

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption

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As was observed above, election itself saved no one; it only marked out particular sinners for salvation. Those *chosen* by the Father and given to the Son had to be *redeemed* if they were to be saved. In order to secure their redemption, Jesus Christ came into the world and took upon Himself human nature so that He might identify Himself with His people and act as their legal representative or substitute. Christ, acting on behalf of His people, perfectly kept God's law and thereby worked out

**Biblical Support for
the "Five Points" of
Calvinism¹**

¹ The question of supreme importance is not how the system under consideration came to be formulated into five points, or why it was named Calvinism, but rather *is it supported by Scripture?* The final court of appeal for determining the validity of any theological system is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. If Calvinism can be verified by clear and explicit declarations of Scripture, then it must be received by Christians; if not, it must be rejected. For this reason, Biblical passages are given below in support of the five points.

After each point has been introduced, some of the more important verses in which it is taught are quoted. All quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. In each case, the italics within the verses are ours. Apart from the remarks contained in the headings under which the verses are given, there are no explanatory comments as to their meaning. This procedure was necessary because of the limited design of this introductory survey. To compensate for this, we have recommended a number of works in Part Three which deal with these as well as with many other passages of Scripture related to Calvinism.

Although the "five points" are dealt with below under separate headings, and texts are classified in support of each of them individually, they must not be evaluated on a purely individual basis. For these five doctrines are not presented in the Bible as separate and independent units of truth. On the contrary, in the Biblical message they are woven into one harmonious, interrelated system in which God's plan for recovering lost sinners is marvelously displayed. In fact, these doctrines are so inseparably connected that no one of them can be fully appreciated unless it is properly related to, and viewed in light of the other four; for *they mutually explain and support one another*. To judge these doctrines individually without relating each to the others would be like attempting to evaluate one of Rembrandt's paintings by looking at only one color at a time and never viewing the work as a whole. Do not, therefore, merely judge the Biblical evidence for each point separately, but rather consider carefully the collective value of the evidence when these five doctrines are viewed together as a system. When thus properly correlated, they form a fivefold cord of unbreakable strength. (Steele, D. N., Thomas, C. C., & Nicole, R. (1963). *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented* (p. 24). The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co.)

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a perfect righteousness which is imputed or credited to them the moment they are brought to faith in Him. Through what He did, they are constituted righteous before God. They are also freed from all guilt and condemnation as the result of what Christ suffered for them. Through His substitutionary sacrifice He endured the penalty of their sins and thus removed their guilt forever. Consequently, when His people are joined to Him by faith, they are credited with perfect righteousness and are freed from all guilt and condemnation. They are saved, not because of what they themselves have done or will do, but solely on the ground of Christ's redeeming work.

Historical or main line Calvinism has consistently maintained that Christ's redeeming work was definite in *design* and *accomplishment*—that it was intended to render complete satisfaction for certain specified sinners and that it actually secured salvation for these individuals and for no one else. The salvation which Christ earned for His people includes everything involved in bringing them into a right relationship with God, including the gifts of faith and repentance. Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners as to whether or not Christ's work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed Himself will be saved infallibly. Redemption, therefore, was designed to bring to pass God's purpose of election.

All Calvinists agree that Christ's obedience and suffering were of infinite value, and that if God had so willed, the satisfaction rendered by Christ would have saved every member of the human race. It would have required no more obedience, nor any greater suffering for Christ to have secured salvation for every man, woman, and child who ever lived than it did for Him to secure salvation for the elect only. But He came into the world to represent and save only those given to Him by the Father. Thus Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others, but it was not limited in value for it was of infinite worth and would have secured salvation for everyone if this had been God's intention.

The Arminians also place a limitation on the atoning work of Christ, but one of a much different nature. They hold that Christ's saving work was designed to make possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death *in itself* did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone.

Since all men will not be saved as the result of Christ's redeeming work, a limitation must be admitted. Either the atonement was limited in that it was *designed to secure* salvation for certain sinners but not for others, or it was limited in that it was not intended to secure salvation for any, but was *designed only to make it possible* for God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe. In other words, one must limit its design either in *extent* (it was not intended for all) or *effectiveness* (it did not secure salvation for any). As Boettner

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so aptly observes, for the Calvinist, the atonement “is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge that goes only half-way across.”²

A. The Scriptures describe the end intended and accomplished by Christ’s work as the full salvation (actual reconciliation, justification, and sanctification) of His people.

1. The Scriptures state that Christ came, not to enable men to save themselves, but to *save* sinners.

- Matthew 1:21: “... she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will *save his people* from their sins.”
- Luke 19:10: “For the Son of man came to seek and to *save* that which was lost.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:21: For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him *we might become* the righteousness of God.
- Galatians 1:3, 4: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, *who gave himself* for our sins to *deliver us* from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.
- 1 Timothy 1:15: The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *save* sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners.
- Titus 2:14: ... *who gave himself* for us to *redeem us* from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

² Boettner, *Predestination*, p. 153. Spurgeon’s comments, as to whether it is the Calvinists or the Arminians who limit the atonement, are to the point. “We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, ‘No, certainly not.’ We ask them the next question—Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer ‘No.’ They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say, ‘No. Christ has died that any man may be saved if’—and then follow certain conditions of salvation. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as infallibly to secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ’s death; we say, ‘No, my dear sir, it is you that do it.’ We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ’s death not only may be saved, but are saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.” Quoted from Packer, “Introductory Essay,” (above, fn. 4), p. 14.

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- 1 Peter 3:18: For *Christ* also *died* for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, *that he might bring us to God*, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.
2. The Scriptures declare that, as the result of what Christ did and suffered, His people are reconciled to God, justified, and given the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies them. All these blessings were secured by Christ Himself for His people.
- a. Christ, by His redeeming work, secured *reconciliation* for His people.
- Romans 5:10: For if while we were enemies we were *reconciled* to God *by the death of his Son*, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19: All this is from God, who through Christ *reconciled* us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
 - Ephesians 2:15, 16: ... by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and *might reconcile us* both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.
 - Colossians 1:21, 22: And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, *he has now reconciled* in his body of flesh by his death, *in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him*.
- b. Christ secured the righteousness and pardon needed by His people for their *justification*.
- Romans 3:24, 25: ... they are *justified* by his grace as a gift, *through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
 - Romans 5:8, 9: But God shows his love for us in that *while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*. Since, therefore, we are now *justified by his blood*, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

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- 1 Corinthians 1:30: He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our *righteousness* and sanctification and redemption.
 - Galatians 3:13: Christ *redeemed us* from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us ...
 - Colossians 1:13, 14: He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom *we have redemption*, the forgiveness of sins.
 - Hebrews 9:12: ... he entered once for all into the Holy Place, *taking* not the blood of goats and calves but *his own blood*, thus securing an *eternal redemption*.
 - 1 Peter 2:24: He himself *bore our sins* in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
- c. Christ secured the gift of the Spirit which includes *regeneration* and *sanctification* and all that is involved in them.
- Ephesians 1:3, 4: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ *with every spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
 - Philippians 1:29: For it has been *granted to you* that for the sake of Christ you should not only *believe* in him but also suffer for his sake.
 - Acts 5:31: "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, *to give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness of sins."
 - Titus 2:14: ... who gave himself for us to *redeem us* from all iniquity and to *purify* for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.
 - Titus 3:5, 6: ... he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of *regeneration* and *renewal* in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly *through* Jesus Christ our Savior.
 - Ephesians 5:25, 26: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might *sanctify* her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

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- 1 Corinthians 1:30: He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and *sanctification* and redemption.
- Hebrews 9:14: ... how much more shall the *blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, *purify* your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
- Hebrews 13:12: So Jesus also *suffered* outside the gate *in order to sanctify* the people through his own blood.
- 1 John 1:7: ... but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the *blood of Jesus* his Son *cleanses* us from all sin.

B. Passages which represent the Lord Jesus Christ, in all that He did and suffered for His people, as fulfilling the terms of a gracious compact or arrangement which He had entered into with His heavenly Father before the foundation of the world.

1. Jesus was sent into the world by the Father to save the people which the Father had given to Him. Those given to Him by the Father come to Him (see and believe in Him) and none of them shall be lost.
 - John 6:35–40: Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. *All that the Father gives me will come to me*; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but *the will of him who sent me*; and this is the will of him who sent me, *that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me*, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”
2. Jesus, as the good shepherd, lays down His life for His sheep. All who are “His sheep” are brought by Him into the fold and are made to hear His voice and follow Him. Notice that the Father had given the sheep to Christ!
 - John 10:11, 14–18: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for *the sheep*.... I am the good shepherd; *I know my own* and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for *the sheep*. And I have *other sheep*, that are not of this fold; *I must bring them also*, and they *will* heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

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No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; *this charge I have received from my Father.*"

- John 10:24–29: [The unbelieving Jews demanded of Him] "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, *because you do not belong to my 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, and no one shall 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 the Father's hand.*"
3. Jesus, in His high priestly prayer, prays not for the world but for those given to Him by the Father. In fulfillment of the Father's charge Jesus had accomplished the work the Father had sent Him to do—to make God known to His people and to give them eternal life.
- John 17:1–11, 20, 24–26: When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, *since thou hast given him power over all flesh, so that he might, give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.*

"I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word. Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me. I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.... I do not pray for these only, but also for those who are to believe in me through their word, ... Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I

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have known thee; and *these know that thou hast sent me*. I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

4. Paul declares that all of the "spiritual blessings" which the saints inherit such as sonship, redemption, the forgiveness of sin, etc., result from their being "in Christ," and he traces these blessings back to their ultimate source in the eternal counsel of God—to that great blessing of their having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and destined to be God's sons through Him.

- Ephesians 1:3–12: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He *destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will*, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have *redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses*, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him, *according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will*, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

5. The parallel which Paul draws between the condemning work of Adam and the saving work of Jesus Christ the "second man," the "last Adam," can best be explained on the principle that both stood in covenant relation to "their people" (Adam stood as the federal head of the race, and Christ stood as the federal head of the elect). As Adam involved his people in death and condemnation by his sin, even so Christ brought justification and life to His people through His righteousness.

- Romans 5:12, 17–19: Therefore as sin came into the world through one man [Adam] and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.... If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so *one man's act of righteousness*

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leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

C. Some passages speak of Christ's dying for "all" men and of His death as saving the "world," yet others speak of His death as being definite in design and of His dying for particular people and securing salvation for them.

1. There are two classes of texts that speak of Christ's saving work in *general terms*:
(a) Those containing the word "world"—e.g., John 1:9, 29; 3:16, 17; 4:42; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 John 2:1, 2; 4:14 and (b) Those containing the word "all"—e.g., Romans 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; 1 Timothy 2:4–6; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9.

One reason for the use of these expressions was to correct the false notion that salvation was for the Jews alone. Such phrases as "the world," "all men," "all nations," and "every creature" were used by the New Testament writers to emphatically correct this mistake. These expressions are intended to show that Christ died for all men without *distinction* (i.e., He died for Jews and Gentiles alike) but they are not intended to indicate that Christ died for all men without *exception* (i.e., He did not die for the purpose of saving each and every lost sinner).

2. There are other passages which speak of His saving work in *definite terms* and show that it was intended to infallibly save a particular people, namely those given to Him by the Father.

- Matthew 1:21: "... for he will save *his people* from their sins."
- Matthew 20:28: "... the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a *ransom for many*."
- Matthew 26:28: "... for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out *for many* for the forgiveness of sins."
- John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for *the sheep*."
- John 11:50–53: "... you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for *the people*, and not that the whole nation should perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one *the children of God who are scattered abroad*. So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death.

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- Acts 20:28: Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed *the church* of the Lord *which he obtained for himself with his own blood*.
- Ephesians 5:25–27: Husbands, love your wives, *as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*, that he might sanctify *her*, having cleansed *her* by the washing of water with the word, that *the church* might be presented before him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that *she* might be holy and without blemish.
- Romans 8:32–34: He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up *for us all*, will he not also *give* us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against *God's elect*? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?
- Hebrews 2:17; 3:1: Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation *for the sins of the people*.... Therefore, holy brethren, *who share in a heavenly call*, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.
- Hebrews 9:15: Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that *those who are called* may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which *redeems them* from the transgressions under the first covenant.
- Hebrews 9:28: ... Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of *many* ...
- Revelation 5:9: ... and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst *ransom men* for God *from every tribe and tongue and people and nation* ..."
 - Review also the verses quoted above under B, 1, 2, 3.³

³ Steele, D. N., Thomas, C. C., & Nicole, R. (1963). *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented* (pp. 38–47). The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co.