

# Sovereign Grace Series

## Lesson #9 – Christ’s Limited Atonement<sup>(2009)</sup>

### T U L I P

**File # Title**  
1412 Limited Atonement, is it Biblical?

**Applicable Sections of These Confessions:**  
**LBC of 1689** Ch 3, Item 6; Ch 8, Items 5, 8; Ch 11, Items 1, 3, & 4; Ch 29, Item 1.  
**AoP of 1858** VII – The Mediator “at whose right hand He ever liveth to make intercession for His people.”

This doctrine of “Limited Atonement” is a difficult doctrine to understand and accept. I only ask that you consider what Scripture says and you must decide before God what is the Truth.

### I. Definition -

Through Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, Christ endured the full penalty of the sins of God’s chosen and elect people.

Although Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary was not limited in degree or sufficiency in any way, nevertheless, it was a “particular” sacrifice for those whom God had chosen to be saved in eternity past, through faith in the atoning work of the Son.

This doctrine is also known as “**Particular Redemption**” or “**Definite Atonement**”.

#### The Logic of Limited Atonement:

1. If Christ died for all the sins of all the people, then there cannot be a Great White Throne Judgment and “Universalism” must be true. (Namely, that all men will be saved. God does not punish sin for which His Son, Jesus, has atoned for.)
2. Under Arminian theology, logically election by itself saved no one. The atoning work of Christ assured the actual salvation of God’s elect. In Arminian understanding, Christ did not secure the actual salvation of any man. (except perhaps the thief on the cross) Christ’s atoning work only provided a potential for men’s salvation.
3. If Christ died for the sins of all men, then most of His suffering was in vain. Those sins of those who would not come to Him would not be atoned for and Christ’s suffering for each of those sins was without effect.
4. If Christ’s passion on the cross was not definitely effectual, but depended on individual men’s choices, then He actually died for no one on the cross, because the final decision of who would be saved and who would not be saved had not been made yet. Man’s decision to belief is the final and determining decision for salvation.
5. Every sin that Christ died and paid for cannot be judged by God. Those sins are no longer in the mind of God.
6. The actual task of saving men and women for God’s glory was not completed on the cross at all, but only started to take effect at Pentecost when 3000 souls believed and were saved.

### II. Scriptural Basis of Limited Atonement – Also known as Particular Redemption or Definite Atonement.

The logic statements above are helpful, but in the end, you as a student of Scripture must decide for yourself, before a Holy God, what you believe about His role in our salvation. This decision should be informed by what Scripture says and not be affected by your preferences, your pre-suppositions, your tradition, my logic, etc.

Reference	Scripture (NASU)	Key Point
<b>Scripture states that Christ came not to enable men to be saved, but to actually save a specific set of men:</b>		
Matt 1:21	<i>She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save <u>His people</u> from their sins.</i>	<b>Effectual Atonement</b> Note: <u>His</u> people – those who belonged to Christ, given by the Father.
2 Cor 5:21	<i>He made Him who knew no sin <u>to be sin on our behalf, so that</u> we might become the righteousness of God in Him.</i>	<b>Specific Atonement</b> Note: All whose sin He took on became righteous.
Gal 1:3-4	<i>Grace to <u>you</u> and <u>peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus</u></i>	This peace is from God; Christ

	<i>Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave Himself for <u>our sins</u> so that He might rescue us from this present evil age <u>according to the will of our God and Father.</u></i>	died for forgiveness of the sins of “the Churches of Galatia” vs 1-2
<b>Christ’s redeeming work absolutely secured actual reconciliation for His specific people:</b>		
<b>Rom 5:10</b>	<i>For while we were enemies (lost) <u>we were reconciled</u> <sup>ainp</sup> to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.</i>	<b>ainp</b> - aorist indicative passive - an event that took place at a specific time in the past; toward us as passive participants.
<b>Col 1:21-22</b>	<i>And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, <u>in order to present you</u> before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach -</i>	“He”, the subject is Christ on the cross. (vs. 20) He is the active participant. We are being presented before Him.
<b>Christ secured our actual righteousness before God on the cross.</b>		
<b>Rom 5:8-9</b>	<i>But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we <u>were</u> <sup>pap</sup> yet sinners, <u>Christ died</u> <sup>aina</sup> for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be <u>saved from the wrath of God</u> through Him.</i>	<b>pap*</b> - present active participle - Active voice; present tense; We were active sinners. <b>aina*</b> - Aorist, indicative, active - Christ acted toward us in the past at a specific point in time.
* <i>The Complete Word Study New Testament with Greek Parallel</i> ; by <b>Spiros Zodhiates</b> ; Section: “Definitions of the Grammatical Categories”; pp. 862-868 with plasticized card “Codes to the Grammatical Notations” (WSNT)		
<b>Gal 3:13</b> <i>Having become - <u>aorist participle in middle voice</u> - (aptm)* See (WSNT)</i>	<i><u>Christ redeemed us</u> from the curse of the Law, <u>having become</u> <sup>aptm</sup> <u>a curse for us</u> - for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” -</i>	In sin, there is only one person cursed by God, the guilty sinner. We and Christ cannot both be sinful before God. My sin was judged by God on the cross. God knows nothing of my sin. It has been paid in full and His righteous wrath has been satisfied. God does know of the sins of the <b>reprobate</b> men and women of this world. God’s wrath toward the un-redeemed is not yet satisfied.
“The <b>Middle Voice</b> represents the subject as acting in some way upon himself or concerning himself. Since English does not have a middle voice, it is usually difficult to translate the Middle Voice into English.” <b>From (WSNT)</b>		
Definition of “ <b>Reprobate</b> ”. Is this too strong a word?? <i>New College Edition of the American Heritage Dictionary</i> ; 1978 p. 1104 “n. - - - 2. <i>Theology</i> . One who is predestined to damnation.” “adj. - - - 2. <i>Theology</i> . Rejected by God and without hope of salvation.”		
<b>Heb 9:12</b> <i>Having obtained - <u>aorist participle in middle voice</u> - (aptm)* See (WSNT)</i>	<i>- - and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, <u>having obtained</u> <sup>aptm</sup> <u>eternal redemption</u>.</i>	Christ did not obtain potential salvation of all, but rather obtained actual salvation for all who are His, given to Him by the Father. (See John 6:35-40 below.)
<b>Christ on the cross secured the gift of the Holy Spirit unto regeneration and sanctification.</b>		
<b>1 Cor 1:30</b>	<i>But <u>by His doing</u> you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the LORD.” Read: <b>Jer 9:23-24</b></i>	My being in Christ is a work of God, by His doing, by His action! My boast is only in God!
<b>Eph 1:3-4</b>	<i>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <u>who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ</u>, <sup>4</sup>just as <u>He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world</u>, that we would be <u>holy and blameless before Him</u>.</i>	In Christ, we are spiritually blessed in heavenly places. His provision is complete. We are blameless before Him because He chose us in Him.
<b>Titus 3:5-6</b>	<i>He saved us, <u>not on the basis of deeds</u> we have done in righteousness, <u>but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit</u>, <sup>6</sup>whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.</i>	Self faith (if it existed) would show great wisdom and insight and would constitute a “deed”. We were saved “ <i>according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,</i> ”

<b>Heb 9:14</b>	- - how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!	The blood of Christ specifically cleanses us from sin. The Holy Spirit is the deliverer of our new heart and our new being in Christ. <b>Our Atonement already occurred on the cross!</b>
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**Expository Passages**

<b>John 6:35-40</b>	<p>Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to <u>Me</u> will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. . . . .</p> <p><sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.</p>	<p>The full open offer is to everyone.</p> <p>Unbelief predominates.</p> <p>Those who will accept the offer have already been given to Christ.</p> <p>The Father has given the elect to Christ.</p> <p>Anyone who has the capacity to believe and does will be saved.</p>
<b>John 10:14-18</b>	<p><sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, <sup>15</sup>even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.</p> <p><sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.</p>	<p>Those known by Christ are spiritual in nature, not dead spiritually.</p> <p>Gentile flock is to be added.</p> <p>Hearing His voice seems to be the requirement. This is what happens during regeneration.</p> <p>Christ died for those whom the Father had given to Him.</p> <p>This is what the Father commanded of Jesus.</p> <p>Christ was in control of His death and resurrection!</p>
<p><b>John 17:1-11 &amp; 20 &amp; 24-26</b></p> <p>Here Jesus prays to the Father just prior to His crucifixion, His atoning work for the world.</p> <p>Immediately after this, Jesus is arrested and begins His passion leading to His death.</p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, <sup>2</sup>even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to <u>all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.</u></p> <p><sup>3</sup>This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup>Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. <sup>6</sup><u>I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.</u></p> <p><sup>7</sup>Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; <sup>8</sup>for <u>the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood</u> that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.</p> <p><sup>9</sup><u>I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;</u> <sup>10</sup>and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. . . .</p> <p><sup>20</sup><u>I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.</u> . . . .</p> <p><sup>24</sup><u>Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am,</u> so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundations of the world. <sup>25</sup>O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and <u>these have known that You sent Me;</u> <sup>26</sup>and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it</p>	<p>The Father has given to Christ people whom the Father has already chosen to give eternal life.</p> <p>Jesus has revealed the Father only to those that the Father has given Him.</p> <p>These belonged to the Father and He gave them to the Son.</p> <p>The words of God were given to these who already belonged to the Father. All of them received and understood these words.</p> <p>Christ prays exclusively for those whom the Father has given, not for all men!</p> <p>Christ extends this prayer to those who will be included in the future of the Church.</p> <p>Christ prays only for those who have been given to Him by the Father to be with Him.</p> <p>Only these (that the Father has given) know that Jesus is from the Father. <b>See Mt 16:13-17.</b></p>

	known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.	
Eph 1:3-12	<p><sup>3</sup>Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, <sup>4</sup>just as <b><u>He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world</u></b>, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.</p> <p>In love <sup>5</sup><b><u>He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will</u></b>; <sup>6</sup>to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.</p> <p><sup>7</sup>In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup>which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup><b><u>He made known to us the mystery of His will</u></b>, according to <b><u>His kind intention which He purposed in Him</u></b> <sup>10</sup>with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.</p> <p><b><u>In Him</u></b> <sup>11</sup>also we have obtained an inheritance, having been <b><u>predestined according to His purpose</u></b> who works all things after the <b><u>counsel of His will</u></b>, <sup>12</sup>to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.</p>	<p>God did the choosing!</p> <p>proorizo - predestined - aorist participle active. God acts in the past to accomplish our salvation.</p> <p>It is His work alone. His basis is in His own will, not our will.</p> <p>God gave us the knowledge!</p> <p>The basis of His choosing was His kind intention, not His foreknowledge.</p> <p>God's choosing of those who are His is based in "His purpose" and "<b><u>the counsel of His will</u></b>."</p>
Rom 8:28-30	<p><sup>28</sup>And we know that <b><u>God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God,</u></b></p> <p><b><u>to those who are called according to His purpose.</u></b></p> <p><sup>29</sup>For <b><u>those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,</u></b> so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;</p> <p><sup>30</sup>and <b><u>these whom He predestined, He also called;</u></b></p> <p>and <b><u>these whom He called, He also justified;</u></b></p> <p>and <b><u>these whom He justified, He also glorified.</u></b></p>	<p>God is in control of all things. Nothing can defeat His purpose!</p> <p>Those who are called, are called on the basis of His purpose.</p> <p>Those who He purposed to be saved, He pre-determined that they would be saved.</p> <p>Those He pre-determined, those He called effectually.</p> <p>Those He called, He justified.</p> <p>Those He justified, He glorified.</p>
Eph 5:25-27	<p><sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just <b><u>as Christ also loved the church</u></b></p> <p>and <b><u>gave Himself up for her,</u></b> <sup>26</sup>so that He might sanctify her, <b><u>having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,</u></b> <sup>27</sup>that <b><u>He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she might be holy and blameless.</u></b></p>	<p>Specifically, Christ loved His bride, the Church.</p> <p>Christ gave Himself specifically to His bride, the Church. Not to all mankind!</p> <p>Christ is the only actor of all that has been done for the bride!</p>

### Some Relevant Quotes

(in response to **1 Tim 2:4** *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*) George Whitefield wrote in his letter, "God taketh no pleasure in the death of sinners, so as to delight simply in their death; but He delights to magnify His justice, by inflicting the punishment which their iniquities have deserved; a righteous judge, who takes not pleasure in condemning a criminal, may yet justly command him to be executed, that the law and justice might be satisfied, even though it may be in his power to procure him a reprieve." God's other attributes such as mercy, love, and righteousness cannot be fully displayed except against the backdrop of evil. With the entire human race fallen into disobedience and sin, God, though He owed salvation to no one, elected some to eternal life, thereby showing His love and mercy. Then He ordained that Christ publicly die on the cross, "to demonstrate His righteousness" (Rom 3:25). There every righteous demand that God required for sinners was fully met.

**Irwin Lutzer; *Doctrines that Divide*; p.221**

"- - - God does not want men to sin. He hates sin with all His being; thus, He hates its consequences – eternal wickedness in hell. God does not want people to remain wicked forever in eternal remorse and hatred of Himself. Yet God, for His own glory and to manifest that glory in wrath, chose to endure "vessels . . . prepared for destruction" for the supreme fulfillment of His will (Rom 9:22).- - -" Partial Study Note for **1 Tim 2:4** in *John MacArthur's Study Bible*