



Does It Matter For Whom Christ Died?

In Vacation Bible School and in summer camps teachers and kids alike love to sing, “Jesus Loves the Little Children, All The Children of the World.” But did you know that there is a growing number of Christians who have come to believe that those words are biblically incorrect? Jesus does not love all the children of the world – at least not enough to desire their eternal salvation.

Does It Matter?

I believe it matters. Does it matter that God only loves some kids, or loves all kids? Does it matter when you look at a bunch of squirming kids in your VBS class – many of whom are just there because mom wants a break from kids and free childcare is a blessing – to think that God loves every one of them and wants every one of them to have eternal life? If that’s true, then you can pray for them, love them and put up with their dirty hands, dirty feet and continual chatter. You love them all, and you know that God loves them all. You are working with God and doing His will. Does that matter? Yes, theology matters. Immensely.

One young Christian and his wife, who came to faith through Harvest Crusades led by Greg Laurie, were amazingly transformed by their coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Their lives were radically changed. The love they expressed for each other and the way they raised their kids was, indeed, a marvel of God’s work in their hearts. But most marvelous of all was the burden they had for their lost family members, friends and neighbors. They became true soul-winners.

So, in an attempt at creative witnessing and low-key outreach they started having Saturday afternoon parties at their home. They had free time, then a dinner and after that they showed an evangelistic movie. They would tell people, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Several people were saved with this informal, non-churchy approach.

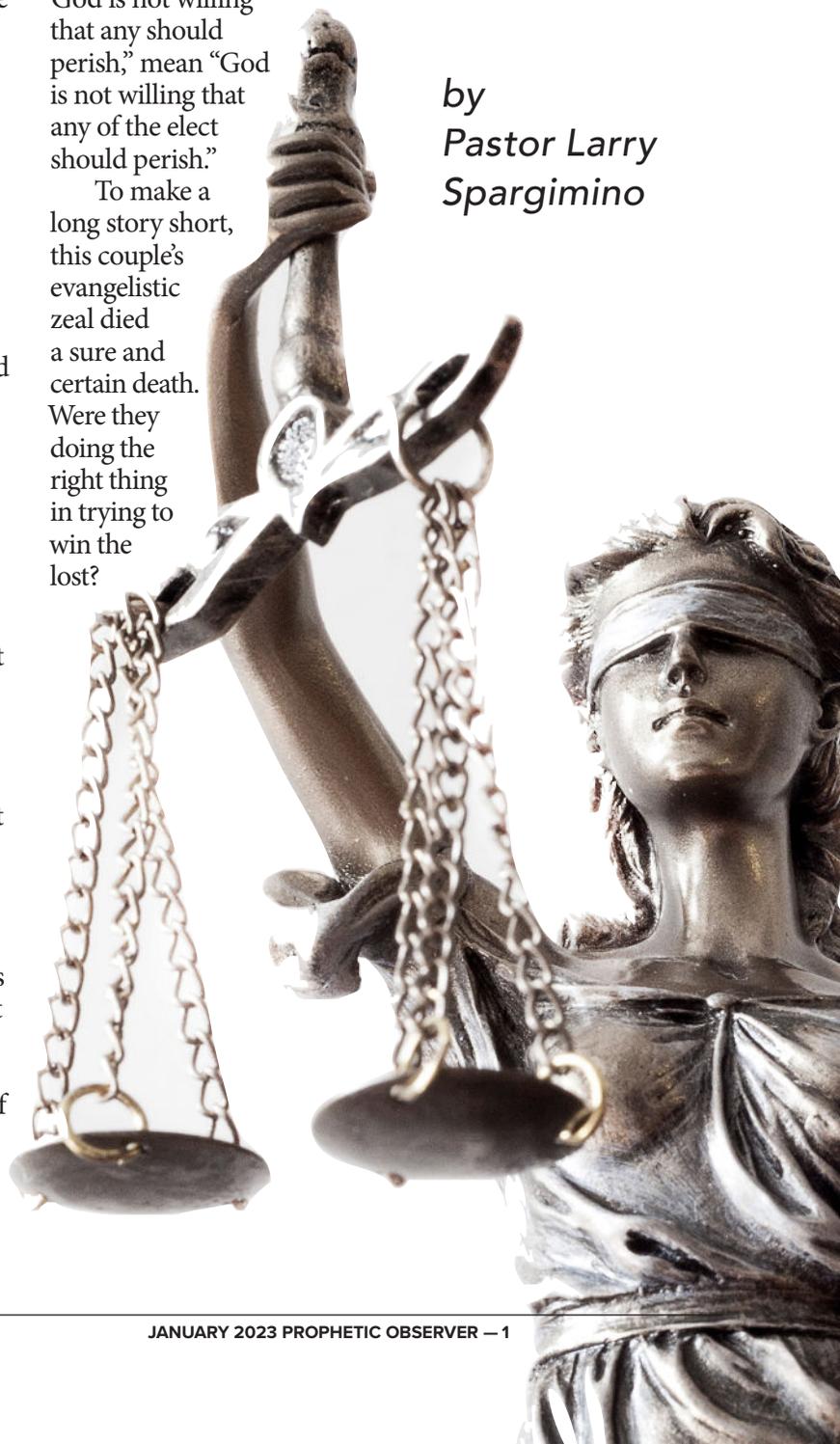
The husband began sharing his faith at work. One of his co-workers was a Reformed Baptist – a Five-Point Calvinist all the way. He told the husband, “‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life’ is not scriptural.” The co-worker gave the husband some Calvinistic literature. One of the booklets was titled, “For Whom Did Christ Die?” The booklet was pushing limited atonement – Christ only died for some, the elect.

The husband read the booklet and found it quite believable. Yes, there were those Scriptures. “All” and

“world” mean something different than what he had been taught they mean. So, the husband took the booklet to his pastor. The pastor said he did not agree with the booklet but frankly admitted the arguments in the booklet did appeal to Scripture. The pastor read in the booklet that the words “God is not willing that any should perish,” mean “God is not willing that any of the elect should perish.”

To make a long story short, this couple’s evangelistic zeal died a sure and certain death. Were they doing the right thing in trying to win the lost?

by
Pastor Larry
Spargimino



Were they dishonoring God in saying to lost people “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life”? Gone were the Saturday fellowship dinners. Gone was the effort to get people to come to faith in Jesus Christ. What will be will be, so what’s the use? As far as I’m concerned this was a horrible disaster. A theology that is becoming more popular is sapping the lifeblood out of evangelism. Yes, theology matters. Immensely. Especially today.

We are seeing an amazing convergence of end-time signs that are leading right-minded individuals to pray, to witness and to work. Jesus could return at any moment, perhaps before you finish reading this Prophetic Observer. However, for many Calvinists that doesn’t matter. They are either partial Preterists or full Preterists and think Bible prophecy is all a lot of end-times hype.

Core Beliefs Control The Narrative

Core beliefs, that are assumed to be true, control the outcome of one’s thinking. When I was a Reformed Presbyterian pastor, my core belief was Covenant Theology. I believed that infant baptism is scriptural because of my core belief. I used to run with Calvinists, both Presbyterian and Baptist. Then, a Reformed Baptist friend challenged me and said, “Larry, forget Covenant Theology. Just read the New Testament and take it at face value. Don’t let your Covenant Theology bleed over into your thinking. And then tell me who are the proper subjects for baptism.”

I couldn’t escape the fact that there are absolutely no examples in the New Testament of an infant being baptized. Without the presuppositional bias of Covenant Theology, there is absolutely no justification for infant baptism. Baptism is for believers. This, of course, doesn’t mean that we hate babies. It simply means we don’t sprinkle them and call it “baptism.”

In the same way TULIP – Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints – is based on a core definition of the sovereignty of God that is unique to Calvinism. Let’s face it, every Christian believes that God is sovereign, not just Calvinists. The sovereignty of God is that attribute of God by which His is the highest authority and does not need to get approval from any higher authority before He makes a decision. God exercises His prerogative to do whatever He pleases.

For the Calvinist, however, God can only be considered sovereign if He controls everything and

if He maintains continuous and absolute Lordship over everything. But let’s be honest – if God is really sovereign, He is free to make man free. He is even free to give man the privilege and responsibility of choosing his own destiny.

For Calvinists, this is the depth of impiety. The Calvinist view of Divine sovereignty leads him to argue that if man has the freedom of choice, then God is not sovereign. And if God is sovereign, then man is not free. But those are not the only alternatives.

Calvinists take this one more step into absurdity. They will argue that preaching Calvinism is preaching the Gospel, and those who are not Five-Point Calvinists don’t believe in grace. They will hold that because I don’t support Five-Point Calvinism I am an Arminian! I am neither an Arminian nor a Calvinist. There is a vast canyon of possibilities between Calvinism and Arminianism.

Insulated Against Truth

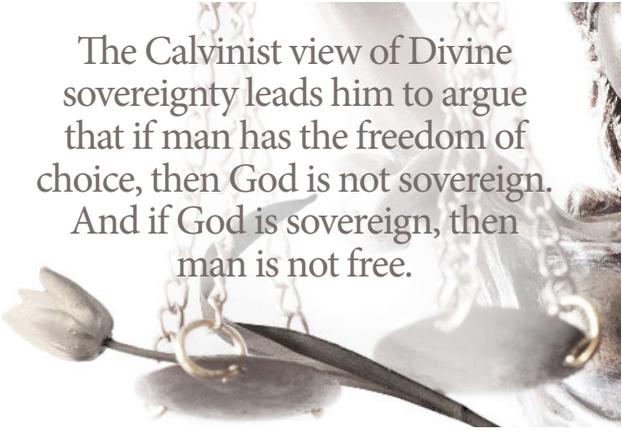
In First Timothy 2 we read, “Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ... Who gave himself a ransom for all” (vss. 4, 6). Second Corinthians 5:14-15 is similar: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

There are many, many scriptures that argue against

Calvinism, and yet they don’t seem to register with Calvinists. Universal terms are often reinterpreted. I often think, “What more could God say to describe the extent of His love that He hasn’t already said?” The answer is, “Nothing.” Nothing will convince the Calvinist. Core beliefs control the narrative.

What is the meaning of the word “all”? Calvinists love to appeal to Luke 2:1 where we read that a decree went out that “all the world should be taxed.” All the world like China, Afghanistan and Borneo? Of course not. In biblical times, “all the world” means “all the known world, mainly the Roman Empire.” It is true that in certain contexts that speak about geopolitical issues, “all” doesn’t mean “all” without exception.

But does “all” ever refer to something that is timeless and above the human situation? Indeed, yes. Consider Isaiah 40:17: “All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing.” “All” cannot mean “some.” “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Acts 1:8 gives us the scope of “all nations”: “... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem,



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and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” This clearly defines “all nations” in Matthew 28:19.

Did John Calvin and Noted Calvinists Believe In Limited Atonement?

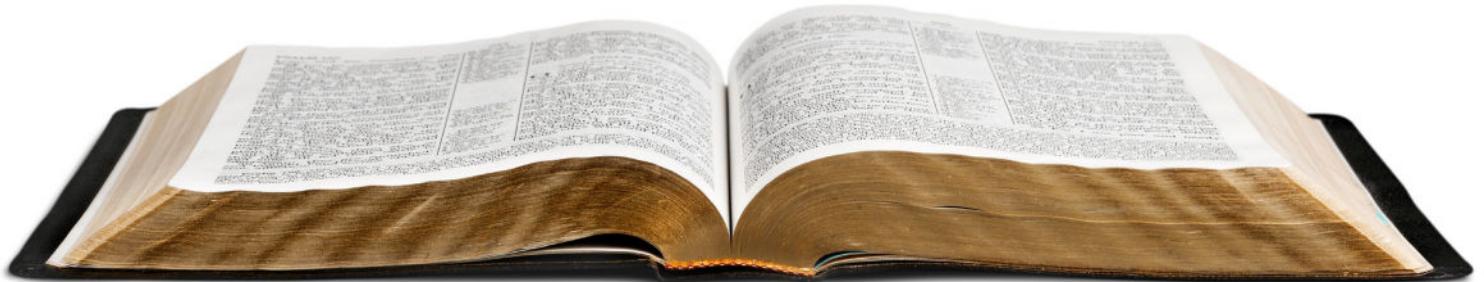
While the Five Points of Calvinism by their very name, are associated with John Calvin, John Calvin made some statements that suggest he believed in a Universal Atonement, or at least a universal benevolence to all men. David L. Allen in his detailed 800-page book, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review*, gives several quotations from Calvin on pages 48ff. We don't have space to cite them all, but Calvin's comment on John 3:16 makes the point: “Such is also the significance of the term ‘world’ which He had used before. For although there is nothing in the world deserving of God's favor, He nevertheless shows He is favorable to the whole world when He calls all without exception to the faith in Christ, which is indeed an entry into life.”

In his sermon, “Compel Them To Come In,” Spurgeon,

loved by Calvinists, appeals to unbelievers in the congregation: “Come, I beseech you, on Calvary's mount, and see the cross. Behold the Son of God, He who made the heavens and the earth, dying for your sins. Look at His face so full of pity. Is there not love in His heart to prove Him willing to save? Sure, sinner, the sight of Christ will help thee to believe.” In my new book, *Calvinism On Trial: This Tulip Has Thorns*, shortly to be released, there are a plethora of quotes from other Calvinists who believed in a Universal Atonement.

At all times, and especially in these days of the Lord's imminent return for His church, we must stand for doctrinal fidelity. To that end I will remind my readers that Luke gives us some unique insights into the Savior's heart in the hours before His death. “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” Who is included in the “you”? “But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table” (22:20-21; also 2 Pet. 2:1).

It's time to let this unbiblical and injurious notion of Limited Atonement die once and for all.



Which side of HIStory are you on?

by Staff Evangelist Josh Davis

It has become increasingly popular in recent years to accuse Bible-believing Christians of being on the wrong side of history, especially when it comes to issues of cultural morality. Modern-day would-be prophets eagerly anticipate the demise of biblical Christianity in Western civilization. They believe their ungodly views on the big questions of life will triumph and, once and for all, make the church irrelevant.

You see, they have rewritten origin, identity, meaning to life, purpose, and destiny without God and His Word in their attempt to chart their own course and follow their own desires. They would heartily agree with William Ernest Henley in his poem, “Invictus,” “It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”

But what makes them so confident that they will be on the right side of history? What in their self-centered worldview allows such a prediction to come true? Is it more wishful thinking than it is accurate predicting?

Let's look back at history and see who came out on the right side in the end. There was a man who stood alone in his generation. While everyone else pursued anything and anyone they wanted, he faithfully followed God. He must have stood out like a sore thumb. For years he hammered and sawed away on a massive building project no one could figure out. As he worked, he warned his generation that judgment was coming from God.

But in their self-centeredness, they ignored his message and went about living their lives however they desired. They must have thought he was on the wrong side of history. But one day, the divine judgment he predicted started to happen. It started to rain for the very first time. As the water level began to rise on planet earth, people began to realize he was right all along. They were wrong. And it was too late for them to escape judgment. His name was Noah. He was on the right side of history. God carried him and his family safely through the judgment and used them to rebuild earth after the flood.

Fast-forward about 1,500 years to another man who seemed to be on the wrong side of history. He felt like he was all alone in his stand against the blatant immorality and political corruption of his day. While everyone else turned worship into a self-serving buffet of pleasure, He faithfully followed God's truth. He looked so out of place. He confronted the godless politicians with God's truth and received death threats for his words. They hunted him like an animal, trying to shut up this man of God.

These wicked leaders made all kinds of shady deals, thinking they could manipulate the system to protect their power and provide whatever their greedy hearts desired. Yes, they were wicked. But they were not irreligious. They conformed religion to fit their lifestyle. You could say they created a god in their image. They thought they were the captains of their fate. But their day of reckoning came. Their god couldn't deliver them.

The God of the faithful prophet proved in no uncertain terms that He was the one true God of all heaven and earth. The wicked rulers eventually lost their lives and their legacy, while the prophet of God flourished more and more. God cut off their descendants from the throne, but simultaneously raised up a new generation of prophets with the same convictions as this faithful man.

The wicked rulers were Ahab and Jezebel. They were on the wrong side of history. The godly prophet was Elijah. He was on the right side of history.

A thousand years or so later, there was a man who thought he was on the right side of history. He excelled in his education. His dedication was unmatched. His zeal was unrivaled. His tenacity for truth knew no bounds. His moral lifestyle was spotless. He heard about a growing sect that claimed Jesus was the Messiah.

He considered this to be blasphemy of the highest order and assembled a team to arrest the ones who were perverting his religion. He chased them out of Jerusalem then chased after them village by village. In his religious rage, he presided over the killing of one of their leaders. As this Jesus-follower breathed his last, he cried out to God in prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). Suddenly the man who was observing this death began to question, "Am I really on the right side of history? How could anyone offer such forgiveness while dying this kind of death?" He tried to push those thoughts to the back of his mind.

He doubled down on his pursuit of these Jesus-followers, but putting a stop to them was like trying to stomp out a wildfire with your feet. Impossible. While he was chasing after more Jesus-followers, he had the encounter of a lifetime. He was transformed by a face-to-face encounter with the resurrected Jesus Christ who made it clear to him that he was really on the wrong side of truth. Jesus delivered him from his self-destruction and set him on a glorious new path, turning

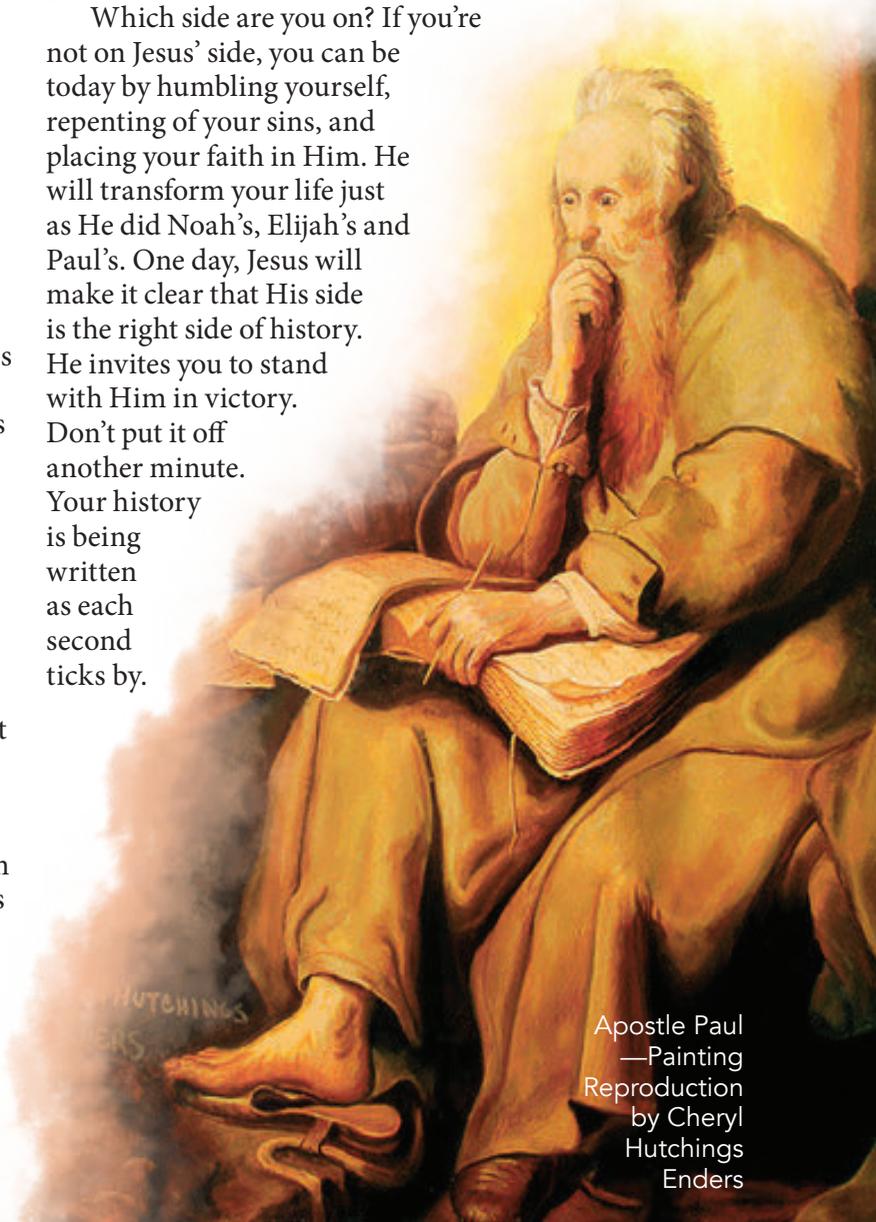
his dedication to sharing the good news of Jesus with the world. Even his name was changed from Saul to Paul. He was now on the right side of history.

You see, the right side of history is always on God's side. The majority opinion may be against you, as it was for each of these three men. But the majority is not always on the right side of history. Standing faithfully and firmly upon God's truth will always place you on the right side of history, because, ultimately, history is really His story. He is writing this story through His providence.

Which side are you on? If you're not on Jesus' side, you can be today by humbling yourself, repenting of your sins, and placing your faith in Him. He will transform your life just as He did Noah's, Elijah's and Paul's. One day, Jesus will make it clear that His side is the right side of history. He invites you to stand with Him in victory.

Don't put it off another minute.

Your history is being written as each second ticks by.



Apostle Paul
—Painting
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