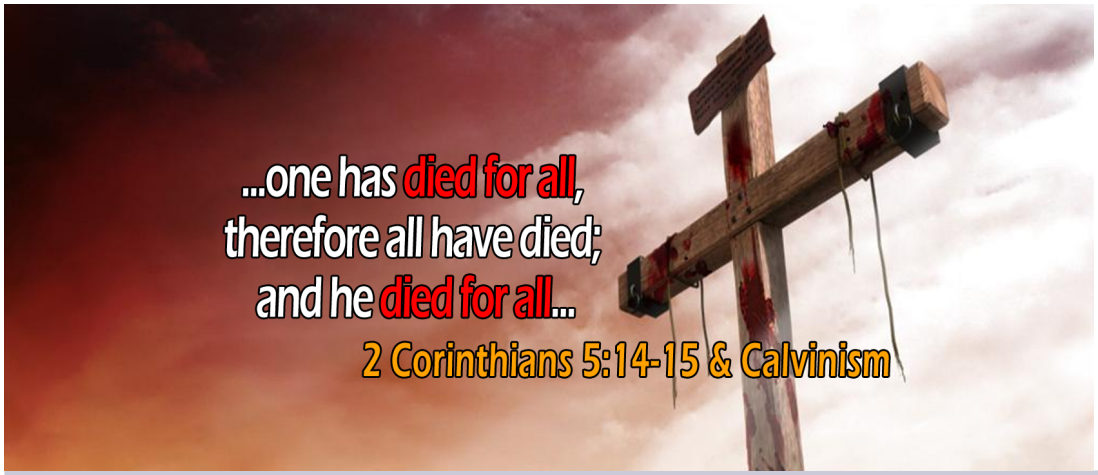
2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 'he died for all'

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For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that **one has died for all**, therefore **all have died**; 15 and **he died for all,** that **those who live** might no longer live for themselves but for **him who for their sake died** and was raised. 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ **God was reconciling the world** to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake **he made him to be sin** who knew no sin, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**. (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

"Can it get plainer than this? Don't you see that it says '*he died for all*.'" Well, we could take the "all's" there to mean "every individual who has ever lived on this planet", but we will lose biblically consistency.

This is going to be a little bit lengthy and that because I decided that we must deal with the clear context of the passage about Christ's death for a specific people rather than addressing verses 14-15 only.

The context speaks of the ministry of reconciliation which we as believers and evangelists have received to share with the world. We are to call everyone to repentance and faith in Christ.

In **verse 14** Paul says that the love of Christ controls, constrains and compels us based on the fact that Christ has died for all. But we must dig deeper to understand the meaning of the word "all" in this context.

We must illustrate what verses 14 and 15 are saying in a table:

The action	The Result
One has died for all	All have died
He died for all	"...no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised"

The death of Christ was also the death of all. How can this be if this speaks of all men without exception? For all men were already dead in sin and trespasses because of Adam (Eph 2:1-3), but this speaks of Christ substitutionary death. This is seen from the fact that Paul speaks of us being united to Christ in His death. See for example Gal 2:20 –

I have been **crucified with Christ**. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and **gave himself for me.**

Who else but the elect can say these words? Can any reprobate truly say that they were united with Christ in His death and

they frustrated the purpose of His death? Because from Gal 2:20 it is clear that the result from being united with Christ in His death is to live with and for Him. So much so that Paul says that He no longer lives, because he considers himself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Rom 6:11). When the Lord Christ died on the cross for our sin, we also died with Him. We were united with Him in His death and that is the assurance to Paul in Rom 6:5 that we also will be united with Him in the resurrection.

Now we go back to 2 Corinthians, there the all are all who are in Him. All who are in the covenant which the Christ mediates. All whom He represents, all the elect. This is not the only time that Paul uses such a language, just take a look at a passage from 1 Corinthians 15 –

> 1Cor 15:22-23 For as **in Adam** all die, so also **in Christ** shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who **belong to Christ**.

It is clear what Paul is saying here. No need to go crazy about the “all's” because they are self-explanatory. What Paul is saying is clear. What he says is that in Adam all humanity which was represented by him in the Garden died (Rom 5:12ff). But in Christ all shall be made alive. There is not a single reason to believe that Paul had here in mind any other than the elect. This is seen from the those who will be resurrected. First of all, Christ was raised, but when He comes, at His Parousia, those who belong to Him. Not everyone who has ever lived. But specifically those who belong to Him, who have His Spirit in them (Rom 8:9), i.e. the elect, the Christians. They are the “all” who “shall be made alive” of verse 22. See 1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 'in Christ shall all be made alive'

So likewise in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul uses the same language. He does not mean every single human being, but all who are under the federal headship of Christ the Lord.

When He died, we died with Him, united to Him so that we may share in His resurrection and life (Gal 2:20: Rom 6:3, 8; Col 2:20; 3:3; 2Tim 2:11).

Verse 15 gives us the purpose of His death. This is seen from the use of the ἵνα purpose clause. The ἵνα gives us the purpose and goal for a thing. Do not think that the rendering of ἵνα as “might” or “may” gives conditionality or uncertainty about a thing. The ἵνα may be translated as “that, in order that, so that.” It shows the purpose for the thing done.

The purpose of Christ's death was that the group for which He died, the “all”, may no longer live for themselves, i.e. in sin, but live for and in Him who for their sake died and was raised. Unless we want to say that God is frustrated in His purposes, which is impossible (Job 23:13; 42:2; Prov 19:21; Isa 14:27; Isa 46:10; Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11) we must accept that the group for which Christ died were the elect, i.e. the believers united with Him on the cross.

Many are the texts which speak of Christ specific and atonening death for the believers and that we will discusses when I try to present my case for Limited Atonement. But that verse 15 says that not only died the Lord Christ died for us, but He was raised for us. As He died for us and we were united with Him in His atonening death, so likewise we will share with in Him in a resurrection body like His (Rom 6:5). See above for Romans 4:25.

In verse 17 Paul concludes based on what was said in verses 14-15 that if we indeed are in Christ, i.e. in the group of the “all”, therefore we a new creation. Each of us. We have been made new by the death of Christ. Our old stony heart was destroyed and replaced by a heart of flesh which loves God and His Law.

Verse 18: All this blessing that we have received is from God, and therefore not from man. It is He that has reconciled us to Himself. It is not we who have approached God and were reconciled to Him. He, the offended party has come to us thanks to the death of Christ and forgiven us and brought us into a loving relationship with Him, our Redeemer. It is He who has received us into His favor. It is a thing done by Him based on Christ's death in our behalf. God imputed our sin to Him and His righteousness to us.

Not only has God reconciled us to Christ, but He has given the ministry of reconciliation to the believers, that through them God may reconcile the world to to Himself.

Verse 19: Paul speaks of Christ's reconciliation of the world to Himself as a past action. God was reconciling the world to Himself. He did that on the cross of Calvary. The way in which He did reconcile the world to Himself was to not count their trespasses and sins against them, i.e. forgive them of their wickedness.

Now we should pay attention to the word “world.” It is here that the non-Calvinists see universal rather than particular atonement. This is the reason that I did not start the exegesis of verses 18-19 which is the subject at hand in verse 18, but went back to verse 14.

I believe that I fairly demonstrated the particularity of the death of Christ in verses 14-15. It is not for every single human

being that was made. His death was particular which is the basis of this reconciliation. For God to be righteous and not count our sin against us means that He has counted them against a Substitute and punished them in Him (2Cor 5:21).

Unless we believe that Paul contradicts himself within a few sentences we must throw away the very simplistic understanding of the word world meaning the whole humanity. The same group which was made a new creation, for whom Christ died is still under discussion, but now Paul speaks in the context of evangelism. We have the message that God on the cross reconciled the world to Himself and that is the basis that we plead with people and God makes His plea through us that people should be reconciled to Him.

The use of the word "world" gauds against the error to believe that we should not preach the Gospel to anyone we do not think is elect. The message of reconciliation is to be preached to every and God will draw His elect to Christ.

That the word world is not used to mean "all humanity" may be seen from Luke 2:1; John 7:4; 12:19; 13:1; 14:17; Acts 19:27; Rom 1:8; Col 1:6; Rev 12:9; 13:3, 7-8.

The word world here means humanity all without distinction, instead of all without exception. Meaning, all people from everywhere and not all Jews or all who we think are the elect. It is proper to use the word "world" when speaking of Christ death as the Bible does that. But we must not go to the simplistic understanding which contradicts the context of the present passage. It is proper to speak of Christ died for the world as in Rev 5:9-10 –

> 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "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**, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

The death of Christ is both particular and universal here. But obviously in two senses. It is particular in the sense that Christ is here spoken of to have shed His precious blood for a purpose. That purpose was to ransom people for God. To purchase them for God. It is not an "iffy" purchasing and ransom which is spoken of, but a definite one. It is to purchase people from every tribe, language, people and nation. It is not, pay attention, to ransom every tribe, language, people and nation, but to ransom people from every… Here is seen the particularity of the atonement. All those whom He has purchased for God He has in the proper time made a kingdom and priests to God. In the present time.

The universality is seen from the fact that Christ has ransomed people for God for all four corners of the world. From every place Christ has died for people and bought them for God. Those for whom He died, He will not fail to bring to be priests and a kingdom for our God.

If we see, as I said the particularity and the universality of the atonement in Rev 5, we may properly and biblically speak of Christ's death being for the whole world.

Verse 20 in light of Rev 5:9 gives us the motivation to go and seek people for God. It is God who works through us to call His people.

Verse 21: We have briefly dealt with this verse above. The particularity is clear and enforces our understanding of the word "world" in verse 19. He was made sin for "our sake" the same people for whom Christ died in verses 14 and 15. So that, not maybe, perhaps, if they like it, if they so choose. No, ἵνα, in order that, for the purpose of that, so that we surely will become the righteousness of God in Him.

Thank you Lord for this great message of reconciliation that you have given us that we may have the honor to represent you in the world. Thank You that You have reconciled us to Yourself. The offended party coming to us and cleansing us from our sin and bringing us into a loving relationship with You.

COMMENTARIES

The **ESV Study Bible** explains:

> **one has died for all, therefore all have died**. By Christ's death, the death penalty for sin (see Gen. 2:17) has been paid for all those who trust in him (see Rom. 3:21–26; 5:6–8; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 3:13), and God counts their old life as ended, thus freeing them from any future penal claims. **he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him.** As a consequence of Christ's death, the power of sin in one's life (see Gen. 3:1–7) has also been broken for all those who trust in Christ (cf. Rom. 6:1–14). Christ's cross therefore frees the believer for a new way of life, exemplified by Paul himself as one that **the love of Christ controls** (see Titus 2:11–14).[1]

The **ESV MacArthur Study Bible** says the following:

> **2 Cor. 5:14 the love of Christ.** Christ's love for Paul and all believers at the cross (cf. Rom. 5:6–8). Christ's loving, substitutionary death motivated Paul's service for him (cf. Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:19). **controls**. This refers to pressure that causes action. Paul emphasized the strength of his desire to offer his life to the Lord. **one has died for all.** This expresses the truth of Christ's substitutionary death. The preposition "for" indicates he died "in behalf of," or "in the place of" all (cf. Isa. 53:4–12; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:11–14). This truth is at the heart of the doctrine of salvation. God's wrath against sin required death; Jesus took that wrath and died in the sinner's place. Thus he took away God's wrath and satisfied God's justice as a perfect sacrifice (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:6–11, 18–19; 1 Tim. 2:5–6;* cf. Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:10; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24). **therefore all have died.** Everyone who died in Christ receives the benefits of his substitutionary death (*see notes on Rom. 3:24–26; 6:8*). With this short phrase, Paul defined the extent of the atonement and limited its application. This statement logically completes the meaning of the preceding phrase, in effect saying, "Christ died for all who died in him," or "One died for all, therefore all died" (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:19–21;* cf. John 10:11–16; Acts 20:28). Paul was overwhelmed with gratitude that Christ loved him and was so gracious as to make him a part of the "all" who died in him.[2]

The **HCSB Study Bible** says about 2 Corinthians 5:13-15:

> 5:13-14 Paul's opponents probably had suggested that he was religiously unbalanced (see Ac 26:24). He was "insane" in that **Christ's love** compelled him into vigorous apostolic ministry. On the other hand, his ministry among the Corinthians had never been that of a madman (1Co 2:1-5). Indeed, he had kept his "third heaven" vision private for 14 years until he mentioned it later in this letter (12:1-10). The heart of Paul's message was that the Jewish Messiah had **died** on behalf of **all** kinds of sinners (1Co 15:3). Jews as well as Gentiles were included in Jesus' substitutionary death (Rev 7:9). In union with Christ, sinners who believe the gospel have died to sin and have been raised to walk in a new way of life.
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> 5:15 The phrase **those who live** refers to believers who are now spiritually alive (Eph 2:4-6). Christ's death and resurrection ministry have become the pattern for the believer's death and new-life ministry. Paul personally modeled this as well.[3]

Footnotes

1. ^ *ESV Study Bible. (2008). Crossway. Taken from the Online Version at www.esvbible.org*
2. ^ *John MacArthur. (2010) The MacArthur Study Bible. Crossway.*
3. ^ *HCSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible®) Study Bible. (2010). Holman Bible Publishers. Taken from the online version at www.mystudybible.com*