

Approaching the Bible with Prejudice, 11 pgs

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S ACCOUNTABILITY

In the introduction to a series of messages in Ephesians, the pastor pointed out that **there are 2 views pertaining to mankind's free-will**, each with its own proponents and supporting passages: **Arminianism** holds that fallen man has the ability to respond to the call of the Gospel to believe in Christ and thus be saved; **Calvinism** stresses our total dependence upon God's grace for salvation.^{1a} The pastor stated that he suspected **the truth was not to be found in either one or the other, but both as seen from different viewpoints.**²

Eph.1:3 begins by **blessing** [speaking well of; highly exalting] *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* for what He has done for us, which redounds to the praise of the glory of His grace (v.6). What we have in Christ, He (the Father) caused to abound to us *according to the riches of His grace (v.7 & 8)*. The passage refers to His treatment of us in terms of *His good pleasure (v.5 & 9)*, His **purpose** and *will (v.9 & 11)*. Thus it all works *to the praise of His glory (v.14)*. We are the Father's gift to the Son, *His inheritance in the saints (v.18)* for *we were made a heritage, [see God's Heritage <http://pop.eradman.com>] having been predestined according to (the Father's) purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will (v.11)*. **God planned and brought about every good thing in the first chapter.**

Therefore, **in approaching chapter 2**, we are already heavily **biased toward God**, extolling and exalting His grace in our redemption. What magnifies God's grace the most - His nursing the sick and dying back to health, or His breathing life into the already dead? **In the first instance**, God extends the lifeline of the Gospel to us and we respond by grasping and holding on while He pulls us to safety.³ **In the second**, God does it all - He saves us completely, bestowing upon us everything necessary for salvation through realization of the truth.⁴ Reading of our sorry condition in **chap.2**, we find mankind caught-up in *the course [lit. age] of this world (v.1)*,⁵ classified as ... *sons of disobedience* in whom the **Devil** is working (v.2), *by nature [not choice] children of wrath (v.3)* ⁶ *[just like those Jews in Jn.8]*, **dominated by the cravings of our flesh in both wishes and understanding (v.3)**. **Our imprisonment was total** - in mind, heart, and body. But God, *rich in mercy and love (v.4)* intervened to make us alive with Christ (v.5) *that He might show forth the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (v.7)*. On the way to describing our high status, the author inserts the parenthetical phrase, *by grace you have been saved (v.5)*. Then, after revealing our new glory, he elaborates,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this does not come from you, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [in contrast from our natural physical origin] for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (2:8-10)

We were people contrary to God, at war with Him in our minds and hearts. We were deceived and imprisoned by all kinds of lies and futile thinking. Even after we have been regenerated, we do not automatically understand God's ways. Learning of Him and grasping truth is a process - we have to

work at it, (depending on the Spirit to enlighten *the eyes of our heart, 1:18*). We will find ourselves discarding all kinds of false notions as we grow in grace.⁷

Why is **biblical history** important? Biblical history gives us a frame of reference **to understand the purpose and spiritual nature of reality**. The whole Bible presents itself as the unfolding process of God's dealings with man and of His self-disclosure to man. Figures and types serve to condition our thinking and instill certain concepts so we will recognize the truth when it is revealed. Thus the Old Testament builds a conceptual framework that provides the categories for understanding the ways of God and comprehending the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Deuteronomy Moses recounted to the Israelites about to enter and conquer the land the history of God in His dealing with the Hebrews in terms of His sovereign election and covenant love. *Behold, to the Lord your God belong the heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set His heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, **you** above all peoples as it is this day, **Dt.10:14-15***

*For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession out of all the peoples ... the Lord set His love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery ... **Dt.7:6-8***

Moses was speaking of God's calling of Abram [exalted father] (**Gen.12**) and setting him apart from the rest of idolatrous humanity. God made covenant promises to him (**Gen.15**) and changed his name to Abraham [father of a multitude] (**Gen.17**) even though he was very old and his wife, Sarai, was both barren and well past child bearing age. Abraham had only 2 sons, the first by an Egyptian slave (**Gen.16**) and the second by Sarai [renamed Sarah] (**Gen.21**). God chose to continue His covenant love with the younger son, Isaac. Isaac's wife was also barren, but God opened her womb and she bore 2 sons, twins, Esau the firstborn and Jacob (**Gen.25**). Again God continued His covenant love with the younger son, Jacob [usurper, supplanter, deceiver], and changed his name to Israel [striven with God] (**Gen.32**). Israel had 12 sons by wives and concubines that become the heads of the tribes of the Hebrews who were enslaved in Egypt and led out several hundred years later by Moses to become God's chosen natural people, the nation of Israel.

Through this history God teaches us about Himself – His **sovereignty** in providence and redemption as well as His **motives** as can be seen in the following New Testament comments:

***For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.** For this is what the promise said: About this time next year I will return, and **Sarah** shall have a son. And not only so, but also when **Rebekah** had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad —in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him*

who calls - she was told, The older will serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. So then [conclusion] he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills, **Rom.9:6b-18**

We balk at being under God's absolute authority, not so much His power as His rule, because it grates on us to obey, submit, and yield to His will. Sovereignty means He is in full control of all things at all times.⁸ Sadly, the only occasions we seem glad to think so and find comfort in that fact are those when we are afraid and in trouble. So it behooves me to approach God with humility and seek to understand His ways in terms that glorify Him maximally. What am I to do when confronted by notions that seem to my mind to be mutually exclusive such as the sovereignty of God vs. the free-will of Man? After all, isn't the attitude that we have the **ability** and **right to choose** the way we think naturally? Ought we not be **suspicious** of such thinking, even **distrust** it now that we have caught a glimpse of the living God? What does one actually know about such things other than what God has spoken and given us understanding of? Should I not give Him the benefit of a doubt and submit my reason to His majesty? It cannot be our expectation that we will understand everything we read in the Bible or even that we will like everything about God and His ways upon first encounter. Therefore, let us be careful not to think too highly of our own rationale. We know that God uses many means, including people, circumstances, and prayer, to accomplish His will. We cannot deny human responsibility in these. So let us approach Scripture with our understanding weighted in favor of God's glorious grace even though we cannot logically reconcile all things yet.

¹ **Antinomy** refers to two perspectives (God's and Man's) on the issue of free-will and sovereignty. Predestination [election] refers to the doctrine that God has determined beforehand who would come to believe in Christ and thus be saved from His wrath [see Both/And].

The basic problem between Calvinism and Arminianism arises as a logical antithesis because they are seen as opposites. In Scripture the sovereignty of God and responsibility of man are spoken of in balance rather than in opposition to one another. [see my essay, BOTH/AND; p.100-102 of TELL the TRUTH by Will Metzger & ch.3 of CONVERSION by Michael Lawrence]

Calvinism [Augustinianism, aka limited or definite and effective atonement; particular or definite redemption] views the decision as God's alone per His sovereign providence. He not only provides the means for forgiveness and righteousness through sending Christ as a substitute for guilty sinners, He also opens the blind eyes of our hearts to realize the truth and does a work in us so we can embrace it. Since a being can only act in accord with his nature and character, man as the enemy of God corrupted as he is by sin is not *able* (free) to believe in Christ. Regeneration precedes faith as the necessary condition for faith in such a way that faith accompanies regeneration in time.

Arminianism [semi-Pelagianism aka unlimited or general atonement] regards atonement as merely potential for everyone. It holds that God bases predestination upon His foreknowledge of who will and will not freely respond to His grace. **Believing results in regeneration.**

² These different viewpoints are depicted by the sign over the entrance to heaven, **WHOSOEVER WILL MAY [has permission to] COME.** On the inside, looking back it reads, **CHOSEN BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.** Both the invitation and the unilateral act are represented in Scripture, but the latter expresses the necessary CAUSE that makes the former both possible and certain. There is a real parallel between these two perspectives toward sanctification known as perseverance of the saints and preservation of the saints. As with Justification, it is the latter that expresses the actuality or realization of God's intent. Sinners come BECAUSE they have been chosen, and saints persevere BECAUSE God preserves His own. [see **Rom.11:1-5** discussion of the remnant chosen by grace that God kept for Himself] God's love is complex and is expressed in different ways depending upon its objects [see **The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God** by D.A. Carson]. His love for the whole of humanity is expressed in the sufficiency of Christ's death for all. **God desires all people to be saved, so He sends the world messengers with His word which reveals, instructs, invites, commands, and warns.**

The definiteness of the atonement turns on **the intent of Christ to redeem His own.** His work is **sufficient for all, but effective only for the elect.** **This is what governs in the matter of redemption.** God, speaking of unbelievers, tells Paul that He has many people in Corinth (**Acts 18:9-10**) to motivate him to preach the Gospel there so they who are already chosen will come to faith. Jesus said **No one [universal negative] can [has the ability to] come to Me [believe in Me for salvation] unless [the one exception] the Father who sent Me draws him (Jn.6:44).** No one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father (**Jn.6:65**). **All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me [qualified positive confirming the certainty of the exception] Jn.6:37.** Then, God keeps His people [preservation] by keeping them faithful to Christ [perseverance].

³ This is the **Arminian and Catholic view** – we have a spark of life within us that is still *capable of* responding to God which means that ultimately man is in control of his own destiny.

⁴ This is the understanding that was recovered in **the Protestant Reformation.**

⁵ We are born into an entire social system with a cultural current against the truth that reinforces our inclination to reject the living God [see **Correlating the Kingdom with the Age**]

⁶ People do not become spiritually dead because they sin - **we are sinners by nature, born into this world without spiritual life.** Does God require of us what we are unable to do, like believe and obey? Yes - He does not alter His standards of holiness and righteousness, but graciously provides for **the inclusion of some with Christ, who did meet those requirements.**

⁷ For example, it is common for people who had been immersed in the concepts of evolution to embrace theistic evolution upon their conversion. It is not until they understand more about God and His world that they are able to see through that lie as well and break free of it. **Arminianism** is like this, **a kind of half-way station on the way to the full realization of the truth.**

God's Part and Man's Part in Salvation, by John G. Reisinger

[http://solochristo.com/ SC/SoloChristo.htm](http://solochristo.com/SC/SoloChristo.htm)

God and man must both do something before a man can be saved. **Hyper-Calvinism** denies the necessity of human action, and **Arminianism** denies the true nature of the Divine action. The Bible clearly sets forth both the divine and human as essential in God's plan of salvation. This is not to say, as Arminianism does, *God's part is to freely provide salvation for all men, and man's part is to become willing to accept it*. This is **not** what we said above, nor is it what the Bible teaches. In order to understand what God's Word really says, and to try to answer some straw-man objections, we shall establish the subject one point at a time.

1. A man must repent and believe in order to be saved. No one was ever forgiven and made a child of God who did not willingly turn from sin to Christ. Nowhere does the Bible even hint that men can be saved without repentance and faith, but to the contrary, the Word always states these things are essential before a person can be saved. The one and only Bible answer to the question *What must I do to be saved?* is *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*.

2. Every one who repents and believes the gospel will be saved. Every soul, without any exception, who answers the gospel command to come to Christ will be received and forgiven by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Philip Bliss put the truth to music when he said, *Whosoever will, forever must endure ...* If we can be absolutely certain about anything, we can be sure that Christ will never void His promise to receive *all who come to Him*. As old John Bunyan said, *Come ... and welcome* is the Savior's eternal word to all sinners.

3. Repentance and faith are not vicarious but are the free acts of men. Men, with their own mind, heart, and will must renounce sin and receive Christ. God doesn't repent and believe for us - we repent and believe. Turning from sin and reaching out in faith to Christ are the acts of man, and every man who so responds to the gospel call does so because he honestly desires to do so. He wants to be forgiven and he can only be forgiven by repenting and believing. No one, including God, can turn from sin for us, we must do it. No one can trust Christ in our place, we must personally, knowingly, and willingly trust Him in order to be saved.

But isn't that what the Arminian teaches? That is what the Bible teaches - and teaches clearly and dogmatically. But don't Calvinists deny all three of those points? Calvinists come in a hundred varieties. If you know *anyone* that denies the above facts, then that person, regardless of what he labels himself, is denying the clear message of the Bible. *But haven't you established the doctrine of free-will and disposed of election if you assert man must repent and believe and it is his own act?* No, we have neither proven free will nor disproved election since it is impossible to do either.^{1a} We have merely stated exactly what the Bible says a man *must do in order to be saved*. Let us now look at what the Scripture says a sinner is able to do and what he is **not** able to do.

4. The same Bible that states man must repent and believe in order to be saved, also emphatically states that man, because of his sinful nature, is totally unable to repent and believe. All of man's three faculties of mind, heart, and will, which must be receptive to gospel truth, have neither the ability to receive such truth nor even the desire to have such ability. In fact the exact opposite is

true. Man's total being is not only unable to either come, or want to come to Christ, but every part of his nature is actively opposed to Christ and truth. **Rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior** is not a passive "non-action," but a deliberate volitional choice. It is deliberately choosing to say "no" to Christ and "yes" to self and sin. No one is "neural" in respect to God and His authority. **Unbelief is just as much a deliberate act of mind, heart, and will as is faith.** This is what Jesus meant in **John 5:40** when He said, *You will not [deliberate choice] come to me. Unbelief is an act of the will - it is active faith, but unfortunately it is faith in myself.*

To believe and preach points One, Two, and Three, without also preaching number Four is to **misrepresent** the Gospel of God's grace. It is to give a totally false picture of the sinner and his true need. It shows only half of the man's sin. It misses the most crucial point of a lost man's need, namely, his lack of power or ability to overcome his sinful nature and its effects. The "gospel" which is concocted out of this view is only a half gospel. It is at this point that **modern evangelism so miserably fails.** It confuses man's *responsibility* with his *ability*, and falsely assumes that a sinner has the moral ability to perform all that God has commanded. The "cannot" texts of scripture are either totally ignored or badly twisted by this perversion of the true gospel of God's saving grace.

some things that a lost man cannot do:

Man cannot **see** - until he is *first born again. Jn.3:3.*

Man cannot **understand** - until he is *first given a new nature. 1 Cor.2:14.*

Man cannot **come** - until he is *first effectually called by the Holy Spirit. Jn.6:44-45.*

These three "cannots," are sufficient to show that a sinner absolutely cannot [as opposed to "will not"] come to Christ until God first does something *in that sinner's nature*. That "something" is what the Bible calls **regeneration**, or the new birth, and it is the exclusive work of God the Holy Spirit. **Man has no part whatever in regeneration.**

5. The new birth, or regeneration, is God giving us the spiritual life that enables us to do what we **must do** (repent and believe), **but CANNOT DO** because of our **bondage to sin**. When the Bible says man is dead in sin, it means that man's *mind, heart, and will* are all spiritually dead in sin. When the Bible speaks of our being in "bondage to sin," it means that our entire being, *including our will*, is enslaved and under the power of sin.

We indeed need Christ to die and pay the penalty of our sin, but we just as desperately need the Holy Spirit to give us a new nature in regeneration. **The Son of God frees us *legally* from the *penalty* of sin, but only the Holy Spirit can free us from the *power* and *death* of our *depravity in sin*.** We need forgiveness in order to be saved, and Christ provides complete forgiveness and righteousness for us in His death. However, **we also need spiritual life and ability, and the Holy Spirit provides it for us in regeneration.** **It is the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration that enables us to savingly receive the atoning work of Christ in true faith** (ie, be converted).

God is a triune God, and no person can understand His "so great salvation" until he sees each blessed Person of the Godhead playing a distinct and necessary part in that salvation. No man can declare the glorious gospel of grace and leave out the Father's sovereign electing love and the Holy

Spirit's regenerating power as essential parts of God's work in saving sinners. To speak of "God's part" in salvation as only being one of "providing" forgiveness and man's part as "being willing" to accept it is to ignore both the Father's work of election and the Spirit's work of regeneration. This not only makes man a full "partner" with God in the work of salvation, it credits man with playing the *decisive roll* in the deal.

How dreadful, and ridiculous, to give Christ the glory for His work on the cross, and then give sinners the credit for the Father's work in eternity (election) and the Spirit's work in our hearts (regeneration). It does great dishonor to the Sovereign Spirit to say, *The Holy Spirit will perform His miraculous work of quickening you unto life as soon as you give Him your permission*. That's like standing in a graveyard saying to the dead people, *I will give you life and raise you up from the grave if you will only take the first step of faith and ask me to do it*. What a denial of the sinner's total spiritual inability. Amazing!

The root error of the Arminian's gospel of free-will is its failure to see that **man's part, repentance and faith, are the fruits and effects of God's work and not the essential ingredients supplied by the sinner as man's part of the deal**. Every man who turns to Christ does so willingly, but that willingness is a direct result of the Father's election and the Holy Spirit's effectual calling. To say, *If you will believe, God will answer your faith with the New Birth*, is to misunderstand man's true need and misrepresent God's essential work.

6. The Scriptures clearly show that faith and repentance are the evidences and not the cause of regeneration. Suppose a man who had been dead for twenty years greeted you on the street one day. Would you conclude that the man had gotten tired of being dead and "decided" to ask a great doctor to perform a miracle and give him life? I'm sure you would instead exclaim in amazement, *Man, what happened to you? Who brought you back to life?* You would see he was alive because he was walking and breathing, but you would know these were evidences of a miracle having been performed on him from without and not the results of his own power of will. Just so when a *spiritually* dead man begins to perform spiritual acts such as repentance and faith - these spiritual "fruits" show that the miracle of the new birth has taken place.

Acts 16:14 is a clear proof of the above. Remember that **we are not discussing whether man must be willing to open his heart. We settled that under the first three points**. We are looking for the *source of power* that enabled man to perform that spiritual act. Arminianism insists that man's free-will must furnish the willingness or power, and the Bible says that the Holy Spirit of God furnishes that power or ability in the new birth. Examine the one text in Scripture that uses the phrase "opened heart" and see if it agrees with our previous points:

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. The NIV says: **The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.**

Lydia did indeed "attend" or listen to the words of Paul. She gladly heard and willingly believed his message. As we have already shown, she had to do this in order to benefit from the gospel and be saved. **Lydia's "attending," or hearing and believing, illustrates points One, Two, and Three above,**

and refutes hyper-Calvinism, (which says the elect will be saved regardless of whether they hear and believe the gospel or not) did choose to believe, and she herself did it only because she *wholeheartedly wanted to*. She did not do it "unwillingly" nor did God hear and believe for her. It was her own most willing response.

We see here demonstrated what God **must do** before Lydia can be saved. **(1) He provided a salvation** "by grace through faith" that could be preached. Obviously "the things spoken" by Paul were the gospel facts concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and surely this Lamb is God's gracious provision. **(2) God also brought the message of His provision** to Lydia. He sent a preacher to tell her about this great plan of salvation. God went to a lot of trouble to provide such a gospel - He gave His only begotten Son up to death. He went to great lengths to provide such a preacher as Paul (see his testimony in **Acts 22**).

It is at this point that Arminianism departs from the Bible and proceeds to apply human logic to the above truths. They tragically fail to look at the rest of the Biblical text and see that God must do something else. **(3) God must open Lydia's heart** (or give her spiritual life) so she will be able to believe. Her natural mind is blind, her natural heart is averse to God, and her will is in bondage to sin and spiritual death. Only the power of God can free her from this graveyard of spiritual depravity. The giving of this life and power is solely the work of God. Notice that the Bible explicitly gives God alone the credit for Lydia's heart being opened. Look at the words carefully: ... **whose heart the LORD OPENED ...**

Notice also how clearly the Holy Spirit teaches us the relationship between the cause and the effect in the conversion of Lydia. **God was the One Who opened Lydia's heart, that is the cause, and He did so [in order that] she might be able to attend to the truths that Paul preached, that is the effect.** To deny that the one single reason that Lydia understood and believed the gospel was because God deliberately **opened her heart** and enabled her to believe is to fight God's Word. Making man's "free-will" the one determining factor into this text, is consciously corrupting the Word of God. The Bible gives the whole credit for this "opening" to God's power and not to man's will. **Modern evangelism does the exact opposite and credits the opening of the heart to the power of man's "free-will."**

God's grace not only provides salvation, but His power also gives us the **ability** to both desire and receive it. He works in us **both to will and to do**. His working in us to "will" is the new birth, and this work of regeneration is totally the work of the Holy Spirit.⁸

⁸ **The moment we lose sight of this distinction between being "saved by faith" (the act of man) and being born again by the Holy Spirit (the act of God), we are heading for confusion and trouble.** We will be convinced that man is able to do what the Bible emphatically states he is unable to do. The necessity of the Holy Spirit's work being thus theologically denied, it will not be long before it is ignored in actual practice. This is the plight of modern day evangelism. Since the evangelists are convinced that the new birth is within the power and ability of man's will, **methodology has become far more important than the theology of the Bible.** Organization and advertising are absolute essentials to success while the necessary work of the Holy Ghost is all but forgotten. It is true that lipser-

vice is given to the need to *Pray for the Holy Spirit guidance*, and cards asking people to *promise to pray every day* are always sent out months in advance of the big campaign. However, some people are not sure which is the most important to the success of the campaign - to pray or to give money (the *other pledge* which is always included - *only your gifts can make this great campaign possible*).

Everyone Believes in a Limited Atonement

An Examination of the Death of Christ, and for Whom it was Intended by Geoff Volker, modified
<http://idsaudio.org/ids/pdf/classic/limited.pdf>

Everyone Has a Problem

When I talk to someone about the extent of the Atonement (for whom did Jesus die?) it seems that the very first passage of scripture pointed out to me is **1 Jn.2:2**, *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world*. I know I am supposed to recognize as obvious the truth of this verse - that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world. But **did Jesus really pay for ALL the sins of EVERYBODY in the world?** The apparent answer is yes, but is there is more to it than meets the eye? **Reformed theologian John Gerstner** has said that what we need is a theology of the second glance, meaning that everything is not always as it seems at first. **1 Jn.2:2** is just such a verse! If we take it at its face value without any qualification it would seem to teach that everyone will be saved. This proves too much! The Bible makes it clear that hell will have its full quota.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it, Mt.7:13-14 If only "a few" are going to be in heaven, then the rest, "many," will be in that place of eternal torment. **This eliminates this first option, universal salvation** (Christ died for all of the sins of all of the people), and we are left with one of the following:

1. Christ died for some of the sins of all of the people.
2. Christ died for all of the sins of some of the people.

Option #1

If Jesus Christ only paid for some of the sins of all of the people then his death on the cross is a bridge to nowhere. If there exists even one sin that has not really been paid for, then there is no hope. Hell will be the only reward and it shall never end. To have an Atonement that included every last person would indeed be something to behold. But, to have an Atonement that does not include all the sins of everyone would be to have no Atonement at all, or an Atonement to hell!

But ... our opponents say that the above scenario is not a true picture of how the cross works. They tell us that Jesus did indeed pay for all the sins of all men. But, the payment for sin that he purchased on the cross only becomes effective when we "believe."

The Weak Link of Option #1

The weak link in this view of the cross is the assumption that men are able to believe on their own. This understanding of the Atonement states in no uncertain terms that the cross in and of itself does not determine who is going to believe. But the Scriptures say:

*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day, **Jn.6:44*** Here the Word of God speaks right to the issue. No one is able to come to Christ on his own. The reason for this is again laid out in Scripture. ***The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned, **1Cor.2:14*****

The two reasons given for man's inability to believe are:

1. The gospel is "foolishness;" a waste of time. He does not want to believe.
2. He simply cannot understand and respond to the gospel on his own.

Clearly, the Father does not draw everyone to Himself. In **Jn.5:44** all those who are drawn by the Father will be raised on the last day. Since no one is able to believe on his own how do we account for the fact that some do indeed believe? The answer is that **the Father chooses those to whom he gives saving faith. Since no one wants or deserves this saving faith it must be purchased on the cross by Jesus. Faith is a gift.**

*For **it is by grace you have been saved**, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast. **Eph.2:8-9***

Some might be saying that the Greek pronoun which makes reference to the gift of God, the "**this**" is in the neuter gender. This is so because "**gift**" is in the neuter gender, and "this" is referring to something as being a gift of God. The question that bothers some has to do with the fact that "**faith**" on the other hand is feminine in gender. Normally, the noun and the pronoun agree in gender. So they say, since "faith" is not of the same gender as the "gift" it must not be what the "this" is referring to. Therefore, **Eph.2:8-9** is not teaching that faith is a gift of God at all. However, the only other noun that is **in verse 8** that gift could refer to is the word "**grace**." The gender for grace is also feminine, the same as faith.

The only solution that seems to fit with the rest of Scripture is that the gift of God must refer to our "entire" salvation of which faith is a part. Faith is part of that "package deal" of our salvation which our Savior purchased on the cross. Since we have already seen that it is impossible for man to believe on his own, it is absolutely necessary that faith be purchased on the cross along with all the rest of our salvation. So to say that Jesus paid for the sins of all, but only those who believe actually get their sins paid for, is in effect saying that no one is going to believe since no one is able to believe on his own.

Option #2

Did Christ die for all of the sins of some of the people? The Scriptures seem to clearly say yes!

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

*He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption, **Heb.9:11-12***

Here we have the death of our Lord described in no uncertain terms as having actually paid for sins, having purchased our salvation. The only possible scenario that fits this description of the Atonement is Option #2. **Jesus actually purchased the entire salvation of all those whom the Father had chosen in eternity past to save by Christ's death on the cross.**

*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, **It is finished.** With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, **Jn.19:30***

With the death of Jesus Christ salvation was infallibly secured. There would be no doubt about it. At the appointed time God the Holy Spirit would draw the elect to the Savior and give them the faith to believe. Our salvation is by grace from the beginning to end, **so that no one can boast.**

Everyone has to qualify, **1 Jn.2:2**. You either have to add some sort of qualifier in the direction of Jesus paying for the sins of every last person but only potentially, or you indeed say that Jesus actually paid for sins, but you make a qualification in the direction of whom the Atonement was intended to save. **Everyone believes in a Limited Atonement!**