

Examining the third Letter of the Acronym TULIP Limited Atonement

Before we get into subject of Limited vs Unlimited Atonement, I think a little housekeeping is in order.

First, we need to keep in mind that those that teach 5-point Calvinism use a different method of interpreting the Bible than we do.

- We use what is called a consistent literal approach (the original intent of the author), grammatical (the use of language of when it was written), historical (within the context in which it is written) all of which allow for figures of speech, parabolic illustrations, and types especially as we see in the ritual Law.
- Calvinism uses primarily the allegorical method which allows for dual meanings of the text and for the interpreter to look for a hidden or deeper meaning that allows one to read into the text what they believe. To be fair all of us are guilty of that at times, sometimes we are unaware that we are doing it.

Secondly, I am aware that this may seem to be a lot to take in, well it is. However, Bob and I believe that the need is urgent because, **first of all** it puts the responsibility of our salvation solely on whether God has chosen or not chosen to regenerate a person to salvation relieving man of any responsibility. **Secondly** it puts the responsibility of final salvation (security of the believer) on man rather than God. Man has to persevere in faith until death as we shall see in the last message. It takes away man's responsibility to believe (have faith in Christ unto salvation), which according to the Calvinist man cannot do because he is dead and unless God first regenerates (bring to life) him so he can believe in the grace God.

That is the exact opposite of what we believe Scripture teaches.

Man is responsible to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit through faith when He is confronted with the truth that Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Son of man died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the grave to pay for his sins. Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "

When we believe our final destination then becomes the responsibility of God alone and entirely apart from works. ***Eph 1:13-14** In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Another reason that we are teaching this series is, I'm not sure how many realize the dangerous theological climate of our day and of the location we live in. Sproul's church is located here in Sanford, and the Reformed Seminary in Orlando is filled with McCarthyism. These among other have had a huge impact on many of our local churches.

Many believers that once saw Reformed Theology as a danger now view it as a viable option. So, what is the big deal. That was the tactic that Satan used with Eve and has been using since. I fully realize that it is a sensitive topic because it often involves family and friends but we cannot allow that to misrepresent the Word of God.

Another faction that we are facing is the development of Progressive Dispensationalism that started in the early 1990s and has blossomed into a major issue that we will talk about at another time.

What is Limited Atonement according to those who believe that Christ died for only the elect? (Part 1)

According to Reformed Theology, for those unconditionally elected to salvation, like the old gospel song says, it is "nothing but the blood of Jesus" that provides payment for sin. We whole heartily agree that it was nothing but the blood of Jesus that paid for sin.

However, in saying that it was only for those who were unconditionally elected to salvation we whole heartily disagree. In saying that He died for only the elect means that there was nothing provided in the blood for the atonement of those who were not elected to salvation. As we shall see later on, this is in direct contradiction to God's Word.

- Reformed Theology denies the Scriptural teaching that Jesus died for all and affirms the very unscriptural teaching that He died only for some.

- That raises two questions for me, Does God’s Word actually say that God chose a certain few out of humanity to save? If that is true, does God’s word really say that Jesus only died for those who were chosen for salvation?”
- If one of these is false, they both are, if one is true, they both are.

The late Sproul in his book, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* says.

- One of the most controversial points of Reformed theology concerns the L in TULIP, Limited Atonement.
- It has been such a problem doctrine that most Christians who define themselves as Calvinists do not embrace this doctrine and refer to themselves as 4-point Calvinists.
- He goes on to say, I prefer to use the term definite atonement. The doctrine of definite atonement focuses on the question of the design of Christ’s atonement. It is concerned with God’s intent on sending Jesus to the cross.
- He is correct when he says that anyone who is not a universalist is willing to agree that the effect of Christ’s work on the cross is limited to those who believe. Not everyone is saved through His death. Everyone also agrees that the merit of Christ’s death is sufficient to pay for the sins of all human beings. **However, this does not get at the heart of definite atonement.**

What is at the heart of definite atonement according to Sproul?

1. The world for whom Christ died cannot mean the entire human family. It must refer to the universality of the elect, people from every tribe (Jew) and nation (Gentile). But he leaves out every language and people. He does not tell us why it cannot mean the entire human family. Is there grammar that proves that point? Is there Scripture that directly says that? I have not been able to find either one.

What he should have said is, “The world for whom Christ died cannot mean the entire human family, if Calvinism is true.

Palmer in his book, *The Five Points of Calvinism* explains what he believes John 3:16 means despite what it says. That is:

2. Because God has so loved certain ones...these particular ones will be saved, He sent His Son to die for them, to save them, and not all the world.

Compare what Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Every unbiased person has to admit that this is a blatant, deliberate, and daring departure from the Word of God to prove his point. This is why Calvinists' resort to the allegorical method of interpretation because you read into Scripture what fits your theology rather than drawing out the literal intention of the author by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In this case he twists the words of Jesus to suit his man-made theology.

Boettner says: Concerning this doctrine (Calvinism), The Westminster Confession says:

3. Wherefore they who are elected...are redeemed in Christ. ... Neither are any other redeemed by Christ...but the elect only.

Steel and Thomas in the Five Points of Calvinism state:

4. Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. The gift of faith is applied to all of the elect, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.

This is confusing, first they say if you are one of the elect you are already saved by Christ's redeeming work not by hearing the gospel. Then they say the gift of faith guarantees their salvation. Which is it?

Wayne Grudem in his Systematic Theology sates:

5. Reformed people argue that if Christ's death actually paid for the sins of every person who ever lived, then there is no penalty left for anyone to pay, and it necessarily follows that all people are saved, without exception. For God could not condemn to eternal punishment anyone whose sins are paid for; that would be double payment.
His nefarious thinking has no merit. Christ's death actually paid for the sins of every person who ever lived. However, His

payment does not save you until you believe/trust in it and until then you are still lost.

Example:

Say your pantry and frig are empty and you are sick and unable to work with no way to earn money to buy food and you are on the verge of starving to death. I can give you a check worth \$1000 and tell you to buy the food that you need with the money. You take the check and thank me go home and put the check in a drawer and do not cash it, so it does you no good. The check's value is still the same, but until you take the check sign it and cash it at the bank it does not help your problem of starvation. It is the same with your salvation, until you put your trust in what Jesus did for you it does not remedy your lost estate.

Besides many clear statements in Scripture, many of which we will consider momentarily, that show the error of that thinking, they are failing to distinguish the difference between **atonement provided and atonement appropriated.**

One more illustration of atonement in the Calvinist view is that atonement **"inherently saves."** In this view the elect are actually saved at the time Christ died for them. This makes the cross just a formality because actually God had it all set before He laid the foundation of the earth. (Eph. 1:3)

Curtis Crenshaw quoted in A.A. Hodge *The Atonement*, admits: Some have said...nowhere does Scripture say that Christ did not die for the reprobate or that He died only for the elect. This is true...

But despite this admission, he immediately goes on to say:

...As we survey, consider the following logic:

Christ's death inherently saves.

If Christ died for all, then all are saved.

Not all are saved.

Therefore, Christ did not die for all. He goes on the say:

If one is going to deny the logic of these statements, he must object to the first premise, for the two middle premises no one would deny, and the conclusion is forced by the premises.

He is right to focus on the first premise. For where in Scripture do we find, Christ's death inherently saves? I'll tell you where, **nowhere**. So, his logic is pointless by his own conclusion.

There are many more examples that I could quote, but these cover the basics for now of what Reformed theology teaches about Limited Atonement. Now let us look at what Scripture really teaches.

Limited Atonement Scripturally Refuted (Part 2)

- **If Christ died for only the Elect why does Paul tell Timothy...**

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who **gave Himself as a ransom for all**, the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

- **Christ died provisionally for all mankind...**

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

Propitiation (Gr. Hilasmos, to atone for) here means to satisfy mankind's sin debt, toward God and His Law. It is a three-part act; it appeases the wrath of God, fulfills His Law, and reconciles us to him.

More about Propitiation

- The world religions teach that in order to appease God you need to offer your gifts or make some sort of sacrifice, some even sacrificed their babies.
- However, this is where Christianity separates from all religions. God Himself had to provide the Sacrifice. Because God is righteous, and the demands of His Law had to be 100% fulfilled, since man is unrighteous, he is unable to make the necessary sacrifice.
- The sacrifice had to be made by Jesus Christ the righteous. He was the only righteous (without sin) man who was God come in the flesh. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (Joh 1:1) And the Word became flesh and dwelt*

among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (Joh 1:14)

- In the New Testament, the act of propitiation always refers to the work of God and not the sacrifices or gifts offered by man.
- For this reason God the Son, Jesus Christ, came into the world in human flesh to be the perfect sacrifice for sin and make atonement or “propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).”
- *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 2Co 5:14-15*

Only those who trust/believe in the finished work Christ for salvation will not perish but have the blessing of eternal life.

- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18
- But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.
- For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rom 3:21-26
- It is through faith in Jesus Christ as God’s perfect sacrifice that we can be reconciled to God. It is only because of Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection on the third day that a lost sinner deserving of hell can be reconciled to a holy God. The wonderful truth of the gospel is that Christians are saved from God’s wrath and reconciled to God not

because "we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" ([1 John 4:10](#)).

- Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" ([John 14:6](#)).
- Those who reject Christ as their Savior and refuse to believe in Him have no hope of salvation. They can only look forward to facing the wrath of God that they have stored up for the coming day of judgment ([Romans 2:5](#)). There is no other propitiation or sacrifice that can be made for their sins.

Everyone is invited to trust in Christ for salvation

- Therefore, many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. ([John 20:30-31](#))
- This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. ([1 Timothy 2:5-6](#))
- The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that **all** should come to repentance. ([2Pe 3:9](#))
- "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** men to Myself." ([John 12:32](#))
- Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. **Act 13:48** (NKJV) This verse is the strength of Calvinism, is it saying that God chose them?
- The people who were not Jews were pleased with what they heard and praised the Lord's word. Everyone who had been prepared for everlasting life believed. **Act 13:48 (GW)**

- Harry Ironside: Another clear rendering for the word ordained is, “as many as were determined for eternal life believed.” Wherever you get a man determined to have eternal life, he can have it through believing on Jesus Christ.

This verse is one of the strongest verses that the Calvinist use to prove that God has preselected some to be saved. It is one verse that they do not have to rearrange in order to make it agree with their doctrine because most translations translate the Greek word “tasso” ordained or appointed which seems to give the idea of predestinated to salvation. However, is that what it is saying?

1. Since there is no Scripture that says, “God Predestined some to salvation and some to lost” it would seem highly unlikely then that what it is saying here. If you do not believe that type in the phrase predestined, or ordained, or appointed to salvation into any Bible search engine.

However, there is a Scripture that says *it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.* (Heb.9:27) Rev 2:11 Jesus says, “**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.**” God has predetermined no one for the 2nd death.

2. Remember, the rule for interpretation of Scripture context. We use exegesis, (to draw out from) not eisegesis (to read into). So, we compare Scripture with Scripture within the context. In verse 1 of chapter 13 we learn that Barnabas and Paul were among several of the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. Together it was determined that the Holy Spirit was sending Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey that eventually led them to a place called Pisidian Antioch. There on the Sabbath they went into the synagogue and sat down.

After the reading of the Law and the prophets the officer of the synagogue asked them if they had a word of exhortation for the people they were to speak. Evidently the news of their previous stops had preceded them.

In verse 16 we learn that he was speaking to men of Israel and those Gentiles who fear God.

He then begins with God choosing Israel to accomplish His purpose and their becoming a great people while in Egypt and how He lead them out and put up with them for 40 years in the wilderness and how God destroyed 7 nations in Canaan and gave the land to them and divided it to the 12 tribes of Israel. Then gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then when they asked God for a king, He gave them Saul from the tribe of Benjamin. Then He raised up David, the son Jesse in Saul’s place and found him to be a man after God’s own heart who would do God’s will.

From his descendants God brought forth to Israel the Savior Jesus Christ the righteous whom they put to death.

When they carried out all that was written all that was written of Him they took Him down from the cross and placed Him in a tomb and after 3 days He rose from the grave thus fulfilling the prophecy concerning that He would not decay.

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him

forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. [13:38-39](#)

This is the setting: They were being prepared big time.

Imagine, Gentiles were hearing all this about Jesus coming to give Israel forgiveness of sin and free them from the Law. In verses 42-43 they were begging to hear more of the grace of God.

So on the next Sabbath when nearly to whole city turned out to hear more the Jews were jealous and began contradicting and actually blaspheming Paul.

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. [Act 13:46](#)

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed (tasso) for eternal life believed.

The UCRT (The Ultimate Cross-Reference Treasury) Ordained (KJV) **appointed** (NASB). Greek word [tassō](#), means to *arrange* in an orderly manner.

- *Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been (tasso) arranged in an orderly manner for eternal life believed.* This makes perfect sense when you look at the context. This exegeses, no limited atonement!

Those who end up lost forever will not be lost forever because Christ did not die for them, but because they refused to trust Christ for salvation.

he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ([Rev 20:11-15](#))