
Mission 119 Ministries

**DECONSTRUCTING CALVINISM
EPISODE 10: IF JESUS DIED FOR ALL,
THEN WILL ALL BE SAVED?**

Hutson Smelley

www.sermonaudio.com/forestbranch

SERIES GOALS

- **Short, focused lessons**
 - **Explain Calvinism**
 - **Address claims of Calvinism**
 - **Exegetically**
 - **Historical**
 - **Philosophically**
-

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Historical or mainline Calvinism has consistently maintained that Christ's redeeming work was definite in *design and accomplishment*—that it was intended to render complete satisfaction for certain specified sinners, and that it actually secured salvation for these individuals and no one else. (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pp. 39-40)

See Episode 2 for more detail on what Limited Atonement is. If the above is true, what is the purpose of the gospel message?

THE LIMITED ATONEMENT PROBLEM

- **Too many verses say it isn't so...**
 - **See e.g., John 1:29, 3:16-17, 4:42; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Tim. 2:6, 4:10; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2, 4:14**
 - **John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**
 - **2 Cor. 5:15 And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves...**
 - **1 Tim. 2:6 who gave Himself—a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.**
 - **Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Jesus—made lower than the angels for a short time so that by God's grace He might taste death for everyone—crowned with glory and honor because of His suffering in death.**
-

THE LIMITED ATONEMENT ARGUMENT

- **Limited atonement is in many ways the weakest link in the TULIP construct**
 - **Many who call themselves Calvinists reject limited atonement (the so-called 4-point position; see Robert Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*)**
 - **They recognize that many verses explicitly teach that Jesus died for all**
 - **But 5-point Calvinists make a strong argument that without limited atonement the entire TULIP dies**
 - **Because of the Bible repeatedly says Jesus died for all, 5-point Calvinists opt to put the greater weight of their position on a philosophical argument**
-

THE LIMITED ATONEMENT ARGUMENT

- **The argument builds on inferences the Bible never states to avoid the unlimited atonement conclusion that the Bible repeatedly states.**
 - **The premise is that if Jesus died for a person's sins, then that person's salvation is secure; in other words, their redemption was completed at the cross because if it happens at the moment of faith, then they are saved by works (faith = work).**
 - **The second premise is the denial of universalism; in other words, not everyone will spend eternity with God**
 - **The conclusion is that Jesus died only for some (the elect) because IF he died for ALL then ALL would be saved, i.e., universalism**
 - **ALSO argues that if Jesus died for the non-elect then "double jeopardy" occurs**
-

THE ARGUMENT

You see, if you believe that the Bible teaches that God is sovereign, His plan immutable, and His election unconditional, you must conclude that the atonement is limited to those whom He freely willed to make the objects of grace. (Actually grace means unmerited favor. It is an act that is wholly undeserved, so that the term, by its very nature of definition, denies conditional election.) The Arminian view insists that it is man's act of faith that merits his being elected according to the foreknowledge of God. If such be the case man is saved by works and not by the grace of God, because he has done at least one thing pleasing to God, and all on his own! — Duane Spencer, *TULIP*

THE ARGUMENT

The atonement of Christ was clearly limited or unlimited. There is no alternative, no tertium quid. If it is unlimited in an absolute sense, then an atonement has been made for every person's sins. Christ has then made propitiation for all persons' sins and expiated them as well. — R.C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?*

Sproul concludes that the unlimited atonement view implies that “faith is not only a condition for redemption, but also one of the very grounds for redemption” and thus “faith becomes a work.”

THE BIBLE

Rom. 3:21 But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—attested by the Law and the Prophets 22 —that is, God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction. 23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. 26 God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

THE BIBLE

Rom. 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.

Rom. 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 9:30 What should we say then? Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith.

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

FINAL REMARKS

- **Jesus paid it all — it is finished!**
 - **But the Bible (OT and NT) also teaches that this gift is received / appropriated by faith and that faith is not a work (Rom. 4:4-5)**
 - **Faith does not add to Jesus' work on the cross, but receives the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection**
 - **And so it does not follow that if Jesus died for someone that that person will necessarily be justified and saved**
 - **And so universalism does not follow from unlimited atonement (Jesus died for all)**
 - **This is consistent with the OT teachings on offerings that were a shadow of things to come. There, also, the worshiper had to appropriate the sacrifice, for example, by placing their hand on the animal.**
-