

# THE ATONEMENT: LIMITED AND UNLIMITED

We must not confuse the **extent** of the atonement with the **value** of the atonement. The extent or design of the atonement is *limited* to those whom the Father gave to the Son. The value of the atonement is *unlimited* and *infinite*. The blood of Christ is *efficient* (or effectual) for the elect alone; but it is *sufficient* in value to save all.

Those who reject “**limited atonement**” or “**particular redemption**” believe we are *limiting* something that we’re not—the boundless love of God, the infinite worth of Christ’s blood, or the universal offer of the gospel. We put no limit on any of these! They see us *narrowing* a door that they have wide open; but that’s not the case at all. Our trumpet call of the gospel is every bit as wide and as loud as theirs: “Look unto me and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth!*” (*Isaiah 45:22*).

God is infinite. Our sin is against an infinite God. We owe him *perfect* and *everlasting* love and obedience, *absolute* loyalty and *impeccable* worship! This is rightfully his due! Our *sin-debt* against God is *infinite*—a debt that has no end! But how? Why so great a debt? Sin is measured not so much by *what you do* as by **who you do it against**. “He knocked the teeth out of *his mother!*” That sin is magnified by **who he did it to**. “He raped *his little daughter!*” Same thing again. Our sin is magnified by **who we’ve done it to!**—an *infinitely* loving and glorious God! “*Against thee only* have I sinned” (*Psalms 51:4*). Sinners are blind to the *magnitude* of sin: how **big** it really is, what it deserves, and what is owed on its account. The holiest man could *never put away* even *the least* sin. Why? He’s a *finite* being—a mere creature. Nor could any angel put away sin. They’re also *created, finite* beings, and as such, are unable to pay for so much as *one* sin, even *the least* sin.

At Calvary, an *infinite* payment was made; the *value* of Christ’s death is *infinite*. If God’s elect consisted of fifty billion, the agonies and sufferings of Christ did not have to reach a level of fifty billion; his sufferings and the payment that he made had to reach to *infinity*. If God’s elect consisted of only thirty souls, the payment again would have to be exactly the same; it would have to reach to *infinity*. Even if God had only chosen to save *one sinner*, and that one sinner had only committed *one sin*—same thing! *infinity!* Now you’re beginning to see **the enormity** of sin! how *big* it really is! and how much we owe! An *infinite* payment to an *infinite* God. Nothing but **the death of Christ** could produce an atonement *sufficient for salvation*. Because he’s the **GOD-man**, it was infinite and sufficient. This is why the wicked never get out of hell—they’re ever paying an infinite debt to an infinite God and never able to pay off that debt! The suffering of one in hell may be *more intense* than that of another in hell, but the payment of both is the same—an *infinite* payment. They never, never, never stop paying the debt they owe. You cannot measure infinity.

What does the word **substitution** have reference to? how many? **No—in the stead of**. What Christ had to endure had reference to the *enormity of sin*, not how many God had chosen or the amount of their sins. The elect will be saved, not because Christ suffered enough for them, and paid a payment just big enough for them. The elect will be saved because Christ died at Calvary **in their place and stead!** That’s “*particular redemption*”—he was their *Substitute!* The price he paid and the agony he endured would not have varied had God chosen more in eternity, or had God chosen less. The payment was infinite.

**Substitution** was pictured perfectly on the Day of Atonement when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of a lamb and made atonement for sin. Was it a **universal** atonement for the sins of everyone in the world, or a specific, **limited** atonement that secured forgiveness *for Israel alone*? What does the Bible say? “Aaron shall *bear the names* of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment *upon his heart*, when he goeth into the holy place” (*Exod 28:15-21, 29-30*). Do you not see the love of Christ *for his own people* here? As he bled and died **their very names** were etched on his heart! That’s **limited atonement!** “Take two onyx stones, grave on them *the names of the children of Israel*... Aaron shall **bear their names** before the Lord *upon his two shoulders*” (*Exod 28:9-12*). Do you not see Jesus *shouldering in particular here* the responsibilities of God’s elect? God the Father, in eternity past, *engraved upon his Son* every one of those names!

“...God is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any [*of us*] should perish, but that all [*of us*] should come to repentance” (*2 Peter 3:9*). Christ died **as a substitute for us** (the elect), not for all mankind. Paul said, “God hath made him to be sin *for us*”; “God commendeth his love *toward us*”; “Christ died *for us*” (*2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:8*). “If God be *for us*, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up *for us all*, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of **God’s elect?**” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (*Rom 8:31-35*). These epistles were not published for *the general public* in the newspapers! They were *specifically* written to *saints!* the “*beloved of God*” at Rome, and “*the church of God*” at Corinth—**the elect of God!**—“*us all!*”