

EXAMINING CONTESTED REFORMED THEOLOGY BELIEFS
Part III: Examining The Five Points Of Calvinism (And Arminianism) In Light Of Scripture
C. Examining Calvinism's Doctrine Of Limited Atonement In Light Of Scripture

I. Introduction

- A. The theology of John Calvin, the main formulator of "Reformed Theology," rests on five "pillars" of belief: Total Inability, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the saints, doctrines that spell, **T-U-L-I-P**, Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, p. 1, 59f.
- B. These **beliefs** and their **spiritual effects** on believers besides the **opposing beliefs** of **Arminianism** and its respective **spiritual effects** are **critiqued** by **Christ** in **respective order** in Revelation 3:17 as follows:

II. Examining Calvinism's Doctrine Of Limited Atonement In Light Of Scripture, Revelation 3:17 et. al.

- A. Calvinism teaches "Limited Atonement," that since God is alleged [in Calvinism] to have chosen only the elect to trust in Christ, His death paid only for the sins of those thus chosen to be saved, *Ibid.*, p. 150-151.
- B. In response, Arminius held since anyone might be saved by contributing faith to aid in his salvation, Christ's death atoned for the sins of all individuals, Bettenson, ed., Docs. of the Chr. Ch., 2nd ed., p. 377.
- C. Yet, **Jesus Christ** prophetically **criticized both** views and their errant **spiritual results** in Revelation 3:17:
 - 1. Jesus claimed the Laodiceans were **third** of all "**poor**" (NIV & KJV). The Greek word for "poor" is **ptochos** (UBS Grk. N.T., p. 845), and we define what Christ means by it through Scripture context:
 - a. In Rev. 3:18, Christ said the **solution** to this Rev. 3:17 "poor" state came by "gold tried in the fire."
 - b. As the only **other** N.T. reference to a thing being **compared** to "gold tried in the fire" is **faith** in 1 Peter 1:7 (Moul., Ged. & Moul., Conc. to Grk. Test., 1019), "poor" in Rev. 3:17 is a **lack of faith**.
 - 2. This **counters both Calvinist and Arminian** views of **faith** and **Calvinism's** view of the **atonement**:
 - a. Calvin taught God gives the elect a gift of faith to trust in Christ, and as the elect will thus persevere in this faith, a true believer could **never** be **poor** in **faith** (Bettenson, [Calvin's] Institutes, v. I, p. 484ff [Book Third, ch. II, 15-17]). Yet, the Laodiceans who were "poor" in faith were **also God's true sons** (as Rev. 3:19 shows us in referring to Heb. 12:6-8 where God **disciplines only true sons!**) Their being **both "poor" in faith and God's true sons opposes Calvin's view of salvation faith**.
 - b. The **followers** of Arminius err on their view of faith as well, for Arminians hold if a Christian's faith in Christ fails, he **loses** his salvation, Chafer/Walvoord, Major Bible Themes, p. 220; *Ibid.*, Bettenson, p. 378. However, though **poor in faith**, the Laodiceans were **still saved** as **God's sons** via Christ's warning He was about to discipline them as **God's true sons** in Rev. 3:19 (alluding to Hebrews 12:6-8). Thus, one cannot contribute faith to his salvation, for **GOD ALONE** saves!
 - c. Hence, man authors his **OWN FAITH versus CALVINISM**, and **FAITH** does **NOT** contribute to salvation **versus ARMINIANISM**. Man authors faith, but **GOD ALONE** saves him!
 - d. On Calvinism's view of the atonement, since man authors his **own** faith, **anyone** must be able to trust in Christ, meaning Christ's atonement is **Unlimited in extent**. Passages like 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 4:10, John 3:16-18 and 2 Peter 2:1 all confirm Christ died for **all individual** humans.
 - 3. Spiritually, the errant views of faith in Calvinism and Arminianism have left disciples either irresponsibly not trusting God in hope God will preserve their faith by predestination (Calvinism) or errantly trusting in the false strength of a human faith (Arminianism). Actually, the believer **should initiate faith**, but a faith in **God** for victorious Christian living! No wonder we are spiritually "poor"!

Lesson: (1) *Calvinism and Arminianism ERR in their views of FAITH, and CALVINISM thus errs in its stand for a "Limited Atonement" of Christ's cross: (a) Opposite Calvinism, salvation faith is NOT an immediate gift from God, but it is authored by man so that anyone can believe in Christ. (b) This in turns means Christ's atonement must be Unlimited in extent. (c) Opposite Arminianism, faith is NOT meritorious, NOR does it thus WORK salvation, so human faith itself does not SAVE, meaning a lapse in faith does not nullify one's salvation!* (2) *These errant views have left believers destitute in the LIFE of faith: (a) Calvinists tend to rely on God's keeping His gift of faith strong to leave them irresponsibly not exercising faith in God for life, and (b) Arminians have leaned on the strength of their faith instead of leaning on GOD for HIS power to live! (c) The SOLUTION is RESPONSIBLY to LEAN on GOD!*