

Dear friends and family,

Perhaps you have heard of the following terms. Perhaps not. Summarizing such large doctrinal points is difficult in a short paragraph, but I will provide a brief definition which will hopefully shed some insight into these topics.

Limited Atonement - a doctrine which states that Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross was effective only for those who are elect. In an oversimplification, Limited Atonement would mean that Christ's work on the cross was limited in scope.

Universalism - On the other side of the spectrum when compared to Limited Atonement. Universalism is a heretical theology which states that the Atonement was universally effective and all will eventually be saved.

Singular Redemption - This doctrine explains that the singular event of Christ's death on the cross was sufficient for all, in its atoning work, but efficient only for those who believe.

Pastor's Point of View

The big question this week: **What does Scripture teach us about Jesus's work of atonement?**

Day 1 – READ 1 Timothy 4:6

According to Leon Morris, to make atonement means “to avert punishment, especially the divine anger; by the payment of a ransom, which may be of money or which may be of life.” Reflect on your own personal atonement. Jesus paid, with His life, so that you and I may avert punishment. In light of your atonement:

1. What would it look like to be constantly nourished on the words of faith and sound doctrine?
2. What benefit is there in learning about differing doctrines?
3. How can you know which doctrines are sound?

Day 2 – READ 1 Timothy 4:7-8

1. Are there worldly fables that you need to stop listening to?
2. How do you need to be disciplining yourself spiritually?
3. How do you think the church would be different if it focused more on godliness?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “*The glory of the gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.*”

4. Reflect on the saying that *godliness holds promise for the present life and the life to come.*

Day 3 – READ 1 Timothy 4:9

1. This is not the first time that Paul has used the term **trustworthy**. Look back at 1 Timothy 3:1. What are your thoughts regarding the similarity of these two statements?

2. What is it that Paul is telling us to fully accept?

Day 4 – READ 1 Timothy 4:10

1. Labor and strive for godliness and fix your hope on God!
2. Here we see that God is **the Savior of all men**. This statement seems to discredit the idea of Limited Atonement. Apparently, God’s work of salvation is for all men. However, this is not a universalist statement. Why not?
3. Paul goes on to immediately say “especially of believers”. This is a deep theological statement. This is one which Paul just alluded to in verse 6 as sound doctrine. Paul is pointing out that the atoning work of Christ was sufficient for all, but efficient only for believers. Record what this means to you.

Scripture is a great mystery. Some incredible scholars have parked their theology on the concept of Limited Atonement. When in doubt, the best route is to study Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit for discernment. The beauty of a body of believers is that we can draw together not to argue and become angry over deep theological mysteries in which we disagree, but to study and seek to understand the truth of Scripture.

Two major questions should come before any theorizing of Scripture.

What is God telling us? Why is he telling us?

Doctrinally, the major points of focus should consistently remain on the tenants of the Gospel message. We serve a risen savior and Lord who died on the cross for our sins. Through his sacrifice we have the free gift of salvation. Remembering that there are major theological points and that there are minor theological points will help guide you in what to be concerned about and what to regard as simply a difference in opinion.

The BEST way to know sound doctrine is to remain immersed in the word of God. We must be constantly nourished on the word and dedicated to godliness. I pray that God will illuminate Scripture as you study it this week!

In sound doctrine,

Pastor Matt

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*

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