

**Biblical Soteriology:
An Overview and Defense of the Reformed Doctrines of Salvation**

Limited Atonement, part 7

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ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED ATONEMENT (continued)

III. Actual Results of the Atonement (continued)

E. Glorification — The atonement secured future glorification for those who were called under the new covenant.

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."

Christ's atonement was not simply of forensic or declarative value. That is, it was not simply a legal proceeding that God found valuable enough to satisfy his wrath against sin. Rather, because believers are united to Christ, they participate in Christ's death. Because believers are united to Christ in his death, and thereby participate in his death, they are accounted as having died themselves. God counts them as having suffered the appropriate penalty for their sins, and thus as being free from the penalty of the Law.

According to Paul in this passage, those who are united to Christ in his death are necessarily also united to Christ in his resurrection, such that they must also receive glorified, resurrected bodies ([1 Cor 15:20-58](#)). Thus, in the same way that the atonement secured justification, it secured glorification (resurrected bodies and total cleansing from all sin) for all who are united to Christ.

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He

also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" ([Rom 8:29-32](#)).

God delivered up his Son in order to justify and glorify the predestined, those whom he foreknew and would effectually call. Having delivered up his Son for these people, it is impossible that God will not also freely give them all things, including the aforementioned glorification. The fact that the atonement took place is the proof that the predestined and called people will be glorified.

Further, God predestined the elect in light of the atonement ([Eph 1:4-7](#)), and the atonement accomplished justification ([Rom 3:23-26](#); [5:6-10](#), [18-19](#); [Gal 3:8-14](#)). According to this passage, glorification necessarily accompanies justification and predestination. It logically follows that the atonement also must have secured glorification.

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him" ([1 Thess 5:9-10](#)).

God destined Christians, not just to initial belief, but to the completion of the salvation process. The salvation process necessarily includes that stage which occurs after physical death, namely glorification ([Rom 8:16-23](#)). "Glorification" describes that phase of salvation wherein we are completely purged of the presence of sin and given our perfected, resurrected bodies. The statement that this salvation is obtained through Christ "who died for us" clearly refers to the atonement. The stated purpose of this atonement is that Christians would be saved, whether they live or die. Since salvation of dead Christians includes glorification, the stated purpose of the atonement includes the glorification of Christians. Since this glorification is part of that which God destined, it must be certain to occur. Thus, the atonement was designed to secure glorification, and God destined it to be successful. Therefore, the atonement secured certain glorification for those for whom it was offered.

"And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were

committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" ([Heb 9:15](#)).

Christ's death took place in order to secure the eternal inheritance, which includes eternal life in a resurrected state of glorification, for those who have been efficaciously called under the new covenant.

F. Fulfillment of All Intended Results — God is sovereign, and promised to fulfill all the covenant blessings, among which are the intended results of the atonement. Because God's purpose in this cannot and could not be thwarted, the atonement accomplished everything that God intended it to accomplish. [See also section IIB of the outline under the Arguments Supporting the Doctrine of Unconditional Election.]

"Then Job answered the Lord, and said 'I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted'" ([Job 42:1-2](#)).

God has the power and authority to do anything. God's expressed purposes for the atonement were the reconciliation, justification, sanctification, adoption and glorification of those for whom the atonement was offered, those whom he had pledged to Christ ([Isa 53:10](#); [John 10:29](#)). Further, God's purpose was contingent upon Christ's obedience ([Rom 5:19](#)), and Christ was fully obedient. Since God purposed to do these things, and was able to do them, and since Christ fulfilled his part of the bargain, the atonement must have accomplished its intended goals.

"The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand . . . For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?" ([Isa 14:24, 27](#)).

God can and does do whatever he swears to do. For his own name's sake, he must fulfill his promises. God promised the gospel blessings to Christ ([Gal 3:8-16](#); compare [Isa 53:10-12](#)). These blessings include reconciliation, justification, sanctification, adoption, glorification, and all the other blessings of the gospel. The atonement was the means by which God determined to fulfill these promises to Christ ([Heb 9:12](#)). Thus, when Christ kept his part of the bargain by offering the atonement, the Father fulfilled his part by granting Christ all the blessings the atonement was designed to accomplish.

"Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it" ([Isa 46:8-11](#)).

God established his purpose regarding the atonement, and truly spoke that intention through his Son, prophets and apostles. Whatever God plans in his holy, eternal counsel, he surely does. God unwaveringly accomplishes all his good pleasure. Since God planned the atonement and its results, and covenanted with Christ that the atonement would succeed, the atonement must have perfectly accomplished all the results for which God was pleased to intend it. Moreover, the atonement cannot have failed to save everyone that God was pleased to save by it because God necessarily accomplishes all, not some, of his good pleasure. If anyone has not been saved by the atonement, then it has not been God's good pleasure to save him. [See also section IVA1a3 of the Arguments Supporting the Doctrine of Limited Atonement.]

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" ([Heb 9:11-12](#)).

The reference to Christ's blood, shed at the cross, indicates that the author spoke of the crucifixion and its benefits. Though he did not mention "justification" here, the context of the book (compare [Heb 7:25](#); [9:21](#); [10:18](#)) demonstrates his understanding of this idea and its relatedness redemption. The passage indicates that at the cross Christ obtained eternal redemption. Christ did not redeem himself, because he did not need redemption. Still, redemption needs an object. Redemption may be an abstract concept without a particular redeemed object, but redemption cannot be manifested without an object. In this case, obtaining redemption was a careful way for the author to state both: 1)

that Christ's death actually redeemed specific objects; and 2) that the author had in mind the impetration or obtaining of redemption, and not the application of redemption.

Because redemption must have an object, when Christ obtained redemption he actually obtained it for specific people (compare [Heb 13:12](#): "the people"; [Heb 2:6](#)). He did not simply merit the right to redeem unspecified people, as if he had earned "redemption credits." Under the Mosaic covenant, to which Christ's ministry is here compared, the high priest offered a sacrifice on behalf of the people of Israel. As high priest ([Heb 2:17](#); [3:1](#); [4:14](#), [15](#); [5:5](#), [10](#); [6:20](#); [7:26](#), [28](#); [8:1](#); [9:11](#)), Christ offered himself as an acceptable and effective sacrifice on behalf of:

- his brethren ([Heb 2:17](#))
- the people ([Heb 2:17](#))
- his house ([Heb 3:6](#))
- the people of God ([Heb 4:9](#))
- all those who obey him ([Heb 5:9](#))
- the house of Israel ([Heb 8:8](#), [10](#))
- the house of Judah ([Heb 8:8](#))
- those who have been called ([Heb 9:15](#))
- many ([Heb 9:28](#))
- those who are sanctified ([Heb 10:14](#))
- house of God ([Heb 10:21](#))

Through his cautions throughout the book, it is evident that the author agreed with the other New Testament authors and leaders that spiritual Israel differs substantially from national Israel (see Appendix). He did not deny that God's people included Gentiles (see reference to Timothy in [Heb 10:23](#)), but rather understood these Old Testament ([Heb 8:8](#), [10](#)) to be fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament church ([Heb 10:21](#); [13:10-14](#)), specifically in those who persevere until the end ([Heb 3:6](#), [14](#); [6:11](#); [10:28-39](#)).