

1 Cor 1:18-31

TULIP- Limited Atonement

In a culture conditioned by the idea of complete autonomy, total depravity, unconditional election and, today, limited atonement sound like strange doctrine. In a world that places humanity at the center, reformed theology, which has God at the center, is foreign to our culture's way of thinking and living. Even the most faithful of believers in this country are often unsettled by the truth that a sovereign God is totally in control of the universe. Down to the smallest detail all things are working towards the accomplishing of God's supreme divine will.

Acts 17:24-28 ²⁴“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, ²⁵and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. ²⁶From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.” **NLT**

Col 1:15-17, ¹⁵“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

ESV

God is not an absentee Father, who births us and then leaves us to our own devices, hoping for the best. Neither is God sitting in heaven, with fingers crossed, hoping that somehow people discover Jesus and accept the atoning work he accomplished on the cross. God is

intentional. God does not leave the atoning work of Christ up to chance. God has determined exactly who the beneficiaries of Christ's atoning work will be, as well as the when. The death and resurrection of Jesus is indeed sufficient for all, but effectual only for the elect. This is limited atonement. In light of what has been said I want to share two observations from our text that will hopefully shed further light on this truth.

First, the gospel challenges conventional wisdom. V18-25

Conventional wisdom is only interested in answers and outcomes. It is preoccupied by explanation and making sense of a matter. And therein lies the problem. Who can explain God? Who can make sense of God? Who could ever know God apart from God making God's self known? The wise of this world say the gospel is foolishness. That the bible is mere mythology, fairytale. They say it is for the weak, uneducated, unenlightened persons. This is why they are perishing, whoever they may be, because God has not and will not open their eyes to its truth, to its beauty and power. But for those who are being saved. That is, those who are the beneficiaries of the atoning work of Jesus the gospel is the power of God. That which makes all the difference in the world. It is not mythology. It is not fairytale, but life itself. By divine decree disciples are recipients of the atoning work of Christ. God did not leave our salvation up to chance. When it comes to your faith in Jesus never believe that that you somehow were more deserving or smarter than the next man or woman. You have simply been chosen by God according to his sovereign will and kindness. We are here by God's grace.

Romans 9:6-24 “⁶Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God's people! ⁷Being descendants of Abraham doesn't

make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too.⁸ This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children.⁹ For God had promised, "I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."¹⁰ This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins.¹¹ But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes;¹² he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, "Your older son will serve your younger son."¹³ In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau."¹⁴ Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not!¹⁵ For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."¹⁶ So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.¹⁷ For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth."¹⁸ So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.¹⁹ Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?"²⁰ No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, "Why have you made me like this?"²¹ When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into?²² In the same way, even though God has the right to show his

anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. ²³ He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. ²⁴ And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.”

NLT

Second and final observation, the gospel produces humility. V26-31

Considering what Paul writes here how could a true disciple ever think him or herself superior to anyone? How, considering what God has done in his/her life through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus the Christ due to no merit of his or her own? How could he/she ever think that somehow, he or she is special, that there is something uniquely different about him or her that compelled God to act on his behalf (expound from text)? I am convinced that the reason we stand in condemnation of one another rather than in loving concern for one another is because we believe we are better than one another. We believe that we have accomplished salvation for ourselves. We believe that we have built this. We believe that we can sustain this. I think that Calvin's teaching so challenges us, not because it is outdated or hard to understand, but it strips of ownership, accomplishment and control as it concerns Christ's atoning work on the cross. The truth of the matter is scripture does this; Calvin's teaching only highlights what has always been true scripturally. We simply choose to believe otherwise despite the overwhelming witness of scripture. And in believing otherwise we rob ourselves of the true freedom Jesus' atoning work has bought us. This is why I am preaching this series on TULIP. This is why I am teaching this because Jesus wants to set us free from the bad doctrine that has kept us bound. Bad doctrine that leads

us to oppress one another biblically, that has given us a false assurance or no assurance at all.

John 8:36 “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Are you free this morning? Are you free from striving? Are you free from believing you have to do it? Are you free from your past failures, hurts and pains? Are you free from the lie that you have to earn God’s love and work to keep God’s love? Are you free from the fear that you have not done enough to make in? Are free from the lie that you can do enough to make it in? TULIP echoes the invitation to freedom that gospel extends. The invitation to finally live in God’s/Christ’s love versus trying to earn and keep God’s/Christ’s love. I think God I am free this morning and I hope it is the same for each of you. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**