Did Jesus Die for YOU?

1. This lesson was a hard one to write. For some of you, you are going to be shocked at what is taught by a very large percentage of Protestant churches. Others will hear this lesson and it will bring back some very bad memories, hurt, and a lot of questions about God and grace. Hang on.

2. A great many Protestant denominations have, as their official doctrine, the attestation that Jesus did for some, but not for all. Their teaching says that the great bulk of humanity was NOT chosen by God and were placed in the "lost and unworthy" column before they were even born. Oh, and these denominations also teach in an eternal torture pit version of hell (not even the slightly moderating grace of annihilation).

3. "Limited Atonement" is an official doctrine of any churches linked with Calvinism which includes a great many Baptist, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Independent Churches. While I was working on the sermons for Palm Sunday and Easter, I kept coming across sermons pushing Limited Atonement as if it were a good thing.

4. I am about to read a summation of the doctrine of Limited Atonement but I want to say this first: this breaks my heart. It takes away hope from millions and causes doubts in the hearts of millions more. It also creates an attitude in those convinced of this doctrine that smacks of "Jesus likes me best. Aren't I blessed and wonderful?"

5. Here it is: "Did Jesus die to the sins of the people who are suffering in hell right now? The Bible's answer is clear "no." When Jesus dies for a sinner, the wrath of God against Him is satisfied. There is no more wrath left – it was poured out on Christ once and for all. The saints will live with Christ forever because Christ died for THEIR sins but the rest of humanity will suffer forever because Christ did not die for THEIR sins. In other words, it is what Christ did for us on the cross, not what we choose to do with the cross, that reconciles us to God."

6. It is out of our hands. We have nothing to do with it. If God wants us to be saved, we will be saved (irresistible grace). If He does not, we will not. Those in hell are there because Jesus did not die for them.

7. This is a circular argument laced with errors such as tautology and scholasticism…and it is heartbreaking.

8. Those of you who've read its champions such as John MacArthur and John Piper know that they can make this doctrine sound great and they even find verses to back them up. They also hold to other doctrines that we lump into a pile called "Reformed" or "Calvinist."

9. John Calvin was a French scholar who broke from the Roman Catholic Church in 1530. He fled to Switzerland where he wrote his doctrines down until he came up with "Institutes." John Knox took this doctrine to Scotland and it spread from there to here in the US and beyond.

10. There were those who stood up and said Calvin's teachings were wrong. One of them was Jacobus Arminius. He published 5 points of protest against Calvin's teachings. He made a simple claim: "Jesus died for all people and for every person, so he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; no one actually enjoys this forgiveness except the believer."

11. Most of you are Arminians and didn't know it! Protestants quickly formed a Synod at Dordrecht in the Netherlands and issued 5 rebuttals to Arminius. Those 5 rebuttals are now commonly called the "five points of Calvinism."

12. One of the objections made went like this: If Christ's death on the cross obtained forgiveness of sins for all people, then how is anyone in hell right now suffering for their sins? The Arminians had an answer: "This gives us only two possibilities. Either no one goes to hell, or the cross did not actually obtain salvation for everyone; it only obtained the possibility of salvation." Christ, they said, did not go to the cross to forgive our sins but only to make our sins forgivable.

13. To those who've listened over the last few weeks, they might notice that something was not considered at all: a reexamination of their doctrine of hell, the doctrine of salvation, and a good look at the

love of God. THAT is why I am not an Arminian nor am I a Calvinist. I'm just a Christian.

14. Calvinists countered by saying, "When Christ went up on the cross, he had specific people in mind whom he loved and wanted to save (John 10:15,27)." They openly teach that Jesus only died for specific people. Are you one of them? They say that, if you accept Jesus and live for him, that means you are one of the chosen. It is a circular argument propped up by a variety of verses that can, indeed, support this doctrine if you ignore the other verses.

15. Look at John 6:39. They read this to clearly teach that only those given to Jesus will be saved…and they never even consider the passages that say Jesus loved the world, died for everyone, and will not lose a one. Why? Because it never crossed their mind to think there was a way to solve this issue: be willing to look at hell, salvation and the love of God.

16. Calvinists think they have a gotcha against Arminians when they use Ephesians 4:1 (the Father chooses the elect before the foundation of the world) so, if they are already chosen, then the death of Jesus did nothing. Why die to save anyone if they are already chosen? Again, this assumes you clearly understand what Ephesians 4 means and what Jesus did on the cross. And I'm not convinced that they – or most of us – have that right.

17. Here is a casual cruelty often tossed out there: doesn't Calvinism kill evangelism? Their answer is "Not at all! We don't tell people "Jesus died for you." We merely tell them the Gospel. If they receive it, they are one of those chosen by God."

18. In science, we know that, if we solve a problem and, by doing so, create more problems…we need to look for another solution. Medicine doesn't always follow that rule so we get commercials for medications with endless, horrific side effects. We don't need to do the same with our doctrines.

19. 1st John 2:2. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. When shown these passages, John MacArthur dismisses them or twists them because, quote, "If he actually died for everyone in the world, everyone goes to

heaven, because that's an actual atonement. But since we know that's not true, because there is a hell, and many are headed to hell, we know that he didn't actually die for everyone."

20. Jesus didn't just die for everyone to forgive their sins (though he did forgive our sins). He died to taste death and remove it from us (Hebrews 2:9). 1st Peter 3:18. 1st Timothy 4:10; 2:4; 2nd Peter 3:9. John 3:16. Revelation 22:17.

21. As we approach Palm Sunday and Easter, let's not fear that God's love doesn't reach as far as us, our neighbors, children in Sudan, trafficked women, alcoholics, and the quiet, isolated people around us that we never see. Let us lift us Jesus so that all will be drawn to him. John 12:32.