

CALVINISM (4)

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Introduction

- 1) **Calvinism** is a theological system of interconnected doctrines which emphasizes divine sovereignty and predestination and denies the free will of man to yield to God's will
- 2) Five points of Calvinism (TULIP): **T**otal Hereditary Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, **P**erseverance of the Saints
- 3) This lesson will examine *Limited Atonement* in the light of Biblical teaching

I) Understanding Bible Atonement

- A) **Kaphar** (Heb) – to cover over, pacify, make propitiation; to atone for sin
 - 1) Law of Moses – Day of Atonement/High Priest (Lev. 16:30, 34)
 - a) Most often associated with blood sacrifice (Lev. 16:15-16; 17:11)
- B) **Hilaskomai** (Gk) – propitiation, expiation, atonement for sin; redeem, remit, covering
 - 1) Covenant of Christ – blood sacrifice of Jesus as High Priest (Heb. 2:17; Heb. 9:12, 14, 22)
 - a) Death of Jesus is a sin-sacrifice for our atonement from sin (Rom. 3:24-26; 1 Jn. 2:1-2)

II) The Doctrine of Limited Atonement Defined

- A) “God did from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification” (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*)
- B) “Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary sacrifice of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners” (Steele and Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented*, 17)
- C) “When the Calvinist uses the term *limited*, he does not mean that the atonement is limited in its power to save...he does believe that the unlimited atonement of Christ is limited in its scope, that Christ intended to and actually did remove the guilt of the sins of a limited number of people. ...Because God has loved certain ones and not all, because He has sovereignly and immutably determined that these particular ones will be saved, He sent His Son to die for them, to save them, and not all the world” (Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 42, 44)

III) Examining Bible Texts Used to Support Limited Atonement

- A) **John 10:15** – “*I lay down My life for the sheep*”
 - 1) If the sheep are the “elect” whose number is fixed from eternity cannot be changed, how could Jesus say He had “other sheep” (v. 16) to add to make one larger flock?
 - 2) Jesus told some that they were not of His “sheep” (v. 26), yet He called on these same ones to believe His miracles so that they would “know and believe” that Jesus and the Father were working together as one (v. 38) – we see that anyone who is not one of His sheep can become one of His sheep if he will turn and believe!
- B) **Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25** – “*...the church of God which He purchased with His own blood*” “*Christ...gave Himself for [the church]*”
 - 1) These passages do not teach that Jesus died *only* for the elect, but that the redeeming purpose and power of His atoning death is for all those who come to Him in faith
 - 2) The doors of Christ's kingdom/church remain open to any and all who will hear and obey the gospel call (Acts 2:37-41; 10:35)

C) **Romans 9:13** – “*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated*”

- 1) Calvinistic argument is that God’s love in sending Jesus was not a general love to all men, “but it is a special and discriminating love, the favor which he bears to His own people, as distinct from others” (John Gill, *Five Points of Calvinism*)
- 2) The problem is that the Bible says that God shows no partiality in salvation (Acts 10:34)
- 3) This passage says that God chose Jacob over Esau as the one through whom to bring the seed promise; this had nothing to do with their salvation, that God unconditionally loved and elected one to be saved and did not love the other so he would be lost

IV) **Bible Teaching that Refutes Limited Atonement**

A) ***God Desires All to be Saved***

- 1) Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9

B) ***Christ Died for All People***

- 1) Because God desires all to be saved, He foreordained the means by which all could be saved from sin – the blood of Jesus for all who believe in God (1 Pet. 1:17-21)
- 2) John 12:32; Romans 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 2:9
- 3) The wonderful benefits of the saving blood of Jesus has been provided for all people by the grace of God and can be obtained by all by meeting the gracious conditions of God by faith (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8)

V) **Calvinism’s Dilemma**

- A) “Here we stand before a fundamental mystery. On the one hand, the Bible teaches that God intends that salvation will be for only certain people. On the other hand, the Bible unequivocally declares that God freely and sincerely offers salvation to everyone.

“How is it possible to reconcile these two sets of statements: on the one hand, God intends to save only certain ones; and, on the other hand, God sincerely offers salvation to all? Do not all the passages which were just quoted prove that Christ did die for all? For if He sincerely offers salvation to all, He must have made provision for their salvation.

“He we come again to that fundamental problem of God, His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. To man it seems impossible to reconcile both truths. They seem to contradict each other. Yet, the Bible is the infallible Word of God and cannot err. Since both sets of truths are in the Bible, they must be accepted; and man must resign himself to the fact that he cannot understand God and His ways” (Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 51)

- B) The solution to this dilemma is NOT to throw up our hands and declare that we must resign ourselves to the fact that we “cannot understand God and His ways”

1) Paul said that we can and must understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17)

- C) The solution is to acknowledge that the claim that “the Bible teaches that God intends that salvation will be for only certain people” is false and unscriptural. That then leaves as true the proposition that “the Bible unequivocally declares that God freely and sincerely offers salvation to everyone”! ***Dilemma Solved!!*** – Let’s get back to the Bible!

Conclusion

Limited Atonement is a false doctrine that contradicts the nature of our God who is not a respecter of persons and stands opposed to His desire that all men be saved. It is a continuation of the false doctrines of Calvinism that began with the errors of total hereditary depravity and unconditional election. Let us not be deceived by the doctrines of men, but humbly hear and respond to the free and gracious invitation of God (Rev. 22:17).