

Limited Atonement

As we saw in the last article, one of the cornerstones of Calvin's theology was the dogma of predestination. This is the notion that, consistent with His own sovereignty, God, before the foundation of the world, predetermined who would be saved and who would be lost. In view of this, when Christ died, His death was effective only for the "elect." This concept of "limited atonement," or limited grace, is so foreign to the Bible that it is difficult to see how anyone with a knowledge of the Bible could accept it.

This doctrine says that the atonement of Christ is limited only to certain individuals, and the perfect righteousness of Christ is transferred to those chosen by God. Most Bible students oppose this doctrine which affirms that Christ did not die for everyone. However, the offspring born by this doctrine has been accepted by many. The dogma of salvation by "faith only" and the concept that God does not put sins to the account of a Christian are two of the faulty conclusions derived from this fundamental tenet of Calvinism. If the root of the tree is bad, then the branches and fruit will likewise be faulty. This is true with Calvinism.

A number of passages teach that Christ's atonement has been provided for all men, not just the predestined elect. If limited atonement is true, then there is no need to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). If God is not willing that any should perish, then why did He consign a large number of people, without regard to anything they did, to perish (2 Peter 3:9)? If God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4), then why is the atonement limited?

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