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Challenges to Limited Atonement



God's Sovereignty and Man's Salvation - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg challenges the idea of limited atonement, a concept often associated with Calvinism, by emphasizing that Jesus died for all men, not just the elect. Gregg argues that Jesus saved everyone who was going to be saved and reconciled everyone, not just a select few. He adds that God's love requires us to love everyone, not just those we deem worthy, and that God's love for sinners is also evident in the fact that Christ died for all, not just the elect.

Transcript

This is lecture number 6. Lecture 6 is entitled Challenges to the Limited Atonement Doctrine. As always, in all these notes, our first point is to re-examine the positive case that was presented in favor of the Calvinist view, and then, after that, to look at the contrary witness of Scripture on the same subject. Now, in my opinion, the limited atonement view is not as offensive, or needn't be as offensive, as it often is at first blush.

When you first hear about it, it sounds like it's insulting the atonement of Christ, or demeaning it. And, to tell you the truth, I believe the limited atonement is wrong. I think it's not seen the atonement correctly and biblically.

But, it is in no sense an attempt to diminish the power or the importance of the atonement. It just emphasizes a different aspect of it than those of us who don't believe in limited atonement would emphasize. We emphasize the fact that Jesus died for all men.

The upshot of that is that, of course, anyone could be saved. There's not some limited number, some fixed number, which cannot be added or subtracted from, that were determined before the foundation of the world, who they alone can possibly be saved, and no one else can. And, Jesus only died for them.

That's what the Calvinist believes. We don't believe that. We believe that we can honestly say to any person, Jesus died for you.

Calvinist doesn't believe that you can say that with knowledge, because we don't know

who Jesus died for and who didn't. We know he died for the elect, they say, but we don't know who's the elect. We can't even, if you're a consistent Calvinist, and many are not, but the consistent Calvinist actually, we can't even know if we ourselves are elect until we have died faithful, because we might very much seem to be elect.

Remember, even Calvin said that God even gives the effectual call to some people for a little while, and then withdraws it, because they're not really elect. I mean, with that kind of monkey's wrenches thrown into the mix, you'd have to say, well, this is a really confusing thing. I mean, I might have all the evidence that I'm elect.

I might even have heard an effectual call, which most Calvinists say is only for the elect, and yet, I may be one of those people that I don't, unbeknowing, that God has given that only for a little while, and I'm not really elect. I mean, Calvinism really does diminish a responsible assurance of salvation in people, whereas an unlimited atonement, in the sense that it's for all people, allows that anyone can be sure that if they respond in the way that God says, that Christ died for them, and they will be saved. Now, I mentioned before, the Calvinist says, well, if you're not a Calvinist, you still have a limited atonement, because you say that Jesus died for everybody, but clearly not everybody is saved.

So, the limits on the atonement are with reference to its effects. The Calvinist believes that everyone Jesus died for is effectually saved, and will certainly be saved. So, they've got a more powerful atonement, and the non-Calvinist has a more expansive atonement.

To the non-Calvinist, the atonement reaches everybody, but doesn't reach anybody irresistibly. It does not guarantee that any particular person will benefit from it. Whereas, the Calvinist view is that Jesus didn't die for everybody, but he guarantees that everybody he died for will benefit from it.

So, there's different ways to limit the atonement, and we don't just pick our favorite. We have to see what the Bible actually says. Now, what was the case in favor of the limited atonement? Well, we'll talk about that, but first I want to quote Dave Hunt, who's not a Calvinist.

He says, yet if Christ actually saved all of the elect at Calvary, which is what Calvinism teaches, they could never have been lost, and would not need to be saved later. Now, his argument is, if Jesus, when he made the atonement, effectually saved all the elect, then at that moment, all the elect of all time were saved, which means that those who are elected were never unsaved, because they're born after that time. If 2,000 years ago, Christ saved everybody that's going to be saved by his death, which reconciled everybody, then the people who happen to be on his list of favorites, his elect, they're born saved, even before they know him, because their salvation was procured beforehand.

This is what Dave Hunt's arguing. I'm sure many Calvinists would not agree with that, of course, but he's saying this is an inconsistency in the view, that if his atonement didn't just make salvation available, but actually made salvation a reality for the elect, that reality was 2,000 years ago, and everyone in our generation who's born, who he died for, can't be unsaved even earlier in their life. They're always saved, even before they're Christians.

This is perhaps a little abstract, but this is his argument. He says, Scripture doesn't say that a man is saved already. It says that he is condemned already, and not because Christ didn't die for him, but because he hath not believed.

John 3, 18. If Christ's death in itself saved, the elect wouldn't need to believe, says Dave Hunt. Christ's death isn't what saved a person.

It's Christ's death coupled with our faith in him that saves an individual. Like Paul, not Paul, but the writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 4, 2, that the Israelites, it says they had the gospel preached to them as it was preached to us. He says the word preached to them didn't benefit them, because it wasn't mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Nothing wrong with the message. Nothing wrong with what God has accomplished. But to apply it to the individual requires that individual to mix it with faith, to believe it.

So it's not just Jesus dying for you that saves you. It's Jesus dying for you and you receiving that benefit through faith. Of course, that's a very Arminian thing to say.

The Calvinists, that's not how they would, they wouldn't approve of that particular description. Now, of course, we have to ask, is it the case that Jesus' atoning work actually procured the salvation of the elect? Or is it that he only made salvation available to everybody who would believe? This is, of course, the question, is Calvinism true or is Arminianism true? And the Calvinists used 2 Corinthians 5.19, which says, 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, as I pointed out when we looked at that verse before, it sounds almost like an Arminian verse.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. That sounds like a universal atonement, the world. But the Calvinist says, well, then you're going to have to be a universalist then.

Because it says that the world that he atoned, through dying, he reconciled that world to himself. Didn't make it potential that they could be reconciled. They are reconciled to him.

He did not impute their sins against him. And the point they're saying is, this is saying that the very people he died for are, in fact, reconciled by his doing so. And certainly that sounds kind of like it could be the case.

In fact, it sounds very much like Paul could be saying that. But, of course, then they have to interpret the world differently than many would. But that can even be legitimate.

Because the word world is used so many different ways in the Bible. And there are times, in fact, when the word world, in a certain context, means the Gentile world as well as the Jewish world. That is, the world sometimes is being used in a context where it's in contrast with just the Jews.

Not just the Jews, but the whole world, the Gentiles too. In which case, the Calvinist would understand this to mean that Jesus died, reconciling the elect from the whole world. From the Jews and Gentile sectors of the world.

And, therefore, they don't have a problem with the word world. And that's true in some of the other verses we'll look at later too. It just means the elect from the Jews and Gentiles of the whole world.

But is it necessarily so that he is saying that because God reconciled them and didn't count their sins against them that they are automatically saved because of that? Well, I don't think that's necessarily what has to be understood to say. You see, forgiveness, or not counting someone's sins against them, there's two stages of forgiveness. We see it in Jesus teaching us about our forgiving people.

Because we're supposed to forgive as God forgives. And Jesus said in Mark chapter 11, I think it's verse 24 or 25, he said, When you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against anybody, that your father may forgive you your trespasses. Okay, so here you are praying and you remember someone has wronged you.

You have something against them. So, he said, just forgive them. It's unilateral.

You don't wait for them to come to you. Just in your heart, you release it. Release the grudge.

Don't hold that against them. Just have a gracious and forgiving disposition. Just say, I'm not going to hold that against them anymore.

Now, that's something that's unilateral without them doing anything. But in another place, in Luke 17, Jesus said, I think it's in verses 3 and 4, He said, If your brother sins against you, no, it's in verses 1 and 2, I guess. But he says, If your brother sins against you, rebuke him.

And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in one day, and seven times comes to you and says, I repent, you shall forgive him. Now, here we get a mixed message.

If my brother repents when I rebuke him, I'm told to forgive him. But the other one says,

just when I'm praying, if I remember I have something against him, I just forgive him. It doesn't seem to require that he repents.

What's up with that? What's the story here? Well, there's two parts of forgiveness. Both are essential for the relationship to be healed. One is, you've got to give up your grudge.

It's what you do in your heart. It has to do with love. It's loving unconditionally.

It's loving your enemy, as Jesus said to do. It means that you're not going to be hateful. You're not going to hold spiteful or angry feelings towards someone, even though they have deserved it.

You're going to do what Jesus did. You're going to love your enemies. He said to do that, and he did it.

That's how God is. That's what I hear 2 Corinthians saying about God in 2 Corinthians 5. In Christ, he didn't count their sins against him. That's what you do when you're praying.

You say, I'm not going to count them. I'm going to release them. Forgiveness means you give up your right to hold something against them.

That you do unilaterally, as God apparently does to the Lord. That would mean that you are now friendly disposed toward that person. Just like God is friendly disposed toward the world.

He loved the world, so he sent his son to die for it. God is a friend of sinners. That's why Jesus behaved in such a way that his religious enemies said, he's a friend of sinners.

Sure enough, he was. Sure enough, he is. Sure enough, God loves sinners, and that's why he sent Jesus.

He didn't have to send Jesus. He sent him because he loved the world. We're supposed to be seamlessly loving to everyone, and God is seamlessly loving.

We don't hold their sins against them, and he doesn't hold ours against us. But there's something else needed. That is, once I've decided I'm not going to stop loving them just because they did something.

I'm going to have a loving heart toward them. That doesn't mean I'm reconciled with them completely. In my heart, I'm disposed to be reconciled, but we're still not in relationship.

Because they injured me. They stabbed me in the back. I don't know if I can trust them.

Now, we are required to love our enemies, but we're not necessarily required to trust them. The Bible doesn't require you to trust anybody except God. In fact, the Bible says,

woe unto him who puts his trust in man.

The Bible indicates men are not trustworthy. You put your trust in them, you're setting yourself up for disappointment. A relationship, though, is enhanced by trust.

In fact, it almost can't exist without any trust. Trust is really the basis of relationship, even marriage. Marriage exists when two people make a promise to each other and trust each other.

When one breaks trust, that crumbles the foundations of marriage. Now, you might say, I thought love would be the foundation. No, love makes it enjoyable.

You can still be in a marriage where you don't feel any love, as long as you're faithful and trustworthy. If you both trust each other, the marriage will survive. If you don't love each other, that makes it an unhappy situation.

But the marriage still survives because people keep their promises. But, of course, the ideal is that you keep your promises and you love each other. Then you're glad that you're in a relationship.

It's a happy thing. Love makes relationships enjoyable. Trust really makes them exist.

And when someone has wronged you, you love them enough to say, I'm not going to hold that against them. But, I'm not going to trust them again. That doesn't mean you don't love them.

Love and trust are not the same thing. People don't have to earn your love, but they do have to earn your trust. There is virtue in loving your enemies.

There is no virtue in trusting an untrustworthy person. We're not required to do that. The reason we're commanded to trust God is because he's faithful, he's trustworthy.

It'd be wrong not to trust him. The reason we shouldn't trust men most of the time is because they're not faithful and they're not trustworthy. So, the man who's shown himself untrustworthy by betraying you and sinning against you, how are you going to have that relationship restored? Well, he's going to have to earn your trust somehow.

But, you're not going to put a high bar on his earning your trust. He just has to admit he was wrong. He just has to repent.

You confront him and say, you know, you did something wrong to me. And he says, oh wow, I feel terrible about that. I don't agree with that kind of behavior.

I don't want to do that anymore. And you say, okay, I'll trust you from that. I forgive you.

That's a formal forgiveness. That's a restoration not of your love for him, but of the

relationship that was broken. It's a restoration of trust.

Now, those are the two phases. Forgiveness begins with a disposition to love a person and forgive them even though they did wrong. It has to proceed to the point where you can trust them again, where they have repented and you know they're not going to keep doing that because they don't think that's the right thing to do.

They did think it was at one time, but they've changed their mind. That's what repentance means. And that's how it is with God too.

God loves the world. In his heart, he's got a reconciling attitude toward them. He's not holding their sins against them.

But he will, of course, if they don't come back into relationship with him, he'll have to deal with the fact that they don't have life. You can't have life except through a relationship with him. He may not have anything against them except that they're lost.

I mean, they're not going to be saved if they don't come into a relationship with him. That requires trust. That requires that he not only have an attitude of forgiveness, but there be formal forgiveness between the two.

We have injured God, and the only way that he can include us in a relationship with him if we repent and say, you know, that kind of behavior is not what we're going to want to continue doing. You know, we don't agree with that kind of sinful behavior anymore. I want to repent of that.

And therefore, there can be a relationship of trust. I have to trust him, and I have to be the kind of person that at least there's some formal reason that he should believe what I'm saying. He knows he can't fully trust me, but he can trust my intentions.

The point is a sinner who's unrepentant doesn't even intend to stop sinning. A Christian, if they're truly a Christian, does intend to stop sinning. They'll have defects because they're weak.

The flesh is weak. The spirit is willing, though, and that's the important thing. Of a Christian, when they sin, you can say the spirit was willing.

That is, willing to be obedient to God, but the flesh was weak. An unrepentant person, when they sin, it's because their flesh was weak, but their spirit was not willing to obey God. You know, what changes when you repent is your spirit, your attitude, your mind.

Your flesh stays the same, which is a problem. But your mind is different. And if your mind is different, if God says, okay, that person has changed their mind.

They now are on my side instead of my enemies. That's enough. I'll accept them.

But even before they do that, when they are his enemies, he still has in his heart toward them the desire for that restoration of that relationship. He's not holding their sins against them because of what Christ did. He loaded their sins onto Christ.

And Christ absorbed the wrath of God for those sins. So that God's wrath toward sinners is exhausted upon Christ. And he has now removed the difficulty, the barrier in the relationship from his side.

But now it's from the sinner's side. Are they going to remove that barrier? Are they going to come into a good faith relationship with God? Are they going to repent of their rebellion? And a person is not saved until they have eternal life. And that eternal life is in his son.

That's in a relationship with God. Until you repent, you're not in a relationship with God. It doesn't matter how fondly God views you.

It doesn't matter how kindly God is disposed toward you. It doesn't matter how much God is saying, I don't really want to hold those sins against you at all. But if you're not in a relationship with him, you don't have life.

And so you're not saved. So God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, removing the barriers to the relationship from his side. He was not counting the world's sins against him.

He counted them against Christ and let Christ suffer the penalty for it. But now the ground is clear for us to make the step that we have to make. And until we make that step, we're not in him.

And until we're in him, we don't have eternal life because this life is in his son. He that has the son has life. You see, sometimes we think of salvation as just a matter of getting the sin problem dealt with.

As long as God has nothing against me, I can go to heaven. Well, how? Just because God has nothing against you doesn't mean that you've got the kind of life dwelling in you that is fit for heaven and that never ends. God has to give you immortality.

God has to give you life. And so this verse is not saying that everybody is saved, that Jesus died for. I believe it means that he just kind of dealt with all the sins of the whole world and removed that as an obstacle.

If he hadn't done that, there'd be no hope. Of anyone ever being reconciled to God, even if they wanted to be. But God has done what he has.

It's like when Paul says, if it is possible, as much as lies in you, be at peace with every man. Paul is saying, from your side, you should be friendly toward enemies and toward

others. But it doesn't all lie in you.

Part of the issue doesn't lie in you. A relationship requires agreement on both sides. You can be ever so eager to be reconciled with your offended relative or offended neighbor, but it's not going to happen unless they want it too.

And so, for your part, be at peace with everyone. But if it's possible, as much as lies in you, Paul is acknowledging there's going to have to be some kind of response on the other person's part too. And that's the position God's in.

As much as lies in him, he has sought to be at peace with man. But man has to want that too. Man has to make a response too in order for any individual to come into peace.

That's why Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how... He says, if you had only known the things which make for your peace, but now they're hidden from your eyes, because they were rejecting him. These things would have made for their peace. God wanted to be at peace with people.

Paul says in Romans 5, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. That is, we're no longer enemies with God because of our faith. Because we've come to faith.

Before we came to faith, because of what Christ did, God was on our side, but he could do nothing for us until we'd respond. He could drop us the rope, but unless we are willing to take the rope, he can't pull us out of the pit. The rope's hanging there.

He did his part. The ball is in our court. Now, of course, Calvinists don't believe any of that, but this is how non-Calvinism usually understands the situation, and I personally believe, I can understand 2 Corinthians 5.19, consistent with that scenario.

They also use Hebrews 9.12, not with the blood of goats or calves, but with his own blood he entered the most holy place, once and for all, having obtained eternal salvation. Now, the functional word here is obtained. They're saying Jesus, when he died, rose again, entered into the heavenly places, made intercession for us.

He obtained salvation for us. And, of course, the Calvinists would emphasize he didn't just make it potential that we could be saved. He obtained it for the elect.

But, of course, I can appreciate coming from where they're coming from, that they could read that into it, but it doesn't say he had obtained it for the elect. There's no reference to the elect. It says he obtained eternal salvation.

For all we could decide from the missing words, he might have obtained it for everybody. But if he obtained it, then he's got it ready to give us. Salvation is a gift of God, but we receive it by faith.

Sure, he obtained salvation. It's like without Jesus having died and shed his blood, this

salvation, even God, couldn't justly hand it out. He might want to, but the reason he sent Jesus is because he had no other option.

God's not a bad economist. He's not going to sacrifice his son if he doesn't have to. He's not going to pay a price for something that could be obtained more cheaply than that.

The fact that Jesus sent his son means that's the only thing that could possibly obtain what he wanted to obtain, namely salvation for us. Now, he owns it, and he gives it as a gift. But there are conditions upon which he gives it, and it's to everyone who believes.

By grace, you've been saved through faith. Not of yourselves. It is the gift of God.

Salvation is the gift of God, not of works. So, of course, if God's going to give it as a gift, he has to have it to give. He obtained it.

He acquired for himself the right to reconcile people without the compromising of his justice, because justice requires that sin be punished, but God could punish Jesus, or more probably, God could punish, in a sense, himself, in the person of Christ, absorb the just punishment so that he now has a just manner of forgiving those who've committed sins and who are guilty. We were his enemies when he died for us, not his friends. And so, to say again, if you have the Calvinist view going into these verses, you can insert in your mind the word for the elect or the elect of the world as opposed to just the world.

You can interpret these things in terms of the concept of the elect, which is not mentioned in the passages, but which can be imported if you insist. But we don't have to insist. We don't have to insist on importing words that aren't there just because we have a preconceived theological construct that we're trying to read into it.

That's eisegesis, in my opinion. I don't think these verses say all that the Calvinist wants them to say. Now, contrast that with 1 Corinthians 8, 11.

Paul said, And because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? Now, this is talking about if a brother can't, in good conscience, eat meat sacrificed to idols, but you can. And he would abstain except he sees you eating it, and you're not really sinning because you have the liberty to do it. But he's weaker than you, and he copies you.

He follows your example, and it ends up leading him back into idolatry, and he perishes. This one, because of your bad example, perishes. But who is this man? He's one for whom Christ died.

But can somebody perish if Christ died for him? Didn't Christ only die for the elect? If Christ only died for the elect, then there will never be a case of someone perishing for whom Christ died. But Paul doesn't know that doctrine. He believes that this man who perished, because of your bad example, what makes that the more tragic is that you're

working against Christ.

Christ died for him, and you've caused him to stumble and perish. The point is that Paul's theology just takes for granted that Christ died not only for those who are saved. He died for those who also perish.

We see Peter saying the same thing when Peter's talking about the false teachers in 2 Peter 2.1. He says, but there were also false prophets among the people. He means the Jews in the Old Testament. Even as there will be false teachers among you who secretly will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

Okay, these teachers will deny the Lord, the Lord who bought them. When did God buy anybody? When Jesus died, he paid a price. We've been bought with a price, Paul says elsewhere.

Christ's death was the payment. These false teachers, who truly are not represented as elect, they're certainly not represented as saved people. They're wicked people who are leading others to destruction too with them.

Christ bought them. They're denying the Lord who bought them. That certainly suggests that the atonement was not only for the elect, it was also for these false teachers who have apparently not benefited from the atonement.

He bought them, but he didn't obtain them. How about Hebrews 10.29? It's talking about those who fall away. It says, 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, and insulted the Spirit of grace? This person who falls away, who tramples on the Spirit of grace, insults the Spirit of grace, tramples on the blood of Christ, that person has insulted the blood of Christ by which he was sanctified.

How could somebody that was sanctified by the blood of Jesus, in other words, atoned for by the blood of Jesus, how could that person trample the Son of God later and fall away and insult the Spirit of grace and clearly not be saved? You see, there are scriptures that talk about those that Jesus died for not being saved. So this would seem to rule out any doctrine that says that Jesus only died for the ones who inevitably will be saved. He must have died for others as well.

And if some, then why not all? After all, the Bible says he died for the world. The world clearly is not limited to the elect of the world because these people were not elect and they are said to be people that Jesus died for. Now, there were several verses we encountered in the Calvinist argument for limited atonement that indicated that Jesus died for his sheep, for his friends, for his church, for his bride, in other words, for the

Christians or for the elect.

John 10 said that the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. John 15, Jesus said, greater love has no one than this. He laid down his life for his friends.

Acts 20.28 says the church which he has purchased with his own blood. Ephesians 1.7 talks about we, Christians, have received redemption through his blood. And even in John 17.9, well, Ephesians 5.25 says that Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, for the church.

See, all these verses say that Jesus died for us, the Christians, the church, his bride, his sheep, his friends. And, of course, in John 17.9, Jesus said in his priestly prayer, speaking about his disciples, I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for those that you have given me, for they are yours.

Well, those who God has given him are the Christians. He said, I'm not praying for the world. And the Calvinist very commonly says Jesus wouldn't even pray for those who weren't elect.

Why would he die for them? You'd sooner pray for someone than die for them, and he won't even pray for them. So we certainly shouldn't think he'd die for them. Of course, this is a pretty poor and irresponsible use of this verse because the prayer he's praying is not a prayer for the world.

It's a prayer for the church, that they'll be unified, that they'll be glorified, that they'll be kept from the power of Satan. You notice this is a prayer specific to Christians. Jesus is not saying, I would never pray for a non-Christian.

I will only pray for Christians. No, he's saying, this prayer I'm praying, these requests I'm making, this is for my people. I'm praying that they'll be one.

I'm praying that you'll keep them from the evil one. I'm praying that they'll be sanctified by your truth. I'm praying that they'll share our glory together.

Notice he's got some specific prayers he's interceding for his friends, his church. And he's saying, this is not a prayer I'm praying for the world, only for my friends here. But that doesn't mean that other prayers he wouldn't pray for the world.

Didn't Jesus on the cross say, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. Who is he praying for? Not his disciples.

He's praying for the sinners, the ones who are crucifying him. Did all those people get saved? Well, maybe, but we have no record of it. We have no reason to believe that all those that he said, Father, forgive them, he prayed for them.

He interceded for them. But we have no reason to believe they all were saved. Although

we couldn't prove that they weren't.

I doubt that anyone would think that they could argue that they all were. Everyone at the foot of the cross, all the people who crucified Jesus, they all got saved later? That'd be nice to know. It'd be something worth mentioning.

But the book of Acts doesn't mention that, because it probably wasn't the case. To say that Jesus didn't pray his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane for anyone other than his disciples doesn't tell us anything about his general prayer life and whether he ever prayed for people who weren't his disciples, of course. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2 that prayers and supplications should be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, and so forth.

I mean, praying for non-Christians is commanded. And Jesus himself, we have no reason to believe, never did so. He just wasn't doing so in this particular prayer in John 17.

Now, how about the contrary witness of Scripture? As you can see, there hasn't been a real strong case made for limited atonement. The main arguments are the atonement is effectual toward all that he died for. But we've seen some verses that say it isn't.

We've seen some verses that say that some of the bad guys who end up being enemies of God, Christ died for them. But it didn't benefit them. So that argument doesn't really carry an awful lot of weight as far as I'm concerned.

The other part of the argument, and certainly the majority of Scriptures used, are simply those that say that he died for Christians. He died for his friends. And that is true.

But none of them say that those are the only people he died for. When Paul said in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

And the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Paul wasn't saying that he was the only person Jesus gave himself for. He could say Jesus died for me.

That's not an exhaustive list of the people he died for. I'm just one of the ones. And I can honestly say he died for me.

And I can say he died for every Christian. In fact, I could say he died for the whole world. All these statements are true and Scriptural statements.

But to find verses that say that Jesus purchased the church with his own blood or that he died for his friends, well, who would deny that? No Arminian would deny that. And that's all folks. He didn't die for anyone else.

We could as easily say that he didn't die for anyone but Paul because Paul said he gave

himself for me. It's not intended to give an exhaustive list of those he died for. Let me give you some things the Scripture affirms.

First of all, there's verses that say that Jesus died for those whom he loves. Now this raises the question, does God love everybody or not? Some Calvinists say God loves everybody, but he only loves the elect a certain way. He loves the lost in that he shows them kindness.

He causes his rain to come on the just and the unjust. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. And therefore, in a sense, God shows mercy and love toward all men.

What a tease he is because he's doing that for many people that he's consigned to hell. He doesn't love them enough to save them. Now, if I could save somebody from death and I thought, no, I don't think I will.

How much could it be said that I love them if I sent them a candy bar on death row? I love you. I'm the governor. I could pardon you if I wanted to.

I don't think I will. But I'll send you a little trinket here to show how much I love you. Who cares about the candy bar when you could save me from death and you won't? What kind of love is that? God sends his rain, his temporal blessings on the just and the unjust, but he knows that most of them are on their way to hell.

He could save them and he says, I don't think I'll bother. What kind of love is that? It says in 1 John 2, it says, If any man has this world's good and sees his brother have need and shuts up his bowels of compassion, how does the love of God dwell in him? If you see someone who has need and you won't help them and you could, you don't have the love of God in you. James said, if a man, he says, if any of you are naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says, be warmed and filled and you don't give them the things they need, does that profit? The Bible is very clear.

Love is expressed in meeting the needs of the people that you can meet their needs. That's what the good Samaritan story is about. The good Samaritan saw a man in need and didn't pass by him like the priests and the Levite did.

Now, the God described in Calvinist theology sees a world in desperate need, greater need than hunger and thirst, need to be rescued from hell, infinitely greater need than just hungry or thirsty. And he doesn't save them all. How does the love of God dwell in him? What is the love of God? Why do we even call it the love of God? If the love of God in us compels us to help everyone we can and God himself doesn't love people like that, why do we call that the love of God? That's not the love of God.

That's humanistic love because God doesn't even love some of those people we're commanded to help. We just love them because we're, we're more compassionate than

God. We will help them as much as we know how and if we don't, God would think us bad people.

But he won't help them as much as he could. This is a very strange theology. Now, and yet, there are some Calvinists who are very honest about this.

They say God doesn't love the reprobate. They use, you know, God loved Jacob but he hated Esau. And Esau is the quintessential reprobate in their opinion.

But what does it mean when he says he loved Jacob and hated Esau? Again, we're using a very familiar biblical idiom. When two things are contrasted, one is said to be loved and the other hated, the word hate in those passages doesn't mean what we commonly use the word hate to mean in our modern culture. We reserve the word hate to speak of things that we detest, that we find unutterably foul and detestable to us, that we have no love for whatsoever.

Hate for us is the opposite of love, the extreme opposite of love. In the Bible, love and hate are contrasted as merely comparative degrees of love. To say that someone is hated, in many contexts in Scripture, simply means they were loved less than someone else.

They were not preferred. One was preferred over the other. When one is preferred over the other for some privilege, the one preferred is said to be loved, the other is said to be hated, though the hatred isn't what we're thinking of.

For example, Jacob had two wives, Rachel and Leah. It says in Genesis, he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. The next verse says, when God saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb.

But we're told specifically, he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. He apparently loved Leah, he had seven kids by her. I don't think a man would have seven kids by whom he hates, and yet God opened her womb, but it wasn't without normal sexual intercourse.

It wasn't without conjugal relationship between these two. To say when God saw that Leah was hated, we know that means she was loved less than Rachel. Jesus said, no man can serve two masters.

He will love one and hate the other. He states that as axiomatic. Is that axiomatic? If I have two jobs, do I have to love one boss and hate the other boss? That's essentially what he's saying.

Why do I have to hate either of them? Well, you don't have to really hate in the sense that we mean it. You do have to prefer one over the other because they both want your time. They both might want you for the same shift.

You're going to have to prefer one over the other. You might have to give up the one in favor of the other, or at least show preference to one over the other when there's a conflict. You can't give them both equal access to your time.

You're going to have to make some choices here. You have to love one and hate the other. Hate means to love less or to give less preference.

There's lots of verses in the Bible like that. Jesus said in Luke 14, if anyone comes to me, he must hate his father and his mother and his wife and his children and his own life also, or he can't be my disciple. Well, hate your mother and father and wife and children? Doesn't that seem a little inconsistent with the general teaching of Scripture? It does.

When you see the parallel in Matthew 10, he says, he that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He that loves wife or children more than me is not worthy of me. You see, hate them means not love them as much.

Of course you have to love your parents. You have to love everybody, even your enemies. Say nothing of your wife and children.

That's strictly commanded. But when Jesus said you have to hate them, he's using a typical Jewish idiom that his disciples were familiar with. It's a very strong term, but it means you shall not love them more than you love me.

Hate, when Jesus, when Malachi said, for God, Jacob I've loved, Esau I've hated, it's the same situation. He's saying, we've got two brothers here. I've got to pick one of them.

One of them's got to be the one that I favor and give the privilege of bringing the Messiah to the world. The other one I'm going to have to just not give that privilege to. I'm going to favor one or the other.

I'll take Jacob. And in the idiom of the Bible, that means he loved Jacob and hated Esau. It doesn't mean he detested Esau.

Now there were things about Esau that weren't very good. He was foolish in selling his birthright and so forth. But near the end of his life, he seems to be a much better man.

He forgave his brother Jacob, whom he had earlier wanted to kill. He and Jacob together buried their father. The later stuff in Esau's life do not indicate that he died an evil man.

And it's entirely possible for someone to make real big mistakes and even bad sins in their early life and to die in a better state. We don't know that Esau didn't die a saved man. And there's no reason to believe that he was the object of God's hatred in the sense that we use that term.

Malachi being a Jew and a prophet did not use that term the way Americans use that

term or modern English speakers use it. Okay, we just have to recognize that. So to say that God hates sinners, now that's another kind of use of hatred or that God is angry with sinners.

Proverbs says there's six things the Lord hates, yea, seven are abomination to him. And it lists seven things, most of which are people. He that sheds innocent blood.

He that sows discord among brethren. These people God hates. But again, the word hatred is just even by us often to mean not the opposite of love, but the opposite of like.

And love and like are not the same thing. You can find someone very unpleasant and not like them. Like is a matter of taste, by the way.

There's some foods I don't like. It doesn't mean I'm angry at them or would wish them to go to hell. I just don't like them.

They don't appeal to my taste. Like is simply a matter of taste. Love is a matter of choice.

Love is where you treat them the way you want to be treated. Love is where you lay down your life for them. That's love.

You can do that even if you don't like them. I don't think Jesus liked the people who were condemning him. I don't think he liked the people who crucified him.

How could anyone like that? But he loved them. No one likes being nailed to a cross. But you can still love the people who do it.

Like and love are not just the same category intensified. We often use the word love to mean I like on steroids. I like these friends, but I love that person.

That means I like them more than the others. That's how we use the word love often. But in the Bible, love and like are different categories.

Like is how you feel about something. Love is what you will do towards someone. Will you lay your life down for that person? Will you do unto them the way you want to be done to you? How will you behave? Will you meet their needs? Even though they're not friendly towards you.

Even though you don't like their personality. Okay, we use the word hate both as the opposite of love and as the opposite of like. I hate Brussels sprouts.

Some people say I don't hate them. I like them. But I mean, I hate Brussels sprouts is different than saying I hate my ex-husband.

Because hating the ex-husband almost certainly is a reference to I'd like to see that guy

burn in hell. Hating Brussels sprouts means I don't like the way they taste. They don't suit my tastes.

That's a very different thing. Now to say God loves righteous and he hates those who do evil. It's not necessarily the opposite of love.

He could still love those who do evil and he does. That's why he loved us. We were doing evil.

We were sinners. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The love of God was manifested in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

He hated us at one level as sinners, but he loved us nonetheless enough to die for us. That's putting love into an extreme demonstration. It's when you die for somebody.

Greater love has no one than that. But he hated sinners in the sense that I heard people say they hate Brussels sprouts. It's the opposite of like.

It's the extreme opposite of like. I really like this behavior. I really hate that behavior.

I hate what my kids are doing when they're not serving God. But I love them. There are references to God hating people, but you can't allow those verses to unnecessarily be canceling out the verses that says he loves everybody.

The rich young ruler apparently was not elect because when Jesus told him the terms of discipleship, he went away sorrowful and didn't accept. But in Mark chapter 10, it says when Jesus spoke to him, he says he looked at him and he loved him. Mark says Jesus looked on him and loved him and said, if you want to be perfect, sell everything you have and give it to the poor and then come follow me.

A genuine invitation of love. This man could have been one of the elect if he'd chosen to, but he didn't choose to. But that didn't mean God didn't love him.

He did. We're told that he was loved. Jesus certainly loved those who crucified him because he prayed and they'd be forgiven.

That's a mark of love. He didn't like it, I'm sure. How could he? He despised the shame, the Bible says.

But he loved the people. So we have to be careful not to take statements about God hating this or hating that in a sense that would cancel out the true statements that he loves everyone. It is possible for him to love everybody, but in the manner of speaking, to hate those who are murdering people, to find it disgusting, to find it offensive, to find it everything the opposite of what you like.

But you still love the person. And that's why Christians have said as a cliché, you have to

hate the sin and love the sinner. But I mean, cliché though it may be, it's true.

You know, God loves everyone. At least I believe that. Now, Edwin Palmer, Calvinist says, by the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are foreordained to everlasting death to the praise of his glorious grace.

Now, if you've ordained somebody who you didn't have to ordain to this, to have everlasting death, that's not a mark of love. He that sees his brother in need and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him? God loves people. He doesn't see people in need and not want to help them.

He'll help them if they'll let him. But that's not what Calvinism says. R.C. Sproul said, God is not all that loving toward those not elected to salvation.

I guess that's like obvious. He says, it would have been more loving of God not to have allowed them to be born. So R.C. Sproul, a consistent Calvinist says, I mean in many ways he's consistent, on other points he's sometimes not, but he says, God really doesn't love these people.

He only loves the elect. But 1 John 3.16 says, by this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. In other words, Christ dying for people was his expression of love for people.

And this is how we're going to know whether he died for everyone or not, does he love everybody or not. The Bible says he does love everybody. If he does love everybody, he died for everybody, because this is how his love is manifested that he died for us.

1 John 4.9.10 says, this is the love of God, or in this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Jesus dying and becoming the propitiation for our sins was the mark that God loved us.

John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. And I mentioned Mark 10.21 where Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and loved him, but the man wasn't saved. The point here is, the Bible says that the way we know God loves someone is that he died for them.

The way we know he loved us is because he died for us. But he loves the whole world. So is it not necessary to assume he also died for the whole world? That's the expression of his love.

He died for the ones he loved. He loves everyone. He loves his whole creation.

Now Calvinists think this is incomprehensible. How could God love those wicked people who curse him every day? Well, let some of them have a grown child who does that to them and see if they love him. I love my kids.

My kids are generally fond of me. My kids are generally polite to me. But there have been times when they were younger, they were very angry at me.

I've had them cuss me. I've had them accuse me of things I didn't do. I've heard them speak hatefully to me.

I didn't love them any less in those moments than I did any other time. How could a father not love his children? The fact that the rebellious doesn't cancel his love. The prodigal son was still loved by his father when he was in a far country away from his father.

We know because his father was so delighted to have him back on the simplest of terms. He didn't expect a whole lot of recognition. You've got to pay back all the money you've wasted of mine.

You've got to do this and this. Maybe I'll let you back in my house. The father wouldn't even listen to the kid's whole confession.

He just said, don't talk. Just wear this ring. Just wear this robe.

Just come to the party. The father obviously was not holding anything against his son. It was the son who remained alienated by his own choices.

When he came back, he didn't find that his father had any grudges against him. Just because he'd been in rebellion. He'd been dragging his father's reputation through the mud.

He'd been wasting his father's inheritance and so forth. Ah, you're back. That's all that matters.

That's how a father loves. And to think that Calvinists often say, how could you think God would love those who spit in his face and curse him every day and express their hatred in all their actions. Well, become a father sometime and maybe you'll know.

Or maybe not. If you're already a father and you don't know, I wouldn't want to be one of your kids. There are fathers who don't love their children, apparently.

Don't know how to. They don't have the love of God in them. But if you do, it's not a mystery how God can love even the sinners.

And he does. And he died for them. The Bible says so.

Christ died not only for friends but for sinners. In fact, he only died for sinners. He didn't die for any righteous people because there weren't any.

He had to die only for sinners. The very ones we're talking about who cursed him and so forth. Luke 5.32, Jesus said, I've not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Luke 7.34, the Son of Man has come eating and drinking. And you say, look, a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. That's right.

Friend of sinners. Romans 5, 7 through 8. For when we were yet still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Not for the faithful remnant only.

He died for those who are ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 1 Timothy 1.15, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Now, of course, these statements, not all of them deal directly with the atonement.

Some of them do. But God's love for sinners and his atoning for all sinners are of one piece in the theology of Scripture. He exhibited his love for us by dying for us.

He loves sinners. He didn't wait for people to be good before he loved them. He did wait for them to repent before he saved them.

That is, accepted them into relationship with himself. But he loved them enough to die when they were sinners. And that's true even of the saints.

They were sinners too when he died for them. In fact, the Bible says he died for all men. Now, J. Adams, who wrote *Competent to Counsel*, who's one of the great founders, really, of the biblical counseling movement.

Competent to Counsel he wrote, I think, in 1970. And he was the first evangelical to write a major book challenging psychological principles and saying we need to counsel from the Bible. He started a great movement.

It's called Newthetic Counseling. John MacArthur's college has a whole department on Newthetic Counseling. J. Adams is the founder of that movement.

He's also a strong Calvinist. And his book, *Competent to Counsel*, is a great book for the most part. But he does say something that really rubbed me the wrong way in that book.

He said, as a Reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him. No man knows, except Christ himself, who are the elect for whom he died. Now, this is consistent Calvinism.

Since you believe in a limited atonement, when you're counseling someone who's not saved, you can't say, you shouldn't say, Christ died for you. Now, if you could say that, what is that saying? God loved you enough to die for you. That's what's supposed to appeal to the sinner.

That is the true message that calls one to salvation. But a Reformed person cannot consistently say to anyone who's not saved, Christ died for you. And really, if he wanted to be more exact, he should not even say any unsaved counselee.

Any counselee at all. Because even if the counselee is a professing Christian, you still don't know for sure if they're the elect. And therefore, you can't tell anybody for sure that Christ died for them.

Now, Calvinists live with this comfortably. I would not. I don't think the Bible does.

I think the Bible says Jesus died for all men. And I think we can, in good conscience, say that to sinners. Now, I'm going to show you many scriptures where it says Jesus died for all.

But the Calvinists will say that means Jews and Gentiles, not Jews alone. All men in these cases, the Calvinists fairly consistently says, this just means not all men who've lived, but all the elect of all categories of men. That's their way of understanding all men.

And truly, the word all men may in some context mean that. But I don't believe it does in these contexts. And we'll show you why.

In fact, in Isaiah 53.6, it can't mean that. Isaiah 53.6 says, All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. This is talking about the atonement. God laid the sins of the world on Christ when he died for them.

God laid on him the iniquity of us all. In the context, who is us all? All of us who've gone astray. All of us who've turned to our own way.

Who is Isaiah talking about? He's talking about the whole nation of Israel, which was apostate for the most part. Most of them never repented, and therefore died in their sins. He's describing the nation of Israel as a whole, as strained from God.

We've all done it. And not all of us will repent in this lifetime. But he nonetheless laid the iniquities of us all on Jesus.

This is a universal atonement that Isaiah is talking about here. It can't be just the elect, because we all who went astray, that he's talking about, are the whole nation of Israel. And certainly not everyone in Israel could be said to have been elect, if that means they died on good terms with God.

They didn't. Many of them died under God's judgment, because they were, in fact, apostate. Romans 5.18 says, Therefore, as through one man's offense, Adam, judgment came on all men, resulting in condemnation.

Even so, through one man's righteous act, Christ's, the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. Now remember, whenever the Bible says that Jesus died for or saved all men, the Calvinist says, well, that doesn't mean all individuals, every person. It just means all the elect, a subcategory of all men.

But all just means not just Jewish, but Jew and Gentile men. Is that what it means when it says all men were made sinners when Adam died? Paul uses the term all men twice in the same sentence. And when he says that in Adam's sin all men were made sinners, Calvinist says that means every last person.

The sentence is not over. So also Christ died and justified all men. Oh, well, that doesn't mean all men.

That means just some. Paul seems to deliberately construct the sentence to say the same all men that Adam affected negatively have been atoned for by Christ. He uses the same phrase twice and doesn't even make two sentences out of it.

1 Timothy 2, 1 through 6, Paul says, Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

Now there's a lot of all's in here, a lot of all men's in this passage. Jesus gave himself a ransom for all. He's talking about who he died for.

The atonement is for all, but all what? All the elect? That's what Calvinists say. They say all men doesn't mean all men without exception, but all categories of men, men from every category. And they think they can prove that from verses 1 and 2, because he says that prayers and supplications should be made for all men, the same expression, but he explains for kings and all who are in authority.

And so the Calvinist says, see, when Paul says all men, he means people from all categories, kings and other categories. When I was debating James White, he says, you can't possibly think you're supposed to pray for all men. What are you supposed to do, get the phone book out and look at every name and pray for every person? Well, the Bible says I'm supposed to love all people too.

And that doesn't mean I have to get off the phone book and individually name each one

and say, God, I love that person. I'm going to go find that person, do something loving to them. What it means, of course, is although each of us has familiarity with only some of the broader category, we must be indiscriminating.

We must love everyone. Jesus said, give to everyone who asks you. Well, you know, there's a lot of poor people.

Not all of them are going to ask me, but the point is I have to be generous, indiscriminating. Anyone who asks me, I should be generous to them. And I should pray for all men too.

There shouldn't be anyone I wouldn't pray for. It doesn't mean that I have to pray for every person by name, but it does mean there should be nobody that I wouldn't pray for. Even for those kings who are the enemies of the church, who persecute Christians, I should even pray for them.

In other words, including your enemies, including those, and maybe especially those who are kings, because the way they go will affect the way things go for us, that we might live a peaceable life. But the point he's making is he's not saying for Jews and Gentiles, he's saying for all men, kings included. He's not by mentioning kings saying, I don't mean all people, I just mean every category.

Well, even if he did mean every category, he doesn't mention Jews and Gentiles. That's what the Calvinists think all men means. He doesn't mention Jews or Gentiles in the passage, just all.

He wants all people to be saved. He gave his life for ransom for all. Certainly the most responsible way to understand this and to pray for all men means without distinction, without exception.

We don't have to name them all one by one, but we should have no exceptions to who we would pray for. We shouldn't have people we don't love enough to pray for, because God doesn't have any that he doesn't love enough to ransom. He died as ransom for all men.

1 Timothy 4.10 says, To this end we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe. Now, he's the Savior of all men, but in a special sense, those who believe. What sense? Those who believe actually experience the salvation that he acquired for all men.

It seems to distinguish between those who believe and the rest. The rest are included in those that he is the Savior of. Now, it's hard to know exactly how Paul means this.

Calvinists think he means, instead of the word especially, it should be translated namely. That he's really saying that God is the Savior of all men, namely those who believe.

That's how they would translate that.

But I believe this is, to take it as it's translated here, is consistent with the general teaching of Paul. Christ died for everybody. But those who believe are especially fortunate to benefit from that.

In a special sense, he's their Savior because they have made him that personally. Hebrews 2.9 says, But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. There's nothing in this passage that ever suggests that there's some Jew-Gentile distinction that the writer is trying to eliminate here by saying everyone.

It's not saying everyone Jew and Gentile. In the context, there's no qualifications, nothing to indicate that he doesn't mean every last person. Jesus tasted death for everyone.

2 Peter 3.9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. Some men count slackness. But is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Now there's some textual differences in this passage. Where it says us, some manuscripts say you. He's longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish, but come to repentance.

Now they would point out that earlier in the passage in chapter 3 of 2 Peter, the readers are identified as Christians. And therefore, he says God is patient toward you, meaning you, the Christians, the elect, not willing that any should perish. So they would make this not a statement about God's universal desire for all people to repent, only all the elect.

But he's being patient toward you, my Christian friends, he's not willing that you should perish, but he wants all of you to repent. Aren't you already repentant? Isn't that why you're a Christian? He's waiting for some people to repent. Is it the Christians he's waiting for to repent? He's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The Christians already have. So he can't be suggesting that he's only not willing for any of the elect to perish, because he's waiting for them to repent. They've already done that.

There's got to be something beyond the elect he's thinking of here. Now, I'm not going to go into much detail, because we're out of time. But this next section, does God have two contrary wills? The Calvinists believe God has two wills.

There's some quotes there to let you know that he has a decreed will and a prescriptive will. He says he wants everyone to be saved. That's his prescriptive will.

Everyone should. He commands all men everywhere to repent. But his decreed will is his secret will.

He's decreed that not everyone will. So they say, although you can find verses where God commands everyone to repent, that doesn't mean he has decreed that all will. His secret will is really where he's at.

He's got a secret will that's different than what he commands people about. Jerry Walls responds to this. There's some quotes from the Calvinists on this.

There's three Calvinists I quote on that, or no, two Calvinists I quote on that. You can find many more. But Jerry Walls, who's not a Calvinist, he's talking about Jeremiah 13, where it says, This is what Jeremiah, speaking for God, said to Judah.

Jerry Walls is talking about that statement. He says, So while the text appears to identify Judah's pride as the root cause of punishment, the Calvinist instead concludes that Judah's ability to repent depends on God's eternally fixed plan. Again, although the text seems to identify salvation as God's deepest desire, the Calvinist must conclude that at a deeper level, God never intended to bestow transforming grace on Jeremiah's hearers.

In other words, the true intentions of God cannot be discerned from his words. That last line is particularly cogent because it's unavoidable. If God said, My eyes will weep with tears if you don't repent, but I have secretly decreed that you won't.

And this is one of many cases you find throughout the scripture. That God says he wants something, but secretly he wants something else. Jerry Walls says, Well, if we can't discern his intentions from what he says, how can we know anything about him? Isn't it from what he says that we learn who he is, what he wants, and so forth? How does the Calvinist claim to know what God wants if we can't know from his words? The Arminian says, I think we can know what he wants from his words.

And to say he wants something different secretly, even though he doesn't say so, is to argue that we can know something about God from what he didn't say, but we can't know from what he did say. This just doesn't seem like good biblical exegesis to me. It's strange.

Now, we're almost at the end of this lecture. Christ's death was for the sins of the whole world, the Bible says. John 1.29, John the Baptist said, John 3.17, 2 Corinthians 5.19, we already saw, 1 John 2.2, Now, that particular statement seems to be written specifically to preclude any doctrine of limited atonement.

He did not die for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Who are we? We're the Christians. He didn't only die for the sins of the Christians, he died for the sins of the whole world additionally, is what John says.

Now, of course, the Calvinist does with this what he always does. The whole world means not just the Jews. When it says not us only, John is a Jewish believer, saying not us Jews only, but the Gentiles too.

That's the import of this verse that the Calvinist sees in it. That he is the propitiation for our sins, us Jewish Christians, but not only us Jewish Christians, but also the Gentile Christians, the Gentile elect, the elect of the whole world. So, they understand the whole world not to mean everybody, but only the categories of Jew and Gentile.

However, John uses this expression, the whole world, only one other time in his writings. It's later in the same epistle. In 1 John 5, 1 John chapter 5, it says in verse 18, We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. The whole world. That's the only other time he uses this expression, the whole world.

Jesus died not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Also, he says, we know God, but the whole world lies in the wicked one. Certainly, this doesn't mean we Jews know God, but the Jews and the Gentiles lie in the wicked one.

The whole world is most easily understood to mean everybody on the planet. If it means that in the second case, it no doubt means it in the first case. Why not? It's the most natural way to understand him.

John, in his epistle, never hints at any concern of distinction between Jew and Gentile. In some epistles, those issues come up, not in 1 John. He doesn't describe any concern to remove distinction from Jews and Gentiles.

That's not the categories he's even talking about in the epistle. So, to make it mean that there is irresponsible. Matthew 13, 44 is very important.

Because Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. Now, does this man want a field or does he want a treasure? There's a treasure in the field. So, he buys the field.

Why? Because unless he owns the field, he doesn't have mineral rights. And you know, some minerals are in there, some gold, silver, diamonds are in that field. He doesn't care much about the dirt.

He's not a farmer. He's a speculative investor. I'm going to buy this field for the mineral rights.

There's a treasure in there. No one knows it but me. I was plowing.

I found this treasure. No one else knows it's there. I hid it again.

I went and bought the field at the value of the field. The seller, not knowing it, had a hidden value because that treasure was there. I got a treasure for the price of the field.

He bought the field because the treasure was in the field. Jesus bought the world because the church was in the world. Yes, he bought the church.

Yes, he purchased the church, the Bible says, and his friends and his sheep. But they were part of the world. In order to claim them, he had to claim the whole world.

He had to get crown rights to the whole planet. You see, the man who bought the field could be said to have bought the treasure because that's what he was really after. He was after the treasure but he bought the whole field so he could also own the treasure that was in the field.

Christ was after a church. He was after a bride. He was after a flock of his sheep.

But to get them, he bought the whole world. In another parable in the same chapter, Jesus said, the field is the world. Different parable, that's the wheat and the tares parable.

He says, the field is the world. This other parable, he doesn't say the field is the world, but it might be. It was in an earlier parable in the same chapter.

He buys the world. Jesus bought the world to get the treasure. James White, in the book *Debating Calvinism*, says, to think that my Savior died for men who are in hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain.

That is, I can't believe that Jesus died for people other than the elect because it's too horrible for me to entertain the notion that he died for them and they end up in hell. But apparently it's not too horrible for him to entertain the notion that his Savior didn't die for them because he didn't want them to be anywhere else but in hell. That Jesus would die for people and not receive them as his own is too horrible to entertain the thought.

But I'm okay with the thought that Jesus never cared for these people who went to hell. He could have died for them but didn't choose to. He didn't want them anywhere else but hell.

If he did, he would have saved them too, but he didn't. That's not horrible. I don't mind that my God has a horrible character.

All I can stand, what I can't stand, is that he might not always get exactly what he wants. I care about his prerogatives, and I'm not going to worry too much about his character, that he hated these people, that he consigned them to hell when he could have done otherwise, when they were no more guilty and deserving of hell than I am, but he saved

me, James White, me, Steve Gregg. He saved me, but I was just as bad as they were.

The fact that I'm going to heaven and they're going to hell, that doesn't bother me. God, he can do that if he wants, as long as I'm not one of them. That's what Calvinists feel.

They don't mind that God hates people almost gratuitously, or we should say he loves some people gratuitously, but leaves others unhelped who need the help just as much. That doesn't bother him, but it does bother him to think that Jesus might have wanted some people to save that didn't get saved. But God often says in Scripture, he doesn't always get what he wants.

We'll see that when we get to irresistible grace, which is our next lecture. Let me close with this Clark Pinnock quote, and we're done. We've gone over time again.

Clark Pinnock, not a Calvinist, said, We consent to Paul's judgment that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and to Peter's conviction that God is not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. If it seems controversial to assert this conviction boldly and unashamedly, then it ought at least to be admitted that here is a truth far more deserving of controversy than many which are debated. On it hangs, we believe, the validity of the universal offer of the gospel, and the possibility of Christian assurance.

If we do not know that God loves all sinners, we do not know that God loves us, and we do not know that he loves those to whom we take the gospel. If Jesus didn't die for everyone, maybe I'm one of the ones he didn't die for. You never know.

We cannot have any assurance of our salvation if he didn't die for everybody, because all I know is I'm part of everybody. I don't know and can't know if I'm one of the elect or not, but I can know I'm part of everybody. If Jesus died for everybody, he died for me.

If he only died for the elect, I can only hope. And the Bible, fortunately, does not require us to think Jesus didn't die for everybody. In fact, the affirmation always is that he did die for everybody.

So, in this point, Calvinism seems to be misreading, I think, the text of Scripture. Okay, we close there.