

Pastor-teacher Don Hargrove

Faith Bible Church

<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

August 30, 2011

DAILY DOCTRINE: Reconciliation &  
a Response to MacArthur's False Teaching of Limited Atonement  
<http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/reconciliation.pdf>



1. Definition of reconciliation. Reconciliation is peace with God because of the removal of the barrier between God and man. Peace is a technical word for man's response to Grace. Peace can never come to you apart from Grace. When an unbeliever responds by faith to Grace, the result is peace. There is the permanent positional peace (Eph. 2:14-16) and experiential peace when we are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
2. Jesus Christ is the agent of reconciliation. He removed the barrier. Now the only barrier to a relationship with God is rejection of the barrier remover, the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Ephesians 2:14, *For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*
  - a. He is the peace for both Jew and Gentiles, 2:14.
  - b. He abolished the barrier of the Mosaic Law (codex #1, "law of commandments;" codex #2, "ordinances"), 2:15.
4. The Cross is the point of reconciliation, Colossians 1:20, *and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.* The *blood* refers to the spiritual death of Christ on the cross. It is the instrument of reconciliation.

5. The result of reconciliation is ultimate sanctification, Colossians 1:21, *And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--*
6. The believer is the minister of reconciliation. It is our responsibility to tell others of the reconciliation God has made possible by the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:18, Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

7. Reconciliation is related to unlimited atonement. Unlimited atonement is the doctrine that teaches that Christ's salvific work on the cross was accomplished for all people. Reconciliation was provided for the believer as well as the unbeliever. Limited atonement teaches that Christ only died for believers, the elect.
8. Limited atonement has now made its way into the *MacArthur Study Bible*.
  - a. Unlimited atonement in respect to propitiation: 1 John 2:2. *and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*
  - b. The passage is very clear that Christ's work on the cross was not only for believers, it was also for the sins of the *whole world*.

c. Note how MacArthur tries to get around this in his Study Bible (page 1965):

**For the whole world.** This is a generic term, referring not to every single individual, but to mankind in general. Christ actually paid the penalty only for those who would repent and believe [note how he adds “repent” to the gospel]. A number of Scriptures indicate that Christ died for the whole world (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 1 Tim 2:6; Heb. 2:9 ). Most of the world will be eternally condemned to hell to pay for their own sins [sin is not the issue in condemnation!], so they could not have been paid for by Christ. The passages which speak of Christ’s dying for the whole world must be understood to refer to mankind in general (as in Titus 2:3, 4). “World” indicates the sphere, the beings toward whom God seeks reconciliation and has provided propitiation. God has mitigated His wrath on sinners temporarily, by letting them live and enjoy earthly life . . . In that sense, Christ has provided a brief, temporal propitiation for the whole world. But He actually satisfied fully the wrath of God eternally only for the elect who believe. Christ’s death in itself had unlimited and infinite value because He is Holy God. Thus His sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of all whom God brings to faith. But the actual satisfaction and atonement was made only for those who believe. . . . The pardon for sin is offered to the whole world, but received only by those who believe . . . . There is no other way to be reconciled with God.

d. Response to MacArthur’s comment:

1. Why is “for the whole world” a “generic term, referring not to every single individual”?
2. On what basis can he say that Christ paid the penalty only for those who would repent and believe?
3. Why does MacArthur interpret world to refer to every member of Adam’s race?
4. There is no such *LIMIT* from the immediate or remote context of the passage. He, and all those who believe in limited atonement, bring *their* limitation to the passage. Their false theology *dictates* to them that the passage must agree with them. This is called *eisegesis* (reading into the passage) instead of *exegesis* (analyzing and reading out of the passage).

9. The truth of the matter is that Christ died as a substitute for all without exception. The debt of sin has been paid in full. Reconciliation is open to all who will receive the gift by faith alone in Christ alone.

**In the Logos,**

*Pastor Don*