

Hermeneutic Study – 16th Session

Agenda: for tonight – May 13th, 2010

- Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages
 - “Understanding Calvinism”
 - Quick Recap of History
 - Quick Recap of 5 Points
 - Atonement (the third of 5 points)
 - **Unlimited Atonement – the Arminian view**
 - **Limited Atonement – the Calvinistic view**

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

□ Recap of the history of the debate

Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) formally wrote against the doctrines espoused by the reformers and systemized by Calvin. Arminius attempted to change Calvin's doctrines so that man would have, as he perceived, the primary role in determining his salvation. From his writings Arminius picked up followers, who did not want to bear his name, so they called themselves Remonstrants (one who protests).

At the Synod of Dort, held in Dordrecht, Holland, in 1618/1619, the representatives of the various protestant churches published a condemnation of Arminius and his followers as heretics. Part of this publication came to be known as the "five points of Calvinism" in response to the "five articles of Remonstrance" written by followers of Arminius. These five points are used even today to define Calvinism and are often called the "TULIP." It must be understood though that Calvinism is much more than the "five points" used to counter Arminius. Calvinism, is considered by many theologians as the systemitized doctrine of the Bible related to grace, Christocentric teaching, and the sovereign glory of God.* parts from Wikipedia

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Five doctrines were determined by the Synod of Dort to counter the five statements of the Remonstrants. These became known as the Five Points of Calvinism.

T – Total Depravity

U – Unconditional Election

L – Limited Atonement (Particular Atonement)

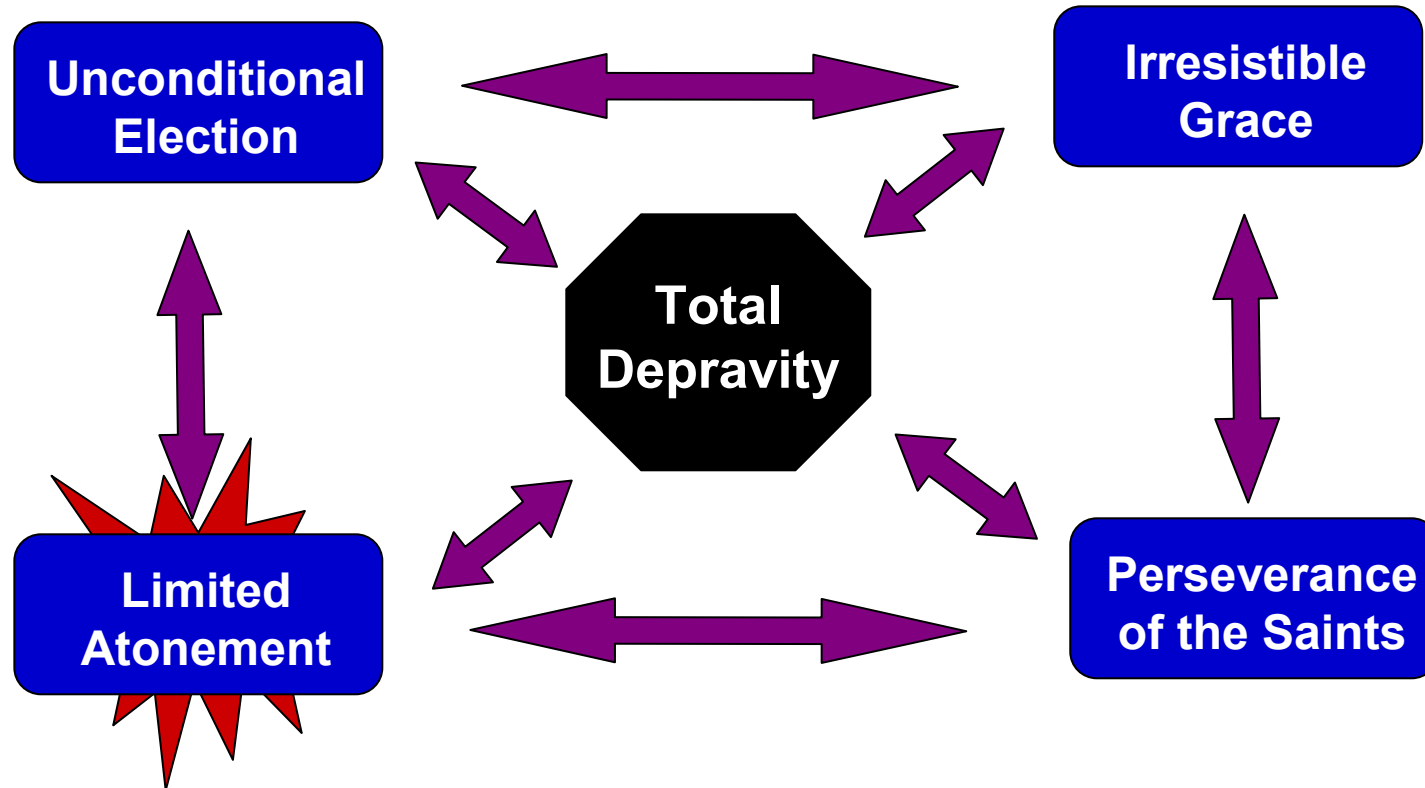
I – Irresistible Grace (Effectual Call)

P – Perseverance of the Saints (Eternal Security)

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

- ❑ Correctly understood, these points effect everything on how the truth is approached, and understood.



The points are all interconnected – but, each can easily be supported individually from Scripture.

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

- ❑ James White in his book “God’s Sovereign Grace” claims the Calvinist Tulip really should be “STULIP.” He believes the first point should be – God’s Sovereignty.

“When these ancient documents were first presented as the Five Points, there was one large and looming ‘belief’, a belief that is the *starting point* of the entire system, that was left unexpressed, only because it was taken, at least formally, as a ‘given’ at that time. Today, such a ‘given’ cannot be assumed. So we must start at the beginning, and present a ‘six pedaled Tulip.’”

He goes on to say....

“Our first introduction to the faith is through the proclamation of the gospel message to us. How often is God’s sovereignty a part of that message? Sadly, hardly ever at all within modern evangelicalism. God is not presented as the King, the Sovereign Ruler of all things. He is presented as someone who would like to save men, if only they would allow Him to! When we are told that we are the ones who decide if God’s entire effort on our behalf (including the death of His Son) is going to be fruitful, or in vain, we automatically produce a picture of God that is far removed from the truth of Scripture.” (God’s Sovereign Grace, White, Crowne Publications, 1999, Page 7)

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement

Chart by David Steele and Curtis Thomas - Originally posted on Archegos: the Champion Statement on offsite articles.

Arminianism

Universal Redemption or General Atonement

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

Calvinism

Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

Understanding Calvinism

□ The Atonement

By definition: “the atonement is the covering over sin, the reconciliation between God and man, accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that special result of Christ’s sacrificial sufferings and death by virtue of which all who exercise proper penitence and faith receive forgiveness of their sins and obtain peace” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Moody 1977, page 106). “The word atonement is an Anglo-Saxon term which has the force of ‘at-one-ment,’ a ‘making of one.’” It speaks of a process of bringing those who are enemies into harmony and unity, and thus it means reconciliation” (Wycliffe Bible Dictionary, Moody 1975, page 175).

It is by the atonement of Christ that His elect are redeemed (purchased) so that they might be able to stand before God absolved from the guilt of their sins, dressed in the righteousness of Christ by His substitutionary death. It is a radical change in the absolved person’s standing before God. It has to do with the legal side of salvation. God through the atonement has made those for whom He died no longer guilty of their sin. It is therefore a change from condemnation to no condemnation. It is the foundation basis necessary to justify the sinner.

Understanding Calvinism

❑ The Atonement...continued

The Scripture tells us that God first “foreknew” some individuals that is “before loved” them out of His own will . Those then He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. Therefore, atonement follows God’s plan based on His fore love, He determined to reconcile some sinners to Himself – that is restore the relationship. Atonement is a key component in that restoration. It is not to be confused with the calling of God, the process of regeneration, the process of sanctification, or glorification. It is an essential for these things to occur. It is the basis of the justification of man with God.

❑ General Thoughts on studying this subject:

1. All presuppositions and emotions must be set aside, and the Bible must be studied using appropriate hermeneutical principles. Whether we understand all that is taught is not the issue (Deut 29:29). We look through a glass darkly. What we must do is study to know what the Bible teaches and then it must be worshipfully accepted as factual. Personal opinions, popular teaching, or full comprehension take a back seat to accepting by faith what the Bible teaches.

Understanding Calvinism

□ General Thoughts on studying this subject...continued:

2. Christianity is unique among the religions of the world with its reconciliation with God via the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Christianity is thereby based on doctrines of personal relationships. There is a personal relationship among the Godhead, and there is a personal relationship between God and man. The atonement is the means initiated and carried out by God for reconciling the personal relationship between God and man. This unique personal relationship, determined by God Himself, must be understood in terms of an overall plan of God to restore His relationship with man. The issue becomes “what was God’s purposeful intention as taught in the Scriptures?” Does the Scripture teach it was to make salvation possible for all men, or does it teach that God had a plan to resolutely redeem a particular people He has chosen from the beginning?

Understanding Calvinism

□ General Thoughts on studying this subject...continued:

3. God is love, but He is also righteous, and His personal integrity requires that He do all that He does in dealing with man's sinful condition in a manner of impeccable and righteous justice. It is God's holiness that necessitates the cross of Christ, and His atoning work. The serious magnitude of the second Person of the Trinity being a sacrifice and substitution for sinful creation shows the mystery of the emphatic and precious work of atonement. As it is a profound working of God, it cannot be tritely treated in study or communication, but must be sacredly handled according to the revelation of the Word of God.
4. Man is a sinner by nature, with no ability to improve his condition (total depravity), and no desire to improve his condition (unconditional election). The atoning work is thereby a work of God on behalf of helpless sinful persons, and naturally flows in harmony with both man's depravity, and the unconditional election of God already studied.

Understanding Calvinism

On the atonement:

“The expression implies that it is God’s mere will and sovereign pleasure, which supremely orders this affair. It is the divine will without restraint, or constraint, or obligation...The sovereignty of God in His absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to His own pleasure.” Jonathan Edwards

“We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ’s death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Atonement – the Arminian view of the extent of the Atonement:

Universal (or unlimited) atonement is the view that Christ's work makes redemption possible for all but certain for none. According to this doctrine, whatever Christ accomplished on the cross, he accomplished for all alike – those who are finally saved as well as those who are finally lost. The elect are those who choose to avail themselves of God's gracious offer of salvation in Christ by their own free will, not a predetermined group” (Theopedia on-line).

“**Unlimited atonement** (sometimes called **general atonement** or **universal atonement**) is the majority doctrine in Protestant Christianity that is normally associated with Non-Calvinist Christians. It originated as a protest against the supralapsarian doctrines formulated in the post-Calvin environment. The doctrine states that Jesus died as a propitiation for the benefit of mankind without exception. It is a doctrine distinct from other elements of the Calvinist acronym TULIP and is contrary to the Calvinist doctrine of limited Atonement” (Wikipedia on-line).

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Arminian view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● What it states:

- The purpose of the atonement was universal—Jesus died on behalf of all people.
- The atonement makes a way for every person who ever lived to respond to the Gospel call—Part of the effect of the atonement is the restoration of the ability to respond to God's call of salvation.
- Salvation is available for all—The doctrine of unlimited atonement rejects the predeterminism associated with Calvinism (using foreknowledge as foresight & election based on future information) and states that every person has an equal opportunity to accept Jesus through personal faith.
- The atonement legally pays for the sins of those who believe on Jesus—Only those who believe on Jesus are forgiven—only the believers' sins are paid.

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Arminian view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● What it does not state:

- Jesus paid the penalty for those who deny faith in Him, and that His death was a substitutionary atonement for those who deny Him— Though the term unlimited atonement can easily give the incorrect assumption that Jesus' payment encompassed all people, Unlimited atonement maintains a limit on the legal effect. Jesus' death was indeed an offer of a substitutionary atonement to all, but this offer was resistible; though salvation is offered to all, not all are saved.

● Four Point Calvinism

- “Amyraldism (commonly called "four-point Calvinism" holds a view of Unlimited atonement that is very similar but not synonymous with the traditional Arminian understanding. Amyraldism teaches that God has provided Christ's atonement for all alike, but seeing that none would believe on their own, He then elects those whom he will bring to faith in Christ, thereby preserving the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election” (Wikipedia on-line).

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Arminian view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Four Point Calvinism..continued

- Charles Ryrie makes the argument for the four point Calvinist: “Did Christ purpose by coming into the world to make provision for the salvation of all people, realizing that the Father would mysteriously draw the elect to Himself and allow others to reject the provision made? Because some reject does not invalidate the provision or mean that the provision was not made for them. If we say that a father provides sufficient food for his family, we do not exclude the possibility that some members of that family may refuse to eat what has been provided. But their refusal does not mean that the provision was made only for those who actually do eat the food. Likewise, the death fo Christ provided the payment for the sins of all people – those who accept that payment and those who do not. Refusal to accept does not limit the provision made. Providing and possessing are not the same”

(Basic Theology, Charles Ryrie, Victor Books 1991, page 318).

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

- ❑ Atonement – the Arminian view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:
 - Scriptures used to support unlimited atonement or universal atonement
 - John 3:14-18 “world”
 - 2 Cor. 5:14-15 “for all”
 - 1 Timothy 2:3-6 “all men to be saved”
 - 1 Timothy 4:10 “Savior of all men”
 - Titus 2:11 “salvation for all people”
 - 2 Pet 2:1 “who bought them”
 - 2 Peter 3:9 “not willing that any should perish”
 - 1 John 2:2 “whole world”

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Atonement – the Arminian view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

In all cases the passages used to support universal atonement are not exegeted according to context, and hermeneutical rules using other Scripture on the same topic to provide understanding. The terms “world” or “all” must be understood in the context of who is being taught, and a reasonable determination of the writers meaning of the use of the broad word. It cannot be assumed that such terms mean “every person without exception” as the same words under other uses in the Bible never do (John 12:19; 16:8; Acts 17:6; 19:27; Rom 1:8).

● **Points of Agreement between limited atonement & unlimited atonement**

- “The call of salvation can be genuinely made universally—to all
- Jesus paid the penalty only for those who have faith in Him
- Jesus' death was a substitutionary atonement only for those who accept Him” (Wikipedia on-line).

Understanding Calvinism

□ **Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement:**

Calvinist agree the atonement was sufficient for all people as it had an infinite value. The issue of the atonement is not its sufficiency but rather its intention. Was it to secure the possibility of salvation for all people, or rather to emphatically, definitely, or particularly secure the salvation of those whom God had determined to save out of the lost of mankind? The latter is the view of the Calvinist, and therefore some have called it “limited” referring to its extent. A better rendering of the term is “particular,” or “definite” as the belief is the Bible makes it clear the atonement of Christ was intended specifically and only for God’s elect whom He gave to Christ before the foundation of the world.

Both Arminians, and Calvinist limit the atonement. The Arminian limits the power of the atonement. When he states that Christ died for the sins of every individual who ever lived without exception to make it possible to be saved, but leaves it up to the individual to apply it through faith, then the very omnipotent power of God and His Atonement are somehow held at the mercy of finite man. This limits the power of the atonement. Calvinist do not limit the power, but the extent by stating it was never purposed for every person but only for the elect.

Understanding Calvinism

On the atonement:

“No more soul-destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please...As it is a truth both of Scripture and of experience that the un-renewed man can do nothing of himself to secure his salvation, it is essential that he should be brought to a practical conviction of the truth. When thus convinced, and not before, he seeks help from the only source whence it can be obtained.”

Charles Hodge

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Logical Considerations:

- In reality both total depravity and unconditional election (which we have already studied) eliminate the Arminian view of atonement. As man has no desire or ability to believe, for man to be saved requires God to act. Particular atonement flows naturally with these other great doctrines of the Bible, whereas the Arminian view is not possible.
- As God is sovereign in the initiation and every step of salvation from beginning to end (Romans 8-9) than a particular atonement must be true.
- Why would Christ die for those not elected? This not only means that He died wastefully, but it also invades the whole matter of justice. One's grasp of God's justice, as it interplays with the extent of substitutionary atonement, has significant consequences. If Jesus paid for all sins of all persons for all times, then how can a God of justice still hold man accountable for his sin? And, if man's sins are all already paid why is there even a need for discussing forgiveness since the issue is closed. God would be unjust to hold any man accountable for his sin since Christ has already died for it.

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

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□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Logical Considerations..continued:

- The Scriptures tell us the Father chooses (Eph 1), the Holy Spirit draws, and the Son dies for sinners. Now, if the Son dies for non-elect sinners than He is inconsistent with the other members of the Godhead. For God the Father chooses a particular people, the Spirit draws a particular people, but the Son dies for everyone without distinction. In John 17:9 Jesus prays for a particular people, and says He does not pray for all people. Now, would the Son die for all people, but only pray for particular people whom the Father gave Him?
- John 6:39 states it is the Father's will that Christ not lose any that He has given Him. Why then would Christ die for those He has not been given since only those who He has been given will not be lost?
- The Arminian view provides a salvation that is incomplete. Yet, Isaiah 53:6 states that God the Father will see His (Christ's) sacrifice and be satisfied. This is the reason Christ stated as He died on the cross "it is finished." How then can there be anything left to do, and for those unsaved because they are not elected – how can they pay for their sins twice?

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Logical Considerations..continued:

- In Matthew 20:28 it states He was a “ransom” for many. Not only does the word “many” limit the number, but the word “ransom” has with it the idea of full payment. It is the same concept of going to the market and purchasing a commodity. When the purchase is complete there is nothing remaining. It would be unreasonable to add anything to the purchase, or attempt to pay for it again as the very concept of “ransom” rules it out. This terminology eliminates the idea of atonement as “making salvation available” – the purchase was made and the transaction is complete.
- There is no place in Scripture where the statement is made that Christ died without exception for every person. There are places that indicate for whom He died, and the wording emphasizes a definite or particular number. Hermeneutically we must allow one Scripture to bring clarity to another. As there are clear passages that limit the extent of the atonement, these must be considered in the interpretation of those less clear passages where broad terms are used.

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Scriptures used to support limited atonement or particular atonement:

Passages that teach the necessity of particular atonement as part of the overall plan of God:

- **John 3:3-16; John 6:35-40; John 10:11-18; John 10:26-30; Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:3-14; Eph 2:1-10; Col 1:13-23; 2 Tim 1:8-14; Heb 10:1-18; 1 Pet 1:1-5.**

Passages that teach the atonement as being particular:

- **Leviticus 16:34** – *the picture or type of Christ atonement was particular only for the nation of Israel*
- **Isaiah 53:5-8** – *the prophecy of the cross was particular in its atonement (Is 53:8)*
- **Mat 1:21** – *the announcement of Christ's coming was particular in its atonement*

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Scriptures used to support limited atonement or particular atonement..continued:

Passages that teach the atonement as being particular..continued:

- Mat 20:28; 26:28 “for many”
- John 10:11;15 “the sheep” – a definite people
- John 15:13 “friends” – in the next verse He defines friends (John 15:14)
- Acts 20:28 “which He purchased”
- Rom 8:32-34 “God’s elect”
- Eph 5:25 “for her” – reference the church
- Heb 9:15 “redeems them”
- Rev 5:9 “ransom men”

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

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□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Problem texts for Limited Atonement:

- **John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42** “world” – must interpret “world” in context – John 10:16 & Rev 5:9 for explanation
- **2 Pet 3:9** “all” – must interpret “all” in context – all here refers to the chosen
- **1 Cor 5:14-15; 2 Cor 15:22** – “all” in context is referring to all in Christ, or the elect only.
- **1 Tim 2:3-6** “all” – a study of the Greek word “pas” means all kinds of people as in 1 Tm 1:2 and Mt. 4:23; 5:11; 10:1; Lk. 11:42; Ac. 10:12; Rom. 7:8; Rev. 21:19. The logic – The Bible does not teach that it is God’s desire to save all men? This would be inconsistent with the preponderance of Scripture and logic. Therefore, as elsewhere this text is referring to “all kinds of people.” Briefly – what does the Bible teach about God desiring to save everyone. God did not choose or elect all men to eternal life. He only chose some; the rest - - - - -

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Problem texts for Limited Atonement...continued:

- - are hardened (Rom. 9:18). These are vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (2 Th. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:8-9; Pr. 16:4; 1 Th. 5:9). God is infinite in power, knowledge and wisdom. If God really wanted to save every individual throughout history, then why did He restrict His special revelation to Israel? Why did God forbid Paul, Timothy, and Silas to preach the gospel in Asia (Acts 16:6)? Why did Jesus Christ not pray and intercede for all men, but only for some (Jn. 17:9)? In Acts 9, Jesus transforms Paul into the greatest evangelist of all time. Why doesn't God raise up thousands of Paul's? God has the power to do whatever He pleases, but does not. The new birth is a sovereign act of God, yet God does not grant the new birth to every person. Faith and repentance are gifts granted to some and not others. The Bible clearly presents that God has not set out to save all men. What it does teach is that He has chosen to save some from every nation (Rev. 5:9).

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Problem texts for Limited Atonement...continued:

2 Pet 2:1 “bought them” – the prevailing thought is that Peter is referring to apostates as being purchased by God therefore these unsaved men were under the purchased blood of Christ. However, Peter is not here speaking of Christ. The word for Master “despoten” is used of God the Father throughout the New Testament. It refers always of the expressed authority masters have over their subjects. The word “bought” cannot then refer to the blood of Christ since that was the work of Christ alone, and not to the Father. It would also be inconsistent with the doctrine of eternal security. What then is Peter saying? The context is referring back to Israel’s false prophets and making them analogous with today’s apostate teachers. Peter is referring back to God gloriously purchasing Israel out of Egypt, and that instead of being grateful they continued to deny God His due (see Deut 32:5-6).

Understanding Calvinism

- **Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:**
 - **Problem texts for Limited Atonement...continued:**
 - **Romans 8:31-32** *“us all” - the “us all” must refer back to Rom 8:28-29 “called according to His purpose” and those “whom He foreknew” (fore-loved or elected). What appears to the Arminian to be a proof text of universal atonement is exactly the opposite. For if Christ died for all men of all time, then according to this passage God will not withhold anything (salvation) from them. This becomes the very argument against universal atonement.*
 - **Practical Considerations:**
 - What does Calvinism (limited Atonement) do to evangelism? It encourages it. Salvation is of the Lord, and the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. God has a definite plan that He is carrying out. He chose individuals to be saved, and He is moving in history to complete their salvation. Evangelism is a key component of His plan “My sheep hear My voice” John 10:27. God has designed His calling so that His own will hear His Word and exercise saving faith.

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

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- **Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:**
 - **Practical considerations...continued:**
 - Historically, the greatest evangelism has taken place through Calvinist who believed in God's particular atonement. Among the vast list of those making such an impact are Calvin, Luther, Knox, Gill, Ryle, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Edwards, and William Carey.
 - Many people in churches *have* been taught from childhood that God loves everyone in exactly the same way and that to suggest otherwise is bigoted. This is related to poor interpretation, and man centered theology. The equal love assumption fuels universal atonement concepts. This also fits with modern views of self-importance, self-esteem, pride, and free-will. Modern rationalism states that in order for God to be fair, man must have an equal ability to freely choose or reject the offer of salvation. These concepts leave God's sovereign right, power, and glory out of the picture, and give no credence to man's lost condition, and inability under sin. The bottom line is the Word of God has been neglected, or reinterpreted to fit man-centered thinking and this has become the standard teaching in churches throughout late Christian history.

Understanding Calvinism

□ Atonement – the Calvinist view of the extent of the Atonement..continued:

● Practical considerations...continued:

- Particular atonement is a message of particular love. It is God moving in history to save for His own purposes a people to adopt into the family of God. He demonstrates His love for these persons through the incredible giving of His own Son, and He uses all His omnipotent power, and omniscient wisdom to uniquely call them to Himself in history. This is a story of God for His own mysterious purposes working and doing something on behalf of those undeserving. Calvinism puts God where the Bible puts Him – as God! It also places man where man belongs as a needy creature ever dependent on God. The particular atonement of the Scripture does not preclude any person from bowing the knee before God in repentance and faith. For the Bible is a call for all, and only God knows who those are who will ultimately be brought by His predetermined plan, and drawing to Himself.

Understanding Calvinism

“Therefore we must guard against depriving believers of anything disclosed about predestination in Scripture, lest we seem either wickedly to defraud them of the blessing of their God or to accuse and scoff at the Holy Spirit for having published what it is in any way profitable to suppress.”

John Calvin

Questions and Discussion – followed by
fellowship continuing at the restaurant.....