

# The Nature of the Atonement

*Why and for Whom did Christ die?*

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Alright, I am going to start now so I don't go way overtime. This is the seminar on understanding the atonement and I'm Phil Johnson. There are a few sets of notes up here left if any of you want them. Again, these notes don't exactly follow what I'm going to say today because, I'm going to focus on the extent of the atonement only in this hour, but it'll give you, at least I think, there's some blank space on the back side where you can take notes.

This is my third year in a row to do a seminar on the atonement. Last year and the year before I focused mostly on the nature of the atonement: the fact that Christ's death was a substitution for the death of sinners. And I stressed the importance of understanding the vicarious, penal aspects of the atonement against the teaching that Christ's death was more of an example than a substitution.

But someone suggested to me that this year I should focus primarily on the extent of the atonement because that's the issue most of you are raring to argue about. So, I'm going to do that, and that means that the notes you have up here are not really applicable to the material we're to cover today but you can take the notes on the backside of your sheet of paper.

Now first let me say at the beginning that I do believe the issue of the *nature* of the atonement is a far more important question than most of the narrow questions people like to debate about surrounding the *extent* of the atonement. And there are plenty of wrong teachings about the *nature* of the atonement

floating around the evangelical world. So I hope you'll read the notes from last year because I think it has some important stuff in it.

But my seminar this year assumes that most of you who would come to a conference like this would be essentially in agreement on the substitutionary nature of the atonement. I hope we would all agree that Christ's death was a vicarious, penal satisfaction. He literally paid the price for our sins. He bore the wrath of God on our behalf. He took what we deserve and He freely gives us blessings that only He deserves. And we who are united with Him are united with Him in such a way that His death paid the price of our sins and His righteousness now covers us like a garment of absolute perfection. I hope we would all agree on that, whether you're a Calvinist, an Arminian, or one of those people who thinks, naively, that you can hover somewhere in between.

So, assuming that we essentially agree on the nature of the atonement let's talk about the extent of it. And I'll tell you up front, as I did in the last hour, if you were there, I'm a Calvinist. I am a Five Point Calvinist. And I affirm without reservation the canons of the Synod of Dort. Dort was the Reformed Church Council that met in Holland in the early 1600's to consider five objections that had been brought against the Reformed Church by some followers of James Arminius. That's why they're called Arminians. And the name of the council, the Synod of Dort, comes from Dordrecht, which was the name of the city in Holland where these men convened. And the Synod of Dort issued a document that covers five heads of doctrine. They are the Five Points of Calvinism. Now you understand, I hope, that the, it's a misnomer, really, to label them the "Five points of Calvinism." Calvin never organized these ideas under those five points. It was the Arminians who were responsible for the five points. Those were actually five points of Reformed doctrine the Arminians objected to and spelled out in a formal document that they called the Remonstrance. And so they were called the Remonstrants. And the Synod of Dort was convened to examine those five objections and make a ruling on them. And so the Five points of Calvinism are really merely an answer to the five points the Arminians originally tried to make an issue of.

Now I don't know who arranged the five points of Calvinism under the acronym TULIP. I don't know who was the first person to do that. It's perfectly

appropriate I guess, because, given the fact that Dordrecht was in Holland. But I'm not particularly fond of the way those terms are listed in order to make them fit the acronym. Let me quickly review the five points for you and I'll explain why I think TULIP is maybe not the best way to state the five points. It's certainly the best way to remember them but it's not necessarily a good way to understand them.

**T - Now, the first of the five points is Total Depravity.**

That term is ok I suppose but it often misleads people. When we say sinners are totally depraved we don't mean they are as bad as they can be. We mean that sin has infected every aspect of their humanity—Their mind, their emotions, their will, their body, their soul, and on and on and on. Some people prefer to use the expression Total Inability to stress the fact that sinners are so infected with sin that cannot please God according to Romans 8, verse 8. And it's in that sense that depravity is total. That's what we mean by this. It's a total inability to do any good that earns God's favor. It affects the whole person in every aspect of our being: what we do, what we think, what we love, what we choose. All of that is tainted with sin. That's what Total Depravity means. But Total Depravity does not mean that all sinners are as utterly evil as they could possibly be; it just means that no part of their being is free from the taint of sin: Total Depravity.

**U - Now Unconditional Election, the second point of Calvinism, is a pretty good term for the second point.**

Unconditional Election. This means that God chooses who will be saved. And He does it not because of anything good He finds in the sinner. Ephesians 1: verse 4, "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Election is unconditional in that sense. It's, it's not based on some foreseen act of faith. It's not based on any good thing in the person whom God chooses but it's based solely on the good pleasure of God's choice. Ephesians 1, verse 11: "We are predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." We don't elect ourselves by responding to the Gospel. But God elected us before time began and that's why we were

drawn to Christ. Jesus told the disciples in John 15, verse 16, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” That’s Unconditional Election. God made the choice, not us. His choice was determinative. Not that we had no choice in the matter. Not that we didn’t make a choice but that God’s choice is the one that determines things.

### **L - Limited Atonement is another unfortunate term.**

That’s the doctrine we’re going to talk about today, but let me just say, first of all, that I prefer the term Particular Redemption. But that has two advantages, Particular Redemption. First, it messes up the TULIP acronym. And second, it has a kind of quaint, old-fashioned sound to it. You say that, that expression, Particular Redemption, and the average person in pew won’t have a clue what you’re talking about. So for the purposes of our seminar this afternoon, I’m going to stick with the expression, Limited Atonement, even though I don’t like that term and I don’t think it communicates the main idea behind the Calvinist’s doctrine of Particular Redemption. Everyone including the rankest Arminian believes the atonement is limited in some sense, unless you want to opt for a universal atonement where everyone without exception will ultimately be saved. And I’m assuming all of us would agree that a completely unlimited atonement would be patently unbiblical. And I’ll give you the Biblical basis for Limited Atonement as we sort of get into the subject.

### **I-Irresistible Grace, the next point of Calvinism, is another expression that misleads some people.**

I mentioned in my last seminar that Dave Hunt suggests that if we believe God’s grace is irresistible then we’re saying that God does violence to the wills of those whom He draws to Christ. And the actual idea of this point, Irresistible Grace, is that God’s saving grace is always effectual. So I actually prefer to refer to grace as effectual rather than irresistible, but again that messes up the acronym too. Jesus said this in John 6, verse 37: “All whom the Father giveth me shall come to me.” That’s the truth of irresistible grace. That’s what we mean by it. It means that saving grace is always effectual. Those whom God chooses will all come to Christ. God will not fail to save those whom He elects.

**P-And finally, the last point of Calvinism, the P, the Perseverance of the Saints.**

This is another term that is frequently misunderstood but I still like it better than the alternatives. It's certainly better than the expression Eternal Security, which some people use to suggest, as John was saying this morning, that you can profess faith in Christ and then fall away from the faith but still be secure in your salvation. The Biblical doctrine of Perseverance teaches us that those who are in Christ will never fully and finally fall away—First John 2:19. But we persevere in the faith because God graciously keeps us there. “We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” 1 Peter 1:5. It's not that the saints have any inherent power in themselves to persevere but that God's grace sovereignly secures their perseverance.

I believe all five of those principles. Those are the five points of Calvinism and I would affirm them all. I'm a convinced, conscientious, unashamed, full Five Point Calvinist. And I say that to you so you know where I'm coming from before we get further into this issue.

**Now I also want to make a couple of comments to sort of set this issue of Limited Atonement in perspective before we go any further.**

1. First, this issue is the most difficult of all the five points of Calvinism to understand and accept. Probably four out of five Calvinists will tell you that this is last of the five points they came to grips with. This is not an easy issue and we shouldn't pretend that it is.

2. But second, don't imagine that there is just one view for the Limited Atonement position and another view for the Unlimited Atonement position. As if there are two polar opposites here and they compete against each other. This is not really an either/or position even among Calvinists. And in fact, historically, the most intense debates about Limited Atonement have come over the past 400 years, they've all been intramural debates between Calvinists,

among Calvinists. There are at least three major divisions of Calvinists. There are the high Calvinists. They have one opinion about how the atonement is limited; they tend to try to say it's limited in its sufficiency. You've got the moderate Calvinists and you've got the low Calvinists and they all have different views and there are many shades and degrees in between. In fact, I doubt if you could find any two Calvinists who agree completely with one another on every text and every nuance related to this verse. You may if you scoured the world find two somewhere but I bet if you could poll every Calvinist in this room you'd find that no two of us agree on every point and every particular related to this issue. There is not just one Calvinist position on limited atonement. There are many. And when you get into individual verses like Second Peter 2, verse 1, there is no such thing as THE Calvinist interpretation of that verse. There are at least six possible Calvinists' interpretations of it and if we have time at the end I'm going to give you three of them.

This whole issue of the extent of the atonement caused a huge debate between two separate Calvinist factions during the Marrow Controversy in Scotland in the 1700's. This was also one of the major issues Andrew Fuller contended with other Calvinistic Baptists about in the late 18th Century in England. It's been continual fodder for debate among Welsh Calvinists since the beginning of the 1700's. In fact, The Banner of Truth has recently republished an important book on this issue. I say republished I think that they're publishing the first English edition of this book, which is an older book called [The Atonement Controversy and Welsh Theological Literature and Debate: 1707-1841](#). Buy that one and keep it by your bed and you won't have any sleepless nights. Actually though it's quite a good book by Owen Thomas. It's a superb study of the various ways Calvinists understand limited atonement. And I recommend it heartily. It's really quite a good book. I hope they have some in the Book Shack here if they do you should get it.

Now, how to explain limited atonement continues to be a point of contention among Calvinists of various opinions. Some of you are Calvinists and I warn you now that you may not like everything I have to say about this issue today. But I would advise all of you, Calvinists and Arminians alike, to gain some of your understanding of these complex issues by reading the historical literature on this subject, rather than by simply tuning into Internet debates on this issue. I'm a little weary of those overzealous Calvinists on the Internet who treat everything as simplistically as possible. Always trying to outdo everyone to see

who can adopt the highest form of High Calvinism. And as a result, and you can actually see this trend if you watch Calvinist discussions on the Internet.

Modern Calvinist circles seem to be filled with guys who insist that Christ's death had no benefit whatsoever for anyone other than the elect and God's only desire with regard to the reprobate is to damn them period. Too many Calvinists embrace the doctrine of limited atonement, they finally see the truth of it but then they think, "Oh that's that." Christ died for the elect and in no sense are there any universal benefits in the atonement, so the atonement is limited to the elect in every sense and it has no relevance whatsoever to the non-elect. I think that's an extreme position and it's not supported by many of the classic Calvinist theologians and writers if you read carefully what Calvinists have said throughout history. I want to encourage you read Andrew Fuller and Thomas Boston. Read what people like Robert L. Dabney and William G. T. Shedd and B. B. Warfield and Charles Hodge wrote on the subject of the atonement. Read John Owen too, but don't imagine that John Owens's book The Death of Death in the Death of Christ represents the only strain of Calvinist thought on the issue. It doesn't. In fact, far from it.

If you begin to study this issue in depth you will quickly discover that the classic Calvinist view on the extent of the atonement is a lot less narrow and a lot less cut and dried than the typical seminary student Calvinist on the Internet wants to admit. Historic Calvinism, as a movement has usually acknowledged that there are universal aspects of the atonement. Calvin himself had a view of the extent of the atonement that was far more broad and, and far more extensive than the average Calvinist today would care to recognize. And I'll show you some of that if time allows.

And, while I'm making concessions to the other side let me also admit, that this is one issue where historical theology is not overwhelmingly on the side of the Calvinists. And until really some of the later Catholic scholastics raised this question and began to debate it some time in the Middle Ages, most of the church fathers and most of the leading theological writers in the church, both orthodox and heretical, most of them assumed that Christ died for all of humanity and that was the end of that.

Now there are some exceptions. Theodoret of Cyrus, who lived in 393 to 466. He wrote this about Hebrews 9:27-28. He said quote: “It should be noted, of course, that Christ bore the sins of many, not all, and not all came to faith. So He removed the sins of the believers only.” Ambrose, the great writer, who lived 339-397, said this: “Although Christ suffered for all, yet He suffered for us particularly, because He suffered for the Church.” And Jerome, 347-420, a contemporary of Augustine, he wrote this about Matthew 20:28, Jerome said: “He does not say that He gave His life for all but for many, that is, for all those who would believe.”

Those are classic Calvinist statements coming from some of the church fathers and you can find little remarks like that here and there among the church fathers. I could actually cite more. But for the most part the church fathers, when they wrote about the atonement, they treated it as universal. We’ll acknowledge that up front.

Now my friend Curt Daniel who is here this afternoon, and who is far more qualified than I am to teach on the history of Calvinism has written an excellent resource that I want to recommend to you. It’s a large, hardbound syllabus called The History and Theology of Calvinism. It is the best single resource on Calvinism I know. It’s filled with copious quotations and wonderful insight. He covers in it, in a kind of extensive outline format every major doctrine related to Calvinism. And in the process he gives a thorough overview of Calvinist history. I love historical theology and in fact this syllabus was practically my first introduction to the subject more than a decade ago. And it remains a favorite resource of mine. I think there are some copies in the bookstore. I asked them to order it, and for those of you who might be interested in obtaining one I don’t think there are many left. But I recommend it enthusiastically. Curt earned his Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh. With a massive doctoral dissertation on John Gill and Hyper-Calvinism. So he probably knows more about the doctrine and history of Calvinism than the rest of us put together. And in his syllabus on Calvinist history he has at least three chapters on the extent of the atonement. His view of the atonement is probably, if anything, a little broader than mine. That’s ok. My favorite theological writer of all time is Robert L. Dabney. And Dabney takes a broader view than I do too. We’re all committed Calvinists. As I said, we as Calvinists don’t

necessarily agree on the particulars of how to interpret this or that verse, or how to define this or that benefit of the atonement. In fact, one of the things Curt Daniel's syllabus shows definitively is that among various strains of Calvinists, there are scores of differing opinions on how to explain the universal and particular aspects of the atonement. So I want to underscore that for you again. I want to emphasize for those of you who think there is only one narrow Calvinistic way to understand how the atonement is limited, this is a considerably more complex issue than most Calvinists realize.

Anyway, in his syllabus, Curt Daniel points out that it was probably a 9<sup>th</sup> Century monk named Gottschalk, who was the first to make a major point out of the extent of the atonement. Who limited the work of Christ to the elect alone. And then during the Middle Ages Catholic scholastics debated the question. And they concluded that Christ had died for the whole world, and for everyone and not just for the elect alone. Even in the Reformation this issue was not really part of the debate between the Roman Catholics and the Reformers. And in fact, all of the major Reformers, including John Calvin, from time to time, made statements that seem to affirm a universal atonement. Calvin's statements on it, if you put them all together and read them is surprisingly ambiguous. I would class him as a Five Point Calvinist and I think there's a very good book by Paul Helm entitled I think, Calvin and the Calvinists where he shows pretty persuasively that Calvin was a Five Point Calvinist. But not every Calvin scholar agrees.

Here's one reason why I think Calvin did hold to the doctrine of particular redemption. Writing on 1st John 2:2 Calvin said this: "Under the word *all* he does not include the reprobate but he refers to *all* who would believe and those who were scattered throughout various regions of the earth. So, on 1st John 2:2, I think Calvin took a pretty clear stance in favor of limited atonement. Still, this was not a matter for explicit debate until Theodore Beza raised the issue in the generation after Calvin died. And it wasn't formally canonized as orthodox Calvinist doctrine, limited atonement, until the Synod of Dordt published their canons and decrees at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

All of that is to say that of all of the five points of Calvinism this one should probably be the last one and the least to be contentious. This should be the last

one to provoke debate and unfortunately that's not the case. This is the most despised and controverted of all the teachings of Calvinism, and even among Calvinists there's a lot of debate about it.

Now you may be thinking, well if you admit those things: that this wasn't held by any of the church fathers and only loosely held by Calvin himself, why make an issue out of it at all? And my answer is because I think there is an important issue of truth in seeing how the atoning work of Christ applies to the elect in a particular sense by the design and the purpose of God. And that's the issue. It amazes me how many people misunderstand what the real point is. The average person thinks this debate is all about the sufficiency and the value of Christ's atoning work but that is not it at all. I read this in the last hour, I'll read it again. Second head, Article 3 from canons of the Synod of Dordt, remember that this the main manifesto of Five Point Calvinism, and it says this: "The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins and it is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world." That's the Calvinist manifesto and virtually all-true Calvinists believe that. The sacrifice of Christ was of infinitely sufficient value. If it had been God's design that one sacrifice would have been infinitely sufficient to atone for the sins of every person who ever lived, most Calvinists would not argue with that statement. If one more person had been elect Christ would not have had to suffer more than He did. No, not one more blow from the Roman scourge would have been necessary, not one more thorn would have been added to his crown. He would not have needed to spend one more moment under God's wrath in order to atone for more sinners. Even if God had sovereignly chosen to save every person who ever lived, and not only that but if Christ had intended to redeem Adam alone and leave the rest of us to bear the curse and punishment of our sin in eternal hell Christ would not have had to suffer any less than He did. There is a sense in which the sufferings of Christ, the sufferings He bore, and the atonement He made constituted an infinite price. And by definition, if it's infinite, it can't be diminished or added to in any respect. That's what infinite means.

So when we say Christ's death was a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world but it's efficient only to save the elect we are affirming precisely what the canons of the Synod of Dordt explicitly state: "that the death of Christ was of infinite value and dignity"--that's their words. Now I should pause and say that there are indeed a few Calvinists who hold to a limited

sufficiency atonement view. They balk at understanding the atonement as infinite in value. In Tom Nettles book, By His Grace and for His Glory, Nettles argues for a different view. And by the way, that's an excellent book on Baptist history. It traces the roots of Calvinist doctrine throughout Baptist history. And I recommend the book even though I would disagree pretty strongly with Nettles on this point about the atonement. Nettles has been influenced by John Gill and other ultra-high Calvinists who argue against the sufficiency of the atonement, and he's not alone in his opinion but it is the opinion of a rather small minority if you examine the mainstream of Calvinist opinion as a whole.

Nettles' argument is this: if Christ's death was substitutionary then He died for particular sins of particular people. And if He died for particular sins than He didn't die for other sins than those. And so Nettles seems to see such a one for one equivalence between our sins and the price of their atonement that he denies the sufficiency of the atonement to save anyone but those for whom it was designed to save. Nettles apparently holds the view that some would call equivalentism. It's the notion that Christ suffered just so much, a finite amount, in relation to the sins of the elect. Now it pains me to disagree with Tom Nettles because I have the utmost respect for him and his writings have been extremely helpful to me and to countless others who want to understand Calvinism's role in historic Baptist Theology. But on this issue I do disagree with him. And it needs to be said that his position stands in opposition to the Synod of Dordt and to most of mainstream historic Calvinism.

Now remember his basic argument is that if Christ's atonement was substitutionary than it had to be for particular sins and therefore it had to be finite. I would argue that if the atonement Christ offered is substitutionary than it had to be of infinite value for two reasons:

1. One, in the words of the Synod of Dordt, "because the person who submitted to the punishment on our behalf was not only really man and perfectly holy but also the only begotten Son of God, the same eternal, and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit." In other words, the person who died on the cross was infinite in His glory and His goodness and therefore it was an infinite sacrifice. That's the first reason.

2. Second, the price of each person's sin is infinite wrath. And if the price of atonement is infinite then the atonement itself in order to be accepted had to be of infinite value. In other words, if you had to suffer the price of your own sins you would spend eternity in hell and still you would not exhaust the infinite displeasure of God against sin. There's an infinite punishment for sin. And that infinite wrath is the very thing Christ bore on the cross. So if Christ's death was not sufficient to atone for all than it wasn't sufficient to atone for even one. Because atonement for sin even for one person demands an infinite price. Now again the overwhelming majority of Calvinists would agree with that. That is exactly what the canons of the Synod of Dordt say. That is mainstream historic Calvinism.

So the real debate between Calvinists and Arminians is not about the sufficiency of the atonement. The real issue under debate is the design and the application of the atonement. And the question we are asking is not merely, for whom did Christ die? The real question is for whom did God ordain the atonement? In other words, the real issue in the extent of the atonement debate comes down to the very same issue as election itself. Did God purpose to save specific people or was He trying indiscriminately to save as many people as possible? What was His intent? What was His design? And if you accept the truth of election I can't understand why you would balk at the truth that the atonement had specific people in view. So that's the real question not was Christ's death sufficient to save all but what was the design and the goal of the atonement? What did God intend to do through it? Did He intend to save specific people through Christ's work on the cross? And if you answer that question, yes, you've affirmed the principle behind the Calvinistic position.

Here's an even more important question. Will all of God's purposes for sending Christ to die ultimately be accomplished? Did God intend something by the atonement that will not come to pass? Is there any purpose in Christ's dying that will ultimately be frustrated? And if you ask those questions it puts the importance of the whole issue in a totally different, clearer light. And I believe that Christ's atoning work on the cross ultimately accomplishes precisely what God designed it to accomplish, no more no less. If you believe God is truly sovereign you must ultimately come to that position. The fruits of the atonement are no less than what God sovereignly intended. God is not going to

be frustrated throughout all eternity because He was desperately trying to save some people who just could not be persuaded. If that's your view of God than your God isn't really sovereign. Pharaoh fulfilled exactly the purpose God raised him up to fulfill. God is not wringing His hands in despair over Pharaoh's rebellion and unbelief.

But on the other hand, Christ's atoning work accomplishes no more than God intended it to accomplish. If benefits accrue to non-believers, reprobate people, because of Christ's death, than it is because God designed it that way. If Christ's dying means that the whole, the judgment of the whole world is postponed, than unregenerate people reap the blessings and the benefits of that delay. They reap the benefits and the blessings of common grace through the atonement. And if that's the case than that is exactly what God designed. It didn't happen by accident. And for that very reason it is my position and the position of most Calvinists throughout history that some benefits of the atonement are universal and some benefits of the atonement are particular and limited to the elect alone.

Now one of the points I made in my seminar last year was this: You cannot ultimately escape the limited and particular aspects of the atonement if you believe Christ's death on the cross was substitutionary. Let me illustrate. Did Christ suffer for Pharaoh's sins, in Pharaoh's place, and in his stead? Certainly not. Because when Christ died on the cross Pharaoh was already in hell suffering for his own sin. Those who suffer in hell all suffer for their own sin. Christ does not suffer on their behalf and in their stead in the same way He did for people who are ultimately redeemed and escape hell. That's a rather obvious point if you think about it. Substitutionary atonement and the substitutionary aspects of the atonement are ultimately something that belong to the elect alone. There's no escaping it. He bore their punishment so that they will not have to. If He had suffered vicariously for the sins of Judas in the same way He suffered in Peter's place then Judas wouldn't be suffering right now for his own sins. That's the inevitable ramification of vicarious atonement.

But at the same time, there are universal aspects of the atoning work of Christ and historic Calvinism has always recognized this. There is a legitimate sense in which Christ is set forth as the Savior of the whole world. The Savior of all

men, Lord of all. And the only one all men everywhere are commanded to believe in. And there's another sense in which He is especially the Savior of those who believe. That's exactly the meaning of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:10, which is the verse that I think, better than any in Scripture, settles this whole question. First Timothy 4:10, "We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe." I think it was R.B. Kuiper, a classic Five Point Calvinist, who said he preferred to speak of Christ's dying "specially for the elect rather than only for them." And that seems to be a good Biblical perspective. To those who believe Christ is Savior in a special and particular sense. His death had a particular reference to them in the ultimate design of God. And that is what Calvinists mean when they speak of particular redemption.

Curt Daniel gives a helpful illustration of how this is true in his syllabus. He points to the parable in Matthew 13:44, where a man finds a treasure hid in a field and Jesus says this: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for the joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." He buys the field and therefore he buys the treasure. The treasure was the object and the aim of his purchase. The treasure was the reason for his great joy. The treasure was the reason he made this deal in the first place but he did not only purchase the treasure, he purchased the whole field. That's a good way, I think, to look at the atoning work of Christ. Listen to Romans 14:9, "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." Now notice what that verse is saying; because of Christ's death and resurrection, because of His atoning work, He is Lord of all men in a special way. And that includes elect and otherwise. Dead and living. His death on the cross purchased the right for Him as perfect man and perfect God, to rule as Lord over all the earth: over both the dead and the living, over the redeemed as well as the reprobate. That's also the same message you read in Philippians 2:8-10. Listen. "Being found and fashioned as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. Wherefore, [that is for this reason], because He was obedient unto the death of the cross, [because of His atonement] God has also highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven of things in earth and things under the earth." There is a very clear statement that there is a universal ramification of the atonement. Christ's death, in some sense, purchased Him an exalted position of Lordship over all. And so there's a true sense in which He purchased the whole world in order to get the treasure, the Church.

Now meanwhile, there are certain benefits of the atonement that accrue directly to the non-elect, the reprobate. Spurgeon said it well in a sermon entitled “Good Cheer for Many that Fear”, Spurgeon said this: “We believe that by His atoning sacrifice, Christ bought some good things for all men and all good things for some men. And that when He died He had a definite purpose in dying and that His purpose will certainly be effected.”

Now what specifically, did Spurgeon have in mind when He said that “Christ bought some good things for all men?” Well clearly, he was speaking of common grace, the goodness of God that is shown to all men. The common blessings of life. This is the grace that keeps the evil in the world from being as bad as it can possibly be. Common grace is the grace that permits all sinners to live and enjoy life under a temporary reprieve from just judgment and justice even though they’re worthy of instant damnation. Common grace delays that. Common grace is also the grace that pleads tenderly and earnestly with sinners to repent and to be reconciled to God, even though they’re hearts are set against Him. And according to Matthew 5:44-45, these common grace blessings are tokens of God’s genuine love. Scripture does not hesitate to apply the expression “love” here. For those of you who may be my Calvinist brethren out there who balk at saying that, “God loves the whole world.” Scripture doesn’t balk at that. This goodness that He shows even to the reprobate is a sincere compassionate love even though it’s not the same eternal redemptive love that God has set on the elect from all eternity. It’s love of a different sort but it’s true love. It’s genuine love. It’s heartfelt compassion. It’s real goodness. And if you think about it you’ll realize that all of the good things God gives us, all the blessings of common grace, all of them are made possible by the atonement. Because if God had no intention to save anyone, ever, He would have instantly damned the whole human race the minute Adam sinned. That’s what He did with the angels that fell. They were cast out of heaven at once and no atonement will ever be made for the sins of any angel. They were immediately judged and deposed without any grace period. But by contrast, the human race, fallen though we are, for the most part, lives and enjoys life in a world where even though we are under the curse of sin we’re blessed to an amazing degree with a providential good God gives us. We see beauty. We enjoy the taste of our food. John MacArthur always says, “God could’ve, if He wanted to, made all our food taste like sand.” But He was good to us. He gave us things we would enjoy. He gave us all things richly to enjoy. We laugh and experience joy and appreciate love and we relish the good things of life and all of those

things are ultimately made possible by the atoning work of Christ. None of them would have been possible, at all, if Christ had not intended to die to save sinners. God would have damned us instead. And even the reprobate, even the non-elect benefit from Christ's death in that way. The crumbs that fall from the table, God spreads for His elect, are a veritable feast for the reprobate who experience all of the blessings of common grace. That is a side benefit of the cross. And it's an expression of God's goodness towards them.

Some ultra-high Calvinists will inevitably try to argue that common grace is not really an expression of love or goodness towards the non-elect. It's not well meant mercy. It's not bona fide goodness because it's ultimate effect they say, is the damnation of the reprobate. It just increases their damnation.

I disagree. While it is true that in the words of Romans 2:4, the reprobate are guilty when they "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God ought to provoke them to repentance." And that does increase their guilt. I don't think the ultimate effect; the overall effect of common grace is to increase anyone's damnation. Because one of the ways God manifests common grace is by restraining the sin of the reprobate. Most people are not as bad as they could be. Not as bad as they would be if God left them to themselves without any grace whatsoever. So on the whole, God's common grace will decrease rather than increase the severity of their guilt.

Robert Candlish said this, he said quote: "The entire history of the human race, from the apostasy to the final judgment is a dispensation of forbearance in respect to the reprobate in which many blessings, physical and moral, affecting their characters and destinies forever, accrue even to the heathen. These come to them through the mediation of Christ, and coming to them now must have been designed for them from the beginning."

R. B. Kuiper said something similar, he writes quote: "The blessings of common grace, although resulting only indirectly from the atonement, were most surely designed by God to result from the atonement. The design of God

in the atoning work of Christ pertain primarily and directly to the redemption of the elect, but indirectly and secondarily it included all the blessings of common grace.” And then he quotes Louis Berkoff’s statement, he says, “It’s not too sweeping for Lewis Berkoff to say that, “All the natural man receives other than the curse and death is an indirect of the redemptive work of Christ, is an indirect result of the work of Christ.” That’s Berkoff. And Kuyper adds, “God planned it thus.”

By the way I want to recommend strongly, R.B. Kuiper’s book on this whole subject. It’s titled For Whom Did Christ Die? And unfortunately it’s been out of print for many years but I’m lobbying to try to find a publisher who will reprint it. In my opinion it is the best single resource on the issue of limited atonement. And if you ever see it a second hand bookshop, it’s well worth buying even if you have to sell a volume of Spurgeon to get it.

Kuiper identifies several universal benefits of the atonement, more than just common grace. For example he says, and I agree: “That the universal, free offer of salvation is grounded in the atonement’s infinite sufficiency.” Let me read you some of Kuiper’s remarks on this. Remember he’s writing as an unapologetic Five Point Calvinist. He says this, “At no time is the Gospel confined to any nation or for that matter, to any particular class of men. It’s intended for Jews, Greek, Barbarians, and Scythians—Colossians 3:11. It comes to both the regenerate and the unregenerate, the elect and the non-elect. To say that such invitations as Isaiah 55:1 [you know ‘Ho everyone that thirsteth’...and He quotes the whole verse and Matthew 11:28: “Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden...] to say that those are intended only for those who having been born-again by the grace of the Holy Spirit have come to realize their lost condition is to limit the meaning of Scripture without warrant.” He says: “Let it be said emphatically that the Reformed Theology does not teach, as some allege, that the Gospel invitation is only for the elect and the regenerate.”

I wish we had time to delve into this larger issue of the free offer of the Gospel, but that is a huge issue beyond the scope of this seminar. Let me just say in passing, however, that I think John Murray and Ned Stonehouse have dealt with these issues very well in their booklet titled The Free Offer of the Gospel.

That document is available on the World Wide Web. You can do a search for it at Google. It's also in the 4-volume set of The Works of John Murray, published by The Banner of Truth. You ought to read that if you are concerned about whether the doctrine of limited atonement would restrict the preaching of the Gospel to the elect alone or hinder us from calling people indiscriminately to Christ. If that's your understanding of the meaning of limited atonement you need to read this book because limited atonement does not mean that.

There is no necessary contradiction between God's eternal sovereign design to save the elect and His sincere pleas for the reprobate to repent. There's no contradiction between that. And remember, when we preach the Gospel, according to 2 Corinthians 5 it is our *duty to plead* with all who hear the message that they be reconciled to God. Paul says, 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, *we beg you*, [he says], in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And if your not proclaiming the Gospel that way your not a good ambassador for Christ. And if you are a Calvinist, and you hesitate to extend God's offer of mercy, freely to all who hear the Gospel, if you recoil from inviting men, no, *pleading* with them, to repent and be reconciled to God than you're not a good Calvinist. Calvin himself said this in his commentary on Ezekiel 18, verse 23, that verse says: "'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die,' saith the Lord God, 'and not that he should return from his ways and live?'" Calvin says this about that verse, "God desires nothing more earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return to the way of safety. And for this reason not only is the Gospel spread abroad in the world but God wished to bear witness through all ages how inclined He is to pity. What the prophet now says is very true, that God wills not the death of the sinner because God meets him of his own accord. And is not only prepared to receive all who fly to Him for pity, but He calls them towards Him with a loud voice when He sees how they are alienated from all hope of safety." Calvin says, "We hold, then, that God wills not the death of the sinner since He calls all, equally to repentance and promises Himself, prepared to receive them if they only seriously repent."

The variety of Calvinism that balks at affirming God's free offer of salvation indiscriminately to all who hear the Gospel is out of step with Calvin and out of step with the mainstream of Calvinist history. By the way this is explicitly stated in the canons of the Synod of Dordt. Listen to the Second head, Article

5, it says this quote: “The promise of the Gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ, crucified, shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously, and without distinction to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the Gospel.” That’s the Calvinist manifesto.

So, to sum up, unbelievers receive a number of benefits from the atonement: Delayed judgment, All the blessings of common grace, The free offer of salvation through the Gospel. Those are universal effects of Christ’s atoning work and that is why Charles Hodge, the great Calvinist theologian said this, “There is a sense therefore in which Christ died for all. And there is a sense in which He died only for the elect.” Curt Daniel suggests that Calvinists ought to say, not that Christ died only for the elect but rather that He died especially for the elect. I agree and I think we would all prefer the words of 1 Timothy 4:10, “He is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe.”

Now so far most of what I’ve said has, is more likely raised the hackles of my Calvinist brethren than it is to upset any of you Arminian guys. But now let me turn my guns on the Arminians. I want to show you biblically why I believe there is a special and specific reference to the elect in the atoning work of Christ. Again as 1 Timothy 4:10 plainly says: “Christ is the Savior of all men” but He is not the Savior of all men equally. He did not die for each and every individual alike. “I am the good Shepherd,” Jesus said in John 10:11, “and the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” And the context makes His meaning inescapable. The good Shepherd does not die for the goats in the same way. He doesn’t die for the wolves like He dies for the sheep. Verse 15 He says, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” And in the Apostle Paul’s speech to the elders of Ephesus, Acts 20:28, he says this: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which The Holy Ghost has made you overseers to feed the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood.” It was the Church that Christ purchased with His blood. They, the church, not the grievous wolves that were threatening the Church but the people of God, His elect. They were object of Christ’s affection and their salvation was the main reason for which He died. And the benefits that accrue to the reprobate are just secondary effects of that.

Here's the real issue in the atonement. Now in what sense did Christ purchase the Church? In Ephesians 5 Paul uses language that evokes the imagery of a marriage price. Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up for her." Not for her enemies, but for her. So Christ bought the Church with His own blood. For what reason, Ephesians 5:26-27, "that He might sanctify her and having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present to Himself the Church and all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she should be holy and blameless."

Those for whom Christ died He loves with the highest and purest kind of love. It is a particular love. Its closest earthly parallel is the love of a husband for his wife. And it's a special love. It's not dispensed indiscriminately to everyone alike. It's reserved only for the bride, this love. In fact what do we call a man who shares conjugal love with his neighbor and does not reserve it exclusively for his wife? We call him an adulterer. What would you call someone who indiscriminately showed every woman the intense ardent affection men reserve only for their wives? We would call him a philanderer. Christ's love for His Church is pure. It's more tender, more personal, and an infinitely greater love than the love of a husband for his wife. And in fact if you heard my seminar critiquing Dave Hunt's book against Calvinism last hour you may have heard me say this but I'm going to say it again. One of the worst things of all about Dave Hunt's position is His insistence that if God is truly loving then He's obligated to love all men equally with the same kind of love. There is nothing obligatory about Christ's love for the Church. He loves them because God chose them and gave them to Him. He died for them in a particular sense.

In fact listen to Curt Daniel's notes on this, he writes this: "The key to the analogy of Christ and the husband is the husband dying for his bride. To understand this we need to understand the Hebrew concept of marriage. First, the man and the woman were betrothed to one another. This may have occurred even before either of them were born. Their parents may have arranged the betrothal. But from the moment of the betrothal they were in a sense, married. Nothing except death or divorce could legally prevent the marriage itself. But before the actual marriage could occur there had to be an exchange, as it were. The father of the bride provided a dowry. The groom provided the marriage price and in that sense the groom bought his bride even though he was already legally obliged to marry her. And then at the appointed time they came together as man and wife." Curt Daniel says, "This is a perfect type of Christ and the Church. The elect were given to Christ by God the Father and Christ was given

to us by the Father. But Christ the groom had to pay the marriage price for His bride. How did He do this? Well, because of our sins the price was death. In other words Christ had to redeem us before He could take us as His bride. Therefore” Curt Daniel says, “Christ gave Himself for the elect in death. The atonement purchased us for Him. And the order here is crucial. First, Christ loved the Church, this is election, Ephesians 5:25. Next, He paid the marriage price, this is the atonement, verse 25. Then He prepares her for the wedding. This is salvation applied, verse 26. Lastly, He presents her to Himself in marriage. This is the final consummation of our union and glorification, verse 27.” And Curt Daniel says: “The point is simply this, Christ died with a special intent for His betrothed that He did not have for the rest of mankind.”

And notice, that as a part of His mediatorial work, in His high-priestly prayer in John 17:9, Jesus said this: “I pray for them. I pray NOT for the world but for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine.” Now remember when Christ prayed that prayer He had already entered into the mediatorial office of the high priest and He expressly excluded the world at large from His high-priestly prayer. It seems clear from Scripture that Christ’s redemptive work had a special reference to his chosen people. When He prayed that prayer the work of atonement had begun. And He made it a point to exclude the world.

The Apostle Paul’s argument in Romans 8:32 is another significant passage. Look at this verse, just real quickly we’ll go through this. It says in Romans 8:32, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?” Now think through what Paul is saying here. This is a classic case of arguing from the greater to the lesser. He’s saying if God delivered Christ to die for us all, and that expression “us all” is clearly a reference to Christians. He says if God gave us Christ, which is the best He had to give, how could He ever withhold any lesser gift from us? So if Christ died for us and the sense Paul was speaking of here is redemption, an effectual atonement. Christ died for us to obtain our salvation. If He did that, if He made effectual atonement for us, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Now think about this. If Christ died equally for all men, if God gave Christ to die equally, in the same sense for every single individual than He ultimately has to eventually give all people all things. Will He ever give all things to all people? Are all members of the human race going to be fellow heirs with Christ? Of course not. Remember what Spurgeon said: “Christ bought some good things for all men and all good things for some men.” The elect. Now what precisely are the all things Paul is speaking of here in Romans 8? The context makes it clear. It’s all things that pertain to salvation. He’s just gone

through a list of them, verse 29, “For whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. That He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, he also called. Whom He called, He justified. Whom He justified, He glorified.” So election, effectual calling, justification, and ultimately glorification, those are the “all things” Paul has in mind. If God gave Christ to die for us than He’s going to see our salvation through to the end. Titus 2:14, “he gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” Those statements cannot apply to the non-elect.

Did you realize that even your faith is a fruit of the atonement? You can’t take credit for your own faith. It’s a gift of God, Acts 6:14, Acts 26:18, Philippians 1:29, a host of other verses show this. Faith is a gift from God, it is a fruit of the atonement. It’s not something you have to add to the atoning work of Christ in order to make it efficacious. Even repentance, Scripture says is God’s work in us. Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:25. And again more verses teach this. In John 10:26 Jesus said this, listen to this one. He said: “You believe not because you are not of My sheep.” Now if Jesus were an Arminian He would have said: “You are not of My sheep because you believe not.” Instead He says: “But you believe not because you are not of My sheep.” You see the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep and their faith is part of His gift to them. Romans 5:11, “We delight in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by Whom we have now received the atonement.” In other words, the application of the atonement is God’s work, not ours. He not only made atonement on our behalf but He provided the means of faith by which we receive it. Don’t try to take credit for your own conversion. Every aspect of your salvation, including your repentance and your faith, all of it was bought and paid for by the blood of Christ and given to you by God through his grace.

So did Christ purchase faith for all men equally? Obviously not. As Curt Daniel says: “There is something in the atonement only for the elect and that something, that’s for only the elect brings all these blessings.” Matthew 20:28, “The Son of Man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” *Many*, not all equally. This is a theme, by the way that runs throughout all of the New Testament. There are far more verses that speak of the atonement and its application to “many” than there are those few texts that speak of the application of the atonement to the world. Why? Because this was the issue. Not the universal aspects of which there are some universal aspects of the atonement, but the particular ones. For the Church, for the many. Jesus said, Matthew 26:28: “This is my blood of the New Testament which is

shed for *many* for the remission of sins.” Romans 5:15: “The grace of God and the gift by grace which is by one man Jesus Christ has abounded unto *many*.” Romans 5:19, “By the obedience of One shall *many* be made righteous.” Hebrews 9:28: “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of *many*.” John 15:13-14, “Greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends.” And Jesus said “You are my friends.” Not the reprobate but those who do what He commands. They’re the ones He laid down His life for.

Now let me go back to the point I began with. If the atoning work of Christ is substitutionary it must be limited to those whom Christ actually redeems. The substitutionary aspects of it dictate that. In other words when you understand that the atonement is substitutionary you must see that in a certain way it applies to particular people. That is the inevitable ramification of vicarious atonement. I’m not sure why this doctrine of the extent of the atonement is such a controversial doctrine. It’s a point that certainly doesn’t warrant all the debate and bickering that it generates. In fact I’m sure that if people truly appreciated the substitutionary nature of the atonement they would not stumble so badly over the particularity of the atonement. It’s a simple matter really.

Here’s another way to say it. The aspects of the atonement that are substitutionary are inherently efficacious. The very reason I don’t have to fear condemnation in the final judgment is that Christ has already paid the price of my sin in full as my Substitute. And if He substituted effectually in that same sense for everyone then everyone would be saved. The atonement of Christ did not just make salvation possible. It actually purchased redemption for those who will be saved. And His dying on the cross made their ultimate salvation an absolute certainty, a done deal, because He paid the price of their redemption in full. He actually bought them. Paid their debt. Wiped it off the ledger. Sealed their pardon. Assured their eternal salvation. He didn’t merely put them in a position where salvation was possible if they made the right choice, He accomplished their salvation. He even graciously provides the faith that is the instrument by which the atonement is applied to them. He stood in their place and bore their sins. They’ll never have to pay a second time for what has been paid in full.

Now I would stop at this point and take questions but I know that at least two questions that you’re going to ask so I’m just going to go ahead and answer them. Let me look at a couple of key verses that seem to be the greatest problem texts for those who reject particular redemption.

First is 1 John 2:2 which says, “He’s the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” Now let’s just examine

what this means really quickly. 1 John 2:2. Remember first of all, that the Apostle is writing to a primarily Jewish audience. Galatians 2:9. The Apostle Paul describes his first meeting with the other apostles and he says this: “When James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go to the Heathen and THEY to the circumcision.” So, John was an Apostle to the Jews. And the recipients of his epistles, therefore, would have been predominantly, if not exclusively, Jewish. And so he reminds this Jewish audience that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for us Hebrews only, but also for the sins of Gentiles from every tongue and nation throughout the whole world. That’s the sense of what he’s saying. Unless you think that is a far fetched interpretation I want to show you that phrasing of 1 John 2:2 is an exact parallel of John 11, The Gospel of John chapter 11, verse 51 and 52. Turn with me there for a moment if you got your Bible out. And quickly here’s the background of this passage, John 11:51 and 52. The Jewish Rulers, the Sanhedrin, were meeting together to conspire against Jesus. Verse 49 says that: “One of them named Caiaphas, being a high priest that same year, said unto them “You know nothing at all nor considered that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and the whole nation perish not.”

Now Caiaphas was primarily concerned about the political situation. In 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jerusalem the Zealots were stirring up people against the Roman Rulers. They whipped messianic expectation to a fever pitch because they believed the Messiah was going to be a political leader who would overthrow Roman rule. So when Jesus comes on the scene with all the right credentials, with the ability to work miracles, with enormous crowds following Him and shouting “Hosanna,” all of Jerusalem was in an uproar. And the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Jewish elders, they were fearful because they ruled by Rome’s permission. And they knew that political strife would cost them their clout, their political clout. And frankly they didn’t care if Jesus was the true Messiah, they’d already made up their minds that this was not a good time for the Messiah to come on the scenes. And so Caiaphas, the wicked high priest who ultimately engineered the crucifixion, makes this little speech: “It’s expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not.” And John, The Gospel writer, the Apostle John, adds a commentary on that little statement because he says that even though Caiaphas didn’t intend it this way his words were an inspired prophecy Because he was in the office of high priest God used his lips to utter this prophecy about Christ saying that “one man should die for the people and that the nation perish not.” And notice what John says, verse 51, “And this he spoke not of himself, but being the high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation and not for

that nation only but that He should also gather together in one the children of God, who were scattered abroad.” And so that’s John, the Apostle John’s commentary on Caiaphas’ unwitting prophecy.

Now notice the parallel language between John 11:51 and 52 and our verse 1 John 2:2. John 11 says, “Jesus would die for the nation.” 1 John 2:2 says, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.” John 11 says, “And not for the nation only.” And 1 John 2:2 says, “And not for ours only.” Then both passages say, “But also.” John 11 says, “That He would gather together in one, the children of God scattered abroad.” 1 John 2:2 says, “He died for the whole world.” Both of the phrasing and the meaning, the sense, are exactly parallel there. So here again is what John is saying in 1 John 2:2. He’s saying: “Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for us Hebrews only, but also for the sins of Gentiles, from every tongue and nation throughout the whole world.” There is little doubt that is exactly how John’s initial audience would have understood this expression. “The whole world” means people of all kinds, including Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans, etc. As opposed to “ours only,” meaning the Jewish nation.

Also, look again before we get away from it, at the John 11 passage. What it says here is particularly significant. Christ died so that He might gather the children of God, the elect, from the whole world. Now there is a very clear statement of particular redemption for you. If John 11:52 were the only statement in all of Scripture about the atonement it would be undeniably clear that the atonement had a particular reference to the people of God. That’s exactly what it’s saying. And so understood in it’s Johanne context it seems unavoidable to take a Calvinistic interpretation of 1 John 2:2. This verse should not be read as if it were teaching that the propitiatory work of Christ applied to all individuals, everyone in the world equally. By the way, that whole view, we could do a word study if we had time, on propitiation. If you understand what propitiation means you, you have to know this cannot be a statement of absolute universality.

Now quickly one other verse, 2 Peter 2:1. It says this, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them. And bring upon themselves swift destruction.” Now, this verse poses no problem if you understand two things. First, the word ‘Lord’ in the phrase ‘the Lord that bought them’ is the Greek word *despotes*. Which speaks of sovereign Master and Lord. It’s strong emphasis on the, on the strength of God’s sovereignty and Lordship. If you understand this as a reference to Christ it could simply refer to what Philippians 2 verses 8 through 10 teaches that

Christ's death obtained, as we said, for Christ a position of absolute Lordship over all. And so these false teachers who were part of the field Christ purchased in order to obtain the hidden treasure of the Church were denying the Lord that bought them. That's one interpretation of the verse. However, this Greek word *despotes*, is almost never used in the New Testament to speak of Christ. It usually is an expression that applies to the Father. When it speaks of Christ as Lord usually the Greek text uses the word *kurios*. Now if these false teachers were Jewish false teachers, as it appears they were, than this might even be a reference to an Old Testament passage. Peter may have been paraphrasing Deuteronomy 32:5-6, which says this, "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children, they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus requite the Lord O foolish people and unwise? Is He not thy Father that hath bought thee?" And in that verse, that Old Testament verse, "thy Father that hath bought thee" plainly refers to the nation's temporal deliverance from Egypt. And so Peter may have simply meant that these false teachers were guilty of denying the God that had redeemed them from the nation of Egypt. On the other hand, here's a third possible interpretation. He may have been making the point simply that although these false teachers had identified with the people of God, claimed to trust Christ, their preaching was a denial of the God they claimed to have been redeemed by. So there are three possible Calvinistic interpretations of that verse, there are others. In any case, nothing in this verse permits us to conclude that Peter believed an atonement had been made equally for everyone in the world. This verse proves nothing against the Calvinistic doctrine of particular redemption.

Well that's a lot to cover. I've already taken more time than I'm supposed to take. Do we have time to open it up for questions? They're telling me not.

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