

# The Doctrines of Grace – Limited Atonement

## Overview:

The 5 points are often summarized by the acronym “TULIP”, which stands for

1. T = Total Depravity or Total Inability
2. U = Unconditional Election or Predestination
3. L = Limited Atonement or Definite Atonement or Particular Redemption
4. I = Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling
5. P = Perseverance of the Saints or the Security of the Believer

## Limited Atonement:

1. Other phrases for Limited Atonement (LA) include Particular Redemption, **Definite** Atonement, and Sovereign Grace Merited.
2. This one causes the most emotional response, misunderstanding, and the **4**-point Calvinist disagrees with this one.
3. 4 possible views of the atonement:
  - a. Christ died for **all** and saves all (universalism)
  - b. Christ died for **all** but only effective based on some human response (Arminianism)
  - c. Christ died for **some** and saves each of them (Calvinism)
  - d. Christ died for **no one** (humanism)
4. Alternative wording for those 4 views could be:
  - a. Christ died for all the sins of all men
  - b. Christ died for some of the sins of all men
  - c. Christ died for all the sins of some men
  - d. Christ died for no one's sins.
5. The Arminian bridge is a **wide** bridge but it only spans half the chasm.
6. The Reformed bridge is a **narrow** bridge but it spans the entire chasm.
7. A definition of LA: Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith, which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation. (*The Five Points of Calvinism*, Steele/Thomas/Quinn, p 6-7)

## Biblical support:

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|---------------------|--|
| 1. Galatians 3:13   | a curse for us   |
| 2. Revelation 5:9   | purchased all or some?   |
| 3. Isaiah 53:5,8,11 | stricken for the transgression of?, justify who?, bore whose iniquities? |
| 4. 1 Peter 2:24     | bore our sins; healed  |
| 5. Matthew 1:21     | save who from their sins?  |
| 6. Matthew 20:28    | give His life a ransom for whom?   |
| 7. Luke 1:68        | redeemed whom?   |
| 8. John 10:11,15    | lays down His life for the sheep   |
| 9. Titus 2:14       | redeem and purify whom?  |
| 10. Ephesians 5:25  | Christ gave up His life for whom?  |
| 11. Acts 20:28      | purchased what/whom with blood?  |

### Quotes:

- The question that needs a precise answer is this: Did He or didn't He? Did Christ actually make a substitutionary sacrifice for sins or didn't He? If He did, then it was not for all the world, for then all the world would be saved. (Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 47)
- The things we have to choose between are an atonement of high value, or an atonement of wide extension. The two cannot go together. (B.B. Warfield)
- The only limitation in the atonement arises from a pure sovereignty; it is a limitation not of value and virtue, but of design and application. (A.W. Pink)
- Christ's atonement did not partly fail; it totally succeeded. Jesus never fails. (Joel Beeke)
- Jesus Christ died in behalf of those that the Father had, from eternity, decreed to save. There is absolute unity between the Father and the Son in saving God's people. The Father decrees their salvation, the Son dies in their place, and the Spirit sanctifies them and conforms them to the image of Christ. This is the consistent testimony of Scripture. (James White)
- Many divines... believe in an atonement made for everybody; but then, their atonement is just this. They believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter; they believe that the damned in hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in heaven; and though they do not say it in proper words, yes they must mean it, for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for he died for them all, they say; and yet so ineffectual was his dying for them, that though he died for them they are damned afterwards. (C.H. Spurgeon)

### Questions to think about:

- Did Christ propitiate the wrath of God for each and every person in the world? Is that wrath truly removed? If so, then why would any go to hell?
- Did Christ die for all the sins of everyone so that they only just have to believe? What about the sin of unbelief?
- Is the atonement wasted on a vast majority of people (unbelievers)?
- Is hell full of people for whom Christ died?
- Is hell full of people whose sins were paid for in full on the cross?
- Is the lake of fire (which burns forever with fire and brimstone) filled with eternally damned people whose sins Christ fully atoned for on the cross?
- Was God's wrath satisfied by Christ's atonement on behalf of those people who forever will stay in hell?
- Will heaven be filled with the same, so Christ did exactly the same thing for the occupants of hell as He did for the occupants of heaven?

### Putting it into practice – the doctrine of Definite Atonement:

1. magnifies the work of Christ on the cross – you can better boast in the cross of Christ
2. gives God the credit for our salvation – He built the bridge all the way across and secured everything we need
3. we learn humility, because Christ effectively accomplished the entire work of salvation for us
4. encourages us because:
  - a. actually redeemed, set free from the curse of the law
  - b. actual propitiation (definite atonement), God's wrath truly turned aside – my sin will not be punished twice
  - c. truly reconciled to God by the death of the Son – God is no longer at war with us
  - d. real atonement, sins actually paid for, not just potentially paid for