

The Son's Work: Definite Atonement

Doctrines of Grace

I. Introduction

"If we are dead in sin, blind to beauty, and hostile to God, then how can anyone be saved? Our only hope is the sovereign and effectual grace of God that gives us a new heart and awakens faith. But where did this grace come from? It came from the cross of Christ, which actually accomplished the salvation of God's people."¹

II. What did Christ Accomplish by His Atoning Work?

A. Our Condition and What Jesus Accomplished to Remedy It

Our Condition	What Jesus Does in the Atonement ²
Guilty of sin (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)	He bears the guilt of our sin (Rom. 3:23-25)
Under God's wrath (Eph. 2:3)	There is no wrath/condemnation for us (Rom. 8:1-4)
Enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:16-17)	Freed from enslavement to sin (Rom. 6:22-23; 8:15-16)
Hostile to God (Rom. 8:7)	Removes our hostility and gives us love for God through the resurrection life of Jesus (Rom. 8:7-11).
Dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-3; John 3:1-7)	Gives life through the sacrifice of Jesus (Gal. 2:20)

B. Summary of the Atonement

1. Penal, Substitutionary Atonement.
 - a. He took the penalty, as our substitute, to make atonement.
 - b. "Originally the English word 'atonement' meant 'the quality of being at one (with).'
 Later it came to refer to human reunion with God through Christ. The Hebrew and Greek terms designate the manner in which Christ puts the sinner in the right relationship with God."³
2. "The atonement is the work of God in Christ on the cross whereby he canceled the debt of our sin, appeased his holy wrath against us, and won for us all the benefits of salvation."⁴

III. Unlimited vs. Definite Atonement

A. Areas of agreement among all biblical Christians on the topic.

1. **Universalism is not biblical** – that is, not every person will be saved based on what Jesus did. Only those who believe will be saved.
2. **A free offer "to believe on the Lord Jesus for salvation"** must be made in evangelism. He will not turn away any that come to Jesus in repentance and faith.
3. **Christ's death has infinite value** (since he is God) and is sufficient to pay the penalty for all people.

¹ Bethlehem College & Seminary, *TULIP, The Five Points of Calvinism*, 88.

² The atonement certainly does more than what is listed here.

³ Myers, Allen. In *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 105.

⁴ Piper, *Five Points: Towards a Deeper Experience of God's Grace*, 37.

B. The question is, Was the atonement intended by God for a definite set of specific people?

1. Did God have in view the actual redemption of *specific people* from *all* that would destroy them, including their unbelief?
2. Or did he merely intend to create an *opportunity* for salvation for all, but not to guarantee that anyone would be saved (because they must create the faith they need to receive the redemption)?
3. "Do [I] believe that Christ decisively secured for me the call and life and faith and repentance I now have? Or do I contribute these things from myself so that what he died to achieve counts for me?"⁵

IV. Definite Atonement in The Scriptures

A. John 10:14-16, 22-30 (Key verses: 16, 26)

1. Jesus dies for his sheep in a special way. He knows who his sheep are and came with a particular mission: "*I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.*"
2. What makes a person a sheep? Why are the Jews in vv. 22-28 not believing (v. 26)?
3. The Father and Son (and Spirit) are united in the work of the atonement for this specific people (28-30. See also Eph. 1; Titus 2).

B. Romans 8:28-32 (Key verse: 32)

1. Jesus's atonement secures *all* that is people receive in salvation (vv. 32-ff).
2. Who is the "all" for whom he secures this (vv. 28-32)? Thus, his work secures all things for a specific people (not just a specific group, but individuals).

C. Luke 22:20 & Ezekiel 36:25-27

1. Luke 22:20: Jesus's blood secures the New Covenant promises.
2. Ezekiel 36:25-27: The New Covenant promises the new heart which is necessary for one to trust the Lord.

D. Revelation 5:9

1. He rescues a people "*from every tribe.*"
2. Not simply, he died "*for every tribe in general.*"
3. This language seems to indicate he had specific ones from each tribe that his atonement is designed to rescue (it is a definite atonement).

E. Summary of the claim of definite atonement

*"We simply say that in the cross God had in view the actual redemption of his children. And we affirm that when Christ died for these, he did not just create the opportunity for them to save themselves, but really purchased for them all that was necessary to get them saved, including the grace of regeneration and the gift of faith."*⁶

F. Is there a sense in which Jesus's atonement is for the world? (John 3:16)

⁵ Piper, *Five Points*, 39.

⁶ Bethlehem College & Seminary, *TULIP, The Five Points of Calvinism*, 103.