

**BIBLICAL SOTERIOLOGY:
An Overview and Defense of the
Reformed Doctrines of Salvation**

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Limited Atonement, part 10

**ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE DOCTRINE OF
LIMITED ATONEMENT**

**IV. MEANS BY WHICH ATONEMENT WAS ACCOMPLISHED: AGENTS
(cont.)**

A. God the Father (cont.)

1. Sent God the Son — God the Father sent God the Son into the world to accomplish the atonement that he purposed beforehand. (cont.)

a. Father made Son Christ/mediator/savior — The Father made the Son the mediator between the elect, who are sinful beings, and God, who punishes sinful beings. The act of mediation is the interposing of Christ between God and the elect in order to reconcile the two parties. Christ’s act of mediation includes both his atonement and priesthood, and results in the salvation of the elect. (cont.)

iii. The Father promised to apply the benefits purchased by the mediator to those people on behalf of whom he mediated.

“Then [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

That God reckoned Abraham righteous by faith prior to the atonement indicates that a covenant existed to guarantee that the Son would purchase

certain merits at the Cross. Abraham was able to be justified by the merits of the atonement — even though the atonement had not yet been offered — because this covenant guaranteed that the atonement would be offered and would secure its benefits. This covenant was strong and good enough that the Father actually kept this promise by applying its benefits even before the atonement was offered.

“Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, ‘By myself I have sworn, declared the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice’” (Gen. 22:15-18).

The Father promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in Abraham’s seed, and Paul taught that this seed was Christ (Gal. 3:16). This passage also teaches that those people throughout the nations who were to receive God’s blessing were to be considered Abraham’s seed as well (the single seed was to be multiplied). Thus, God promised Christ that he would bless Abraham’s seed throughout the nations of the earth. As Paul also taught, Christ secured these blessings by his atonement (Gal. 3:13-14). Thus, the Father promised Christ that the merits he obtained by his atonement would be applied in blessings to Abraham’s seed. He did not promise to bless those who were not Abraham’s seed. As Paul wrote, it is not those of Abraham’s physical line, but “those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7).

“Surely our grief He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed” (Isa. 53:4-5).

According to Peter, Christ ultimately fulfilled this prophecy (1 Pet. 2:24). The prophecy indicates that the chastening “for our well-being” was to fall on Christ, that is, Christ’s death was to procure benefits that would heal those for whom he suffered. This indicates that the Father promised to apply this healing to those for whom Christ mediated.

The intimacy of the first person plural narrative (“we,” “our”) indicates that Christ’s mediation was not intended for an unknown group of individuals, or even for a known but not identified group of individuals. Rather, the speaker indicates that the mediation was to be rendered on behalf of a particular group of people whom he identifies as “my people” in verse 8, meaning “Israel” in this context. As the New Testament teaches, however, only the faithful within national Israel are counted as being part of Israel, along with all the faithful Gentiles (Rom. 9:6,24-28). Thus, the prophecy indicates that Christ mediated and died for the faithful only, and that the Father promised to heal only the faithful.

“As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:11-12).

The Father promised to apply justification to “the many” for whom Christ died. Isaiah 53:8 identifies these many as “my people,” that is, the faithful Israelites and Gentiles (see comments on Isa. 53:4-5 above).

“Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal. 3:16-22).

Paul teaches that the promise of salvation is given by faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe, and that this promise of salvation was made to Abraham and to his seed Christ. Simply put, the Father promised Abraham and the Son the he would apply to those who believe the benefits purchased by the Son’s atonement.

The promise to which Paul refers is found in Genesis 22:16-18, and one of the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed was that in the seed every nation on earth would benefit from the promise. Paul explained that this was fulfilled because those who believe are considered

Abraham's children and heirs to this promise (Gal 3:7,29). The promise does not extend to all who descend from Abraham according to the flesh (Rom 9:6ff.). The promise was not that Abraham's seed would mediate or atone for those who were never to come to faith, but that the mediation and atonement would only be effective for those who were to come to faith.