

## *Calvinism: Not Tiptoeing Through the TULIPS!*

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You asked, "What's to object to?" as relating to Calvinism so I will try to explain my objections to what is commonly called, "Calvinism." I will try to sketch my perspective on various kinds of Calvinism.

It is only fair to provide a statement by Baptist, Charles H. Spurgeon that lends credibility to the Calvinist position. He wrote, "There is no such a thing as preaching Christ and him crucified, unless you preach what now-a-days is called Calvinism." Spurgeon's *Sovereign Grace Sermons*, p. 129. But then Spurgeon could have been wrong since he was a fallible person.

RC Sproul admitted, "It is possible that Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards could all be wrong on this matter. Again, that these agreed does not prove the case for predestination. They could have been wrong. But it gets attention." *Chosen by God*, p. 15.

RC Sproul admitted, "It is possible that Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards could all be wrong on this matter." Would any fundamentalist or evangelical refute that statement? After all, the above scholars were wrong on the church, wrong on the Lord's Table, wrong on a state controlled church, wrong on sprinkling babies, etc., so of course, they could be wrong about "Calvinism."

Going to the source of "Calvinism" one must read Augustine and as I consider him and Calvin, I don't want to be identified with them or their teachings. Calvin, while brilliant, was a religious and political despot who managed to accomplish some good. He and his fellow reformers were not reluctant to imprison, exile, and kill their Roman Catholic and Anabaptist opponents. I have never read or heard a defense of the killing of Servetus, a doctor who rejected infant baptism and had "unusual" thoughts about the Trinity, that made any sense or made the defender of Calvin appear to be other than a slavish follower.

To say that a loving God before the foundation of the world predestined some to be saved and others to be lost is a monstrous doctrine. It makes God a robot maker or puppet master. A Calvinist wrote me, "No, merely a genuinely sovereign God who is never out of control, even given His ordaining the existence of evil. The only other option is He is out of control in the face of monstrous evil. These are the only two options....I prefer the God who's in control." There is no question that a sovereign God is in control which is why I never lose sleep about the terror of Islam that will smash the face of America. God did not ordain, predestine, or plan the coming terror but He is permitting it to happen. Maybe simply because we deserve it. God is in control but permits men to "do their own thing" and suffer the consequences.

Calvin even declared that the fall of Adam and Eve with all the foreboding consequences, "was ordained by the admirable counsel of God." Philip Schaff, *The Swiss Reformation*, p 554. My Calvinist correspondent wrote of the above, "I agree. Otherwise God was off-duty that day?" No, God was not off-duty but was on-duty and watched Adam exercise his choice of disobedience to Him. God told Adam in *Genesis 2* that they could eat of all the trees except the forbidden tree and if they chose to eat of that tree in disobedience, they would die. They did and they did.

My friend added that God “knew about it but allowed it (surely, in this case, no less culpable!)” However, how can that be true? How can one equate the two positions? One, God creates man so that he has no will but to disobey God or two, God gives man a choice and holds him accountable for that unwise choice. How can God be culpable by doing exactly as He told Adam He would do? Adam got exactly what he deserved for disobeying God.

Calvin admitted predestination was a “horrible decree” and was repulsive to reason and opined that God chose to permit billions of souls to spend eternity in hell to “promote our admiration of His glory” as we behold His omnipotent power! The Calvinist says that God’s election to damnation is “far from arbitrary, though far from our understanding. It exalts His glory, unless one believes that willful and eager sinners deserve or can demand access to God’s mercy and grace.” But of course according to Calvinism it would be arbitrary since God’s actions would have been “based solely on personal wishes, feelings, or perceptions, rather than on objective facts, reasons, or principles” which is the first definition of arbitrary. Moreover, a sinner does not and cannot demand access to God’s mercy and grace since that would negate the very meaning of the two words. The only confidence a lost sinner can have is his faith that a sovereign God will keep His word and save him if he repents and believes the Gospel.

Calvin took power (or more correctly, re-took power) over Geneva (Switzerland) in 1541 and controlled the city until his death in 1564. His voice was the most influential in Geneva and historian Will Durant calls his rule, a “dictatorship.” All residents of the city were required to be in church unless forced to be home because of illness or to care for the cattle. They were also to attend all special meetings during the week. (hummm!) Late comers were to be fined. No one had a right to believe and follow a different religion. Heresy was punishable by death. In one year, 14 alleged witches were burned at the stake.

Every family received an annual visit from an elder who questioned the family as to their morality such as gambling, card playing, profanity, drunkenness, dancing, irreligious songs, and immodesty in dress. The law specified the number of dishes at meals and the color one was permitted to wear. A woman could go to jail for having hair too high! It was a crime to speak disrespectfully of Calvin or the other preachers. Children were to be named after Old Testament characters and one father spent four days in jail for naming his son Claude rather than Abraham! Fornicators were banished or drowned and adulterers and blasphemers were killed. Durant tells of one child who was beheaded for striking his parents!

Durant wrote of Calvin, “He was painfully sensitive to criticism, and could not bear opposition with the patience of one who can conceive the possibility that he may be wrong.” Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, “The Reformation,”* P. 477. Does that sound like some experiences we all know?

Then Michael Servetus came to church! “Gather the jurors while I gather the firewood! We’ll have a fair trial then burn the heretic!” Calvin’s defenders try, without success, to place the blame elsewhere but it clearly ends up with Calvin guilty. While he preferred him to be beheaded by the state with them taking the heat, he was willing to accept the faggots and let Servetus take the heat. As long as his critic was dead. Calvin threatened his death and took credit for it after the fact.

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Without Augustine there would be no Calvin, in my humble opinion. Charles Spurgeon plainly says that Calvin “got his Calvinism from Augustine.” Augustine was born in 354 in North Africa and was converted in 386 and was later baptized again by the bishop of Hippo. It is interesting that he did not become a priest in the quickly developing Roman Catholic Church until he was age 37. I have believed for many years that Augustine was responsible for the curse of the ages—The Roman Catholic Church. In fact, I have recently seen him called the “first real Roman Catholic.” Warfield said Augustine was “in a true sense the founder of Roman Catholicism.” Benjamin Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, p. 313. But then running a close second to Augustine was Constantine and he may have been more responsible since he preceded Augustine.

Augustine maintained, “Through a woman (Eve) we were sent to destruction; through a woman (Mary) salvation was restored to us.” Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, “The Age of Faith,”* p. 69. He taught that the fall of Adam and Eve resulted from their having sex! Sex was always wrong unless the motive was to have children. He was the father of a-millennialism. He believed in Purgatory and taught that salvation came via the “sacraments.” He did not believe that God created the world in six days and got around Genesis by skulking, like Origin, into allegories. He was not sure that women would retain their sex in heaven, and was not sure how those eaten by others in time of famine would be restored in heaven.

Laurence Vance asks a penetrating question about Augustine: If he was wrong about so many other things, why would anyone think he would be right on election and predestination? *The Other Side of Calvinism*, p. 25.

It is at Augustine’s feet we lay the false doctrine of infant baptism; he was unsure about the thief on the cross going to heaven without baptism, however, he opined that no one knew that he had not been baptized before his crucifixion! Sounds desperate to me. Thomas Aquinas really reached for the stars when he argued that the thief had a desire to be baptized and that was sufficient! Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, p 564. That comes from one who believed baptism is essential for salvation! Sweet consistency.

Calvin admitted that immersion was the biblical way to baptize yet refused to do so! He wrote: “The word baptize means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient churches.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 1320. Moreover, I documented in my book dealing with colonial history that immersion was the norm until the 1600s. *Don Boys, Pilgrims, Puritans, & Patriots*, p. 209, 211-212.

Calvinist Charles Spurgeon said of infant baptism: “A human and carnal invention, an addition to the word of God, and therefore wicked and injurious.” Charles H. Spurgeon, *Infant Salvation*, p. 3.

Augustine also gave the Roman Church its ridiculous doctrine of Purgatory for those who sin after their baptism. Would that not be everyone? Moreover, salvation is possible only to those in the Roman Catholic Church. As one bigot wrote, “If the Church is not your mother, than God is not your Father.”

Augustine was “on a roll” of error and he rolled on into the TULIP patch.

Calvinist theology can be broken down into the acronym, TULIP, representing the five major points of Calvin. While Calvin did not originate the TULIP acronym, his followers did in the 1700s to counter the teachings of Jacob Arminius.

Augustine taught the five points of Calvinism without identifying the TULIP system, more than a thousand years before Calvin. Augustine taught the Total depravity (the T of TULIP) of man although his first book was *On Free Will* where he argued that evil is the result of free will. God could not leave man free without giving him the possibility of doing wrong as well as right. He later changed his mind (Oh the dangers of putting what you believe in print!) and he went from total depravity to total inability. This is what Calvinists mean when they speak of Total Depravity. As Vance so eloquently said about the Calvinist’s absurd view of Total Depravity (or Total Inability), “Man is unable to repent and believe the Gospel which God commands him to do.” Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, p.68. What folly!

Calvinists tell us that is true until a merciful God enables the lost sinner to believe; however, my question is “Can any lost sinner appeal to God’s mercy and believe?” He cannot according to Calvinism since God back in the eons of time chose the mass of humanity to spend eternity in Hell (which they deserve) and chose a few to go to Heaven. In fact, it is impossible for those few to NOT go to Heaven!

One of Calvinism’s brightest lights is Arthur Pink who wrote: “Faith is not the cause of the new birth, but the consequence of it. This ought not to need arguing. ... Faith is a spiritual grace, the fruit of the spiritual nature, and because the unregenerate are spiritually dead—‘dead in trespasses and sins’—then it follows that faith from them is impossible, for a dead man cannot believe anything.” Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 73. However, faith is the gift of God that is made available to anyone who believes and the Bible does not teach that a depraved man cannot believe. In fact, he is commanded to do so. Would a loving, sovereign God command a person to do what He had made impossible for him to do, then consign him to hell for not obeying Him? Not the God of the Bible.

Every conversation I have had with Calvinists they have always compared the condition of men (totally depraved) to those who are physically dead but they overlook the pertinent fact that those totally depraved people are still very much alive! Those spiritually dead can still think, argue, discuss, reflect, feel pain, etc. The rich man in hell in Luke 16 was double dead in that he was dead in sins and physically dead in hell yet he could talk, thirst, feel, think, etc. Vance wrote, “Being dead in sin does not mean to be unconscious....A dead man cannot believe on Jesus Christ, but a dead sinner can.” *The Other Side of Calvinism*, p. 93.

Vance wrote, “Being dead in sin does not mean to be unconscious... Calvinists poke around *Romans 3* for support of their position especially verse 11; however, they read what they want to be there. Furthermore, it is not said that a man does not have the ability to seek after God. He simply doesn’t seek after Him. Big difference. *Isaiah 55:6* clearly commands, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” In *Hebrews 11:6*, He even promises a reward to those who “diligently seek him.” One must realize that it is one thing to establish the fact of total depravity and another thing to deal with individuals and their sin. After all, many (most?) unregenerate men do some good. Some fear God while some go to church, help the poor, etc., in their unsaved state.

You will note that the *Romans 3* passage doesn't say anything about man's ability to believe. Calvinists place their doctrinal template over those passages to make them fit their system. In other words, they are reading into the Scripture what is not there. It seems they erected their system then "discovered" Scripture to support it.

It is true that a lost man cannot understand spiritual things but Scripture does not declare that he cannot receive Christ as he is commanded to do in *John 1:12* "To as many as received him gave he power to become the sons of God." Calvinists pounce on *verse 13* "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Of course, we are born of God! And no, it is not of blood or physical birth; nor are we born of the will of man who wills himself to salvation apart from God nor can anyone, however sincere, bring you to salvation. It is of God when a sinner is born again.

Christ asked the lame man in *John 5*, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He wilt! And he walked!

After "T" comes "U" meaning Unconditional Election followed by the petals of "L," "I," and "P."

The Westminster Confession states this second point well: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."

Calvin didn't tiptoe through the TULIPs when he bluntly wrote on this subject: "Predestination we call the decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny: but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, p. 1320.

In *Romans 8:29-30* note our salvation from beginning to end where we are conformed to be the image of Christ. "Foreknowledge" means "to know beforehand," or "knowing something before it happens." Upon the foreknowledge of our trusting Christ is predestination determined, not to salvation, but to be conformed to His image. No lost person was ever predestined to anything.

My Calvinist friend wrote of the above, "Nowhere in Scripture is 'foreknowledge' defined or referenced as 'knowing beforehand that someone would believe.' In fact, it's used not so much as knowledge, but as setting favor upon." However, there are five places in the KJV where foreknow, foreknew, and foreknowledge are used. It seems all passages deal with "knowing beforehand" the definition I found in eight dictionaries.

*Romans 8:29* reveals, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Calvinist R.C. Sproul admits, "All the text declares is that God predestines those whom He foreknows." R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, P 131.

Peter declared in *Acts 2:23*, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of

God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” Adam Clarke wrote, “that counsel of God which defined the time, place, and circumstance, according to his foreknowledge, which always saw what was the most proper time and place for the manifestation and crucifixion of his Son.” God determined back before time began that Christ would be the sin offering for the world but the actualization of the events were not predetermined. If Judas had not chosen to be a traitor then someone else would have done so.

*1 Peter 1:2* says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” Note the elect resulted from the foreknowledge of God.

In *Romans 11:2* Paul declares, “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Clearly, Paul is referring to Israel as the context shows. He is saying, “God has not cast aside Israel whom he had before determined to be his people.”

Pink wrote, “Foreknowledge of future events then is founded upon God’s decrees, hence if God foreknows everything that is to be, it is because He has determined in Himself from all eternity everything which will be.” Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 110.

Calvinists tell us that my position makes salvation man-centered rather than God-centered.

We are told that each person would then be sovereign since “we make the choice; we make the decisions.” God is seen as a pitiful suitor standing before the sinner pleading for a chance to come into his heart. Alas, God could not overcome the sinner’s reticence, reluctance, and rejection, so His will has been frustrated by sinful man. No, salvation is God-centered since God planned this wonderful, free, undeserved salvation if man chooses to meet His conditions of repentance and belief of the Gospel. However, man is the object of this great salvation and God will save him if he meets His predetermined conditions. If he does not, he is damned by his own choice. *John 3:18* declares, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Note that unbelieving men are condemned because of unbelief not because they were unelected.

There is no question that a sovereign God could have done exactly as the Calvinists say He did, but that does not mean He did what He could have done. God is not willing that any should perish and He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But a loving, kind, gracious God did not create Heaven and Hell, then a plan for man to disobey so He could curse the human race, provide the salvation plan, but fix men so that it would be impossible for most of them to be saved and make it impossible for the elect to not be saved.

Pink also bluntly affirmed: “As a builder draws his plans before he begins to build, so the great Architect predestinated everything before a single creature was called into existence.” Pink, *The Doctrines of Election and Justification*, p. 9. Note the word, “everything.” Does that mean everything, even sin? Yes, according to Boettner who wrote: “Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret counsels of God.” Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 234. Pink continued with such nonsense when

he declared: "Not only did His omniscient eye see Adam eating of the forbidden fruit, but He decreed beforehand that he should do so." Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 249. Not the God of the Bible!

Calvinists say that if God did not decree beforehand Adam's disobedience, then "God either relinquishes His control or, worse yet, the control is, by definition, out of His hands. What God is that?" It is a God who loves men so much that He refused to make a puppet out of him and gave him a free will to decide to love, follow, and obey a sovereign God. What kind of God has to force or program men to believe, follow, love, and trust Him? Can love be forced or programmed? If so, what kind of love is that?

This nonsense was vividly expressed by this particular Baptist hymn.

We are the Lord's elected few,  
Let all the rest be damned;  
There's room enough in hell for you,  
We won't have heaven crammed!

A question must be asked: What about infants who die? Calvinists disagree on that question. It would seem that if a couple had a houseful of children, one or two of them would not be chosen for Heaven. Augustine taught that babies who had never been "baptized" would be damned although they would receive a lesser punishment than unbaptized adults.

Obviously, according to extreme Calvinists, God designed and created men as robots programmed to perpetrate unspeakable wickedness so that a sovereign God could be glorified by those He chose to save. Those He chose to damn (the vast majority of mankind) would not be inclined to glorify Him since they had no option in choosing God or self, life or death, heaven or hell, happiness or horror. Calvinists will say that the above is a mischaracterization of their position but that is not correct. While robots is my term, I have provided many quotes to prove the validity of my assertion. If every act of man has been predestined, even the most wicked, then obviously my statement is correct.

The Calvinists say, "What claim does a lost sinner have to God's amazing grace? Are you saying that every sinner on earth can go to an omnipotent God and demand salvation because God has chosen to save some?" A repentant sinner does not demand anything, but he can go to a beneficent God and plead the blood of Christ as propitiation for his sins based on offers made by a God who cannot lie: whosoever will may come.

So leading spokesmen for Calvinism declare that the most wicked acts of men were ordained in the secret, sovereign counsels of God back in the eons of time. Not that they were foreseen, but were planned as an architect plans a house, for the glory of God! God becomes responsible for every evil perpetrated in the universe! When a man molests, tortures, rapes, and murders a child, it really was not his fault because God planned it because somehow, sometime, someday, God will be glorified! Such advocates must not have read Paul's question in *Romans 9:14*: "Is there unrighteousness with

God? God forbid.”

Calvinists tell us that if God knew about it and did not stop the evils mentioned above then He becomes a participant in the evil. After all, He could have stopped every evil act but chose not to do so. But again, God gave each one a will to obey or disobey and the resultant evil is not God’s choice but man’s, so men must live with the horrendous consequences.

Most sane, sensible, scriptural-minded people will reject with horror the extreme position that makes God the originator of all evil. The proponents of the above are known as hyper-Calvinists, more technically known as surpralapsarians. Others take the infralapsarian position whereby man takes the hit for his own sin. In this position, where most Calvinists stand, God damns mankind because of the Fall as just deserts for disobedience. God is not the author of sin but the judge of sin. Sublapsairans is another group similar to infralapsaians.

Almost all Calvinists run through the TULIP patch to *Romans 9* dealing with the potter and the clay; however, it has nothing to do with salvation! *Romans* is a great book dealing with salvation but the ninth chapter focuses on Israel (mentioned 5 times), Jews (mentioned once), “my brethren,” (once) “my kinsmen” (once), Israelites (once), Abraham (once), Isaac (twice), Sarah (once) Rebecca (once), Jacob (once) Esau (once) Zion (once). The clay is the nation of Israel according to *Jeremiah 18:6* and the clay was formed not created. The vessels unto dishonor were fitted to destruction because they crucified Christ. See *Matthew 27:25*. This has nothing to do with God’s choice of individuals to eternal damnation.

The “L” in TULIP stands for limited atonement. Calvin said of this: “When it appears that when the doctrine of salvation is offered to all for their effectual benefit, it is a corrupt prostitution of that which is declared to be reserved particularly for the children of the church” (Institutes, Book III, chap. 22). The five-pointer tells us that Christ did not die for the world but only for a chosen few. However, *1 Timothy 2:6* tells us, “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Calvinists tell us that “all” does not mean all. It means the elect! However, “all” is a three-letter word meaning all. The context will determine the precise meaning of all. Did Christ heal “all” diseases or various kinds of diseases? Were “all” the sick of a city healed or “all” those who came to Him?

We are told that if God is not willing that any should perish and yet most people do perish then God is a failure in seeing His plan fulfilled. The Calvinist tells us that if Christ’s death was universal then universal salvation must be preached. However, the Passover lamb is a good refutation of this statement. The killing of the lamb was not sufficient since the blood had to be applied as per God’s instructions. A family could have sincerely followed God’s plan in choosing and killing the lamb but if they did not make the blood effectual by the application to the doors, there was no protection and death of the firstborn followed.

We are told that this passage will not suffice because each family member did not apply the blood so it is not valid unless you believe in household salvation. However, like a parable, an analogy cannot be applied in every point. One must look for the central truth of the analogy or parable.

I could provide scores of verses to disprove limited atonement; but frankly even one is sufficient. Christ died for every person who ever lived and every person who ever lived must exercise faith in His

atoning death on the cross to experience personal, eternal salvation. *1 John 2:2* informs us: “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” That should settle that—but I doubt it will satisfy those who have been planting, cultivating, and manuring TULIPS.

This part of the TULIP is not as bright and attractive as the whole and is not considered by most Calvinists to be essential to their system. After all, if the non-elect have no hope for salvation why even discuss whether Christ’s death was limited or not? Most four-point Calvinists reject this point. If Christ died only for a select few, why waste time, money, and energy going into all the world to preach the Gospel since the non-elect have zero chance of being saved and the elect have zero chance of being lost? Calvinists tell us to preach to unbelievers because a gracious God will “save any who believe.” And the “any who believe” are only the elect who can’t be lost anyway!

Calvinists reply that this is a straw man argument, but is it? Look, it is very simple: if it is impossible for a non-elect person to get to Heaven and it is impossible for an elect person to go to Hell then it is not a specious argument. Why go to a group of headhunters or cannibals with your family as one of my oldest friends did and spend your life. You make zero, zilch, impact on anyone going to Heaven! Calvinists reply that we should go into all the world because God told us to but is it not reasonable to ask, “For what purpose if everything has already been decided?” Their reply? “Because we must be faithful to a holy God’s commands.” You must decide if that is something a holy God would require, knowing it would have absolutely zero impact on the unelected.

Calvinists tell us that without their ancestors, there would not have been much church history to speak of and they list the various church leaders who taught election. However, almost all those mentioned were leaders of the Reformation when the Reformation (of the Roman Catholic Church) should have been a Rejection. Our opponents know little or speak little of those churches for the last 2000 years that opposed the Catholic Church and the Reformers and paid with their lives. It must be remembered that the winners always write the histories whether Luther, Calvin, the Puritans, etc., but there were thousands of gallant, brave, holy, often brilliant men who stood against a state church and went to the flames for their biblical stand. Such people were Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses, Lollards and Anabaptists; however, many Calvinists and other reformers pretend that those people never existed or were inconsequential.

Moreover, when one lists the Calvinist leaders in the past, they are known to have been very talented and intellectual people but not known for holy living! I do not mean to paint all Calvinists with such a broad statement, but all too often it is true. While I do not agree with Wesley’s theology, his godly life was an example for everyone. Look at Augustine, Zwingli, Calvin, Luther, etc., and you will note a huge lack of simple godliness in word and deed. Calvinism seems too often to be accompanied by loose living and intellectual arrogance—not becoming of genuine Christians.

The “I” in TULIP stands for Irresistible Grace. Because this point is so obnoxious to sane people, Calvinists have used euphemisms such as efficacious, effective, etc., to make their point that man has nothing to do to go to Heaven. It is all of God because if men are totally dead, i.e., unable to repent, believe, or accept Christ’s atoning death then the elected few must be overwhelmed by God and saved. Philosophers and theologians have argued down through the ages about the possibility of man having free will, and Calvinists have decided they do not.

The Calvinist says that they are not “determinist” but of course, they are. Every Calvinist argues that man’s will is totally in bondage to sin. So is man “free” to do all manner of evil as he chooses, but not “free” to choose God? A determinist is one who has the “doctrine or belief that everything, including every human act, is caused by something and that there is no real free will.”

If a man has been chosen for Heaven, then it is impossible for him to resist God’s power and grace. But how does that bring glory to God? I should think a man choosing to accept God’s offer of mercy, based on the death and resurrection of Christ, would be far more glorifying to God than Him grabbing men by the neck and dragging them kicking and screaming into Heaven although my analogy breaks down since puppets don’t kick and scream. The Bible teaches that God draws men but He does not drag them, that He chose to give man the choice to worship Him. No one goes to Heaven against his will or His will.

*John 6:44* is the verse that all Calvinists run through the TULIP patch to get to. “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.” Most Fundamentalists believe that means “draw” not drag. We are told that men are not forced by God to come to Him but have been given the will to come and that God does not make man do what he does not want to do. However, what does “irresistible” mean if not that? The first definition is “overpowering.” Man’s will is overpowered by irresistible grace which brings men to salvation. According to this point in TULIP, an elected person could not refuse to be drawn to Christ because His grace is irresistible. The Bible teaches “draw” but Calvinists teach “drag.”

The word “draw” is used in the New Testament six times. In *Acts 16:19* it is applied to a forced drawing of Paul and Silas to the market place. Two times it is used to denote the drawing of a net, *John 21:6,11*. Once it is used to draw a sword (*John 18:10*); and once similar to *John 6:44* in *John 12:32*:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Chrysostom (died 407) early church father and great preacher said that this word “all” refers to everyone in every nation, not only to the Jews. What is it that Calvinists don’t understand about the word “all”?

So, does the Calvinist have a good point? If Christ draws all men then is that universal salvation? No, it is one thing to be drawn and another to be saved when a sinner makes a choice that a sovereign God has made available to him. It is all that come, not all who are drawn.

Please note that in *Numbers 21:19* the serpent-bitten Jews in the desert, desolate country near Edom south of Mount Hor had a decision to make. God’s plan was for Moses to make a serpent of brass, elevate it on a pole and tell the bitten people to look and live. The result of disobedience was, don’t and die. No one forced them to look although no doubt friends and family sought to convince the bitten skeptics to seek the only remedy they knew. Christ used that historical incident to illustrate what He was going to do. Then follows *John 3:15 and 16*. No one forces anyone to do anything. It was a choice made by the bitten Jews and it is a choice made by lost sinners today. Look and live, don’t and die.

Adam and Eve had a choice, to obey God or disobey Him. They exercised their free will and disobeyed God, bringing a curse upon the world and mankind. But then supralapsarians believe that Adam and

Eve had no choice. They were programmed by God to sin then cursed because of that sin! I am told that this is a misrepresentation but I don't understand how it is so. Some Calvinists tell us that man has the ability to reject Christ but not to accept Him! Pink wrote, "In and of himself the natural man has power to reject Christ; but in and of himself he has not the power to receive Christ." Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 128. Wait a minute; I thought man was totally dead. If a man cannot believe or repent then how can he reject? This is a complete rejection of irresistible grace!

*Judges 5:2* tells us, "Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves." My search of "chosen," "willing," and "willingly" in the KJV and revealed that "chosen" is used 58 times, "willingly" is used 23 times and "willing" is used 31 times. Whatever the reason, Calvinists can't read or they are so obsessed with their TULIP patch that they can't see the truth.

Calvinists understand that their system rises or falls on this hinge of irresistible grace, but their hinge is rusty. Sinful, dead, lost, man does have the ability to accept or reject Christ thereby experiencing salvation or eternal damnation and all the Calvinists declaring otherwise doesn't change that fact.

The "P" in TULIP stands for perseverance of the saints and for many years I thought this point was synonymous with eternal security but not so. The Bible teaches that once a person has trusted Christ, he is saved eternally, that at his conversion he is as good as in Heaven. I go further and say that I could not go to hell if I wanted to. That is not blasphemy; it is scripturally true. Saved, born-again people are totally secure forever. Our eternal destiny does not depend upon our perseverance! It depends on God's power, presence, and preservation. Salvation is eternal life which begins at salvation not at death.

Most cursory readers of theology will be shocked to hear that Calvinism is the mirror of Arminianism when it comes to Perseverance of the saints! Again, Pink declared: "There is a deadly and damnable heresy being widely propagated today to the effect that, if a sinner truly accepts Christ as his personal Savior, no matter how he lives afterwards, he cannot perish. That is a satanic lie...something more than believing in Christ is necessary to ensure the soul's reaching heaven." I. H. Murray, *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, p 248-249. Again, Pink wrote: "Conclude we, then that holiness in this life is absolutely necessary to salvation, not only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity—as part of the end itself." *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, p. 28. That is an incredible statement for a Calvinist to make!

Dr. John MacArthur wrote, "The signature of saving faith is surrender to the lordship of Christ. The Gospel According to Jesus, p.209 Later he wrote, "Those who deny the lordship of Christ are damned." p. 217. I have always believed that salvation will result in a changed life; however, the changed life is a result of the salvation and becomes outward evidence of it. It is not that the salvation depends upon a changed life, but a changed life depends on salvation. One gets saved to get better but does not get better to get saved. If a person professes faith in Christ and never shows any inclination to godliness and service, it is obvious that he was a mere professor not possessor. If a person says, "I will take Christ as my Savior from sin but I reject Him as Lord of my life," his decision is flawed in my opinion. When I got saved I knew nothing about anything other than the fact that I was going to Hell, deserved it, and Christ offered me a free salvation. I took it and everything changed. As I reminisce, I believe I acknowledged Him as Lord when I said "Yes!" to Him, not just to salvation, but did not know what was going on.

Many of this club tell us that there is no such person as a carnal believer; however, that is obviously not true. Paul writing in *1 Corinthians 3:1* declared, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." In *1 Corinthians 3:3* Paul writes, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? In verse four, he continued, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" That should settle the argument about the possibility of a believer's ability to be a carnal believer.

I am not advocating carnality and ungodly living. I am only saying that all Christians don't live godly. And of course, all who profess to be Christian are not Christian. But in the above passages Paul was writing to believers. Paul even tells us in *1 Timothy 4:1* that one can depart from the faith and *6:10* err from the faith. I think there is a great difference in departing from the faith and denouncing the faith as an apostate.

I will close with Calvin's own words and present day followers should be asked if they concur: "We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestinated to life or death." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 926.

Lastly, he wrote: "I freely acknowledge my doctrine to be this: that Adam fell, not only by the permission of God, but by His very secret counsel and decree; and that Adam drew all his posterity with himself by his fall, into eternal destruction." John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 267.

John Wesley put it well when he wrote:

"The sense of all is plainly this: By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or than any of the latter should be saved. But if this be so, then is all preaching vain."

Alan Sell, *The Great Debate*, p. 73. Well said!

I must let that suffice since I have gone on much longer than I had planned. I have only cut a swath through the TULIP patch, not accomplishing a total discussion of the issue, but then men far more knowledgeable and competent than I have discussed this issue for hundreds of years without satisfying everyone.

Thanks for your interest in our work and for writing.

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