may be observed, either God did know, or did not know, that these men would not perform the conditions required: if he did not know, this ascribes want of knowledge to him; which surely ought not to be ascribed to him that knows all things: if he did know they would not perform them, where is his wisdom, to provide the blessing of redemption, which he knew beforehand, would be of no service to them?

Let not such a charge of folly, be brought against infinite Wisdom. 7a1c. The universal scheme, highly reflects on the justice of God: God is righteous in all his ways and works; and so in this of redemption by Christ; and, indeed, one principal end of it is, "To declare the righteousness of God, that he might be just", or appear to be just, "and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". But if Christ died for the sins of all men, and the punishment of their sins is inflicted on him, and bore by him, and yet multitudes of them are everlastingly punished for them, where is the justice of God?

It is reckoned unjust with men, to punish twice for the same act of offence: if one man pays another man's debts, would it be just with the creditor to exact, require, and receive payment again at the hands of the debtor? If Christ has paid the debts of all men, can it be just with God to arrest such persons, and cast them into the prison of hell, till they have paid the uttermost farthing? Far be it from the Judge of all the earth to do so, who will do right. 7a1d. The universal scheme, reflects on the power of God; as if he was not able to carry his designs into execution; whereas, "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save"; but, according to this scheme, it seems as if it was; for if Christ has redeemed all men, and all men are not saved, it must be either from want of will in God to save them, or from want of power: not from want of will; for, according to this scheme, it is the will of God that every individual man should be saved: it must be therefore for want of power; and so he is not omnipotent.

Should it be said, that some men not being saved, is owing to evil dispositions in them, obstructing the kind influences and intentions of God towards them; to the perverseness of their wills, and the strength of their unbelief. But, what is man mightier than his Maker? Are the kind influences of God, and his gracious intentions, to be obstructed by the corrupt dispositions of men? Is not he able to work in them, both to will

and to do, of his good pleasure? Cannot he remove the perverseness of their wills, and the hardness of their hearts?

Cannot he, by his power, take away their unbelief, and work faith in them, to believe in a living Redeemer? Far be it to think otherwise of him, with whom nothing is too hard, nor anything impossible. 7a1e. The universal scheme reflects on the immutability of God, of his love, and of his counsel: God, in the scripture, says, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). But, according to this scheme, it should be, rather, I am the Lord, I change; and therefore the sons of men, or at least some of them, are consumed, are lost and perish, though redeemed by Christ; for the love of God, as has been observed, is changeable with respect unto them: one while he loves them, so that he wills their salvation; at another time his love is changed into hatred, and he is resolved to stir up his wrath to the uttermost against them.

He is said to be "in one mind, and who can turn him?" and yet, according to this scheme, he is sometimes in one mind, and sometimes in another; sometimes his mind is to save them; and at another time his mind is to damn them. But let not this be said of him, "with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning". 7a1f. The universal scheme disappoints God of his chief end, and robs him of his glory. The ultimate end of God, in the redemption of men; as has been observed; is his own glory, the glory of his rich grace and mercy; and of his righteousness, truth, and faithfulness: but if men, any of them who are redeemed, are not saved, so far God loses his end, and is deprived of his glory; for should this be the case, where would be the glory of God the Father, in forming a scheme which does not succeed, at least with respect to multitudes? and where would be the glory of the Son of God, the Redeemer, in working out the redemption of men, and yet they not saved by him?

And where would be the glory of the Spirit of God, if the redemption wrought out, is not effectually applied by him? But, on the contrary, the "glory of God", Father, Son, and Spirit, "is great in the salvation" of all the redeemed ones (Ps. 21:5). 7a2. Secondly, Another set of arguments against universal redemption, might be taken from its reflecting on the grace and work of Christ: whatever obscures, or lessens, the grace of Christ in redemption, or depreciates his work as a Redeemer, can never be true.

Whereas, 7a2a. The universal scheme reflects on the love and grace of Christ. The scripture speaks highly of the love of Christ, as displayed in redemption; and Christ himself intimates, that he was about to give the greatest instance of his love to his people, by dying for them, that could be given; even though and while they were enemies to him, (John 15:13). But what sort of love is that, to love men to such a degree as to die for them, and yet withhold the means of grace from multitudes of them, bestow no grace upon them, and at last say to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" 7a2b.

The universal scheme reflects upon the work of Christ; particularly his work of satisfaction, which was to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, by satisfying divine justice for it; by putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now, either he has made satisfaction for every man, or he has not: if he has, then they ought to be set free, and fully discharged, and not punishment inflicted on them, or their debts exacted of them: if he has not made satisfaction by redeeming them, this lessens the value of Christ's work, and makes it of no use, and ineffectual; and indeed, generally, if not always, the advocates for general redemption deny the proper satisfaction, and real atonement by Christ; plainly discerning, that if he has made full satisfaction for the sins of all men, they must all be saved; and so the work of reconciliation, which is closely connected with, and involved in satisfaction, is not perfect according to the scriptures: Christ, by redeeming them with the price of his blood, has made satisfaction to justice for them, and

thereby has procured their reconciliation; for they are said to be reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; and peace is said to be made by the blood of his cross, which is the redemption price for them; and he is pacified towards them for all that they have done; which is meant by Christ being a propitiation for sin, whereby justice is appeased.

But, according to the universal scheme, God is only made reconcilable, not reconciled, nor men reconciled to him: notwithstanding what Christ has done, there may be no peace to them, not any being actually made for them; and, indeed, the work of redemption must be very incomplete; though Christ is a "Rock", as a Saviour and Redeemer, and his work is "perfect", his world of redemption; and hence called a "plenteous" one; and Christ is said to have obtained "eternal redemption" for us; and yet if all are not saved through it, it must be imperfect; it cannot be a full redemption, nor of eternal efficacy; the benefit of it, can at most, be only for a time to some, if any at all, and not be for ever; which is greatly to depreciate the efficacy of this work of Christ. 7a2c.

According to the universal scheme, the death of Christ, with respect to multitudes, for whom he is said to die, must be in vain; for if Christ died to redeem all men, and all men are not saved by his death, so far his death must be in vain: if he paid a ransom for all, and all are not ransomed; or if he has paid the debts of all, and they are not discharged, the price is given, and the payment made, in vain. According to this scheme, the death of Christ is no security against condemnation; though the apostle says, "Who shall condemn?"

It is Christ that died!" so that there is no condemnation to them whose sins are condemned in Christ; and he has condemned them in the flesh (Rom. 8:1, 33), and yet there is a world of men that will be condemned (1Cor. 11:32), and therefore it may be concluded, that Christ did not die for them, or otherwise they would not come into condemnation; or else Christ's death has no efficacy against condemnation. 7a2d. The universal scheme separates the works of Christ, the work of redemption, and the work of intercession; and makes them to belong to different persons; whereas they are of equal extent, and belong to the same; for whom Christ died, for them he rose again from the dead; and that was for their justification; which is not true of all men: for those he ascended to heaven, to God, as their God and Father, for the same he entered into heaven, as their forerunner, and appears in the presence of God for them and ever lives to make intercession for them; and for the same for whom he is an advocate, he is the propitiation; for his advocacy is founded upon his propitiatory sacrifice: now those for whom he prays and intercedes, are not all men, himself being witness; "I pray for them; I pray not for the world" (John 17:9).

Yet, according to the universal scheme, he died for them for whom he would not pray; which is absurd and incredible. 7a2e. If Christ died for all men, and all men are not saved, Christ will not see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; as was promised him (Isa. 53:11), for what satisfaction can he have to see his labour, with respect to multitudes, all lost labour, or labour in vain? it was the joy that was set before him, of having those for whom he suffered and died, with him in heaven: but what joy can he have, and what a disappointment must it be to him, to see thousands and millions whom he so loved as to give himself for, howling in hell, under the everlasting displeasure and wrath of God? 7a3.

Thirdly, Other arguments against universal redemption, may be taken from the uselessness of it to great numbers of men. As, 7a3a. To those whose sins are irremissible; whose sins will never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come: that there are such sinners, and such sins committed by them, is certain, from what Christ himself says (Matthew 12:31, 32), and the apostle speaks of a sin which is "unto death", unto eternal death; which he does not advise to pray for (1 John 5:16), and surely Christ

cannot be thought to die for such sins, for which there is no forgiveness with God, and no prayer to be made by men for the remission of them; to say that Christ died for those, is to say that he died in vain: besides, there were multitudes in hell at the time when Christ died; and it cannot be thought that he died for those, as he must, if he died for all the individuals of mankind; as the men of Sodom, who were then, as Jude says, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"; and the inhabitants of the whole world, the world of the ungodly, destroyed by the flood; those that were disobedient in the times of Noah; whose spirits, as the apostle Peter says, were, in his time, in the prison of hell (Jude 5:7; 1 Pet. 3:20), if he died for these, his death must be fruitless and useless; unless it can be thought, that a jail delivery was made at his death, and the dominions and regions of hell were cleared of their subjects. 7a3b.

Redemption, if for all, must be useless to those who never were favored with the means of grace; as all the nations of the world, excepting Israel, for many hundred of years were; whose times of ignorance God winked at and overlooked, and sent no messengers, nor messages of grace unto them; (see Ps. 147:19, 20; Acts 17:30), and since the coming of Christ, though the gospel has, in some ages, had a greater spread, yet not preached to all; nor is it now, to many nations, who have never heard of Christ, and of redemption by him (Rom. 10:14). 7a3c.

The universal scheme affords no encouragement to faith and hope in Christ: redemption, as it ascertains salvation to some, it encourages sensible sinners to hope in Christ for it; "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him is plenteous redemption" (Ps 130:7), a redemption full of salvation; and which secures that blessing to all that believe. But, according to the universal scheme, men may be redeemed by Christ, and yet not saved, but eternally perish: what hope of salvation can a man have upon such a scheme? it requires no great discernment, nor judgment of things, to determine, which is most eligible of the two schemes, that which makes the salvation of some certain; or that which leaves the salvation of all precarious and uncertain; which, though it asserts a redemption of all; yet it is possible none may be saved. 7a3d.

Hence, even to those who are redeemed and saved, it lays no foundation for, nor does it furnish with any argument to engage to love Christ, to be thankful to him, and to praise him for the redemption of them; since the difference between them and others, is not owing to the efficacy of Christ's death, but to their own wills and works; they are not beholden to Christ, who has done no more for them than for those that perish; they are not, from any such consideration, obliged to walk in love, as Christ has loved them, and given himself for them; since he has loved them no more, and given himself for them no otherwise, than for them that are lost; nor are they under obligation to be thankful to him, and bless his name, that he has redeemed their lives from destruction; since, notwithstanding his redemption of them, they might have been destroyed with an everlasting destruction; it is not owing to what Christ has done, but to what they have done themselves, performing the conditions of salvation required, that they are saved from destruction, if ever they are, according to this scheme: nor can they indeed sing the song of praise to the Lamb, for their redemption; saying, "Thou art worthy--for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by that blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!" since, according to this scheme, Christ has redeemed every kindred, every tongue, every people, and every nation.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net