

CALVINISM

- A System Of Unbelief -

by Douglas W. Hill

Most denominations believe in Calvinism to some degree or another. Even those who deny being Calvinist, often believe some of its tenets. Therefore let us “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21), and see if it is truly according to God’s word.

A short history: John Calvin (1509 – 1564 AD) was a French theologian who broke with Catholicism around 1530. In 1536 he published “The Institutes of Christian Religion” which expressed his beliefs. As a Protestant Reformer he created his own form of church government and worship. Working mainly in Geneva, Switzerland he even contributed to the execution of those he deemed heretics. Regarding one man who openly opposed Calvin’s Institutes of Christian Religion, Calvin wrote that if he came to Geneva, ““as far as my authority goes, I would not let him leave alive.” (Calvin: A Biography by Bernard Cottret, p. 216-217). Men often praise Calvin for breaking from Catholicism, but in Calvin’s behavior was oppressive in his own right.

Calvinism has five primary tenets which stand or fall together, summarized as: T.U.L.I.P.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Total depravity, original sin, sinful nature and other expressions like these identify, in Calvinist thinking, a state that is passed on by birth from Adam. As one quote summarizes:

“**Because of the fall of Adam** man is **unable of himself to savingly believe** the gospel... **His will is not free** but is in **bondage to his sinful nature**... Therefore he will not – indeed **cannot choose good over evil in the spiritual realm**. Consequently it takes much more than the Spirit’s assistance to bring a sinner to Christ – it takes regeneration by which the Holy Spirit brings a sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life and gives him a new nature... **Faith is not something man contributes to salvation** but is itself a part of God’s gift of salvation – it is God’s gift to the sinner, not the sinner’s gift to God...” (The Reformed Faith by L. Boettner p. 25) [Emphasis added]

Thus, free will is utterly denied in any significant spiritual way. Some Calvinists say they believe in free will, but still argue against free will when it comes to choosing to believe unto salvation.

All agree that God created Adam with free will (Gen. 1:26-27). Interestingly, God in the next chapter tells us that the death Adam experienced the day he ate of the tree was not physical, but spiritual (Gen. 2:17). It was not a change in his physical nature, but **a change in his knowledge and relationship** with God (Gen. 3:7, 22). Why would God tell Cain, Adam’s descendant, to rule over and resist sin if he was unable to (Gen. 4:7)?

The doctrine of total depravity makes the children spiritually depraved for the sin committed by Adam. Yet God rejects this concept: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezk. 18:20) And in Romans 5:12, “Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, **for that all sinned**.” Note the highlighted portion. Calvinism says sin and death pass to all men by birth. Yet the Bible says sin and death pass to all men “for that all sinned”. Calvinism denies personal accountability. Yet the truth is, we today have the same free will as Adam did and the same measure of accountability for our own choices.

Note also that Calvinism redefines faith. Since man supposedly has no free will, then he cannot choose even to believe. So, God must make you believe in order to be saved. Who is to blame then if you do not believe? God... Thus, Calvinism maligns God for man being lost. Yet, the Bible says that faith comes by hearing the word (Rom. 10:17), not by a direct miraculous act of God. Faith is not something forced upon you, but something you choose (or reject) when you hear His word.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

This doctrine teaches that, “God’s choice **of certain individuals** unto salvation, before the foundation of the world, rested solely on His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners **was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part, such as**

faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God’s choice. **Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man.** Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God’s choice of the sinner, not the sinner’s choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.” (Ibid p. 26)

In Romans, we read of Elijah’s plea against Israel. “But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have left for myself seven thousand men, **who have not bowed the knee to Baal.** 5 **Even so** then at this present time also there is a remnant **according to the election of grace.**” (Rom. 11:4-5) Those whom God claimed then are “even so” compared to those claimed by Him now “by election of grace.” Those back then did not bow to Baal. They did something to demonstrate their belief in Jehovah and rejection of Baal. “Even so” God chooses people today who demonstrate an active faith in God (James 2:14-26). Yes, God elects or chooses, but He does so by choosing those who trust Him enough to obey Him.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

“Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary... in the place of certain specified sinners.” (Ibid p. 26-27)

This Calvinist doctrine is built upon the other error which denies free will. If man has no free will, and Christ died for all... then all are automatically saved. Yet the Bible says not all are saved, so Calvin logically had to limit the atonement of Christ. One verse entirely answers this error: “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

“In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect **a special inward call** that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call... can be, and often is, rejected, **whereas the internal call** (which is made only to the elect) **cannot be rejected**; it always results in conversion. By means

of this special call **the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ.**" (Ibid p. 27)

Built upon the error of "depraved nature" which denies free will, Calvin saw that logically his position would result in no one being able to choose salvation. Therefore, if anyone was to be saved, then God must **forcibly** make them saved. Yet, logically, the result of this doctrine is that all who are lost (after Adam) never had a chance to believe. And all who were forcibly saved by God will go to Heaven even if they did not want to.

How does God draw people to Himself? John 6, "44 No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. 45 It is **written** in the prophets, And they shall all be **taught** of God. Every one that hath **heard** from the Father, and hath **learned, cometh** unto me." God draws people by teaching them. Yet they must also learn and come to Him. Thus, the Bible says God draws men in connection with their ability to choose or reject. Again, the answer is plainly revealed. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Spirit:** as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51) Calvin says this is impossible. Who will we believe, Calvin or the Bible?

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

"All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of the Almighty God and thus persevere to the end." (Ibid p. 27) This is the doctrine commonly known today as "once saved, always saved".

Some cite John 10:28-29 to prove this idea, that saved people cannot be "snatched" out of the Father's hand. While we readily agree salvation can not be lost by being snatched, yet the context identifies that salvation is conditional upon the sheep hearing and following Christ: "My sheep **hear** my voice, and I know them, and they **follow** me" (10:27). Can we stop hearing and stop following Him? Yes. Is this being snatched away? No. It is walking away of our own free will..

Also, if one can **never** fall away from grace and lose salvation, why did Paul write: "Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen

away from grace." (Gal. 5:4) Hebrews 10:26-31 clarifies that sinning willfully after becoming a partaker of the blood of Christ will result in one facing fierce and fiery judgment from God.

Simply put, Calvinism teaches people to believe things that contradict Truth. Calvinism is, therefore a system that **rejects** the revealed faith. It is a system of unbelief, a system of error. Let us reject all such manmade doctrines and look to God's word for all we believe, teach and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

NOT Total Depravity, But Total Accountability!
NOT Unconditional Election, But Conditional!
NOT Limited Atonement, But Available To All!
NOT Irresistible Grace, But Resistible!
NOT Pers. Of Saints, But We Must Persevere!

Will you hear and follow Jesus (John 10:27)? Or will you listen to the doctrines of men?

North Sparta church of Christ
359 N. Spring St. • Sparta, TN 38583

(931) 836-3321 [Http://NSCOC.Info](http://NSCOC.Info)
Preacher@NSCOC.Info

"Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:29)