

Resources:

Mr. John Miles. *Doctrine 2 Notes*. Frontier School of the Bible
 Lewis Sperry Chafer. *Systematic Theology Vol. 3*. Pg. 183-205
 David Thompson. *Soteriology #23*. Texas Corners Bible Church
 Charles Ryrie. *Basic Theology*. Pg. 367-374

For whom did Christ die? Who did Jesus die for? Did Jesus die for all, or did Jesus die for some? Another way we could ask this question is this way: Would the Bible teach us that Jesus could look a person in the face and say these words: I did not die for you. Does the Bible teach us that Jesus did not die for certain people?

Now, this issue stems from the elective decree of God. The Bible is clear that God elects, or selects individuals to salvation. As the student of the Word begins to analyze what exactly takes place in election, eventually that student will come across this question. For whom did Christ die?

Over the years this subject has been given a title. The title is this: limited vs. unlimited atonement.

There have been 3 major views regarding this subject.

View #1 - Limited Atonement.

This view says that Jesus died for only an elect group of people. Jesus did not die for all people. He died for some people. And within this view there are 2 camps.

(Camp #1) - Extreme Limited Redemptionists.

This camp is also known as hyper-Calvinism or ultra-calvinism. This camp believes that God decided to elect people to salvation before He decided to create man, before He decided to allow the fall, and before He decided to provide salvation. This camp says that the order of God's decisions would force the student to conclude that God in no way would offer Christ to die for anyone other than His elected people. This camp also takes this stance to the point to say that it would be wrong to preach the gospel to anyone or it would be unnecessary to evangelize because you may run the risk of sharing the good news with someone who is not elect. It would be wrong to tell them that they could believe on Christ's cross-work for them and be saved, because there was no cross-work done for them, and they can't believe.

(Camp #2) - Moderate Limited Redemptionists.

This camp is known as moderate Calvinism, and this is the camp that says they agree with all five points of Calvinism known by the acronym of T.U.L.I.P. The "L" in TULIP stands for limited atonement. This view agrees with the order of God's decisions as mentioned in the extreme camp, but this camp rejects the idea that evangelism should not be done. They view evangelism like this: God sent Christ to die for the elect, our job is to preach the gospel to everyone, and those who are the elect will believe. Those who believe are the ones for whom Christ died. Those who do not believe are those for whom Christ did not die.

For a person who believes in limited atonement, that person says this: If Christ died for a person, that person must be saved eventually, or else Christ did not accomplish what God purposed to do in Christ's death. This camp believes that God's primary and only purpose in Christ dying for a person was to guarantee that individual's salvation. They focus on the purpose and the motive behind why God did what He did. They want to focus less on the what and more on the why. They try to determine, and I say this with as much humility as I can, they try to determine what was going on in God's mind.

This camp also often states that they believe Christ died for all people without distinction, but He did not die for all people without exception. What they mean by that is that Christ died for all kinds of people. He died for Jew and Gentile. He died for men and women. He died for children and adults. He died for people of all different cultures and nationalities. That is what they mean by He died for all without distinction. What they

mean by He did not die for all people without exception is that Jesus did not die for every single person. They say Christ died for all kinds of people except for those who are not part of the elect.

View #2 - Unlimited Atonement.

This view says that Jesus died for everyone without distinction and everyone without exception. Jesus died for all people actually and fully. He died for the whole world. Jesus died for all people, not just the elect.

Within this view, there are actually 2 major camps as well.

(Camp #1) Moderate Unlimited Redemptionists.

This camp most often agrees very closely 4 of the five points of Calvinism while rejecting limited atonement. A moderate unlimited Redemptionist believes that Christ did die for all people, but His death for a person does not require the salvation of that person. Christ's death accomplished all that was necessary to make that person savable, but it is not the death of Christ for him that saves him, rather, it is a combination of the enabling power of the Spirit, the drawing of God to salvation through the message of the gospel, and the elective selection of God that brings a person to the point of faith in Christ. Upon faith, the person is saved, chronologically speaking. This camp believes that the death of Christ on behalf of the world of all people allows God to be a God of salvation, but it is only those who are the elect of God that will believe and be saved.

(Camp #2) Extreme Unlimited Redemptionists.

This camp is also known as the Arminians. This camp disagrees with all five points of Calvinism and has its own theology that emphasizes the choices of man rather than the sovereignty of God. This camp does say that Jesus died for all people without distinction and exception, but salvation has little or nothing to do with God's elective choices, it has to do with man's choices. This camp believes that God has given a common grace to all people whereby they can choose to believe in Christ and be saved. That might sound nice, but it results in claiming that salvation is not secured by God but by man's obedience and man's choices. This camp appears to claim that man saves himself based on his obedience in response to the message of Christ on the cross, but it is not God Himself actually doing the saving work.

View #3 - Universal Atonement.

This view says that if Christ died for the whole world, that guarantees salvation for the whole world. All people will eventually be saved because Christ died for all people. This view actually uses the same logic as the limited atonement view. This view states that if Christ died for a person, that person must be saved or else Christ did not accomplish what He set out to do. That is the logic, and I really like what Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote: "What if God did give His Son to die for all men of this dispensation in an equal sense, to the end that lives might be legitimately invited to gospel privileges, could He, if actuated by such a purpose, use any more explicit language than He has used to express such an intent?" Basically Chafer is saying this: Why must a person be saved if Christ died for Him? Is it not okay for the sovereign God of creation to have a purpose that says: I have decided that Christ will die for everyone, but only some will end up being saved. Why is that not okay. The limited redemptionist and universal redemptionist will both say that God can't do that.

Now this view of universal atonement, unlike limited atonement, very clearly and flat out contradicts Scripture. I will refute universalism as heresy, because the Bible is very clear that people will go to eternal condemnation. Not all people will be saved.

Now that I have walked us through those views, let's go to the Word and hear what God has said, and I want us to do this by looking at 14 Biblical statements.

Biblical Statement #1 - The Bible states that Christ died for the Church. **Ephesians 5:27; Acts 20:28**

We cannot in anyway dodge the subject that Christ died for the Church. Ephesians and Acts are not the only places. We could look at John 10:15, Romans 5:8, Titus 2:14, and 1 Peter 1:18-19 and come to the same conclusion. Christ did in fact die for the Church.

Biblical Statement #2 - The Bible states that Christ died for Israel. **John 11:51; Isaiah 53:5-6**

Not only did Christ die for the Church, but Christ also died for the nation Israel. That is plainly and prophetically stated by the high priest in John 11, but also that is the context of Isaiah 53. It was the nation Israel for whom Christ was crushed according to Isaiah 53. I will note though, that Peter does allude to this text of Isaiah in regard to the church, so Isaiah's immediate application concerned Israel, but Isaiah also had a wider scope that went beyond Israel to the Church.

Biblical Statement #3 - The Bible states that the Church is an elect group of God and that Israel is an elect group of God. From this, we can conclude that the Bible states that Christ did die for the elect. **1 Peter 1:2; Duet. 7:6; John 11:51-52**

The Bible is clear that Christ did die for the elect. Now the issue is this: is that the only people for whom Christ died? Is that it? Did Jesus only die for the Church and Israel? Well, to answer that, let's move on to

Biblical Statement #4 - The Bible states that Christ died for the world. **John 1:29; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 2:2.**

All five of these texts, taken in their plain sense, really do appear to say that Christ's death had a broader scope than just the elect. John said the world. The writer of Hebrews said everyone. Paul said all men, and Peter went so far as to say that hell bound false prophets even deny the Master who purchased them. Peter's statement screams the doctrine of redemption to us. If the Biblical writers wanted to avoid us coming to a false conclusion that Jesus died for the whole world, then I think they would have added a sentence or two that explains, in all actuality, Jesus did not die for world or for all, it was only the elect.

Biblical Statement #5 - The Bible states that Christ's redemption work on the cross related to all men. **1 Timothy 2:5-6**

Relating to redemption, Christ is the mediator between God and man, and He is the ransom price payment for all. The term ransom is certainly connected to redemption, because a ransom is the price one pays to redeem something. In this case, Jesus is the ransom for all. If Paul wanted Timothy to think that Jesus was not the ransom price for all, then I think he would have said otherwise.

Biblical Statement #6 - The Bible states that Christ's reconciliation work on the cross related to the world. **2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:20**

The Bible does tell us here that Christ's cross-work had something to do with reconciliation of the world to God. This text appears to be all inclusive.

Biblical Statement #7 - The Bible states that Christ's propitiation work on the cross related to the whole world. **1 John 2:2**

It really does appear that John is saying that Jesus is the satisfactory payment that diverted the wrath of God and continues to divert the wrath of God for not just the elect members of the Church, but even to those who are not the elect members of the Church. Christ is available as the propitiation for the whole world, even though the whole world does not accept the benefit of His availability. To consider John's definition of "whole world," look at 1 John 5:19.

Biblical Statement #8 - The Bible states that Christ's substitutionary work on the cross related to sins of the unjust. **1 Peter 3:18**

According to Peter, even the doctrine of substitution appears to cover a wider scope than just the elect. Peter said that Jesus, being the Just One, was the One who died for the unjust. We know from Scripture that all people without exception are unjust prior to faith. In fact, that is what our next statement is all about.

Biblical Statement #9 - The Bible states that all men without exception are lost and in need of a Savior, including the elect. **Romans 3:22-23**

The Bible is very clear that all people are sinners and therefore need a Savior.

Biblical Statement #10 - The Bible states that not all people will be saved. **Matthew 7:13-14**

The Bible does not let us conclude that all people will be saved. Not all will be saved.

Biblical Statement #11 - The Bible states that anyone who will be saved must believe. **John 8:24; Acts 16:31**

Belief is this hinge point. A person who believes that Christ died for him will be saved. A person who does not believe upon Jesus will die in his sins. That is a simple truth of Scripture.

Biblical Statement #12 - The Bible states that the gospel is to be preached to all. **Acts 17:30**

God commands all men everywhere to repent - to change their mind in respect to sin, God, and self. If God commands the non-elect to repent even though Christ did not die for them, that would mean that God is calling for people to trust in something that did not happen for them.

Biblical Statement #13 - The Bible states that salvation hinges on belief in the work of Christ on the cross, not the actual work of Christ on the cross. **Ephesians 1:13**

When the Bible talks about a person being saved, the reason is always related to belief in Jesus' work on the cross. Paul told the Ephesians they heard the message and believed, therefore they were sealed with the Spirit.

Biblical Statement #14 - The Bible states that a person perishes for a lack of faith rather than a lack of Christ dying for him. **John 3:16**

This is where my argument from silence comes into play. The Bible does not state that unbelievers are condemned because Christ did not die for them, rather, they are condemned for a lack of faith in Christ's death for them. Never once do we read in the Bible that a person is condemned because Christ never died for them, and never once do we read that a person is a believer because Christ died for them.

So what is my conclusion?

I personally believe the lack of Biblical emphasis for limited atonement and the lack of Biblical evidence against unlimited atonement has led me to conclude to believe in unlimited atonement.

I would agree most with a moderate Unlimited Redemptionist viewpoint.

JESUS CHRIST'S DEATH IS UNLIMITED. HE DIED FOR ALL. SALVATION, HOWEVER, IS LIMITED. ONLY SOME WILL BE SAVED.