



# The Reformed Doctrine of Particular Redemption

## *A Defense from the Scriptures*

by Shane Rosenthal

© 1995 Reformation Ink

Shane Rosenthal received his B.A. in liberal studies from Cal-State Fullerton, and is currently an M.A. candidate at Westminster Theological Seminary in CA. He was formerly the producer of the national radio program *The White Horse Inn* and managing editor of *Modern Reformation* magazine. He is currently the president of the *Society of Classical Protestants*, and webmaster for *Reformation Ink*.

## #1 Various passages of Scripture limit the efficacy of Christ's atonement to a "remnant," or to "God's people," rather than to the entire human race indiscriminately:

**Micah 7:18** Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of *the remnant of his inheritance*? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. 19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

**Matt. 1:21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save *his people* from their sins."

**John 11:51** He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, 52 and not only for that nation but also for *the scattered children of God*, to bring them together and make them one.

**John 17:2** For you granted him [Jesus] authority over all people that he might give eternal life to *all those you have given him* (Although Christ has authority over all people, as this passage explains, he only gives eternal life to those chosen by God's electing grace).

**Eph. 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved *the church* and gave himself up *for her* to make her holy...

**Titus 2:13** ...while we wait for the blessed hope --the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify *for himself a people* that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Why, if Christ died for each and every person who ever lived, would it be stated that the purpose of Christ was to purify for himself a people that are his very own? If universal grace is true, it would say that God purified for himself "all people.")

**2Tim. 2:19** God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows *those who are his...*"

**Heb. 9:28** ...Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of *many people...*(Various passages indicate that the atonement was for a limited number of people, rather than for every person who ever lived -- see also Is. 52:15, Is. 53:11-12, Zech. 2:10-13, Matt. 20:28, Matt. 26:28, Mark 10:45, Mark 14:24, Acts 18:10, Heb. 2:10).

**Rev. 5:9** And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased *men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* (This text does not indicate that each and every person was purchased, but that Christ purchased men from every tribe, language and people and nation).

## **#2 Various passages of Scripture refer to the work of Christ in connection with God's electing grace:**

**John 6:36** But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. (The work of Christ is limited to those given him by the Father, and he will raise them up on the last day).

**John 17:9** I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours (Why, if Jesus was to die for all men, would he not pray for the

whole world? It seems that the priestly office of Christ includes not only his redemptive work, but also his high priestly prayers and intercessory work: [1John 2:1, Rom. 8:34]).

**Rom. 8:30** And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (In this passage, Christ has justified only those who were predestined and called, and all who were justified were glorified --see also Heb. 9:15 where a "ransom" is given only to those who are "called").

**Rom. 8:32** He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all --how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against Gods elect? It is God who justifies (Jesus was given up for us all. Does this mean for all men or for all believers (us all)? The context seems to indicate it was for all believers because 1) if all men were atoned for, wouldn't God then graciously give [them] all things (i.e. the Spirit and eternal life), 2) why does Paul write that it is Gods elect that are free from all accusations, and not the whole world?)

**Eph. 1:4** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight... <sup>v7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (This passage clearly teaches that election and the work of Christ are inseparable).

**Rev. 13:8** All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast --all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world (Christ atoned for the sins of everyone whose name was found in the Lambs book of life --i.e., election).

### **#3 Various passages of Scripture exclude the non-elect from salvation, and from God's redemptive work:**

**Matt. 13:10** The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" <sup>11</sup> He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them... <sup>v13</sup> This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. <sup>14</sup> In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."

**Matt. 13:37** The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

**Matt. 15:13** Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.

**John 8:43** Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. <sup>44</sup> You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him... <sup>v46</sup> If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? <sup>47</sup> He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

**John 10:14** I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep... <sup>v26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand (Jesus will lay his life down for the sheep and gives them eternal life, but some in the passage are not of his sheep).

**Rom. 9:11** Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad --in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup> not by works but by him who calls --she was told, "The older will serve the younger." <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." <sup>14</sup> What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

**Rom. 11:5** So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. <sup>7</sup> What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, <sup>8</sup> as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

**#4 The Scriptures present the atonement, not as an event which makes men savable, but rather an event which actually secures salvation. In other words, the atonement was effective for all those for whom it was intended:**

**Rom. 5:9-10** Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

(Commenting on this verse, Calvin writes, "By saying that we were reconciled to God by the death of Christ, [Paul] means, that it was the sacrifice of expiation, by which God was pacified..." In other words, God's wrath was turned aside by what Christ did, rather than by what we have done. We were made right with God primarily by the cross of Christ, not our own appropriation of it. Arminians cannot make sense of passages like this because they maintain that one's faith (something we add) "causes" a person to be reconciled to God. But the text clearly teaches that salvation was procured by the objective work of Christ on the cross, the benefits of which we receive through faith. Therefore, those with true saving faith can say with Paul, that they were justified and reconciled even while they were enemies, whereas the Arminian can only say that reconciliation begins with one's decision. As the Arminian theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer once wrote, "The death of Christ upon the cross does not save anybody--either actually or potentially. Rather, it makes all men saveable.")

**Hebr. 9:12** He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption

(The author of Hebrews speaking in the past tense regarding the accomplishments of the cross declares that Christ obtained eternal redemption. If all mankind's sins were covered by this, then all men are destined for heaven, for they would have already obtained eternal redemption).

**Hebr. 10:14** ...by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy

(First we notice that we are made "perfect" by the atonement of Christ, not merely made "savable." Second, we notice that Christ has made perfect only those who are being made holy -- clearly a limited group of individuals. But if Christ died for every person ever born, why doesn't the Spirit sanctify, regenerate, and call them to faith? This is because the work of Christ is in union with the work of the Spirit. Those for whom Christ died, will be sanctified (Acts 26:18), just as our lord himself taught when he said, "I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine...They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth (John 17).

## Dealing with Objections to Particular Redemption

**What do we do with passages that present Christ as the Savior of the whole world, or of all men? (i.e., John 3:16, John 1:29, 1John 2:2, 1Tim 2:4, Tit. 2:11).**

**A) John 3:16** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

"Whoever believes in him shall not perish" is quite particularistic if you think about it. Christ's atonement is only efficacious to "believers," and only the elect are given the gift of persevering faith (John 6:37, Acts 13:48, 16:18, 18:27, Rom. 12:3, 1Cor. 12:3, 2Cor. 1:21-22, Eph. 1:9-10, 2:8-9, Phil. 1:29, 2Tim. 2:24-25). God's love in this passage, therefore, should be understood as general benevolence, and not a specific "redemptive" love for each and every person, because the latter interpretation is in direct conflict with various passages (Matt. 13:37, John 8:47). In Romans 9:13, for example, Paul recalls the passage, "Jacob I have loved, Esau I have

hated" to contrast the true Israel (i.e., the elect remnant) with national Israel. Could a better example be given to show that God does not "redemptively" love each and every person who ever lived? God then further shows he has a love for a "specific people" in verses such as 2Tim. 2:19, Acts 13:48, Acts 16:14, and Acts 18:10.

It is also helpful to read the entire context of John 3:16 and following:

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

In the wider context, Jesus states the following:

- a) Light has come into the world (v. 19, i.e. Christ and his gospel).
- b) Men will not come to Christ because they love evil (v. 19-20).
- c) If someone does come to Christ, it is the result of God's grace and power; "what he has done has been done through God." (v. 21).

Therefore to draw some conclusions, God loves the world insofar as he sent his son into the world (general benevolence). But specifically, God only redemptively loves those whom he calls out of the world and regenerates, for only they can express faith. We must always keep in mind that it is only "believers" who are spoken of in John 3:16 who "will not perish, but have everlasting life." Thus, only believers are "efficaciously" loved by God.

## **B) John 1:29** The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

It is quite possible that John the Baptist is harkening us to the "lamb" imagery in Is. 53 "...he was led like a lamb to the slaughter..." (v. 7) Accordingly, Christ is the Lamb of God to whom Isaiah refers. But if this is the case, an interesting problem develops. Isaiah refers to the justification of "many" (v. 11-12 "...by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities...For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."), whereas John refers to the redemption of the "world." How should we resolve this? It is possible that Isaiah himself resolves this problem in chapter 52 when he writes "He will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him" (v. 15). But how can it be possible that "he will sprinkle many nations" is synonymous with "he takes away the sins of the world"? Let us examine this question. First we must ask what the word "world" refers to throughout the Bible? Here's a general sampling:

A limited number of men: 1Kgs. 10:24, Jn. 18:20, Jn. 14:22.

A large region: Acts 24:5.

The world of unbelievers: 1John 3:13, 1John 5:19, Rev. 12:9.

The world of creation: 1Chr. 16:30, John 21:25, Rev. 13:8.

The world of possessions: Matt 16:26, Luke 9:25.

Both creation and the world of unbelievers: John 1:10, 1John 2:15-17.

The world of Gentiles: Rom. 11:12-15.

All nations: Matt. 24:14.

Now, if you checked the references, you might have noticed that none of the above uses of the word "world" can be interpreted as "each and every person who ever lived." It is also evident however, that another use of the word "world" appears in the Scriptures. Rom. 4:13 is a verse that refers to Abraham as the "heir of the world." But in what sense is he the heir of "each and every person who ever lived"? But we do know that Abraham is the heir of believers (Gen 15:5, Rom. 4:18, Luke 16:19-31). So we are not standing on shaky ground when we ask the question of the meaning of the word "world." Its use must be governed by the context. This is why it is at least a "possible" (and I would argue the most probable) interpretation to say that "he will sprinkle many nations" is synonymous with "he takes away the sins of the world"?

Now, let us take this principle to a verse we have not yet considered. "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2Cor 5:19). This verse could mean:

- a) God no longer counts the sins of "each and every person," regardless of faith.
- b) God is reconciled to the created world - i.e., rocks, trees, etc.
- c) God is reconciled to the world of believers.

There are other options but it would begin to get absurd. Now we know that **b)** is not true because the next line indicates that Paul is referring to the world of men (men's sins), not general creation. And **a)** cannot be true, otherwise we make Paul's words of non-effect in Col. 3:5-6: "Because of these [sins - sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry] the wrath of God is coming." **a)** indicates that God is no longer counting the sins of "each and every person" while Paul in Col. 3 admits that God is still keeping score for those not in Christ. Were Paul to approve of **a)** he might have said: "Because of these [sins] the wrath of God was poured out on Christ." But he says that the wrath of God "is coming" (present tense - note also that this coming wrath is for real sins, and not merely "unbelief" - see also John 3:36).

Thus, by the analogy of Scripture, we can determine what interpretations we cannot take, in order to help us understand how to interpret correctly. And in this particular case, it looks as if **c)** has the most going for it, especially when you read throughout the Scriptures that the atonement is only effective for those who "believe": "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain" (1Cor 15:2). Faith in Christ must be present in order for us to be among the reconciled of God; and as it turns out, it is only the elect who persevere in the faith: "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots (Matt. 15:13 - see also Matt 24:24).

## **C) 1John 2:2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now here is the classic Arminian/Universal Grace prooftext. But we still have to ask what John means by the term "whole world." John himself gives us an ambiguous answer later in this very letter: "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1John 5:19). Clearly, there is a distinction between believers and the "whole world" of unbelievers (unless you wanted to argue that each and every person, even Christians, are under the control of the devil -- a position which violates many texts of Scripture: 2Tim. 2:24-26, Col. 1:3, Heb. 2:14, James 4:7). So we have established that even the term "whole world" is used as a select portion of humanity, and not necessarily "each and every person who ever lived." Here are some other examples of John's use of the term "whole world": (A limited number of people, John 12:19. The created world, John 21:25. The world of unbelievers, Rev. 12:9).

But we cannot prove our case simply by stating that whole world can "possibly" refer to a limited number of people. Although we have established that based on the analogy of Scripture, we must proceed to show why it is the only "viable" interpretation.

I wonder if those who use 1John 2:2 in support of their non-particularism wind up proving more than they set out to prove. The implications of this passage (if "whole world" means each and every person) is not Arminianism, but Universalism. Why is this? Because of the clear wording John uses: "He is the [propitiation] for our sins..." If Christ propitiates (turns aside, satisfies) God's wrath on behalf of "each and every person" then everyone on earth is heaven bound. How can God send someone to hell if his wrath against the person has been fully satisfied? The standard reply is that people can "reject" what God has provided. But is "unbelief" a sin? Hasn't God's wrath been turned aside from all the sins of every human being? Another problem with this reply is that God punishes Christ for all the sins of someone such as Judas Iscariot, and then pours out his wrath on Judas for eternity in hell. Was God's wrath toward Judas "fully satisfied" (propitiated) at the cross, or was it not? If it was, and he is sent to hell anyway, this would be a double payment for sin, would seem to imply injustice with God.

It is also very worth while to notice what precedes 1John 2:2 : "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense --Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1John 2:1). John connects the intercessory prayer of Christ for the believer (v1) to propitiation (v2) which is for the whole world. But we must continue to ask what is meant by "whole world." If Christ is praying for "each and every person who ever lived" and not all come to salvation, what does that say about the power of his Word? And is it really conceivable that Jesus would "speak to the Father [on the] behalf" of Judas?, or the Pharisees to whom he said, "You do not belong to God" (John 8:47), and "you are not of my sheep" (John 10:26)? John himself openly reveals that many "could not believe, because as Isaiah says...He has blinded their eyes..." Is Jesus praying for these individuals while God blinds their eyes?

The clearest verse on this issue, however, is John 17:9: "I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours." While in 17:2 Jesus admits that he has been granted "authority over all people," he determines to give eternal life only to those given him by the Father. Clearly, Christ's intercessory work is for the church, the sheep, his own, the elect.

We have therefore not only demonstrated that the term "whole world" can be, and is used to mean a limited number of people (sometimes believers, sometimes the world of unbelievers), but we have also shown the context of 1John 2:1-2 is limited to those for whom Christ prays and not "each and every person who ever lived." John is most likely showing that Christ propitiatory sacrifice was not for believers of one region or ethnic group, but was for believers throughout the whole world. This is not just a possible interpretation, it is the only reading which stands the test of the analogy of Scripture.

**D) 1 Tim 2:4** "...who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"

**E) Titus 2:11** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

I lumped these together because the chief misunderstanding is what is meant by the word "all." I think common sense will help you see that Titus 2:11 cannot be referring to "each and every man" for there were many lands in Paul's day that were not touched by the gospel. You are thus forced to interpret this as "all classes of men," or "all men of the known world," etc.

We must again demonstrate that the words "all men" have various meanings in Scripture and very seldom refer to "each individual who ever lived":

The world of unbelief: Matt. 10:22, Rev. 13:8.

The unrighteous deserving of judgement: Isa. 66:16.

Those in Christ: 1Cor. 15:22-23.

We have already mentioned point #5, but how do we rightly interpret 1Tim 2:4. One must look at the context which clearly identifies "classes" of men. Verse 1 & 2 define the word "everyone" as "kings and all those in authority" -- a limited focus. Thus it is a "possible" interpretation to say that verse 4 refers to all classes of men, not just Jews, not just people from this or that region, not just kings, but all men.

Now that I have shown that this is a "possible" interpretation, I will try to argue that it is the only "probable" interpretation, as I have done with other texts. If "all men" in 1Tim 2:4 means "each and every person who ever lived," how does one reconcile "[God] wants all men to be saved..." with Rom. 11:7 where only the elect come to salvation while "the others were hardened," or in verse 8 where God gives the Jews "a spirit of stupor"? You can't reconcile these two. They are mutually exclusive. What would you do if I told you that I really sincerely wanted to share my wealth with 100 individuals, but secretly chose to give it all only to 10, while hiding information about the money to the other 90? You would question my sincerity, and rightly so. That is why we must interpret 1Tim 2:4 to mean all classes of men (an interpretation that is clearly allowable based on other texts). The Arminian interpretation essentially rips the fabric of the whole concept of predestination. For why, if God wants "each and every person in the world" to be saved, would he only choose to save a select group? Why would God choose "those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith" (James 2:5) and not everyone? Indeed, any concept of a "select group" conflicts with the Arminian interpretation of this passage.

But Jesus was a particularist. Clearly he shows his intent is not to save "each and every person who ever lived": "For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him" (John 17:2). His intent is to give eternal life to all those given him by the father (as the whole chapter of John 17 makes clear). Luke 8:10 is also impossible to interpret with a "universal grace" interpretation of 1Tim 2:4. It reads, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand." Again, the question of sincerity comes up; does he "really" want "each and every person who ever lived to be saved?" (see also Luke 10:21-22). And what do we do with our Lord's words to Paul in Acts 18:10 "Keep on speaking...for I have many people in this city." If Jesus wanted "each and every person to be saved" he should have said "Keep on speaking for there are a lot of possible converts here." One must ask whether or not it was Christ's will to save "those who are not of [his] sheep" (John 10:26), or "those who do not belong to God" (John 8:47), or those not planted by the Father who will be "pulled up by the roots" (Matt. 15:13).

## What about 2 Peter 2:1?

**2Pet. 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them --bringing swift destruction on themselves.

The problem with this passage is that it seems to imply that Jesus paid for the sins of those who will not be saved. The problem is that the work of Christ is what saves (Rom. 5:9-10, Heb. 9:12). So in comparing Scripture with Scripture we have a herminutical question as to what this unclear text means. One possibility is

that the text in question does not indicate what these men were purchased for (that is, it doesn't clearly link the purchase with the benefits of the redemption as all other passages using the "purchase" language seem to do: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood (Acts 20:28). "...With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9).

This is important because our passage in question does not link the purchase with the blood. And it is for this reason that I think the passage can be interpreted with the help of John 17:2: "For you granted him [Jesus] authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him." In a certain sense, Christ earned the right to have authority over all men by fulfilling the role as the Davidic King. He is not just our Lord, he is everyone's Lord. Thus in this sense, Christ's ownership of all men does not necessarily indicate redemption. What is emphasized is Lordship, and ownership. It is interesting to note Peter's use of the words, "denying the 'SOVEREIGN LORD' who bought them." We tend to think of redemption when we see the word "bought," but this text is not followed by the usual connection "...with his blood." Therefore, the text, although it is a difficult one for those who hold to particular redemption, does have the possible resolution of referring to the Lordship of Christ, and not to his Priestly office. As Irenaeus once said, "Jesus is the Savior of them that believe; but Lord of them that believe not." If it were to refer to the redemption of Christ this would cause problems with Scriptures such as Rom. 8 in which election and justification are tightly knit together. Those who are predestined are then called, justified and glorified. But if the Arminian interpretation of 2Pet. 2:1 holds, then we would have a situation in which someone was called and justified (i.e. right with God because of Christ), but not glorified.

Peter's context was false teaching from within the camp of faith. So what do we do when someone starts out a Christian and then begins teaching "destructive heresies." Does this mean the person "loses his or her salvation?" The apostle John had the clearest words to say on this subject, "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us" (1John 2:19). Only the elect persevere in the true faith. Thus, while the death of Christ was "sufficient for the whole world" it is only "efficient for the elect." As Paul asks, "Who shall lay any charge against God's elect?, for it is God who justifies."

## What about 2 Peter 3:9?

**2Pet. 3:9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Here the context indicates that Peter has the elect in mind, that is, the full number of the invisible church throughout the world. Peter is writing to believers or to those who will believe in the future ("He is patient with you"). The larger context is that people are scoffing at the Lord's return. But Peter is teaching that God will come back only when the whole church has been given the gift of repentance (2Tim 2:24-25) and has been grafted into Christ. Then, when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, The Lord will return.

## Was Calvin Himself A Five Point Calvinist?

It has become popular of late to argue that Calvin himself did not believe in Definite Atonement, but we must keep in mind that the "five points of Calvinism" were not outlined until the Synod of Dort in 1619. Reformed theology had a lot of time to organize itself and to become more systematic. Dort was a good response to five

Arminian errors, which after much reflection on the Scriptures from within the Reformed community, the "five points" were outlined. So on one hand it is somewhat of a fallacy to ask whether Calvin was a "five point Calvinist."

Now, on the other hand, Calvin clearly expounds on all the other four points (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints), although, not in one area of his writings (in other words, he doesn't hold these points as the litmus test they have become today -- they are all part of the Scriptural teaching which he sets out to explain, just as the doctrine of justification and the sacraments are). So you at least you can say what side of Dort Calvin would have fallen on with regard to T U I & P. But as I have said, be cautious when you do this sort of thing. It is sort of like asking Augustine if he is a Protestant or a Catholic. The categories aren't quite there yet. In Calvin's day, there was no debate over the extent of the atonement because it was not a major issue, so he has little to say about the subject in his writings. Things would have been much different if he were alive around the time of Dort when the debate was raging. Having said all that, I do think there are a number of passages in Calvin's writing from which a doctrine of definite atonement can be drawn.

### **On the Lord's Supper:**

"I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ which was not crucified for them and how they can drink the blood which was not shed for their sins" (*The Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine concerning the True Partaking of the Flesh and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper*, Library of Christian Classics, Vol 22, pg. 285 ).

### **The Institutes of The Christian Religion:**

"Lo, you see plainly that Christ bore the penalty of sins to deliver his own people..." (3.4.30)

"Therefore, Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify" (3.16.1)

"Whence it comes about that the whole world does not belong to its Creator except that grace rescues from God's curse and wrath and eternal death a limited number who would otherwise perish." (3.22.7)

"Through Isaiah he still more openly shows how he directs the promises of salvation specifically to the elect: for he proclaims that they alone, not the whole human race without distinction, are to become his disciples. . ." (3.22.10)

"If he willed all to be saved he would set his Son over them, and would engraft all into his body with the sacred bond of faith." (3.22.10)

### **Calvin's Commentaries:**

He makes this favor common to all, because it is propounded to all, and not because it is in reality extended to all; for though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God's benignity indiscriminately to all, yet all do not receive him (Rom. 5:18 Comm.)

"Christ brings none to the Father, but those given him by the Father; and this donation, as we know, depends on eternal election" (Heb. 2:13 Comm.).

"The universal term 'all' must always be referred to classes of men, and not to persons...He wishes the benefit of

his death to be common to all [classes]" (1Tim 2:5-6 Comm.).

"By employing the word all he does not speak of each individual...but includes the whole body of Christ" (Is. 64:10 Comm.).

"When the Holy Spirit names 'all' he means some out of all nations, not everyone universally" (Daniel Comm.).

## Did anyone hold to the doctrine of Particular Redemption before Calvin's day?

The following quotes will serve to show that particular redemption was not a doctrine invented by the Reformed community. It has been articulated by a respectable number of theologians at various times in church history as they have weighed the Scriptural material on the subject, although it was best articulated by Calvinist theologians. (Not all these quotes indicate direct support for this doctrine by the individuals cited, but rather, through the use of these citations it is hoped that the development of the doctrine of particular redemption throughout church history can be more clearly seen).

### **Irenaeus (A.D. 180) An Interpretation of the word "all" in 1Tim 2:6**

"He came to save all, all, I say, who through him are born again unto God, infants, and little ones, and children, and young men, and old men....Jesus is the savior of them that believe; but the Lord of them that believe not." (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 291-292).

### **Cyprian (A.D. 250)**

All the sheep which Christ hath sought up by His blood and sufferings are saved...Whosoever shall be found in the blood, and with the mark of Christ shall only escape...He redeemed the believers with the price of His own blood...Let him be afraid to die who is not reckoned to have any part in the cross and sufferings of Christ. (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 292).

### **Eusebius (A.D. 330) In response to "He gave himself up for us all"**

To what "us" does he refer, unless to them that believe in Him? For to them that do not believe in Him, He is the author of their fire and burning. The cause of Christ's coming is the redemption of those that were to be saved by him. (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 292).

### **Ambrose (A.D. 380)**

Can He damn thee, whom He hath redeemed from death, for whom He offered Himself, whose life He knows is the reward of His own death? (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 293).

### **Epiphanius (A.D. 390) In a debate with certain Pagans who did not believe...**

...Thou art not of the number of them who were bought with blood, O Manes, because thou deniest the blood...He gave his life for His own sheep. (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 293-294).

### **Hieronymus (Jerome) A.D. 390**

Christ is sacrificed for the salvation of believers...Not all are redeemed, for not all shall be saved, but the remnant...All those who are redeemed and delivered by Thy blood return to Zion, which Thou hast prepared for Thyself by Thine own blood...Christ came to redeem Zion with His blood. But lest we should think that all are Zion or every one in Zion is truly redeemed of the Lord, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ from the Church...He did not give His life for every man, but for many, that is, for those who would believe (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 294).

### **Gottschalk (A.D. 803-869)**

Why did the Lord say to the Pharisees: 'You do not believe, because you are not of my sheep' (Jn. 10.26), if not because He saw them as having been predestined to eternal death, not as having been purchased for eternal life at the price of his blood.' (Tractates, 48: translated by John V. Fesko).

### **Anselm (A.D. 1033-1109)**

If you die in unbelief, Christ did not die for you. (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 294).

### **Johann von Staupitz (Martin Luther's mentor, A.D.1460-1529)**

"Because of His likeness to sinful flesh He could make satisfaction for sins, sin He could fast, pray give alms, and offer himself as a sacrifice to God. Each and every one of these penitential duties of all the elect the Lord imposed upon His own head" (Oberman, Forerunners of The Reformation).

"Nor should it escape you that the suffering of the Son of God is sufficient for all, though it was not for all but for many that His blood was poured out" (Oberman, Forerunners of The Reformation).

### **Martin Luther (A.D. 1483-1546)**

We find, then, in this excellent lesson, the comforting doctrine taught that Christ is he whom we should know as the Priest and Bishop of our souls; that no sin is forgiven, nor the Holy Spirit given, by reason of works or merit on our part, but alone through the blood of Christ, and that to those for whom God has ordained it. This matter has been sufficiently set forth in the various postils. (Sermons of Martin Luther Vol. 7, page 167-68, Baker edition).

When folks object to predestination based on the verse, "God will have all men to be saved" (1Tim 2:4), Luther responds: "But this objection and others like it can...easily be refuted...because all these sayings must be understood only with respect to the elect, as the apostle says in 2Tim 2:10 "All for the elect." Christ did not die for absolutely all, for he says: "This is my blood which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20) and "for many" (Mark 14:24)--he did not say: for all-- "to the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28)." (1516, Lectures On Romans, p. 252, Westminster edition). It must certainly be admitted that Luther later revises his view of 1Tim 2:4 to include everyone in the world, and not just the elect. This is in keeping with his move to Universal Grace which would become the official position of the Lutheran Church by the time of the Augsburg Confession. My citation of Luther's words, "Christ did not die for absolutely all..." was not intended to prove that Luther was in fact a "proto-Calvinist" but rather serves to show that there have been many who have found these themes in the Scriptures independent of the "Calvinist tradition." The fact that contemporary Lutheranism finds this view abhorrent shows the extent to which they have chosen to side with the theology of the "later" Luther.

### **William Tyndale (A.D.1494-1536)**

Christ's blood only putteth away the sins of them that are elect...We are elect through Christ's blood...Thou art elect to life everlasting by Christ's blood, whose gift and purchase is thy faith.

### **Charles Spurgeon (A.D. 1834-1892) Dealing With A Common Objection**

I can hear another objection--"How can you, sir, upon that theory, go to preach the Gospel unto every creature?" I could not go upon any other theory, for I dare not go on that fool's errand of preaching a

redemption that might not redeem...a salvation that might not save. I could not go to a man and say, "Believe and thou shalt be saved," for the man may ask me, "Do you think you are going to be in heaven?" "Yes," I would reply. "Why?" "Because Christ died for me." "But He died for everybody so my chances are therefore just as good as yours." And after he had accepted my declaration, he might reply, "Is there any real reason why I should rejoice? Some for whom Christ died are in hell. What makes me so sure I will not go there? It is rather a faulty piece of good news, because it is nothing positive; it is a grand uncertainty you have proclaimed to me." (Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace, p. 142).

For Further Reading:

**Charles Hodge: [For Whom Did Christ Die?](#)** (An excellent article on this subject. After reading it a few times I believe that I am going to have to modify some of my views in the direction that Hodge outlines. I'll probably update this article to reflect some of these changes).

---

This article was made available on the internet via **REFORMATION INK** ([www.markers.com/ink](http://www.markers.com/ink)). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: [SocietyCP@aol.com](mailto:SocietyCP@aol.com)