

One of the points of disagreement between Calvinists and Traditionalists has to do with the extent of the atonement. For whom did Christ die? (Rom. 5:8). Whose sins did He bear in His own body on the tree? (I Peter 2:24).

The position of the Calvinist is that Christ died only for those who He knew would ultimately be saved, i.e., He died only for the sins of the elect.

The position of the Traditionalist is that Christ died for the sins of the entire human race.

In this session I will attempt to state why, as a Traditionalist, I do not believe in limited atonement.

### **I. The doctrine of limited atonement is not logical.**

- A. Limited atonement is partially based on the fact that a number of texts state that Christ died for particular groups of people.

But God demonstrates His own love toward **us**, in that while **we** were still sinners, Christ died for **us**. Romans 5:8

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for **the sheep**. John 10:11

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his **friends**.  
John 15:13

So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of **many**. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Hebrews 9:28

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save **His people** from their sins. Matthew 1:21

- However, the fact that Christ died for particular groups does not allow us to logically deduct that He did not die for everyone.

Example: We cannot deduct from Galatians 2:20 that Christ died only for Paul.

In Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." John Calvin wrote about this verse, "By the word 'many' He means not a part of the world only, but the whole human race. "

John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries, Harmony of Matthew, Mark and Luke, vol. 3, p. 214.

B. The doctrine of limited atonement is also based on the double payment argument, embraced by John Owen.

John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, p. 173-174.

This argument says that justice does not allow the same sin to be punished twice.

C. Matthew 7:13-14 clearly states that more people will be lost than will be saved. Is it logical that God receives the most glory if He sends His Son to die only for a minority of the human race?

## **II. The doctrine of limited atonement contradicts the most basic principle of hermeneutics.**

“...the meaning of a text is what the author consciously intended to say by his text. Thus, the meaning of Romans is what Paul intended to communicate to his readers when he wrote his letter.”

Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, p. 20-21.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of **the world!** John 1:29

For God so loved **the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of **the world.**” John 4:42

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for **the whole world.**  
1 John 2:1-2

The biblical word “world” (kosmos) never refers to “world of the elect” in any of the following lexicons, encyclopedias or dictionaries:

- Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
- Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words
- Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament
- Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament
- Souter’s Pocket Lexicon of the New Testament
- The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge
- Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible
- The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
- The New Bible Dictionary
- Baker’s Dictionary of Theology
- Arndt and Gingrich’s A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

Yet John Owen retranslated John 3:16 as follows....

“God so loved His elect throughout the world, that He gave His Son with this intention, that by Him believers might be saved.”

John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, p. 214.

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought **them**, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. II Peter 2:1

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death **for everyone**. Hebrews 2:9

I Timothy 2:1-6, 4:10

### **III. The doctrine of limited atonement hinders a clear presentation of the gospel.**

- If we believe in limited atonement, we cannot honestly say to another person, “Christ died for **you**.”
- If we believe in limited atonement, we cannot honestly say to a group or a congregation, “Christ died for **all of you**.”
- Peter, however, preached the gospel to those he referred to as “you.”

You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ <sup>26</sup> To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.” Acts 3:25-26

### **IV. The doctrine of limited atonement cannot be supported historically.**

- The following men were Calvinists. None of them embraced the doctrine of limited atonement:

John Calvin, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, Isaac Watts, Johnathan Edwards, David Brainard, Charles Hodges.

David Allen, *Whosever Will*, p. 67.

- The following church fathers did not believe in limited atonement:

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-220)

Eusebius (A.D. 260-340)

Athanasius (A.D. 293-373)

Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-386)