

L - Limited Atonement

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 July 2009

Preacher: Jonathan Smith

[0 : 00] That's what the kids are listening to today. Tonight we're going to tackle that very topic that was just sung about.

If you followed that, we're going to talk about who Jesus died for on the cross, the atonement. The question is, is it unlimited, as the Aminians say, that it was for all people, that Jesus died for all people to make salvation possible for all people, or is it limited in the sense that Jesus died for some people, for the elect, that when he died he actually saved them from their sins, not just made it possible but saved them, or is it something else?

That's what we're going to tackle tonight. But before we start, and this is a tough one really, I don't know if this is why I've got eight people here tonight and people just didn't want to come to this topic, but it's a tough one and I'm going to need all of us to really, really focus tonight.

But before we do that, I wanted to make a couple of disclaimers or a couple of explanations. Something that came up last week, out of last week's sermon, a little bit of confusion about a few comments I made.

I made a fairly strong rebuke to a bunch of people who, over the weeks that we've been doing this series, have been on the internet kind of taking shots at some of the stuff that I've been saying here.

[1 : 26] And so what I was saying in that rebuke was that I didn't want to entertain those people just for the sake of argument, just for the sake of nitpicking with them.

There's just not time to do that. I just didn't want to entertain that kind of argument for the sake of argument. What I wasn't saying was that if you disagree with me, you can't be in this church, that you need to leave or whatever.

I've never said that. All the way through I've said that no matter where you land on this issue, whether you're a Calvinist, an Arminian or a un-Calvinian and you're unsure, you're welcome to be here.

This is an in-house debate. It's a family debate. So I just want to clear that up. But we've had people trying to stir stuff up for the sake of argument and we don't want to entertain that.

If you have genuine concerns, genuine objections, that's fine. We'll deal with them. Which leads me to the second thing I need to talk about and that is that in the final week, so the fifth sermon, when we talk about perseverance, whether Christians stay Christians or whether they can reject God somewhere along the line, I'm going to try and make that a short sermon and then we're going to have some question and answer time.

[2 : 40] So in order for you to submit your questions, we've set up a page on a website. It's for the Crave ministry, Young Adults Ministry, but anyone can go there.

It's at the bottom of your sheet with a scripture on it that you've got on the way in. It's cravecommunity.com. So if you would like us or me or others to answer some of your questions that have been raised during this series, you need to go there and on the front page, when you load up that page, you can submit your questions in the comments section.

If you don't have the internet, just come and speak to me. You can submit questions otherwise, but that's just the easiest way for us to do it, okay? I know many of you have had questions and I can't even try to answer all of them in these sermons, but we'll try and do that on the final week, okay?

Well, tonight we're obviously still in the five points of Arminianism, five points of Calvinism. We're into the third week, so we're looking at the atonement, as I said. And if you remember the slide, we don't have it tonight, but the slide that outlined our sort of trek through this journey together, this is all about the atonement.

And before we can ask any questions about the atonement, who Jesus died for, what did the atonement achieve? We need to clarify what is the atonement. You might be sitting there thinking that's a big word, I don't know what that means.

[4 : 04] Well, literally, it's easy to remember because it literally means at-one-ment. Atonement, at-one-ment. The fact is, the Bible says that all of us have been separated from God because of our sin, that all of us deserve to be separated forever from God's love and His mercy under His judgment in hell.

And so the atonement is about bringing all of God's people, everyone who sinned against Him, to be one with Him, to bring them back into relationship with Him.

And the great text to go to when you're trying to talk about the atonement is Romans chapter 3. This is verse 25 to 26. It says, God put Christ forward as a propitiation.

That's a really old school word. It means that we deserve to get the punishment for our sin, but Jesus took it for us instead. He kind of soaked up our punishment rather than us.

So God put Christ forward as a propitiation by His blood. This was to demonstrate God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins.

[5 : 11] It was to prove at the present time that He Himself is righteous and that He justifies those who have faith in Jesus. So the big problem is everyone sinned and everyone deserves to go to hell.

And if God's going to be just then everyone has to go to hell. A just judge has to punish sin. He can't say to a rapist, we'll let you off this time. That's not a just judge.

So for God to be a just judge, He has to punish sin. And so what He did, rather than empty out, pour out His wrath on everyone who deserves to suffer His anger, He put forward Jesus as a propitiation, as a substitute.

It's called the great exchange. Jesus takes our sin instead of us. He takes the punishment instead of us. So that's the atonement. And that's what Jesus did it for.

That's what Jesus died on the cross for. It was to show that God is just and to save sinners from the wrath of God. And so tonight the big question is, who did He do it for?

[6 : 14] Who did Jesus die for? We're going to see why this has become such a big issue over the years in a minute. It's a massive argument. I mean, this has divided churches, it's divided families, it's divided whole countries a few hundred years ago.

So this is a big question and we're going to tackle it together. I want to look at it from five different perspectives. So from now, for the last couple of weeks, we've looked at two different perspectives.

Some people have said to me, why do we have to look at two? Why can't we look at more? We're going to look at five tonight. The first one, the first couple are really kind of throw away because they're clearly wrong, but we'll look at it anyways.

So first of all, we're going to look at Unitarianism and Universalism. A lot of big words tonight. Second of all, we're going to look at Pelagianism. Then we're going to look at Arminianism and Calvinism.

And then we're going to look at another option, which I'm going to try and sell to you. Okay? So let's just dive straight in. We'll go to Unitarianism and Universalism. These are beliefs that have been around for centuries.

[7 : 15] They have their roots in Protestant Christianity, but for a long time since, they've gone completely off the rails. So Unitarians and Universalists are united in their belief that everyone goes to heaven.

Okay? So there's no condemnation for anyone. It doesn't matter what you believe. You will be with God in heaven. Everyone's already reconciled to God. And they got together in 1961 and they formed their very own kind of official religion.

And now you can be a member of the UUE and go to their services. They're not worship services because you can be an atheist and be a Unitarian Universalist.

You can be a Christian. You can be a Buddhist. You can be a Jewish person. You can believe anything really. One of the central tenets is that all truth is relative, that everyone has their own right to find their own truth in life.

So it's kind of a mutual appreciation society and they're mutually appreciating everyone because everyone is okay with them. So when we look at these five views, we're going to look at their view on sin and their view on the atonement.

[8 : 18] So their view on sin is that there's no such thing as sin. Nothing separates us from God. It just doesn't exist. There's no reason for God to punish us.

There's no reason for God to rescue us. There's no sin in the first place. And so their view on the atonement, obviously, is really affected by that. But they say that, well, yeah, Jesus might have died if you believe that.

Then that's true. But he didn't die to save us from anything because we don't need saving. He really died to show us a supreme example of love, that an innocent man would die needlessly, possibly, but at least it was a great example of love.

And so this is wrong on so many levels. I mean, we could be here all night talking about how wrong this view is. The truth is that this would be the majority view in the world today. Okay?

So atheism wouldn't be the majority view. I would say universalism would be that, you know, we're all good people. Everyone's going to be in heaven. It's the great golf course in the sky. So first of all, though, the Bible teaches that there is one God.

[9 : 25] There aren't many gods. There aren't kind of relative gods and beliefs. There is one God in three persons. There's one Saviour, Jesus Christ. If you don't believe in Jesus, you don't believe in the Father.

And Jesus died to save us from a real hell. It's a real place that really exists for eternity. And people are going there in reality.

That's what the Bible teaches. Jesus spoke about it more than anyone else. Hell really exists. And people are really going there. So we'll dismiss that. What about Pelagianism? This actually is quite popular today.

In a lot of churches, though they might not say that they're Pelagian, they have Pelagian beliefs. And this is named after a 5th century British monk named Pelagius. And he went at it with another guy named Augustine.

And they had a lot of arguments about the nature of humanity and the nature of sin. And Pelagius basically said that people aren't born with original sin or imputed sin or any kind of sin.

[10 : 25] We're kind of born into a Garden of Eden situation. So little babies born, they're sinless. And from that point on, we have complete free will to choose good at every opportunity, to choose godliness at every opportunity.

So Adam, remember a few weeks ago, a couple of weeks ago, we said that Adam's sin is given to us so that we have original sin when we're born and we have imputed sin, that we actually, in some sense, committed the first sin with him in the Garden of Eden.

They would say, the only thing that Adam gives us is a bad example on how to make bad choices. So, in reality, you could go your whole life making the right choices, you know, following Jesus, and you could get to judgment day and God would say, well done, come in, you've been a good boy, you made the right choices, you earned it.

come in, sit next to Jesus, you guys have a lot in common, that kind of thing. Okay? So, in this view, Jesus did die for people's sins, but people aren't spiritually dead, they're not desperately in need of a saviour, they're kind of sitting on the naughty spot, they're kind of in prison for making dumb choices, but that's about as far as it goes.

That's his view of sin. When it comes to the atonement, again, it reflects that view of sin, that God saved us, but it wasn't kind of a desperate thing, it wasn't a Romans 3 kind of atonement, it was to get us off that naughty spot, to give us a tap on the hand and say, make good choices from now on.

[12 : 09] This is wrong for so many reasons as well, I mean, we all know that we're sinners, this is why we have that common saying, everyone says it, no one's perfect. We all know that everyone does, you know, makes the wrong decisions, does the wrong thing and sins against God.

No one lives up to Jesus' perfect standard of perfection in everything we do. Psalm 51.5 says, we're sinners from our mother's womb. From day dot, we're all sinners.

Romans 3.23 says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that's everyone, all people, and 1 John 1.8 says that if you think you don't sin, if you think that you're not a sinner, then you're calling God a liar and God's not a liar.

In fact, if you call God a liar, then you're sinning and doing that. So, everyone's in the same boat, we're all sinners, we all need God's redemption. It was actually, Pelagianism was actually thrown out as a heresy back in 14, sorry, 418 A.D.

there's the council of Carthage and they got together and they said, what do you think about this guy Pelagius? And pretty much everyone said, he's completely lost, he doesn't know what he's talking about, this is a heresy, so they threw it out.

[13 : 23] But, in later days, particularly in the last few hundred years, or at least in the last hundred years, this has come back in a lot. So, you get churches who preach this message that basically everyone's good and it's just about following the example of Jesus and making the right decision each day.

That's the kind of teaching in a lot of churches today, even though it's clearly and utterly bankrupt. So, we've done away with those two, there's no basis for them.

Now we get to the two major views on the atonement, Arminianism and Calvinism, okay? And both of these are Christian views, both of these take the Bible very seriously, both of these views, as we'll see, have a bunch of scriptures to back up what they're saying.

So, first, Arminianism. Just to recap this from a couple of weeks ago, remember there was a Dutch guy named Jacob Arminius. He was around 1560. He was originally a Calvinist.

He was originally a one-hand guy that God saves us, despite us. But he moved away from that. He kind of took up a lot of the thinking of Erasmus of Rotterdam who was another Dutch guy.

[14 : 31] Started talking a lot about free will and suddenly he was on a different train and he was talking about how God responds to us in salvation, that we choose God and then God looks at us somewhere down in the future and says, okay, he picked me, now I'll pick him.

So, he changed his views and so, about 100 years later, a bunch of his students got together and they put together the five points of Arminianism.

Remember, it was called the Remonstrance. It was a protest document against Calvinism and they said, all that Calvinist stuff is wrong. People have free will, the ability to choose God or reject God.

The election is conditional on whether we choose God first. The atonement, as we'll see tonight, is unlimited, that Jesus died for everyone and then it's up to them to respond to him.

They say that grace is resistible, that there's such a thing as prevenient grace, that grace is available to all and you can resist it if you like, even if God desires that you be saved, you can reject him and finally, there's perseverance of some saints, that there's everyone who becomes Christians, out of that bunch of people, some people will walk away from the faith and give up along the way.

[15 : 52] So, these people, these Arminians, when it comes to sin, they're spot on. They'll say that everyone's a sinner, everyone has fallen short of the glory of God, maybe they don't have such a strong view about our sin being given to us by Adam, like they still think that our will is free, that it wasn't corrupted by sin, but pretty much they've got it right, we're all in need of God's redemption, all in need of God's forgiveness and that Jesus died on the cross to save sinners.

Now, when it comes to this question of who did Jesus die for, what is the effect of the atonement, they're going to say this, they say, when Jesus died on the cross, he died for the whole world, for the whole world and everyone in it and so the offer of salvation is available for all sinners.

they'll say that God's hand is offered to everyone and then it's up to them to exercise their free will to grab hold of his hand and be saved.

It's that synergism, you remember that word, the two cooperative event. And then when you ask the Arminian, do you have any Bible to back up what you're saying? They'll say, yes, we've got a bunch of verses.

We've got a big pile of verses to back up what we say and it's true, they've got a bunch. I've got a couple here that we'll go through. This is on your paper. This is the Arminian view of who did Jesus die for.

[17 : 26] Okay, so they'll say Jesus died for all. First of all, in Isaiah 53, 6, it says, all we like sheep have gone astray.

So that affirms what we've been saying, that everyone's a sinner. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all, all.

It's the Arminian's favourite word, all. 1 Timothy 2, 3-6, this is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour who desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ who gave himself as a ransom for all. Gotcha.

2 Peter 3, 9, the Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.

[18 : 29] Get the idea? He doesn't just talk about the whole world, sorry, all people being offered salvation but the whole world. John 1, verse 29. 1 Timothy 3, 9, this is John the Baptist saying, when he saw Jesus coming towards him he said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

That sounds like a lot of people, doesn't sound very limited. What about John 3, 16-17? Everyone knows it. that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

And then finally they'll say he didn't just die for all, not just for the whole world but for everyone. Hebrews 2, 9, but we see him who for a little while, this is Jesus, was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for who?

Everyone. Universal, unlimited atonement. And so they'll pack up their stack of verses and say, there you go.

Case closed. It's a pretty good selection of verses. They've got more. You can read bunches of them. So out of all that they'll say, what did the atonement achieve?

[20 : 02] Who did Jesus die for? He died for all people to make salvation possible for all people if we respond. That's the Arminians.

Next, in the other corner in the ring they've been duking it out for hundreds of years we've got the Calvinists. Okay? Just to recap them, they're named after a guy named John Calvin.

The Calvinists themselves came about just the same with the Arminians after the death of Calvin but again, it was his influence as a Bible school teacher and as a Bible commentator.

Very influential. Probably wrote the greatest systematic theology of all time. It's called the Institutes of the Christian religion. He wrote a bunch of commentaries. I've got them all.

They're great. Fantastic guy. Got a lot of followers today. Time magazine called Calvinism the third most influential movement in the world today.

[20 : 59] So, the Calvinists are really cranking up at the moment and they're following this guy, John Calvin who was a forerunner in the Reformation with another guy you might have heard of named Martin Luther.

they thrashed a lot of this stuff out and their view of sin is a pretty bleak one but I think it's one that we've seen that the Bible holds and that is that everyone is completely and utterly saturated in sin.

Saw this in the first week that everyone is born with being completely and utterly depraved. Total depravity we call it. And because of that they have total inability to save themselves.

That we are not just drowning in the need of God to save us not just in prison and need of God to rescue us and to break us out but that we're dead spiritually and we need God to do what he did for Lazarus and raise us from spiritual death.

Therefore we can't choose him we can't respond to him it's all got to be from him. This is the view that puts God's sovereignty and God's glory at the very highest order and the five points of Calvinism came out of the Synod of Dort in 1610 in response to those five points of Arminianism.

[22 : 13] So when it comes to sin we're completely stuffed we're sinners by nature and by choice even if you're given the choice whether you want to have hell or heaven everyone naturally will choose hell it's like a shark if you give them seaweed or seal they're going to eat the seal just the same with us if we're given the choice between good and evil we're going to choose evil whether that's sinful.

So when it comes to this question of the atonement who did Jesus die for? What effect did the atonement have? The Calvinist asked the Arminian after listening patiently like Calvinists do they're very patient they're not very patient they're actually very angry and red faced a lot of the time which is a shame but anyway in our story they listened patiently the Arminian and then they asked the Calvinist asked the Arminian this question this is important tune in look at me he will ask the Arminian do you believe that Jesus died for all?

And the Arminian will say I just gave you a stack of verses that say all yes I believe that Jesus died for all and then he'll ask or she'll ask do you believe that Jesus' death saves people from sin and hell?

And the Arminian will say yes that's what we believe that's what the Bible says and then the Calvinist will tie the knot the noose and say well then you must be a universalist you're like the first group because if Jesus died for all and Jesus' death saves people from sin then all people must be saved see the problem?

they'll point out the logical inconsistency with the Arminian's view and then they'll push on it really hard so that makes good logical sense when you hear it like that is there any scripture to back up what the Calvinists are saying?

[24 : 14] well lo and behold yes there is they've got a stack of verses as well they've been piling them up for the last 500 years and so they'll go to the page in front of you and say Jesus died for some not all people Matthew 1 21 says about Mary she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins not all people his people what about Matthew 20 28 even as the son of man came not to be served not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many and they'll accentuate that many not all many Matthew 26 28 for this is my blood of the covenant Jesus says we'll talk about this tonight when we have the Lord's supper together Wayne will say these words for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins then Romans 5 19 says as by one man's disobedience that's Adam the many were made sinners that's all of us are made sinners because of

Adam so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous many not all then they'll talk about the places in scripture where Jesus talks about dying for his sheep and the sheep in the New Testament is a metaphor for Christians it's not all people there are sheep and there are goats there are believers and unbelievers Jesus says this this is the Bible reading I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for who for the sheep he who is a hired hand and not a shepherd who does not own his own sheep see the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf snatches them and scatters them he flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep I am the good shepherd I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep another point for the

Calvinists and then they'll round it out by saying that Jesus died for the church not for all people just for the church the bride the bride of Christ believers Acts 20 28 pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood who did Jesus obtain who did Jesus buy with his blood it was the church say the Calvinists and then they'll go to Ephesians 5 25 you might have heard at weddings he says Paul says husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her he didn't give himself up for everybody he didn't give himself up for a harem just for his bride who is the church and they'll shut the book too and say there you go Jesus died for some not all the atonement is limited in its scope and that's what the

Calvinists will say so here's the quandary it's obvious isn't it we believe in this church that God's word is infallible and true that it's good for instruction to lead us to godliness and knowledge of God and yet here we've got a pile of verses in each hand and they seem to be contradicting each other Jesus died for all that's what the Arminians are saying or did Jesus just die for the elect those people who choose ahead of time it's hard to say and so what I want to do tonight is sell you a fifth option I'm going to call it unlimited limited atonement okay so we're all postmodern people here we love just merging everything into one unlimited limited atonement that's what I'm going to try and sell and I'm going to try and sell it to you using the thought of Calvinists people like John Calvin I believe this was

John Calvin's view remember the Calvinist came after Calvin he didn't have any say really in what they believed and maybe maybe just maybe some of them have taken this a little too far so if you are a young Christian guy who spends all of his time on high speed internet then you will no doubt come across a lot of websites that are hyper Calvinist and go way further than Calvin ever went and it's easy to jump on that bandwagon and get lost well I want to give you some Calvin tonight and I believe that he believes in unlimited limited atonement so first of all I'm just going to read you some quotes I said I've got all of Calvin's commentaries I do I've got every single one I think he's a brilliant brilliant Bible teacher and he'll say crazy things for a Calvinist if he is one first of all if you go to Galatians chapter 5 verse 12 in his old school commentary he'll say this it is the will of God that we should seek the salvation of all men without exception as

[29 : 36] Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world he doesn't sound like much of a Calvinist what about if you go to Colossians chapter 1 verse 14 he says this Paul says that this redemption that Jesus redemption of us was procured through the blood of Christ for by the sacrifice of his death all the sins of the world have been expiated expiation is like a wiping clean of the slate there's a great truth of the atonement that if you come to Jesus having been had terrible things done to you like you've been molested or raped or you've done terrible things to other people murdered beaten up your wife etc etc the great glorious truth of the gospel is that when you're saved Jesus expiates your sin he wipes your sins clean though your sins were like scarlet they'll be made white as snow

Calvin says through the blood of Christ the sins of the whole world have been expiated very strange for Calvinist finally Romans 5 18 this is a good one he says in his commentary Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world and is offered through God's benignity his goodness indiscriminately to all yet all do not receive him he sounds like a classic Arminian preacher Arminian preacher will say Jesus died for everyone yet some don't receive him and that's what Calvin's saying here Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world and is offered through God's benignity his goodness indiscriminately to all yet all do not receive him so what kind of Calvinist am I I'm a I'm a Calvin just a Calvin I believe that Calvin was so strongly committed to the

Bible and not to theological structures that when it looked Arminian he taught it that way when it looked Calvinist he taught it that way and above everything he had the supremacy of God in mind the glory of God and that's how we should be we shouldn't just be committed to one structure or another for the sake of it we should be committed to God's word what about another guy probably the second most famous Calvinist Charles Haddon Spurgeon this guy was a legend this guy is my buddy I'm going to look him up as soon as I get to heaven after Jesus then Spurgeon he was a dude right he was a great preacher I've got ten volumes of his sermons and I'm a nerd I know but he's worth it he just says some amazing things he's called the prince of preachers he was a Calvinist unapologetically he said I preach Calvinism that's what my people get that's what my people want no negotiation and yet he preached on this very issue is the atonement limited or unlimited is it general or particular and he landed with me or maybe

I land with him it was both general and particular he says in a great sermon particular election it was called he said by the word calling in scripture we understand two things one the general call the general call which in the preaching of the gospel is given to every creature under heaven universal unlimited the second call is the special call which we call the effectual call whereby God secretly in the use of means by the irresistible power of the holy spirit calls out of mankind a certain number the elect whom he himself hath before elected calling them from their sins to become righteous from their death in trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men and from their worldly pursuits to become the lovers of Jesus Christ the call is to everyone the atonement is for everyone but there's an effectual a definite a secret special call of

God to the elect he also said in another great sermon called general and yet particular he said there is a general influence for good flowing from the metatorial sacrifice of Christ and yet its special design and definite object is the giving of eternal life to as many as the father gave Jesus things afteräart it was said in you the have And that's it.

[34 : 45] And when it says all in the Bible, it doesn't mean all. When it says the world, it doesn't mean the world, which is a weird argument really, I think. And then we've got these guys, Calvin, Spurgeon and others saying, no, Jesus died for the world.

The Bible says that. But there is a definite effectual call to those whom he predestined for election.

A better word for that doctrine would be definite atonement, not limited. We're not saying that the atonement is limited in any way.

We're saying that it's definite, that it has a definite purpose and that God's will in his atonement for his elect does come about. It's not contingent on how we respond.

What about scripture when it comes to this view? I've got a couple. I think this gets to the heart of it. When it says that Jesus died for all, all people, unlimited atonement, but in a saving way for some, we go to 1 Timothy 4.10.

[35 : 57] Paul says, For to this end we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God who is the saviour of all people and especially those who believe.

He's the saviour of all people and especially those who believe. Also Peter agrees with Paul here. He says in 2 Peter 2.1, But false prophets, these are non-Christians, these are wolves that come in and try and lead Christians astray.

False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

This has non-Christians. There are a bunch of non-Christians. Don't believe in Jesus. Leading Christians astray. And Peter says, So Jesus has bought all people.

He's Lord over all people. The atonement is universal in that sense. We have to say in some sense Jesus died for all. Yet at the same time we want to affirm that he died in a saving way, in an effectual way for those people who he chose before the foundation of the world.

[37 : 27] We need to reconcile that in our mind. We can't just go the extreme view on either side and disregard a whole bunch of the Bible because we know that God is wise, that he put the Bible together and that it doesn't contradict itself.

We need to take both and I think this is where we need to land. It fits in so far with what we've learned over the last couple of weeks that we are totally depraved. We are so sinful that we can't save ourselves, that God needs to act for us, that there is such a thing as unconditional election, that Jesus and God didn't respond to something they'd see in the future and save us because of that, but they saved us despite ourselves, despite our sin, despite anything redeeming about us.

And then because of that, Jesus dies for the whole world, the sins of the whole world, his scope in the atonement is unlimited, but in effect, his atonement is applied to those whom he chose at the foundation of the world.

That's a lot of scripture, it's a lot of theology, there's some philosophy there, we've used a lot of big words, but what does it mean practically for us? We always want to come back to what does this mean for us practically?

How does this encourage us? A lot of people get really depressed when they start thinking about this stuff, but really it should be an encouragement to us. Who would you rather have in control of your destiny?

[39 : 01] Would you rather have Satan and demons? That's one option. Do you want them deciding who goes to heaven? No one goes to heaven, if that's the case. Would you want to have us determining on who goes to heaven or not?

That's one option, a lot of people say that would be a lot more fair, we're a democracy, everyone should get a vote. But then what happens to little babies who are aborted in the womb?

About a third of all babies I think. What happens to them? They never heard, they could never respond, they could never exercise their free will. What about severely disabled people?

Maybe they don't understand what we're saying when we preach a 45 minute sermon using big words. What about miscarried babies, stillborn babies? What about people who haven't heard the gospel?

I tell you what, I'd rather have God deciding for them whether they're getting into heaven or not. It seems like the optimistic view to me. We know that God is good and wise and makes every decision he makes is the right one.

[40 : 05] So I want to encourage us to leave this stuff in his hands. It's also very reassuring if you've got friends, relatives, neighbours who don't believe in Jesus. Because all God requires of you is that you tell them the gospel, that you pray for them, that you woo them, welcome them to Jesus, tell them about the horrors of hell and then you go home and you sleep like a Calvinist, which is very well.

You sleep easy. It doesn't mean you don't care, it doesn't mean you're sad that they're not believers, but you sleep well because it's God who decides and we can put our trust in him to make that choice.

Clearly a lot of this stuff is really complex and I can't address it all in 30 minutes, 40 minutes. We're going to have the Q&A; at week five, which I hope will help, but it's really complex and on this issue, it's taken me years, probably 10 years to come to this position.

I'm not expecting everyone to agree with me or everyone to know what they think as a result of this sermon. I would just encourage you to read some of these really old dead guys. They're really good. Invest in some sermons.

There's a lot of good sermons online. You can go to places like Desiring God and hear a lot of John Piper's sermons that are all available for free. That's a great resource. Download this sermon and listen to it again and try and pick it apart.

[41 : 33] You don't have to make up your mind tonight. I would say also, without discounting the importance of theology or right theology or understanding this, I would say that I think this is probably the least important out of these five points that we're looking at over these five weeks.

It's probably the least important. All right, if you agree with the Arminians, you know, you're still a Christian. You're still welcome here. If you agree with the Calvinists, that's okay.

If you agree with what I've said, that's fine. It probably has the least bearing on how we live out our lives as Christians and how we do evangelism, how we do missions and so on. It's not unimportant.

I just don't want us to freak out if we don't have all the answers right now. I would say finally, just by way of encouragement, that unlimited, limited atonement, as I've put it forward tonight, means a few things.

It means that everyone in this room is a sinner. Every one of us is desperately in need of being rescued. It means that everyone has benefited by the cross of Jesus in some way.

[42 : 37] Remember, that's what Spurgeon says. There's a general benefit to all people. This could be the fact that hospitals were started by Christians in response to Jesus' death on the cross for them, that schools were started in the same way, that most of the major charities today will be run by Christians in response to what Jesus has done for them.

So in some way, there is a general grace a general benefit to all people because of the cross, because of the universal nature of the atonement.

It means that everyone's been bought by Jesus. Everyone's owned by Jesus. Jesus is Lord over all people. Acts 17 says that Jesus is Lord over all. He determines when and where you're born and He commands everyone, no matter whether you live in the smallest tribe in Africa or in Melbourne or wherever, it doesn't matter what religion or persuasion you are, He commands everyone, everywhere, to repent of their sin.

He's Lord over all people. He commands everyone to repent. It means that everyone is culpable for their own sin. Right? If you get to the end of your life and you've rejected Jesus, that's your problem and it's your eternal damnation that you'll pay out because of your own sin and culpability.

Finally, everyone here on the upside has an opportunity to respond to Jesus' universal offer of salvation. Let's not forget Jesus in all of this.

[44 : 08] In a bid to figure out all this theological stuff, all these details, let's not forget who we're worshipping. Let's not forget who died on the cross in the first place. It's easy to make the atonement this kind of cold, theological, otherworldly, kind of philosophical thing.

Jesus' death on the cross is beautiful. It's valuable. It's the greatest treasure we could ever find. Finally, I'm going to leave you with a quote and it's the same one I'm going to leave you every week with.

This is the truth. This is what God is saying to all of us tonight. No matter where you land on this issue, Romans 10, 9 to 13. If you're not a believer, hear this now and respond.

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

for one believes with the heart and so is justified and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, no one who believes in him will be put to shame.

[45 : 25] There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, no distinction between race, no distinction between sex, no distinction between where you come from, how much money you have in the bank, what car you drive, there is no distinction.

The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. That in mind, let me pray for us.

Father, a lot of this is heavy sledding. It's tough work God and so we pray Lord that you would be moving now to help us to get clarity on this issue.

Help us to come to a knowledge of the truth on this issue. Lord, I know that your spirit has to move in order for this to come. So I pray that you would bring that about, that we would be encouraged that you are in control, that we would be encouraged, that it's not up to us as sinners to determine our destiny, but that you have us in the palm of your hand.

Father, I pray that rather than extinguishing our desire to do evangelism, that you would enable us to see this and to pray and to preach and to proclaim all the more intensely because of it.

[46 : 53] Father, I pray that we would glorify you tonight and every day of our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to have an opportunity now to respond to God's word, this picture of a great glorious God who is sovereign over all things.

We're going to do that by singing a couple of songs now. So please stand with me and we'll praise God together. and , .