

Limited Atonement

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In our second article on TULIP, we call your attention to the third letter of this word. This third letter of the word representing the Five Points of Calvinism refers to the truth of Limited Atonement. We prefer to speak of Particular Atonement. Of course, we have no objection to the word, limited, as meaning that the atonement of Christ is limited strictly to the elect. Fact is, however, the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is also unlimited in a very real sense of the word. unlimited in the sense that it is infinite, bearing the infinite and eternal wrath of God and as covering all the sins (and what a number!) of all the elect throughout all the ages, and meriting an everlasting salvation. We prefer the word. particular, because it so clearly states that the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ extends only to the elect given Him of the Father.

Why do we call attention in this article to the third letter of TULIP? We believe that this is logical. Before we can speak of the preaching of the gospel, whether the sinner is able or unable to embrace or "accept" that gospel, whether he is saved by irresistible or resistible grace and will surely persevere until the end, we must first treat the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Canons also follow this order. The atonement of Christ is treated in the second head of these Canons. Without the cross there would be no preaching of the gospel, no work of grace within the heart of a sinner. Salvation must be merited before it can be bestowed. And let us remember: the cross and God's counsel of predestination are inseparably connected. If God's predestination be conditional, if the love of God be universal, then it follows that the cross is also universal. If, however, God's double predestination be unconditional and sovereignly particular, then it must follow that the cross, too; is particular, that Jesus suffered and died only for the elect. And let us remember one more thing: the question whether the cross of Calvary be universal or particular is crucial. With this question, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ stands or falls.

Particular or limited atonement - is it scriptural? It surely is. First, we refer to Gen. 3: 15. The text is familiar. It is called the mother promise, the promise from which all subsequent promises issue forth. There we read of the seed of the woman which will bruise, crush the head of the serpent. Why is this pertinent? Because this Seed of the Woman is Christ, and Christ here is surely the head of the seed of the woman, in and through Whom we have the victory.

Secondly, I refer to Matt. 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name, Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." That He shall save them surely also includes the cross. Here we have stated the purpose of His coming. And notice: He shall save His people from their sins. And, He *shall save* them. There is no doubt about this.

Thirdly, who are *His* people? Are they simply the ones who believe in Him, "accept" Him? This question is clearly answered in the gospel of John. Incidentally, you will notice that I have the word, accept, in quotation marks, indicating that this is the word very commonly used and used by the arminians. We read in John 6:39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This "will" of the Father is the Father's mandate to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And what is this mandate? To lose

nothing of what the Father has given Him. For them He must suffer and die. They are surely the elect. And then there is John 10. We read in verses 11, 15, 16, 27-29: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." These sheep are they given Christ by the Father.

More passages can be added to these. However, we now wish to call attention to a word which the Word of God uses to describe Christ's death upon the cross of Calvary. I refer to the word, redemption or redeem. The apostle Peter uses this word in I Pet. 1:18. The word occurs throughout the scriptures. It is a very striking word. The arminians really do not know what to do with it. It means: to buy with a price, to ransom, to purchase one's freedom. What does this imply? We repeat: to redeem means to ransom, to purchase one's freedom. Redemption means that something very really happened upon the cross of Calvary. Christ's death does not simply mean that salvation became a possibility, provided that the sinner now agrees to be saved, that God made salvation possible for him, can now renegotiate with the sinner, and will save him if that sinner will now consent to confess his sin and accept the Lord's salvation. This is the arminian position. Redemption means, however, that salvation has now become a fact. Our sins have been paid and blotted out. Our eternal salvation has been merited. Even as the U. S. government pays the ransom price for an American prisoner, purchases his freedom and now his actual freedom must follow, so now upon the cross of Calvary our deliverance and everlasting salvation have been purchased and must follow. This the arminian rejects. He refuses to glory in the cross, refuses to believe that the cross seals his salvation, would place that salvation as dependent upon the will of the sinner.

So, what happened upon the cross of Calvary? This: the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world (John 1:29). No, this does not refer to the sin of all men, head for head, of everybody. This is obvious. Christ surely did not take away the sin of those who perish. Fact is, their sins are held against them. It is because of their sins that they perish. Their sin, therefore, was never taken away. The sin of the world refers to the sin of the world of God's love, as that world, with all the elect, will inherit everlasting life and glory in heavenly perfection and immortality. This happened upon the cross of Calvary. Zion was redeemed. All the sins of all the elect throughout all the ages were paid. God's infinite and eternal wrath was borne in perfect obedience, His justice was satisfied, everlasting life was merited. How true it is that we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. From that cross all our blessings follow. That cross does not save us because we believe; we believe because of the cross. Not one drop of that precious blood was spilled in vain. All those for whom Jesus died will surely be saved.

We believe in limited or particular atonement. Is this important, namely that Jesus died only for the elect? The arminian believes in a general atonement. He claims that his Christ is richer than our Christ. After all, his Christ died for all men, our Christ died only for some. Is not God's love of the arminian richer than our conception of that love of God? Is not his scope of the love of God so much broader than ours? Let us not be

deceived. The choice is not between a Christ for all and a Christ for some. The choice lies between a Christ for some and a Christ for none. You see, the Christ of the arminian died for all men, also for those who perish. This really means that nothing then happened upon the cross of Calvary. Christ also died for those, I repeat, who perish. This means that He did not pay for or remove their sins. Had He really paid for their sins they could never perish. But this also means that Jesus really died for nobody. All He did was give an example to all men of God's universal love. But this love is impotent. It cannot save. It surely could not save those who perish. Jesus died and His blood was spilled in vain. What an impotent death of Christ upon the cross of Calvary! And with this blood of Christ, which never paid for one solitary sin, the arminian would do mission work! How vain and ridiculous! That arminian really has nothing to offer-bear in mind that he conceives of the preaching of the gospel as a general, well-meaning offer of salvation.

Indeed, the arminian has nothing. However, we may and must proclaim Jesus and Him crucified. That Jesus died for me if I have learned to confess my sin and turn unto the living God. That is, He died for me because my repentance is the fruit of the cross and, therefore, seals the blessed truth that, dying atoningly, He paid for all my sins and iniquities. In that cross we glory. In that cross we may surely glory. Redeemed through the blood of the cross we are and will be saved forevermore.

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