



# FIVE POINTS

*TOWARDS A DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF  
GOD'S GRACE*

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**FOCUS**



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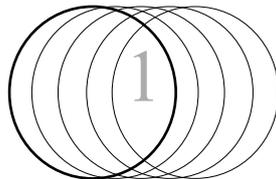
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# PREFACE

Christians love God. He is our great Treasure, and nothing can compare with him. One of the great old catechisms says, “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”<sup>1</sup> This is the One we love. We love the whole panorama of his perfections. To know him, and be loved by him, and become like him is the end of our soul’s quest. He is our “exceeding joy” (Ps. 43:4).

He is infinite—and that answers our longing for completeness. He is eternal—and that answers our longing for permanence. He is unchangeable—and that answers our longing for stability and security. There is none like God. Nothing can compare with him. Wealth, sex, power, popularity, conquest, productivity, great achievement—nothing can compare with God.

## **When the Fog Clears**

The more you know him, the more you want to know him. The more you feast on his fellowship, the hungrier you are for deeper, richer communion. Satisfaction at the deepest levels

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<sup>1</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question Four.





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breeds a holy longing for the time when we will have the very power of God to love God.

That's the way Jesus prays for us to his Father: "That the love with which you have loved me may be in them" (John 17:26). That is what we long for: the very love the Father has for the Son filling us, enabling us to love the Son with the magnitude and purity of the love of the Father. Then the frustrations of inadequate love will be over.

Yes, the more you know him and love him and trust him, the more you long to know him. That's why I have written this little book. I long to know God and enjoy God. And I want the same for you. The great old catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" and answers, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and *enjoy* him forever." Enjoying God is the way to glorify God, because *God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him*.

But to enjoy him we must know him. Seeing is savoring. If he remains a blurry, vague fog, we may be intrigued for a season. But we will not be stunned with joy, as when the fog clears and you find yourself on the brink of some vast precipice.

### **Worthwhile Wrestling**

My experience is that clear knowledge of God from the Bible is the kindling that sustains the fires of affection for God. And probably the most crucial kind of knowledge is the knowledge of what God is like in salvation. That is what the five points of Calvinism are about. Not the power and sovereignty of God in general, but his power and sovereignty in the way he saves people. That is why these points are sometimes called *the doctrines of grace*. To experience God fully, we need to know not just how he acts in general, but specifically how he saves *us*—how did he save me?





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I do not begin as a Calvinist and defend a system. I begin as a Bible-believing Christian who wants to put the Bible above all systems of thought. But over the years—many years of struggle—I have deepened in my conviction that Calvinistic teachings on the five points are biblical and therefore true, and therefore a precious pathway into deeper experiences of God’s grace.

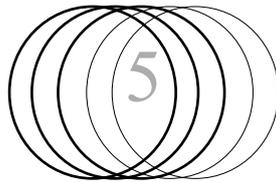
My own struggle makes me more patient with others who are on the way. And in one sense, we are all on the way. Even when we know things biblically and truly—things clear enough and precious enough to die for—we still see through a glass dimly (1 Cor. 13:12). There can be many tears as we seek to put our ideas through the testing fires of God’s word.

But all the wrestling to understand what the Bible teaches about God is worth it. God is a rock of strength in a world of quicksand. To know him in his sovereignty is to become like an oak tree in the wind of adversity and confusion. And along with strength is sweetness and tenderness beyond imagination. The sovereign Lion of Judah is the sweet Lamb of God.

### **My Prayer for You**

I pray you will be helped. Please don’t feel that you have to read these short chapters in any particular order. Many of you will want to skip the historical introduction because it is not as immediately relevant to the biblical questions. There is an intentional order to the book, but feel free to start wherever it looks most urgent for you. If you get help, then you will be drawn back to the rest of it. If you don’t, well, then just return to the Bible and read it with all your might. That is where I hope you will end up anyway: reading and understanding and loving and enjoying and obeying God’s word, not my word. I pray that because of our meeting here you will move “Towards a Deeper Experience of God’s Grace.”





# LIMITED ATONEMENT

The Atonement is the work of God in Christ on the cross in which he completed the work of his perfectly righteous life, canceled the debt of our sin, appeased his holy wrath against us, and won for us all the benefits of salvation. The death of Christ was necessary because God would not show a just regard for his glory if he swept sins under the rug with no recompense. That's the point of Romans 3:25-26:

God put [Christ] forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was *to show God's righteousness*, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was *to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

You can see from the emphasized words that the death of Christ was necessary to vindicate the righteousness of God in justifying the ungodly by faith. Why is that? Because it would be unrighteous to acquit sinners as though their sin was insignificant, when in fact sin is an insult against the value of God's glory. And since the value of God's glory is infinite, the





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offense is infinitely outrageous. Therefore Jesus bears the curse, which was due to our sin, so that we can be justified and the righteousness of God can be vindicated.

### **What Did Christ Actually Achieve?**

The term “limited atonement” addresses the question, “For whom did Christ do all this?” “For whom did he die?” “Whose sin did he atone for?” “For whom did he purchase all the benefits of salvation?” But behind these questions of the *extent* of the atonement lies the equally important question about the *nature* of the atonement. What did Christ actually achieve on the cross for those for whom he died? That question will lead to a more accurate answer to the others.

If you say that he died for every human being *in the same way*, then you have to define the *nature* of the atonement very differently than you would if you believed that Christ, *in some particular way*, died for those who actually do believe. In the first case, you would believe that the death of Christ did not *decisively secure* the salvation of anyone; it only made all men savable so that something else would be decisive in saving them, namely their choice. In that case, the death of Christ did not actually remove the sentence of death and did not actually guarantee new life for anyone. Rather it only created possibilities of salvation which could be actualized by people who provide the decisive cause, namely their faith. In this understanding of the atonement, faith and repentance are not blood-bought gifts of God for particular sinners, but are rather the acts of some sinners that make the blood work for them.

You begin to see how closely this doctrine of the atonement is connected with the previous one, irresistible grace. What I think the Bible teaches is that this very irresistible grace is purchased by the blood of Jesus. The new birth is blood-bought. The effectual call is blood-bought. The gift of repentance





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is blood-bought. None of these acts of irresistible grace is deserved. They came to us because Christ secured them by his blood and righteousness. But that means, he did not secure them for all in the same way. Otherwise all would be born again, and all would be effectually called, and all would receive the gift of repentance.

So the personal and experiential question we face here at the beginning of this chapter is: Do we believe that Christ decisively secured for me the call and life and faith and repentance I now have? Or do I contribute these things from myself so that what he died to achieve counts for me? For if Christ died for all people in the same way, then his death did not infallibly obtain regenerating grace or faith or repentance for those who are saved. We must have regenerated ourselves without the blood-bought miracle of Christ, and we must have come to faith and repentance ourselves without the blood-bought gifts of faith and repentance.

In other words, if we believe that Christ died for all men in the same way, then the benefits of the cross cannot include the mercy by which we are brought to faith, because then all men would be brought to faith, but they aren't. But if the mercy by which we are brought to faith (irresistible grace) is not part of what Christ purchased on the cross, then we are left to obtain our deliverance from deadness and blindness and rebellion another way. We are left to make our way into the safety of Christ another way, since he did not obtain this entrance (new birth, faith, repentance) for us when he died.

### **Who Really Limits the Atonement**

Therefore, it becomes evident that it is not the Calvinist who limits the atonement. It is those who deny that the atoning death of Christ accomplishes what we most desperately need—





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namely, salvation from the condition of deadness and hardness and blindness under the wrath of God. They limit the power and effectiveness of the atonement so that they can say that it was accomplished even for those who die in unbelief and are condemned. In order to say that Christ died for all men in the same way, they must limit the atonement to a *possibility* or an *opportunity* for salvation if fallen humans can escape from their deadness and rebellion and obtain faith by an effectual means not provided by the cross.

On the other hand, we do not limit the power and effectiveness of the atonement. Rather we say that in the cross, God had in view the actual, effective redemption of his children from all that would destroy them, including their own unbelief. And we affirm that when Christ died particularly for his bride, he did not simply create a possibility or an opportunity for salvation, but really purchased and infallibly secured for them all that is necessary to get them saved, including the grace of regeneration and the gift of faith.

We do not deny that Christ died to save all *in some sense*. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:10 that in Christ God is “the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.” What we deny is that the death of Christ is for all men in the *same* sense. God sent Christ to save *all* in some sense. And he sent Christ to save those who believe in a *more particular sense*. God’s intention is different for each. That is a natural way to read 1 Timothy 4:10.

For “all men” the death of Christ is the foundation of the free offer of the gospel. This is the meaning of John 3:16, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The sending of the Son is for the whole world in the sense that Jesus makes plain: *so that whoever believes in him should not perish*. In that sense God sent Jesus for everyone. Or, to use the words





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of 1 Timothy 4:10, God is the “Savior of all people” in that Christ died to provide an absolutely reliable and valid offer of forgiveness to all, such that everyone, without exception, who trusts Christ would be saved.

When the gospel is preached, Christ is offered to all without discrimination. And the offer is absolutely authentic for all. What is offered is Christ, and anyone—absolutely anyone—who receives Christ receives all that he bought for his sheep, his bride. The gospel does not *offer* a possibility of salvation. It *is* the possibility of salvation. But what is offered is Christ, and in him the infinite achievement that he accomplished for his people by his death and resurrection.

### **The Crucial Role of the New Covenant<sup>1</sup>**

The biblical foundation for saying that Christ died not just to make salvation available for all who believe, but to actually purchase the faith of the elect is the fact that the blood of Jesus secured the blessings of the new covenant for his people. The faith of God’s chosen and called was purchased by “the blood of the covenant” (Matt. 26:28).

The Arminian view portrays sinners as needing divine assistance in order to believe. That’s true. We do need assistance. But more assistance than Arminianism assumes. In that view the sinner, after being assisted by God, provides the decisive impulse. God only assists; the sinner decides. Thus, “the blood of the covenant” does not decisively secure our faith. The decisive cause of faith is human self-determination. The atoning work of Christ, they say, sets up this possibility. But it

<sup>1</sup> The argument that follows is developed more fully in John Piper, “‘My Glory I Will Not Give to Another’: Preaching the Fullness of Definite Atonement for the Glory of God,” in David and Jonathan Gibson, eds, *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013).





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does not secure the outcome. But the new covenant, bought by the blood of Christ, teaches something very different. Let's put the teaching of the new covenant before us.

God spoke the terms of the new covenant through Jeremiah:

The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers ... my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:31-34)

One fundamental difference between the promised new covenant and the old one “made with their fathers” is that they broke the old one, but in the new covenant, God will “put the law within them” and will “write it on their hearts” so that the conditions of the covenant are secured by God’s sovereign initiative. The new covenant will not be broken. That is part of its design. It lays claim on its participants, secures them, and keeps them.

God makes this point even more clearly in the next chapter of Jeremiah:

I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good. (Jer. 32:39-41)

God makes at least six promises in this text: 1) I will make with them an everlasting covenant; 2) I will give them the kind of





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heart that secures their fearing me forever; 3) I will never turn away from doing good to them; 4) I will put the fear of me in their hearts; 5) I will not let them turn away from me; and 6) I will rejoice in doing good to them.

Here in Jeremiah 32 it becomes even clearer than in Jeremiah 31 that God is taking the sovereign initiative to make sure that the covenant succeeds. God will not leave it finally in the power of the fallen human will to attain or sustain membership in the new covenant. He will give a new heart—a heart that fears the Lord. It will be decisively God’s doing, not man’s. And he will act in this covenant so that “they may not turn from me” (Jer. 32:40). Thus John Owen comments, “This then is one main difference of these two covenants—that the Lord did in the old only require the condition; now, in the new, he will also effect it in all the federates, to whom this covenant is extended.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Ezekiel prophesies in the same way: God will take the initiative and give a new heart and a new spirit.

I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh. (Ezek. 11:19)

I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezek. 36:26-27)

An unregenerate heart of stone is the deep reason why Israel did not trust God’s promises, or love him with all their heart and

<sup>2</sup> John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, 16 vols. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967 [1850-1853]), 10:237.





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soul and mind and strength. If the new covenant is to be more successful than the old covenant, God will have to take out the heart of stone and give his people a heart that loves him. In other words, he will have to take a miraculous initiative to secure the faith and love of his people. This is exactly what Moses says God will do:

The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.  
(Deut. 30:6)

In other words, in the new covenant God promises that he will take the initiative and will create a new heart, so that people are made members of the new covenant by his initiative, not their own. If someone enjoys participation in the new covenant with all its blessings, it is because God forgave his iniquity, removed his heart of stone, gave him a tender heart of flesh that fears and loves God, and caused him to walk in his statutes. In other words, the new covenant promises regeneration. It promises to create faith and love and obedience where before there was only hardness.

### **The Blood of Jesus Obtains the Promises of the New Covenant**

What we find when we come to the New Testament is that Jesus is the Mediator of this new covenant and that he secured it by his own blood. This is the connection between the atonement and the new covenant: Jesus' blood is the blood of the covenant. The design of his death was to establish this covenant with all the terms we have just seen.

According to Luke 22:20, at the Last Supper, Jesus took the cup after they had eaten and said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Paul recounts this





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in 1 Corinthians 11:25: “He took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.’” I take this to mean that the promises of the new covenant are purchased by the blood of Christ. Or to use the language of Hebrews, “This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:22). “He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15).

Therefore all the promises of the new covenant are blood-bought promises. When they come true for us they come true because Jesus died to make them come true. This means that the particular promises of the new covenant to create a people of God and keep a people of God are what Jesus died for.

The point I am making is that not all the promises of the new covenant depend on the condition of faith. Rather, one of the promises made in the new covenant is that the condition of faith *itself* will be given by God. That’s why I say that the new covenant people are created and preserved by God. “I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me” (Jer. 32:40). God puts the fear of God in us in the first place. And God keeps us from turning away. He creates his new people and keeps his new people. And he does this by the blood of the covenant, which Jesus said was his own blood (Luke 22:20).

The upshot of this understanding of the new covenant is that there is a definite atonement for the new covenant people. In the death of Christ, God secures a definite group of unworthy sinners as his own people by purchasing and guaranteeing the conditions they must meet to be part of his people. The blood of the covenant—Christ’s blood—purchases and guarantees the new heart of faith and repentance. God did not do this for everyone. He did it for a “definite” or a “particular” group, owing to nothing in themselves. And since he did it through Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep,





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we say, “to [him] be glory forever and ever” (Heb. 13:21). This achievement is a great part of the glory of the cross of Christ.

### **Jesus Lays Down His Life for the Sheep**

There are many Scriptures which support what we have just seen, and teach that God’s purpose in the death of Christ included the ingathering of a new-covenant people by means of his irresistible grace.

For example, in John 10:15 Jesus says, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” This is not the same as saying I lay down my life for all people. In John’s Gospel “the sheep” are not everyone. Nor does the term “sheep” refer to those who have used their power of self-determination to produce faith. Rather they are those whom God has chosen and given to the Son (John 6:37, 44). Their faith is possible because they are sheep.

We see this in John 10:26 where Jesus says, “You do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.” In other words, being a sheep enables you to believe, not vice versa. So the sheep do not first make themselves sheep by believing; they are able to believe because they are sheep. So when Jesus says, “I lay down my life for the sheep,” he means, by my blood I purchase those my Father has given to me, and I secure their faith and all the blessings that come to those who are united with me.

John 17 points in the same direction. Jesus limits his prayer in John 17 to his sheep—those whom the Father has given him.

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me ... I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours... And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:6, 9, 19)





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The consecration in view here is the death of Jesus which he is about to undergo. Therefore he is saying that his death is designed especially for those for whom he is praying. “I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me” (John 17:9). And for these he is consecrating himself. For these he is laying down his life.

### **Jesus Died to Gather the Children of God**

John tells us of a prophecy coming from the high priest which makes a similar point.

“Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (John 11:50-52)

There are “children of God” scattered throughout the world. These are the “sheep”—the ones the Father has given to the Son and will irresistibly draw to Jesus. Jesus died to gather these people into one flock. The point is the same as John 10:15-16: “I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; *I must bring them also*, and they will listen to my voice.” The “gathering” in John 11:52 and the “bringing” in John 10:16 are the same work of God. And both are the divine design of the cross of Christ. Christ did not die just to make this possible, but to make this happen.

It is described again by John in Revelation 5:9 where heaven sings to Christ: “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” In accordance with John 10:16, John does not say that the death of Christ ransomed all people but that it ransomed people *from* all the tribes of the world.





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This is the way we may understand texts like 1 John 2:2, that some have used to argue against the doctrine of limited or definite atonement. In words very reminiscent of John 11:52 John says, “[Christ] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” The question is: Does this mean that Christ died with the intention to appease the wrath of God for every person in the world? From all that we have seen so far from John’s writing, it is not likely that it has that meaning. Rather the verbal parallel between John 11:51-52 and 1 John 2:2 is so close it is difficult to escape the conviction that the same thing is intended by John in both verses.

John 11:51-52, “He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

1 John 2:2, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

The “whole world” is parallel with “children of God scattered abroad.” So it is natural to think that John’s point in 1 John 2:2 is to stress that God’s propitiating work in Christ is not parochial, as if he is only interested in Jews, or in one class or race. No grouping of humans should ever say, “He is the propitiation for our sins only.” No. His propitiating work is meant to gather people from the “whole world.” “I have other sheep that are not of this fold!” (John 10:16)—all over the world. These are the “sheep” for whom he died, the redeemed “children of God” scattered abroad, the ransomed people “from every tongue and tribe and people and nation.”

### **A Ransom for Many**

In harmony with what we have seen, for example, in Revelation 5:9 (“by your blood you ransomed people for God





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from every tribe”), Jesus said in Mark 10:45, “The Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” He does not say “ransom for all” but “ransom for many,” just as Revelation 5:9 says “ransomed *from* every tribe.” I know that the word “many” does not prove my case. “Many” could logically mean “all.” My point is simply to show that “many” (rather than “all”) fits with the limits we have seen already in this chapter.

Similarly in Matthew 26:28, Jesus says, at the last supper, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out *for many* for the forgiveness of sins.” And Hebrews 9:28 says, “So Christ, having been offered once to bear the *sins of many*, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” And Isaiah 53:12 says that the suffering servant “bore the sin *of many*.”

### **Christ Gave Himself for the Church**

One of the clearest passages on God’s particular intention in the death of Christ is Ephesians 5:25-27.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Here Paul says that the intended beneficiary of the death of Christ is the church, the bride of Christ. One of the reasons I am jealous for this doctrine of limited atonement or particular redemption is that I want the bride of Christ to be properly moved by the particular love that Christ had for her when he died. This was not only a world-embracing love; it was a bride-purchasing love. God knew those who were his. And he sent his Son to obtain this bride for this Son.





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From heaven he came and sought her  
To be his holy bride;  
With his own blood he bought her,  
And for her life he died.<sup>3</sup>

There is a particular love for the bride in this sacrifice that the church misses when she only thinks that God did not have any particular people in mind when he bought the church with his Son's blood. I used to say to the church I served, "I love all the women of this church, but I love my wife in a very special way." I would not want Noël to think that she is loved just because I love all women and she happens to be a woman. So it is with God and all the people of the world. There is a universal love for all, but there is a particular love that he has for the bride. And when Christ died, there was a particular aim in that death for her. He knew her from the foundation of the world, and he died to obtain her.

### **The Precious Logic of Romans 8:32**

Another important text on this issue of the design and extent of the atonement is Romans 8:32. It is one of the most precious promises for God's people in all the Bible. Paul says, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" The unanswered question anticipates our ability to answer it and turn it into a rock solid promise: "Since God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, he will most certainly give us all things with him." Who are the "us" in this verse? They are the people of verses 29-31:

<sup>3</sup> Samuel J. Stone, "The Church's One Foundation." (<http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh545.sht>)





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*Those* whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among *many brothers*. And *those* whom he predestined he also called, and *those* whom he called he also justified, and *those* whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall *we* say to these things? If God is for *us*, who can be against *us*?

The reason Paul can make such a staggering promise to “us” as he does in verse 32—that God will infallibly give us all things with him—is that the ones being addressed are the foreknown, the predestined, the called, the justified. These are the “sheep,” the “children of God scattered abroad.” And for these people, Paul says, the death of Christ is the unshakable, absolutely certain guarantee that they will receive all things with him. This is the wonderful logic of Romans 8:32.

But what becomes of this logic if God gave his Son in this way for thousands who do not receive all things, but in fact perish? The logic is destroyed. It becomes: “If God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all people in the world, then, since many of them are lost, it is not true that they will most certainly receive all things with him.” That is not the point of the verse.

It says, Because of God’s giving the Son for his people, those people—foreknown and predestined from the foundation of the world—will receive everything God has to give. Therefore, the design of God in giving the Son is not only a general offer to the whole world, but a rock solid securing of infinite riches for his people. My great desire is that God’s people see this and go deeper into the grace of this particular redemption. We are loved specifically in the atonement, not just generally. Our future is secured particularly by the blood of Christ.

In summary, the biblical point of limited atonement is that in the death of Christ God had a particular design for his elect. He





## FIVE POINTS

was purchasing not just a possibility for them to believe and be saved, but he was purchasing the belief itself. The conversion of God's elect is blood-bought. The overcoming of our deadness and rebellion against God is not performed decisively by us so that we then qualify for the atonement. God's sovereign grace overcomes our deadness and rebellion. And that grace is purchased for us in the death of Christ.

If we want to go deeper in our experience of God's grace this is an ocean of love for us to enjoy. God does not mean for the bride of his Son to only feel loved with general, world-embracing love. He means for her to feel ravished with the specificity of his affection that he set on her before the world existed. He means for us to feel a focused: "I chose you. And I sent my Son to die to have you."

This is what we offer the world. We don't hoard it for ourselves. And we don't abandon it by saying, all we have to offer the world is God's general love for all people. No, we offer this. We offer a full and complete and definite atonement. We offer Christ. We don't say, Come to a possibility. We say, Come to Christ. Receive Christ. And what we promise them if they come is that they will be united to him and his bride. And all that he bought for his bride will be theirs. All that he secured with absolute certainty will be their portion forever.

Their faith will prove them to be among the elect. And their coming to Christ will prove that they are already the particular beneficiaries of his particular redemption, his definite atonement.

To solidify this deepening of our experience of God's grace we turn now to the doctrine of election. For it is the elect for whom he died with this immeasurable design of everlasting love.





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