

NOAH ESKEW

Loving the World to Death:

SCRIPTURE'S STORY OF A GOD
WHO DIED FOR EVERY SINNER



This book is a no-holds-barred rejection of Limited Atonement—the idea that Jesus only died for a select group. I’ve studied the arguments. I’ve read the books. I’ve heard the sermons. And I’m convinced: it’s not just wrong, it’s dangerous.

But *Loving the World to Death* isn’t just a critique—it’s a call to rediscover a message the New Testament won’t shut up about: Jesus Christ died for sinners. All of them. The addict and the elder. The religious kid and the burnout. The skeptic and the saint. When the Bible says “*Jesus died for the world*” it means the world.

If you’ve ever felt nervous telling someone “Jesus loves you” because you weren’t sure if it was theologically accurate, this book is for you. If you’ve been told to stare at your spiritual progress to find peace with God, this book is for you. If you’ve heard a gospel with fine print, a Savior with caveats, or a cross with limited coverage—this book is for you.

**Christ died for the world.
That includes you. And that changes *everything*.**

Noah Eskew is a normal guy with the joy of the Lord and a knack for “*boasting in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). His teaching is marked by gospel honesty, theological clarity, and a down-to-earth tone that aims to comfort the broken and refocus the confident on Christ alone. For the past five years, he’s led a weekly small group committed to digging deep into Scripture, where most of his content is field-tested. Noah has served in youth ministry, played drums in praise bands, and spoken to audiences ranging from 3 to 83-years old. He also runs CrossReference Christianity, a ministry offering videos, study guides, and teaching resources designed to equip believers with grace-saturated truth and help them know the Savior by studying the Scripture.



Loving the World to Death:

Scripture's Story of a God who Died for Every Sinner

To all who have gathered with me on Thursday nights over the past five years—some briefly, some faithfully, all meaningfully.

You give me a reason to keep studying. Thank you for being the people I get to share Jesus with.

— For more resources to help you know the Savior by studying the scripture, visit crossrefchristianity.com —

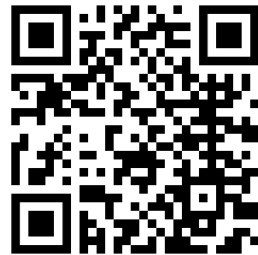
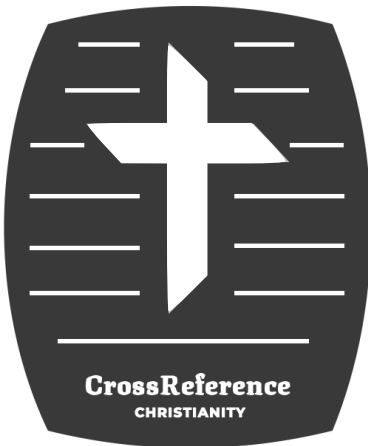


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Loving the World to Death

SCRIPTURE'S STORY OF A GOD WHO DIED FOR EVERY SINNER

Not long ago, I heard something that *simultaneously* made my eyes squint in suspicion and my stomach drop in sickness. I stumbled across a podcast clip featuring two “*Reformed*” radio hosts that stopped me in my tracks. One of them leaned into his microphone to say—I kid you not—“*I’m really uncomfortable with letting my kids sing ‘Jesus Loves Me.’ It’s too early to know whether they’re part of the elect. Singing that song with them feels like a lie because, for all I know, they might be God’s enemies.*”

Immediately, I hit the pause button. Stared at my ceiling. And shouted, “*You’ve got to be kidding me.*” If your theology keeps you from telling your kids that Jesus loves them and died for their sins, something is *deeply* wrong. After picking my jaw up off the floor, I *knew* I *had* to write this book—not just to take aim at ridiculous soundbites like what I’d just heard, but to pull back the curtain on an *entire* false doctrine that’s done more harm than good: “*Limited Atonement.*” Simply put, it’s the belief that Jesus *did not* die for the world *and all* the people in it, but *only* for a relatively small, predetermined group.

These days, if you so much as whisper that you’re interested in theology, someone’s going to ask: “*So...what are your views on Calvinism? What do you think about predestination?*” as if these are the *only* ways to measure if you’re *serious* about the Bible. I get it. Concepts like atonement and predestination pose *big* questions. At *some point* in your Christian life, you’re *going to have* to wrestle with them. I did. I’ve spent *years* undoing assumptions, re-reading the verses everyone loves to quote, and doing my best to focus on Jesus as I make sense of *both* sides of the argument. But if I’m being honest, the conclusion seems *abundantly* clear to me now. Yet, here I am writing to you about it. What keeps dragging me back into this conversation—again *and again*—are *these* two things:

- ❶ the *ignorance* on one side, and
- ❷ the *arrogance* on the other.

In *one* corner, you've got folks who reject Calvinism, but for *all* the wrong reasons. They make sloppy citations of Scripture, repeat tired Christian clichés, and convince *absolutely* no one. Most of these objections amount to “*That just doesn't seem fair!*” or “*My pastor said God loves everyone!*”

On the *other* side, you've got Calvinists who stand on their predestinarian pedestals, puffed up with confidence, and act like *they* discovered a *truer* gospel that everyone else must've missed all along. They have *such certainty* over the *finer* details of their statements of faith, that I sometimes can't help but laugh. They've got their 5 points down pat, and they are skilled at squeezing Scripture through their system, but perhaps the *worst* problem with their opinions is the ego that so often accompanies it. If you haven't memorized TULIP, read Calvin's *Institutes*, or studied the *2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith*, you'll be written off by Calvinists who'll say: “*you're not enlightened enough. If you just read a little more, you'd be on our side.*”

And that's why I have a *special* interest in *this* topic. At one point, I thought maybe *I* was the problem. Maybe I wasn't old *enough* or wise *enough*. Maybe I'd understand *someday*. “*Maybe I just haven't read enough!*” I thought. So I tried. I soaked in the sermons, I devoured the books. Calvin, Edwards, Spurgeon, Piper, Sproul, MacArthur. You name it. I tried to force the Bible through a Calvinistic lens to see if it would make everything in the Bible click. But spoiler alert: it didn't.

What it *did* do was make a *whole bunch* of Bible verses harder to explain. I found myself *constantly* needing to skim over Scriptures so I didn't have to come to terms with what they *obviously* meant. When this kind of theology has a hold on you, you'll start to read *clear* texts about Jesus dying for the world and feel that nudge to add fine print. And you'll

never reference any Bible verse that speaks of God's desire to save all *without* including an asterisk. That, once, was me. As much as I *hate* to admit it, the Calvinistic coloring of the Bible had infected my studies. Thankfully, God wouldn't let me stay there. He kept interrupting my tidy theological categories with grace. *Real*, radical grace. The kind that humbles you and messes up your pride. Once I *finally* wrapped my head around the fact that Jesus died *for me*—and *not just* me, but *everybody*—the relief was almost embarrassing. I realized I'd been carrying around a version of the gospel that needed *constant* explanations and disclaimers. Turns out, these ideas and influences hadn't *cleared up* the gospel, they had fogged up the faith!

Eventually, *every* one of us who's felt the effects of 5-point Calvinism *must* ask ourselves: "*Why would I try to defend a theology that's not taught in Scripture and didn't show up until at least halfway into Church history?*" So I started purging. Books. Podcasts. Even the internal script that made me hesitate to tell someone "*Jesus died for you*" because, well, "*what if He didn't?*" Yeah...That's where this stuff leads if you're not careful—a message that starts sounding *more* like a secret handshake for the chosen few than Good News for *everyone*. And let me be clear: I *haven't* rejected Calvinism out of ignorance. I know it. I've wrestled with it. I've tried it on. And *then I threw it out*—because it doesn't survive an unbiased, basic reading of the Bible.

It's been interesting to walk back into the Christian culture as a hard non-Calvinist. I've had people roll their eyes at me and dismiss *centuries* of Christian doctrine with condescending comments. I've seen seminary students and scholars play Olympic-level word games with texts that are *plain as day*. And I've even noticed that one of the world's leading Calvinists uses a hymn by Martin Luther (who *detested* Limited Atonement) as the intro music for his Reformed theology radio show—talk about irony!

But I've also realized that this recent rise in so-called Calvinist theology is *partially* our fault. Those of us who were not "Reformed" stopped preaching the gospel the way we *should* have been *all along*. Somewhere in recent history, we got *so* scared of dwindling numbers and so interested in competing for attention or entertaining first-time visitors, that we forgot to be solidly *evangelical!* We quit preaching "*Christ and Him crucified*" (1 **Corinthians 2:2**), so Calvinism came in through the open door. Whenever our churches seem silly, irresponsible, and shallow, we look amateurish...meanwhile, the airtight system of TULIP starts to look *awfully* attractive. And because we've been negligent in preaching the gospel, *many* Christian people have come under the influence of this particular philosophy.

So, it's time to get down to business and *actually* talk about the biblical reasons why *so many* of us—yes, *many of us*—**can't** get on board with the 5-point system. This book isn't *just* going to poke holes in Limited Atonement or pluck off TULIP's weakest petal...We're going to open the floodgates and see how *far* the blood of Christ flows. But here's the thing: the verses that imply or flat-out *declare* a universal atonement are *everywhere*. I *won't even* get to them all...

Now, I'm not trying to come across as a self-proclaimed master of this subject...and I'm *not exactly* a rockstar evangelist who has *perfectly* proclaimed the Christian message at *every* opportunity. I must confess, at times, I've failed to teach and think about the gospel in its fullness. I've said things like: "*Jesus died for sinners,*" because it's a compromise with Calvinists and makes them happy. I've told people, "*if you repent and believe, **then** Jesus will have died for your sins.*" These hesitations came from Calvinistic influences that stuck around after I tried spitting them out. But I think you and me both will be *all the more fired-up* to preach the Good News once we *truly* know and believe that the message is for *everyone* we meet.

And that brings me to *you*.

If you are a *Calvinist* reading this, brace yourself. I'm not here to play nice with a doctrine that makes a mess of the cross, rewrites the Bible, distorts the heart of God, and pretends Church history started in Geneva, Switzerland with John Calvin. Don't expect professional courtesy. Expect biblical pushback.

If you're *not* a Calvinist, prepare to hear some new language. (I've included a glossary in the back of this book for your convenience). Don't expect me to exalt you or your free will as the be-all-end-all reason why you're saved today. Instead, be prepared to run into verses that you don't read often. It'll be good for you, I promise. Let them stretch you. Let them stir up your love for the gospel all over again.

No matter who you are, or where you're coming from, the message I hope comes across all throughout this book is:

You are a sinner.

Christ died for your sins.

You are **not** outside the invitation.

And that changes *everything*.

Common Ground with Calvinists

Before this book goes *any* further, let me be the *first* to admit, there are *plenty* of Calvinists who've earned *and kept* my *deepest* respect for *several* years now. Some of my professors have been persuaded in this way. Some of my best friends in the world believe in Calvinistic predestination. And some of my favorite Christian influencers to this day are "Reformed." Their teaching on Christianity is thoughtful, well-read, and *consistently* engaging with Scripture in a way that I appreciate. These folks *know* their theology, and their commitment to the Bible is something I *can't* overlook. Far too often, it feels like Christians have a *pretty low* view of the Scriptures, but in *most* cases, that *can't* be said about Calvinists. Though I have *strong* disagreements with their conclusions, they *do seem* to strive to keep Scripture as their foundation. *Most* Reformed preachers value verse-by-verse, expository preaching in a way that is *all too rare* these days—and that's *part* of why their assertions are *so* alluring.

I've personally benefited from listening to Steve Brown (the beloved "old white guy" on *Key Life Radio*), Michael Horton (of the *White Horse Inn* podcast), Jared C. Wilson (my *favorite* baptist), and Tullian Tchividjian (Billy Graham's grandson) for *hours*. These guys get it when it comes to grace. They *don't* present the gospel as if it's *just some* abstract idea but as a *declarative announcement* that Jesus is "*for you*." They are *deeply* in touch with the Bible's teaching on sin and forgiveness—and they *refuse* to let *anyone* think, even for a moment, that they could save themselves.

Now, here's the thing: I have *no trouble* listening to these guys because they *don't* let Calvinism get in the way of the gospel...And while *some* Reformed preachers will try to pass off lectures on Limited Atonement as Sunday morning sermons, most of them rarely mention it from the pulpit. More often than not, Calvinists—at least the ones worth listening to—are opening up a text and comforting sinners with the

gospel after confronting their sin with the law. That's why I know a few folks who continue to attend Calvinistic churches, even when they've got *sharp* theological differences with whoever's preaching.

Introducing the Differences

If I *had* to, I could sit through and soak up the truth from sermon series and Bible studies led by Presbyterians, Reformed Baptists, and other Calvinists. But I think it only works that way because Reformed doctrine has some internal inconsistencies. They're pretty obvious to me, but no one ever *really* wants to talk about them. You'll hear them preach to a *capacity* congregation as if the forgiveness of sins is available to anyone and everyone, but *you and I both know*, they don't believe it. On the surface, they come across like the gospel is a "*well-meant offer*" from God to *all* people, but in the back of their minds, they think it's *only* true for the elect.

In fact, *some* Calvinists, whenever they hear a guy like me preaching the Good News as if it *objectively* applies to *everyone* in the room, get *real* nervous. They'll pull preachers aside and whisper, "*You just told everyone in that room that Jesus died and their sins are forgiven. What if some of them aren't Christians and they actually believe that this is true for them?*" My answer to that objection will *always* be: "*What exactly is your problem here? If a sinner hears that Christ died for them and he or she believes it, they aren't a non-Christian anymore! They've been delivered from their unbelief.*" That's how this works. The Gospel is **not** a fragile thing that must be rationed carefully. So, we **don't** preach *possibilities*—we proclaim *reality*.

Aside from situations like that, these practical differences *rarely* pop up. But, if and when they do, I've found that Calvinists pull out their presuppositions, slap them on the text of Scripture, and then use those *same* misinterpretations to "prove" their 5 points. So, let's dust off some of those passages where the disagreements become clear, pull back the curtain, and walk through them together.

PART I

Affirming Christ's Atonement

For Us—and For the *Whole World*

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

When you come across this verse in John’s first letter, it’s hard *not* to see it as a *clear* statement—a slam dunk—that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the *entire* world. And I think it *is* just that. This verse means *exactly* what it sounds like...1 John 2:2 says Jesus Christ died for *everyone*—and I’m dumb enough to believe it! This gospel statement *doesn’t* need a translator—only a preacher! *If* John was trying to teach something like *Limited Atonement*, this is about the worst way he could’ve done it. There’s *no way* John would’ve chosen such *expansive, universal* language to describe Jesus’ sacrifice if he believed it was limited. And if your *first* instinct upon reading this verse is to say “*how can I interpret this so that it doesn’t mean what it says?*” rather than standing amazed by God’s *cosmic* compassion, you’ve got it all wrong...

Having said that, I’m aware that fruitful discussion doesn’t consist of shoving verses in the faces of those who disagree with you...We actually *should* spend some time analyzing the arguments. And, in this case, we have *a lot* to work with. Since this verse presents *such* a problem for Limited Atonement, each Calvinist *has* to provide *some* sort of explanation at one point or another. So, I’m volunteering to do the legwork. *I’ll* take the job of engaging with their views *and* demonstrating *why* this verse *actually* means what it says *rather* than what Calvinists *want* it to say.

“*Propitiation*,” is a word you’ll only use if you’re preaching or playing Scrabble. You’ll almost *never* hear it tossed around in casual conversation...so, it’s worth taking a moment to think about what a 5-syllable word like this might mean. Later in this letter—chapter 4 to be exact—John uses this *same* term again. If we look at how the word is used *there*, it *just might* help us understand what John means when he uses it *anywhere*. “*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He*

loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Just after simply *reading* a verse like that—while you *might not* be able to write a Webster-worthy definition—my guess is that you’ve *already* got a *better* sense for what “*propitiation*” means. If not, *don’t* worry. John *isn’t* the *only* biblical author to utilize this word, so we’ve got more reading material to help us figure this thing out.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith (Romans 3:23-24).

If you flip through *most* Bible dictionaries, you’ll find words like sacrifice, substitute, reconciliation, or covering used to define the word “*propitiation*.” Speaking of dictionaries, Merriam-Webster defines “*propitiation*” as atonement—*how fitting!* Each of these dictionary definitions fits *nicely* with how *both* John *and* Paul used the word. Knowing this, how does it help us boil down 1 John 2:2 and get to its basic meaning? Simply put, Jesus is the atoning sacrifice, the substitute, the reconciliation, the payment, and the covering for our sins. But **not** *just* for *our* sins, John clarifies...Jesus covers the sins of the *whole world* too!

And that’s where the differences between Calvinists and the rest of us come up. *As far as I can tell*, we’re on the *same* page regarding the definitions of words, like “*atonement*,” “*sacrifice*,” and *even* “*propitiation*.” The controversy comes in with the word, **κόσμος** *kosmos*. The issue is over “*the world*.” Calvinists are quick to define “*the world*” on John’s behalf. But, before we let Limited Atonement dictate who or what *cosmos*—“*the world*”—is, don’t you think we should let *John* have a say? After all, it’d be *super* helpful if the apostle and author *himself* offered a definition. Well, wouldn’t you know it, John uses **κόσμος** *kosmos* *so many* times in this letter that we can get a *really* good idea of what he means whenever he speaks of “*the world*.”

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

“...the reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him” (1 John 3:1).

“Do not be surprised that the world hates you” (1 John 3:13).

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world...every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them... In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins...By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:1-14).

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes...?” (1 John 5:4-5).

After reading *all* the evidence, it's *obvious*. “The world” is clearly a reference to people outside of the Church or the sinful practices common among them. In John's letter, there are those who are in “the world” and those who are in Christ, “in Him” (1 John 3:1). So, when John labels Jesus the substitute for “our sins,” he means *all* the sins of *all* Christians. And when he says “but not just ours—the sins of the entire world too,” he's referencing *every* person beyond the walls of the Church.

There is *a ton* of sin in this world we live in—and there's plenty of sin among us too...but Christians tend not to *love* that sin or *live* to participate in it. As believers, we know Jesus died to cancel our debt of

sin, but we *also* know that this is true for those who haven't joined us yet. He gave His life for *every* sinner in the Church, and *outside* of it too. And because of this, we can *boldly* go into the world and proclaim, "*you're sinners, and Christ died for you!*"

One of Jesus' job titles in 1 John is "*advocate for sinners*"—it's a major theme in this epistle. This has never been *more* clear than at the end of Chapter 1, leading up to 1 John 2:2. I hope you've heard these verses often, but read them again.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 1:8-2:2).

I find myself returning to these verses *constantly*. Honestly, I don't think you can overemphasize *just how* important they are for the Christian life. The pen of John made *many* contributions to your Bible. John's *Gospel* focuses on telling the *story* of Jesus. John's *Revelation* deals with what happens after that. And John's *Letters*—out of *everything* he wrote—say the *most* about theology and the Christian life. 1 John 1:8-9 is a *prime* example.

Have you ever met someone who acted like, or straight-up said, they had no sin? I have...*Some* Christians claim to have reached a kind of *peak* personal holiness where sin just *isn't* an issue anymore...and certain churches are watering down God's Law so that it *seems* like they are keeping God's commands and refraining from sin, all while feeling better about themselves. Then, on the other hand, most *unbelievers* are likely to get offended if *anyone* dares to call their lifestyle sinful...

Regardless of how you or those around you try to get out of admitting your sins, here's the truth: Jesus Himself said, "*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (**Matthew 5:48**)—and don't kid yourself into thinking you've obeyed this. You've *never* once loved "*the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength*" or "*your neighbor as yourself*" (**Mark 12:30-31**). You are a sinner. The people out there, in the *world*, are sinners. And *anyone* who denies it is a liar and, therefore, a sinner (Ex. 20:16)! That's bad news, and we might not want to admit all of it...But 1 John 1:9 actually gives us an *incentive* to fess up—to *boldly* admit that we are sinners: if we confess our sin, God will forgive us!

Now, *that* sounds *too good* to be true. It's a *scandalous* message to be sure. It's a statement of *such pure* gospel that John *knows* it's going to stir some reactions. That's why he adds, in **1 John 2:1**, "*I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.*" Some people *might* hear that God forgives sin and say "*Well, I can and should sin as much as possible and then ask for God's forgiveness later!*" Or, more likely, religious people will come behind John and say: "*Ugh, you can't tell people that Jesus forgives all sins! They'll start living however they want!*" But John says, "*No, actually, God's radical grace makes people want to stay away from sin. The Gospel does a whole lot better of a job at keeping us from sin than the Law does.*" Paul has a *similar* train of thought in Romans 5-6.

"Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!" (**Romans 5:20-6:2**).

This is how you *know* you've preached the gospel in its fullness, by the way. If you preach God's grace as *so free* and "*overflowing*"—to use the language of Paul—that people start to wonder, "*Can grace really go that far? Is there ever a point where it runs out?*" Then, *congratulations*—now, you're preaching the *real* gospel.

But a good follow up question to John's shocking statement is, "*if we're guilty sinners, how can God 'forgive us our sins' while still being 'faithful and just'*" (1 John 1:8-9)? How can God's grace "*abound all the more*" (Romans 5:20)? This is where 1 John 2:1-2 comes in. "*But if anyone* [notice the universality] *does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*"

Because Jesus died for the sin of the *whole world—ours included*—we can experience the freedom of confession. We can call a thing what it is. We can call a sin a sin. We *don't* have to downplay the damage caused by our deeds. We don't have to redefine morality. We can preach the *whole* law forcefully and condemn *all* sins, because Jesus already *died* for *all* sins! You can *boldly* confess *your own* sinfulness, because Christ died for sins *and* for sinners—*each and every* one of them!

Now, I'd like to show you that these *aren't* just *my* thoughts. Christians *throughout history* have said *exactly* what I'm saying when commenting on 1 John 2:

"And not only for our sins,"—that is for those of the faithful—the Lord is the propitiator, does he say, 'but also for the whole world.' He, indeed, saves all," (Clement of Alexandria).

"Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race," (Thomas Aquinas).

"You, too, are part of 'the world,' so that your heart cannot deceive itself and think, 'The Lord died for Peter and Paul, but not for me'" (Martin Luther).

"All men, in every land, and through successive generations, are invited to come to God through this all-sufficient atonement," (Matthew Henry).

"The apostle does not say that He died for any select part of the inhabitants of the earth, or for some out of every nation, tribe, or kindred; but for ALL MANKIND; and the attempt to limit this is a violent outrage against God and His word" (Adam Clarke).

“He suffered the full penalty for the sins of the whole world. That one point cannot be emphasized too often or too strongly, namely, that the redemption of Christ was made for the whole world, for every single person that ever lived or is living today,” (Paul Kretzmann).

“His propitiation extends as widely as sin extends,” (Jameson, Faussett, Brown).

“Christ made ample provision; His propitiation avails for the sins of the whole world,” (Leon Morris).

At this point, Calvinists usually raise what they consider their *strongest* objection. It goes something like this: *“If Christ died for all sins, then all people must be saved. Otherwise, God would be punishing sins twice—once on the cross and once in Hell.”* This argument, popularized by the Puritan John Owen, is often called *“double jeopardy.”* In court, you can’t be charged for the *same* crime twice. So, this *sounds* logical, just, and consistent, but the *simple* fact is the Bible *never* raises this as an issue... Calvinists make a big deal about this but the Bible never brings it up.

This is *just one* example where those who talk about TULIP aren’t consistent with their own position. On one hand, they *insist* that the benefits of Christ’s atonement *must* be applied at the *exact* moment His sacrifice is made. But *they* don’t even believe this...They believe Christ died for the elect, but *almost none* of them believe that, ever since the moment Jesus breathed His last, those people were born saved and forgiven. If they stick to their guns that a sacrifice is applied at the exact moment it is offered, they’d end up believing that most of the *“elect”* are born *already* justified. But that raises plenty of problems because it goes against the grain of the Bible’s teaching. *“You were dead in the trespasses and sins...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”* (Ephesians 2:1-2). All people—even the *“elect”*—begin as dead, sinful *“children of wrath.”* So, here’s the bottom line: the moment of propitiation is **not** *necessarily* the *same* as the moment of individual salvation or justification. Jesus’ advocacy for the individual (1 Jn. 2:1) and His death

for the *whole* world (1 Jn. 2:2) are *connected* but separate. In other words, Jesus can *legitimately* provide a payment for someone's sins and that payment can *also* be rejected. We should *all* be able to agree on that.

Others in the Reformed camp raise a *different* disagreement. They claim that 1 John 2:2 is *merely* commenting on the clashes over Jewish exclusivism. In the ancient world, there was a popular notion that God's favor was reserved for the Jews *only*. You see some of this play out in Acts and Galatians, for instance. Well, some Calvinists suggest that 1 John was written to Jews and the apostle was putting them in their place. So *they* hear him say: "*Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world,*" as meaning "*Jesus died for Jews and Gentiles.*" I want to acknowledge the truth of that statement while also reminding you that the verse *just isn't* talking about that issue...1 John *doesn't* deal with Jewish exclusivism. And the audience *isn't even* Jewish to begin with! John wrote to seven *Gentile* churches in Revelation 1-3. His two most prolific students had very non-Jewish, *obviously* Gentile names; *Polycarp* and *Ignatius*. And John's three letters are labeled "*general*" or universal epistles by *virtually all* scholars through the centuries because they were intended to be distributed to *as many* Christians as possible. But if you need more evidence that this is a letter geared toward all Christians, in the letter itself, John says, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life*" (1 John 5:13).

Let's play pretend for a second and say that the Calvinists are somehow right on this one...Jesus is the sacrifice for the sins of "*us*"—meaning Jews—and "*the world*"—meaning Gentiles. That *still* doesn't get you to Limited Atonement. Nothing *actually written* in the verse would lead you to believe this means *only some* Jews and *some* Gentiles...What's *even more* detrimental for this Calvinistic objection is that, if this letter is a Jew writing to a bunch of Jews saying that Jesus died for Jews *and* Gentiles, that *actually* rules out Limited Atonement. Many Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and if John is saying "*Jesus is the atoning sacrifice*

for Jews,” that makes it sound like he’s saying Jesus died for un-elect unbelievers! But enough speculation...Some people have rested their *entire* interpretation of 1 John 2:2 on a *bad* guess that John was addressing a conflict between Jews & Gentiles...But, frankly, there just *isn’t* enough substance to this argument for me and you to spend any more time on it.

Now, perhaps the *most reasonable* denial of 1 John 2:2 comes from a verse in the John’s Gospel. *Some* Calvinists take an alternative route of interpretation 1 John 2:2 by referencing John 11:52, a verse with admittedly a *similar* structure. Here’s the passage in context: “*Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, ‘It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad*” (John 11:49-52).

Here, Caiaphas steps into the story and *accidentally* preaches the gospel. The historical, biblical understanding of this verse is that Jesus wasn’t *only* going to die for the nation Israel, but for *everyone else* beyond its borders too. This is *actually* quite the *expansive* text in terms of the atonement. It says that everyone is *covered* by the cross, but *not everyone* is coming to it. Jesus gave His life for *all*, but *not* all will gather as God’s children. On the other hand, a Calvinist reads it like this: “*Look, there are chosen people all throughout the world who are the real children of God and they must be gathered.*” But I don’t see *any* room in Scripture for calling *un-gathered, unbelieving* people “*children of God,*” *especially* since the Bible calls them “*children of wrath*” (Eph. 2:3)...*No one* is a child of God *until* they are gathered to Jesus by faith.

The author, John, set this record straight from the outset of his Gospel. “*To all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God*” (John 1:12). “*Children of God*” is the title that *will* be given to *anyone* out there who hasn’t yet heard the gospel—who

hasn't believed *yet*—but who is *about* to be grabbed by God's grace and put into the family by faith. You *can't* run to John 11 to cancel out 1 John 2:2. Similar sentence structures from here or there in the Bible **don't** trump *actual* context. So, *instead* of reading "*He is the propitiation for our sins, and...also for the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:2) and reaching for John 11:52, how about we grab an *actual* parallel verse from 1 John itself? "*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world*" (1 John 4:14). So, don't let *anyone* fool you. This verse of the Bible is for *you and* for *anyone* in the world who hears it!