

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

The Intent of Christ's Atonement

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS

- “I can lead anyone to Christ if I can find the key to that person’s heart. It’s just a matter of moving their will” (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*)
- “That is the popular idea which means hell is full of people whose salvation was purchased by the death and resurrection of Christ” (John MacArthur, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*)

GENERAL CATEGORIES

- Unlimited or general atonement (Arminians): atonement is sufficient for all, available to all, and on condition of faith
- Limited or definite atonement (Strong Calvinists): atonement is intended by God to be effective for the elect

DEPRAVITY

CALVINISM

- Man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is spiritually dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God. His will is not free; it is in bondage to his evil nature, and therefore cannot choose Christ or good until the Holy Spirit initiates the work of regeneration.

ARMINIANISM

- Man is not in a state of total spiritual helplessness. His will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. Each sinner possesses free will to cooperate with God's spirit to receive or to reject him. Faith is man's response that precedes regeneration and contributes to salvation.

ELECTION

CALVINISM

- God's choice of certain individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely on his sovereign will. His choice of particular individuals was not based on foreseen response on their part. God gives faith and repentance to those whom he selected.

ARMINIANISM

- God's choice of certain individuals was based on his foreseeing that they would respond to his call. Election was determined by or conditioned on what a person would do. God does not give faith, but humans possess free will to embrace or reject Christ.

ATONEMENT

CALVINISM

- Christ's redeeming work intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore securing their salvation.

ARMINIANISM

- Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure salvation of anyone. His death did not actually put away anyone's sin. Redemption only becomes effective if a person chooses to accept it.

GRACE

CALVINISM

- The Holy Spirit extends a special call to the elect that inevitably brings them to salvation. The general or outward call is often rejected. But the special or internal witness of the Spirit cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion.

ARMINIANISM

- The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation. Due to free will, one can resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate a sinner until he believes. Human faith precedes and makes the new birth possible.

PERSEVERANCE

CALVINISM

- All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of God and will persevere to the end.

ARMINIANISM

- Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith.

CONSENSUS

CALVINISM

- This system of theology was affirmed by the Synod of Dort in 1619 as the doctrine of salvation contained in Scripture.

ARMINIANISM

- This system of thought contained in the “Remonstrance” was submitted to the Reformed Church in Holland in 1610 for adoption. It was rejected by the Synod of Dort in 1619 as unscriptural.

QUESTIONS

- When God sent his son to the cross, did he think of the effect of the cross with respect to his elect differently from the way he thought of the effect of the cross with respect to all others?
- In what ways does the Bible speak of the love of God?

GOD'S LOVE IN DIFFERENT SENSES

- **Intra-Trinitarian love of God**
- “The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands” (Jn 3:35)
- “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed” (Jn 5:20)
- “but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (Jn 14:31)

GOD'S LOVE IN DIFFERENT SENSES

- **God's love for the world and his invitation to all for salvation**
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16)
- “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (Jn 15:19)
- “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 16:19)

GOD'S LOVE IN DIFFERENT SENSES

- **God's particular, effective, selecting love toward the elect**
- “The Lord did not set his affections on you and choose you because you were the fewest of all people... but because the Lord loved you” (Deut 7:7-8)
- “I loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated” (Mal 1:2-3)
- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25)

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

- There is biblical grounds for dividing this question into two parts—the **provision** and the **application** (DA Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, 16-19)

PROVISION

- Isa 53:6—As sin is universal, so also is Christ's saving provision
- Jn 1:29—“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”
- Jn 3:16-17—This passage speaks of God's universal love, and his invitation to all people
- 1 Tim 2:6—“who gave himself as a ransom for all”
- 1 Jn 2:2—“He is the propitiation...for the whole world”

APPLICATION

- Matt 1:21—“He will save his people from their sins”
- Jn 10: “he calls his sheep by name” (v. 3); “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me” (v. 27); “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish” (v. 28)
- Rom 8:28-30—the golden chain of salvation
- Eph 5:25—“Christ gave himself for her”
- 1 Pt 1—chosen, believed, born again, sanctified, and preserved (vv. 2, 8, 3, 15-16, 5)

CONCLUSION

- The **provision** side indicates that God loves all people and that Christ died for all. It refers to the general will of God that must be proclaimed. Beyond this, the Father loves the “sheep” with a special love, and in the divine will the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ’s death to the elect

CONCLUSION

- The **application** side refers to the special will of God shared with those who come to faith. It differs from strong Calvinism, which teach that Christ died to make provision only for the sins of the elect. And it differs from Arminian atonement to all, but that the divine purpose was frustrated by human resistance

CONCLUSION

- Is this view a modification of limited atonement?
- Millard Erickson insists that this position is a form of “unlimited” atonement (*Christian Theology*, 2:826)
- Bruce Demarest argues that it is neither, but rather a “view close to that of Calvin himself—a position that was narrowed by later, Scholastic Calvinism” (*The Cross and Salvation*, 193)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Would you feel free to tell unbelievers that God loves them when sharing the gospel?
- If one's salvation is effected by human choice, would that impact the biblical understanding of "grace"? Why or why not?