



SUFFICIENT  
FOR ALL

EFFICIENT  
FOR SOME

REFUTED

# ACTUAL ATONEMENT — NOT POTENTIAL

Why Christ's Suffering *Guarantees* Actual Salvation

*Not one drop of His blood was hypothetical.*

*Not one lash was wasted.*

*Not one sin He bore will be punished again.*

Christ's suffering was *horrifically* actual *not* potential in any capacity. Therefore, the salvation He accomplished by enduring that suffering *must* likewise be and *is* equally actual, not hypothetical. Not conditional, suspended upon human contribution. But rather, in His words "*finished!*"

**Atonement that does not atone is no atonement at all.**

*If* Christ bore your sins, you cannot *also* bear them.

*If* Christ stood in your place, you cannot *also* stand in your own.

*If* wrath fell upon Him for you, wrath cannot *also* fall upon you.

This truth immediately nullifies the old, widely used formula "the atonement was / is sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect." Not because definite atonement is wrong, but because that *formula*, while well-intended, is a bad defense of it. The formula confuses worth with intent, capacity with purpose, possibility with accomplishment.

**✚ Christ and His work has infinite worth *because He is God, manifest in the flesh. For that reason, His sacrifice has infinite value to the Father. But infinite worth / value does not define, nor require a universal intent.***

This is the key distinction.

## I. Who Jesus Actually Redeemed / Ransomed / Gave Himself For

Because of the infinite worth of His sacrifice and of His person, He could have ransomed ten billion worlds, had that been His *intent*. But Scripture tells us whom He *did* ransom, redeem and *how* He did:

“He *shall* save *His* people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

“I lay down My life *for the sheep*.” John 15:10,15.

“He purchased *the church* with His own blood.” Acts 20:28

“He loved *the church* and gave Himself *for her*.” Ephesians 5:25

“With Your blood You purchased for God men *from* every nation.”  
Revelation 5:9

“For *by one offering* He has perfected forever *those* who come to God by Him” Hebrews 10:14

“In whom *we* have redemption through His blood – *the forgiveness of sins* through His blood” Ephesians 1:7 / Col. 1:14

**These** passages explicitly affirm *who* it is Jesus purchased with His blood and *what* His death accomplished – *real* forgiveness, eternal perfection, *actual* salvation which is “the forgiveness of sins.” Not the *possibility* of forgiveness, but in whom we *have* forgiveness of sins through His blood.

The specific language of these texts is so qualifying that it instantly calls for a re-assessment of the “universal texts” which on the surface speak of the same event – the death of Christ – as being *for* “the world” (John 3:16, 18); “the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2), “a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:6) etc.

- *Because* scripture speaks of and to the *same* event using both universal and clearly qualified language, we must use wisdom in determining which passages are literal and which therefore cannot be.

As surely as “A” cannot be both A and *not-A* at the same time, in the same way, so also the texts which speak to and of the atonement of Christ. This is not to be decided based on personal preference, bias, whim or anything outside of common linguistic logic, language and the supreme rule of non-contradiction. So, is there such a method

available to us? One which is universally used / recognized and objectively valid? Yes, there is. It is the literary practice of synecdoche.

### **Synecdoche Must Be Recognized**

Synecdoche is the commonly used practice of over-stating the number or matter of a thing when in reality only a smaller part within the larger overstatement is in fact literally true.

“Have you seen the movie *everyone* is talking about?”

“Did you see the clip that has *all* the media buzzing over?”

“Are you going to the concert? *Everyone* will be there!”

These – and so many more – are not literal statements. They were never intended to be taken literally. They are examples of synecdoche.

- Even though from a purely grammatical context, the words “everyone” and “all” etc do mean literally everyone and all, when used linguistically *as* synecdoche they still should not be interpreted as slavishly literal.

We know in scripture that the Holy Spirit “inspired” the use of metaphor, simile, parable, poetry and symbolism. It may surprise you – though it really shouldn’t – to know that from Genesis to Revelation, God Himself and those He commissioned to write His word used synecdoche. Such was the common practice of the people at the times the scriptures were being written.

**Other** passages, using the linguistic synecdoche of the ancient Jews, speak of Christ dying for “the world,” “the whole world,” or “all men.” While grammatically those terms are universal, *if they function as synecdoche linguistically*, then they are no more slavishly literal, than passages which claim;

“the *whole world* sought an audience with King Solomon” (1 Kings 10:22-25).

Does anyone suppose this means that literally every individual person on earth did so? Since it cannot possibly be literal, though the term “the whole world” is used, it is clearly, obviously synecdoche.

Concerning the flood, we read:

“*every* living thing, *all the creatures* and *all mankind* perished in the flood” (Gen. 7:21)

God Himself before and after the flood said,

“the end of *all flesh* is before Me” (Gen. 6:13)

“never again will I destroy *every living thing as I have done.*” (Gen. 8:21)

### **Did God literally destroy “*all flesh*,” “*every living thing*” in the flood?**

No. God Himself employed synecdoche. We know from other passages that Noah and his wife, his 3 sons and their wives and at least two of every type of walking, crawling, flying animal survived on the ark. *Because* we have “universal” and qualified passages which speak to or about the *same* event, we know that that the universal terms function as synecdoche linguistically. They are not slavishly literal.

➤ **As a rule, synecdoche *always* defaults to the lower number.**

This is grammar-school logic here. Because it is an overstatement expression using a term that is not intended literally. Though the term “everyone” grammatically means literally everyone, it is used linguistically as synecdoche, and therefore, it is not literal.

### **How do we know what is or is not synecdoche in scripture?**

In cases like the example from 1 Kings 10:22-25, common sense and logic will demonstrate it cannot possibly be literal. More examples:

- The Pharisees on “Palm Sunday” saw the crowds thronging to Jesus they said, “Look the *whole world* has gone after Him” (John 12:19). Did they mean it literally?
- When Mark said, “*all* Jerusalem and *all* Judea went to see John to be baptized by him” (Mark 1:5), did he mean literally every single person – including children and toddlers, the lame, the lepers, all the Gentiles living in those areas, every Roman soldier and King Herod himself went to be baptized by John?
- When John said that if everything Jesus said and did was written down “the *whole world* could not contain the books” (John 21:25), did he mean that planet Earth could not literally contain the books?

I can go on and on – these are merely a few examples. The point is made; scripture from Genesis to Revelation employs synecdoche.

**The same principle is true of the atonement.** When it comes to the atonement, just like we saw with the flood account – when multiple passages speak to or about the same event in both universal and qualified language, by grammatical rule, as well as basic logic (we understand that the passages which qualify the number are the literal truth and the “universal” ones are therefore, synecdoche. This is *not* a question of personal, private preference or opinion. Scripture itself, *when cross-referenced to itself*, will plainly and decisively reveal what is the literal and what is synecdoche.

Failure to recognize this necessary distinction will inevitably lead to incorrect conclusions, hence incorrect soteriology. *Because* Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25; John 10:15; Rev. 5.9 (and others) explicitly qualify *who* the Son redeemed / purchased / gave Himself for, we *should* confidently say the other passages which employ “universal language” are also examples of Jewish synecdoche. If they are not, then no attempt to harmonize by appeal to a “sufficient for all” while “efficient only for the elect / believer” will resolve the obvious contradiction. Here is why.

## II. An Atonement that is “sufficient” *is necessarily* “efficient”

**Webster’s Dictionary** defines “efficient” thus: adjective - “productive of *desired effects*. *Especially: capable* of producing desired results **with little or no waste** (as of time or materials).” It further elaborates saying, “The focus of the word is on **how little is wasted or lost** while the desired results are produced.”

**Thesaurus.com** defines “efficient” thus: “effective, capable” and lists as synonyms - “able, **adequate**, effective, potent.”

**Thesaurus.com** defines “sufficient” thus: “enough, **adequate**”

✚ It becomes obvious that the two adjectives have essentially the *same practical meaning, because the actual definition of the word refers to its being capable of producing its “desired effects.” To use the word only in its application sense, is therefore, demonstrably inaccurate.*

Furthermore, this “sufficient for all, efficient for some” distinction relies on semantics which the very words used do not support. This will become increasingly clear in section III where I deal with the analogy of medicine being sufficient as a remedy but only efficient if applied.

When combined we see that both terms speak to the same idea – so that *if* something is truly sufficient *for its intended purpose* it is thereby also necessarily efficient for the same purpose.

✚ **Of crucial note is the fact that if the atonement is efficient, there is no waste involved - nothing is *unused* or *not utilized* in the result. Here the obvious problem is fully revealed.**

**“You paid for all, but only get some”?**

Consider this analogy. My family consisting of my wife and five children are all in prison because of their debt which they are unable to pay.

I offer to do something that is “sufficient” *as* the ransom to pay *for* the entire debt of my family. The one to whom the debt is owed both *accepts and takes* from me what I offered *as* full payment of the *full debt owed*. If the one to whom the debt is owed accepts me as a substitute “surety” on their behalf and also accepts my payment on their behalf, then the transaction is now fully, legally, officially settled. It is done. Those I “ransomed” by / with my payment can no longer be kept in prison.

➤ In fact, *their* desire or choice in this matter is completely irrelevant! The *only* thing that matters from the legal, righteous perspective is *my* will and desire in light of the payment *I* made on their behalf.

**IF**, after I have so paid the full debt of my entire family, the creditor said, “I am only going to *apply* your fully sufficient payment of the debt of your entire family to a few members not your entire family,” would I not thereby be horribly cheated?

Of course I would!

What I paid was *sufficient – adequate – enough* for the intended purpose of removing the whole debt of my entire family. I made the payment with *that* purpose and intent; therefore, I fully expect that the entire debt of my entire family is thereby settled – so they are all released from it.

✚ ***If I had agreed up front that only some would benefit from that payment which was sufficient for all, only then, could this not be an injustice.***

**But this raises yet another problematic question: *why* would I agree to pay *more* than what is needed to release *some*? If I paid for all but only intended to release some, did I then overpay?**

Would I not say, “I will agree only to pay as much as is needed for the release of so and so”? In which case, to ensure nothing is *wasted, not utilized or unused* – hence, “*efficient*,” I would pay *only* as much as was needed to “redeem” those few.

So would *you*.

So would any reasonable person.

*Who* in their right mind would say,

1. What I am offering to pay is sufficient to cover the debt of my *entire* family – all of whom I love and *want* to release from their debt.
2. But despite it being fully sufficient for the entire debt of my entire family, I nevertheless *agree up front* to pay for *all* yet only receive *some* back from prison.
3. Despite knowing what I did *was sufficient* to release them all, I am not merely willing to allow many of them to remain in prison, I am actually content with that result. Yet, I truly love and pay for them all to be released.

➤ **Such an idea is logically, legally, theologically and morally absurd.**

**IF** I initially agreed that my payment, although sufficient for every member of my family, would only benefit *some* - thereby accepted that it was “efficient for *some*” while still settling the entire debt with this understanding - **THEN** what I knew and agreed to as the “efficient result” would clearly show my *actual intention behind making the payment*. And that intention would still be that only some are “ransomed” by means of it.

There is no logical, consistent, or reasonable way to interpret this differently.

✚ **In which case, particular, limited, actual atonement is thereby irrefutably affirmed.**

If Christ’s atonement was truly sufficient for Judas, Pharaoh, Herod, and every soul now in hell then *what* was missing?

Not merit. Not value. Not power.

The only thing missing was divine *intention* to save them by means of it.

**Objection:** “But God made the benefits of the blood of Christ *applicable* only through faith” (Rom. 3:3-5)

I reply,

**Did God, when He chose to limit the application of the cross only to those who believe, *know* that not all would do so?**

The vast majority of Synergists, Molinists, Arminians affirm this is the case - except those who are “Open Theists” (those who claim God did not foreknow who would and would not believe).

Therefore, the “value” of the atonement did not fail to save them - God *chose* not to use it to save them by means of it because He added a condition to its “*applied* benefits” He *knew* not everyone would meet.

**If** God foreknew who would and would not believe, and *still* sent Christ to bear the sins of those He foreknew would never benefit from it, **then** either God intended a payment He knew would be refused and therefore, unused for them — which impugns divine wisdom — *or* the payment was never actually made *for* those persons in any substitutionary sense

➤ **IF God made such a condition, knowing this, THEN it becomes impossible to logically deny such was His intended purpose.**

So, the cross becomes:

- universally *capable* by virtue of its “sufficient” value
- but selectively *willed* in terms of its “efficient” application.

The doctrine of sovereign-grace has consistently, historically affirmed that the *intent* of God in giving His Son, the Son’s intent in willingly giving Himself as the sin-bearing substitute are consistent *only* with limited or particular, accomplished atonement / redemption. This is *why* scripture speaks of the death of Christ – who He actually purchased, loved and gave Himself for – in limited, qualified terms.

Thus,

Not a drop of blood was wasted or futile, or *not utilized*.

Not a lash was theoretical.

Not a single sin He bore will ever be punished again.

### Objection: “The Price Is the Same Regardless of Number”

Some object: “The price to redeem is the same whether for one person or many. If there was only one sinner, Jesus would pay the *same* price. Therefore, the number of the redeemed doesn’t determine the price - the nature of the price itself does.”

### Response:

This objection actually **reinforces** particular atonement rather than refuting it.

If there were only one sinner in existence, and Jesus paid the infinite price to redeem that one person, then:

- Jesus would receive *100%* of what He paid for
- The *full* value of His death would be applied *to* *100%* of those for whom it was offered
- Nothing would be wasted, unused, or not utilized
- The ratio would be perfect: **1:1** (*intent = result*)

Now ask: In such a hypothetical scenario; **If** God designed redemption with perfect efficiency where payment *equals* result, with nothing wasted, or not utilized - *would He abandon that principle in **the actual, real-world** scenario?*

The objector must choose:

1. **Universal intent:** Christ paid for all, but not all are saved. In which case, waste and inefficiency are simultaneously together. Hence, *not* ‘efficient’ at all.
2. **Particular intent:** Christ paid *for* the church only and all the church are saved. His death is simultaneously sufficient and efficient *for* the church – nothing is not utilized = **100% is applied to 100% of those for whom it was offered.**

✚ **The “same price regardless of number” argument does not rescue universal atonement – it *destroys* it for this reason.**

Because **IF** the price truly “is what it is, regardless of the number” **THEN** the only coherent position which retains “efficiency” is where **100% of that price achieves 100% of its intended result** - exactly as it would in the one-sinner scenario.

**Particular atonement alone maintains the perfect 1:1 ratio.** Universal atonement introduces waste, inefficiency, and contradiction - the very things the objection was designed to avoid.

### III. Medicine Can Be Sufficient Yet Only Efficient If Applied

**Note Context:** I am **not** here claiming *everything - in every possible context* that can be said to be sufficient - is thereby automatically efficient. My context is exclusively, obviously *the atonement and its application*.

For example, medicine may indeed be sufficient to cure an ailment. That does not mean it will automatically be efficient to do so. To be efficient, it must be *applied*. If not applied, such does not reflect a lack of sufficiency in the medicine – only a realization that application is required for efficiency.

This is in principle, the essence of the Synergistic claim that while the atonement is of itself sufficient for all, it only becomes efficient when “applied” *by* the autonomous choice of the sinner.

This idea fails because

✚ **God both *prescribed and produced* the remedy – something no Doctor who can prescribe an objective remedy did not and cannot do. Therefore, because God both produced and prescribed the remedy, He alone may administer it as *He* – not we – wills.**

**The problem is that the effect of the cross is not a material thing** – like a pain killer or bottle of medicine. It is a *metaphysical reality* of forgiveness of sin, resulting in justification through faith, and acceptance before God - which God, not the sinner, *prescribes, produces and applies*. God does this through the means of faith – granted / produced entirely by His grace alone – “Sola Gratia.”

In the case of physical medicine, **the patient needs to be proactive** by application. Only then does it become efficient. The Doctor may diagnose and prescribe but not does produce or apply either the medicine or the result.

**✚ However, in the case of the cross, God is the proactive One because He both prescribed and produced the cure by Himself.**

Because of this, He can effectually apply the cure so that it is fully efficient and sufficient *at the same time*, to whom He wills, as He wills, per His saving purpose. Not only can He do so, per scripture, that is precisely what He has done and does do – “He has mercy on whom He wills...Therefore, He has mercy on whom He wills...” (Rom. 9:16-18).

This makes the sufficient but not efficient dichotomy – when referring to the atonement, which is the only context I am concerned with – invalid.

Thus,

- The moment grace is no longer sufficient; Sola Gratia has already been denied.
- The moment Christ is no longer sufficient, Sola Christus has already been denied.
- “Sola Fide” – faith alone, is still essential and correct, because God has “presented Him as atoning sacrifice through faith in His blood”.
- But Sola Fide does not contradict Sola Gratia because it flows entirely out of Sola Gratia. This is what I meant when I said God both diagnosed and prescribed and produced the remedy by Himself.
- Introduce any other element than that – regardless of the size, degree or relative importance you, not grace alone has produced your X and you have denied the “Sola.”
- The moment Christ’s death - for any reason - becomes not efficient to the effect it was done to achieve, the purpose of the cross becomes divorced from its effect. This is not how scripture – rightly and consistently compared to itself – portrays the cross. We will now turn fully to the Textual, Soteriological logic of scripture itself.