

Our Doctrine (TULIP)

Part 3:
Limited Atonement



1

Review



Total Depravity – The doctrine that unregenerate man is constantly sinning and incapable coming to saving faith in Christ without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Unconditional Election – The doctrine that God chooses some (“the elect”) to be saved according to God’s own will and not on any conditional act of man.

2

The L in “TULIP”



Limited Atonement is perhaps the most controversial point of Calvinism/Reformed Theology.

Also called “definite atonement” or “particular atonement”.

So controversial that some identify as “Whiskey Calvinists”.

- They accept T, U, I, and P, but
- they reject L.
- Accepting 4/5 points of Calvinism, they are “a fifth short.”

3

What is The Atonement?



The Atonement – Christ’s death as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of lost people and to reconcile them to God.

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Atonement in the OT



Leviticus 4:14–15 [W]hen the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the Lord, and the bull shall be killed before the Lord.

Leviticus 4:20 Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.

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Atonement in the OT



Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

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

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The Atonement



1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Hebrews 10:10–12 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.

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The Atonement



The Atonement: When Christ died on the cross, he atoned for sin as the perfect and final sacrifice, exchanging the sins of lost people with his own righteousness so that sinners could be presented to God as pure and blameless sons and daughters.

Questions remain: What is the scope of Christ's atonement?
How effective is Christ's atonement?

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The Scope of the Atonement



What is the scope of the atonement? Who was the object of Christ's death on the cross?

- Only the Jews?
- Every person who has ever lived?
- Those who would someday accept Christ as Savior?

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The Effect of the Atonement



What is the effect of the atonement? What was gained by those for whom Christ died?

- The opportunity to accept Christ as savior?
- The surety of Christ as the savior?
- A good example on how to live righteously?

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Three Options



1. **(Universalist) Unlimited in Scope and Effect**
Christ's death was meant for all mankind, and all mankind have their sins forgiven.
2. **(Arminian) Unlimited in Scope—Limited in Effect**
Christ's death was meant for all mankind, but only some in the scope of the atonement have their sins forgiven.
3. **(Reformed/Calvinistic) Limited in Scope—Unlimited in Effect**
Christ's death was meant for only an elect group, but all in the scope of the atonement have their sins forgiven.

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God's Love for the Wicked



Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

God loves those who never come to belief, but that love is different than the love he has for his bride the Church.

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Limited Atonement



Limited atonement – The doctrine that Christ’s death on the cross was by design limited to atone for the sins of God’s elect only, and not for the sins of all mankind.

Furthermore, this atonement is complete and requires no action or effort on the part of the elect.

Limited in scope – Unlimited in effect

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Limited Atonement – Gospels



John 10:14–16 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:25–27 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

15

Limited Atonement – Gospels



Matthew 1:20–21 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

From the beginning, Christ’s plan was to bring “his people” to salvation.

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Limited Atonement – Gospels



John 11:49–52 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

Caiaphas unwittingly prophesied that Christ would die for the “children of God”, a “nation” which is “scattered abroad”.

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Limited Atonement – Gospels



John 15:12–14 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Can a totally depraved, unelected person be a friend of Christ in any meaningful sense?

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Limited Atonement – Gospels



From the gospels, we see that the object of Christ's atonement is limited to:

1. his sheep (John 10),
2. his people or nation (Matthew 1 & John 11), and
3. his friends (John 15).

Christ does not indicate that his death was meant to atone for the sins of all mankind.

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Limited Atonement – Paul



Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Christ obtained his Church with his blood, not just the opportunity to become part of his Church.

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Limited Atonement – Paul



Ephesians 5:25–27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Christ died for his Church alone just a good husband loves his wife alone.

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Limited in scope – Unlimited in effect

22

Unlimited Effect



John 6:36–40 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

23

Unlimited Effect



John 10:27–29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Unbelief cannot snatch Christ’s sheep from his hand.

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Limited in scope – Unlimited in effect

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Arminian View of the Atonement



Arminian view of the atonement – Christ’s death on the cross paid for the sins of all mankind.

However, this atonement does not become effectual for a person unless that person comes to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Unlimited in scope – Limited in effect

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Two Relevant Verses



2 Corinthians 5:18–19 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 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.

1 John 2:2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

What is meant by “the world”?

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Some Relevant Verses



Verses which reference Christ’s atonement for “the world” refer to the application of the atonement to Jews, Gentiles, Germans, Gamecocks, and Tigers.

Revelation 5:9b–10 “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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

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Did Christ Die for Me?



John 1:12–13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

The strength of our faith does not save us, but the object of that faith (Christ's atonement for sin) does save us.

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The Atonement is The Gospel



1 Corinthians 15:3–4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

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