

BRUSHFIRES | WEEK 5

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Core Doctrine: Definite Atonement – Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)

Verse: John 10:14–15 (CSB)

14 “I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, **15** just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep.

Book Context:

The Gospel of John, written by the Apostle John around A.D. 85–90, presents Jesus as the eternal Son of God who brings life to all who believe. Chapter 10 centers on Jesus’ role as the Good Shepherd, distinguishing between true believers (His sheep) and false teachers. His words here are deeply personal and theologically loaded—He lays down His life not for the world at large, but specifically for His sheep.

Core Doctrine:

Definite Atonement teaches that Christ’s death wasn’t a blanket offer—it was a decisive act to actually save His sheep. His atonement was not hypothetical—it was effectual. When Jesus says, “I lay down my life for the sheep,” He’s showing us that His mission was intentional and complete.

This doctrine doesn’t limit Christ’s power—it magnifies it. He didn’t merely make a way—He made it happen.

Danger of Not Holding to the Core Doctrine – Week 5: Definite Atonement – Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)

If we believe that Christ died equally for every person without distinction—whether they believe or not—we risk reducing the cross to a potential remedy instead of a finished

rescue. The danger here is subtle but soul-shaping: we turn the blood of Jesus into an offer rather than a purchase. But Scripture is clear—Christ died to redeem a people, not just to make redemption possible (John 10:14–15, Titus 2:14).

To deny this doctrine is to unintentionally question the power and purpose of the cross. Was Jesus simply making salvation available, or was He actually securing it? Did He bear the wrath of God for all sins of all people—including those who will never believe? Or did He decisively, effectively, and lovingly take the place of His sheep, guaranteeing their reconciliation?

Even our good intentions can obscure this truth. We want to protect God's love, make the gospel sound wide and welcoming—and it is! But the wideness of God's mercy never contradicts the precision of His mission. Christ's sacrifice was not vague compassion—it was targeted grace. He laid down His life for His bride, not in general, but in particular.

If we don't hold to this, we may present a Jesus who tries to save but fails unless the sinner responds. And in doing so, we place the weight of salvation back on human will. But the true gospel brings comfort precisely because Jesus did not fail. Every drop of blood, every moment of agony, was for a people the Father had given Him—and He lost none.

To believe in definite atonement is to say with certainty: Jesus did not just die for someone like me—He died for me. And that changes everything.

Conversational Evangelism

Many people believe Jesus died generally “for everyone,” but they've never considered what His death actually accomplished. Try asking, “Did Jesus make salvation possible—or did He actually save people?” This moves the conversation from vague love to particular redemption.

Jesus didn't die hoping someone would respond. He died to secure salvation for His people.

Call to Action:

If Christ died for you specifically, then your life has been purchased with blood. Let that reality lead you to worship and obedience. And let it give you confidence as you share the gospel—not as a sales pitch, but as a rescue mission that’s already been accomplished for many who just haven’t heard it yet.

Fire Starter Question:

How does knowing Jesus died for you personally change the way you talk about Him—and who in your life needs to hear that kind of love?