

Gospel Atonement

God says in Mark 16:16 that those who do not believe the gospel are unregenerate. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:3 that the gospel includes the truth “*that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.*” Thus, those who do not believe the truth “*that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures*” are unregenerate. What does it mean “*that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures*”? This article will go into the life-and-death truth of The Atonement.

Every religion has its version of an “atonement.” Ask any false religionist, from a Buddhist to a Muslim to a Roman Catholic to a Mormon to a Russellite to a Campbellite to an Arminian, if he believes in “atonement,” and you will hear an answer in the affirmative. Does this mean that any of these false religionists believe the one true Atonement of the one true gospel? Of course not. One’s profession of belief in an atonement means nothing unless we find out what one MEANS by “atonement.” Ask a Muslim what he means by “atonement” and you will find that he says that his good deeds atone for his evil deeds. Ask an Arminian what he means by “atonement” and you will find that he says that his “jesus christ” atoned for the evil deeds of everyone without exception, yet there are some for whom this “jesus” atoned who go to hell anyway. Although Islam does not come in the name of Christianity while Arminianism does, Arminianism is actually closer to Islam and the rest of the false religions of the world than it is to true Christianity. All of the false religions of the world, including religions that profess belief in a “jesus christ” who is both human and divine who died for the sins of everyone without exception, propound a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner in which the efforts of the sinner are what make the ultimate difference between salvation and damnation.

In this article, we will describe THE Atonement, which is The TRUE Atonement of Jesus Christ – The Atonement of the one true gospel of true Christianity. We will contrast it with the false atonement of the most prevalent form of false religion that comes in the name of Christianity – namely, universal atonement (sometimes called Arminianism, although not all who believe in the false gospel of universal atonement would be called classical “Arminians”). We will see that universal atonement is actually NO atonement at all and treats the true cross of Christ as nothing. We will then consider those who say they believe in Gospel Atonement but who believe that at least some universal atonement advocates are true Christians, showing that they, too, do not believe in Gospel Atonement.

Two important concepts must be understood at the outset: *substitution* and *imputation*. *Substitution* denotes an exchange of places. Jesus Christ *took the place* of certain sinners. Jesus Christ suffered *on behalf* of certain sinners. He *represented* certain sinners. He suffered as a *vicarious sacrifice*. “*But He was wounded for our transgressions; [He was] bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His wounds we ourselves are healed*” (Isaiah 53:5). “*... For also Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5:7). “*... This is My body being given for you ... My blood, which is being poured out for you*” (Luke 22:19-20). “*... this is My body which is broken on behalf of you ...*” (1 Corinthians 11:24). “*... for even Christ suffered on our behalf ...*” (1 Peter 2:21). “*Truly [He] who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up on behalf of us all ...*” (Romans 8:32). “*... our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on our behalf ...*” (Titus 2:13-14). “*... He has been manifested*

for putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). “Because even Christ once suffered concerning sins, the just for the unjust ...” (1 Peter 3:18). “... Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us ...” (Ephesians 5:2). “... the Son of God, the [One] loving me and giving Himself over on my behalf” (Galatians 2:20). “... Christ also loved the Assembly and gave Himself up on its behalf” (Ephesians 5:25). “... The Good Shepherd lays down His life on behalf of the sheep ... I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:11,15). “... by [the] grace of God He might taste death for every [son]” (Hebrews 2:9). “... if One died for all, then all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). “For if by the deviation of the one the many died, much more the grace of God, and the gift in grace, which [is] of the one Man, Jesus Christ, did abound to the many. ... For if by the deviation of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who are receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall rule in life by the One, Jesus Christ. So then, as through one deviation [it was] toward all men to condemnation, so also through one effected righteousness toward all men to justification of life. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many shall be constituted righteous” (Romans 5:17-19).

Imputation denotes a legal charging to one’s account. All of the sins of certain sinners, with all their guilt and condemnation, were charged to Jesus Christ. For He made the [One] who knew no sin [to be] sin for us ...” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us ...” (Galatians 3:13). “... Christ having been once offered to bear [the] sins of many ...” (Hebrews 9:28). “who Himself carried up in His body our sins onto the tree ...” (1 Peter 2:24). “Surely He has borne our sicknesses, and He carried our pain ... and Jehovah made meet in Him the iniquity of all of us. ... He shall bear their iniquities. ... He bore the sin of many ...” (Isaiah 53:4-12).

The differences between Gospel Atonement and the false gospel of universal atonement in the areas of substitution and imputation are as follows: In Gospel Atonement, Jesus Christ was the substitute of all whom God chose before the foundation of the world to be saved, and the sins of these people and these alone were imputed to Jesus Christ. In the false gospel of universal atonement, their “jesus christ” took the place of and took on the sins of every single human being without exception. We will see how this universal atonement rips out the very heart of the gospel.

Having established that the sins of Jesus Christ’s people were imputed to Him and He suffered in the place of His people, let us go into what The Atonement actually accomplished and compare The Atonement to the false gospel of universal atonement, which is really no atonement at all.

The Atonement fully and perfectly accomplished complete, absolute, entire *remission* of all the sins of all the people for whom Christ died. To *remit* means to *cancel*, to *forgive*, to *pardon*, to *take out of the way*. Jesus Christ’s bloody death on the cross totally canceled, totally purged, totally paid the debt for the sins of His people. Jesus Christ is “*The Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). He “*was revealed that He might take away our sins*” (1 John 3:5). His blood was “*poured out for remission of sins*” (Matthew 26:28). He “*made*

purification of our sins through Himself” (Hebrews 1:3). His mission was “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make atonement for iniquity” (Daniel 9:24), and to “undo the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), that “through death He might cause to cease the [one] having the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus Christ “has been manifested for putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). He “washed us from our sins by His blood” (Revelation 1:5). He has “forgiven you all the offenses, blotting out the handwriting in the ordinances against us, which was contrary to us, even [He] has taken it out of the midst, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13-14). His blood “cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). In Him there is “the remission of sins” (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). His blood was shed once, because “apart from shedding of blood no remission occurs. ... But where remission of these is, there [is] no longer offering concerning sins” (Hebrews 9:22; 10:18). God in Christ was “not charging their trespasses to them” (2 Corinthians 5:19), and “with His wounds we ourselves are healed” (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24).

What of the “christ” of universal atonement? The “christ” of universal atonement died for everyone without exception. Did this death actually accomplish the remission, the cancellation, the pardon, the putting away of the sin of everyone without exception? It did not do anything even close to that. There are people in hell for whom this “christ” died, for whom this “christ” atoned, whose sins were supposedly “taken away” and “pardoned” and “paid for.” Universal atonement advocates use John 1:29 to try to prove that their “christ” took away the sins of everyone without exception. Yet they also say that there are some who are burning in hell. Were the sins of those who are burning in hell *taken away* by the blood of their “christ”? If so, why are they burning in hell? It is because their “christ” actually accomplished NOTHING on the cross. There are people burning in hell for sins that were *not* pardoned or taken away. Their god is a liar when he says that this “christ” took away the sins of everyone without exception. The blood of their “christ” is of no effect in and of itself. And they blaspheme the true Jesus Christ by using His Name in their damnable heresy, claiming that the true Jesus Christ of the Bible paid the sin debt for everyone without exception. They hate the true God and the true gospel. They are unregenerate.

The Atonement fully and perfectly accomplished complete, absolute, entire *redemption* of all the people for whom Christ died. To *redeem* means to *buy*, to *purchase*, to *pay the ransom price* for a possession so as to *rescue* or *deliver* that possession. God’s people “*were bought with a price*” (1 Corinthians 6:20). They were “*redeemed ... with precious blood of Christ*” (1 Peter 1:18-19). They were “*purchased through [His] own blood*” (Acts 20:28). They “*shall be saved from the wrath through Him*” (Romans 5:9). They are “*justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:24). They sing to Jesus Christ, “*You were slain, and by Your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9). Jesus Christ came to “*save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21) and to “*set these free, as many as by fear of death were subject to slavery through all the [time] to live*” (Hebrews 2:15). He is “*the [One] delivering us from the coming wrath*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). He has “*given Himself a ransom on behalf of all*” (1 Timothy 2:6). He “*gave Himself for our sins, so that He might deliver us out of the present evil age*” (Galatians 1:4). He “*gave Himself*

on our behalf, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness” (Titus 2:14). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law” (Galatians 3:13). He came “that He might redeem the ones under Law” (Galatians 4:5), “to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). In Christ, “we have redemption through His blood” (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

What of the “christ” of universal atonement? The “christ” of universal atonement died for everyone without exception. Did this death actually accomplish the redemption, the purchase, the deliverance of everyone without exception? It did not do anything even close to that. There are people in hell for whom this “christ” died, for whom this “christ” atoned, who were supposedly “purchased” and “redeemed” by the blood of this “christ.” Universal atonement advocates use 1 Timothy 2:6 to try to prove that their “christ” gave himself a ransom for everyone without exception. Yet they also say that there are some who are burning in hell. Did this “christ” give himself a *ransom*, *buy* with his own blood, *pay the price* for those who are burning in hell? If so, why are they burning in hell? It is because their “christ” actually accomplished NOTHING on the cross. There are people burning in hell who have *not* been purchased or delivered. Their god is a liar when he says that this “christ” paid the ransom price of everyone without exception. The blood of their “christ” is of no effect in and of itself. And they blaspheme the true Jesus Christ by using His Name in their damnable heresy, claiming that the true Jesus Christ of the Bible redeemed everyone without exception. They hate the true God and the true gospel. They are unregenerate.

The Atonement fully and perfectly accomplished complete, absolute, entire *propitiation* and *reconciliation* for all the people for whom Christ died. To *propitiate* means to *appease*, to *pacify*, to *assuage*. To *reconcile* means to *bring back into fellowship with*, to *make peace with*. God’s wrath was fully appeased when Jesus Christ became sin for His people and suffered the just punishment for that sin. The blood of Christ made peace between God and all for whom Christ died. God “*reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ ... God was in Christ reconciling [the] world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). He “sent His Son [to be] a propitiation relating to our sins” (1 John 4:10) and set forth Jesus Christ as “a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Romans 3:25). Jesus Christ is the “propitiation relating to our sins, and not relating to ours only, but also relating to all the world” (1 John 2:2). He came “to make propitiation for the sins of [His] people” (Hebrews 2:17), “that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3: 18). “For He is our peace, He making us both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, in His flesh causing to cease the enmity, the Law of the commandments in decrees, that He might in Himself create the two into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, slaying the enmity in Himself. And coming, [He] proclaimed peace to you, the ones afar off, and to the ones near” (Ephesians 2:14-17). “For if [while] being enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life; and not only [so], but also glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5: 10-11). “... through Him making peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things to Himself ... now He reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death” (Colossians 1:20-22). “But He was wounded for our transgressions; [He was] bruised for our iniquities; the*

chastisement of our peace was upon Him ... But Jehovah pleased to crush Him, to make Him sick, [so that] if He should put His soul as a guilt offering, He shall see [His] seed; He shall prolong [His] days, and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand. He shall see [the fruit] of the travail of His soul; He shall be fully satisfied. By His knowledge the righteous One, My Servant, shall justify for many, and He shall bear their iniquities. Because of this, I will divide to Him with the great, and with the strong He shall divide the spoil; because He poured out His soul unto death; and [He] was numbered with those transgressing; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for those transgressing” (Isaiah 53:5-12).

What of the “christ” of universal atonement? The “christ” of universal atonement died for everyone without exception. Did this death actually accomplish the appeasement of God’s wrath for everyone without exception? Did it actually accomplish reconciliation between God and everyone without exception? It did not do anything even close to that. There are people in hell for whom this “christ” died, for whom this “christ” atoned, who were supposedly “reconciled” to God by the blood of this “christ,” for whom God was supposedly “propitiated.” Universal atonement advocates use 2 Corinthians 5:19 and 1 John 2:2 to try to prove that their “christ” was reconciling everyone without exception to God and that their “christ” was a propitiation for everyone without exception. Yet they also say that there are some who are burning in hell. Did this “christ” appease the wrath of God for those who are burning in hell? Did the blood of this “christ” make peace between God and those who are burning in hell? Did this “christ” reconcile to God those who are burning in hell? If so, why are they burning in hell? It is because their “christ” actually accomplished NOTHING on the cross. There are people burning in hell who are *still under* the wrath of God, who are *not* at peace with God. Their god is a liar when he says that this “christ” reconciled everyone without exception to himself and propitiated for everyone without exception. The blood of their “christ” is of no effect in and of itself. And they blaspheme the true Jesus Christ by using His Name in their damnable heresy, claiming that the true Jesus Christ of the Bible reconciled everyone without exception to the true God of the Bible and was the propitiation for everyone without exception. They hate the true God and the true gospel. They are unregenerate.

At the end of Jesus Christ’s suffering on the cross, He said, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). Jesus Christ had finished the work He came to do. All the sins of all His people were imputed to Him, and He suffered as a substitute and representative for His people. His suffering unto death actually accomplished full pardon, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation for every single person whom He represented on the cross. Christ’s atoning death was absolutely, totally effectual. This, THE Atonement, is the very heart of the gospel. If there is not THIS Atonement, The One True Atonement, there is no gospel. If there were only one person for whom Christ died who ended up in hell, the entire gospel would be meaningless, and the blood of Christ would be of no effect.

Consider the passage that was quoted in the first paragraph of this article. Do universal atonement advocates believe “*that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures*” (1 Corinthians 15:3)? Not even close. Far from it. Their “christ” died for everyone without

exception, not to *accomplish* salvation but merely to *make salvation possible* if the sinner would only do his part. This is not the atonement of the gospel. This is blasphemy. Those who believe that Jesus Christ died for those who are burning in hell spit in the face of Christ, trample underfoot the blood of Christ, and treat the blood of Christ as nothing. They do not believe that the blood of Christ was effectual to accomplish anything in and of itself.

The motto of every Christian is this: *“But may it never be for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14)*. Whoever walks by this rule, this canon, this doctrine, is the one who has peace and mercy on him and is a person to whom all true Christians will speak peace; whoever boasts in anything else does *not* have peace and mercy on him and is a person to whom all true Christians will not speak peace (Galatians 6:16-17). Whatever one believes makes the difference between salvation and damnation is what one boasts and glories in. The one who believes that it is the work of Jesus Christ alone that makes the only difference between salvation and damnation boasts and glories in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and does not boast or glory in self. What of those who believe that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception? They *do not* believe that it is the work of Jesus Christ alone that makes the difference between salvation and damnation; instead, they believe that it is the effort of the *sinner* that makes the ultimate difference between salvation and damnation. They do not boast or glory in the cross of Christ; they boast and glory in *themselves*. They might say they “give all glory to God” and that it is “the cross that makes the difference” and that it is “nothing but the blood of Jesus,” but if they believe that Jesus Christ died for people who are burning in hell, then they DO NOT believe that it is the work of Christ alone that makes the difference between salvation and damnation. They DO NOT believe that the work of Christ was effectual to secure and ensure the salvation of everyone for whom Christ died. They DO NOT believe the very heart of the gospel. They are unregenerate boasters in self. *“But now a righteousness of God has been revealed apart from Law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ toward all and upon all those believing; for there is no difference, for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth [as] a propitiation through faith in His blood, as a demonstration of His righteousness through the passing over of sins that had taken place before, in the forbearance of God, for a demonstration of His righteousness in the present time, for His being just and justifying the [one] that [is] of the faith of Jesus. Then where [is] the boasting? It was excluded” (Romans 3:21-27)*.

Now let us logically consider those who claim to believe in the efficacious atonement of Christ, who would say they agree that Christ only died for those who will be saved, yet who also believe that at least some universal atonement advocates are saved. This includes the “Calvinists” or “Sovereign Gracers” who believe that at least some Arminians are regenerate.

For the purpose of this consideration, let us call the “Calvinist” who considers at least some Arminians to be his brothers and sisters in Christ “TC” (for “Tolerant Calvinist”).

Let us assume that TC believes that all regenerate people believe the gospel. There are certainly some TC's who do not believe this (such as the Primitive Baptists who believe that a regenerate person can go for a period of time being completely ignorant of the gospel and even believing a false gospel and worshipping a false god before they are "converted"), showing that they are unregenerate (see the review "*The Irrelevant Gospel*" in the May 2001 issue of *Outside the Camp*). But what of TC who believes that all saved people believe the gospel?

Consider: (1) TC believes that some who believe universal atonement are saved. (2) TC believes that all saved people believe the gospel. Thus, (3) TC believes that some who believe universal atonement believe the gospel.

What does this show about TC's belief about the gospel? Since TC believes a person can believe the gospel and believe universal atonement at the same time, then he *must* believe that the gospel does *not* include the efficacious atonement of Jesus Christ. TC has just *denied* the very heart of the gospel.

If that were not clear enough, let us go further. Suppose now that TC would agree with us that universal atonement means that Christ's death did not actually accomplish pardon, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. This is not an unreasonable supposition; many, if not most, TC's would agree that this is what universal atonement means (just read Gordon Clark's *The Atonement*). In fact, some TC's would even go so far as to say that universal atonement is a false gospel, yet they say in the same breath that some who hold to universal atonement are regenerate (just talk to the pastors in the Protestant Reformed Churches).

Now consider: (1) TC believes that some who believe universal atonement believe the gospel. (2) TC believes that universal atonement means that Christ's death did not actually accomplish pardon, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. Thus, (3) TC believes that some who believe that Christ's death did not actually accomplish pardon, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation believe the gospel.

What does this now say about what TC thinks about the gospel? TC believes that the gospel is made up of certain doctrines. TC also believes that some who believe that Christ's death did not actually accomplish pardon, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation believe the gospel. Thus, TC does NOT believe that the gospel includes the doctrine that Christ's death actually accomplished pardon, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. TC does NOT believe that the gospel includes the doctrine that Christ's blood actually atoned. TC *denies* that The Atonement is part of the gospel. And in doing so, TC *denies* the very gospel itself. TC shows that he has no idea what the gospel is. He shows that he is just as unregenerate as the universal atonement advocate is.

Finally, consider the following logic: (1) All who believe a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner are unregenerate. (2) Universal atonement is a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner. Thus, (3) all who believe universal atonement are unregenerate. TC and every person who would consider at least some universal atonement advocates to be regenerate MUST

disagree with #3. And the only way people can disagree with #3 is if they disagree with at least one of the first two statements. Consider those who disagree with #1. These are people who believe that at least some who believe a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner are regenerate. Can a true Christian disagree with #1? Of course not. Consider those who disagree with #2. These are people who believe that universal atonement is not a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner. Can a true Christian disagree with #2? Of course not. Thus, all who disagree with #3 (all who consider at least some universal atonement advocates to be saved) are unregenerate.

It is no wonder that God says that anyone who speaks peace to a person who brings a false gospel is unregenerate (2 John 11). Those who say that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception deny that the death of Christ actually pardoned, redeemed, propitiated, and reconciled. They deny that Christ's blood actually atoned. They deny that it is the work of Christ alone that makes the difference between salvation and damnation. They deny the very heart of the gospel. They boast and glory in themselves. They are God-haters. And those who speak peace to these God-haters, who call them brothers and sisters in Christ, who say that the universal atonement advocates believe the same gospel they do, show that they, too, deny the true gospel. They deny that the atoning, pardoning, redeeming, propitiating, reconciling blood of Christ is an essential part of the gospel. They, too, do not believe the gospel. They, too, are boasters who glory in the sinner. They, too, are God-haters.

THE Atonement whereby Jesus Christ, the God-man mediator, as a representative and substitute for His people, in His bloody death on the cross, accomplished full pardon, full redemption, full propitiation, and full reconciliation for everyone whom He represented, is the very essence, the very heart, the very core, the very foundation, the very cornerstone, the very crux of the gospel. One cannot deny The Atonement by believing in universal atonement and still believe the true gospel. All who deny The Atonement, including all who believe that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception, are not true Christians. One cannot deny that The Atonement is an essential gospel doctrine by believing that some universal atonement advocates are saved and still believe the gospel. All who deny that The Atonement is an essential gospel doctrine, including all who speak peace to universal atonement advocates, are not true Christians. The cross of Christ is what Christianity is all about. If there is no Atonement, there is no Christianity.

“For the Word of the cross is foolishness to those being lost, but to us being saved, [it] is [the] power of God. For it has been written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will set aside the understanding of the understanding ones. Where is [the] wise? Where is [the] scribe? Where [the] lawyer of this world? Did God not make the wisdom of this world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world [by] wisdom did not know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of preaching to save the ones believing. And since Jews ask for a sign, and Greeks seek wisdom, we, on the other hand, preach Christ crucified (truly an offense to Jews, and foolishness to Greeks), but to the called ones, both to Jews and to Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God; because the foolish thing of God is wiser [than] men, and the weak thing of God is stronger [than] men. For you see your calling, brothers, that [there

are] not many wise according to flesh, nor many powerful, nor many wellborn. But God chose the foolish things of the world that the wise might be put to shame, and God chose the weak things of the world so that He might put to shame the strong things. And God chose the low-born of the world, and the despised, and the things that are not, so that He might bring to nothing the things that are, so that no flesh might glory in His presence. But of Him, you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that even as it has been written, He that glories, let him glory in [the] Lord. And when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with excellency of word or wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him having been crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:2).

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