

31 — The Reformation / 5 – Limited Atonement

Today....we look at the “L” of our “TULIP” which stands for... Limited Atonement!

There are many, many 4-Point **Calvinists**. :) The problem being—Limited Atonement.

In short—here is the foundation of the discussion...

- The **Arminian** believes — Christ died for all men equally and alike
- The **Calvinist** believes — Christ died for the Elect only

I personally find both views a little confusing since their focus is on sin, forgiveness, & reconciliation. Neither of them refer directly to “eternal life” which is the ultimate purpose for salvation.... yet...

Romans 5:10 We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

What the **Arminians** believe is... Atonement is unlimited and universal. Since God loves all people equally and alike then Christ died for all persons—indiscriminately... and potentially.

The **Arminian** believes that the blood of Christ is the basis for offering pardon to all but does not accomplish that pardon unless man accepts it. That man, by his own free will, has the choice to accept the pardon... or to reject the pardon for his sins.

The **Arminian** belief is based on the belief that “God wants, or desires, to save everybody.”

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Acts 10:43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.

John 1:12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan - this rebirth comes from God.

And this is the primary question that prompted the Reformer’s response to the **Arminian** view....

Q - If God loves everybody equally... and... it is His intent that all should be saved... has the atonement then been a failure, in light of the fact that most are lost? Does God really love everybody equally?

A - Scripture teaches us that God does not love everybody equally...

Romans 9:13 Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I have hated.”

God does not love everyone equally... and... not everyone is saved.

Let's look more closely at some of the verses the Arminians rely upon:

In John 3:16 - Who is it that will never perish? The lost? — No! ...those who believe in Him—those who are saved! And who believes in Him? Only the Elect!

In **2 Peter 3:9** - “not willing that any should perish.” Well—to whom is Peter writing?

2 Peter 1:1I am writing to all of you who share the same precious faith we have, faith given to us by Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, who makes us right with God.

And what is Peter writing about? In this passage he is addressing the fact that there will be scoffers... those who deny the truth....

The Message translation states it this way... **2 Peter 3:4 This will be their argument: Reducing everything to the level of their puny feelings, they'll mock, "So what's happened to the promise of his Coming? Our ancestors are dead and buried, and everything's going on just as it has from the first day of creation. Nothing's changed." Well - Don't overlook the obvious here, friends. With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, (believers) holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone (the elect) lost. He's giving everyone (the elect) space and time to change."**

Regarding God's will in this passage... R.C. Sproul addresses this passage in brief... “We are told that God does not delight in the death of the wicked. God does not take pleasure in the lostness of the wicked but it does serve His rule of justice.

“And the **Reformers** responded to the **Arminians**. First, dead men... cannot will to receive life. The Reformers believed that Christ died only for those whom the Father gave Him... those called to become His bride. And only the Elect, the “Saints” of God, are ever said to be “the beloved of God” and objects of His grace.

“At no point in Scripture is the term ‘loved of God’ applied to any person other than God’s chosen.

“The **reformers** reasoned—if Christ had died for all... then all would be saved, therefore if only the Elect are saved... then Christ died for them alone.”

The **reformers** based their views on the following:

John 10:11, 14, 15 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 6:37 However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.

Romans 5:8 But God showed his great love for us (context) by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Again, *The Message* details this nicely... **Romans 8:31 If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us (context) — who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture: They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one. None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.**

Ephesians 5:25b Christ's love makes the church (His bride only) whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness.

John 17:9 (Jesus) My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you.

Here is the crux of the discussion:

The **Arminian** leaves salvation up to the free will of man.

The **Calvinist** leaves salvation up to the free will of God.

For one—man is in control of his own destiny.

For the other—Only God is in control of the destiny of all mankind.

Most see the **Calvinist** view as limiting because it takes man out of the equation, but in reality... the **Arminian** view is more limiting because it takes God out of the equation.

J.I. Packer quotes Spurgeon who unmistakably wrote:

*"The **Arminians** say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, 'No, certainly not.' We ask them the next question – Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer 'No. Christ has died that any man may be saved if.....' - and then they follow certain conditions of salvation. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, the **Arminian** who says that Christ did not die so as infallibly to secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, 'No, my dear sir, it is you that do it.' We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement: you may keep it."*

In Loraine Boettner's book on *Predestination* he states:

"For the Calvinist, the atonement is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge that goes only half-way across."

R.C. Sproul asks:

"For whom was the atonement designed? Did God send Jesus into the world merely to make salvation 'possible' for people? Or did God have something more definite in mind? The doctrine of limited atonement goes further than universal salvation. It is concerned with the deeper question of the Father's and the Son's 'intention' in the cross. It declares that the mission and death of Christ was restricted to a limited number—to his people, his sheep. The mission of Christ was to save the elect. Wherever it is said that Christ died for all, some limitation must be added or the conclusion would have to be universalism or a mere potential atonement."