**The Atonement Of Christ – Limited Or Unlimited?**

I appreciate David Landon’s kind and intelligent response to my article in the Oct 2017 issue of Faith And Facts. A few years back I had enjoyed reading Mr. Landon’s exchanges in Faith And Facts with my friend Keith Sharp on the several points of Calvinism.

**Mr. Landon’s Three Proof Texts**

David quotes three similar verses in an attempt to prove the “limited atonement,” that Jesus only died for the saved, and not “every man” (Heb 2:9). I will examine one of the three verses and let my answer be a response to all three since they are so similar.

Eph 5:25 reads “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” David evidently interprets this verse to mean Christ gave himself for the church only. But how would that same reasoning work in a scripture like “…God sent forth his Son … To redeem them that were under the law …” (Gal 4:4-5). According to David’s logic, that text then would mean Jesus died for the Jews only, and that leaves all of us Gentiles out in the cold. Moreover using David’s same logic, Gal 2:20 (“the Son of God … gave himself for me”) would prove Jesus only gave himself for Paul; Paul would be the only person who could possibly be saved. Does David really think that if I say “I provide for my children,” that implies I do not provide for my wife also? I seriously doubt it, so this indicates to me David doesn’t really even believe his own argument, because he doesn’t reason this way with the same type language in everyday life and with other similar passages. I am not accusing David of being dishonest here; far from it. I just don’t think David has thought his argument all the way through.

**Jesus Died For All Men**

I have a list of at least nine simple passages that say Jesus died for the world or all men (not just the saved). I Tim 2:5-6 is one of them and reads this way “… the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” The typical Calvinistic response to these type passages (like David’s response to Heb 2:9 in his article) is that “all” refers to all of the elect, not to all men. But context shows that can’t be true in this case. I Tim 2:1 begins by exhorting us to pray for “all men.” That can’t just be referring to the elect only because verse 2 shows this “all men” includes praying for “kings, and for all that are in authority.” Unless all that have been in government authority throughout history (including Adolf Hitler) just happened to be of the elect (were saved), then the “all men” in this context refers to all men unlimited including the non-elect. To make a play on a popular religious saying – taking a proof text in context is not a pretext.

**Jesus Died For Non-Christians Also**

Let’s look at a few of the other Bible passages that conclusively prove the “general atonement,” that Jesus died for all. I John 2:2 says “And he (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” It is actually stated in this verse that Jesus died for the whole world, but (as mentioned earlier) the Calvinist will usually respond to such verses by saying “world” here only refers to all of the elect (saved). But that won’t work here either because John has already mentioned the sins of the elect with the term “ours.” The verse is saying Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the elect (saved) and also for the sins of the whole world. That doesn’t make any sense if the “world” only refers to the elect. That would make the verse say Jesus died for the elect, and not for the elect only, but also for the elect.

**Some That Jesus Died For Will Be Lost**

Rom 14:15,23 reads this way “But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, … Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. … he that doubteth is d-a-m-n-e-d if he eat, because he eateth not of faith …” Of course the Calvinist position is that everybody Jesus died for will be saved, but this verse talks about some Jesus died for who will be condemned. See my point? We can make the exact same point from I Cor 8:11 (“through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died”), and II Pet 2:1,4,9 (“… false teachers … shall bring in d-a-m-n-a-b-l-e heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction …”). So that gives us three passages that conclusively falsify Calvin’s Limited Atonement theory by saying that some “for whom Christ died” will be lost.

**Some Who Are Called To Salvation Are Not Saved**

Matt 22:14 (“For many are called, but few are chosen”) is also impossible to fit into the Limited Atonement scheme. The verse shows there is a difference in the number of those who are called and those who are chosen (elected to be saved, those whom Jesus died for according to the Limited Atonement theory). But how could God honestly ask someone to come to salvation who can’t be saved because Jesus hasn’t died for them? That invitation to salvation rings hollow if it is impossible for them to accept the invitation, right?

**Jesus Died For The Unbelievers Too**

I Tim 4:10 is the last passage I would like to look at in this short article. It says “… we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” The word “specially” here is critical to our discussion. It necessarily implies that God is the Saviour of some men who are not believers. There is no way the verse can be explained in light of the Limited Atonement theory, because that theory says Jesus only died for believers. It is clear from this text that Jesus died for all men (unlimited), but believers are the only ones who end up taking advantage (receive the spiritual benefits) of His death.

**Conclusion**

When we just take the plain meaning for all the scriptures on the topic, it is very clear the Limited Atonement theory is untrue. What does this mean in practicality? – that all humans of all time have the opportunity to be saved (since Jesus died for them), not just a select “few” (Matt 7:14).

The true (consistent) Calvinist agrees all five points of Calvinism stand or fall together. My opinion is that the Limited Atonement point is the easiest of the five to knock down. So by disproving it, we prove the whole Calvinistic system to be false.