

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XIII

July 25, 2004

No. 30

Uprooting the T.U.L.I.P. - Limited Atonement

Nathan Mayberry

Tenet number three of the TULIP, Limited Atonement, states: “this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing up them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God that Christ... redeem... all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation...” (Canons of Dordt). Simply stated, this doctrine purports that Christ died only for the elect, and that the saving power of his blood does not extend to those who have been chosen for destruction. This doctrine wrongly limits the reach of atonement, the love of God, the power of Christ’s death, and the power of the gospel.

God is a loving god; yet, He is also just and will punish the evildoer (Mat 25:46). However, He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires that the wicked would turn to Him (Eze 18:23, 32; 33:11). Because He does not wish for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance, He patiently waits before

coming in judgment (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). If, however, the Calvinists are correct in asserting that the “nonelect” cannot be saved despite their potential obedience, then God is unloving and unjust.

To show His love for all men, God sent his Son to grant eternal life to whoever believes in Him (Joh 3:16). Jesus came to be the Savior of the world (1 Joh 4:14), to serve as the propitiation for the sins of the *whole* world, not just the sins of the elect (Joh 1:29; 1 Joh 2:2). All men are under death, for all have sinned (Rom 5:12), but Christ died to give salvation to all who walk in His obedient footsteps (Rom 5:15-19). Calvinism limits the universal scope of Christ’s redeeming power by saying that His blood was shed only for the elect.

The gospel is God’s power for salvation to *everyone* who believes (Rom 1:16); however, if the gospel cannot save the reprobate individual, is it truly powerful? Would it not be weak? Calvinists essentially eliminate any need for the gospel by their false doctrines. If only the elect will be saved (that salvation being unconditional), what purpose would the gospel serve at all? It would not make their salvation more sure than it

already is. Also, it would not help the reprobate, for it would only bring them despair as it told them of their helpless condition. The gospel is supposed to bring peace, not despair (Eph 6:15). If the gospel brings only despair, would it not be better to quit preaching the gospel altogether? Yet, Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to *all creation* (Mat 28:18-19). All men are expected to repent after hearing the universal call of the gospel (Act 17:30). When any person responds to the gospel in faith and obedience they will be saved (Jam 1:21-22).

Contrary to the beliefs of many, atonement is not limited by God’s arbitrary selection of certain individuals, but by a person’s response to the truth. A remnant, a small group of individuals, will be saved (Rom 11:2-5); yet, the only limiting factor in being a part of that remnant is a person’s willingness to obey God’s word. There will only be a few that follow the straight and narrow path to Heaven (Mat 7:13-14); however, ample opportunity is given to every individual to follow that road.