

# Atonement/Unlimited Atonement

Written and compiled by Gary Kukis

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

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**Preface:** This set of doctrines was taken from Exodus 12 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

This is only a small portion of the doctrine of Unlimited Atonement found on the Middletown Bible Church website.

## For Whom Did Christ Die? (George Zeller)

He died for ALL (1Tim. 2:6 ).  
He died for ALL MEN (Rom. 5:18; 1Tim. 4:10).  
He died for US ALL, for ALL OF US (Isa. 53:6).  
He died for the UNGODLY (Rom. 5:6).  
He died for CHRIST-DENIERS (2Peter 2:1).  
He died for SINNERS (Rom. 5:8).  
He died for EVERY MAN (Heb. 2:9).

## For Whom Did Christ Die? (George Zeller)

He died for MANY (Matthew 20:28).  
 He died for the WORLD (John 6:33,51; John 1:29 and John 3:16).  
 He died for the WHOLE WORLD (1 John 2:2).  
 He died for the WHOLE NATION of Israel (John 11 :50-51 ).  
 He died for the CHURCH (Eph. 5:25).  
 He died for His SHEEP (John 10:11 ).  
 He died for ME (Gal. 2:20).

From <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/4whom.pdf> accessed August 19, 2020.

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The basic term *atonement*, comes from the Old Testament and it generally means, *to cover over*. It is a reference to sins being temporarily covered over during Old Testament times. However, in the New Testament, this word reflects a more permanent status (our sins are not simply covered over, but completely taken away).

## Definition of Terms Regarding the Atonement (George Zeller)

**The atonement:** For our purposes here we are using this term to refer to the cross-work of Christ in general, with special emphasis upon Christ's substitutionary death for our sins.

**Unlimited atonement** (general atonement, universal atonement): This is the doctrine which says that Christ died for the sins of all men, for all mankind, for every person, for the whole world. However, individuals do not benefit from the death of Christ in a saving way until they come to Christ and believe on Him. God's gift has been purchased, offered and extended to all (1John 5:11), but must be personally received by faith (1John 5:12; John 1:12).

**Limited atonement** (definite atonement, particular atonement, limited redemption): This is the doctrine which says that Christ died only for the elect. He did not die for those who will eventually be in hell (such as Judas or Pharaoh<sup>1</sup>). This is the third point of 5-point Calvinism, the letter "L" in the term TULIP.

**The Elect:** We use this term to refer to the saved of all ages. The term includes any or all of those who will eventually be in heaven and counted among the redeemed (compare Col. 3:12).

**The Non-elect:** We use this term to refer to those who will eventually perish in hell. It refers to those who persist in their unbelief and reject Christ even to the day they die. They are in hell, not because God elected them to damnation, but because **"they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved"** (see 2Thess. 2:10-13). Those who go to heaven have only God to thank; those who go to hell have only themselves to blame.

**Extreme Calvinism (Hyper-Calvinism, 5-point Calvinism):** This term...refers to those who believe in a limited atonement, that Christ died only for the elect.

<sup>1</sup> There has been some discussion over the centuries on whether Judas and/or Pharaoh are saved.

From <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/4whom.pdf> accessed August 19, 2020.

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I used the ESV (capitalized) below. No doubt that Dano was influenced by R. B. Thieme, Jr., as Dano was an assistant pastor at his church. I did some editing.

### The Doctrine of Unlimited Atonement (Buddy Dano/Kukis)

- 1) Definition: The judgment of Christ on the cross as a substitute for every sin committed in human history by every member of the human race. But just because the penalty is paid for doesn't mean they go to heaven. They still don't have eternal life and they still lack perfect righteousness. But sin is actually and truly paid for; that is the emphasis in unlimited atonement. The work of Christ made salvation available to all but did not actually assure the salvation of anyone. Only those who express faith alone in Christ alone are eternally saved.
- 2) As R. B. Thieme, Jr. expressed it, *God is a gentleman; He does not force you to believe in Him*. We choose to trust in Jesus Christ, and God saves us. John 3:16, 36
- 3) Historical background to this doctrine. There are people who believe in something called limited atonement, sometimes called limited redemption. It means that Christ's death was only for the elect and that Christ did not die for the unbeliever. This is part of a system known as Calvinism today. However, John Calvin did not hold to this. The concept of limited atonement was developed by Calvin's successors, specifically by Beza who systematized Calvin's theology after his death. Around 1610 there was a man by the name of Jacob Arminius who taught theology in Holland and he could not go along with extreme Calvinism because there wasn't enough room there for individual volition, responsibility and freedom of choice in relation to salvation. So he began to teach a theological system which emphasized human responsibility and free will. His followers set forth five points which emphasized that every human being has the ability live a perfect life, to please God by his works, that election was conditional on what man did, that Christ died for everyone—unlimited atonement. They believed that grace was resistible and that salvation could be lost. They did not believe in eternal security.
- 4) In response to their five theological points, the Calvinists reacted with their five points that have come to be known through the acronym TULIP. T = total depravity, total inability to be saved; U = unconditional election; L = limited atonement; I = irresistible grace; P = perseverance of the saints (which is nothing more than *Lordship* salvation). Perseverance of the saints simply means that a person who believes in Jesus then goes on to live at least the minimum godly life (obviously, it is never clear as to what this minimum life might be).
- 5) The problems with 5 point Calvinism:
  - (1) So that no one misunderstands, this bastardization of Calvin's teaching is not Biblically accurate (I am accepting the history presented herein by Dano).
  - (2) This approach to salvation, known to some as hyper-Calvinism, removes our free will from the picture entirely. This makes us nothing more than chess pieces being moved around the chessboard; chess pieces who think they have some sort of free will, but, in truth, do not.
  - (3) This would mean that every free will decision that we make, for good or for bad, is meaningless. We are just doing what God has set forth for us to do.<sup>1</sup>
  - (4) This approach also assumes that, if a person does not persevere to the end, then it is likely that he was not saved in the first place. Given that no Christian is sinless, given that all Christians fail—what exactly are the minimum requirements required by this theology? Maybe I am better on Tuesday than I was on Monday, but suffer a setback on Wednesday. Does that mean that I was not really saved in the first place? Or do we somehow have to look at Thursday and Friday to make the final determination? Can I lose my salvation on Saturday but then regain it on Sunday through better obedience? If that is the case, how can I exhibit better obedience on the day I am not saved as opposed to, on a day when I

## The Doctrine of Unlimited Atonement (Buddy Dano/Kukis)

am saved? Do you see how the idea of losing your salvation is illogical, even by simple human logic?

- (5) The key is, we are saved and we are kept saved by Jesus Christ. We might be the worst Christians in the world and God might remove us from this life by the sin unto death. However, even under those circumstances, we remain saved. That is because our salvation depends upon Jesus Christ and not upon our post-salvation behavior.
- (6) The correct understanding is this: we have free will, just as every angel has free will. God allows us to choose; He allows us a legitimate set of choices in our lives, including the choice to believe in His Son. However, once this choice has been made, God then freezes that choice and protects that choice. He does not allow us, after salvation, to be plucked out of His hand.
- (7) Nevertheless, we retain free will after salvation. So, even though we cannot be plucked from God's hand (nor can we *jump out* of God's hand), we can, post-salvation, make decisions to sin and to go against God. After salvation, we are given the choice to exit fellowship with God (by committing a sin) and we are given the option of returning to fellowship via 1John 1:9 (by naming our sins to God). The very fact of 1John 1:9 (**If we acknowledge our sins, then God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**) means that man sins after salvation.
- (8) The very fact that men suffer the sin unto death suggests that, even as believers, we can stray far from God.
- 6) The true foundation of our salvation is what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross:
  - (1) 1 Peter 2:24 emphasizes the reality of Christ's substitution. **He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.** (Isaiah 53:5b)
  - (2) Romans 5:7–8 makes clear the substitutionary nature of Jesus dying for us: **For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us.** The Greek preposition *hupér* (ὑπέρ) [pronounced *hoop-AIR*] + the genitive means *as a substitute for*.
  - (3) 1Corinthians 11:23–24 **For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."** The Eucharist memorializes what the Lord did for us.
  - (4) 2Corinthians 5:21 **For our sake He [God] made Him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.** This passage gives us the clear option that we have in life.
- 7) There are several key passages in Scripture that Christ clearly state that Christ died for all:
  - (1) John 3:16 **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**
  - (2) Acts 10:43 **To Him all the prophets bear witness that **everyone who believes** in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."** The subjunctive mood is used here. Therefore, this is for anyone who *might* believe; salvation is open to all.
  - (3) 1Timothy 2:5–6 **For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a **ransom for all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time.**
  - (4) 1Timothy 4:10 **For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, **Who is the Savior of all people**, especially of those who believe.** Notice,

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- believers are a sub-category of all men.
- (5) 2Corinthians 5:14–15 **For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that **One has died for all**, therefore all have died; and **He died for all**, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.** So the issue now isn't sin, the issue is whether or not you possess the life of God, eternal life, and the righteousness of God, and that comes at the instant of faith alone in Christ alone.
  - (6) No one can make the claim, "I am simply unelected; Jesus did not die for my sins." We have free will, and we can choose for or against Jesus.
  - (7) Emphasis is mine in the passages above.
  - 8) God has designed this physical world in which we live, where His sovereignty can coexist with our free will. That is, God is able to remain sovereign over all; and yet, at the same time, we have volition.

<sup>1</sup> In personally considering the notion of free will, I have taken the time to consider my own near-future actions; and I have come to the conclusion, I do not know what I am going to do until I actually do it. Regarding some things, I know I will do one thing rather than another; but on things I am on the fence about and considering—I really don't know what I am going to do until the time comes that I choose to do it (I am not talking about life-changing decisions here, but just normal, day-to-day decisions).

From <http://www.divineviewpoint.com/sane/dbm/setup/1stJohn/1Jno16.htm> and modified considerably.

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It appears that this doctrine has been fully covered by others. *Unlimited atonement* means that Jesus died for every person, not just the elect. The sins of every man have been paid for.

### Links to the Doctrine of Unlimited Atonement

A Defense of Unlimited Atonement ([Middletown Bible Church](#))  
 Unlimited Atonement ([Wenstrom](#))  
 Unlimited Atonement ([Rev. Thomas Tyree, Jr.](#))  
 Doctrines of Propitiation; Unlimited Atonement ([Divine Viewpoint](#))  
 For Whom Did Christ Die? ([Doctrine.org](#))  
 Scripture Teaches Unlimited Atonement (mostly [L.S. Chafer](#))  
 A Critique of Limited Atonement and the Problem of Double Jeopardy ([Timothy Ministry](#))

Not being too deep into the Christian debate world, I did not realize that this was such a controversial doctrine.

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