Calvinism 101: Session 10

Limited Atonement, Part 1

From heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

What is the "Atonement"?

- "The Atonement is the work of God in Christ on the cross in which he completed the work of his perfectly righteous life, canceled the debt of our sin, appeased his holy wrath against us, and won for us all the benefits of salvation." (John Piper, *Five Points,* p. 37)
    - Sacrifice (Isa 53; Heb 9)
        - *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.* (Heb 9:22)
    - Propitiation (Rom 3:25-26; 1 John 2:2)
        - *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John 4:10)
    - Reconciliation (Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:20)
        - *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* (Rom 5:10)
    - Redemption/Ransom (Mark 10:45; Gal 3:13)
        - *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"* (Gal 3:13)

What is "Limited Atonement"?

- Limited Atonement teaches that the extent of Jesus Christ's atoning work is limited, or efficacious only for the elect.
    - "…it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectively redeem from every people, tribe, nation, and language all those and *only those* who were chosen from eternity to salvation and given to him by the Father…" (Canons of Dort 2.8; see also WCF 8.5-6, 8)

- Non-Calvinistic traditions disagree. They say that the extent Jesus' death is unlimited to the entire world.
    - "God has ordained that Christ should be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world and by virtue of that decree He has determined to justify and to save those who believe in Him, and to provide for men means necessary and sufficient for faith in such a way as He knows to be in harmony with His wisdom and justice.

> But He has by no means determined, by virtue of an absolute decree, to give Christ the Mediator *solely to the elect*, and through an efficacious calling to bestow faith upon, justify, preserve in the faith and glorify them alone." – Article A.12 in the Opinion of the Remonstrants (1618)

What Limits the Atonement?

- Non-Calvinistic traditions: Because the *scope* of the atonement is universal, the *effect* is limited.
    - Jesus' work on the cross doesn't save you, but makes you save-able. Jesus' death is for humanity *in general,* not for anyone specifically.
    - An implication: God's love displayed in the giving of Jesus (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10) is for humanity in general, not for individuals. Whereas, Calvinism believes that God demonstrates His Jesus-giving love of you *personally.*

- Calvinistic traditions: Because the atonement is *efficacious,* the *scope* is limited to the elect.
    - Jesus' work on the cross does save you and serves as the grounds for *why* you believe.
    - An implication: God doesn't love all people equally.

An Argument for Unlimited Atonement

- *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,"* (John 3:16)

- *"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world,"* (1 John 2:2)

- *"…we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe,"* (1 Tim 4:10)

- *"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction,"* (2 Pet 2:1)

How Do We Respond?

- Who is "the world"?
- What is "propitiation"?
- *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.* (John 10:14-16)