

The Doctrine known as Calvinism



ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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THE DOCTRINE KNOWN AS CALVINISM

- I. **This doctrine was first taught by Augustine in the 4th century.**
 - A. Augustine was later given Sainthood by the Roman Catholic Church

- II. **Over 1000 years later, John Calvin, an ex-Catholic priest, revived the doctrine and taught it to those outside the Catholic Church.**
 - A. John Calvin's character was such that he hated people who disagreed with him.
 - B. Calvin had a man named Servetus arrested because he refuted this doctrine.
 - C. Servetus, on October 27, 1553, was burned at the stake.

- III. **There is great misunderstanding about "5-point Calvinism" today.**
 - A. Five points of Calvinism
 - 1. Total Depravity
 - 2. Unconditional Election
 - 3. Limited Atonement
 - 4. Irresistible Grace
 - 5. Perseverance of the Saints
 - B. Many Baptists claim to be "2-point" Calvinist
 - 1. Total Depravity
 - 5. Perseverance of the Saints

(NOTE: In this study you will learn that Calvin did not believe point 1 & 5 as we believe them).

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- I. **Bible Position on total depravity**
 - A. All people are sinners by birth. (Psalms 58:3)
David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalms 51:5)
 - B. However, there are degrees of good and bad. All men have the potential of being extremely bad, but, all men are not as bad as some other men.
Why? They "chose" not to do certain things.
 - C. Every part of man is "touched" by sin – but by the free will to "choose," all men are different.

- II. **John Calvin's Position on "the free will of man."**
 - A. Calvin "added to the Scriptures;" something that is strictly forbidden!
 - B. Calvin taught "Total Inability."

Men do not have the free will to choose.

C. John Calvin wrote the following in his famous writing, “Calvin’s Institutes,” a 22 volume set of studies.

“Who then shall be saved? That is what His sovereign will decides and nothing else. It is purely a matter of the divine sovereign will which, doubtless for good reasons known to God Himself but none of them relative to anything distinguishing one man morally from another, **chooses some and rejects the rest**. God’s election has nothing to do with foreknowledge except in so far as he foreknows who are to be members of the human race” (*Calvin’s Institutes III*, xxiii, page 10).

From Genesis 2:16 through Revelation 22:17, God has always given man the freedom of choice. In relation to Genesis 2:16-17, John Calvin exercised **double talk**. The verses read,

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Note that God **commanded** Adam that he should not eat of the tree of good and evil. John Calvin would have us believe that God commanded Adam **not to do such-and-such a thing** but that God had already decreed that Adam would violate His command. That would make God the author of willful disobedience!

John Calvin wrote, “The only time free will might be reasonably asserted to have existed was in Adam before the fall. **Adam could have resisted** if he would, since **he fell merely by his own will** (emphasis mine). In this integrity, man was endowed with free will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life. Nevertheless, there is no reality in the free will thus attributed to man, in as much as **God had decreed the fall**, and therefore must have in some wise already biased Adam’s will. It was not left in neutral equilibrium, nor was his future ever in suspense or uncertainty. It was certain that sooner or later Adam would fall into evil, and with that inevitable fall there disappeared every trace of the free will which man may have had. From that time, the will became corrupt along with the whole of nature. Man no longer possessed the capacity to choose between good and evil” (*Calvin’s Institutes II*, iv, page 8).

In Calvin’s own statement above, he again double talks. He said Adam **could have resisted; Adam fell by his own free will; that the fall was decreed by God**. John Calvin, which position do you hold? All three statements cannot be true.

III. The Bible Position on the Free Will of Man

A. The Bible clearly teaches that God **enlightens sinners** (John 1:9, 12:32, and 16:8).

B. The Bible also teaches the **free will and free exercise of that will by man**. This will be covered more completely in the point entitled *Irresistible Grace*. For now, let it simply be noted that throughout the Bible, God sets forth the free will of man to choose for himself.

1. John 1:12
2. John 3:16
3. John 5:24
4. Acts 2:21
5. Acts 16:30-31

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

I. **John Calvin taught that God elected, chose, and predestined some people to be saved and go to Heaven and chose others to spend eternity in Hell.**

II. **Modern day Calvinists claim they do not believe in “double predestination.”**

A. They believe that God chose some to be saved.

B. They claim that God did not choose or elect some to spend eternity in Hell.

III. **John Calvin believed and taught “double predestination.”**

Concerning this matter, John Calvin wrote:

“The reprobate like the elect are appointed to be so by the secret counsel of God’s will and by nothing else” (*Calvin’s Institutes II*, xxii, page 11).

In a letter to Christopher Liertet, Calvin wrote, “You are much deceived if you think that the eternal decrees of God can be so mutilated as that He shall have chosen some to salvation but destined none to destruction. There must be a mutual relation between the elect and the reprobate” (*The Teaching of Calvin*, Chapter VI, page 109).

Again, Calvin wrote, “Their fate was the direct immediate appointment of God, justified indeed by their life but not in necessary consequence. He might have saved them from their doom as He did in the case of the elect who were no more worthy in themselves to be saved, but that doom was fixed from all eternity and nothing in them could transfer them to the contrary class, any more than anything in the elect could result in their becoming reprobate...” (*Calvin’s Institute III*, iii, page 4).

IV **The Bible Position on Unconditional Election is as follows:**

A. John Calvin’s position is totally contrary to the Word of God

1. I Timothy 2:3-6

2. II Peter 3:9

3. Acts 17:30

4. John 3:16-17

5. Ezekiel 33:11

B. From the time of Genesis 2:11 through Revelation 22:17, God has always given man the right to choose.

C. God has always said, *Whosoever will* may come.

1. Did God mean what He said?
2. If we interpret the Word of God consistently and literally, it must be concluded that God did mean what He said! To teach the doctrine of Unconditional Election is to add to the Scripture things that God did not teach and never intended for men to teach!

D. The teaching of Unconditional Election by John Calvin is not election at all. It is *selection*. If God did indeed select some, as Calvin taught, but did not choose them relative to anything distinguishing one man morally from another, then God is a respecter of persons.

E. The Bible says, “*For there is no respect of persons with God*” (Romans 2:11; see also Acts 10:34).

NOTE: The words *predestinate* and *predestinated* are found in only two texts in the Bible, Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:5,11. In both texts, predestination speaks not of people being lost or saved, but rather of position or privilege to be shared in the future by those who are **already** saved.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

I. Calvinism teaches that the Blood of Christ was shed and applies ONLY to the elect.

A. It teaches that it was not shed for all people and therefore those people for whom it was not shed, the non-elect, cannot be saved even if they want to.

II. Modern-day Calvinists, in an attempt to disguise their belief, changed the name of Limited Atonement to “Particular Redemption.”

A. Same damnable doctrine – Just a different name.

III. John Calvin’s writing clearly establishes what he believed on this subject.

“The reprobate like the elect are appointed to be so by the secret counsel of God’s will” (*Calvin’s Institutes II*, xxii, page 11) and

“...their doom was fixed from all eternity and nothing in them could transfer them to the contrary class...” (*Calvin’s Institutes III*, iii, page 4).

IV. The Bible’s teaching concerning to whom the Blood of Christ applies

A. John 3:16

B. I John 2:2

C. II Peter 2:1

NOTE: It could not be said that the blood of Christ was shed for all men in the light of Calvin’s statement, “The reprobate like the elect are appointed to be so by the secret counsel of God’s will” (*Calvin’s Institutes II*, xxii, page 11) and “...their doom was fixed from all eternity and nothing in them could transfer them to the contrary class...” (*Calvin’s Institutes III*, iii, page 4).

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

- I. **John Calvin taught that if a person was one of the elect for salvation,** when God was/is ready for that person to become a Christian, the person would/will come to Christ (not by choice but as a robot that cannot resist the grace of God).
- II. **Calvin often referred to John 6:44-45 as a proof text (*Election and Conversion*, pp. 37, 67, 133).**

A. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” These very verses refute John Calvin’s teaching of Irresistible Grace!

B. The word *draw* **does not** mean “force.” According to other texts in the Word of God, it cannot possibly mean “an irresistible drawing.” The same Greek word *helkuo* which is used for *draw* in verse 44 is found in John 12:32. which says, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all men unto me.”

C. If the word *draw* in John 6:44 teaches an irresistible drawing, the Bible would be teaching in John 12:32 that **all** men would be irresistibly drawn. We acknowledge that this is certainly not happening. The word *draw* in both texts means that Christ will **attract** all men. This is in agreement with the entire Word of God.

III. **The Bible teaching on this subject:**

- A. God enlightens every man (John 1:9).
- B. God convicts every man (John 16:8).
- C. God draws every man (John 12:32).
- D. God leaves the choice to every man (John 3:16).

Irresistible Grace, within itself, is a phrase of contradiction. If it is irresistible, **it is not grace** at all! An irresistible grace would destroy the personal quality of the relationship between God and man that is established by grace and involves the free response of man’s will to God’s love and grace.

IV. **God’s Grace being resisted is found throughout the Bible**

- A. Proverbs 1:24, “...***I have called, and ye refused...***”.
- B. Matthew 23:37, Christ said, “...***how often would I have gathered...and ye would not!***”
- C. John 5:40, Christ said, “***And ye will not come to me, that ye might have***

life.”

D. Acts 7:51, Stephen says, “*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*”

(See also Matthew 22:3 and Isaiah 65:12.)

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

I. Many confuse Calvin's doctrine of "Perseverance of the Saints" with Eternal Security.

- A. Calvin taught all of the Elect would be kept to the end.
- B. Calvin taught that if a person "claimed" to be saved, but fell into and lived in sin, they were not of the elect, but were false professors.

II. The Bible position of Eternal Security is totally different from Calvin's position.

- A. John 10:28-29
- B. Romans 8:35-39
- C. Ephesians 4:30
- D. I Peter 1:4-5

NOTE: Calvin's position has nothing to do with the keeping power of Christ. His position teaches that if you are of the "elect," YOU will persevere to the end. Basically, you keep yourself.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY OF CALVINISM

I would like to make several observations in reference to the matter of the sovereignty of God, the free will of man, and the strange teaching of John Calvin.

1. **The Sovereignty of God.** We believe in the sovereignty of God, but we believe that in the matter of salvation, God leaves the final decision to man. God has elected a plan of salvation. He has given man the free will to accept or reject that plan.

We believe, without question, that God knew, before the foundation of the world, who would choose to accept Christ and who would choose to reject Him. I Peter 1:2 says, “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*” We do not believe that God decided, determined, elected, or selected who would and who would not receive Christ.

2. **Confusing Terms.** In reference to modern-day Calvinist terms, there is much confusion and misunderstanding. We hear the terms *Calvinist*, *Hyper-Calvinist*, *Five-Point Calvinist*. Then we hear the terms One-Point, Two-Point, Three-Point, Four-Point Calvinist, along with other terms such as Two-and-a-Half-Point Calvinist! I fail to find room for these terms when we are talking about the doctrine that Calvin embraced and taught.

The five points which identify Calvin’s teaching (previously outlined and commonly called *TULIP*) are like dominoes: they stand or fall together! If a person claims to be a One-Point (Total Depravity) Calvinist and believes the doctrine as Calvin taught it, that person must accept the other four points. If the person believes in Total Inability (without ability to choose *yes* or *no*), he has to accept the teaching that God unconditionally elected some to go to Heaven and others to go to Hell. If man has no will to decide, one must also accept the teaching that someone apart from man made the decision. Someone **had** to decide! In Calvin’s teaching, that *someone* was God. One must accept that God selected, in eternity past, who would be saved and who would not be saved, and the decision by God was not relative to anything which distinguished one man morally from another. There can be no other explanation, as there are no other alternatives!

The next domino in line is Irresistible Grace. If a person believes in Total Inability, that belief demands that he accept Unconditional Election. The two together require that he also believe Irresistible Grace. If one has no part in the decision, the only way remaining for a person to come to Christ is mechanically.

What is the next domino? It is Calvin’s teaching of Limited Atonement. If one believes that God did indeed elect or select that certain people would be saved and the rest of the human race would go to Hell, one must accept the doctrine of Limited Atonement. How can a person say that he believes the Blood of Christ was shed for the entire world, when he believes that only the elect have any opportunity to be saved and the non-

elect have no opportunity, no chance, no way to be saved? In Calvin's words, "...but their doom was fixed from all eternity and nothing in them could transfer them to the contrary class, any more than anything in the elect could result in their becoming reprobate..." (*Calvin's Institute III*, iii, page 4). A person cannot accept one and reject the other. That would be double talk!

The doctrine of Perseverance, as taught by John Calvin, falls in the same line. It must be accepted along with the first four. If it is rejected in favor of the doctrine of Eternal Security, as believed and taught by Bible-believing people, the other four have no foundation on which to stand.

I see no room for a One-, Two-, Two-and-a-Half-, Three-, Three-and-a-Half-, or Four-Point Calvinist! I see no difference between a Calvinist and a Hyper-Calvinist or a Calvinist and a Five-Point Calvinist.

Fundamental Baptist World-Wide Mission rejects all five points of the doctrine called Calvinism. It was founded in Hell and popularized by the teaching of Augustine, a Catholic saint in the Fourth Century. It was made famous in the Fifteenth Century by John Calvin of the Reformed Church and has been the cause of great confusion. John Calvin wrote commentaries on most of the books of the Bible, commentaries which received the endorsement of being "better than most" by the infamous Karl Barth!

- 3. Contradictions.** While preaching on II Peter 2:1 concerning "Damnable Heresies," one pastor said, "There is one way to spot a heretic" (or those who teach false doctrine). He said, "Ask them 'What must a person do to be saved?'" If the question is directed to a person who believes and preaches the doctrine of John Calvin, and he answers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved," that involves man's will and his answer is contradicting his doctrine. He should answer, "In order for you to be saved, you must be one of the elect and then you can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. If you are not one of the elect, there is nothing that you can possibly do to be saved."

He might also answer, "You must wait until there is a 'drawing' which you **cannot resist**, then you will be saved because you will automatically be saved if you are one of the elect."

I have never read material written by a Calvinist, or a so-called Calvinist, when his statements did not continually contradict his doctrine.

The teaching of the doctrine of John Calvin, the Reformer, causes confusion everywhere it is discussed, leaves unanswerable questions, and creates strife and division. We have seen works and entire mission fields divided and destroyed by the doctrine of John Calvin. God keep us from this heresy!

- 4. Bible Verses Concerning a Heretic.** "*A man that is a heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself*" (Titus 3:10-11).

5. **Attempts at Justification.** Men, speaking of other men (generally their friends) who are admitted Calvinists, in an attempt to justify them, have said, “Yes, he is a Calvinist, but he wins as many souls as anyone I know.” Winning souls will not justify teaching false doctrine any more than a preacher, by winning souls, can build up enough merits with God to offset the results of falling into sin, as some would have us to believe!

6. **Additional False Doctrine.** Two other false doctrines taught by John Calvin, the Reformer, fall in the same category: heresy!

Calvin believed and taught that church membership was necessary for salvation. His position is clearly expressed in the Westminster Confession, “according to which out of the visible church there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

“The church is no amorphous, vaguely defined body, a haphazard collection of individuals accidentally, temporarily, and loosely associated by reason of common beliefs or sympathies. It is not an institution toward which one might adopt an attitude of indifference, or with which professing Christians might decline to enter into relations. **To stand outside of the church is to cut oneself off from God’s storehouse of the bread of life** (emphasis mine), for the Church is the sphere within which the grace of God exclusively operates. It is the sole reservoir and distributor of the blessings of the Gospel **otherwise unattainable**. Only by the forgiveness of sins was entrance into it to be gained, for without pardon we can have no union with God. But that benefit is so peculiar to the Church that we cannot enjoy it unless we continue in communion with the Church” (*Calvin’s Institutes IV, I, page 20; iv, page 10; Comm. Romans xiii, 8; Institute IV, I, page 22*).

Calvin also taught that infant baptism was acceptable. He said, “By infant baptism, regeneration is begun though sin remains, but condemnation ceases because guilt is no longer charged. It is like a sealed charter by which God gives confirmation that all our sins are so erased, cancelled, and blotted out, that they may never come in His sight nor be rehearsed or imputed” (*The Teaching of John Calvin, Chapter IX, Part VI, page 175*).

7. **The Deadening Effect.** Allow me to quote again from *The Teaching of John Calvin, Chapter VIII, Part III, page 159*, “It may be that the larger hope which Calvin countenanced was to some extent responsible for his attitude of indifference to heathen peoples. He left them to the tender mercies of God and displayed no trace of missionary enthusiasm.” How totally contrary to all that the Holy Spirit of God emphasized in the Word of God!

The Word of God says, “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (II Peter 3:9). The Bible closes by saying, “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will** (emphasis mine) let him take the water of life freely*” (Revelation 22:17).

8. **Summary.** In reality, the doctrine of Calvinism is diametrically opposed to and is an attack on the true and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is indeed heretical to teach that God, in eternity past, without respect to any decision which He foreknew that we would make, appointed some people to go to Heaven and predestined others to go to Hell. In I John 2:2, the Bible says, “*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also **for the sins of the whole world***” (emphasis mine).

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY
vs
MAN’S FREE WILL AND RESPONSIBILITY

We have been told on a number of occasions that there are two great doctrines in the Word of God: the sovereignty of God and the free will and responsibility of man. We have been told that we must accept both doctrines, even though we cannot, in our finite minds, reconcile the two.

By saying God is sovereign, if one means that God is 100% dominant in 100% of the affairs of man beginning with salvation, we must reject the above statement!

We accept the fact that God *could* be sovereign in all the affairs of men and that He *could* decree *every minute detail* of man’s life. That God *could do so* is not debatable. He is God! However, we believe that God, **in His sovereignty, purposely limited Himself** in that He gave man a free will! This does not discredit or dishonor the sovereignty of God. We believe that God knows/knew before the foundation of the world, *every* decision man would make and every detail of man’s life (I Peter 1:2). We do not accept the teaching which says that God *decreed* all of those decisions, details, and actions.

If God’s sovereignty extends past the free will of man, or if it is said that man’s free will always acts in harmony with God’s sovereign decrees, the so-called sovereign decrees of God carried out in the daily life of man, are in continual conflict with God’s Word, nature, character, and holiness. It would present thousands of theological problems which are unacceptable in light of divine revelation.

Man fulfilling God’s preordained decrees would create a *mechanical existence* which would leave no room for **real human responsibility or accountability**. **It would also leave no room for the righteous judgment of God.**

In Exodus 20:3-4a, God said, “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...*” Could the same God who said the above be charged with decreeing, before the foundation of the world, that the Israelites under the guidance of Aaron would with an engraving tool make a molten calf of gold and declare, “*...These be thy gods...*”? (See Exodus 32:4a.) Then, in Exodus 32:7 God said, “*...thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt*

have corrupted themselves.”

To teach that God commanded one thing and decreed that people would do the opposite is totally inconsistent and unacceptable.

Millions of people have other gods today. Can God be blamed with decreeing that men would have other gods when He had previously commanded them to have no other gods? No, that is impossible!

In Exodus 20:14, God said, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” To teach that King David, by the decree of God (along with many men, some of them preachers whom we can name), *would* commit adultery is blasphemy! The same God who said “**I am Holy**” cannot be charged with decreeing David’s sin nor the sins of whomever! That type of theology is an **attack** on the character and holiness of God! (See I Peter 1:15-16.)

The Bible says, “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Hebrews 13:8). He cannot change! He does not change! (See Malachi 3:6.) He is never inconsistent! He never lays aside His holiness!

There is an unending list of things such as the above, but this clearly illustrates the point. Man has a free will and acts independently of God’s sovereignty (not God’s knowledge) because God *decreed* and granted that man would have that privilege. Man is responsible for his actions!

If we accept Calvin’s teaching that God is sovereign in **all** things, we must stop preaching that no man in Hell will point his finger at God and say, “You are to blame!” Certainly it would be said that God is to blame if eternal destiny is appointed and settled before the foundation of the world and **not based on any decision that God foreknew that man would make.**

If we accept Calvin’s teaching, we must also stop being hard on people who commit adultery. They can simply say, “I could not help myself. God had already decreed that I would commit adultery!” We must stop preaching against all sin if we believe that God is 100% sovereign in the affairs of men and has decreed all things. Again, I am not speaking of foreknowledge; I am speaking of *designing/decreeing* all things. To teach that God decreed all the sins that mankind is committing is unacceptable and constitutes blasphemy!

We believe that God **foreknows** every dotting of each *i* and every crossing of each *t*, but we do not believe that He decreed all of the dotting and the crossing. We believe that God is sovereign and **could have decreed all things but chose not to do so!** We believe *He chose, in His sovereignty, to give man a free will.* Therefore, we believe that man has a free will, which God draws, enlightens, attracts, convicts, and impresses—but does not dominate; and man is totally responsible for his actions, sins, thoughts, words, and all he does. We do not believe that the sovereignty of God and the free will and responsibility of man are two doctrines in the Word of God that cannot be reconciled by our finite minds. They must be accepted!

We believe in the free will and the responsibility of man. We believe in the sovereignty of God. We believe that God, in His sovereignty, *limited* that sovereignty and gave man a free will, making him responsible. We believe that God foreknows every detail of all that has happened and will happen on the earth.

