

John Calvin and Calvinism – No. 3

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The second major platform of Calvinism has to do with the atonement of Christ for sin. Calvinism teaches a limited atonement, denying that Christ died for all men or for the whole world. This is absolutely required by the prior assumption of the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election or predestination. If it is assumed that the eternal salvation and damnation of specific persons was determined by God before creation, without any conditions to be met by those persons, then the conclusion must follow that Christ died not for all men, but only for those predestined to salvation. If God picked out only certain ones to be saved (per Calvinistic “election”) but Christ died that all might be saved if they meet certain conditions, then some might meet those conditions and be saved, contrary to God’s foreordained election! Thus, the limited atonement, that Christ died only for the elect, is a false doctrine based upon a false doctrine. As is often the case, one false doctrine gives birth to others.

What does the Bible say about the extent of Christ’s atoning death? It is obvious from the following passages:

1. “Christ Jesus ...gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5-6)
2. “For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Tit. 2:11)
3. “...That by the grace of God, He (Jesus) should taste of death for every man” (Heb. 2:9)
4. “(Christ) is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2) (See also John 1:29; 3:16-17; 6:33, 51; 12:32-33; Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 John 4:14, etc.).

The Bible teaches that Christ died for the salvation of all men, not just a select, predetermined, few. Why then, will not all men be saved? “And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life” (John 5:40). All men are invited (Mat. 11:28), but all do not come. God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4) and He has provided the means, if men would only wake up and serve Him!

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