

LIMITED ATONEMENT

- ▣ What was the original purpose/plan/design of God in sending Christ into the world to die on the cross?
- ▣ Was it the Father's intent to send his Son to die on the cross to make salvation *possible* for everybody but also with the *possibility* that it would be effective for *nobody*?
- ▣ Or did God from all eternity have a plan of salvation, by which according to the riches of his grace and his eternal election, he designed the atonement to *ensure* the salvation of His people?
- ▣ Was it *limited* in its original *design*?
- ▣ Perhaps a better name for this doctrine is "Definite (or Purposeful) Atonement"

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- ▣ Does not mean there's a limit or value to the atoning work of Christ.
- ▣ The death of Christ is *sufficient* for all, but only *efficient* (*effective*) for some. Not everyone *actually* receives the benefits of Christ's work on the cross.
- ▣ Universalist – Christ's death satisfied the wrath of God for all people on the face of the earth, believer or non-believer.
- ▣ Particularist – Some are saved. (Both Arminians and Calvinists believe this)

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Back to the main question:

Was it God's divine plan to make redemption *possible* or to make it *certain*?

- ▣ To answer these questions, we have to consider another: Was divine justice satisfied for all people by the atonement?
- ▣ If it was, God would be unjust to condemn anyone today. If Christ satisfied the demands of God's justice for everyone, surely, no one needs to worry about future punishment and everyone is saved.

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- ▣ It is one thing to say that faith is the means by which God justifies you and produces the fruits that come with it.
- ▣ It is quite another to say that faith is a *necessary condition* for the satisfaction of divine justice.
- ▣ If it is, then it would mean that the atonement, in itself, is not sufficient to satisfy the demands of God's justice.
- ▣ The Arminian position makes man's choice the final condition of satisfying divine justice.

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- ▣ Calvinists believe that the death of Christ accomplished or purchased something more than Arminians believe it did.
- ▣ Namely, the death of Christ *purchased the grace that effectually brought you to saving faith.* (More on this next week.)
- ▣ Arminians believe that faith was not purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus, faith is something we must add to the table.

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- ▣ If God is omniscient and if He acts in accordance to His sovereign election, then it follows that God designs his plan of redemption to accomplish the salvation of those he predestined.
- ▣ **In other words, from all eternity, God knowing who He is pleased to save, designs the atonement to satisfy 100% of the demands of his wrath for that definite group.**

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2 Peter 3:9,

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing (willing) that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

What type of “willing” is this?

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- ▣ Decretive will – what he decrees must necessarily come to pass. If God decrees sovereignly that something will happen, it will certainly take place. The decretive will is irresistible.
- ▣ Preceptive will – refers to God’s precepts or commands, the law he enjoins upon his creatures. We are able to follow or violate his preceptive will. We are capable of sinning and disobeying his law. We MAY go against this will (not that it is GOOD to, but in the sense that it is possible). “It is not God’s *will* that you steal.”
- ▣ Will of disposition – that which is pleasing or delightful to God.

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- ▣ Let's assume for a moment that the "any" and the "all" used by Peter refers to every single person on the face of the planet...
- ▣ 1) If God is not willing that any should perish (in the decretive sense), then this means every person will be redeemed. No person will ever perish.
- ▣ 2) If God is not willing (in the preceptive sense), then this means no one is "allowed" to perish. This means that God forbids, in a moral sense, anyone to perish. Sounds awkward, probably unlikely.
- ▣ 3) If God is not willing (in the dispositional sense) that any should perish, then He doesn't delight in those who perish. Like a judge who doesn't delight in giving out the sentence to a convicted criminal who happens to be his son. If there's any pleasure in that, it is in his pleasure for upholding justice.

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- ▣ *Any* of whom? *All* of whom? Who is “us”?
- ▣ Context is important: Since 2 Peter is written by a Christian believer to Christian believers and for Christian believers, it is likely that “us” refers to Christian believers.
- ▣ If Peter is addressing “*any of you Christians*” or “*all of God’s children*,” then we could very well interpret this will as God’s decretive will.
- ▣ In other words, God is not willing that any of his elect should perish. All that is necessary for the elect to be saved is brought to pass sovereignly by the decretive will of God.

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What about “world”?

1 John 2:1-2,

“¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole *world*.”

Luke 2:1,

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the *world* should be registered.”

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- ▣ Obviously, Augustus was not forming a census for every person on the face of the earth. We can infer that it was a census for the *Roman* world.
- ▣ Likewise, the 1 John passage might be referring to the *Gentile* world as opposed to the Jewish people to whom he was addressing.
- ▣ The emphasis here is that the body of Christ is composed of people from every tribe and nation, from people drawn out of the whole world, not merely the world of Israel.

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Here's the bottom line:

The Bible does not speak of a God who sits enthroned in heaven crossing his fingers hoping that people would turn and believe in his Son.

The doctrine suggests that the Bible speaks of a God that has an eternal plan of redemption – perfectly planned, perfectly designed, and perfectly executed – so that the will of God to save His people is accomplished certainly and swiftly by the atoning work of Christ.

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See John Piper's notes/references on Limited Atonement:

<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/seminars/tulip-part-1#Atonement>

The same references will also be posted as a Microsoft Word file on the church website:

<http://slzjcc.org/2011/03/24/exploring-our-christian-roots/>