

# OpenTheo

## Is Calvinism Biblical? (Part 3)



### Is Calvinism Biblical? (Debate) - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg and Douglas Wilson discuss the biblical basis of Calvinism in this segment. The conversation revolves around the concept of God's determination and the role of reason in interpreting scripture.

### Transcript

Each man has 20 minutes to make their opening statements, then 10 minute responses, and 10 minutes for cross-examination, and then 3 minute closing remarks. We begin with the affirmative response to the question, Is the Calvinist doctrine of atonement biblical? And Mr. Wilson will begin. Because of the nature of this debate, we're doing three debates with certain topical emphases, but all of these topics are interrelated.

And so what I want to do as we proceed is point out some of the connections with what has gone before and some of the questions which in my mind are still not addressed. And that can help us understand the cumulative force of these questions as we consider them in the light of scripture. If it is true, as we both agreed last night, that the Lord took from Job, for example, by letting Satan do certain things, God's non-action amounted to action.

So Satan came and wanted to do this, and God says, alright, Satan does it, Satan is the agent, but Job, without sin, attributes that to God. The Lord takes away, the Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. If the Lord took from Job by letting someone take from Job, letting someone take from Job with God's knowledge of what was going to happen, then how can we deny that the Lord decreed by creating? If God does something to Job by letting something happen to Job, then God is doing something to me by letting something happen to me, provided God knows what's going on.

So this relates to the next thing, which is, I believe that there's a great deal of confusion on this question. If God knows, as came up in one of the questions, if God knows, if P then Q, and then does P, and his knowledge that if P then Q is infallible, it's really true that if P then Q, and then God creating from nothing brings P into existence and Q follows, then God has caused all things. God has determined all things, or put another

way, God has decreed all things.

And then the debate between the Calvinist and the Arminian, if that's acknowledged, the debate becomes a question of how we do the math, how we attempt to explain or not explain the mechanics of the thing, but God is God. Third, I think a lot of the confusion has to do with what I pointed to last night, which is the hermeneutical difficulty of appealing to common sense. Now, I don't believe any Christian can object to an appeal to right reason, an appeal to logic rightly handled, and so forth.

But all too often, especially on issues like this, common sense is really emotion. There are certain things that the Bible tells us that we just don't want to swallow. It offends our pride in different ways, and this topic before us this morning on the nature of the atonement is one of those, and more about that in a minute.

The role of reason, the role of our mental faculty should be to exegete the scriptures, unpack the scriptures, and find out what they actually say. And if there's an appearance of a contradiction between that passage and another passage, we know that ultimately in the mind of God there is no contradiction. And probably in our own lives, five years later, there will be no contradiction.

But the best thing to do is to accept the plain face value meaning of the text and take that as a given. And then if another text gives you an apparently contradictory reading, take the face value of the text anyway and just let it sit there. Don't try and do the math.

It'd be like a Junebug trying to do quantum physics. There are things about this that are beyond our reach. And so what we need to do is trust God as he tells us things.

All right. That said, those are the things that I want to have us keep in mind. If the Lord can take from Job by letting things happen, then the Lord decrees by creating.

If God knows if P then Q and does P, then this means that God is the one who has determined, decreed, settled what is happening right this minute. And the debate would be about why he has done this. And then lastly, it's important to be hermeneutically submissive.

With all that said, let's talk about the atonement. One of the first things that I learned about the nature of the atonement was from my parents as they read to me when I was a small child, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Aslan died in Edmund's stead.

What I learned then and what I want to be faithful to now and what I came to see in the scriptures as having after having had it set before me very vividly in that children's book was the glorious doctrine of the substitutionary atonement. Christ died as a substitute, a vicarious atonement is another way of saying this. When Christ died, I died.

And when Christ was raised from the dead, I in Christ was also raised from the dead in

order to walk in newness of life. The New Testament presents the death of Christ as something that's intimately tied in with co-crucifixion. The crucifixion of Christ is tied in with the co-crucifixion of believers.

The burial of Christ is tied in with the co-burial with believers. The resurrection of Christ with the co-resurrection of believers. And when Christ ascended into the heavens, he did so with us being being raised up and seated with him in the heavenly realms at the right hand of God the Father.

The Bible presents the atonement as an event in which Christ established fundamentally his union with his people. In the death of Christ, his people were united with him. Paul says in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live.

The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me. So this is intimate, it's personal, it's substitutionary. I have been crucified with Christ.

But the Bible also says that everyone who's crucified with Christ is also raised with Christ. Well, now we have a problem because not everyone is raised with Christ. We're not universalists.

We believe that some people are lost and this leads to some thorny questions. Now, I need to throw another factor into this and this might generate a whole separate debate, and I'm not trying to do that. But there's an important aspect to this that has to be mentioned.

A number of years before I came to the Reformed faith, before I came to this Reformed understanding, I came to another doctrinal understanding that is key in understanding the atonement. I came to an eschatological position called postmillennialism. And postmillennialism says in brief, teaches in brief, that the world will be disciplined and will be brought to true faith in God through Christ before Christ's second coming.

And the popular eschatology of the day is premillennialism. And the most popular form of that is that the world is all falling apart. Everything's flying apart and there's going to be persecution and bad times.

And then at the last minute, Christ will come and save his people. But things are going to look pretty grim for the church between now and the end of the world. Well, for various reasons, I've come to the conviction that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the world.

And that means, I believe, that he will, in fact, save the world. I'm not a universalist. I believe that there are many who are lost.

But I believe the number of the saved, when human history is done, the number of the

saved will far exceed the number of the lost. In the book of Revelation, when the question comes up, how many are saved? In so many words, John sees 144,000 and then he turns and looks. And what did he see? He saw a multitude that no one can number.

How many people are saved? The answer to the Bible is you can't count that high. It's a multitude that no one can number. Now, given this, coming into an optimistic view of the future of missions and evangelism, coming into this position is extremely crucial at this point.

Before I was reformed, I remember picking up a book by a certain well-known Calvinistic author, and I wanted to see what he was going to do with John 3.16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. And so I flipped to the section where he discussed it, and he did not share this optimistic view of the future. And so his interpretation of John 3.16 was basically God so loved the world.

Well, you have to understand the world here means the elect. Well, if you couple that with the belief, which he held, that I'm overstating it slightly, is that the elect amounted to about 15 or 16 people. So if you have the spectacle of God saying, God so loved the world, that is you tiny huddled band of people here, which to my mind just took the word cosmos, world, and stood it on its head and emptied it of all meaning.

The word cosmos can mean any number of things in Scripture and does mean a number of things in Scripture. But one of the things it doesn't mean is tiny remnant. Cosmos can mean planet Earth.

It can mean the Gentiles as opposed to Jews. It can mean unbelievers as opposed to believers. It can mean all of humanity redemptively considered.

There are multiple definitions in context for cosmos. But it's never used to speak of the tiny huddled remnant. So I put the book down in disgust and walked away.

I can't believe he said that. And I have to tell you here that I would still put the book down in disgust because I think that understanding trifles with the Scripture. What's at stake in this question about the atonement? Here's a statement that I believe that we as Christians, evangelical Christians, must affirm.

Jesus died in order to save the world. Jesus died in order to save the world. Therefore, I conclude, the world will be saved.

Jesus died in order to save the world. Therefore, the world will be saved. John 3.16 is very famous.

Less famous is the next verse. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Most evangelical Christians believe that when everything's said and done, if Jesus comes next year, if Jesus comes

soon, they believe that when everything's said and done, Jesus will then, as it says in Acts 17, judge the world, and they believe that that judgment is going to be a devastating judgment.

Most evangelicals believe that the overwhelming mass of humanity will be damned, that the world will be damned. But the Bible says that Jesus did not come into the world to damn the world. He came into the world in order to save the world.

Now here's the problem. I believe that we must not water down. There are two words in this sentence.

Jesus died in order to save the world. There are two words that must not be watered down. The pessimistic Calvinist, the eschatologically pessimistic Calvinist, waters down the word world, and he says world means something else.

World means all kinds of people. World means a tiny band of all kinds of people. The word world means three Pakistanis and two Turks and several thousand North Americans, and that's what world means.

But that's not what the word world means in Scripture. We must not water down the word world. But neither must we water down, as the Arminian does, the word saved.

Saved does not mean try to save. So we cannot say God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved if they believe, but they probably won't. That's not what it says.

Jesus didn't come into the world to try to save the world. He came into the world to save the world. Therefore, the world must be saved.

And Jesus says in the Great Commission to the disciples, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go, disciple, the nations. He says, therefore, go.

When I want Thailand, I want China, I want Scotland, I want North America, I want it all because I bought it with my son's blood, and I've given all authority into his hand, and ask of me, it says in Psalm 2, God says to the son, ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. Jesus purchased the world with his blood. Jesus purchased all the nations of men with his blood.

Consequently, it's the task of the Christian church to disciple the nations. Now, with this backdrop, I hope you see what is being affirmed here. I do believe with the historic reformed understanding that Jesus died to secure the salvation of his elect.

Jesus died to secure the salvation of his elect. Those of you who have read any books on the five points of Calvinism may have read through this under the really unfortunate and unhappy title of limited atonement. Well, limited atonement says Jesus died to save the

elect, and that's true enough.

Jesus did die to save the elect. But the word limited leaves out the fact that the Bible also teaches that the world is elect. Jesus died to save the elect.

That's true. He didn't die in order to save Pharaoh and Pilate and Judas and Benedict Arnold. He didn't die in order to secure their salvation.

For if he had died to secure their salvation, they would be saved. There are some who are lost, and Jesus didn't die to secure their salvation, because if he had, their salvation would have been secured. But he did die to secure the salvation of the world.

So consequently, Calvinists who talk about this as limited atonement are basically setting themselves up for, I think, a sucker punch. I believe in limited atonement. What do you believe in? Well, of course, the opponent would say, well, I believe in unlimited atonement.

You believe in limited atonement? I believe in unlimited atonement. And who sounds more biblical? Well, obviously, unlimited atonement sounds far more biblical. Jesus died to save the world.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Jesus is the Savior of the world, in John 4 and 1 John.

Jesus is the Savior of the world. Unlimited atonement, given those verses, sounds far more biblical. Unlimited atonement sounds biblical over against limited atonement.

But if you say, I believe in definite atonement, what do you believe in? Then the opponent says, well, I believe in indefinite. Well, that doesn't sound so biblical, indefinite atonement, because there it reveals that the atonement is a come and get it atonement. Here, I've created the possibility of salvation.

By the cross, I've created the mechanism of salvation. And you can come and operate the machinery that I've created, if you want, but you probably won't. Well, I don't believe that that's what the Bible teaches.

I'm fast running out of time, so let me just read a few verses. I've got a number here. But I want you to remember the backdrop, the assumptions that we have.

When the Bible says that Jesus came to save the world, I believe that he will save the world. I believe that the atonement is efficacious. Everything that God said he would do in the atonement, he will do in the atonement.

So I believe that a post-millennial Calvinist can take world in an honest, exegetical meaning, and he can take save with an honest, exegetical meaning. Jesus died to save

the world. He didn't come to condemn the world.

Jesus said, I didn't come to condemn the world, but most evangelicals believe that he condemns the world. At the end of the day, the world's condemned. In John 10, I'd like to read verses 14 through 18 and verses 25 through 30 with various emphases.

The emphases are mine. I'm the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by my own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Now, this doesn't tell us how many sheep there are. I've just been arguing that the world is going to be filled with sheep, and Jesus lays down his life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Therefore, my Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

This command I have received from my Father. Then in verse 25, Jesus answered them, I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep. You do not believe because you are not of my sheep. Note, he doesn't say you are not of my sheep because you don't believe.

He says you don't believe because you are not of my sheep. And he said just above, I lay down my life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand.

I and my Father are one. The inability of the sheep to be snatched from Christ's hand and out of the Father's hand is pertinent to our next debate later this morning. But for our purposes here, I want to just point to the fact that Jesus says, I lay down my life for the sheep.

He's not laying down his life for the wolves. He lays down his life for the sheep. And he is not saying that every human being is a sheep.

He says my sheep hear my voice. When I come and speak, my sheep hear that. My sheep respond.

And people who aren't my sheep don't believe. And the Arminian has to reverse this. The Arminian has to say, well, the reason they're not his sheep is they don't believe.

Everybody could be a sheep if they believe. But that's not what Jesus says. He says you could believe if you were among the sheep.

And the reason you can believe is I lay down my life for the sheep. That's separate. Now, this is separate.

The definiteness of the atonement is a separate question from the universality of the atonement. And this cannot be emphasized too much. If we see the world ahead of us, the future of human history, as one of glorious evangelism, glorious, successful, efficacious evangelism, that is going to be a motivator to go to all nations and preach the gospel to every creature, as Jesus commanded us to do.

Last, John 17, Jesus spoke these words, lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come, referring to his crucifixion. Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son, that your son may also glorify you, as you have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him.

So Jesus, when he dies on the cross, in that action, is giving eternal life to as many as God has given to Christ. Now, we learn elsewhere in scripture that that involves many, many millions of people. But Jesus Christ gives eternal life to as many as the Father has given to him.

So the atonement is a combination of two things. It's potent and it's extensive. It's potent and it's extensive.

Thank you. Thank you. The negative position can now be presented by Steve Greig.

Twenty minutes. The doctrine of definite atonement or particular redemption or, as Douglas has correctly said, the unfortunate label, limited atonement, is the one point of the Calvinist system that even many people who are otherwise Calvinistic sometimes have difficulty with and certainly that all non-Calvinists have difficulty with. I dare say it's the most controversial point, though it's not necessarily the most fundamental in my thinking to the Calvinist system.

However, it is a point that is logically called for in the Calvinist system. If you accept the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity and total inability so that nobody can be saved unless God has unilaterally and providentially and sovereignly chosen to save those individuals. And if you also accept the unconditional election, which is a necessary corollary of total depravity, then what this tells us that God has not really elected to save every individual and no one can be saved except those that God has unconditionally elected.



It follows that there's no God had no business redeeming the whole race since he didn't want to save them all. He had no business or interest in saving every person. Calvinists are not squeamish usually about saying that.

I don't think Douglass would have any problem with that statement either. Maybe he would. But many Calvinists actually say that God didn't love everyone in the world.

He only loved the elect and he despises and hates and so forth those who are not elect. Well, if that is true and that is basically what primitive Augustinianism and Calvinism teaches, then there's no reason for God to have Jesus die for anyone more than the elect. Well, that's reasoning.

Maybe it's carnal reasoning. I don't know. But it's it certainly is reasoning.

The question is whether it's biblical. And Douglass actually doesn't take the same approach that some Calvinists do. I think he's wiser and he has pointed out that he doesn't follow even some of the Calvinist writers he's read.

And there's good reason not to. As he pointed out, many Calvinists would say that the statements about, you know, Jesus dying for the world really means a small fraction of the world. And there's not really any exegetical reason to take any of those verses that way.

There is, I believe, exegetical reason to believe that Jesus died for all people. And I do believe that the strength, the greatest strength of Douglass's approach is that he argues for the efficacy of the atonement. So the fact that Jesus saved, he redeemed, he propitiated those for whom he died.

And Douglass, of course, reasonably seems to be reasonable, at least I think, saying that if Jesus redeemed somebody, then they are redeemed. And not all human beings are redeemed. And therefore, Jesus must not have died for everybody because everyone's not redeemed.

I've followed Douglass's argument not only in his presentation here, but in the book, *Back to Basics* and *Escher's Hard Words*. And I appreciate the fact that he doesn't make some of the exegetical fallacies that most Calvinists prefer to do. And I think he recognized the danger of doing that and took another approach.

But his approach, I believe, does not satisfy the demands of the scripture. I can understand the inherent logic of his approach, given the other Calvinistic points. But I don't give those other Calvinistic points de facto credence.

I believe that I'm going to have to argue what most Calvinists say as well as what Douglass says, because most Calvinists may not agree with Douglass. We're talking about Calvinism in general as well as what Douglass is presenting as his views on it.

Most Calvinists argue, and Douglass did this to a certain extent, that the atonement is limited to the elect because of statements like those that say Jesus purchased the church or God purchased the church with his own blood.

He laid down his life for his sheep. He laid down his life for his friends, Jesus said. Let's see.

He. Well, these are the categories that we often we have some statements saying he died for his friends. He died for his sheep.

He purchased the church. And in the in the book, easy chairs, hard words, for example, Douglass is alter ego in the book says or the inquire in the book says, well, how can how can these verses be correlated with the verses that say he died for every man and for the whole world and all that? And both parties in the book, conveniently for the argument of the book, can't see any way to reconcile these things. How could it say in one passage that Jesus gave his life ransom for all and then say he purchased the church or laid down his life for the sheep? How can we have this? One verse sounds like he died for the whole world.

The other sounds like he died just for the church. Well, it really isn't that hard to harmonize such statements. We have a parable of Jesus, which could very well be about the atonement.

It's its interpretation is debatable, but its wording is will make the point. It's a parable in Matthew, chapter 13, verse 44, about a treasure in a field. A man found a treasure in a field that was not his field.

He went out and sold everything he had and purchased the field so he could obtain the treasure. Now, some people think, though I don't say we have to believe this, that Jesus is saying that the field is the world and the treasure is the church. There are other ways to look at that parable, but I think that's not a bad one to suggest.

But whether that is true or not, we could easily say, depending on how we're talking about the situation, that the man purchased the field. Or in another situation, since he really just purchased field because he wanted the treasure and he wanted to gain the rights to the treasure. It'd be easy to say he purchased the treasure.

Neither. There'd be no contradiction here to say that he he purchased the whole world. Does not rule out the possibility of pointing out in a particular context that he purchased this group or that group or that group who happened to be part of the larger group that he purchased.

It's not contradictory to say this man purchased that treasure. And then at the same time, say he purchased the field. He did both.

Now, again, whether the field is the world and the treasures, the church or not, I frankly think it is. But if it's not, that doesn't change my point. We're talking about the way language is used.

And to say I purchased a certain thing doesn't mean I can't say that I can't on another occasion talk about a portion of that thing that came with the purchase or that I purchased it in order to obtain. And the Bible says so many times and in so many different words that Jesus died for the world that it doesn't always fit. I think what Douglas is trying to do and say, well, all those statements of him dying for the world.

Well, that's talking about the eschatological world in the end times when at least or when it's all said and done. Such a huge majority of the people who've ever lived will be saved that you could practically say the whole world was saved. Well, according to Calvinist presuppositions, every unbaptized baby that dies is lost.

There's got to have been at least 10 billion such babies with a high rate of infant mortality historically, as well as all the people who died as adults lost. We'd have to say that the number of people lost in the whole scheme of human history has got to be in the tens of billions, at least over. Let's just say over 10 billion.

Let's be conservative. Well, let's say 100 billion are saved before it's all over. That's those that are already lost would already constitute 10 percent.

I don't believe that when you lose over 10 billion people, which have already been lost in the history of the world in all likelihood. Although I couldn't I couldn't confirm that figure. It's hard to imagine that any number of people saved could still constitute saying that he saved every man or they save the whole world.

But even if we allow for Douglas's argument about the use of the world, that's not the only language the Bible uses. The Bible uses language of every man. And, of course, he deals with this in his books as well.

But in First Timothy, chapter two, Paul makes several references in a row to the term all meaning all people. And in verse one, he says, therefore, I exhort first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men. OK, then down in verse four, speaking of Christ, it says who desires all men to be saved.

Same expression, essentially same adjective. And then a little further down, it says in verse six, who gave himself a ransom for all. Now, three times in the space of six verses, Paul refers to all in terms of all men.

In the first case, he does. He includes all men, including non-elect men, because he says we should make prayers for all men, which includes all rulers. Well, not all rulers are saved.

So all men certainly extends beyond just those who are the elect. And then two more times, he uses the term all men without qualifying it, without changing its meaning in any sense. And he says God wants all men to be saved.

And he gave himself a ransom for all men. Now, Calvinists usually think immediately of the passage in Mark where Jesus said that Jesus came to give his life a ransom for many. And they say, well, you see, it can't really be all men because you said many.

Well, obviously, these two verses are intention, but they can't be in contradiction. When Jesus died for the sins of many or gave himself a ransom for many, it could mean many as opposed to all, if not for the fact that the Bible so many times says he died for all. You see, to say he died for many can be in contrast to few.

The word many is used either way. Many can be in contrast to all in some context or many can simply be in contrast to few. And when she said he came to give his life a ransom for many, I believe it means in contrast to few, not a few, but many.

How many? Well, we're told elsewhere all are the many and there certainly are many in the category of all. But later on in First Timothy, the same book from which I was drawing the earlier statement in First Timothy four and verse 10, it says for this end. We both labor and suffer reproach because we trust the living God, who is the savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Now, Paul here makes a distinctive contrast between all men and those who believe for a smaller category within all men. Now, Jesus is the savior, he said, of all men. Now, not all men are saved in the sense that they're going to heaven.

So to say that Jesus is someone's savior does not apparently mean, as Douglas says, that these people are all going to end up saved. He is the savior of all men, but it must not mean that that's an efficacious salvation that guarantees the salvation of all people. Christ becomes the savior of all men by providing an atonement for the sins of all men.

He gave himself a ransom for all. He wants all men to be saved. Now, frankly, when we take all those verses, he takes away the sin of the world and so forth.

It seems to me that when we correlate those statements, talk about all men, the world is not the eschatological world. In the end, it'll all be saved. But rather, it's the whole world, all people Jesus died for.

Now, this causes problems because Douglas says, and I'm sure many Christians would agree with him, that this seems to teach universalism. And it certainly sounds like it does at first glance. But I think not.

I believe there's a couple of passages. And by the way, Douglas deals with these in his books. I'm not satisfied with his arguments, but but I don't want to pretend like he's not

aware of these passages.

He does deal with them. But one of them is in Romans, chapter five. And and he gives special attention to this in his book.

Easy chairs, hard words. But we have in that discussion in Romans five, it begins around verse 12, goes into the chapter, a comparison or a contrast of the effects of one man, Adam, on all men. And the effects of Christ, another man on all men.

Now, Calvinists argue that when it says that through Adam, all sin and all condemnation came on all men because of one man, that all men there certainly means every individual who was ever born. But when Paul in the same passages, therefore, justification came to all men and the free gift came to all men, they say, well, obviously that can't be all men because I'd be universalist, wouldn't it? And we aren't universalist. And therefore, we have to say that when Paul says Adam's effect on all men, all men means something different than all men means in the same discussion when talking about Christ's effect.

Well, this is possible, but I don't I believe the burden of proof would rest heavily on the exegete that wants to make all men one thing in in one part of the verse and all men a different thing in the same verse later on. But how do we get away from universalism if we allow that the effects of Christ's atonement came on all men? And not just the elect. Before I answer that, I'd like to also turn to another passage relevant to this, and it's second Corinthians, chapter five and verse 18 and 19.

Paul said, Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

And not imputing their sins against them. Now, the Calvinist says, and probably a lot of Armenians would say, well, that sounds like, you know, if we take it the way it sounds, that would lead to universalism. The whole world, God didn't impute their sins to them.

Isn't that right? That can't be true because universalism is true. However, it is true that when we talk about what Adam did to the race, it's talking about what Adam did to the whole race and a condition into which all the race was born because of being in Adam. I believe that what Jesus did in affected the whole race in exactly the same way, I believe.

And this is, of course, going to bring up issues of original sin, where I disagree also with some of the classic orthodoxy. This raises the question of is it not possible that as Adam affected every child from birth by what he did, that Christ affected every person from birth? That is, every child is born with the justification of Christ imputed to him. And if that is true, then, of course, it's not until that child reaches the age where he rebels

against that justification, he rebels against light, that he is lost.

It says in Romans chapter one, verse 18, that God's wrath burns against those who suppress the truth. Babies don't suppress the truth. God's wrath is not against them.

They don't suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. They are unrighteous. They have a tendency to sin from birth.

No question about that. But they don't suppress the truth, and they are not, therefore, the objects of God's wrath. In my judgment, in my understanding of scriptures, they become the objects of wrath when they suppress the truth, as all men eventually do from an early age.

Likewise, Jesus in John chapter six said, this is the condemnation. He said the Son of Man didn't come to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. The world was already condemned.

And he says, and this is the condemnation. This is why people are condemned, because light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light. That's why men are condemned.

They're condemned when light comes to them and they love the darkness instead of the light. I believe that Jesus died to atone for the sins of the world. But as soon as men receive light and rebel against the light, then they are condemned, as Jesus said.

Paul said in Romans chapter seven that he, in his early childhood, apparently, was alive once without the light. He's not talking about physical life. He's talking about life in terms of relationship with God.

He says, I was alive once without the law. But when the commandment came, sin revived. And I and it slew and I died.

What does he mean? I died. I mean, he became dead to God. Well, what was it then before that when he was alive to God? That was before he knew the commandment.

That's before he had any light to reject. I believe that there is something like a universalist application to saying that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and that Christ, the one man affected the whole race and every man in a way that is analogous to the way Adam affected every man. But the difference was that Adam brought condemnation.

Christ brought justification. But one who is justified, the Bible nowhere says that a person is justified, must necessarily persevere. That's going to be our next debate.

But I believe that God did justify the world. But I believe that people condemn themselves when light comes into the world and they hate the light. As Jesus said, that is

the condemnation that will condemn the world.

Now, there's much more to say, but not much time to say it. Let me just say this. How could we say that God did not reconcile the sins of the world to them? But some some are still lost.

I believe there are two aspects of forgiveness. And the way we're commanded to forgive is to replicate the way God forgives us. The Bible says that we are to forgive others as he forgave us.

Well, how does he forgive and how are we told to forgive? On one hand, in Mark 11, we are told to forgive people unilaterally and unconditionally. Jesus said, when you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone so that your father may forgive you your trespasses. But over in another passage in Luke 17, he says, if your brother sins against you, rebuke him.

And if he repents, forgive him. Now, in one place, I'm supposed to forgive him just if I remember I have something against him. The other place, I'm supposed to deal with him, get him to repent and then forgive him.

What is this? It's two aspects of forgiveness. One is what's in my heart and one is what's in the relationship. My forgiving of him unilaterally has to do with my love for him, which has got to be universal and unconditional.

My restoration of the relationship has to do with restoration of trust in him and a relationship with him. I can say I don't hold that against you. Jesus on the cross said, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they do. I assume God honored that prayer, but not all of them became Christians as far as we know. Certainly Caiaphas didn't.

And so there is a sense which God can say in my heart, I've rendered forgiveness to the world, my disposition. I hold not anything against them. But if they do not repent, they cannot experience a restoration of relationship and salvation, as we call it ultimately, is a restoration of relationship with God.

That comes through repentance and that's conditional. So in one sense, Jesus did save the whole world. He's the savior of all men, but especially those who believe those who've repented actually have a restored relationship with him.

His forgiveness of the others does not bring them into relationship until they come into relationship with him. And that is, I realize, probably not what all every Armenian would say. And I know it's not what any Calvinist would say, but I'm out of time, kind of.

So I'll let you refute me now. Okay. Each man now has ten minutes to respond, one to

the other, beginning with Mr. Wills.

There are some things I just want to touch on and mention or suggest a particular direction of answer, a particular direction for the answer, and other things I want to press and maybe follow up further in the Q&A. First, what we're talking about, when we say that Jesus died for someone, the debate is over what that does. What do you mean died for? Because the Armenian has to say there are people in hell for whom Christ died.

There are people in hell for whom Christ died. And so the question is, what is it that Christ's atonement did for that person? Well, the atonement, what that atonement did was increase that person's condemnation. What that atonement did was nothing related to salvation.

It didn't save him. So when we say that Jesus died for someone, we're not saying that Jesus is saving that someone. We're saying, in effect, that Jesus is attempting to save that person and can be thwarted by the person's refusal to be saved.

All right. So in one view, if we wanted to use the word limited atonement, the phrase limited atonement, which I'm not suggesting, but if we wanted to stipulate that, both sides are arguing for a limited atonement. The Calvinist is arguing for an atonement that's limited in extent.

The Armenian is arguing for an atonement that is limited in power. In other words, the atonement doesn't actually save anybody. The atonement, what the atonement does is it makes it possible for people to be saved.

It creates potential salvation. It doesn't actually ransom. It doesn't actually forgive.

It doesn't actually secure anything for anybody. What it does is it creates a certain machinery that any sinner can come and operate if he wants to, but most of them don't want to. And so, consequently, what Jesus did for them falls to the ground.

The question of the treasure in the field, you know, if you buy the treasure and you you're also buying the field in order to get the treasure and so forth. That argument, I don't think answers the text that I brought up. The text that I brought up was from John 10.

Jesus says, I lay down my life for the sheep. You are not my sheep. That's what we're talking about.

And furthermore, you're not my sheep. OK, you don't believe because you're not my sheep. He doesn't say you're not my sheep because you don't believe I lay down my life for the sheep.

You're not my sheep. And furthermore, you can't be my sheep or you can't be my sheep



because that's that that's out of the realm of discussion. So textually, exegetically, within one passage, we have a very blunt juxtaposition.

I lay down my life for the sheep. So we're not talking about disconnected statements. I laid down my life for the church or friends and so forth.

We have a sharp contextual distinction made between the sheep and the non sheep and how the how it is that the non sheep are are incapable of believing because they're not Christ's sheep. So the issue, I think, is more tightly exegetical than disconnected statements that can be can be reconciled. I do believe I agree with Steve that that many that that phrases like that you can buy a field and be buying a treasure at the same time.

Those sorts of phrases by by themselves, disconnected from contextual discussion could mean what he says they mean. But in the context of the scripture, as the scripture discusses it, you've got something that's far more potent. I laid down my life for the sheep.

That's you. These people aren't my sheep. They can't be my sheep.

They don't believe because they're not my sheep. So I would like to at some point, I'd like to see Steve interact with how it is that Jesus says you cannot believe because you're not my sheep. In First Timothy two, when when we're talking about all men, the word the Greek word for all there is POS in the Gospels, for example.

And one of the things that POS means is all but another. Recovered by Calvin, I said, I believe Calvinism is not a very exegetical system. Both things are true.

The difference is what Calvin recovered was not objective exegesis, but I believe dogma driven exegesis. Calvin was committed to Augustinianism, and that was his starting point in exegesis. When you come to the Bible with a certain grid, you have certain presuppositions say, well, these verses have been made to fit into this grid.

One of those is that Jesus didn't save everybody. And if he didn't, then we have to find some way to interpret these verses that say he did. My position is not that everybody is saved, but that everybody was saved, that Christ died for the whole of the human race.

All of us were born into the benefits of that. But like Paul, who he says, I was alive once without the law when he was younger. But he died when he became aware of God's light and he rejected it as all men do.

Eventually, it's as if we were all out drowning and someone pulled us aboard a ship and we said, oh, it's so great to be aboard this ship. We're saved. And then the captain came and said, no, by the way, to be on this ship requires that you die to yourself.

You forsake all that you have. You follow my instructions to the letter for the rest of your life. Almost all of us jump ship again.

I just say everyone would jump ship again if they weren't in love with the captain. And so we were saved. But when the light came as to what is required of us and what God's law is, we say not on those conditions.

Thanks. And then we have all rebelled against the light. And that's how condemnation came upon us.

I believe all infants are saved because Christ saved the human race. But the wrath of God comes on those who suppress the truth because of their love of sin. And they are condemned because light has come to them and they have loved the darkness instead of the light.

It takes a while to get to a place where you do love darkness or even know what the light was. You have to grow into a certain stage of maturity just to know such things, I believe. Now, so I don't think it's self-evident that Jesus didn't save the world.

I believe the Bible says he did. And I accept that to say he's the savior of all men. I believe you see, it is true, of course, that the word all can mean a variety of things in different contexts.

But in First Timothy two, there's a context, a context in which the term all men or the equivalent is used three times within six verses and another time, two chapters later in the same book. And in one of those cases, all men is distinguished from those who believe savior of all men, especially those who believe in one case, all men includes all kings. That would include some who don't believe.

So to say that in the midst of that context, because our dogma requires it, we will not allow. He gave himself a ransom for all to mean what all means and all the other passages and cases in the same passage to my mind is, again, exegesis that's being led by by dogma. And that is what I find in virtually all Calvinist writers.

The plain statements of scripture, which are many times a multitude on the same non-capitalistic point, I think are very often not allowed to speak for themselves because, well, what I would call carnal reasoning. It's not seen as logical. Now, Douglas said earlier in his presentation that the right way to take the scripture is in its plain meaning.

You find a scripture and take the plain meaning of it. And if there's another scripture that seems to be in tension with it, you still take it as claiming to leave the mystery to God. There's another possibility, and that is to find the meaning that doesn't contradict either.

And that is what I believe is possible with virtually every scripture. I the Calvinist is too quick to surrender to the diagnosis of this is an inscrutable mystery. And Calvin and his

writings comes up with that again and again.

How can God foreordain and change people's sin and then condemn them for it? It's a mystery. Calvin says this again and again. And Calvinist authors do.

They appeal to mysteries all the time. The Bible doesn't contain quite that many mysteries. The Bible does say there is a mystery, and that's the mystery of the body of Christ, of the Jew and the Gentile.

But it doesn't appeal to other mysteries. Generally speaking, it is Calvinism that requires mysteries because it will not interpret the verses of Scripture in a way that that are consonant with each other, which is not a difficult thing to do in most cases, as long as we don't have a particular agenda. Now, Douglas said, I have to close my comments with this.

Douglas said, I think this will be my close. I don't know how much time I'll have. He said that those that Jesus died for are saved.

I would say they were saved. But of course, Douglas believes once saved, always saved. Of course, that's what Calvinists do believe.

And so if we were saved, we can't be lost now. I believe that he could have saved us. We could have been born saved, alive toward God when we're young.

But when the law came, we died when we became aware of it. That's what Paul said about himself. That's, I believe, stated in many places in Scripture, the same kind of thing.

But the Bible clearly says that some people for whom Christ died do not remain saved. And we can see that. I can give you three passages of Scripture.

I know Douglas is certainly familiar with all of them. One of them is Hebrews 10, 29. And it there says, let me find chapter 10.

Of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, a common thing, an unholy thing, and insulted the spirit of grace. Now, I think everybody, including Calvinists, would agree this is describing a person who's lost. He's insulted the spirit of grace.

He's trampled underfoot the Son of God. And he's got worse punishment coming to him than came to people under the law. That's what the writer says.

This person who does this, though, was once sanctified by the blood of Christ. And he's trampled the blood of Christ by which he was sanctified underfoot. How can this man have been sanctified by the blood of Christ if, indeed, he was never atoned for? No one is

sanctified without being atoned for by the blood of Christ.

In 2 Peter, another well-known passage, Calvinists are not unaware of these passages. They just don't give satisfying answers to them, in my judgment. 2 Peter 2, 1 says, but there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them.

Now, these heretics had been bought by the Lord. That is reference to the atonement, most certainly, I believe, although Calvinists have sometimes argued differently. I don't think there's a very good case for their interpretation.

These people, like all others, have been bought. But these people deny the Lord who bought them. And Jesus said, if you deny me before men, I'll deny you before the Father.

So clearly, such people don't go to heaven who have denied the Lord, even though he bought them. Paul makes a similar kind of statement over in 1 Corinthians 8. Nothing very original here. Armenians always bring these ones up.

But Paul talks about stumbling a brother by your exercise of liberty. In verse 11, he says, and because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? Now, Paul assumes that this young this man who perishes because of your bad example and who's led into sin, he perishes. And he's one for whom Christ died.

Certainly, the Bible does not teach that everyone for whom Christ died ends up in heaven. We just saw three examples of people who are lost, although in one case they had been sanctified by his blood. In another case, they've been bought by his blood.

In another case, Christ has distinctly been said to have died for them. And yet they perish. Perish is a term in scripture that does not refer to the fate of the saved.

And therefore, whatever else may be done with the verses that Douglas thinks teach that the person for whom Christ died must inevitably be saved. There are scriptures that state very plainly to the contrary. And it is the exegesis of those kinds of verses that I'll be looking very carefully at before I will accept a doctrine such as the Calvinist doctrine of the atonement.

Thank you.