

Vicarious Sacrifice: Atonement is Unlimited: Calvinism's "Saving" & "Temporary Faith" Cause Lack of Assurance of One's Salvation; Critiques of the Five Points of Calvinism: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, & Perseverance of the Saints; Verses in Support of Unlimited Atonement

IV. Atonement Is Unlimited:

1. The word "unlimited" means that atonement is an option available to everyone. The fact that all are not is the expression of the total freedom enjoyed by every person's volition.
2. The doctrine of limited atonement includes the contention that even the expression of positive volition is a form of works.
3. This means that the unbeliever's volition cannot be employed independently, it must be assisted by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Only those individuals chosen by God in eternity past are enabled to execute this "saving faith." Those not chosen are termed as "reprobates" and any expression of faith on their part is classified as "temporary faith" and is ineffectual for salvation.
5. The problem with this theology is that many who gather under a pastor that communicates these ideas must become curious if they are among the reprobate.
6. Having no assurance that their faith was of the "saving" variety, they begin to wonder, if not inquire, "What must one do to have confidence he is among the elect?"
7. Proponents of limited atonement have their own vocabulary. "Temporary faith" is consigned to those that are classified as "reprobates." "Saving faith" is given to those deemed to be among the "elect."
8. The foundational principles that support this theology are known by the acrostic TULIP, each letter representing a doctrine to which five-point Calvinists subscribe.
9. **Total depravity:** The Calvinist asks the question, "In light of the scriptures that declare man's true nature as being utterly lost and incapable, how is it possible for anyone to choose or desire God?" The answer is, "He cannot. Therefore, God must predestine." (**Disagree:** In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man must coexist by divine decree. Mankind is totally depraved, but, at gospel hearing, God the Holy Spirit acts as a human spirit to enable the spiritually dead unbeliever to comprehend the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:14). This ministry is referred to as "common grace":

There are two acts of volition in common grace: (1) hearing the gospel and (2) believing in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit makes the gospel information clear in the unbeliever's soul so he has all the information he needs to make a decision.
10. **Unconditional election:** God does not base His election on anything He sees in the individual. He chooses the elect according to the kind intention of His will (Eph. 1:4-8; Rom. 9:11) without any consideration of merit within the individual. Nor does God look into the future to see who would pick Him (*sic*). Also, as some are elected into salvation, others are not (Rom. 9:15, 21).

(**Disagree:** God is said to pick willy-nilly those whom He elects without any reference to the individual's free will. Omniscience knew those who would use their free will to believe in Christ and He elected those in eternity past.

Unconditional election places the selection on the "kind intention of His will." Quite the contrary, the divine choice for election was based on recognizing an individual's faith in Christ.)

11. **Limited atonement:** Jesus died only for the elect. Though Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient for all, it was not efficacious for all. Jesus only bore the sins of the elect. Support for this position is drawn from such scriptures as Matt. 26:28 where Jesus died for "many." John 10:11, 15 which say that Jesus died for the sheep (not the goats, per Matt. 25:32-33). John 17:9 where Jesus in prayer interceded for the ones given Him, not those of the entire world. Acts 20:28 and Eph. 5:25-27 which state that the Church was purchased by Christ, not all people. Isaiah 53:12 which is a prophecy of Jesus' crucifixion where He would bare the sins of many (not all). (**Disagree:** It is true that election applies only to believers, but His atonement was for the entire human race. This is why we find the word "whoever" used in numerous passages: John 3:16; 6:40; 12:46; Acts 2:21; 10:43; Romans 10:13; 1 John 5:1.
12. **Irresistible grace:** When God calls his elect into salvation, they cannot resist. God offers to all people the gospel message. This is called the external call. But to the elect, God extends an internal call and it cannot be resisted. This call is by the Holy Spirit who works in the hearts and minds of the elect to bring them to repentance and regeneration whereby they willingly and freely come to God. (**Disagree:** The Holy Spirit could not work on our volition, for that would destroy free will. The fact is that God the Holy Spirit takes the faith that is freely expressed and makes it effective for salvation, i.e., efficacious grace.)
13. **Perseverance of the saints:** You cannot lose your salvation. Because the Father has elected, the Son has redeemed, and the Holy Spirit has applied salvation, those thus saved are eternally secure in Christ.¹ (**Agree:** this is in compliance with the doctrine of eternal security of the believer.²)
14. The substitutionary spiritual death of Christ made salvation available to all: "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16b, NASB).
15. Other verses documenting the doctrine of unlimited atonement include these expanded translations:

¹ Definitions of the five-points of Calvinism taken from: Matthew J. Slick, "The Five Points of Calvinism," Calvinist Corner, <http://calvinistcorner.com/tulip.htm> (accessed January 18, 2014).

² "Perseverance of the saints asserts that since God is sovereign and his will cannot be frustrated by humans or anything else, those whom God has called into communion with himself will continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away either never had true faith to begin with, or, if they are saved but not presently walking in the Spirit, they will be divinely chastened (Hebrews 12:5–11) and will repent" (Lorraine Boettner, "The Perseverance of the Saints," in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*). Boettner's statement of the fifth point includes concepts with which we disagree. This theological position is apparently so complex that no two expositors present it the same way. Since God is not the Author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), I recant and contend the fifth point is inherently flawed.

Romans 5:6 - For while we were still spiritually dead, at the right time Christ died for the godless ones.

1 Timothy 2:6a - Jesus Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all ...

1 Timothy 4:10 - For this reason, we pastor-teachers work hard to the point of exhaustion, and we keep on contending, because we have confidence in the living God, Who is the Savior of all men [**unlimited atonement**], especially of believers.

Titus 2:11 - The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.

Hebrews 2:9 - But while He was made inferior to angels [**Jesus Christ in His true humanity**] for a brief time [**the Incarnation**], because of the suffering of death [**spiritual**], we see Jesus Who has been crowned with glory and honor for the purpose that, by means of the grace of God, He should taste death on behalf of all.

1 John 2:2 - He is the propitiation for our sins [**believers'**], and not for our sins only, but for the entire world [**κόσμος (kósmos)**].

16. *Kósmos* is used in a number of ways in Scripture. In the New Testament it has four uses: (1) world in some sense, (2) the heaven and the earth, (3) the inhabited earth, and (4) humanity and the earth as the combatants and environment for the angelic conflict.
17. On this latter definition we find this excerpt helpful:

As the “universe” becomes the “inhabited world” once we think of it as the theatre of human life, so the “inhabited world” can narrow down to the “humanity” which inhabits it. The sense “human world,” humanity,” has been found already in the *koine* and the LXX [Septuagint].

The biblical view of *κόσμος* comes to fruition in the Johannine writings. The *κόσμος* is the setting of the drama of redemption which is recounted in the Gospel.³

18. “The entire world” in 1 John 2:2 makes reference to unlimited atonement. God was satisfied with the work of Christ in dying for “our sins, but not for ours only.”
19. Because of unlimited atonement all unbelievers remain condemned:

John 3:18 - “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

John 3:36 - “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

20. Consequently, unlimited atonement provides salvation for all – all the world of humanity – but the necessity of faith in Christ limits the possession of eternal salvation to those who believe.
21. Mankind has been reconciled to God through the punishment of Christ on the cross. By the bruise of man’s sins imputed to Him, “we have been sewn together with God.”

³ Hermann Sasse, “κόσμος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 3:889–90; 894.