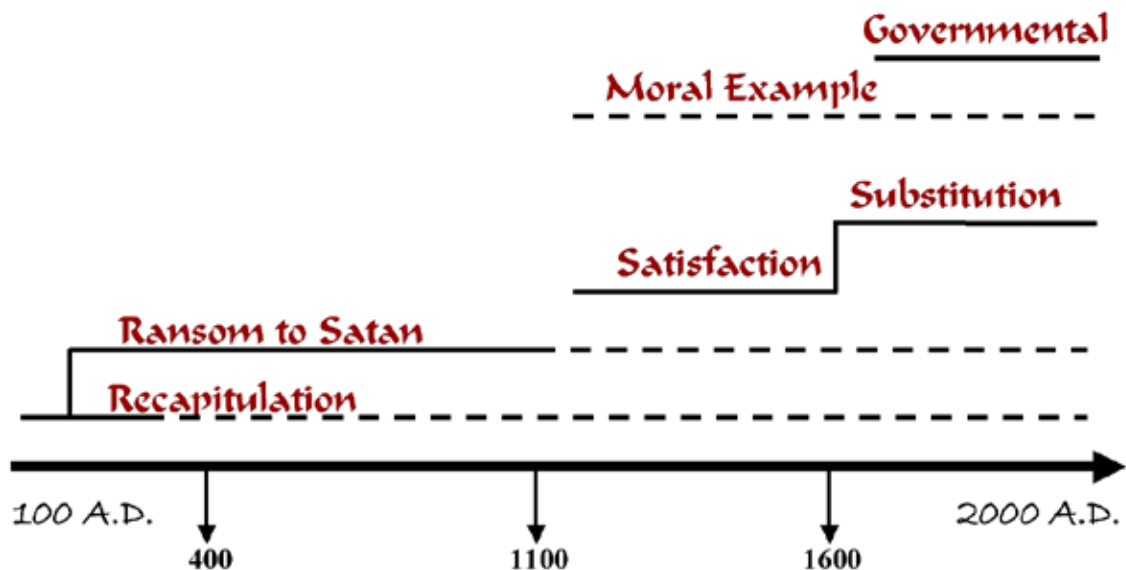


## SESSION 5

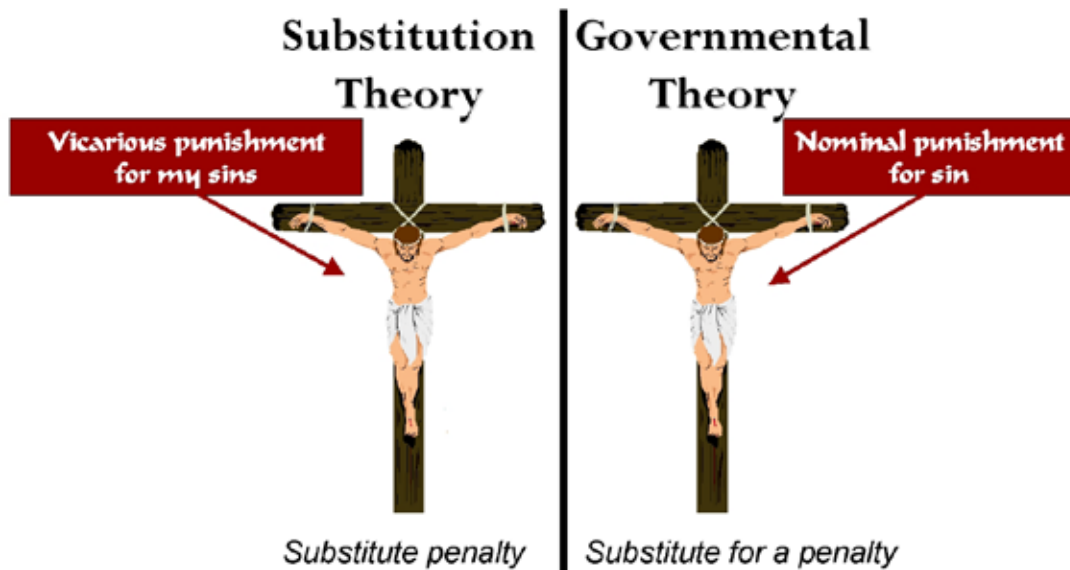
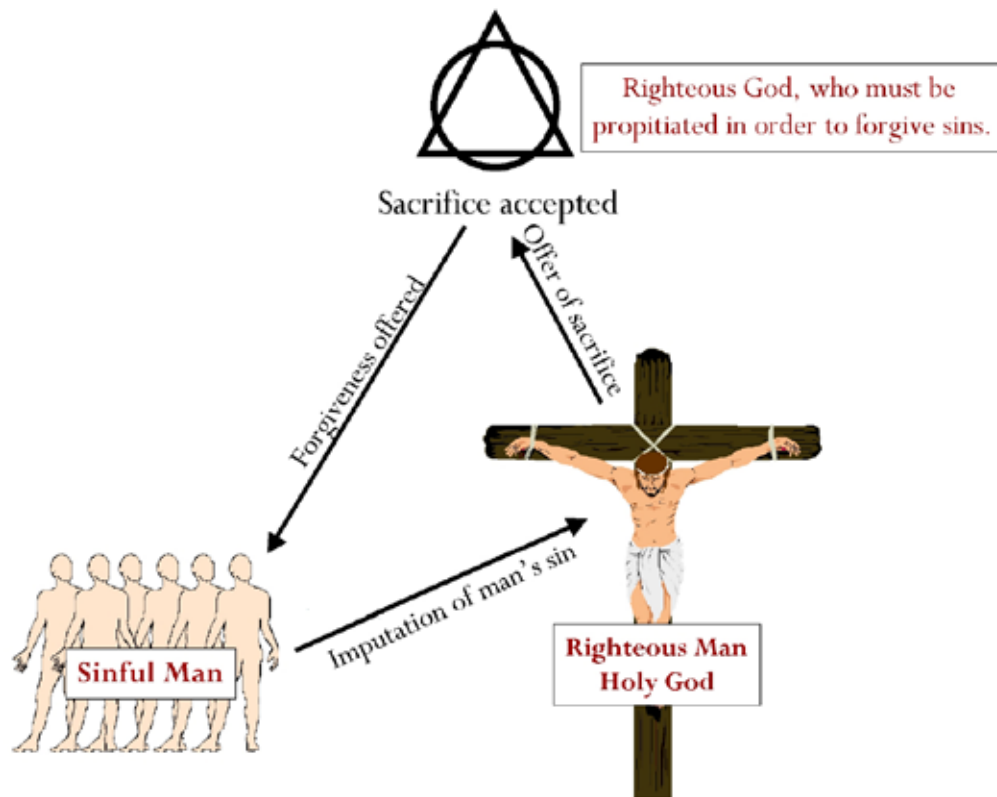
# ATONEMENT: SUBSTITUTION THEORY

## 6. Vicarious Substitution



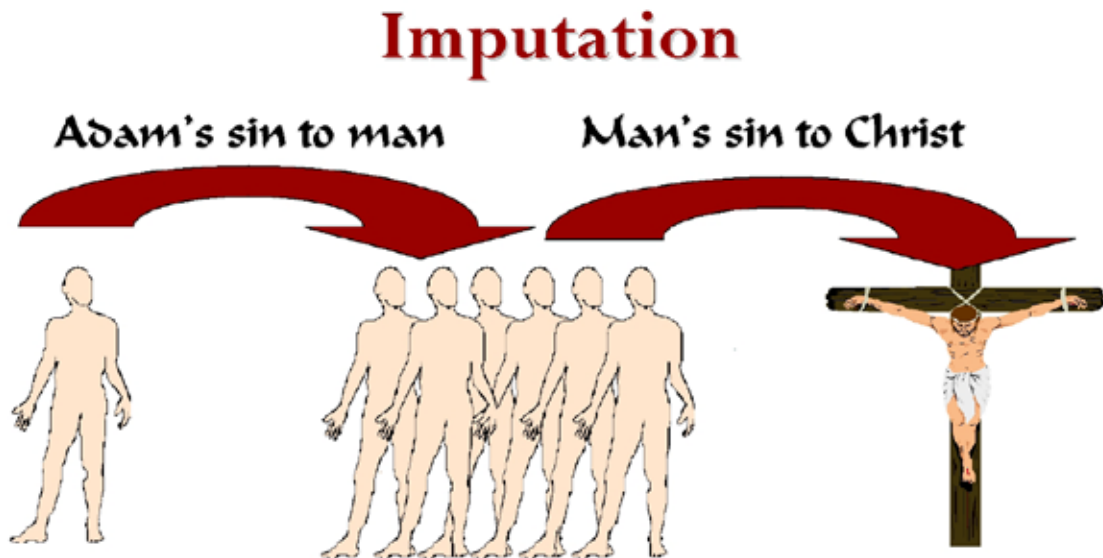
**Belief:** The atonement is made on the Cross when Christ vicariously bore the exact penalty of His people, thereby placating the wrath of God and satisfying His righteousness.

**Adherents:** Martin Luther, Calvin, Reformed Protestants.



## Key Terms

- Propitiation:** The act whereby God's righteous wrath is satisfied by the atonement of Christ.
- Imputation:** The transference of the sin of man to Christ while Christ was on the Cross.
- Redemption:** Lit. "To be purchased." The scriptural teaching that God paid a price for man's salvation, redeeming us from sin.



	Ransom to Satan	Vicarious Penal Substitution
Reason:	Cosmic Warfare	Divine Judgment
Offended Party:	Satan	God
Result:	Price Paid to Satan	Price Paid to God
Benefit:	Satan Releases	God Forgives

# The Offer

A Presentation of the Gospel According to Vicarious Substitution

## The Problem

**The Bible says that all people are guilty of offending a righteous God.**



Romans 3:23 "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Sin means that we have offended God in thought and action.  
If you have ever lied, cheated, stole, been selfish, or had lustful thoughts, you stand guilty before God.

## THE PROBLEM

**The Bible says that God is perfectly and eternally righteous.**

Psalms 97:2

"... Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne."

Psalms 119:142

"Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness . . ."



**Like a judge in a court, He must punish the offender.**

Hab. 1:13

"Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor."

Romans 6:23

"The wages of sin is death . . ."

But can't God just  
forgive my sin out of  
love?

God can't *just* forgive sin

### Imagine this situation:

You are watching the proceedings in a courtroom where a man is accused of robbery. The evidence is clearly convicting. There are witnesses who saw the defendant commit the crime. There are videotapes of the crime which show the defendant in the act of robbery. Finally, the defendant himself confesses.

What if the judge says to the defendant, "Even though you did this, I am going to set you free with no penalty. I forgive you."

Would that judge be considered righteous?

Of course not. If he is righteous and just, he *must* punish the crime.

But what if the defendant said  
he was sorry?

What if the defendant  
said that he would never do  
it again?

While it is good that the man was sorry and said that he would not do it again, the judge must still punish the crime if he is to remain righteous. It might be kind for the judge to let the man go free, but it would be unjust.



## We are like the defendant

We have committed sin before God.  
And while we might be sorry and repentant, God cannot deny His righteousness any more than He can cease to be God. God must punish our crime. As a judge sentences criminals to jail, so God must sentence sinners to hell.



Colossians 3:25

“For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”

## The Dilemma

### God’s Dilemma:

The Bible says God is righteous and must punish sinners.

Psalm 119:142

“Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness . . .”

**But** →

The Bible says God loves all people, not wanting to send anyone to hell.

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

### Our Dilemma:

Our sin must be punished.

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death . . .”

**And** →

Good works cannot save us.

Romans 3:20

“Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”

## The Solution



### God offers His Son to be our substitute

Mark 10:45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

### Christ took the penalty Himself

Isaiah 53:6

"All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

The Cross was the only way for God to remain righteous and yet forgive our sins.

It is a perfect demonstration of God's love *and* justice.



Romans 3:21–25a

"But now God has shown us a different way of being right in His sight— not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done. For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right [declared righteous] with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us."



Just because Jesus Christ died on our behalf does not mean that this automatically applies to us. We must trust in Christ for salvation, thereby receiving God's offer.



John 1:12  
“Yet to all who received Him,  
to those who believed in His name,  
He gave the right to become  
children of God . . .”

**You can bear your  
own punishment**

**OR**

**You can allow  
Christ to bear it**



## The Offer

**How do you do this?  
Trust in Christ to take  
your penalty. He died  
on the Cross and rose  
from the grave for the  
purpose of taking your  
punishment.**



### **John 3:16–18**

“For this is the way God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.”

### **Strengths:**

- It takes God’s righteousness seriously.
- It takes our sin seriously.
- It shows the severity and necessity of the atonement.
- It shows that there was no other way.

### **Scriptural Support Old Testament**

- The institution of the Passover points to a vicarious substitution.
- The sacrificial system (esp. the day of atonement) pointed to the perfect sacrifice that Christ would give on behalf of our sins (see Lev. 16:9–10, 16, 29). Christ is later called the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29; Rev. 5:7).
- Isaiah 53 vividly describes vicarious substitution.

### Scriptural Support New Testament

**Mk. 10:45**

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**Matt. 26:39**

“And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”

**Gal. 3:13**

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree.’”

**Rom. 3:21–26**

“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed—namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus’ faithfulness.”

**2 Cor. 5:21**

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

**Eph. 5:2**

“And live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.”

**Heb. 7:26–27**

“For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

**Heb. 9:28**

“So also, after Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, to those who eagerly await him he will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation.”

**1 Pet. 2:24**

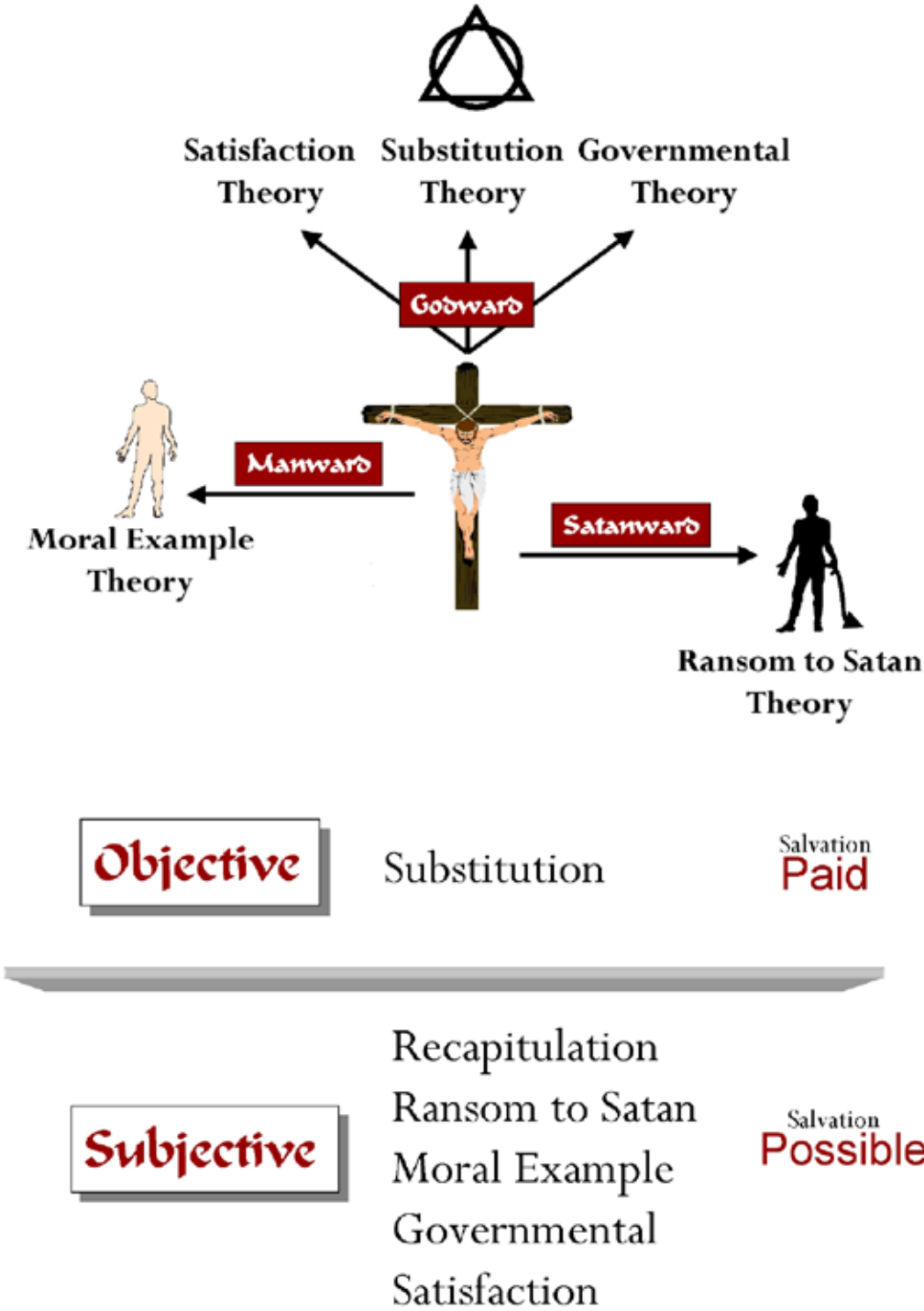
“And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

**1 Jn. 2:1–2**

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

**1 Pet. 2:24**

“And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”



**Why did Christ have to die?**

<b>Recapitulation:</b>	Christ lived and died to earn the right to represent humanity, thereby making salvation possible.
<b>Ransom to Satan:</b>	Christ died to pay Satan so that people would be freed from bondage.
<b>Satisfaction:</b>	Christ died to satisfy God's honor, thereby purchasing merits of grace so that people could draw upon them when needed.
<b>Moral Example:</b>	Christ lived and died to give us an example to follow.
<b>Governmental:</b>	Christ died as a substitute for a penalty so that salvation may be possible.
<b>Vicarious Substitution:</b>	Christ died to pay to God the exact penalty of the sins of individuals.

<b>Atonement Theories</b>	Recapitulation	Ransom to Satan	Satisfaction	Moral Example	Governmental	Vic. Substitution
<b>Proponents</b>	Irenaeus, Eastern Orthodoxy	Origen, Eastern Orthodoxy	Anselm, Roman Catholicism	Pelagius, Abelard, Liberalism	Grotius, Arminianism	Luther, Calvin, Reformed
<b>Why did Christ die?</b>	Christ lived and died to earn the right to represent humanity, undoing Adam's sin.	Christ died to pay Satan so that people would be freed from bondage.	Christ died to satisfy God's honor thereby purchasing merits of grace so that people could draw upon them when needed	Christ lived and died to give us an example to follow.	Christ died as a substitute for a penalty so that salvation may be possible.	Christ died to pay the exact penalty of the sins of individuals to God.
<b>Was His death the only way?</b>	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Result</b>	Salvation made possible	Salvation made possible	Salvation made possible	Salvation made possible	Salvation made possible	Salvation secured
<b>Focus</b>	Man	Satan	God	Man	God	God

### Which theory is correct?

They all have truth in that . . .

- Christ did undo Adam's sin through His obedience to the law
- Satan was defeated
- God's honor was satisfied
- Christ is an example to live by
- God's government is upheld

But the atonement itself is a vicarious, penal substitution that was necessary to redeem mankind.

# EXCURSUS: THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

*For whom did Christ die?*

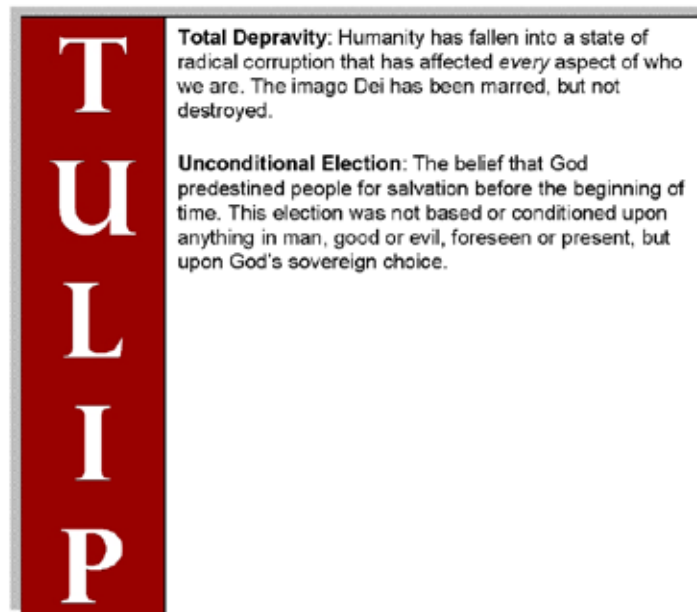
**Two Views:**

1. Limited Atonement
2. Unlimited Atonement

## 1. Limited Atonement

**Limited Atonement:** The belief that Christ only died for the sins of the elect in order to secure their salvation.

**Adherents:** Most Reformed theologians





Calvinism	Arminianism
<b>T</b> otal Depravity (Radical Depravity)	Partial Depravity
<b>U</b> nconditional Election	Conditional Election
<b>L</b>	
<b>I</b>	
<b>P</b>	

**Defense of Limited Atonement:**

- 1. If Christ died for the sins of all people, then their sins have been paid for by virtue of Christ’s vicarious atonement for their individual sins. If all people’s sins have been paid for, then all people stand blameless before God and will be saved. This is universalism and contrary to biblical revelation (Matt. 7:14).
- 2. Christ explicitly stated that he only came to die for the elect.

**Jn. 6:39**  
“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”

**Matt. 1:21**  
“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

**Acts 20:28**

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

**Eph. 5:25**

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

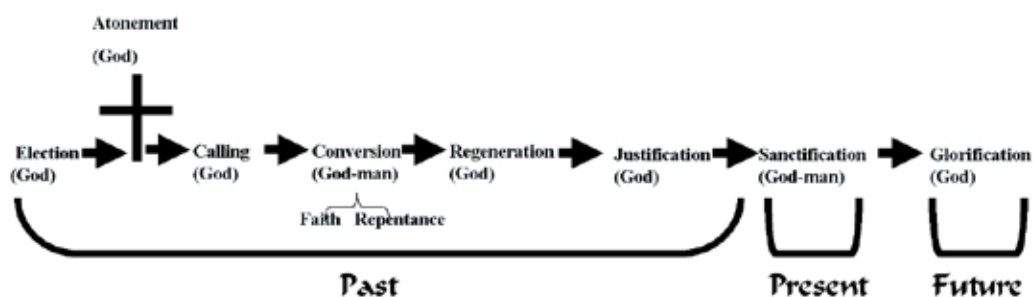
**Jn. 17:9**

“I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours.”

3. If Christ's intent was to die for all people, then He failed, since not all people will be saved. This would be the only aspect of salvation in the ordo that falls short of its intended goal.

**Rom. 8:29-30**

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called,



4. Why would God knowingly pay for the sins of someone He has not elected?

5. How could we believe that people are being punished in hell for sins that have been paid for by Christ? Isn't this double jeopardy? If God's righteous requirements have already been satisfied by Christ, there is no justifiable reason for God to send them to hell. God would be unjust.

## 2. Unlimited Atonement

**Unlimited Atonement:** Christ died for every individual, elect and non-elect, in order to make salvation possible for all.

**Advocates:** Arminians, most dispensationalists, some Reformed theologians

**Defense for Unlimited Atonement:**

While the rational arguments behind the Limited Atonement/Particular Redemption Theory are convincing, the scriptural support for unlimited atonement is overwhelming.

### **1 Jn 2:2**

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

### **2 Cor. 5:18**

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

**Jn. 1:29**

“The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

**1 Tim. 2:5-6**

“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”

**Heb. 2:9**

“But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.”

**2 Pet. 2:1**

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”

**Jn. 3:16**

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

**COMPROMISE:**

Christ died for all people *potentially*, but *actually* only paid for the sins of the elect.

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE? <i>All People</i> WHOSE SINS DID CHRIST PAY FOR? <i>Only the Elect</i>	Christ's death is sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect
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## Group Discussion Questions:

1. The Substitution Theory of the Atonement emphasizes both the righteousness and love of God. Explain how this is true.
2. Some people object to the Substitution Theory of the Atonement believing that foolishly promotes an evil God who vindictively punishes an innocent person for the sins of the guilty. Read 1 Cor. 1:21-25 and 2:14. How do these passages help us to understand this objection?
3. Read the entire passage of Isa. 53 and underline all the words and phrases that suggest that Christ was a substitution for sinners.
4. The book of Isaiah was written 700 years before Christ's birth. We have extant copies of Isaiah among the Dead Sea Scrolls that date back 150 years before Christ. Therefore, no one can claim that this passage (Isa. 53) was written after the fact. How can you use the detailed description of the Atonement given here by Isaiah as a defense for the Christian message?

5. One objection to the Substitution Theory of the Atonement is that if Christ took our exact penalty, why isn't He in Hell for all eternity. Discuss this objection.

6. While the presentation of the Gospel called "The Offer" accurately illustrates the Substitution Theory of the Atonement in many ways, it also falls short in many ways—as all illustrations eventually do. Discuss how the courtroom illustration breaks down.

7. Do you believe that Christ died only for the elect, or for all people? Explain.

8. How was your thinking challenged the most by the lesson? Explain.

