

## Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 024

John 1:29

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Open your Bibles to Numbers 14:18. In this Sunday School class, we are continuing our look at Calvinism. We are at Roman numeral V, dealing with the acronym TULIP and holding it up to the light of Scripture to see if it is biblical.

### **Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible**

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion

We have talked about the "T," Total Depravity. We finished the "U" last time, Unconditional Election. Now we just have the -LIP in TULIP to cover.

### **V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**

- A. Total Depravity
- B. Unconditional Election
- C. Limited Atonement**
- D. Irresistible Grace
- E. Perseverance of the Saints

We move now into the "L," which stands for Limited Atonement. The Calvinistic system basically teaches that people are dead like rocks, unable to receive truth. So how do people get saved? Well, God imparts the gift of faith to some who happened to be elected unto God before the foundations of the earth. That is the "T" and the "U" in TULIP. In their thinking, it means that Christ did not die for everybody. He only died for the elect, those chosen from the foundations of the earth. That is what you call Limited Atonement. What is their definition of Limited Atonement? Here is our outline that we are going to use as we explore Limited Atonement.

### **C. Limited Atonement**

- 1. Calvinistic definition
- 2. Examples
- 3. Problems with the Calvinistic definition

First I will give you their definition of Limited Atonement. I have actually already done that.

I will also give you some examples from their own writings in which they teach this doctrine. And then, of course, we will give you some problems with Limited Atonement. The biggest problem with it is the Bible, as I will show you. Of all the different points in Calvinism, this is probably the one that is most vulnerable to criticism.

I called myself a four-point Calvinist for years, meaning that I believed in the other parts of TULIP, but not the "L"; then I became a three-and-a-half-point Calvinist; then a three-point Calvinist; and then finally I just said, "Well, forget the whole thing. I am going to follow God." Sorry to be so crass about that.

This is a system, as we have studied, that came into existence in the sixteenth century, and there are people that are completely and totally loyal to this system. So what do they mean by Limited Atonement? Bob Kirkland in his really good little book, which I recommend to you, "Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin," published by Lighthouse Trails in 2018, says this:

"'L' stands for 'Limited Atonement.' Christ's atonement on the Cross was not for everyone but rather was just for the 'elect.'"<sup>1</sup>

The elect are those that have been chosen by God before the foundations of the earth to receive the gift of faith. So, you hear that definition advanced by a critic of Calvinism, and you say to yourself, "Well, surely they do not really believe that, do they?" That is why I bore you with rather lengthy quotes to show you that they really do teach this.

This is a quote from a book by Jay Adams, called "Competent to Counsel," page 70. "Competent to Counsel" is probably his most famous book. It is a really good book in the sense that he is saying that pastors should do their counseling from the Bible and not delve into all this humanistic psychology to counsel people. And I completely agree with that part of it. So, you are reading the book and you are saying, "Yeah, this is great stuff. This is great stuff. This is great stuff." And then you hit page 70. It is like when the needle on the record player scratches. It is like, "Whoa, what am I reading here?"

So this is not hearsay. This is not mishearing someone doing a public teaching. This is in Jay Adams's book, his most famous book, "Competent to Counsel." Jay Adams, who I think is with the Lord now, was a devotee of five-point Calvinism and Reformed Theology. Most people do not know that.

In fact, when I was doing my research at Dallas Seminary on preterism, which is the belief that the Book of Revelation already happened, I was shocked to discover a little, thin book—I had to read everything related to preterism to write my thesis and dissertation. There was this little thin commentary on the bookshelves, promoting preterism by none other than Jay Adams. That was a shock to discover. It is a verse-by-verse commentary on the Book of Revelation trying to argue that it already happened.

The preterists think that the Anti-Christ is Nero and all these kinds of things. It was quite shocking to discover that Jay Adams was so much into all this Reformed Theology when

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

he was so good on another topic, the topic of counseling. But at any rate, we are not here to talk about preterism; we are here to talk about Calvinism. So here is what Adams says on page 70 of "Competent to Counsel." He says,

"But counselors, as Christians, are obligated to present the claims of Christ. They must present the good news that Christ Jesus died on the cross in the place of His own,"<sup>2</sup>—

When Adams says "His own," he means the elect. That is "His own." "Jesus died on the cross for His own. He did not die on the cross for the world." "Oh, come on, Andy, you are being too hard on the guy. You are misreading him. Maybe. But when you get down to the end of the quote, you will see I am not misreading him at all.

—"They must present the good news that Christ Jesus died on the cross in the place of His own, that He bore the guilt and suffered the penalty of their sins. He died that all whom the Father had given to Him might come unto Him and have life everlasting."<sup>3</sup>—

Why did Jesus die, according to Adams? He died for those that the Father had given to Him.

—"As a reformed Christian,"<sup>4</sup>—

What does Adams mean by "a reformed Christian"? A devotee to Calvinism. A devotee to preterism.

"As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, FOR THEY CANNOT SAY THAT. No man knows except Christ Himself who are His elect for whom He died"<sup>5</sup> [emphasis mine].

So basically Adams is saying that when you come to somebody that is a potentially unsaved person, you do not tell them that Jesus died for their sins, because as a Reformed devotee, you do not really know if Jesus died for their sins or not, because after all, you believe in the "L" in Calvinism, Limited Atonement: Jesus died for His elect, not for the world. And until you are sure whether the person is one of the elect or not, which you really cannot tell, you do not go up to unsaved people and say, "Jesus died for you."

In my opinion, we are not dealing with a bunch of ivory tower academic stuff anymore. We are dealing with how the gospel is shared. I will be completely frank with you: every person I get an opportunity to share the gospel with, I tell them, without any equivocation whatsoever, that Jesus died for them. Now, whether you receive the gift of life by trusting in the provision of Christ is up to your volition. But the price has been paid for every single person in the world—today and ever. I can tell them that, because I am not a devotee of

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<sup>2</sup> Jay Adams. *Competent to Counsel*, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Jay Adams. *Competent to Counsel*, 70.

<sup>4</sup> Jay Adams. *Competent to Counsel*, 70.

<sup>5</sup> Jay Adams. *Competent to Counsel*, 70.

Limited Atonement. I do not believe that Limited Atonement is a biblical doctrine. I am a devotee of unlimited atonement.

So if you believe in Limited Atonement, it suddenly affects how you are evangelizing. You cannot aggressively go up to unsaved people and say, "Jesus died for you." That is this quandary that Jay Adams, a very good counselor, is dealing with when he has counselees that might not be saved. He does not tell them, "Jesus died for you," because he does not know that Jesus died for them. He does not know that they are one of the elect.

Here is an example in which Calvinism is having a negative influence on the sharing of the gospel. We developed a missionary questionnaire to see where our missionaries are at. Some of the questions on the questionnaire deal with this issue: "Do you believe in limited atonement or unlimited atonement?" Because only if we know that do we know how and what you say, when you share the gospel with the potentially unsaved people. That would be another example of somebody who is a Calvinist who believes in Limited Atonement.

Now, R.C. Sproul, was a five-point Calvinist all the way. In this particular quote from his book which you can get and read for yourself, "The Truth of the Cross," he is criticizing his fellow Calvinists that are four-point Calvinists. He is a five-point Calvinist criticizing the four-point Calvinist. He is criticizing people that hold to Calvinism, but do not hold to Limited Atonement. He says,

"My point is that there is confusion about what the doctrine of limited atonement actually teaches. However, I think that if a person really understands the other four points and is thinking at all clearly, he must believe in limited atonement because of what Martin Luther called a resistless logic."<sup>6</sup>—

He is reaching his conclusion on Limited Atonement by human logic—not by biblical exegesis, but by human logic, as he says.

—"Still, there are people who live in a happy inconsistency."<sup>7</sup>—

"Oh, you four-point-ers. Enjoy your theology, but you are really inconsistent."

—"I believe it's possible for a person to believe four points without believing the fifth, although I don't think it's possible to do it consistently or logically. However, it is certainly a possibility given our proclivity for inconsistency."<sup>8</sup>

So he is saying here that if you really understood the first four points of Calvinism, minus the "L," you would just buy into Limited Atonement. And the fact that you do not; and the fact that you call yourself a four-pointer instead of a five-pointer; well, we can still fellowship together and do conferences with each other, but, you know, wink, wink. We

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<sup>6</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007), 140-42.

<sup>7</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007), 140-42.

<sup>8</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007), 140-42.

all know you are living inconsistently and believing inconsistently.

R.C. Sproul says there is only one kind of Calvinist and that is a five-pointer, which includes the "L"; and everyone else just does not have good logic. They are not thinking clearly, and they have an inconsistent kind of theology. These are examples that they do teach this doctrine of Limited Atonement. Here is John 3:16. You have heard of this verse, right? I hope that everybody says "Yes." If not, you need to see me afterwards. Because in that case maybe you are not one of the elect.

No, I am just kidding with that one. Anyway, John 3:16—is there anything hard to understand about it?

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever"<sup>9</sup>—*

That would be everybody, would it not?

*—"believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

I will just use the desert island test for a moment. If you were stuck on a desert island with nothing but your Bible, there is no way you could misunderstand this unless a Calvinist came swimming to the shore, reinterpreting everything for you. To me, it is crystal clear. But watch these five-pointers. Watch how they rewrite the passage. John Calvin himself said of God in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," "for, (as he hates sin) he can only love those whom he justifies, [i.e. the elect]."<sup>10</sup>

So according to Calvin, God's love does not extend to the whole world: God's love only extends to the elect. And the elect, as I will show you with the "I" down the road, are irresistibly drawn to God. Resistance is futile, so to speak. So, there it is in Calvin's writings: God only loves the elect. You just have to cross-reference that with John 3:16—*"For God so loved the world,...."*

So we have a couple Johns. We have John Calvin and we have John the Apostle. Which one do you want to believe? As for me and my house, we are going to believe John the Apostle. And when John Calvin—or anybody else for that matter—departs from the Bible, I depart from them at that point, because the Scripture is my authority. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.

Here is a quote from Arthur Pink in his book, "The Sovereignty of God." If you are under Calvinistic teachers and teaching, they push this book constantly because it is one of the most lopsided books you will ever read, since the whole focus is the sovereignty of God. Man having any kind of volition is completely dismissed in this book. Here is how Arthur Pink handles John 3:16—

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<sup>9</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 3, Chapter xi, section 11.

"The fact is, that the love of God, is a truth for the Saints only..."<sup>11</sup>—

See that? Do not talk about God's love for the world. It is God's love for the elect.

—"In like manner, the 'world' in John 3:16 must, in the final analysis,"<sup>12</sup>—

Well, there is the problem right there: analysis. The "paralysis of analysis," as I call it. You are so busy philosophizing that you have lost your reading comprehension ability.

"The fact is, that the love of God, is a truth for the Saints only...In like manner, the 'world' in John 3:16 must, in the final analysis, refer to the world of God's people."<sup>13</sup>

See what just happened here? He just took "world" and redefined it. According to Pink, the "world" in John 3:16 does not refer to the world. The "world" refers to the world of the elect. Is that what John 3:16 says?

*"For God so loved the [elect]"*<sup>14</sup>—

It does not say that at all.

—"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" (John 3:16).

So Arthur Pink just took his philosophy, which is really what this is, and read the Bible through his philosophy. These guys do this all the time.

Here is a quote from John Gerstner, who wrote what I guess I would have to call an attack piece on dispensational thinking. The title of his book, published in the 1990s, is "Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism." The dispensationalists at Dallas Seminary then, brought John Gerstner in and allowed him to tour the campus and all these kinds of things, and he did not say a word of criticism to anybody.

But when he got home, he decided to go into print with this attack piece, a full-length book attacking dispensationalism, free grace, and soteriology. Here is how John Gerstner handles John 3:16. Gerstner argues that if John 3:16

"is supposed to teach that God so loved everyone in the world that He gave His only son to provide them an opportunity to be saved by faith... such love on God's part... would be a refinement of cruelty...Offering a gift of life to a spiritual corpse,"<sup>15</sup>—

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<sup>11</sup> A. W. Pink. *Sovereignty of God*, p. 160, 163.

<sup>12</sup> A. W. Pink. *Sovereignty of God*, p. 160, 163.

<sup>13</sup> A. W. Pink. *Sovereignty of God*, p. 160, 163.

<sup>14</sup> John 3:16, adapted.

<sup>15</sup> John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 124.

There is the "T": Total Depravity, meaning that people do not have an ability to choose because they are dead, like a rock.

—"a brilliant sunset to a blind man, and a reward to a legless cripple if only he will come and get it, are horrible mockeries."<sup>16</sup>

So basically Gerstner is saying that, since only the elect are irresistibly drawn to Christ, you cannot make John 3:16 a statement of God's love for the whole world. In other words, if most of humanity is doubly predestined to damnation, then John 3:16 cannot mean what it says. That is basically what Gerstner is saying.

So if you say that God loves people that cannot be saved, it is like offering a sunset to a blind man; like offering a reward to a legless cripple. This is just another example in which Calvinists are taking their philosophy and rewriting John 3:16.

Let's go over to John 1:29. This is what John the Baptist said of Jesus. John the Baptist showed up at work one day, baptizing everybody, and then Jesus showed up to be baptized by John. And John's like, "I should not be baptizing You. You should be baptizing me. In fact, I am not even worthy to untie your sandals."

In the process of that, this is what John 1:29 says, recording the words of John the Baptist.

*"The next day he saw Jesus coming"*<sup>17</sup>—

Would that not be something? You are doing your regular job and Jesus shows up. You are serving those fries, you know, and the number one Big Mac meal, which I had last night, so I have a little bit of reference to it. So maybe you are back there, you know, serving the fries, making the drinks, and all of a sudden Jesus shows up at the drive-thru menu and says, "Yeah, give me the number one meal, please." Would that not be something?

That is rather like what John the Baptist went through here. He is doing his thing, baptizing people. They are identifying with his message. And Jesus shows up to be baptized by John. And John knows who Jesus is, and says,

*"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the the world!"* (John 1:29).

Not the elect—the world. So if you are a five-point Calvinist, how do you handle this passage? Well, here is a quote from John MacArthur. This is not mishearing him on the radio. This is just reading what he says in the MacArthur Study Bible. John MacArthur writes on John 1:29, on the "'sin of the world'":

"In this context 'world' has the connotation of humanity in general, not

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<sup>16</sup> John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 124.

<sup>17</sup> John 1:29.

specifically every person."<sup>18</sup>

So, by MacArthur, the "world" is redefined as an umbrella statement of the human race, which is not talking about every person. So when John the Baptist says, seeing Jesus coming,

*"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29)

you are not to understand that as every person. It is just an umbrella category for the human race.

A lot of people get mad at me because I point these things out with John MacArthur and the MacArthur Study Bible. People like the MacArthur Study Bible. It has a lot of good maps in it, and colorful pictures and outlines of the Bible. What is the matter with you, pastor? Why will you not recommend the MacArthur Study Bible to people?

Well, it is because of stuff like this. What do you need to poison something? If I am going to poison a glass of water, I do not have to pollute the whole cup of water. I just need to put a little drop or two in. People, because they like other things John MacArthur says, that he is good on Creation and or whatever, or he is taking a stand against the purpose-driven church, just buy into everything the man says. They are getting spoon-fed, constantly, this five-point Calvinism, including the most controversial point in Calvinism, the Limited Atonement idea.

That is the reason I do not promote the teachings of John MacArthur. I think that it is a stumbling block to people. I think that it confuses a lot of people. I am not a fan of it because I know enough about theology, so as to spot the problematic areas. This is just one of many areas I could talk about. His view of lordship salvation is off. He believes that salvation is not receiving a free gift, but has to do with your willingness to lay down your life for Jesus. He confuses justification with spiritual growth. He does this constantly in his commentaries and notes.

He takes things out of context. I will show you this with the Perseverance of the Saints: Matthew 24:13, *"the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."* You read John MacArthur's commentary on the Olivet Discourse, and he is doing a really good job with it, and then he hits Matthew 24:13, and it is like he loses his mind. He leaves the context and dumps into Matthew 24:13 (when he is commenting in his commentary) all this Calvinistic Perseverance of the Saints stuff: that you have to make it to the end of your life in good works and faith, or you are not one of the elect.

Then when he is finished with Matthew 24:13, it is as though he gets his sanity back and goes back to a normal verse-by-verse reading of Matthew 24:13. Matthew 24:13 is talking about the Nation of Israel at the end of the Tribulation Period. It has nothing to do with "I have to make it to the end of my life and good works, to prove that I am one of the elect." It has to do with "if the Nation of Israel makes it through the Tribulation Period, then they are going to be saved, physically protected by Yeshua from the wrath of the satanically

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<sup>18</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr., ed. (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 1576). Word Pub.



possessed beast." That is what Matthew 24:13 is talking about.

MacArthur handles the other verses right; but that one he does not handle right at all. He just stops, and all of a sudden—it is like a download button: he downloads a bunch of Calvinistic stuff into Matthew 24:13, that has nothing to do with the verse.

The MacArthur Study Bible and MacArthur commentaries and MacArthur sermons do this kind of stuff all the time. I might agree with most of the stuff the man says. But if I stand up here and say, "Let's all go to the next John MacArthur conference, and let's get the MacArthur Study Bible, and let's get the MacArthur commentaries," and I start quoting him constantly in a positive way, you are going to stumble over these things.

I think there are a lot of good study Bibles to get that do not have all of this nonsense in them. So if you are wanting a study Bible with good maps, why not pick the Ryrie study Bible that has all the same bells and whistles that the MacArthur Study Bible has, but without all this Calvinistic stuff? Not that I agree with everything Charles Ryrie says, but I agree with him a lot more than this Calvinistic stuff that the Christian public is being forced constantly by this round-the-clock Reformed teaching.

So what is the Calvinistic definition of Limited Atonement? It is the idea that Jesus did not die for everybody. Do they really teach this? Yes, they teach this. And they actually chide their fellow four-pointers for a lack of clear thinking and philosophical inconsistency. So with all that being said, what are the problems with what they are teaching us?

### **3. Problems with the Calvinistic Definition**

- a) Attack on God's character (Num. 14:18; Ps. 103:8)
- b) Limited atonement proof texts lack exclusivity (Matt. 20:28; John 10:15; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25)
- c) Abundance of unlimited atonement passages
- d) What Jesus never said

Four things. The first thing that I am seeing with this is an attack on God's character. That is why I had you open up to Numbers 14:18. It says,

*""The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations""* (Numbers 14:18).

All this Limited Atonement stuff—that Jesus did not die for everybody, and some people are created to go to hell—how does that at all comport with *""The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness""* (Numbers 14:18)? I am bothered by all this stuff because I think that it is an attack on God's character.

John MacArthur's ministry is called "Grace to You: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time." The truth of the matter is that he is not unleashing God's truth one verse at a time. He is unleashing God's truth through an a priori grid that he has already bought into. I do not call his ministry "Grace to you." My wife calls it "Grace to Few."

See if Psalm 103:8 fits with the idea that most of the human race is preprogramed for damnation. Because, after all, Jesus said that "broad is the road that leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13-14, paraphrase). When Calvinists talk about election, they are talking about a very small group of people that are actually elect unto salvation. Psalm 103:8 says,

*"The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness"* (Psalm 103:8).

That is the God I know. Notice 1 John 4:8, which says,

*"The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love"* (1 John 4:8).

It is not enough to say that God is loving or that God occasionally demonstrates love. That does not cut to the heart of what John is saying here in his epistle. He is saying that God is love: that is who He is. So if God is love (1 John 4:8, 16), how in the world do you come up with a system in which most of the world's population has no ability to be saved, and we are created to go to hell? It just makes no sense at all.

That is why Dave Hunt's book against Calvinism is entitled "What Love Is This?" Is this the loving God of the Bible that we have all come to know? No it is not. It is a golden calf. What is a golden calf? A golden calf is an entity that you make as a false God, when you elevate one part of God and suppress another part of God. You do not allow all His attributes to have their say. You do not allow all of His being to have its say. You gravitate towards the parts of the Bible that fit your golden calf, or idol. But at the end of the day, it is not God. It is a selective treatment of God.

And in this case, the Calvinists are throwing out love. This is why Calvinists do not really talk about love. I have heard a number of Calvinists tell me that, well, if you do a word study, love is only mentioned a certain number of times; but holiness is mentioned this much. And even if that is true, so what? How many times does God have to say something for it to be true?

*"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, 16). I do not really care how many times the word "love" appears elsewhere. I have a clear teaching here in 1 John 4:8. I have a clear word from God himself, as John is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, 16). In fact, God loves people so much that He stepped out of eternity into time to fix the holiness problem.

God cannot accept us as we are because He is holy and we are not: we are sinners by nature. Yet God loves us so much that Jesus Christ paid the penalty on our behalf. So if you want to have a discussion about holiness, yeah, let's do it. But do not forget that God loves us so much that He fixed the holiness problem. That is a complete understanding of God; not a selective, piecemeal understanding of God.

The second problem with the Calvinistic definition is they are misusing the Limited Atonement proof texts.

## Extent of the Atonement

### Limited

- ❖ Five point Calvinism – TULIP
- ❖ Biblical support
  - Matt 20:28
  - John 10:15
  - Acts 20:28
  - Eph. 5:25

Jot those references down. When you are interacting with Calvinists on Limited Atonement, they will quote these verses to you. All these verses indicate God's love, and mention a group; or God's work, and mention a group. Calvinists take that as a statement of exclusivity, when none of those texts use the word "only" or "alone."

It is as if you have two kids and you say to kid A, "I love you," using the child's name. Now, does that mean that you do not love the second kid? You did not say "I only love you." You just say, "I love you." And the other kid says, "Well, that is not fair. You mean that you do not love me too?" "Well, of course I love you, too. But I am not talking about you right now. I am talking about kid A."

So there are statements that God's love or His work is shown towards a group, and the Calvinists understand that as an "only" statement or an "alone" statement, when that is not what any of these texts say. In all these passages, you will never see the word "only" or "alone" when God's love or work on behalf of a particular group is discussed.

Let's look at a few of these. Notice Matthew 20:28. It says,

*"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).*

Now, a Limited Atonement person says, "There it is, right there in your Bible: Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for many. Not the world, but the many." Well, does it say, "only the many"? Does it say, "the many and no one else"? Because I have a ton of verses that indicate that Jesus died for the world. How are you going to corroborate your interpretation with all those other verses?

Let's go over to John 10:15. This is a big verse for Calvinists.

*"even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15).*

There it is, in the Bible: Jesus lays down His life for the sheep. Not the goats, just the sheep. Well, guess what? In the process of laying down His life for the sheep, he also laid down his life for who as well? The goats. Because John 10:15 does not say "only the sheep."

Boy, when I first started learning about these things, a lot of it I had to learn through the

school of hard knocks, so to speak. I was invited to teach a Bible study for some laypeople at a Presbyterian church in Southern California. The pastor wanted to talk to me beforehand, rightfully so. And I made the mistake of, in front of this Presbyterian pastor, telling him that I was a dispensationalist. That is the wrong thing to say. And he said to me, "I do not want any of that." "Heresy" is what he called it. "I do not want any of that heresy taught in this Presbyterian church."

I was rather shocked by that because I was reading dispensationalists at the time. I did not see anything heretical about it. I started to think to myself, "What is the deal with the overreaction here with this guy?" And I finally figured it out after the fact. It has to do with the fact that they teach infant baptism.

So if I start explaining to people that you become a member of the church that started on the day of Pentecost, through faith alone in Christ alone, and the normal pattern is that you are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, And then water baptism follows, he would have all of these people on his hands that now wanted to get water baptized when they had been taught that if you are baptized as an infant, then that is good enough or that is fine.

How do they get this idea, that if you are baptized as an infant, that is fine? Well, they get it from Abraham. They go back to Genesis 17, in which God commanded Abram, soon to become Abraham, to circumcise children on the eighth day. They take that as water baptism, when that is not what the passage says. That is God's program for Israel, not the church. That is how the dispensationalist would respond.

So if you start saying stuff like that in a Presbyterian church, then all of a sudden you have all these people that want to be baptized because they never were baptized, after believing they were baptized at infancy.

So in hindsight, I understood what the guy was so upset about. At the time, it rather shocked me. Then the fellow announced to me that he was a five-point Calvinist. And I said, "Even the 'L'?" I knew at that time (I did not know much about it, but I knew enough at that time) that the "L" was the weakness in their system). He said "Yes, even the 'L.'"

And lo and behold, what verse does he quote to me? John 10:15. Jesus only laid down His life for the sheep. Of course that is not what John 10:15 says. What it says is, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Period. It does not say "only the sheep." It does not say "the sheep, but not the goats."

So, there are passages that Calvinists use to support their belief system, but they are making these passages exclusive statements, when that is not what the text says.

Let me take you to a third one here: Acts 20:28, Paul speaking to the elders of the church of Ephesus, at the end of his third missionary journey. It says,

*"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" (Acts 20:28).*

The five-point Calvinist says, "You see, it is right there in the Bible. Jesus with his blood purchased the church. He did not purchase the world. He purchased the church." My response is that in the process of purchasing the world He also purchased the church, because there is nothing in this verse that says that His blood only purchased the church.

I will show you some very clear passages indicating that Christ's blood purchased the world. The world has been purchased. "The world"—not a generic statement about humanity, but every individual—is savable, although they are not actually saved until they trust Christ.

Go to Ephesians 5:25. Paul here is writing in the context of marriage.

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her," (Ephesians 5:25).*

So the five-point Calvinist says, "It is right there in the Bible. Jesus gave Himself up for the church"—which is true. He did give Himself up for the church. But there is nothing in the verse that says He only gave Himself up for the church.

The Greek word for "only" or "alone" is "monon" (lexical form: "monos" [μόνος]), if I remember correctly. That is where we get the name "Monopoly": "alone," "by itself." If the biblical writers were trying to communicate the idea that Jesus only died for a certain group, such as the church or the many or the sheep, it would be a very, very easy thing to put in the word "alone," "monon" (lexical form: "monos" [μόνος]). But the biblical writers never do that.

So what you are getting from five-point Calvinists is a Bible study, but it is read through an a priori grid. If you look at the verses that the Calvinists are using, the verses do not say what the Calvinists say the verses are saying. So with all that being said, "what saith the Scripture," is the most important thing. Not what your most popular, most well published, most media influential person out there says.

People are deceived by that. They think that if someone has a big following or has a bunch of degrees after their name, that somehow you have to buy into carte blanche everything they say. That is not what Christianity teaches. It has never taught that. Paul commended the Bereans, because they searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:10-11). Are you doing that, Christian? That is your job. Are you searching the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so (Acts 17:10-11)?

You should screen everybody, including yours truly, because I have made mistakes before. In fact, I made one the other Wednesday night when I said that Jesus went into the tomb with broken legs. That is not right. That would violate the Passover typology. I tried to retract that. I am not inerrant. I make all kinds of errors—hopefully not intentionally. But the only way you can fortify yourself is by searching the Scriptures for yourself, which is your job as a Christian.

You do not just sit there and carte blanche, open your mind to everything because someone has a big following or has written a ton of books. If that is what you think Christianity is, you have fallen short of your calling as a high priest in the royal family of

God.

So, what saith the actual Scriptures? Well, the actual Scriptures categorically teach unlimited atonement.

John 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" (John 3:16).*

Isn't John 3:16 followed by John 3:17? You probably have John 3:16 memorized. Do you have John 3:17 memorized?

*"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:17).*

That is very, very clear: unlimited atonement. "Yeah, but, pastor, the 'world' there means the elect. It does not mean the whole world." Well, the fact of the matter is that the Greek word for "world" is "kosmos" [κόσμος], where we get the word "cosmopolitan." "Kosmos" [κόσμος] is used in the Bible 240 times, and it never once ever means the elect—ever.

So if you want John 3:16 to refer to the elect, as in, the world equals the elect, that would be a use of the word "kosmos" [κόσμος] that is never used, out of 240 times in the Greek New Testament. And if you want to shrink the word "world" to a smaller group of people, then (R.C. Sproul accused everybody of being inconsistent) be consistent about it.

Look at John 15:18-19: same book, same author.

*"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world ["kosmos" (κόσμος)] the world ["kosmos" (κόσμος)] would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).*

So, if I am going to treat the word "world" ("kosmos" [κόσμος]) the way the Calvinists are treating it in John 3:16, I would have to read John 15:18-19 as follows:

*"If the...[elect] hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the...[elect], the...[elect] would love its own; but because you are not of the ...[elect], but I chose you out of the...[elect], because of this the...[elect] hates you" (John 15:18-19, adapted).*

That is insanity, is it not? But if R.C. Sproul wants to talk about resistless logic and inconsistency and all this stuff, well, fine. I am in favor of consistency. Let's take your interpretation out for a little boat ride and see how it works with other passages of Scripture.

I am being facetious this morning just to make a point, that this is how you recognize false doctrine—not just the things I am dealing with here, but also any other false doctrine.

But what about John 12:19? Doesn't John 12:19 teach that the word "world" can refer to a smaller group? Yes, but there is a context to support that. "World" never means the elect, but it can mean a smaller group of people. Notice John 12:19 (in the context of Palm Sunday).

*"So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world ["kosmos" (κόσμος)] has gone after Him' (John 12:19).*

The Pharisees were disturbed by the popularity of Jesus in His Triumphal Entry, riding on a donkey's colt. In John 12:19 they are upset about this. And they say, "We have to do something to stop this man's popularity, because the world has gone out after Him!" Now, obviously, when these Pharisees use the word "world," they do not mean every person in the human race. There is a context to support a limited reading of the word "world," because it is specifically talking about the people praising Jesus close to the time of Passover in the city streets of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago.

Calvinists say, "Aha, here is a definition of "world" that is limited. Let's read that into John 3:16. If John 12:19 means something limited, then maybe it means that in John 3:16." They do not understand that John 12 has a context to support that limited meaning and John 3:16 does not.

What are the three rules of real estate? Location, location, location. What are the three rules of Bible study? Context, context, context. Words have meanings based on the context in which they are found. So you cannot take a limited understanding of something supported by a particular context such as in John 12, and then just read that anywhere you want in the whole Bible.

In fact, there is a fancy name for when people do this. D.A. Carson, in his book "Exegetical Fallacies," calls this action "illegitimate totality transfer." I.T.T. for short. What is illegitimate totality transfer? It is the "adoption of an expanded semantic field": this is what the word means there, so that is what it has to mean here. If you do that, you just committed an exegetical fallacy. Carson writes,

*"The fallacy in this instance lies in the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word's entire semantic range. The step is sometimes called illegitimate totality transfer."<sup>19</sup>*

So to simplify the definition, think of the word "apple." How many meanings can you generate from the word "apple"? Well, it could be a piece of fruit. It could be a computer. It could be New York City, the Big Apple, it could be the pupil of one's eye—the apple of one's eye. So when I see the word "apple" in a text—it could be something as simple as an email—how do I know which meaning to supply since there are at least four, or more, definitions of the word "apple"?

Well, if you are talking to me about a computer and I take the word "apple" and put into it

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<sup>19</sup> D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 60-61.

the meaning of a piece of fruit, I just committed illegitimate totality transfer because, that is what the word can mean in its broad semantic range elsewhere, but that is not what you meant in that email that you wrote to me, when you are talking about a computer.

We already know instinctively what to do, right? You have to watch theologians very, very carefully because they commit this error constantly to support a preexisting theology. So, when someone makes a point and then lists a bunch of verses, your response should be, "So what? I am not impressed by this big block of verses that you have just listed in parenthesis, because I have not had a chance to look at the context of those verses to see if you are using them right."

Look at the word "run," for example. How many meanings can you generate of the word "run"? George Gunn of Shasta Bible College gives this example:

"I ran out of ingredients for the salad, so I decided to make a quick run down to the store. While at the store, I left the car engine running while I made my purchase, thinking that I would be right out again. However, while I was in the store, I ran into my good friend Edward who was running for county supervisor. This resulted in my having to hear a somewhat long-winded rundown on how his campaign was running. Finally, fearing that my car would run out of gas, I ran with great haste out to the parking lot and returned home with the car surely running only on fumes."

<sup>20</sup>Look at how many different meanings of the word "run" are just in one paragraph. He could have said, "I ran into a woman who had a run in her stockings."

So if a word can dramatically change meaning that much, how in the world would you ever figure out what it means? Context tells you. And that is how to handle these "Christ died for the world" passages. Yeah, "world" can mean a limited group somewhere else, but that is not what it means in John 3:16. And if you are going to analyze words by what they mean somewhere else, then you have just committed the exegetical fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer. We will pick it up right here next time.

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<sup>20</sup> John 14:1-3 – The Father's House: Are We There Yet?, 30. [www.pre-trib.org](http://www.pre-trib.org).