

EXCERPTS FROM THE BESTSELLING BOOK
What Love Is This?

CALVIN'S DILEMMA

GOD'S
SOVEREIGNTY

VS.

MAN'S
FREE WILL

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE



BIBLICALLY

DAVE HUNT

CALVIN'S DILEMMA

GOD'S
SOVEREIGNTY



MAN'S
FREE WILL

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE



BIBLICALLY

DAVE HUNT

THE
Berean
Call

BEND • OREGON

CALVIN'S DILEMMA
God's Sovereignty vs. Man's Free Will

by Dave Hunt

Published by The Berean Call Copyright ©2014

ISBN 978-1-928660-78-1

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, King James Version (KJV)

COPYRIGHT & FAIR USE

The Publisher reserves all rights, but encourages readers to quote material from this book for reviews or instructional purposes, provided that: the excerpt is not longer than 500 words and is not the primary content of a work for sale; that the context and content are preserved and not altered; and that proper attribution is provided.

The Berean Call PO Box 7019 Bend, Oregon, 97708-7020

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Publisher's Note

Throughout this book, reference is made to the acronym **TULIP** which is commonly used to denote the five points of Calvinist doctrine: T)otal Depravity, U)nconditional Election, L)imited Atonement, I)rresistible Grace, and P)erseverance of the Saints. Elements of these doctrines may be referenced in this book without a detailed explanation. For a comprehensive biblical critique of these five points, please see Dave Hunt's *TULIP and the Bible* or his encyclopedic work on Calvinism, *What Love Is This?* from which this title, *Calvin's Dilemma*, was derived.

Table of Contents

[Publisher's Note](#)

[\[1\] Irreconcilable Differences?](#)

[A Commendable but Mistaken Zeal](#)
[Freedom to Rebel but Not to Repent?](#)
[Confronting a Vital Distinction](#)
[Hear It from Calvin and Calvinists](#)
[Limiting God](#)
[Is This the God of the Bible?](#)
[A Merciless Sovereignty](#)

[\[2\] Sovereignty & Free Will](#)

[A Serious Contradiction](#)
[What about Ephesians 1:11?](#)
[An Important Distinction](#)
[What a Sovereign God Cannot Do](#)
[God Can neither Tempt nor Be Tempted](#)
[What God Cannot Do to Save Man](#)
[Free Will Does not Conflict with God's Sovereignty](#)
[Setting the Record Straight](#)

[\[3\] Foreknowledge & Man's Will](#)

[Creator and Creation](#)
[God's Continual Protection](#)
[Why Doesn't God Stop Evil and Suffering?](#)
[Practical Consequences of Denying Free Will](#)
[The Horrible Consequences of Calvinistic "Sovereignty"](#)
[Love: The Missing Ingredient](#)
[The Failure of Attempted "Explanations"](#)
[Differentiating Foreknowledge from Predestination](#)
[Foreknowledge as Proof](#)
[What about Man's Will?](#)
[Confusion Where Clarity Is Needed](#)
[What Scripture Says about Free Will](#)

[Do Outside Influences Destroy Free Will?](#)

[Foreknowledge and Man's Will](#)

[Augustine on Free Will](#)

[4] [With Liberty & Salvation for All?](#)

[Christ Defines "Whosoever"](#)

[Illustrating a Point](#)

["As Many as Were Ordained to Eternal Life Believed"](#)

[The Context Is Clear](#)

[Predestination to Salvation—or Not?](#)

[Giving God a Bad Name](#)

[A Strange "Mercy" and "Kindness"](#)

[Biblical Mercy, Kindness, and Grace](#)

[5] [Perverting Predestination](#)

[The "Eternal Decree of God"?](#)

[Where Is God's Love?](#)

[Distorting a Metaphor](#)

[A Simple Exegesis](#)

[The Essential Function of Foreknowledge](#)

[Why not Accept the Simplest Meaning?](#)

[More Redundancies and Nonsense](#)

[A Closer Look at Election](#)

[The Five Pertinent Scriptures](#)

[Calvin's Fallacious Arguments](#)

[Some Important Distinctions](#)

[Ridicule and "Mystery"](#)

[What about 2 Thessalonians 2:13?](#)

[6] [The Calvinist's Irresolvable Problem](#)

[No Explaining Away](#)

[What Does Christ Teach?](#)

[What about God's Love?](#)

[Was Paul Wrong in His Passionate Concern?](#)

[What God Is This?](#)

[The Darkest Side of Calvinism](#)

[This Is Election?](#)

[Left with Unanswered Questions](#)

[7] [Grace & Human Responsibility](#)

[Is It All a Charade?](#)

[Except the Father Draw Him: What Does That Mean?](#)

[Eisegetical Illusion](#)

[8] [Persuasion, the Gospel, and God](#)

[Calvinism and Evangelism](#)

[Another Favorite Verse](#)

[The Simplicity of What John Says](#)

[Staggering Deductions](#)

[Directly Contradicting Scripture](#)

[Confusing Man's Faith with God's Work](#)

[Is Faith, or Salvation, the Gift of God?](#)

[We Must Believe—God Doesn't Believe for Us](#)

[The Biblical Order: Faith Brings Salvation](#)

[To Whom Is Salvation Offered?](#)

[The Serpent and Christ](#)

[9] [He Loves Me — He Loves Me Not?](#)

[Did Christ Really Weep over Jerusalem?](#)

[Disagreement in the Ranks](#)

[Contradictions, Contradictions ...](#)

[Kinds or Aspects of Love?](#)

[Christ Is Speaking as the God of Israel](#)

[Is There a Real Battle for Souls?](#)

[Luther's Astonishing "Answer"](#)

[That Inescapable Will Again!](#)

["Where Is Boasting Then?"](#)

[Man Is Meaningless without a Will](#)

[Commissioned by God to Persuade Men](#)

[Paul's Fervent Preaching and Example](#)

[The Bottom Line](#)

[God Contrasted with False Gods](#)

[A Final Word](#)

[Endnotes](#)

[Readers may also enjoy ...](#)

[About The Berean Call](#)

[1] Irreconcilable Differences?

THE APPARENT TENSION between God's sovereignty and man's free will has been a point of study and discussion—and, sadly, of contention—among sincere Christians for centuries. Some have taken the approach of C. I. Scofield, that these are two truths that must both be accepted but that cannot be reconciled. “Both are wholly true, but the connecting and reconciling truth has not been revealed.”¹ In apparent agreement, James M. Gray, a past president of Moody Bible Institute, suggested that “no one finite mind could hold God's ... sovereignty and man's free agency ... both equally at the same time. How necessary, however, that both be duly emphasized!”²

Likewise, William L. Pettingill wrote, “God insists upon His sovereignty and also upon man's responsibility. Believe both and preach both, leaving the task of ‘harmonizing’ with Him.”³ In a similar vein, A. T. Pierson, although a leading Presbyterian, declared that both “the sovereign will of God and the freedom of man” are taught in Scripture and that “if we cannot reconcile these two, it is because the subject is so infinitely lifted up above us. Man is free. ... Thus the last great invitation in God's Book is an appeal to the *will*.”⁴ R. A. Torrey agreed that we should not “try to explain away the clear teaching of the Word of God as to the sovereignty of God [and] the freedom of the human will. ...”⁵

Unfortunately, neither Calvin nor many of his followers today have been willing to accept both sides of this biblical teaching. The result has been devastating in its consequences for the gospel: that man can only reject Christ; he cannot accept and believe in Him unless he is sovereignly regenerated by God. Calvinism refuses to accept what so many great evangelists have recognized is vital. Edgar Mullins expresses very well the essential balance that is missing:

Free will in man is as fundamental a truth as any other in the gospel and must never be canceled in our doctrinal statements. Man would not be man without it and God never robs us of our true moral manhood in saving us. ... The decree of salvation must be looked at as a whole to understand it. Some have looked at God's choice alone and ignored the means and the necessary choice on man's part.⁶

A Commendable but Mistaken Zeal

Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton assure us that “The sovereignty of God is ... the most basic principle of Calvinism ... the foundation upon which all [including Christianity itself] is built.”⁷ Loraine Boettner agrees: “The basic principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God.”⁸ Such fervor for God's sovereignty is commendable. However, Calvinists have mistakenly made God the effective *cause* of every event that occurs: “Whatever is done in time is according to his [God's] decree in eternity.”⁹ But would a Holy God decree the evil that fills man's heart and the world today? Surely not!

Calvinism denies to man any real choice concerning *anything* he thinks or does. C. H. Spurgeon referred to “a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of [human] responsibility.”¹⁰ The Calvinist mistakenly believes that if man could make a genuine choice, even in his rebellion against God, it would be a denial that God is sovereign. Thus God must be the cause of all sin, beginning with Adam and Eve. Boettner argues, “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.”¹¹ That unhappy conclusion is necessitated by a concept of sovereignty that is required neither by the Bible nor by logic.

We have noted the admission by some Calvinists that man is free to respond to God. At the same time, however, the doctrine of Total Depravity requires that he can respond only negatively and in opposition to God. Of course, that is not freedom at all. Philip F. Congdon points out:

Classical Calvinists may talk about man having a “free will,” but it is a very limited freedom! That is, a person may choose to reject Christ—all people do—but only those who have been elected may choose to accept Him. This is no “free will”! Are the open invitations to trust Christ in the Bible actually a cruel hoax? I don't think so. Are all people free to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior for their sin? Yes. That is why the call to missions is so urgent.¹²

Freedom to Rebel but Not to Repent?

How can there be any real freedom of choice if only one kind of choice can be made, and one, at that, which has been decreed eternally? To call this “free choice” is a fraud. It is, however, the only “freedom” Calvinism can allow. Pink favorably quotes J. Denham Smith, whom he honors as a “deeply taught servant of God”:

I believe in free will; but then it is a will only free to act according to nature. ... The sinner in his sinful nature could never have a will according to God. For this he must be born again.¹³

Nowhere does the Bible support such a statement; and this is one of Calvinism’s most grievous errors. Were Abraham and Moses “born again,” i.e., regenerated? Isn’t that a New Testament term? What does Smith mean by “a will according to God”? Even Christians don’t always do God’s will. A desire to know God? Surely all men are expected to seek the Lord while He may be found. That God promises to be found by those who seek Him must imply that the unregenerate can seek Him.

Nor does it help the Calvinist to say that man can only will and act according to his sinful nature and against God. How could it be God’s will that man defy His law? If sinful acts are admitted to come from genuine choice, then we have the same challenge to God’s sovereignty that the Calvinist cannot allow. Either man has a free will, or his sin is all according to God’s will. As we have seen, the latter is exactly what Calvin himself taught and many Calvinists still believe, making God the author of evil.

Could it be that Adam’s nature was actually sinful, though God pronounced him “good” when He created him? How else, except by free will, can his sin be explained? The Calvinist escapes free will by declaring that even the sin of Adam and Eve was foreordained and decreed by God. A. W. Pink argues, “God foreordains everything which comes to pass. His sovereign rule extends throughout the entire Universe and is over every creature. ... God initiates all things, regulates all things. ...”¹⁴ Then why did Christ tell us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth ...” if all is already according to God’s will and decree?

It is fallacious to imagine that for God to be in control of His universe He must foreordain and initiate everything. In fact, it would deny His

omniscience and omnipotence to suggest that God cannot foreknow and control what He doesn't foreordain, decree, and cause. Here again, Calvinists are trapped in contradictions. Though he was a leading Presbyterian theologian, A. A. Hodge recognized the severe consequences of that extremist view of God's sovereignty: "Everything is gone if free-will is gone; the moral system is gone if free-will is gone. ..." ¹⁵ At the same time, however, he declared: "Foreordination is an act of the ... benevolent will of God from all eternity determining ... all events ... that come to pass." ¹⁶

Confronting a Vital Distinction

For the Calvinist to uphold his extreme view of control, God must be the cause of man's total depravity and the negative response it produces. There is no way to escape this conclusion. If God were not the cause of man's sin, man would be acting independently of God, and that cannot be allowed for *anything* in the Calvinist scheme. It follows, then, that "He [God] could ... have prevented it [the fall and entrance of sin into the world], but He did not prevent it: ergo, He willed it." ¹⁷ Thus one must conclude, "It is even biblical to say that God has foreordained sin." ¹⁸

The only way, however, to defend God's integrity, love, and compassion in a world filled with sin and suffering is to acknowledge that He has granted to man the power to choose for himself. It is thus man's fault and by his own free choice that sin and suffering are the common experience of all mankind. God has provided full forgiveness of sins on a righteous basis, and will eventually create a new universe into which sin can never enter—a universe to be inhabited by all those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. God is exonerated and man alone is to blame for sin and suffering. Such is the teaching of the Bible, as we shall see in depth.

Calvinism rests upon a mistaken view of what it means for God to be sovereign. Edwin H. Palmer tells us that God predestines untold multitudes to everlasting torment "for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures ..." ¹⁹ Obviously, God could show His sovereign power over His creatures in many ways other than by decreeing their eternal damnation, a fate surely not required by sovereignty.

The Bible teaches that God sovereignly—without diminishing His sovereignty—gave man the power to rebel against Him. Thus, sin is man’s responsibility alone, by his free choice, not by God’s decree. Calvinism’s basic error is a failure to see that God could sovereignly give to man the power of genuine choice and still remain in control of the universe. To acknowledge both sovereignty and free will would destroy the very foundations of the entire Calvinist system.

This false view of God’s sovereignty is the Calvinists’ only justification for God’s saving only a select group and damning the rest. If one asks how a loving God could damn millions or perhaps billions whom He could have saved, the answer is that it “pleased Him so to do.” If one persists and asks *why* it pleased Him, the response is that the reason is hidden “in the mystery of His will.”

Free will does not diminish God’s control over His universe. Being omnipotent and omniscient, God can so arrange circumstances as to keep man’s rebellion from frustrating His purposes. In fact, God can use man’s free will to help fulfill His own plans, and He is thereby even more glorified than if He decreed everything man does.

Hear It from Calvin and Calvinists

In his classic, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, Palmer writes, “Although sin and unbelief are contrary to what God commands (His perceptive will), God has included them in His sovereign decree (ordained them, caused them to certainly come to pass). ... How is it that a holy God, who hates sin, not only passively permits sin but also certainly and efficaciously decrees that sin shall be? Our infinite God presents us with some astounding truths. ...”²⁰

“Astounding” is the wrong adjective. What Palmer admits astounds even him, a man who dogmatically defends this doctrine, is *appalling* to non-Calvinists, including even non-Christians. Palmer expounds further upon this outrageous doctrine:

All things that happen in all the world at any time and in all history—whether with inorganic matter, vegetation, animals, man, or angels (both the good and evil ones)—come to pass because God ordained them. Even sin—the fall of the devil from heaven, the fall of Adam, and every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history, including the

worst sin of all, Judas' betrayal of Christ—is included in the eternal decree of our holy God.

[If] sin is outside the decree of God, then the vast percentage of human actions ... are removed from God's plan. God's power is reduced to the forces of nature. ... Sin is not only foreknown by God, it is also foreordained by God. In fact, because God foreordained it, He foreknew it. Calvin is very clear on this point: "Man wills with an evil will what God wills with a good will. ..." ²¹

There is neither biblical nor rational support for such dogma. Surely God in His infinite power and foreknowledge could fit into His plan even the most rebellious thoughts and deeds of mankind. He is perfectly able to frustrate, prevent, or use man's plans and deeds to fulfill His will, and He can do so without destroying man's ability to exercise free choice. To make God the author of sin is to blasphemously misrepresent Him.

Why would an infinitely holy God ruin his own creation by purposely creating sin? Why invent the elaborate story of "casting fallen angels out of heaven"? Why cause mankind to sin in order to "forgive" them? How would that glorify God? Instead, in Calvinism God becomes like the person who sets a forest fire so he can "discover" it, put it out, and be a hero. It also turns God into a fraud who pretends that Satan, though God's own intentional creation, was His enemy. How absurd!

Limiting God

Furthermore, why would God need to foreordain something in order to foreknow it? Obviously, if God can only know what He himself has decreed, and would be taken by surprise if man had free choice, then His knowledge would not be infinite (i.e., God would not be omniscient).

Yet Calvinists persist in this unbiblical and irrational doctrine, which they imagine defends God's sovereignty, but actually diminishes it: "If God did not foreordain all things, then He could not know the future. God foreknows and knows all things because He decreed all things to be." ²² On the contrary, God does not have to decree human thoughts and actions to foreknow them. He knows all beforehand because He is omniscient.

The contemporary Calvinists we are quoting are expressing the very heart of Calvinism. They are being true to John Calvin, who in turn reminds us that the same was taught by Augustine. The latter has been described as

the first of the early so-called Church Fathers who “taught the absolute sovereignty of God.”²³

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin acknowledged his debt to Augustine concerning God’s predetermination of mankind’s every thought, word, and deed, good or bad, including all evil committed:

[W]e hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things—that from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom, he decreed ... that, by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined. ...

In short, Augustine everywhere teaches ... that there cannot be a greater absurdity than to hold that anything is done without the ordination of God; because it would happen at random. For which reason, he also excludes the contingency which depends on human will, maintaining a little further on, in clearer terms, that no cause must be sought for but the will of God. ... I say, then, that ... the order, method, end, and necessity of events, are ... produced by the will of God. ...²⁴

An Irrational Position

Augustine did say that all wills are subject to the will of God, but he did not go as far as Calvin carries him. Moreover, Calvin leaps further into a number of fallacies that have been perpetuated to this day. Obviously, contrary to Calvin, actions by the free will of humans do not happen at random. If they did, our entire judicial system would break down, since rape, murder, robbery, and all other crimes would have to be viewed as random events beyond their perpetrators’ moral responsibility or control. This is, of course, nonsense.

Ironically, Pink attempts to avoid the intolerable consequences of Calvin’s strong statements by also appealing to Augustine: “Let it be emphatically said that God does not *produce* the sinful dispositions of any of His creatures, though He does *restrain* and *direct* them to the accomplishing of His own purposes. Hence He is neither the Author nor the Approver of sin. This distinction was expressed thus by Augustine: ‘that men’s sin proceeds from themselves; that in sinning they perform this or that action, is from the power of God who divideth the darkness according to His pleasure.’”²⁵

Yet Calvin himself is already on record, and echoed by many of his followers today, that God is the *cause* and thus the author of every thought, word, and deed. Pink, like Palmer, has often said the same! Without that

conclusion, though it is repugnant to man's God-given conscience, Calvinism's sovereignty won't hold up, nor will its five points.

Is This the God of the Bible?

The human conscience and sense of right and wrong—which man has received from God himself—cry out in revulsion against such teaching. Have not Calvin and Augustine misrepresented the loving, merciful God of the Bible? Did God create us to be mere puppets, with Him pulling the strings? Is our innate sense of making genuine choices of our own volition, sometimes rationally and at other times impulsively or even out of lust, a total delusion?

God appeals to human reason: “Come now and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18). No one can engage in reason without making choices between differing opinions, theories, options, or possible courses of action. Thus, without the power of choice, man is not a rational being. And surely, without the power to make genuine choices man could not be a morally responsible being, accountable to his Creator.

All through the Bible, man is called upon to choose between time and eternity, between Satan and God, between evil and good, between self and Christ. Jonathan Edwards affirmed that “an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice.”²⁶ Nor is there any reason biblically, scientifically, or logically why man—who makes choices of all kinds daily—could not also, without first being regenerated, choose between good and evil, God and Satan, and genuinely open his heart to Christ.

Palmer calls it a paradox that “although man is totally depraved and unable to believe, and that although faith is a gift of God produced by the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, it is up to man to believe. He has the duty to obey God's command to believe.”²⁷ This is no paradox; it is an absurdity. No one can justly be held accountable for failing to do what it is impossible for him to do.

Could it be true that we really have no choice, but that God causes us to do whatever we do, having predestined our every thought, word, and deed? That certainly is not a perception held in ordinary experience, as Augustine himself argued. Yet, though so contrary to common sense, the Calvinist is forced to accept this view in order to support his system.

Augustine, as will be shown in the next chapter, believed in man's free will, while Martin Luther taught that man's will is in bondage to sin. Calvin says that the sin to which we are in bondage was decreed by God, and thus there is no escape except by God's sovereign act. If such is the case, then it is God who holds man in sin's bondage!

Nowhere does the Bible state that God's sovereignty requires that man has no power to make a genuine choice, moral or otherwise. Obviously, if God's sovereignty makes man totally incapable of any moral choice, then God must sovereignly cause him to believe the gospel. Thus, The Five Points of Calvinism actually flow from this erroneous view of sovereignty.

A Merciless Sovereignty

Calvin's God plays into the hands of atheists who justly charge that an all-powerful "God" who causes men to sin and then condemns them for doing so is a monster. Will Durant was not a Christian, but one must take his complaint about Calvin seriously: "... we will agree that even error lives because it serves some vital need. But we shall always find it hard to love the man who darkened the human soul with the most absurd and blasphemous conception of God in all the long and honored history of nonsense."²⁸

Following Calvin's lead, and with no apparent realization of the blasphemy he expresses against the God who *is love*, Palmer writes:

The Bible has well over a hundred examples in which God brought sin to pass. ... This is the awesome biblical asymmetry: God ordains sin, and man is to blame. We cannot comprehend this. If all things are ordained by God—including sin and unbelief—then God has ordained who will be unbelievers. ... It is essential to establish the biblical data on the foreordination of sin.²⁹

This is not "awesome" but repugnant to conscience and a libel upon God's character—nor is it biblical. Palmer quotes "scores of texts that [allegedly] indicate sin is foreordained by God."³⁰ In fact, none of the biblical passages he cites supports that horrifying thesis.

James Orr, editor of the original *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, called this doctrine "one which no plea of logical consistency will ever get the human mind to accept and which is bound to provoke

revolt against the whole system with which it is associated.”³¹ King James, who had sent a delegation to the Synod of Dort, referred to “that infamous decree of the late Synod, and the decision of that detestable formulary, by which the far greater part of the human race are condemned to hell for no other reason, *than the mere will of God, without any regard to sin*, the necessity of sinning, as well as that of being damned, being fastened on them by that great nail of the decree before-mentioned”³² [emphasis in original].

Attempting to justify this doctrine, so many Calvinists have responded to me in discussions, in letters, and in comments written in the margin of preliminary manuscripts I sent to them for review, “God is under no obligation to extend His grace to those whom He predestines to eternal judgment.” Of course God is under no obligation to any man for anything. As we have already noted, however, grace and mercy do not flow from obligation but rather from God’s love. Nor can God’s perfect holiness and justice be compromised in the process. Evaluating a popular Calvinist author, Zane Hodges writes,

The result of [Michael S.] Horton’s theology is that non-elect people are hopelessly bound for hell because God declines to regenerate them. ... The picture of God that emerges from this is a hideous distortion of His loving character and nature. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Horton also writing: “He [God] cannot love us directly because of our sinfulness, but he can love us in union with Christ, because Christ is the one the Father loves.”³³ What this amounts to is that God does not “directly” love *anyone* unless *first* He regenerates him or her, since “regeneration is the commencement of union.” In other words, God does not love the elect until they are regenerated, and He *never* loves the non-elect at all.³⁴

[2] Sovereignty & Free Will

ONE OFTEN HEARS Christians say, “God is in control; He’s still on the throne.” But what does that mean? Was God not in control when Satan rebelled and when Adam and Eve disobeyed, but now He is? Does God’s being in control mean that all rape, murder, war, famine, suffering, and evil is exactly what He planned and desires—as Edwin H. Palmer says, “—even the moving of a finger ... the mistake of a typist ...”?¹

That God is absolutely sovereign does not require that everything man chooses to do or not to do is not his own choice at all but was foreordained by God from eternity past. There is neither logical nor biblical reason why a sovereign God by His own sovereign design could not allow creatures made in His image the freedom of moral choice. Indeed, He must, if man is to be more than a cardboard puppet!

In a chapter titled “the great mystery,” Palmer insists that the non-Calvinist denies the sovereignty of God while insisting upon man’s power of choice, while the “hyper-Calvinist denies the responsibility of man.” He then suggests that the true ...

...Calvinist ... accepts both sides of the antinomy. He realizes that what he advocates is ridiculous ... impossible for man to harmonize these two sets of data. To say on the one hand that God has made certain all that ever happens, and yet to say that man is responsible for what he does? Nonsense! It must be one or the other. To say that God foreordains the sin of Judas, and yet Judas is to blame? Foolishness ...! This is in accord with Paul, who said, “The word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Greeks seek after wisdom and logic, and to them the Calvinist is irrational. ... So the Calvinist has to make up his mind: what is his authority? His own human reason or the Word of God? If he answers, the human reasoning powers, then, like the Arminian and hyper-Calvinist, he will have to exclude one of the two parallel forces. But ... he believes the Bible is God’s Word ... infallible and inerrant ... [T]he apparent paradox of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man ... belongs to the Lord our God, and we should leave it there. We ought not to probe into the secret counsel of God.”²

On the contrary, there is no contradiction between God's sovereignty and man's free will. That God can be sovereign and man be free to choose is not an unfathomable mystery. But Calvinism denies free will by its definition of sovereignty, making God the cause of all, including sin—yet man is accountable for what God *causes* him to do. That proposition is irrational. The confusion here should be obvious.

The “paradox” has been created by Calvinism's distortion of sovereignty. Accepting this manmade contradiction, J. I. Packer says we must “refuse to regard the apparent inconsistency as real.”³ That pronouncement sounds more like Christian Science, Positive Thinking, or Positive Confession than biblical exegesis!

On the contrary, as Junius B. Reimensnyder has said, “The free-will of man is the most marvelous of the Creator's works.”⁴ It is indeed the gift that makes possible every other gift from God—for without the power to choose, man could not consciously receive any moral or spiritual gift from God. That fact, of course, is self-evident—and biblical. Repeatedly men and women are called upon to make moral choices, to love and obey God, to believe the gospel, and to receive Christ: “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15); “if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:19); “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8), etc.

A Serious Contradiction

Unquestionably, men by their own choice can and do defy and disobey God. The knowledge that men continually break God's laws is common to every human conscience and experience. In spite of the fact that He is sovereign, and, obviously, without violating or lessening His sovereignty, God's will is continually being resisted and rejected as a result of the rebellion of Satan and man. That both citizens and foreigners often violate its laws does not deny a country's sovereignty. Indeed, lawbreakers will be punished if apprehended.

Even Christians do not always perfectly fulfill God's will. If so, they would have no sin to confess, and there would have been no need for the Epistles or Christ's letters to the seven churches of Asia or for the judgment

seat of Christ—or any other correction from God. Rewards, too, would be meaningless without free will.

The Bible itself contains many examples of men defying and disobeying God in spite of His being sovereign and in control of His universe. Through Isaiah the prophet, God laments, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me” (Isaiah 1:2). They are offering sacrifices that He abhors, obviously not according to His will, and they are living lives that dishonor Him. We are told that “the Pharisees and lawyers [continuing the tradition of those before them] rejected the counsel of God against themselves” (Luke 7:30). Quite clearly, everything that happens in human affairs is *not* according to God’s will.

Throughout the Old Testament, God pleads with Israel to repent of her rebellion, to return to Him and obey Him. Of Israel He says, “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Romans 10:21). Israel’s history provides more than ample proof that in spite of His absolute sovereignty, man can and does rebel, and that the sin he commits is not God’s will, much less His decree. Typical of His continual lament is the following:

I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day. (Jeremiah 44:4–6)

Surely, the idolatry that God calls “this abominable thing that I hate” could not be according to His will. That His will is rejected by man’s rebellion, however, just as the Ten Commandments are broken millions of times each day around the world, does not in the least deny or weaken His sovereignty.

What about Ephesians 1:11?

In light of such scriptures, how can we understand the statement that God works “all things according to the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11)? Alvin Baker claims that this passage proves that “God works ‘all things,’ including sin, according to His eternal will.”⁵ However, the word “worketh” (KJV) is *energeo*, which doesn’t convey the idea of controlled

manipulation but of stimulation. See Colossians 1:29 and 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 9; see also “work out your own salvation ... for it is God which worketh in [energizes] you” (Philippians 2:12–13).

Nor does Paul say that God works all according to His will but according to the *counsel* of His will. There is a huge difference. Obviously, the eternal “counsel” of His will must have allowed man the freedom to love and obey, or to defy, his Creator—otherwise sin would be God’s will. We could never conclude from this passage (and particularly not in light of the many scriptures stating that men defy God’s will) that mankind’s every thought, word, and deed is according to God’s perfect will, exactly the way God desired and decreed it. Yet that is what Calvinists erroneously conclude from Ephesians 1:11. To make that the case, as Calvin did, portrays God as the effective cause of every sin ever committed.

Christ asks us to pray, “Thy kingdom come Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). Why would Christ suggest such a prayer if everything is already according to God’s will and His eternal decree—and if we are already in the kingdom of God with Satan bound, as both Calvin and Augustine taught?

The objection is raised: “How dare you suggest that the omnipotent God cannot effect His will!” Of course He can and does, but that in itself does not say that God wills everything that happens. Without freedom to do his own will, man would not be a morally responsible being, nor could he be guilty of sin. That much is axiomatic.

Christ’s special commendation of “whosoever shall do the will of my Father” (Matthew 12:50; Mark 3:35), and such statements from His lips as “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father” (Matthew 7:21), show very clearly that everyone doesn’t always fulfill God’s will. The same truth is found in Isaiah 65:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:17–22, Hebrews 10:36, 1 Peter 2:15–16, 1 John 2:17 and elsewhere. Clearly, there is a distinction between what God desires and wills, and what He *allows*.

An Important Distinction

Many scriptures show that God’s will can be, and is, defied by man. Nor does Scripture ever suggest that there is any will or plan of God with which

man's will and actions are by nature in perfect accord. Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston point out, however, that "Some Christian writers seem to have been unable to accept this. ... If, as they believe, everything that happens is God's will, then the unrepentance and perishing of the wicked must also be God's will. Yet God himself says it is *not* his will. ..."⁶

On the fact of human rebellion and disobedience in defiance of God, both Calvinists and non-Calvinists agree. The disagreement comes in the explanation. The former say that even man's rebellion has been decreed sovereignly by God and that God's will is the effective cause of it. The latter explain sin as the result of man's own selfish and evil desires and deeds in defiance of God. Thereby man is justly held morally accountable, because it is in the power of his will either to intend to obey or to deliberately disobey God. The Calvinist, however, denies that man, because he is "totally depraved," has such a choice—yet holds him accountable in spite of his alleged inability to act in any way except as God has decreed.

Thus any independent choice on man's part—even to sin—must be denied in order to maintain TULIP. This is especially true when it comes to salvation. Pink writes, "To say that the sinner's salvation turns upon the action of his own will, is another form of the God-dishonoring dogma of salvation by human efforts. ... Any movement of the will is a work. ..."⁷

On the contrary, there is a huge difference between deciding or willing to do something and actually doing it—something that every lazy person and procrastinator repeatedly demonstrates. Merely to will is not a work at all. Paul clearly makes that distinction when he says, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). Indeed, Paul's will is not the major problem but rather his inability *even as a regenerated person* to do the good he wills and to refrain from the evil that his will rejects.

The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). The effective power that saves man is all of God, but man receives salvation by faith—and only by faith. For the condemned sinner simply to receive by faith the salvation that Christ purchased on the Cross is no work on man's part at all. Yet the Calvinist insists that it is. For Pink to call receiving Christ by faith "human effort" is to invent his own meaning of words.

The distinction between faith and works is so clear in Scripture that we need not belabor the point.

It is the Calvinists' extreme view of God's sovereignty that causes them to reject the biblical teaching that salvation is offered freely to all. Instead, they limit salvation to the elect. Otherwise, they argue, if man is free either to accept or reject salvation, that leaves the final decision up to man and places God at his mercy.

"So are you suggesting," they object, "that God wants to save all mankind but lacks the power to do so? It is a denial of God's omnipotence and sovereignty if there is anything He desires but can't accomplish." Yet John MacArthur, J. I. Packer, John Piper, and others say that God desires the salvation of all yet doesn't decree it. This is a real contradiction, whereas it is no contradiction at all to say that God has given man the free choice of whether to receive Christ or not.

In fact, power has no relationship to grace and love, which provide salvation. Moreover, as we shall see, there are many things God cannot do, and a lack of "power" is not the reason for any of them, nor is His sovereignty mitigated in the least.

What a Sovereign God Cannot Do

Laurence M. Vance points out, "The Calvinist perception of God as being absolutely sovereign is very much accurate; however, that doesn't mean that it takes precedence over his other attributes."⁸ Clearly, God's ability and even His right to act in His sovereignty are only exercised in harmony with His other attributes, which must all remain in perfect balance. Calvinism destroys that balance. It puts such emphasis upon sovereignty that God's other qualities are made inconsequential by comparison, and God is presented as acting out of character.

Throughout history, sovereign despots have misused their sovereignty for their own evil purposes. Obviously, however, God employs His sovereignty not as a despot but in love, grace, mercy, kindness, justice, and truth—all in perfect symmetry with His total character and all of His attributes. Indeed, He cannot act despotically or use His sovereignty for evil. Cannot? Yes, *cannot*.

“Heresy!” cries someone. “God is infinite in power; there is nothing He cannot do.” Really? The very fact that He is infinite in power means He *cannot* fail. There is much else that finite beings routinely do but that the infinite, absolutely sovereign God *cannot do because He is God*. He cannot travel because He is omnipresent. He cannot lie, cheat, steal, be mistaken, contradict Himself, act contrary to His character, etc. Nor did God will any of this in man. To will sin in others would be the same as to practice it Himself—a fact that Calvinists overlook.

What God cannot do is not *in spite of who He is*, but *because of who He is*. Thus Augustine wrote, “Wherefore, He cannot do some things for the very reason that He is omnipotent.”⁹ There are things God cannot do, because to do them would violate His very character. He cannot deny or contradict Himself. He cannot change. He cannot go back on His Word.

God Can neither Tempt nor Be Tempted

Scripture must be taken in context and compared with Scripture; one isolated verse cannot become the rule. Jesus said, “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Yet it is impossible for God to do evil, to cause others to do evil, or even to entice anyone into evil. This is clearly stated in Scripture: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man...” (James 1:13–14).

What about instances in Scripture where the Bible says God tempted someone, or was tempted Himself—for example, “God did tempt Abraham” (Genesis 22:1)? The Hebrew word there and throughout the Old Testament is *nacah*, which means to test or prove, as in assaying the purity of a metal. It has nothing to do with tempting *to sin*. God was testing Abraham’s faith and obedience.

As for God being tempted, Israel was warned, “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 6:16). They had done so at Massah, in demanding water: “they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?” (Exodus 17:7). Later they “tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust ... they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Yea ... they tempted and provoked the most high God” (Psalm 78:18, 41, 56).

Clearly, God was not being tempted to do *evil*—an impossibility. But instead of waiting upon Him in patient trust to meet their needs, His people were demanding that He prove His power by giving them what they wanted to satisfy their lusts. Their “temptation” of God was a provocation that put Him in the position either of giving in to their desire or of punishing them for rebellion.

When Jesus was “tempted of the devil” to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple to prove the promise of God that angels would bear Him up in their hands, He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16—“Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:1–11). In other words, it is one thing to rely upon God to meet our needs as they arise and as He sees fit, but it is something else to put ourselves deliberately in a situation where we demand that God *must* act if we are to be rescued or protected.

In the quotation above, James goes on to say, “every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.” Temptation to evil comes from within, not from without. The man who would never be “tempted” by an opportunity to be dishonest in business may succumb to the temptation to commit adultery and thus be dishonest with his wife.

God was not tempting Adam and Eve to sin when He told them not to eat of a particular tree; He was testing them. Eve was tempted by her own natural lust, her selfish desire. Even in innocence, mankind became selfish and disobedient. We see this in very young infants, who as yet presumably do not know the difference between right and wrong.

What God Cannot Do to Save Man

Furthermore, when it comes to salvation, there are three specific things God cannot do. First of all, He cannot forgive sin without the penalty being paid. In the Garden of Gethsemane the night before the cross, Christ cried out in agony, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ...” (Matthew 26:39). Surely had it been possible to provide salvation without Christ paying the penalty demanded by His justice, the Father would have allowed Him to escape the cross. We know, therefore, that it was not possible for God to save man any other way. Even God’s sovereign, omnipotent power cannot simply decree that sinners be forgiven. This fact

destroys the very foundation of Calvinism's salvation for the elect alone by sovereign decree.

Secondly, God cannot force a gift upon anyone. That fact also shows that salvation for the elect cannot be by predestination. Salvation can neither be earned nor merited—it can only be *received* as a gift from God. And the recipient must be willing; the gift cannot be imposed by the giver against the recipient's will.

Finally, even God cannot force anyone to love Him or to accept His love. Force cannot produce love. True love can only come voluntarily from the heart.

By the very nature of giving and receiving, and of loving and receiving love, man must have the power to choose freely from his heart as God has sovereignly ordained—"if thou shalt ... believe in thine heart ... thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). The reception of God's gift of salvation and of God's love (all in and through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for our sins) can only be by a free choice.

Christ repeatedly gave such invitations as "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), or "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37); and "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Relying upon the ordinary meaning of words, we can only conclude from Scripture that Christ is offering to all a gift that may be accepted or rejected.

There is no question that salvation is a free gift of God's grace: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16); "If thou knewest the gift of God" (John 4:10); "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift" (Romans 5:15); "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23); "For by grace are ye saved ... it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8); "God hath given to us eternal life" (1 John 5:11), etc. By its very nature, a gift must be received by an act of the will. If forced upon the recipient, it is not a gift.

Tragically, Calvinism undermines the very foundation of salvation and man's loving, trusting relationship with God through Christ.

Free Will Does not Conflict with God's Sovereignty

Literally hundreds of verses throughout the Bible offer salvation to all who will believe and receive. The Calvinist objects that if man had the choice of saying yes or no to Christ, he would have the final say in his salvation, his destiny would be in his own hands, and God would be at his mercy. Therefore, where the Bible seems to say that God desires all to be saved and is offering salvation to all either to be accepted or rejected, the Calvinist must limit the application only to the elect—and they must have no choice. Thus Scripture’s clear meaning is changed to make it conform to TULIP.

God’s sovereignty is not in question. The issue is what that means biblically. The Calvinist argues that if God’s desire is for all men to be saved—and obviously they are *not* all saved—then God’s will is frustrated by rebellious, sinful men who by their wills have been able to overturn God’s sovereignty. As a consequence of this mistaken view of sovereignty, the plain meaning of numerous passages must be changed in order to support TULIP. The Calvinist insists, “The heresy of free will dethrones God and enthrones man.”¹⁰ In fact, this error was rejected by Augustine himself.

Setting the Record Straight

Clearly, there are a number of things a sovereign God *cannot* do, yet none of these limitations impinges in the least upon His sovereignty. God is not the less sovereign because He cannot lie or sin or change or deny Himself, etc. These follow *because* of His sinless, holy, perfect character.

Nor is God any the less sovereign or lacking in power because He cannot force anyone to love Him or to receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Power and love (and love’s gift) do not belong in the same discussion. In fact, of the many things we have seen that God cannot do, a lack of “power” or a lessening of sovereignty is not the reason for any of them. Edward B. Pusey points out that “It would be self-contradictory, that Almighty God should create a free agent capable of loving Him, without also being capable of rejecting His love. ... Without free-will we could not freely love God. Freedom is a condition of love.”¹¹

Far from denying God’s sovereignty, to recognize that mankind has been given by God the capacity to choose to love Him or not, and to receive

or reject the free gift of salvation, is to admit what God's sovereignty itself has lovingly and wonderfully provided. In His sovereignty, God has so constituted the nature of a gift and of love that man must have the power of choice or he cannot experience either one from God's gracious hand.

Nor could the power of choice challenge God's sovereignty, since it is God's sovereignty that has bestowed this gift upon man and set the conditions for loving, for receiving love, and for giving and receiving a gift. Yet as Zane Hodges points out:

If there is one thing five-point Calvinists hold with vigorous tenacity, it is the belief that there can be no human *free will* at all. With surprising illogic, they usually argue that God cannot be sovereign if man is granted any degree of free will. But this view of God actually *diminishes* the greatness of His sovereign power. For if God cannot control a universe in which there is genuine free will, and is reduced to the creation of "robots," then such a God is of truly limited power indeed.¹²

It is foolish to suggest that if man could reject Christ, that would put him in control of either his own destiny or of God. God is in control. It is He who makes the rules, sets the requirements for salvation, and determines the consequences of either acceptance or rejection. God is no less sovereign over those who reject Christ than He is over those who accept Him. He is the one who has determined the conditions of salvation and what will happen both to those who accept and to those who reject His offer.

But the Calvinist, because of his extreme view of sovereignty, can no more allow any man to say yes to Christ than he can allow him to say no. This error, having destroyed the foundation for a genuine salvation, creates a false one. And in order to support this false salvation that, allegedly, God imposes upon an elect, Calvinism has had to invent its five points. This fact will become ever more clear as we proceed.

[3] Foreknowledge & Man's Will

MANY THEOLOGIANS and philosophers seem to find a conflict also between God's foreknowledge and man's free will. If God knows what will happen before it happens, then it must happen as He foreknew, or His foreknowledge would be wrong. That being the case, how could anyone be free to make a choice? To consider that question, we must define some terms.

The biblical doctrine of foreknowledge simply states that God knows everything that will happen before it happens. The psalmist's statement, "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139:4), tells us that God knows every thought and word before we speak it—and has known it from eternity past—but does not say that God's foreknowledge *causes* these thoughts and words. At the council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem, James stated clearly, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). To know everything He would do, God must have known every thought, word, and event that would ever occur. This biblical truth is clearly necessary if God is to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, the Creator and Sustainer of all.

Unquestionably, from eternity past, God must have known everything. That includes the motions of the stars and electrons, and the exact location at any nanosecond of each atom and the earthly bodies they comprise, large and small, animate and inanimate. God knew everything that would happen to each one and how each would function. Before He created the universe or men or angels, God knew every event that would ever occur in heaven or in the physical universe, and thus necessarily every thought, word, and deed of every human or angel that would ever exist. This is what it means to be God and therefore to be omniscient.

Creator and Creation

This cornerstone truth of Scripture was stated well by Augustine: “For to confess that God exists, and at the same time to deny that He has foreknowledge of future things, is the most manifest folly. ... But ... we [who] confess the most high and true God Himself, do confess His will, supreme power, and prescience.”¹ No one, however, stated God’s foreknowledge more fully than the much defamed Jacobus Arminius:

[God] knows all things possible, whether they be in the capability of God or of the creature ... imagination or enunciation ... all things that could have an existencethose which are necessary and contingent, good and bad, universal and particular, future, present and past, excellent and vile; He knows things substantial and accidental of every kind; the actions and passions, the modes and circumstances ... external words and deeds, internal thoughts, deliberations, counsels, and determinations, and the entities of reason, whether complex or simple.²

Calvinism, unfortunately, takes a far different view of foreknowledge, which actually denigrates God’s omniscience: “If God did not foreordain all things, then he could not know the future.”³ Without scriptural support, Calvin declared that God “foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed that they are so to happen ...”⁴ Going even further, another author says, “The idea that God knows the future without having planned it and without controlling it is totally foreign to Scripture.”⁵ In fact, the opposite is the case. Nowhere does Scripture say or even imply that God knows all beforehand *only because He has foreordained and caused it*.

How, then, can God be sure that what He foreknows will happen and that something will not intervene to change the future? Simply because He is all-knowing, and therefore the future is as plain to Him as the past. If God had to plan and cause something to happen or even to control its occurrence in order to know it would take place, He would be limited in His foreknowledge and therefore not the infinite, omniscient God that He is. If the Calvinistic view is correct, then every detail of every crime and disease and of the destruction to property and the human suffering and loss of life and limb caused by natural disasters would be foreordained and caused by God; otherwise, He would be ignorant of the future.

We are told that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8); and that “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night”

(Psalm 90:4). Some have attempted to find a hidden meaning in these statements, but there is none.

The phrases “with the Lord” and “in thy sight” are the key to understanding this rather simple and straightforward declaration. Time is part of the physical universe, which God created out of nothing. God himself is therefore outside of time. That is the simple truth in these two scriptures.

As one scientist recently explained, “The actual existence of past, present, and future is required by Einstein’s theory of relativity. All space and time form a four-dimensional continuum that simply exists; the theory does not permit time to be treated as a dimension in which the future is open or incomplete.” He further explained:

From a Christian point of view, it is reasonable to conclude that the temporal and the spatial extent of our universe were created together, and thus the entire four-dimensional structure resides before [in the view of] its Creator in an eternal present. Thus our modern scientific understanding of the nature of time fits quite well with the Christian tradition that God has knowledge of all time, past, present, and future: “Before Abraham was, I am.”⁶

Note that God does not say, “I was,” or “I will be.” He says, “I *am*.” He is the self-existent One ever present to all events, whether past, present, or future from our point of view.

God’s Continual Protection

God knows the future without His foreknowledge influencing it because He views it as an outside observer. God is totally separate and distinct from space, time, and matter. Therefore, just as He looks at the universe from outside, so He sees past, present, and future from outside, knowing it all at once.

We are finite and God is infinite; therefore, we could not possibly understand *how* He knows the future. He has given us enough intelligence, however, to understand that He *must* know it. As David said, speaking for all mankind, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psalm 139:6).

Scripture makes it equally clear that God is no passive observer entirely disinterested in events taking their own course. Keeping a watchful eye and

playing an active part, He fulfills His eternal purpose for all creation. As the psalmist declared, “Say unto God, How terrible [awesome] art thou in thy works ...! Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. ... He ruleth by his power for ever ...” (Psalm 66:3, 5, 7).

God exerts His influence upon men and events (exactly as He has foreknown He would from eternity past) in order to create the future for us that He desires and has willed. In light of man’s willful intentions and actions, whatever influence or action God has foreknown would be necessary on His part to implement His plans would obviously also be part of God’s foreknowledge—eliminating any necessity of emergency adjustment.

At times all Christians have an awareness of God’s marvelous and gracious intervention in their lives. “Just in time” intervention (the way God, from our perspective, so often works) may seem like a last-minute thought and action on His part, but that is clearly not the case. No doubt, His good hand is always upon His people, but in ways beyond human comprehension. As David said again:

Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. ... Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ... Into heaven ... in hell ... the uttermost part of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ...

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. (Psalm 139:5–18)

The Problem of Evil

It is an inescapable fact that, in spite of God’s foreknowledge and sovereignty, evil predominates in human affairs. That God is not the author of evil is clearly stated in the Bible, as we have already seen. Therefore, we can only conclude that He has, in His sovereignty, given man moral responsibility to be exercised with free choice. That men choose wickedness is not what God desires for mankind. Total Depravity, as defined by Calvinism, eliminates man’s faculty of free will:

Inasmuch as Adam’s offspring are born with sinful natures, they do not have the ability to choose spiritual good over evil. Consequently, man’s will is no longer free ... from the dominion of sin ... as Adam’s will was free before the fall.⁷

The Bible presents evil as the result of man's free will choosing for self instead of for God. The Calvinist, however, in denying human moral freedom, makes God the *cause* of all evil, insisting that He "creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul."⁸ As Calvin declared:

The first man fell because the Lord deemed it meet that he should ... because he saw that his own glory would thereby be displayed. ... Man therefore falls, divine providence so ordaining, but he falls by his own fault. ... I will not hesitate, therefore, simply to confess with Augustine ... that the destruction consequent upon predestination is also most just."⁹

This idea, however, is so contradictory to man's God-given conscience and sense of justice that Calvin spent much of his *Institutes* struggling unsuccessfully to justify it. Calvin digs a hole from which no Calvinist to this day has been able to escape. He does this by irrationally and unbiblically insisting that God can only foreknow what He foreordains:

The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before he made him, and foreknew, because he had so ordained by his decree.¹⁰

In defending God's sovereignty, another Calvinist, at the same time that he denies that man has a free will, implies that man's will must exist after all: "Free will is the invention of man, instigated by the devil."¹¹ How can free will be man's invention by an act of his will if his will doesn't exist? Calvin struggles with the problem of man's will and is forced to acknowledge that man is not rational without it:

I feel pleased with the well-known saying which has been borrowed from the writings of Augustine, that man's natural gifts were corrupted by sin, and his supernatural gifts withdrawn. ... [In fact, being a creature and not the Creator, man never had "supernatural" gifts.]

For although there is still [after Adam's fall] some residue of intelligence and judgment as well as will [because] reason, by which man discerns between good and evil ... could not be entirely destroyed; but ... a shapeless ruin is all that remains ... the will, because inseparable from the nature of man, did not perish, but was so enslaved by depraved lusts as to be incapable of one righteous desire. ...

To charge the intellect with perpetual blindness so as to leave it no intelligence of any description whatever, is repugnant not only to the Word of God, but to common experience ... the human mind [retains] a certain desire of investigating truth ... [but it] fails before it reaches the goal ... falling away into vanity ... unable, from dulness, to pursue the right path ... and, after various wanderings, stumbling every now and then like one groping in darkness, at length gets so completely bewildered. ...

Still, however, man's efforts are not always so utterly fruitless as not to lead to some results. ...¹²

Calvin carries on in this fashion page after page. Man has *some* intelligence for discerning “between good and evil,” but that ability is “a shapeless ruin. ...” What does that mean? He can't tell us. The will did not *perish* but was so enslaved as to be morally useless in desiring the good which it dimly perceives. Man has *some* desire after truth, but is unable due to “dulness” to pursue it fully, so that he becomes “completely bewildered,” yet his efforts are not “so utterly fruitless as not to lead to *some* results. ...” Every effort to extricate himself only causes Calvin to sink deeper into the bog of his own contriving.

Far from supporting such assertions by careful exegesis of Scripture, Calvin can't provide one verse that even comes close to what he theorizes. Indeed, what does he assert? He hedges, qualifies, and contradicts himself so often that he really offers nothing but useless double-talk.

Why Doesn't God Stop Evil and Suffering?

Of course, sinful man and rebellious Satan must be blamed and God, who is perfect in holiness, must be exonerated—but this is impossible if God has predestined everything. Many pages and even chapters of the *Institutes* are given to attempting to prove that everything man does, including all evil, is foreordained of God, but that man is nevertheless guilty and is justly punished by God for doing the very evil that God has ordained. (See for example *Institutes* I: xv-xviii; III: xxi-xxiv.)

Many of today's Calvinists deny that Calvinism teaches that God *causes* evil. Yet that is clearly what Calvin himself insisted upon: “That men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God, and do not discuss and deliberate on anything, but what he has previously decreed with himself, and brings to pass by his secret direction, is proved by numberless clear passages of Scripture.”¹³ In fact, there is no such Scripture—and Calvin's examples apply only to some men, not to all.

Could not the sinner blame for his sin and eternal suffering in the Lake of Fire a God who allows him to choose only evil and not good? Who, by eternal decree, sovereignly originated his evil thoughts and caused his evil deeds and then in punishment for that evil predestined him to eternal

torment? But wait! Doesn't Romans 9:19–22 declare that no man has the right to complain against God? Paul asks: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and the other unto dishonour?" That important question will be dealt with in depth later.

Why, if God is sovereign and all-powerful, doesn't He intervene to stop all evil? That is a meaningless question, however, if (as is claimed) God has decreed the rampant evil and suffering that plague mankind. Why would He undo what He has foreordained? Yet Calvinists insist that God *could* stop all evil if He so desired, because He controls everything. But how could God reverse what He has predestined? He cannot change His mind or go back on His Word. Therefore, if He foreordained evil, He cannot stop it. Here we uncover another contradiction.

The question cannot be escaped: Why would a good God who *is love* decree evil and suffering for billions not only in this life but for eternity in the Lake of Fire? That question is an embarrassment to at least some Calvinists, such as R. C. Sproul and John Piper, because there is no rational (much less biblical) answer within that system of theology. This was admitted by Calvin himself: "I again ask how it is that the fall of Adam involves so many nations with their infant children in eternal death without remedy, unless that is so meet to God? Here the most loquacious tongues must be dumb."¹⁴

There is, of course, a biblical answer to the question of sin that satisfies man's God-given conscience. Man has genuine moral responsibility to God because, beginning with Adam and Eve and coming down to the present, "all have sinned" by their own free will, not by an imposed divine decree. Therefore, any sovereign intervention short of wiping out the human race would not solve the problem of evil, because evil comes from within the heart of man.

Jesus said that from the human heart itself "proceed ... evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies ..." (Matthew 15:19). The only solution short of destroying mankind, as God almost did with the flood, is to completely change the heart. Calvinism claims that God can do this through a sovereign "regeneration" of whomever He pleases without any faith or understanding on man's part. If

that were the case, He could have done so with Adam and Eve and with all mankind, eliminating the sin and suffering in man's entire history. If the problem of sin is all God's doing, then He could undo it as well—but not if He has foreordained it!

On the contrary, because it was by *man* that sin entered the world, the biblical solution is found in the man Christ Jesus alone (Romans 5:12–21). Only through His death in payment of the just penalty for our sins, and in His resurrection to live His life in believers can man be forgiven and born again of the Spirit of God.

This wonderful salvation cannot be forced upon anyone but is God's gracious gift for all who will receive it through believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is by faith that we are saved and created in Christ Jesus “unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8–10). To believe the gospel and to receive Christ requires the exercise of a free choice on man's part, a choice that Calvinism will not allow. As Oxford professor Andrew Fairbairn explained,

While Freedom reigned in Heaven, Necessity governed on earth; and men were but pawns in the hands of the Almighty who moved them whithersoever He willed. This was the principle common to theologies like those of Augustine and Calvin. ... It made illusions of our most common experience.¹⁵

Practical Consequences of Denying Free Will

Sadly, many of those who deny that God allows any free choice to man have been prone to act like the Deity they believed in by denying choice to those who disagreed with them and attempting to coerce everyone into conformity. In this they were following Calvin, who “demanded that the state must consent to be the servant of the church. ... Liberty of conscience was not granted. Heretics and dissenters were executed or banished, and the people were compelled by the arms of the magistracy to perform what was considered their religious duties.”¹⁶

As we have already seen, setting up a state church in the early days of the Reformation, Calvinists forced their views on others whenever possible. One historian writes, “A majority of the framers of the new creeds [in England and Scotland] believed in the divine right of Presbyterianism. They considered it a duty of the state to enforce uniformity, and were not

prepared to make concessions of any importance to the Independents [i.e., the “free churches” that rejected the state church system]. In 1648, Parliament passed an act of extremely intolerant character. Eight [theological] errors [were] made punishable with death.”¹⁷

As we have also observed, the Westminster Assembly was called and financed by Parliament and was controlled by Presbyterians; Baptists and Independents were excluded as “mortal enemies of the State Church.”¹⁸ Tolerance for any religious belief other than Calvinism “was denounced by leading members of the [Westminster] Assembly as the ‘last and strongest hold of Satan. ...’” The Assembly was determined to enforce its brand of religion “upon the entire population.”¹⁹

The Horrible Consequences of Calvinistic “Sovereignty”

This small segment of history provides hundreds of examples of men who loved the Lord with their whole heart and were willing to suffer imprisonment and death in His service, yet because of some of their religious beliefs, they treated other Christians in a most un-Christian manner. Samuel Rutherford was such a man. His letters from prison contained such deep spiritual insights and were so moving that nearly 400 editions were eventually published. Robert Murray McCheyne said that “the *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* were often in his hand.” Richard Baxter held these letters in such regard that he said that, apart from the Bible, “such a book as *Mr. Rutherford’s Letters* the world never saw the like.” Spurgeon considered them “the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men.”²⁰

Historians described Rutherford as a “gracious and godly man.” Yet, because of his Calvinist beliefs, he “denied absolutely the moral principles underlying religious toleration.”²¹ Sounding like the popes he despised, he even went so far as to declare that “there is but one true Church and all who are outside it are heretics who must be destroyed!”²²

Never did Christ or His apostles or the early church attempt to force anyone to believe the gospel. The tolerance the early church had for the ungodly around them was not an acceptance of their errors. It was a recognition that no one could be forced against his will into the kingdom of

God. They attempted to persuade the heathen to believe the gospel, but never did they attempt to force them to do so (as Islam requires)—nor did they believe in a God who could or would. The gospel is the good news of God’s love in Christ and can only be received *willingly* from the heart. Since Calvinism denies the necessity of choice, it was only natural that its adherents would seek to force their views on all dissenters.

Roger Williams, one of the best-known advocates of religious freedom in his day, published a protest titled *The Bloody Tenent [Bloody Tenet] of Persecution for Cause and Conscience*. He fled England for America, where he was badly treated by the Puritans. In England, the Westminster Assembly had his book publicly burned.²³ In 1648, the Presbyterians succeeded in enacting the “gag law ... to punish the Baptists as ‘blasphemers and heretics’ ... Under this infamous law four hundred Baptists were thrown into prison.”²⁴

In fact, dissenters had been suffering persecution and imprisonment for years—Protestants suffering at the hands of fellow Protestants for not being Calvinists. Nearly thirty years before, the following entreaty, titled “A most Humble Supplication of many of the King’s Majesty’s loyal subjects ... who are persecuted (only for differing in religion) contrary to Divine and human testimonies,” had been smuggled out of a prison:

Our miseries are long and lingering imprisonments for many years in divers counties of England, in which many have died and left behind them widows, and many small children; taking away our goods ... not for any disloyalty to your Majesty, nor hurt to any mortal man ... but only because we dare not assent unto, and practise in the worship of God, such things as we have not faith in, because it is sin against the Most High.²⁵

Many Calvinists would deplore the persecution perpetrated by the early proponents of this doctrine. They would not approve of that side of the Westminster Assembly. Yet they praise its Calvinistic Confession, seemingly blind to the connection between the two. And they zealously promote Calvinism as “Reformation theology,” as though the Calvinists had alone carried the Reformation on their shoulders. There were hundreds of thousands of others who were just as sincere in their faith (and we believe far more biblical) as were Calvin and Luther; and they suffered for Christ at the hands not only of the Roman Catholics but of Calvinists and Lutherans as well.

[Note: For more details on the disastrous reign of Calvin as “Protestant Pope” of Geneva, Switzerland, please see Dave Hunt’s *John Calvin’s Tyrannical Kingdom or What Love Is This? Calvinism’s Misrepresentation of God.*]

Love: The Missing Ingredient

God’s love for the lost and the love of Christians for the lost—two major interrelated themes of Scripture—have no part in Calvinism. We know many would take offense at that statement who, indeed, are lovingly concerned for the lost. This is, however, *in spite* of and contrary to their Calvinism and not because of it. Though a Presbyterian theological professor and one-time Moderator of the General Assembly, Herrick Johnson acknowledged:

Across the Westminster Confession could justly be written: “The Gospel for the elect only.” That Confession was written under the absolute dominion of one idea, the doctrine of predestination. It does not contain one of the three truths: God’s love for a lost world; Christ’s compassion for a lost world; and the gospel universal for a lost world.²⁶

In Calvin’s entire *Institutes of the Christian Religion* there is *not one mention* of God’s love for the lost! Nor is that surprising in view of the fact that Calvin’s God can only love the elect.²⁷ Does that not bother today’s evangelical leaders who praise Calvin as the great exegete and call themselves Calvinists?

Furthermore, Calvin’s concept of love is defective. He says that God “requires that the love which we bear to Him be diffused among all mankind, so that our fundamental principle must ever be, Let a man be what he may, he is still to be loved, because God is loved.”²⁸ This is one of several places where Calvin says the Christian is to love “all mankind.” Should not God, then, who *is love*, love all men also? Calvin never says so, but at least here he seems to imply an agreement with that principle—though his idea of God’s love is strange indeed.

He tells us that God’s “boundless goodness is displayed” to everyone, “but not so as to bring all to salvation.”²⁹ How could a “goodness” that stops short of what it could do be seriously described as “goodness,” much less as “boundless”? This goodness (in spite of stopping short) is said by

Calvin to be “evidence of his [God’s] love.” Again we ask, how can failing to do all the good that God is able to do be evidence of His love? And evidence to whom? And how can it be said that God loves those whom He predestined to eternal torment before they were born?

This warped view of God’s love is further revealed in Calvin’s statement that this alleged display of God’s “goodness” is not for the purpose of helping all mankind. Instead, God’s intention is to bring “a heavier judgment ... [upon] the reprobate for rejecting the evidence of his [God’s] love.”³⁰ This argument leaves one stunned. Can a “goodness” that doesn’t do all the good it could be evidence of God’s love? Would it not, instead, be evidence of a *lack* of love? And for using the common sense and conscience God has given us, are we to be condemned for rejecting what Calvin mistakenly called the “evidence of God’s love”?

The Failure of Attempted “Explanations”

Follow Calvin’s reasoning. God loves and saves only the elect; He neglects to save those whom He hasn’t elected to salvation. Incredibly, through “shin[ing] the light of his word on the undeserving,” he reveals His goodness and love by withholding it from them, the better to damn them for “rejecting the evidence of his love.”

Such warped reasoning is an integral part of Calvinism that attempts to show that God loves those whom He could have saved but instead damns. Hear it from pastor and author John Piper, one of today’s most respected Calvinist apologists:

We do not deny that all men are the intended beneficiaries of the cross *in some sense*. ... What we deny is that all men are intended as the beneficiaries of the death of Christ *in the same way*. All of God’s mercy toward unbelievers—from the rising sun (Matthew 5:45) to the worldwide preaching of the gospel (John 3:16)—is made possible because of the cross. ... Every time the gospel is preached to unbelievers it is the mercy of God that gives this opportunity for salvation.³¹ (Emphasis in original)

Trying to reason with those who espouse such obviously contradictory statements leaves one with a sense of complete frustration. Proclaiming the gospel to those He has predestined to damnation is an act of God’s mercy, by which He is giving “opportunity for salvation” to those who can’t be

saved?! And the gospel being preached to the doomed non-elect stems from God's "mercy toward unbelievers" flowing from the Cross?

Words such as love, grace, and mercy seem to have lost what was once their meaning. It is impossible to reason with those for whom the above seems reasonable. Are we talking about two different "Gods" and two different "gospels"—one described in the Bible, the other invented by Calvin and Augustine?

Differentiating Foreknowledge from Predestination

Calvinism's view of predestination, which for Calvin was seemingly empty of genuine love, is a large part of the problem. As we have seen, Arthur W. Pink says, "God foreknows what will be because He has decreed what shall be."³² He was following Calvin, who said that "God foreknew what the end of man was to be ... because he had so ordained by his decree."³³ Central to that belief is the denial that God's foreknowledge has anything to do with knowing something in advance. Instead, foreknowledge is defined as "foreordaining" and is equated with predestination.

Thus when Paul writes, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate" (Romans 8:29), Calvin insisted that it must be read, "For whom He predestinated He also did predestinate"—an obvious redundancy. This will be discussed further when we come to Predestination. It is mentioned here only to show why this view was adopted by Calvin, a view that is followed loyally by his followers today.

To know something in advance is not the same as predetermining that it will happen. Foreordination and foreknowledge are not the same, but they can overlap. Whatever God has predestined, He obviously knows will happen. His foreknowledge, however, is not limited to what He has predestined. He does not need to predestine something in order to know it will happen. Were that the case, as we have already observed, God would not be omniscient.

An unbiblical view of predestination, as we shall see in more detail later, is foundational to Calvinism. Pink claims that "God *decreed* from all eternity that Judas should betray the Lord Jesus" because through Zechariah "God declared that His Son should be sold for 'thirty pieces of silver' (Zechariah 11:12). ... In prophecy God makes known what *will* be, and in

making known what will be, He is but revealing to us what He has ordained *shall be*.” Pink goes on to argue that in spite of all he did, being foreordained, Judas was nevertheless “a *responsible agent* in fulfilling this decree of God.”³⁴

Pink is best known for his strong views on God’s sovereignty, especially through his book *The Sovereignty of God*. Vance points out that “Pink’s Calvinism upset some Calvinists so bad[ly] that an attempt was made to tone it down by The Banner of Truth Trust, by issuing, in 1961, a ‘British Revised Edition’ of *The Sovereignty of God* in which three chapters and the four appendices were expunged. For this they have been severely criticized (and rightly so) by other Calvinists.”³⁵

Philosophers and theologians have long speculated about how God could know the future without *causing* the future. The consequences of whether this is true are serious. We have already given two reasons why God’s foreknowledge of what will happen need have no influence upon what to man are future events. Even Calvin wrote, “I, for my part, am willing to admit, that mere prescience lays no necessity on the creatures; though some do not assent to this, but hold that it is itself the cause of things.”³⁶ Calvin’s reason, however, was that he held foreknowledge and predestination to be one and the same: “but since he foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed that they are so to happen, it is vain to debate about prescience, while it is clear that all events take place by his sovereign appointment.”³⁷

Of course, “all events” must include every evil thought, word, and deed. So here again, as elsewhere, Calvin clearly declares that God is the cause of evil. Yet in the face of undeniable evidence, so-called “moderate Calvinists” today deny that Calvinism teaches that God is the cause, and thus the author, of evil. There is obviously a vast difference between saying that God fully *foresees* everything that will happen and *allows* much that is not His perfect will (which Calvin would not permit)—and in saying that God *predetermines* everything that occurs and thus is the *cause* of it (which Calvin insisted is the case). The latter view, which is Calvinism’s foundational doctrine, makes man a mere automaton and reveals God as the effective cause behind all evil, wickedness, and sin. Thus a terrible blemish is imposed upon God’s holy character!

Like Calvin, Luther asserts that “God foreknows and wills all things.” And he argues that if this is not true, then “how can you believe, trust and rely on His promises?”³⁸ The answer is, “Quite easily. We rely upon God’s promises because He is God, knows all, and cannot lie.”

Luther is simply mistaken here, as he was on much else. Scripture nowhere indicates that God must *will* all things in order to *know* them—or in order to make and keep promises. What God promises to do, He *will* do, regardless of the will or actions of man or nature, yet without violating human will. That He is able to protect us and bring us to heaven does not require that He must will every event that swirls about us—much less that He must be the direct cause of every sin we commit or of which we may become the victims.

Foreknowledge as Proof

More than simply claiming that God knows the future in advance, Scripture proves this fact by revealing His infinite foreknowledge in the hundreds of supernatural prophecies recorded therein. God foretells the future through His prophets for a number of reasons, the greatest being to prove that He is the one true God, as opposed to false gods, and to prove beyond question that, in contrast to all other sacred books of world religions, the Bible is His only and infallible written Word to mankind. Thus God declares:

- Behold, the former things [which I foretold] are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. (Isaiah 42:9)
- I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. ... (Isaiah 46:9–10)
- I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. (Isaiah 48:5)

For at least two reasons, one cannot deny God’s complete foreknowledge of the future. First of all, one would be denying God as He necessarily is and as the Bible presents Him. Second, one would be denying the very foundation of Christianity. Old Testament prophecies comprise the major evidence God offers to man’s faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the

Christ, the Messiah of Israel. Without Him there is no Christianity. So complete is this proof—solely on the basis of numerous clear prophecies—that no one who makes a careful investigation can honestly deny that the Lord Jesus Christ is the prophesied Messiah, the Savior of the world.

The Apostle Paul firmly links the gospel of our salvation in Christ with God’s foreknowledge expressed through His prophets: “... the gospel of God (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord ...” (Romans 1:1–3).

Paul validates the gospel of salvation with the phrase, “according to the scriptures,” meaning, of course, Old Testament prophecies:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand ... How that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*. ... (1 Corinthians 15:1–4; emphasis added)

Unless God’s prophets, through His foreknowledge, had told us how, where, and when the Messiah would be born, and of His sinless life and miracles, His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver by one of His disciples, His rejection by His people the Jews, and many other specifics including His cruel crucifixion and His glorious resurrection, we would have had no way of identifying the Messiah when He came. Had the precise details not been foretold by prophets who had already been proved to be inspired of God, His betrayal, rejection, and crucifixion would have been enough to convince us (as most Jews are convinced to this day) that He could not have been the Messiah. The detailed identification leaves those who reject Christ without excuse.

None of the world’s religions has such prophetic evidence for its validity. There are no prophecies for Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, or any other leader of the world’s religions, whereas there are literally hundreds of prophecies proving that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

And here we confront another odd contradiction (beyond the scope of this book, but which we have dealt with in other writings): that those of the so-called Reformed position (in general) who put such emphasis upon foreknowledge and predestination have, following Augustine’s lead yet further, rejected the premillennial rapture of the church, the literal thousand-year reign of Christ on David’s throne, and the literal fulfillment of all of

God's promises to His chosen people, Israel, along with so much else that is clearly prophesied for the future. Instead, like Augustine, to their own harm they allegorize and spiritualize away this massive and vital portion of God's revealed foreknowledge—the very prophecies about Israel that constitute the major proofs God has provided for His existence and that the Bible is His Word.

What about Man's Will?

As surely as we recognize that God is sovereign, we also recognize that we have at least limited freedom to act within whatever bounds He may have established for human actions. This recognition seems to be continually validated by daily experience. What L. S. Keyser says could hardly be disputed: "That man has a conscience which distinguishes between right and wrong, and free will by which he is able to choose between them, scarcely seems to require any argument. ... His whole experience tells him that he is a free moral being."³⁹ Alexander Maclaren, one of England's great Baptist preachers, put it in similar terms:

If I cannot trust my sense that I can do this or not do it, as I choose, there is nothing that I can trust. Will is the power of determining which of two [or more] roads I shall go. ... God, the infinite Will, has given to men, whom He made in His own image, this inexplicable and awful power of coinciding with or opposing His purpose and His voice. ...⁴⁰

It is not only Calvinists and Lutherans who deny free will, but for thousands of years atheists and skeptics have also argued against this belief. Even Arminius declared that "the Free Will of man towards the True Good is ... imprisoned, destroyed, and lost ... it has no powers whatsoever except such as are excited by Divine grace."⁴¹ Of course, neither can man think rationally or even breathe except by God's grace—but we do think and breathe, and we make choices by our own wills as well as by God's grace.

It hardly seems reasonable that our perception of making choices, some of which we agonize over for days, could simply be an illusion and that we are mere puppets of God's foreordination. In his *Confessions*, Augustine, supposed originator of "absolute sovereignty," wrote:

I knew as well that I had a will as that I lived: when then I did will or nill anything, I was most sure that no other than myself did will and nill: and I all but saw that there was the

cause of my sin.⁴²

The very fact that John tells us that the redeemed are born again “not of the will of man” indicates that there must be much else for which the will of man is to be credited and blamed. Peter’s statement that men “willingly are ignorant” (2 Peter 3:5) of God’s truth indicates that depravity is not something beyond man’s control, but the product of his willing choice. That God says to Israel, “If ye be willing and obedient ... but if ye refuse and rebel ...” (Isaiah 1:19–20), indicates again that man can be reasoned with and can choose by an act of his will either to obey or to disobey God. There are numerous statements in Scripture indicating that God has given man a free will to make moral and spiritual choices for which he alone bears responsibility and is to be blamed.

Although God works “all things after [according to] the *counsel* of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11), this does not state that God *causes* everything that happens in the universe. It is perfectly compatible with God’s sovereignty for Him (by His own *counsel*) to allow man to disobey Him. Without free will, man could not receive God’s love, love Him in return, and receive the gift of salvation.

Confusion Where Clarity Is Needed

Although Calvinism rejects free will, its adherents can’t agree upon what this means. Some allow man freedom in the sphere of earthly matters and deny it only when it comes to believing in Christ. Edwin H. Palmer defines “free will” as “the kind of freedom that no man has,” not only “to believe on Christ or to reject Him,” but even “the ability or freedom to choose either good or evil.”⁴³ Duane Edward Spencer further explains, “*Total Depravity* insists that man does not have a ‘free will’ in the sense that he is *free* to trust Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.”⁴⁴ Vance counters that “No philosopher who denies to man a free will does so on the basis of man’s depravity.”⁴⁵ Nor did (or could) Calvin produce any scripture to support his undefined assertions that man can choose *some* good but *not enough* good, or that he is therefore unable to believe in Christ to the saving of his soul.

Even defining terms divides Calvinists. Charles Hodge insists that “the [Calvinist] doctrine of man’s inability, therefore, does not assume that man has ceased to be a free moral agent.”⁴⁶ Pink, however, declares that “‘free moral agency’ is an expression of human invention⁴⁷ [which denies] that he [man] is totally depraved ...⁴⁸ the sinner’s will is ... free in only one direction, namely in the direction of evil.”⁴⁹ C. H. Spurgeon said, “Free will is nonsense.”⁵⁰ Pink quotes J. N. Darby in another *non sequitur*: “If Christ came to save that which is lost, free will has no place.”⁵¹

On the other hand, equally strong Calvinists Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton rightfully insist that to deny that man has “free moral agency would be to allege that he could never make a choice about anything at all. That would be absurd.”⁵² Another Calvinist points out that “Calvin retains [to man] so little of the will ... that he cannot explain adequately the moral character of human action [in] choices between good and evil.”⁵³ Each of us must come to his own conclusion based upon Scripture.

What Scripture Says about Free Will

The words “will,” “free-will,” “willing,” “freewill,” “free will,” along with related words such as “voluntary,” “choose,” etc., are found nearly 4,000 times in Scripture. The requirement of willing obedience from the heart is a theme that runs all through the Bible: “If ye be willing and obedient ...” (Isaiah 1:19), “If any man will do his [God’s] will ...” (John 7:17), “If thou believest with all thine heart” (Acts 8:37), etc.

God wants our hearts, and the very concept of “heart” used throughout Scripture is meaningless without free will. That “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Proverbs 21:1) does not say that the king has no choice as Calvinism insists. At the least, this is Solomon’s declaration of submission as Israel’s King to God; and at the most, it says that God can turn any king’s heart when He so desires. But it does not declare that everything any king thinks, speaks, and does is according to God’s will and by His pre-ordination. That proposition, again, would make God the author of evil.

The phrase, “freewill offering” is found nine times (Leviticus 22:21, 23; Numbers 15:3; Deuteronomy 16:10; 23:23; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 7:16; 8:28), and “freewill offerings” is found seven times (Leviticus 22:18, 38; Numbers

29:39; Deuteronomy 12:6, 17; 2 Chronicles 31:14, Psalm 119:108). Those numbers, however, do not tell the full story. There were countless freewill offerings as the following indicates: “And Kore the son of Innah the Levite ... was over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things (2 Chronicles 31:14). The phrase “willingly offered” is found five times, such as “the people willingly offered themselves” (Judges 5:2). Both phrases are even used together: “willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD (Ezra 3:5). Could the fact that God gave man free will—and a major reason why—be stated more clearly?

Do Outside Influences Destroy Free Will?

In order to support the doctrine of Total Depravity, the Calvinist must show that man’s will is totally enslaved by sin. The argument has been used that no choice could be made without some influence. Of course, whatever choice one makes is affected to some extent by multiple factors: health or mental mood, the weather, financial pressures, temptations, lust, timing, opportunity, and so forth. And many if not most of these almost numberless influences would seem to be beyond the control of the chooser. How then can the will ever be free?

In pressing this point, Talbot and Crampton write, “If this Arminian concept of free will is taken to its logical conclusion, then it would be sinful to preach the gospel to fallen man. Why? Because it would be an attempt to *cause* him to turn to Christ, which would be a violation of his free will.”⁵⁴ In other words, it would be wrong to attempt to influence man to believe the gospel, because his choice would not have been made freely.

Then Paul was wrong. He said, “we persuade men ...” (2 Corinthians 5:11). What were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the prophets trying to do but to persuade Israel to turn from her evil back to God in full repentance?

Echoing this same argument, Pink imagines he delivers a death blow to free will with this broadside: “There is something which *influences* the choice; something which *determines* the decision.”⁵⁵ Not so. Influences *influence*; they don’t *determine*.

Nor is free will an “Arminian concept.” For thousands of years, many non-Christian philosophers have marshaled excellent arguments in favor of man’s free will. Further, the very fact that various influences are brought to

bear while man arrives at any choice is in itself evidence that man has a free will. If man had no will, there would be nothing for these “influences” to influence. Influences don’t make decisions. The will takes into consideration all factors, and no matter how compelling any influences (i.e., facts, reasons, circumstances, emergencies, contingencies, etc.) may have been, the will still makes its own choice—often irrationally.

That it may have been influenced to some extent in no way proves that the will did not take all factors into consideration and make its own decision. No matter how it reached a resolution, only the will could have decided. Although the Calvinist looks to Augustine for so much, and avidly quotes him for support, here again Augustine is ignored, for he argued persuasively on this very point:

...we do many things which, if we were not willing, we should certainly not do. This is primarily true of the act of willing itself—for if we will, it *is*; if we will not, it *is* not—for we should not will if we were unwilling.⁵⁶

Influences can be powerful. Many of today’s preachers deliberately employ psychological and salesmanship techniques, entrapping multitudes in false professions of faith. God does not use psychological techniques but truth to convince and persuade. This is the purpose of prophecy. Paul “confounded the Jews ... proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22). Apollos did the same, “publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28). We should do the same today.

There is obviously a godly persuasion that does not employ deceptive techniques. Moreover, as we have already seen, if Calvinism were true, Paul’s use of persuasion would be misguided for other reasons: the elect would need no persuasion and the non-elect, being totally depraved and predestined to eternal damnation, could not be persuaded.

Foreknowledge and Man’s Will

Given the above, a central issue has engaged philosophers, skeptics, and theologians in debate for thousands of years: *How* can God’s foreknowledge and man’s free will both be true? Inasmuch as God knows what everyone will ever think or do, isn’t everything therefore

predetermined? And wouldn't that fact rule out any possibility that man could make a free choice concerning anything at all?

We have already seen why God's foreknowledge has no causative effect upon man's free choice. God, being timeless, sees from outside—as though they had already happened—what to us are future events. Thus His foreknowledge has no effect on man's will. There is no reason why in His omniscience God cannot know what man will freely choose to do before he chooses to do it—and have that knowledge without *causing* the event to occur.

There is yet another question that troubles many: If man is free to choose between options, would that not in itself deny both God's sovereignty and His foreknowledge? Luther claimed that this question was the very heart of the Reformation and of the gospel itself. In fact, Luther dogmatically insisted that it was impossible for God to foreknow the future and for man at the same time to be a free agent to act as he wills.

Believing firmly in God's foreknowledge, Luther wrote an entire book titled *The Bondage of the Will*, to prove that the very idea of man's free will is a fallacy and an illusion. Several reasons have already been given as to why Luther was wrong on this point, and that issue will be dealt with further in the next chapter.

Though Calvin took so much from Augustine, like Luther he also rejected the Augustinian belief that God could foreknow the future, while at the same time man could have a free will. According to Calvin, foreknowledge leaves no room whatsoever for free will, because foreknowledge is the same as predestination:

If God merely foresaw human events, and did not also arrange and dispose of them at his pleasure, there might be room for agitating the question [of free will] ... but since he foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed them, they are so to happen, it is vain to debate about prescience. ...

If this frigid fiction [of free will] is received, where will be the omnipotence of God, by which, according to his secret counsel on which everything depends, he rules over all? [57](#)

Calvin repeatedly uses such unbiblical and utterly fallacious reasoning. The Calvinist assumes a contradiction between sovereignty and free will that doesn't exist. The fact that God is able to allow man freedom of choice,

while still effecting His purposes unhindered, is all the more glorifying to His sovereign wisdom, power, and foreknowledge.

Augustine on Free Will

In taking so much else from him, the Calvinist overlooks the fact that Augustine clearly affirmed the free will of man.⁵⁸ Moreover, Augustine argued that there *is no incompatibility* between God's absolute sovereignty and man's free will; and that to deny that fact, as did Martin Luther and John Calvin, would be "impious"! Augustine writes persuasively:

...we assert both that God knows all things before they come to pass and that we do by our free will whatsoever we know and feel to be done by us only because we will it. ...

He Who foreknew all the causes of things would certainly among those causes not have been ignorant of our wills. ... Wherefore our wills also have just so much power as God willed and foreknew that they should have.⁵⁹

Therefore we are by no means compelled, either, retaining the prescience of God to take away the freedom of the will, or, retaining the freedom of the will, to deny that He is prescient of future things, which is impious. But we ... faithfully and sincerely confess both.⁶⁰

[4] With Liberty & Salvation for All?

GOD DETERMINED of His own will to provide salvation. He devised the plan and set the rules to satisfy His love and justice. It is folly for anyone to imagine that man can set the requirements for salvation and impose them upon God. It is no less obvious that God, because He is God, has the prerogative of offering salvation to whomever He will. Yet Calvinists claim that their critics deny such “freedom” to God. We do not.

God declared, “[I] will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (Exodus 33:19). He does not say, however, that He will be gracious and merciful to some and not to others—but that grace and mercy are by His initiative. He is under no obligation to be gracious and merciful to *anyone*.

Only by God’s grace and mercy can anyone be saved: “By grace are ye saved. ... According to his mercy he saved us” (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5). Since salvation is by grace, it cannot be earned, merited, or demanded on any basis whatsoever.

Grace and mercy can be given to whomever God should decide. However, far from indicating that His grace is limited because He has decided to save only a select group, the Bible clearly states that “God so loved the world” that He gave His Son to die “that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16–17). Christ the Lamb of God came to take “away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and He became the propitiation “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

God repeatedly declares that He is gracious and merciful to all. And so it is with God’s love, from which His grace and mercy flow—without partiality it reaches out to all mankind.

Furthermore, in contrast to the literally hundreds of places where God’s love is clearly expressed for all of Israel (most of whom rejected Him) and for the whole world (most of whom also reject Him), nowhere does the Bible declare that God doesn’t love and desire the salvation of all. No

Scripture indicates that God's love and salvation are limited to a select number. If this were the case, surely it would be stated clearly—but it is not. Instead, God's grace and mercy are repeatedly offered to all mankind.

The Calvinist therefore attempts to take the hundreds of declarations of God's love for all and “interpret” them to say the opposite. Thus, in expressions of God's desire for and offer of salvation to all, words such as “world” or “any” or “whosoever” or “sinners” or “all men” are interpreted to mean “the elect.”

Sovereignty and Salvation

God is not in any way obligated to provide salvation for *anyone*. Yet the Bible repeatedly makes it clear that God's gracious purpose is for all mankind to be saved: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. ... Christ Jesus ... gave himself a ransom for all ...” (1 Timothy 2:4–6).

“Whosoever believeth in him. ... Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (John 3:16; Revelation 22:17), etc. Scripture could not declare more clearly that salvation is offered to *all* as a free gift of God's grace to be accepted or rejected.

Yet everyone is not saved. Why not, if the sovereign God truly wants all to be saved? Could the God who “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11) merely express His will in an *offer* that man could by *his* will accept or reject?

Why not? Surely a command is stronger than an offer, and the Ten Commandments are not “Ten Suggestions.” Yet this universal declaration of His desire for mankind, which God gave from Mount Sinai to Moses and has written in every human conscience, is broken billions of times every day by man's rebellious self-will. God's sovereignty is no more undermined by some accepting the offer of salvation and others rejecting it, than by man's continual disobedience of the Ten Commandments.

The word “whosoever” is defined in *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* as “whoever; whatever person: an emphatic form.” There are no alternate meanings—it *always* means whoever or whatever person. Yet Calvinism requires that in certain places “whosoever” actually means “the elect alone.”

In truth, the correct meaning for “whosoever” completely contradicts Calvinism. The word “whosoever” is found 183 times in 163 verses in the Bible, beginning with “whosoever slayeth Cain” (Genesis 4:15) and ending with “whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). “Whosoever” clearly means everyone without exception. It is found in warnings (“whosoever eateth leavened bread”—Exodus 12:15) and in promises of reward (“whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief”—1 Chronicles 11:6). Among the scores of other examples are “whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle” (Jeremiah 19:3) and “whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32). Not once in its 183 occurrences in the Bible could the word “whosoever” mean anything except “whosoever”! But wherever salvation is offered to whosoever will believe and receive Christ, the Calvinist changes the same Hebrew or Greek word to mean the “elect.” He must in order to hold onto Calvinism. But isn’t submission to God’s Word more important than loyalty to a dogma?

Christ Defines “Whosoever”

The best-known Bible verse promises eternal life to “whosoever believeth in him” (John 3:16). Christ’s last recorded words in Scripture are, “And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:16–17). There is nothing in these passages or in any other context to suggest that Christ *ever* offers salvation to anyone less than “whosoever.”

Yet the doctrine of Unconditional Election declares that this offer is effective for only a select group, who alone have been unconditionally elected to salvation—a reinterpretation of God’s clearly declared will that has no basis except the need to salvage Calvinism.

We have shown elsewhere that Christ left no question concerning the meaning of “whosoever” in John 3:16. In verses 14-15, He likened His being lifted up on the Cross for our sins to when the fiery serpents bit the Israelites because of their rebellion, and all who looked in faith to the uplifted brass serpent were healed. Numbers 21:8-9 is unequivocal: “... *everyone* that is bitten, when he looketh upon it [the brazen serpent], shall live ... if a serpent had bitten *any man*, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

The healing from the poisonous snakebite was not for a select group within Israel whom God had predestined to be healed, but for “everyone ... any man.” The only limitation was to look in faith to the upraised serpent. Likewise, everyone who has been bitten by “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Revelation 12:9) is healed if they will but look in faith to Christ lifted up on the Cross. No wonder Calvinist apologists, such as James White, avoid the passages in the Old Testament that point to the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world.

Scripture clearly declares that there is “no difference” between Jew and Gentile, “all have sinned ... all the world [is] guilty before God”—and that God is the God “of the Gentiles” as well as of the Jews. Thus salvation is for “all them that believe” (Romans 3:9-31).

If salvation is not genuinely available to all, why did Christ command His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15)? Is that not giving a false impression, both to His disciples and to all who would read their account of Christ’s teachings in the four Gospels? Christ repeatedly offered salvation to all who would believe and receive Him: “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life” (John 5:24); “If *any* man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (7:37); “I am the door ... by me if *any* man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:7-9), and so forth.

How would His disciples, or the common people who heard Him who had never heard of Augustine’s and Calvin’s theories, come to the conclusion that salvation was only for a limited number who had been unconditionally elected? Complicated reasoning and a system of “Five Points” are required to arrive at that conclusion. And if that were the case, would it not be misrepresentation of the worst sort to offer salvation to *whosoever will*? If Calvinism were true, Christ could have chosen words to convey that fact rather than seeming to offer salvation to whosoever would believe on and receive Him.

The Calvinist, of course, explains that he preaches the gospel to all because he doesn’t *know* who is among the elect. Could it really be God’s will for the gospel to be preached to those for whom Christ did not die, and for multitudes to be urged to believe from whom God withholds the necessary faith? Isn’t this not only dishonest but cruel? Peter told the Jews gathered at Pentecost, “for the promise is unto you and to your children ...”

(Acts 2:39). Calvinism turns this promise into a lie, and the preaching of the gospel becomes a cruel hoax to multitudes!

Illustrating a Point

The God of the Bible declares repeatedly throughout His Word that He is not willing that anyone should perish but wills for “all men to be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4). Continually, and in the most urgent and solemn language possible, He calls upon all men to repent and to believe on His Son as the Savior of all mankind. Christ holds out His nail-pierced hands and pleads, “Come unto me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). This is a promise that *all* who labor and are heavy laden with sin have every reason to believe is extended to *them*.

Believing the Bible, one must conclude that just as “*all* have sinned” (Romans 3:23), so *all* are offered deliverance from sin and its penalty through the gospel. Surely the “all” in “all we like sheep have gone astray” must be the same as the “all” in “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). Unquestionably, *all Israel* went astray. Therefore, Christ suffered for the sins of all Israel. Since Israel is a picture of the relationship God desires for all mankind, and since “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), we may thus be confident that God laid on Christ the sins of the whole world. As John the Baptist declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

To claim that “all” and “world” mean only a select group called “the elect” does violence to the plain meaning of language and impugns the character of God. In our ministry newsletter, *The Berean Call*, I likened Calvinism to the following scenario:

If I should hold a rope 30 feet above a man at the bottom of a well and plead with him earnestly to take hold of it so that I could pull him out, wouldn't he think that I was mocking him? And if, in addition, I berate him for not grabbing the rope, would he not begin to wish he could grab me by the throat? And how could I maintain to any reasonable persons that I really wanted to bring the man up out of the well but he was the one who wasn't willing? So how can God really want to save those to whom He doesn't extend irresistible grace, that being the only means whereby they can believe the Gospel?

Misunderstanding a Biblical Illustration

In a radio discussion with me,¹ James White countered that the man at the bottom of the well was dead and couldn't grab the rope. The point of the illustration, however, had nothing to do with grabbing a rope. No illustration is perfect. Salvation is not by any effort on our part, nor do we hang onto Christ to be saved. He keeps us secure.

The point was that the rope was held so high above the man in the well that the professed rescuer couldn't be sincere. The would-be rescuer, of course, is not obligated to save the man below him. But if he does not desire to save him, why does he mock and chide the man at the bottom of the well for failing to grab the rope while continuing to hold it far beyond his reach?

The insincerity of the offer by the supposed rescuer was the point of the imperfect illustration. And so it is with our Lord's offer of salvation in the Bible: Calvinism turns it into an offer that, though it seems to be extended to all, really isn't.

Nor does it help to picture the man at the bottom of the well as dead. In that case, the supposed rescuer is pretending to call to a corpse that he knows cannot hear him. Furthermore, if the man at the top has the power to raise the dead man to life and take him out to safety but doesn't do so, how could he be sincere in his offer?

Such is the God of Calvinism: He pleads with men to repent, He sends forth His servants to preach a gospel that seems to offer salvation to every person, and He chides and damns those who do not believe, even though Christ did not die for them. Yet He neglects to elect them to salvation and does not give to them the essential faith without which they cannot respond to His pleadings. In fact, He has from eternity past irrevocably damned them eternally to the Lake of Fire!

Such insincerity cannot be explained away by the example of the potter and clay. The fact that the potter can do with the clay what he pleases could not explain the potter's promising perfection to each lump of clay and then discarding many, if not most, onto the rubbish heap.

Of course, God sovereignly has the right to save whom He will, and no one could complain. But His sovereignty is only one facet of His Being. God *is love* (i.e., love is the very essence of His character) and He is merciful to all—exactly what we would expect of Him. We surely would not expect the “Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3) to withhold mercy from any who so desperately need it—much less

that He would take pleasure in doing so. Surely, God is being misrepresented by those who limit His love and mercy and grace to a select number.

“As Many as Were Ordained to Eternal Life Believed”

One of the Calvinists’ favorite proof texts is Acts 13:48—“as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Laurence M. Vance says, “Every Calvinist, no matter what else he believes, uses this verse to prove Unconditional Election. ...” David Nettleton claims it is “this verse that made him a Calvinist.”² White devotes four pages to it.³ Palmer exults, “Here is another text with stunning clarity. ... The stark simplicity of this text is astounding.”⁴

Certainly, “*ordained to eternal life*” is the translation of the Greek word *tasso* (in this case *tetagmenoi*) found in all major translations (as White points out).⁵ A number of paraphrases, however, give a decidedly non-Calvinistic rendering. *The Living Bible* puts it, “... as many as wanted eternal life, believed.” *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible* says, “as many as had become disposed for life age-abiding. ...” The *Nazarene Translation 2000* by Mark Heber Miller has, “... all those who believed were disposed to ageless Life.” Whatever the differing opinions of translators and commentators, this one verse cannot undo what hundreds of others establish.

The Calvinist, to support his beliefs, assumes that *tetagmenoi* must mean “predestined to salvation.” Yet that is clearly not the meaning in any of the seven other usages of *tasso* in the New Testament. If that were the intent, why was *tasso* used and not *prooridzo* (predestinated)?

In fact, Adam Clarke declares rather dogmatically, “Whatever *tetagmenoi* may mean, which is the word we translate *ordained*, it includes no idea of *preordination* or *predestination* of any kind. ... [O]f all the meanings ever put on it, none agrees worse with its nature and known signification than that which represents it as intending those who were predestinated to eternal life; this is no meaning of the term and should never be applied to it.”⁶

Nor does the context support the Calvinist rendering, as numerous commentaries declare. J. W. McGarvey comments that “the context has no

allusion to anything like an *appointment* of one part, and a *rejection* of the other, but the writer draws a line of distinction between the *conduct* of certain Gentiles and that of the Jews addressed by Paul. ... Luke says, many of the Gentiles ‘*were determined*’ for everlasting life. It is an act of the mind to which Paul objects on the part of the Jews, and it is as clearly an act of mind in the Gentiles which Luke puts in contrast with it. ...”⁷

Several authorities trace the KJV’s “ordained” to the corrupt Latin Vulgate, which, as T. E. Page points out, “has *praeordinati*, unfairly ...”⁸ *Cook’s Commentary* reads, “The A.V. [KJV] has followed the Vulgate. Rather, [it should read] were ... disposed for eternal life, as in ... Josephus. ...”⁹ Likewise Dean Alford translated it, “as many as were *disposed* to eternal life believed.”¹⁰ *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* says, “There is no countenance here for the *absolutum decretum* of the Calvinists.”¹¹ A. T. Robertson likewise says: “The word *ordain* is not the *best* translation here. ‘Appointed,’ as Hackett shows, is better. ... There is no evidence that Luke had in mind an *absolutum decretum* ... of personal salvation.”¹²

Greek grammarians tell us that *tetagemenoi*, a nominative case, perfect tense, passive middle voice participle of *tasso* is used, indicating an influence upon the Gentiles toward eternal life and believing the gospel. That this is a *present* influence and, as Barnes says, “not ... an eternal decree,” is generally agreed. It was at least in part Paul’s persuasive preaching—which would fit the immediate context and the entire book of Acts: Paul and Barnabas “so spake, that a great multitude ... believed (Acts 14:1). “The verb ... is middle ... thus implies personal action ... among those who had ranged themselves for eternal life.”¹³

Some claim that the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as comments from early church writers, indicate that the first 15 chapters of Acts were probably written first in Hebrew. The Greek would be a translation. Some scholars claim that going back to a “redacted Hebrew” version, based upon word-for-word Greek-Hebrew equivalents, would render Acts 13:48 more like “as many as submitted to, needed, or wanted salvation, were saved.” Furthermore, even if “ordained” were the correct meaning, these Greeks still would have had to believe the gospel and accept Christ by an act of their own faith and will, as all of Scripture testifies.

The Context Is Clear

Always salvation is promised to all (“Repent, and be baptized every one of you” [Acts 2:38]) contingent upon individual faith (“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” [Acts 16:31]). Never is there a hint of God’s predestining certain ones to heaven whom He will sovereignly regenerate and irresistibly cause to believe the gospel while withholding that grace from others. It would be a clear contradiction of the rest of Acts and all of the Bible for 13:48 to mean that certain Gentiles, but not Jews, were foreordained by God to go to heaven and sovereignly given faith to believe the gospel.

The meaning depends upon: (1) comparative usages of *tasso* elsewhere, and (2) the context. Here are all other usages: “... into a mountain where Jesus had *appointed* them (Matthew 28:16); “For I also am a man *set* under authority” (Luke 7:8); “... they *determined* that Paul and Barnabas ... should go up to Jerusalem” (Acts 15:2); “... all things which are *appointed* for thee to do” (Acts 22:10); “they had *appointed* him a day” (Acts 28:23); “... the powers that be are *ordained* of God” (Romans 13:1); “... they have *addicted* themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15). In none of these other usages in the New Testament is there anything even close to a divine decree *causing* human action.

The context is clear. In verse 46, Paul tells the Jews, “seeing that ye put it [the gospel] from you ... we turn to the Gentiles.” That was their personal decision. Verse 48 presents the contrast between the Jews who had rejected the gospel and the Gentiles who believed it. The implication is of a personal decision by the Greeks, as well. There is no support for the Calvinists’ claim that a sovereign decree was the sole reason.

Robertson comments,

The *Jews* here had voluntarily *rejected* the word of *God*. On the other side were those Gentiles who gladly accepted what the *Jews* had *rejected*. ... Why these Gentiles here ranged themselves on *God’s* side as opposed to the *Jews*, Luke does not tell us. This verse does not solve the *vexed* problem of *divine* sovereignty and human free agency.¹⁴

The exact meaning of *tetagmenoi* is in dispute. Yet this is the best verse the Calvinist can point to for support. And to do so, he must arrive at a questionable meaning that contradicts literally hundreds of scriptures where the meaning is crystal clear.

Predestination to Salvation—or Not?

Predestination and election are biblical teachings—but they are *never* unto salvation. To the Calvinist, however, predestination/election is *always* and *only* unto salvation—a view that is imposed wrongly upon Scripture. In fact, election/predestination is always unto specific blessings that *accompany* salvation, but not to salvation itself.

Foreknowledge is always given as the reason for predestination (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2). Knowing who would believe the gospel is a valid *reason* for electing or predestinating those persons to certain blessings. But God’s knowledge that He would extend Irresistible Grace to certain persons cannot be offered as the *reason* for doing so.

White has an entire chapter titled “Unconditional Election a Necessity.” Indeed, it is a necessity for Calvinism, but not on any other basis. To define Unconditional Election, White quotes not from Scripture but from the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and a number of leading Calvinists such as James P. Boyce:

Before the world was made, God’s eternal, immutable purpose, which originated in the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, moved Him to choose (or to elect), in Christ, certain of mankind to everlasting glory. ... (Baptist Confession) This decree ... is made “independent” of all such foreknowledge God has of what will take place in time [and] predestines certain *specific individuals* to eternal life and others it leaves to justice. This is an election *unto salvation* and ... is *utterly unconditional* ... [of] either foreseen faith, actions, dispositions, or desires. (Westminster) [Salvation is conditioned upon faith: “Believe ... and thou shalt be saved.”] The latter theory [i.e., the Calvinistic theory] is that God ... of his own purpose ... has from Eternity ... determined to save ... a definite number of mankind (not the whole race ... not for ... their faith ...) but of his own good pleasure (simply because he was pleased so to choose). (Boyce)¹⁵

These are fallible human opinions, which both Boyce and White admit express merely a “theory” that must be tested by Scripture. More quotations of men’s opinions follow in the remainder of White’s chapter. The final one is from Calvin himself:

We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God’s free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illumines God’s grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others.¹⁶

Who ever imagined that God “indiscriminately adopt[s] into the hope of salvation”? Only those who believe the gospel are saved.

Giving God a Bad Name

One would think that, rather than quoting this statement, Calvinists would be embarrassed by it. How could God’s withholding of salvation from billions to whom He *could* give it cause us to appreciate “the wellspring of God’s free mercy” and “illumine God’s grace”? That is like praising a man’s generosity by exposing his stinginess.

In their chapter on “Limited Atonement,” after explaining that Christ died for only a select group and that all others have been damned by God for eternity, John Piper and his staff defy all logic with this statement: “Every time the gospel is preached to unbelievers it is the mercy of God that gives this opportunity for salvation.”¹⁷ Opportunity for salvation for those for whom Christ did not die, and who have been predestined to eternal damnation? What taunting, cruel mockery!

Far from glorifying God, Calvinism gives God a bad name. Atheists and other critics of the Bible ridicule this portrait of God as a monster who takes pleasure in imposing suffering on mankind. Calvin’s God *could save the entire human race*—but only saves a relative few in order, allegedly, to demonstrate the greatness of His grace!

This continual emphasis upon God’s sovereignty to the exclusion of His love, mercy, and grace pervades Calvinism. In the booklet that John Piper and his pastoral staff at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis published, which promotes Calvinism, God’s love to lost sinners is missing, while sovereignty is the repetitious, dominant theme. In the preface, Piper writes, “To know him [God] in his sovereignty is to become like an oak tree in the wind of adversity and confusion.”¹⁸ But entirely missing is *anything* about knowing God’s love or loving Him.

The real issue is God’s love and character. God’s love for the world is missing from Calvin’s *Institutes*. Indeed, God’s love for anyone, including the elect, is scarcely mentioned—a stark contrast to the importance it is given in the Bible. In Calvinism, it is not love that brings salvation to mankind but God’s sovereign choice for His good pleasure.

God expects us to love our enemies and to do good to all. Calvin admits that “God enjoins us to be merciful even to the unworthy. ...”¹⁹ Yet He has a lesser standard for Himself? How could it glorify God for Him to be less gracious than He commands *mankind* to be? And where does God say that He limits His mercy—much less that He is thereby glorified?

Scripture declares, “The Lord is good to all” (Psalm 145:9), “plenteous in mercy unto all” that call upon Him (Psalm 86:5), and the “God of our salvation [is] the confidence of all the ends of the earth” (Psalm 65:5). How can God be “good” to those whom He, according to Calvinism, predestined to eternal torment? How can He be “plenteous in mercy” unto those whom He could have saved but didn’t? And how can the God of salvation be the “confidence” of those He takes pleasure in damning? Calvin refers to “our most merciful Father,”²⁰ yet he limits God’s mercy to the elect.

Boyce offends the God-given conscience even of atheists in saying that God chose to save only a few and to let the others perish, because He “was *pleased* so to choose”! Where does God ever intimate that He is pleased to let *anyone* perish? In fact, He repeatedly states the opposite—that He has *no pleasure* in the wicked perishing.

A Strange “Mercy” and “Kindness”

The Baptist Confession declares that God’s election, which is supposedly a manifestation of His mercy, “predestines certain *specific individuals* to eternal life and others it leaves to justice.” How can it be a manifestation of mercy to leave the condemned to suffer the penalty that justice demands, when they could be justified and forgiven and rescued from eternal punishment? This is not a question of the guilt of sinners or of whether they deserve judgment, which we all do. The issue is mercy. Surely there can be no limit to the infinite mercy of the infinite God!

God solemnly warns man, “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death ... doth not he that pondereth the heart consider ... and shall not he render to every man according to his works” (Proverbs 24:11–12)? Yet Calvin’s God not only fails to deliver the lost but mercilessly decrees their doom! This cannot be the God of the Bible, of whom Jesus said, “it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14)!

These “little ones” grow into adults. Is it then that God is pleased to damn many whom He formerly loved? But Calvinistic predestination refers to the ultimate torment even of children.

Calvin declares, “Hence the highest proof of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of him whose word it is.”²¹ How can he dare to say this while impugning God’s character? Calvin then goes on to extol God’s mercy and grace as the pinnacle of His character:

There are certain passages which contain more vivid descriptions of the divine character, setting it before us. ... Moses, indeed, seems to have intended briefly to comprehend whatever may be known of God by man, when he said [actually God said], “The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. ...” (Exodus 34:6–7) In Jeremiah, where God proclaims the character in which he would have us to acknowledge him ... it is substantially the same. ... “I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. ...” (Jeremiah 9:24)²²

Yet elsewhere Calvin claims that God’s *withholding* of His grace, mercy, and love from all except the elect enhances the goodness of His character! In fact, Paul argues that God has found “all the world ... guilty” (Romans 3:19) and has “concluded them all [Jew and Gentile] in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all” (Romans 11:32). Unquestionably, the *all* who are guilty and in unbelief must be the whole world of sinners, Jews and Gentiles, *all* of whom are by nature rebels and in unbelief—and these are the *all* upon whom God is determined to have mercy. It could not be stated more clearly throughout Scripture that God’s mercy extends to *all*.

Denying a Clear Contradiction

As we have already seen, White informs us, “Why is one man raised to eternal life and another left to eternal destruction ...? It is ‘according to the kind intention of His will.’”²³ So it is God’s *kindness* that causes Him to damn so many! We are offended for our loving God!

The Calvinist, however, denies any contradiction in the idea that the God of infinite love is pleased to predestine billions to eternal torment. Calvin even castigates those who recognize this lie. He praises Augustine for throwing out of the Church any who suggest that God couldn’t really love those He has predestined to eternal torment:

Were anyone to address the people thus: If you do not believe, the reason is, because God has already doomed you to destruction: he would not only encourage sloth, but also give countenance to wickedness. Were any one to ... say, that those who hear will not believe because they are reprobates [i.e., damned by God's foreordination], it were imprecation rather than doctrine.

Wherefore, Augustine not undeservedly orders such, as senseless teachers or sinister and ill-omened prophets, to retire from the Church.²⁴

Calvin is trying to escape the consequences of his own dogmas, but he can't. He repeatedly insists throughout his *Institutes* that "God saves whom he wills of his mere good pleasure"²⁵ and that some are "predestinated to salvation, and others to destruction."²⁶ Calvin says that the latter, whom it was God's good "pleasure to doom to destruction ... are excluded from access to life. ..."²⁷ How those whom the omnipotent God has "excluded from access to life" could be responsible for their own doom and could be the beneficiaries of His infinite love is incomprehensible.

It is as if God has thrown into the ocean billions of people whom He has so created that they cannot swim a stroke. He "mercifully" rescues some of them and leaves the rest to drown in eternal death. How could anyone say to those whom God created to drown, "It is your own fault!"? How can Calvin (and Calvinists today) say it is "wickedness" and "imprecation" to say that the non-elect cannot believe the gospel because God has excluded them from faith, when, in fact, that is exactly what Calvinism teaches? It is outrageous to suggest that those whom God foreordains to eternal doom are not only to blame for their fate but are the objects of His love, mercy, and grace! *What love is this?*

Biblical Mercy, Kindness, and Grace

All Scripture contradicts the false doctrine that God would withhold mercy from anyone. In fact, God is "ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Nehemiah 9:17). Such statements are misleading if God intended to pardon only an elect group and predestined the rest (or simply left them) to eternal torment! Of the good and righteous man, the Bible says, "he is ever [always to all] merciful" (Psalm 37:26). Surely the very "gracious and merciful God" (Nehemiah 9:31) would be no less than always merciful to all. But Calvinism limits God's grace and

mercy to a select group called the elect—a lower standard of mercy than He expects of us.

The Apostle James points out the hypocrisy of saying to someone who is “naked, and destitute of daily food ... be ye warmed and filled” and then failing to meet his need (James 2:15–16). Yet the God who inspired James, according to Calvinism, tells a lost and perishing world, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” but withholds the faith without which they cannot believe and be saved. Such a God sees those who are in greater need than physically naked and destitute, and He fails to rescue them from an eternal hell even though He could in His omnipotence and sovereignty do so—in fact, He has predestined them to this horrible fate. Is this really the God of the Bible, or a God that Calvin borrowed from Augustine?

The psalmist rejoices that God’s “tender mercies are over all his works” (Psalm 145:9). The Calvinist, however, changes Scripture to limit God’s mercy to “the elect.” Christ exhorts us, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36). If our Father in heaven is merciful to only the elect, we could neglect helping multitudes and claim that so doing reveals how merciful we are!

Jesus illustrates the mercy of His Father in many ways. He tells us that after crying out, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13), the publican was mercifully justified. Paul refers to “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). Would the very “Father of mercies” be any less merciful *to all* than He expects mankind to be? “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

These scriptures, and scores more in the same vein, tell us that God’s mercy is infinite, extending to all mankind without discrimination. The psalmist says, “I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever ...” (Psalm 89:1). God’s mercies are unto all who call upon Him. Indeed, the very glory of God is in His mercy to all mankind.

Of course, God has the right to limit His mercy. However, Scripture declares repeatedly and in many ways that God *does not* limit His mercy but extends it to all. One is forced to reject Calvinism on this basis if on no other, for it contradicts the very character of God that is consistently displayed throughout Scripture.

In contrast, the non-Calvinist believes that God offers salvation to all without discrimination, but He cannot *make* anyone believe, for that would violate their free will and eliminate love. Those who will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire will be there because of their own choice and won't be able to blame God.

Whether God loves all, is merciful to all, and provides salvation for all to accept or reject, is the real issue. The answer to that question should become increasingly clear to the reader in the following pages.

[5] Perverting Predestination

IN SCRIPTURE, the basic meaning of the terms *predestination* and *election* is the same: to mark out beforehand for a special purpose and blessing. On what basis? The sole reason that is always given is *foreknowledge*. So declare both Peter and Paul: “For whom he did foreknow [Greek: *proginosko*], he also did predestinate [*proorizo*] to be conformed to the image of his Son ...” (Romans 8:29); “Elect according to [*kata*] the foreknowledge [*prognosis*] of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience ...” (1 Peter 1:2).

It seems that God predestined certain blessings for those He foreknew would believe the gospel and be saved. The heavenly Father planned from eternity past an inheritance for those who would become His children through faith in Christ Jesus: “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

Never does election or predestination refer to salvation, but always and only to particular benefits. “What must be borne in mind is the fact that predestination is not God’s predetermining from past ages who should and who should not be saved. Scripture does not teach this view.”¹ Ironside declares: “... There is no reference in these four verses [the *only* four that refer to predestination] to either heaven or hell, but to Christlikeness eventually. Nowhere are we told in Scripture that God predestined one man to be saved and another to be lost.”²

The “Eternal Decree of God”?

Edward Hulme says of Calvin, “Predestination was his pivotal dogma. ... ‘Everything,’ says Calvin, ‘depends upon the mere will of God; if some are damned and others saved it is because God has created some for death and others for life.’”³ Calvin declares: “I say with Augustine, that the Lord has

created those who, as he certainly foreknew, were to go to destruction, and he did so because he so willed. Why he willed, it is not ours to ask. ...”⁴

Again, Palmer informs us, “The first word Calvinism suggests to most people is predestination; and ... the other four points [of TULIP] follow.”⁵ John H. Leith writes, “Predestination can be taken as a special mark of Reformed theology.”⁶ Pink adds, “Not only has God the right to do as He wills with the creatures of His own hands, but *He exercises this right*, and nowhere is that seen more plainly than in His predestinating grace.”⁷ *Grace preordains multitudes to eternal doom?*

Predestination (according to Calvinism) is the “eternal decree of God, by which ... some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. ...”⁸ Calvin reiterates: “Those, therefore, whom God passes by he reprobates, and that for no other cause but because he is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children. ...”⁹ It is a libel on the character of God to say that damning billions pleases Him! Yet this distasteful doctrine is the inevitable result of Calvinism’s extreme view of sovereignty.

The Calvinist “thrusts his doctrines of election and predestination into every conceivable Scripture text.”¹⁰ Vance goes on to say:

Clark claims that “Isaiah has some two dozen verses that bear rather directly on the doctrine of predestination.”¹¹ [Yet] the word neither occurs in Isaiah nor anywhere else in the Old Testament. Culance is even bolder: “Turning more specifically to the matter of Election to salvation, consider the following.”¹² Then follows a list of twelve passages from the Old Testament in which election is not mentioned and salvation is not even in view.¹³ Turning now to the New Testament, we find the same thing. Boettner audaciously declares: “There is hardly a chapter in the Gospel of John which does not either mention or imply election or reprobation.”¹⁴ But even after a statement like that he didn’t give any verses. In answering the question, “I would like for you to list the scriptures which teach that God elected individuals to salvation before the world began,” one Sovereign-Grace Baptist lists six scriptures where election is not even mentioned.¹⁵

The Role of Predestination in Calvinism

Calvin always limits God’s mercy and love to the elect. As an Islamic expert says of that religious system: “The Divine will is irresistible, and has decreed in every detail the entire course of the universe which He governs, and the fate each moment of every creature therein. ... Its dogma of

predestination and of fate ... leaves no room for human free-will. ...”¹⁶ So it is with Calvinism.

John Horsch comments, “According to Augustine’s teaching, the history of mankind would, from a religious and spiritual point of view, be little more than a puppet show, ...”¹⁷ R. C. Sproul writes, “God wills all things that come to pass ... God desired for man to fall into sin ... God created sin.”¹⁸ Sheldon agrees: “The Augustinian scheme ... does represent Him [God] as foreordaining that the fall should involve, beyond every chance of rescue, the eternal ruin and damnation of the greater part of the race ...”¹⁹ Without any apparent embarrassment or regret, Palmer explains that by the teaching on predestination in Calvin’s *Institutes* and echoed by most Calvinists to this day, God is the author of everything and therefore even of all sin:

Foreordination means God’s sovereign plan, whereby He decides all that is to happen in the entire universe. Nothing in this world happens by chance. God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen. ... He has fore-ordained everything “after the counsel of his will” (Ephesians 1:11): the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist—even sin.²⁰

No wonder Susanna Wesley wrote to her son John: “The doctrine of predestination as maintained by rigid Calvinists is very shocking, and ought utterly to be abhorred, because it charges the most holy God with being the author of sin.”²¹ This abhorrent doctrine is not biblical but is a human invention. Calvinism’s five points require a sovereignty that allows man no freedom of the will, thereby necessitating that God be the predestinator and effective cause of all.

Consequently, mankind could blame God for everything, and Calvinists ought to acknowledge that fact. In a feature article as part of *Christianity Today’s* “occasional series on doctrinal renewal, sponsored by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.,” two Master of Divinity students at Princeton Theological Seminary recounted the joy of their conversion to Calvinism: “Blaming God for everything has been such a joy that we decided the least we could do...was to tell the world how we got here.”²²

Once again, looming over Calvin, is the long shadow of Augustine. Paul K. Jewett calls Augustine “the first true Predestinarian.”²³ Of Calvinism’s central doctrine of salvation through Irresistible Grace and

Unconditional Election, Loraine Boettner declares, “This cardinal truth of Christianity was first clearly seen by Augustine.”²⁴ Of that great Catholic “Saint” (another fallacy: in the Bible, all believers are saints), Horsch commented:

Augustine ... was by theological speculation led to the belief in predestination ... [that] God in his mercy selects and predestinates a [certain] number ... for eternal life. ... From the rest of mankind ... God withholds his grace, and will condemn them even if they should die in infancy. ...²⁵

This repugnant doctrine of punishing innocent infants mocks Christ’s words, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).

Where Is God’s Love?

Every biblical passage that mentions predestination/election will be searched in vain for any reference to anyone being predestined to damnation. How, then, does the Calvinist support such a doctrine? By implication only. Those whom God did not elect have been just as surely damned by His eternal decree. Calvin said it is “childish” to deny this, “since there could be no election without its opposite reprobation.”²⁶ Boettner declares:

The doctrine of absolute Predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life. The very terms “elect” and “election” imply the terms “non-elect” and “reprobation”. ... We believe that from all eternity God has intended to leave some of Adam’s posterity in their sins, and that the decisive factor ... is to be found only in God’s will.²⁷

What a misrepresentation of God! We search the writings of Calvinists in vain to find some hint of regret or sympathy for those hopelessly doomed by God’s eternal decree. How could the God who damns multitudes then profess His love for them—or regret His sovereign decrees? *Love and compassion*—where shall we find these greatest of all virtues in Calvinism?

Calvinists propose various theories to make it seem that God really *does* love those He predestines to eternal torment. One of the most callous theories comes from Michael Horton in a book with a foreword by J. I. Packer. He argues, “This view intensifies God’s love, by limiting it only to

those who believe. That sure beats the indiscriminate, general benevolence we seem to be hearing much about today.”²⁸

For God to love all mankind would be a despicable “indiscriminate, general benevolence”? Limiting God’s love to a select group intensifies God’s love? What madness!

As noted, John Piper and his pastoral staff published a booklet titled “TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism.” Like Calvin’s *Institutes*, it glorifies God’s sovereignty (as we have already seen), but nowhere in its pages is there even a mention of God’s love for sinners. John Calvin is presented as “the famous theologian and pastor of Geneva,”²⁹ with not a word about the floggings, imprisonments, tortures, banishments, and burnings at the stake that he encouraged there. Piper also praises Augustine,³⁰ but without a hint that he was the father of modern Roman Catholicism and held to numerous doctrines that evangelicals find repugnant. Is it honest to withhold vital facts in order to promote Calvinism?

Five times in the New Testament, Christ commands us, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:19, etc.). Paul twice, and James once, reiterate this command that one must love one’s neighbor as oneself (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). Christ makes it clear that everyone who is in need is one’s neighbor (Luke 10:29–37). Surely none are in greater need than the lost. Yet Calvinism tells us that the God who “is love,” and who “so loved the world” and sent His Son “that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17)—even though He could save *all*—damns billions for His “good pleasure” and to prove His justice. Aghast at such doctrine, one can only repeat in astonishment, *What love is this?*

Distorting a Metaphor

Calvinism negates God’s love, mercy, and grace for any except the elect. “All who will finally be saved, were chosen to salvation by God the Father, before the foundation of the world, and given to Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace.”³¹ Piper writes, “Election refers to God’s choosing whom to save. It is unconditional in that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him. Man is dead in trespasses and sins. So there is no condition he can meet. ...”³² John MacArthur, too, declares

that unbelievers are “no more able to respond to God than a cadaver” and “are incapable of any spiritual activity. ...”³³ Vance points out the obvious error:

And finally, if you make an exact parallel between a physically dead man and a spiritually dead man ... then you likewise have to say ... [if] he can't accept Christ because he is dead then he can't reject Christ either. A [physically] dead man cannot believe on Jesus Christ, but a [spiritually] dead man can.”³⁴

The physically dead can do nothing, not even commit sin; so they could hardly present a proper analogy of spiritual death. The spiritually “dead” are able to live active lives, get an education, earn a living, defy God, and continue to sin—or submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. Yet MacArthur reiterates:

How can a person who is dead in sin, blinded by Satan, unable to understand the things of God, and continuously filled with evil suddenly exercise saving faith? A corpse could no sooner come out of a grave and walk.³⁵

On the contrary, to the spiritually dead, Isaiah writes: “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. ... Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:1, 7). Surely the wicked are dead in trespasses and sins. Yet they are commanded to come, repent, and drink of Christ.

We agree that none would seek the Lord unless He first seeks them. Scripture declares, however, that God seeks *all*. He calls upon *all who thirst* to come to Him and drink, and upon *all who are wicked* to turn unto Him in reliance on His mercy. It must therefore be possible for those who are spiritually dead to hear God's voice, turn to the Lord, believe the gospel, and receive pardon by His grace.

Yet the insistent denial that the unregenerate can believe in Christ is a major point in Calvinism. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas argue that “The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God. ... Consequently ... it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation ... but is God's gift to the sinner. ...”³⁶ Yet when Paul and Silas said, “Believe

on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31), were they suggesting that by believing the Philippian jailor would contribute faith to his salvation? Hardly.

And how could Paul and Silas even address the spiritually dead and invite them to believe on Christ? How could they know that those to whom they gave the invitation were going to be sovereignly regenerated and given faith to believe? Obviously Paul and Silas were not Calvinists.

A Simple Exegesis

Peter says we are “elect according to [kata]” God’s foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:2). The Greek *kata* carries the meaning of homogeneity or harmony. Thus God’s election/predestination was in agreement, or harmony, with something He foreknew about those whom He predestined to partake of the declared blessings. What could that have been?

Surely the most obvious possibility would be that God foreknew who would repent and believe the gospel, and on that basis He predestined them “to be conformed to the image of his Son” and “unto obedience.” Apparently departing from his oft-professed Calvinism, Spurgeon declared:

Mark, then, with care, that OUR CONFORMITY TO CHRIST IS THE SACRED OBJECT OF PREDESTINATION. ... The Lord in boundless grace has resolved that a company whom no man can number ... shall be restored to His image, in the particular form in which His Eternal Son displays it ... the likeness of the Lord from Heaven. [Emphasis in original]³⁷

In order to escape foreknowledge as the basis of predestination, the Calvinist must establish another meaning for foreknow/foreknowledge that fits his theory. Generally, this attempt has taken two forms. Most try to maintain that foreknow/foreknowledge, instead of meaning to know in advance, means to determine in advance, or to foreordain. Piper writes, “he [God] foreknows—that is, elects—a people for himself. ...”³⁸ Others suggest that it means to love beforehand. There are, however, several reasons why neither of these stratagems will work.

Various Calvinist authors argue that “foreknowledge” is “the equivalent of a determined counsel ... God’s omniscient wisdom and intention ... God’s prerogative to ‘choose beforehand.’”³⁹ MacArthur writes:

God's foreknowledge, therefore, is not a reference to His omniscient foresight but to His foreordination. God does indeed foresee who is going to be a believer, but the faith He foresees is the faith He Himself creates. It's not that He merely sees what will happen in the future; rather He ordains it. The Bible clearly teaches that God sovereignly chooses people to believe in Him.⁴⁰

He hasn't shown us from Scripture—he simply declares it to be so in order to support Calvinism. But this is not what Scripture says! Piper quotes C. E. B. Cranfield, who refers to the foreknowledge of Romans 8:29 as “that special taking knowledge of a person which is God's electing grace.” Piper then comments that “foreknowledge is virtually the same as election. ... He foreknows—that is, elects—a people for himself. ...⁴¹ But the Greek word is *proginosko*, which means to know beforehand in the sense of foreseeing. The Calvinist is desperately twisting the Scripture in order to maintain his theory.

Peter very clearly distinguishes counsel or determination as well as election *from* foreknowledge: “him [Christ], being delivered by the determinate [*horizo*] counsel [*boule*] and foreknowledge [*proginosko*] of God ...” (Acts 2:23). If these are the same, then Peter is saying nonsensically that Christ was “delivered by the foreknowledge and foreknowledge,” or by “the determined counsel and determined counsel” of God. Paul likewise makes a clear distinction: “For whom he [God] did foreknow, he *also* [*kai*] did predestinate. ...” The Greek *kai* denotes a differentiation, thus making it clear that foreknowledge could not be the same as predestination, or Paul, as already pointed out, would be redundantly saying, “whom he did predestinate he *also* did predestinate.”

The Essential Function of Foreknowledge

This inspired statement by Peter on the Day of Pentecost reveals that in foretelling future events through His prophets and accomplishing them in history, God takes into account what He by His foreknowledge knows will be the actions and reactions of men. He did not *cause* Judas to betray Christ, nor did He *cause* the Jews to reject Him or the Romans to crucify Him—or predestine them to do so. He arranged that these particular individuals, who He knew would act in that manner, were on the scene at the right time to fulfill His will, though they were unaware that they were

fulfilling prophecy. As Paul declared, “... because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they fulfilled them in condemning him” (Acts 13:27).

To foreknow is simply to know in advance. And to know in advance is not the same as to foreordain. If God simply elected/predestined certain ones because He elected/predestined them, there would be no reason to mention foreknowledge at all. Clearly, that God foreknew certain persons would believe the gospel was the *reason* for electing/predestining them to the special *blessings*.

That foreknowledge means nothing more nor less than to know beforehand is clear not only in the particular scriptures above, but also in other places where the same Greek words are used in the New Testament. In referring to Jewish leaders of his acquaintance who he says “knew me from the beginning [i.e., before that day]” (Acts 26:4–5), Paul uses the same word, *progonisko*, translated at Romans 8:29 “for whom he did *foreknow*.” Peter uses the same word in a different context but with the identical meaning: “ye know [*proginosko*] these things before ...” (2 Peter 3:17).

Other Calvinists point to the way sexual intercourse is expressed in the Old Testament: “Adam knew [*yada*] his wife” (Genesis 4:1), “Cain knew [*yada*] his wife” (verse 17), etc. They then suggest that “whom God foreknew” actually means “whom God loved beforehand.” But that is nonsense.

While *yada* is at times used to denote a special relationship—“I did know thee in the wilderness” (Hosea 13:5), “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2)—never does it mean to know in advance, whereas that is the principle meaning of *proginosko* and *prognosis*. There is, therefore, no relationship between these words that would be of any help in supporting Calvinism.

Furthermore, to “know” one’s wife in a sexual way could not be before the fact, nor does God “know” man in that manner. Therefore, the attempt to link love with foreknowledge through *yada*, to give the meaning “foreloved,” won’t work. That strained effort, however, reveals the lengths to which the Calvinist is both forced and willing to go to protect his theory.

Why not Accept the Simplest Meaning?

Clearly, God in His omniscience has foreknown from eternity past who, when convicted of sin and drawn by His Holy Spirit, would willingly respond to the gospel. On the basis of that foreknowledge He predestined, or elected, those particular persons to special blessings: "... To be conformed to the image of his Son ... unto obedience. ...” Paul adds another blessing: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:4). Dave Breese writes, “We also notice that election in Scripture is not unto salvation, but ‘unto obedience. ...’ [In] Romans chapter 8 ... predestination is based upon the foreknowledge of God and its object is not salvation but conformity to the image of Christ.”⁴²

Paul and Peter are encouraging Christians with what God has in store for those who believe the gospel. As Paul declares, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ...” (1 Corinthians 2:9–10).

Furthermore, not only is predestination/election never said to be unto salvation, but Paul carefully separates predestination from salvation whether in its call, its justification, or its glorification: “whom he did predestinate, them he *also* [*kai*] called ... them he *also* [*kai*] justified ... them he *also* [*kai*] glorified” (Romans 8:30). The Greek *kai* shows that a distinction is being made: predestination is not the same as calling, justification, or glorification. Hobbs comments, “Predestination ... simply means that God has predetermined that those who respond affirmatively to His call ... will be justified ... and furthermore will be glorified. All of this is ‘according to His purpose’ ...”⁴³ The plain meaning of the text is clear.

More Redundancies and Nonsense

There is a further problem with the Calvinist interpretation of “foreknowledge.” Because it rejects knowing what man would do (i.e., repent and believe the gospel) it can involve nothing more than God knowing what He would do. To say that God foreknew what He had predestined would be nonsense.

Moreover, it would be impossible for God to “foreknow” what He purposed to do because His purposes have always existed. As James said,

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world [*aion*]” (Acts 15:18). The Greek *aion*, rather, carries the meaning of “from all eternity.”

Ironically, Rob Zins accuses non-Calvinists of teaching that “there was a time when God knew not [what man would do]. ... However, it is our contention that God knows all things because He wills all things.”⁴⁴ On the contrary, we affirm that from eternity past God has known all that would happen in the universe and in the minds and affairs of men—*not* because He “wills all things” but because He knows all things, i.e., is omniscient.

Piper insists that “God does not foreknow the free decisions of people to believe in him because there aren’t any such free decisions to know.”⁴⁵ If so, man is a puppet with God pulling the strings, making foreknowledge meaningless. Without free choice man would not be morally responsible, could not love God, know God’s love, receive the gift of salvation, have meaningful communion with God, or worship Him. Spurgeon asked: “Shall we never be able to drive into men’s minds the truth that predestination and free agency are both facts?”⁴⁶

Yet White writes, “In other words, the *foreknowledge* of God is based upon His decree, plan, or purpose which expresses His will, and not upon some foreseen act of *positive volition* on the part of man.” Such a conclusion is not only unbiblical but assaults reason. There is no point in saying that God foreknew His eternal decrees—nor could He. Since His decrees have always been, and thus were never future to Him, there is no way in which He could know what they would be before they were decreed.

Neither could one say that God, because He knew in advance that He had decreed to save certain persons, therefore saved them. Foreknowledge is very clearly the *reason* given for election and predestination. God’s knowing in advance what He would do could never be the *reason* for His doing it.

Clearly, knowing in advance who would believe the gospel, God made certain that those individuals heard the gospel, and He predestined them to partake of the many blessings He planned to bestow on the redeemed throughout eternity. Such is the reasonable and legitimate conclusion to be derived from the clear language expressed in these passages. Why go to such great lengths to find another meaning, except to support a theory?

A Closer Look at Election

The words “predestinate” and “predestinated” are used only four times in Scripture. The first three have already been considered. The fourth will be dealt with later. Election has a similar meaning, and the words “elect,” “elected,” “election,” and “elect’s” are together used twenty-seven times in the Bible.

The objects of God’s election/predestination are called “the elect.” The word “elect” (*bachiyr* in Hebrew, *eklektos* in Greek) is used in a variety of ways. It refers to the Messiah (Isaiah 42:1; 1 Peter 2:6), to Israel or Jews (Isaiah 45:4; 65:9, 22; Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27), to the church (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; Titus 1:1), to both Israel and the church (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; Luke 18:7), to angels (1 Timothy 5:21), and to a lady (2 John 1, 13).

These verses cover every mention of the word “elect” throughout the entire Bible. *Not once* is that word used to designate a special class of persons whom God has marked out for salvation and whom alone He loves. Contradicting Scripture (but agreeing with Calvin’s *Institutes*), a minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America writes, “Thus it cannot be that God loves everyone. Since God’s love is sovereign and therefore always a saving love, only those who experience the salvation of the Lord can be the objects of His love.”⁴⁷ Again we must ask, what love is this? And where in the Scripture is this idea expressed?

The Five Pertinent Scriptures

The word “elect” is found four times in the Old Testament: once referring to the Messiah (Isaiah 42:1) and three times referring to Israel (Isaiah 45:4; 65:9, 22). None of these is pertinent to our inquiry. In the New Testament, the word “elect” is found seventeen times, the word “election” six times, the word “elect’s” three times, and the word “elected” once.

Eliminating the one reference to angels, the one reference to Christ himself, the three references that could be both to Israel and the church, the three to a lady, the four to those Jews who have been preserved through the Great Tribulation and survived Armageddon, and the six that are simply a name for believers in Christ, we are left with five that pertain to the general subject of election:

- 1) That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth. ... (Romans 9:11)
- 2) There is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:5)
- 3) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. ... (1 Thessalonians 1:4)
- 4) 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. (1 Peter 1:2)
- 5) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. ... (2 Peter 1:10)

These scriptures present the following truths: (1) God works a definite purpose through election; (2) election involves not all mankind but a “remnant”; (3) election is according to God’s grace; (4) election is “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”; and (5) some responsibility rests upon the elect to make their “election sure.”

If election is to salvation by Irresistible Grace without any intelligent or moral choice on man’s part, it would be impossible to be sure of one’s election. But if election is to service and blessing, Peter is reinforcing in different words Paul’s exhortation to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1–6).

Thus, to make one’s election sure is to fulfill the responsibility that comes with election, not to somehow be sure that one is among the elect and thus eternally saved. Marvin R. Vincent, an authority on biblical languages explains, “*Ekloge*, election [is] used of God’s selection of men or agencies for special missions or attainments. ... [Nowhere] in the New Testament is there any warrant for the revolting doctrine that God predestined a definite number of mankind to eternal life, and the rest to eternal destruction.”⁴⁸

Calvin’s Fallacious Arguments

As already noted, election is determined by God’s *foreknowledge*: “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” In attempting to make predestination and election pertain to salvation so that it would fit his theory, Calvin entangled himself in fallacious reasoning and even heresy.

Of Ephesians 1:4–5, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before

him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” Calvin wrote:

By saying they were elected before the foundation of the world, he [God] takes away all reference to worth. ... In the additional statement that they were elected that they might be holy, the apostle openly refutes the error of those who deduce election from prescience, since he declares that whatever virtue appears in men is the result of election.”⁴⁹

His misunderstanding is obvious. That God would predestine to certain blessings those whom He foreknew would believe the gospel has nothing at all to do with their “worth.” It is folly to suggest that some worth is ascribed to sinners if, by their own free choice, they believe the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Indeed, it is because of their unworthiness and desperate need of salvation that sinners turn to Him.

And how could the blessings that are “the result of election” (as Calvin says above) be “virtues” for which those who receive them can take credit? In fact, the *why* of election is not even mentioned here. Therefore, this scripture cannot be used to dismiss what is so clearly stated in Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2—that God’s foreknowledge is the *reason* behind His choosing certain ones to specific blessings.

The Calvinist argues that “elect according to the foreknowledge of God ... whom he did foreknow them he also did predestinate” can’t mean what it seems to mean, or God’s sovereignty would be undermined. On the contrary, there is nothing inherent in the concept of sovereignty that requires that those to whom God sovereignly offers a gift cannot genuinely receive or reject it. And surely, God in His foreknowledge would know who those persons would be and could plan to bestow special blessings upon them.

That God, being outside of and independent of time, could know the future without *causing* it has been recognized for centuries by many who could not in good conscience accept the Calvinist definition of foreknowledge and predestination. For example, around 1780 John Wesley declared in a sermon that ...

When we speak of God’s foreknowledge we ... speak ... after the manner of men. For ... there is no such thing as either foreknowledge or after knowledge in God. All...being present to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another; but sees all ... from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with everything that

exists therein, is present with him at once, so he sees at once, whatever was, is or will be to the end of time. But observe; we must not think they are, because he knows them. No; he knows them, because they are.⁵⁰

Some Important Distinctions

We could have been given eternal life, and even a place in heaven like the angels, without being made God's children and joint heirs with Christ of all the inheritance He has in the Father. But God, in His infinite love and grace, predestined believers to be part of His family—His very own children, who are called “unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 5:10). As John Wesley said, “God decrees, from everlasting to everlasting, that all who believe in the Son of his love, shall be conformed to his image. ...”⁵¹

Salvation is clearly distinct from the blessings that accompany it—but Calvin had to make them one and the same or his cause was lost. Opposing this error, and echoing so many other biblical scholars, Andrew Telford wrote, “Nowhere in the Bible is Election connected with the salvation or the damnation of a human soul. ... It has to do with service. It is God's elect who serve Him.”⁵² Sadly, in trying to make Scripture fit his theory, Calvin seems to have fallen deeply into error, once again relying upon Augustine:

It is wisely observed by Augustine, that in the very head of the Church we have a bright mirror of free election ... viz. that he [Christ] did not become the Son of God by living righteously, but was freely presented with this great honour, that he might afterwards make others partakers of his gifts. Should anyone here ask, why others are not what he was ... if they are bent on depriving God of the free right of electing [to salvation] and reprobating [predestining to damnation], let them at the same time take away what has been given to Christ.⁵³

Calvin seems to be denying the eternal Sonship of Christ and His eternal equality and oneness with the Father! He says that Christ *became* the Son of God, being “freely presented with this great honour. ...” Those who attempt to support Calvin often quote Psalm 2:7, as well as its quotation in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” They claim this refers to a time when “Christ became the Son of God.” When might that have been? It must have been in eternity past, because Christ was clearly the Son of God before He was born into the world: “and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell” (Proverbs 30:4)?

But there is no *time* in eternity—certainly nothing that could be called “this day.” Time began with creation of the universe (Genesis 1:1). Furthermore, Christ, who is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), must therefore eternally be the Son of God. There was no point in eternity when “Christ *became* the Son of God” as Calvin alleges.

Is there a contradiction in Scripture? Of course not. Psalm 2:7 is not referring to Christ’s *becoming* the Son of God at all. That never happened. He always *is* the Son of God. Paul tells us that “this day have I begotten thee” refers to Christ’s resurrection: “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts 13:33). This agrees with His being called “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18). Calvin was simply wrong on this point as on so many others.

Christ’s alleged “election” to this honor apart from “living righteously” (i.e., without any merit) is then used by Calvin to establish the alleged election of humans to salvation apart from their worth or works. The comparison borders on blasphemy. Christ *is* the I AM from all eternity, one with the Father; and because of *who He is* it was He alone who could redeem us. Throughout the Old Testament, Yahweh, the God of Israel and great I AM, repeatedly says, “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Saviour” (Isaiah 43:11 and many others). Jesus declares, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Ridicule and “Mystery”

One of the sad features of Calvin’s *Institutes* is the demeaning language he continually employs (much like Luther) to vilify all who disagree with him: “Hence it is, that in the present day so many dogs tear this doctrine [predestination] with envenomed teeth ... assail it with their bark. ... Since some feeling of shame restrains them from daring to belch forth their blasphemies against heaven, that they may give the freer vent to their rage, they pretend to pick a quarrel with us ... this doctrine, which perverse men undeservedly assail because it is sometimes wickedly abused. ... The

profane make such a bluster with their foolish puerilities,”⁵⁴ and so forth, page after page.

Beneath Calvin’s own bluster there is often little substance to his arguments, which he can support only by abusing Scripture. His obvious misunderstanding of opposing views, and the weak and unbiblical reasons Calvin adduces for rejecting foreknowledge as the basis of predestination, are reinforced with much ridicule:

We, indeed, ascribe both prescience and predestination to God; but we say that it is absurd to make the latter subordinate to the former. ...⁵⁵ Others, who are neither versed in Scripture, nor entitled to any weight, assail sound doctrine with a petulance and improbity which it is impossible to tolerate ... They ought at least to be restrained by feelings of awe from talking so confidently of this sublime mystery.⁵⁶

The fact that foreknowledge is the *reason* for predestination, as Scripture declares, does not make the latter subordinate to the former. Both are among the many infinite qualities and abilities unique to God alone, none of which is either independent of or subordinate to any other. All of God’s qualities are exercised in perfect harmony with each other. Thus, Calvin’s argument entirely misses the point. And here, again, he pleads “mystery” when all else fails him.

What about 2 Thessalonians 2:13?

Calvinists often cite 2 Thessalonians 2:13 as proof of their position: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Being “chosen to salvation,” however, does not mean that one has been predestined for heaven. Numerous scriptures force us to conclude that all mankind have been “chosen to salvation” by the God who would “have all men to be saved ...” (1 Timothy 2:4), who is “the savior of all men, specially of those that believe” (4:10), and whose Son “gave himself a ransom for all” (2:6).

If all have been chosen to salvation, why are all not saved? Christ said to His disciples, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas ... that should betray him ...” (John 6:70-71). Judas was one of those chosen to be a disciple, but through his own choice he did not fulfill that calling and is now in hell.

God said to Israel, “The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself ...” (Deuteronomy 7:6). That “choosing” did not automatically assure that all Israel would live the part. Unfortunately, Israel as a whole did not fulfill that calling but went into sin, and God had to cast her out of the land.

From these and other scriptures, it is clear that being “chosen” to salvation does not bring salvation: one must still believe the gospel in order to be saved. That fact is further made clear by the rest of the verse: “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Though “chosen to salvation,” the means of salvation is not the choosing by God but the individual’s “belief of the truth.”

[6] The Calvinist's Irresolvable Problem

EVEN CHRISTIANS at times disobey God. Consider the following: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification ...” (1 Thessalonians 4:3); “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God ...” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). What Christian fulfills God’s will by always living a perfectly sanctified life and giving thanks to God “in everything”?

God’s will is violated continually by unbelievers disobeying the Law, and by believers failing to live as they should. “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (1 John 2:1) expresses the will of God for every Christian. Yet John also declares that no Christian fully lives up to this desire of God: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. ... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10).

Even God’s grace requires faith and obedience. Many scriptures make it clear that while grace is unmerited, we must accept and respond to it. Paul declares, “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10); “We ... beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1); “My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1); “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy ...” (Hebrews 4:16). Clearly Paul is declaring that God’s grace is *not* irresistible but must be wedded to human will and effort.

Numerous scriptures teach that the reception of God’s grace is not through irresistible imposition by an overwhelming, omnipotent sovereignty without willingness on man’s part. One could even fail to accept (or accept in part and not fully cooperate with) God’s grace. God sincerely desired to bless Israel. Nevertheless, she refused His grace and placed herself instead under His judgment by her rebellion and idolatry.

God’s desire for Israel, as for all men, was good: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not

of evil ...” (Jeremiah 29:11). Yet much evil befell Israel. Why? Because the blessings of His grace were contingent upon Israel’s faith and obedience. By her disobedience, she reaped God’s wrath.

We are even told that they “limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 78:41). Think of that—limiting the omnipotent, sovereign God, which Calvinists say is impossible! Indeed, the rabbis “rejected the counsel of God against themselves” (Luke 7:30)—but there is no hint that they thereby annulled God’s sovereignty or gained control over God.

The Christian life and victory is not only by sovereign power, but the believers’ faith and obedience as “labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9) are essential: “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:29); “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13).

God truly and powerfully works within the believer, and we can do nothing but by the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, however, we must devote ourselves willingly to the work of God through us. Most Calvinists admit this cooperative effort when it comes to living the Christian life, but insist that there can be no such willingness in believing the gospel and accepting Christ.

Again we point out how unreasonable it is—that, if He so desired, God could sovereignly cause every totally depraved sinner to turn to him, yet His sovereignty seems to lose its Calvinistic power when it comes to causing Christians to live in victory and holiness and fruitfulness. It is certainly clear that once God has regenerated the elect, they do not all live to His glory as fully as they might and as His perfect will for them, as expressed in Scripture, desires.

Surely, God’s desire for Christians goes far beyond their experience. If not, we would have to admit that the shallow and unfruitful lives of so many genuine believers are exactly what God desires for them. We ask again, what is the meaning of rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ if each Christian’s every thought, word, and deed is exactly as God wills? And if that is the case, why aren’t Christians perfect? Surely the continual disobedience, both of unbelievers and believers, proves that God’s grace is

not “irresistible.” Nor does man’s disobedience diminish God’s sovereignty in the least. Obviously, freedom of choice itself is part of God’s plan.

Yet the idea of Irresistible Grace is predicated upon the belief that a human ability to accept or to reject the gospel would deny God’s sovereignty. We have shown that reasoning to be fallacious and that the very concept is unbiblical and irrational.

In spite of its doctrine of “irresistible” grace, Calvinism denies that grace is “imposed” by God upon the elect. At this point, Calvinists begin to contradict themselves further. R. C. Sproul, for example, concedes that Irresistible Grace can be resisted but at the same time declares that “it is invincible.”¹ We are left to wonder how something invincible can be resisted. Most Calvinists agree that Irresistible Grace produces an “effectual call” that is “ultimately irresistible.” Laurence M. Vance quotes a number of Calvinists to this effect and explains that this concept is “derived from Chapter X in the Westminster Confession of Faith.”²

Sproul says that for the elect, God takes away all that caused them in their total depravity to resist Him. The great problem is how to get a totally depraved man saved—a man who cannot even hear the gospel, much less understand and believe it. Remember, the Synod of Dort describes this process as not taking away man’s “will and its properties” but “sweetly and powerfully bend[ing] it. . . .”³ But to “bend” the will of the totally depraved (rather than to destroy and create a new one) means that the original will must have yielded to God. Moreover, what does it mean to “bend” the will, and how is that done “sweetly” and at the same time “powerfully”? And if the human will is not destroyed and something else not put in its place, then it cannot be denied that the human will does, after all, decide and choose to be bent.

This is a knotty problem! After declaring that totally depraved man’s will and its properties of self-determination are not taken away, Dort laid out its complaint against Arminians: “The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod *rejects* the errors of those: 1. Who teach . . .; 2. Who teach . . .;” and so forth, through nine numbered paragraphs. Much of what is listed as being rejected was not believed by the Arminians, nor is it believed by most non-Calvinists today.

Paragraph 8 wrestled with the difficult problem created by Calvinism itself: How can man’s will be allowed any part in receiving Christ, when it

is totally depraved, man is spiritually dead, and God's sovereignty must cause all, including sin, and salvation through faith in Christ? Here is the alleged non-Calvinist error denounced by that paragraph:

8. Who teach: That God in the regeneration of man does not use such powers of his omnipotence as potently and infallibly bend man's will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been accomplished, which God employs to convert man, man may yet so resist God and the Holy Spirit, when God intends man's regeneration and wills to regenerate him, and indeed that man often does so resist that he prevents entirely his regeneration, and that it therefore remains in man's power to be regenerated or not.⁴

Of course, it is not in man's power to be regenerated, nor would the rankest Arminian suggest that it was. Regeneration is entirely God's work—but it is also a *gift* that the recipient must willingly *receive*: “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). That man can accept or reject the offered salvation, however, does not mean that it is in his power to be regenerated.

While Ben Rose insists that “God does not bring anyone into the kingdom against his or her will,”⁵ yet that statement is clearly contradicted by the phrase “irresistible grace.” If, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, man could make a genuine choice to believe and to receive, there would be no need for grace to be “irresistible.” The Westminster Confession of Faith continues the double-talk:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those alone, he is pleased ... effectually to call ... to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God ... renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power ... effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.⁶

No Explaining Away

There is no escaping the mind and will. Even Calvinism's sovereign regeneration (supposedly without faith or consent) does not create a new man out of nothing—but it *regenerates* him. Consequently, Westminster must use phrases such as “enlightening their minds.” Remember, this was allegedly a totally depraved sinner who could choose only evil. Yet his

mind must have the inherent ability to understand truth, or how could it be “enlightened”?

And what about “renewing their wills”? Could that mean restoring some capacity once held but lost? Not if man is totally depraved. When was the will ever that to which it is *renewed* (i.e., restored) by this regeneration and enlightenment? “Renewal” does not fit Calvinism. How can those born spiritually dead be renewed to what they never were? The very language contradicts the foundational beliefs of Calvinism—but there are no other words available.

Of course, we need to be enlightened. How that happens is the question. For the Calvinist, enlightenment is irresistibly imposed upon a totally depraved sinner who has no capacity to be enlightened and never experienced any such state of mind or will to which he could be renewed. Therefore the process cannot be described as “enlightenment” or “renewal”—but Westminster can find no expression, either in Scripture or in language itself, to “explain” this false belief.

Men are without excuse, because all understand the law of God written in every conscience and fear the consequences of disobedience. Thus man is morally responsible to God. Biblically, the problem is not that man *cannot understand* the gospel or that he *cannot submit* to God, but that he *will not*: “Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40); “Because ... when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ...” (Romans 1:21-22).

For that stubborn self-will to change, the Holy Spirit must, of course, work in heart and mind. But it is not an *irresistible* work upon hopelessly blind and dead creatures, but a persuasion with the truth of those who know what they are doing and could believe on Christ if they were willing. Scores of scriptures make it clear that those who are “willing and obedient” (Isaiah 1:19) receive God’s salvation; that “whosoever will [may] take of the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). All are loved by God, sought and persuaded by God, and all have the choice either to accept or reject the salvation He offers. That fact is what makes eternal judgment just—and so tragic.

What Does Christ Teach?

Responding to the criticism of the Pharisees that He received sinners and ate with them, Christ gave the illustrations of the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son to show that humans seek and have great joy in finding the lost, whether sheep, coin, or wayward son (Luke 15:1–32). It seems equally clear that these illustrations are intended also to tell us of God’s love and joy in seeking and finding the lost. The vignettes Christ gives do not seem to represent true children of God who have wandered away and are being brought back by God but rather examples of lost mankind.

In telling the prodigal’s story, Christ uses language that contradicts Calvinism. The “totally depraved” prodigal realizes his situation, comes to a decision, makes a choice, and acts upon it by his will: “And when he came to himself, he said ... I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. ...” Christ does not say that the prodigal, being totally incapable of understanding his situation, or of repenting and returning to the father, was irresistibly drawn by the father.

Although the prodigal “was dead,” and was “lost” (Luke 15:24), that did not prevent him from being moved in his conscience and choosing to return of his own volition to the father. If the prodigal does not represent the unregenerate lost sinner dead in sin whom God welcomes in love, then the Calvinist must admit that salvation can be lost—which neither side believes.

Christ declared that all men are to act like the good Samaritan toward everyone in need (Luke 10:30–37); we are to love even our enemies and do good to those who hate us (Matthew 5:44). If this is the standard God sets for mankind, would He not behave even more benevolently toward all? If Paul did not want a single Jew to go to hell and was in continual agony of soul for their salvation, willing even to be accursed of God if that would save his “kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:1–3), would God, who must have put this selfless love in Paul’s heart, be any *less* loving and concerned for lost humanity on its way to hell? Surely not the God of the Bible!

What about God’s Love?

It is simply impossible to maintain that a God who damns those He *could* save (much less who takes pleasure in so doing!) is merciful and full of love. How then can the Calvinist escape the charge that he misrepresents the God of the Bible? Sovereignty can't excuse or justify callous neglect on God's part to rescue those He could save. That God has the right to damn everyone does not make it loving and merciful.

Our disagreement with Calvinism is not over God's sovereignty, which is biblical. The issue is whether God loves all without partiality and desires all to be saved. Unquestionably, Calvinism denies such love, no matter how the "moderate" Calvinists try to explain that fact away. Yet the Bible repeatedly declares God's love to all and His desire that all should be saved and none should be lost.

The God of the Bible is surely even more loving than He expects Christians to be. We may be certain, as Spurgeon said, that just as we desire the salvation of all, so that is God's desire—as Scripture so often and plainly declares. To say that the God who is not willing for any to perish provides salvation for only a limited number of elect does violence to Scripture and maligns God's character.

If grace is irresistible, why doesn't God, who is love and full of compassion, impose it upon everyone? But grace *cannot* be irresistible. God cannot *force* anyone to believe in Christ, much less to love Him. All who would be in God's presence for eternity must love Him sincerely, and love requires a genuine choice.

The Bible declares that multitudes will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. Why? There are only two possible reasons: either God causes multitudes of men to go to hell because He doesn't love and has no desire to save them—or they willfully reject the salvation He offers. Nor can it be both, or God's will would coincide with that of rebels.

Was Paul Wrong in His Passionate Concern?

It seems reasonable that Paul, who was inspired of the Holy Spirit to provide the definitive teaching concerning foreknowledge, election/predestination, sovereignty, and salvation by grace through faith, would know these subjects even better than Calvin. Could Paul have been wrong in his continual agony for the salvation of Israel (and indeed of all

men)? Yet if God himself, as Calvin sincerely believed, is not concerned over the lost (and how could He be, having predestined their eternal torment?), then we must conclude that Paul was badly out of touch with the Holy Spirit for being in continual, prayerful distress for the salvation of the Jews. Paul misunderstood the scriptures which he was inspired to write, but Calvin interpreted them correctly?!

Paul confesses, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Romans 10:1). Surely he cannot be praying for Calvin’s elect, for their salvation has been predestined from eternity past. Irresistible Grace will make certain they are saved, so there is no need to pray for them. And how could Paul dare to express deep concern for those whom God in His sovereignty has willed to be damned, and for whom God has no concern and Christ did not die—if that were indeed the case?

It is troubling that we hear no concern from Calvinists that so many will spend eternity in hell. That attitude, however, is perfectly consistent with their beliefs. Why should one be disappointed at that which is God’s sovereign good pleasure? And wouldn’t it be rebellion to be concerned for the salvation of those whom God refuses to save?

What God Is This?

Calvinism’s God does not desire to save all mankind, and Calvinism’s Christ had no intention of dying for the sins of all on the cross. At this point, we reach our ultimate objection to this system of religion, which young Calvin learned from Augustine and further developed and passed along to millions who follow it today. This doctrine is repugnant even to unbelievers, because it contradicts the conscience and the sense of obligation and fairness God has implanted in every one of us. Yet a Calvinist pastor insists, “To suggest that Christ came *actually* to save all men is ‘universalism’ ... a heresy openly promoted by the ecumenical churches.”⁷ On the contrary, universalism teaches that all men will ultimately *be saved*, not that salvation is *offered* to all.

A Calvinist editor in England wrote to me earnestly, “The plain truth is that God does *not* wish to save all men. If He did, then He would save them ... [why don’t “moderates” admit this?]. If God wanted to save all men,

why did He prevent Paul from preaching the gospel in certain areas?”⁸ Such an argument makes sense only to a Calvinist, for whom salvation is not something man receives by faith in his heart but is imposed upon him contrary to his natural will and cannot be resisted. Hence the necessity for Irresistible Grace.

But what does this have to do with God preventing Paul from preaching in certain places? There could have been many reasons for redirecting Paul. Certainly he could not preach everywhere. Again Calvinists are grasping at straws.

Peter asked Christ, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” The Lord responded that he ought to forgive “seventy times seven.” Christ then told the story of the servant who, because he would not forgive a fellow servant, was “delivered ... to the tormentors.” In application, He said, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matthew 18:21–35).

Surely if our heavenly Father expects us to forgive those who sin against us, how much more can we be confident that He is ready to forgive all who sin against Him. This is God as the Bible portrays Him—infinite in love, grace, and mercy, ready to forgive all who call upon Him. Calvinism misrepresents Him as only loving and forgiving a limited number of sinners.

The Darkest Side of Calvinism

We consider TULIP to be a libel against our loving and merciful God as He reveals himself both in His Word and in human conscience. Because of the Lord’s mercy to the rebellious house of Israel, Nehemiah praises Him: “... thou art a gracious and merciful God” (Nehemiah 9:31). In seeking to call His wayward people to himself, God says to disobedient Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, “I am merciful” (Jeremiah 3:12). In the spirit of all of the prophets, Joel begs Israel to repent: “[T]urn unto the LORD your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness ...” (Joel 2:13).

There is no way to reconcile with conscience or Scripture the lack of concern on the part of Calvinism’s God for *all* of the lost. Sproul wrote,

“How we understand the person and character of God the Father affects every aspect of our lives.”² He is right, and what effect must it have upon those who believe in a God who limits His love, grace and mercy to a select group, takes pleasure in damning the rest of mankind, and tells us to be merciful as He is merciful!

David, who surely knew God at least as well as Calvin did, declared, “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful ...” (2 Samuel 22:26). Not a word about being merciful to the elect only. The God of the Bible is merciful to those who have shown mercy to others. Is this not what Jesus also said in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7)? But we are to believe that those who show mercy would receive no mercy from God unless they were among the elect. Yet both Christ and David make it sound as though, even without the benefit of Irresistible Grace, some of the “totally depraved” show mercy to their fellows, and because of that God’s mercy will be given to them. Apparently, showing mercy reveals a heart willing to receive (and to be grateful for) God’s mercies.

This Is Election?

Calvin seemed to believe that nearly everyone in Geneva was one of the elect and treated them accordingly. Why? First of all, Calvin believed that baptism transformed an infant into one of the elect. In fact, to have been baptized at any age, even by the most wicked and unbelieving Roman Catholic priest, was to have entered into the kingdom of God if one thereafter believed in the efficacy of that sacrament:

God in baptism promises the remission of sins, and will undoubtedly perform what he has promised to all believers. That promise was offered to us in baptism, let us therefore embrace it in faith.¹⁰

This is a remarkable statement. According to Calvin, the gospel is no certain way to bring people to Christ—but baptism is. Baptism gives certain entrance into the kingdom of God! Furthermore, Calvin taught that the children of believers, even though not baptized, are automatically among the elect:

Children who happen to depart this life before an opportunity of immersing them in water are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven. ... Hence it follows, that the children of believers are not baptised in order that though formerly aliens from the Church, they may then, for the first time, become children of God, but rather are received into the Church by a formal sign, because, in virtue of the promise, they *previously belonged* to the body of Christ (emphasis added).¹¹

Apparently from Calvin's belief that everyone in Geneva, having been baptized, was one of the elect (though he might have to burn, behead, flog, torture, or banish some of them for heresy), attendance at church services was required of all. It was perhaps this rule that caused Servetus to risk drawing attention to himself by attending the service where he was recognized. Moreover, also mandatory for everyone (with few exceptions) was the partaking of the bread and wine at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Considering Paul's clear warning that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Corinthians 11:29), what can be said in defense of Calvin's forcing of the Eucharist upon the unwilling? Could he have sincerely believed that every citizen in his holy "City of God" belonged to Christ? Wasn't this a worse sort of "universalism" than that which Calvinists attribute to those of us who believe Christ died for all?

There was at least one exception to this universalism that nevertheless hardly changes the picture. A notorious libertine named Berthelier had been forbidden by the Church Consistory to partake of the Lord's Supper. In 1553, together with others of his persuasion, he attempted to do so and was repulsed by Calvin.¹² This sparked the last uprising against Calvin (harshly put down by force with executions) to which we have earlier referred.

Left with Unanswered Questions

Calvinism's elect, chosen by God for salvation, must somehow be *made* to believe the gospel in spite of both their natural unwillingness and alleged inability. The gospel of God's grace, which seemingly is offered to whosoever will believe, must be imposed—but this "grace" is only for those whom God has elected. As James White explains, this is why Irresistible Grace is an absolute necessity:

Unregenerate man is fully capable of understanding the facts of the gospel: he is simply incapable, due to his corruption and enmity, to submit himself to that gospel. ...¹³

This is a terrible attack upon the gospel, rendering powerless what Paul declares is itself “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)! With no clear support from the Bible, the “Reformed position” must be deduced from the fact that man is “dead in sin”¹⁴—erroneously ascribing (as we have already seen) the symptoms of physical death to the spiritually dead.

Once sovereignly regenerated, the person is presumably able, under the influence of Irresistible Grace, to believe the gospel and thereafter to serve Christ from the heart. Yet grace is evidently no longer imposed irresistibly upon the elect once they are regenerated, since they do not always behave as they should, much less to perfection. But Scripture describes in very clear terms the Christlike life that believers are to live:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new. Christ liveth in me. ... For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. ... Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. ... Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not ... greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. ...” (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:13; 1 John 2:29; 3:6; 4:4)

The Calvinist cannot point to any passage in the Bible that clearly states that grace is irresistible or that God imposes it upon the elect who otherwise could not believe the gospel. Yet many passages such as the above clearly state that God intends Christ-likeness for those who are regenerated. Then why don’t Christians perfectly perform the “good works, which God hath before ordained” for them (Ephesians 2:10)?

If God irresistibly imposes His grace upon the “totally depraved” to regenerate them, why doesn’t He impose it upon the regenerated unto perfection in Christian living? There is no biblical answer to this question if we deny free will and accept the theory of Irresistible Grace.

Paul even gives the example of a true Christian, surely one of the elect, who does not have even *one good work* as evidence that he belongs to Christ. Yet “he himself shall be saved”(1 Corinthians 3:12–15). How could God’s sovereignty completely override human moral responsibility and choice, as the Calvinist insists, to the extent that man has no choice when it

comes to salvation—and yet the elect are able to resist God’s grace and His will and thus often fail to do the good works that God has ordained for them?

If the elect, having been made spiritually alive by sovereign regeneration, nevertheless do not perfectly obey God, why is unbelief and rebellion equated by Calvinism with total depravity and spiritual death?

If God’s sovereignty does not nullify for the elect the moral accountability to make choices, why would His sovereignty disallow a genuine choice on the part of the unsaved to accept or reject the gospel? If disobedience to God’s will by the elect poses no threat to God’s sovereignty, why would a rejection of the gospel by some of the unsaved pose such a threat?

And would not an irresistible imposition of grace turn it into no grace at all? Some of these questions are considered in the next chapter.

[7] Grace & Human Responsibility

IN ADDITION to the many scriptures already discussed, Calvinists have a number of other favorites that they cite in support of TULIP and especially of Irresistible Grace. A sufficient number of these will be presented herein to allow Calvinist leaders to put forth their best arguments.

A passage used most frequently and with the greatest confidence is John 6:37, 44: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. ... No man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him. ...” Note the enthusiasm with which James White “proves” his thesis from this portion of God’s Word:

If believing that man is “so dead” in sin that he is incapable of coming to Christ on his own is “extreme Calvinism,” then the Lord Jesus beat Calvin to the punch by 1500 years with His preaching in the synagogue recorded in John 6. Here we have the Lord teaching almost everything Norman Geisler identifies as “extreme Calvinism.” Jesus teaches that God is sovereign and acts independently of the “free choices” of men. He likewise teaches that man is incapable of saving faith outside of the enablement of the Father. He then limits this drawing to the same individuals given by the Father to the Son. He then teaches irresistible grace *on the elect* (not on the “willing”) when He affirms that *all* those who are given to Him *will* come to Him. John 6:37–45 is the clearest exposition of what [Geisler] calls “extreme Calvinism” in the Bible.

There is good reason why [Geisler] stumbles at this point: there is no meaningful non-Reformed exegesis of the passage available. ...

Let us listen to Jesus teach “extreme Calvinism” almost 1500 years before Calvin was born. ...“All that the Father gives me will come to me. ...” The action of giving by the Father *comes before* the action of coming to Christ by the individual. And since *all* those so given *infallibly come*, we have here both unconditional election and irresistible grace ... in the space of nine words ...!

Since the action of coming is dependent upon the action of giving, we can see that it is simply not exegetically possible [to deny that] God’s giving results in man’s coming. Salvation is of the Lord. ...¹

“Unconditional election and irresistible grace” are found in this passage? Robert W. Yarbrough,² John Piper,³ D. A. Carson,⁴ and J. I.

Packer⁵ (among others) also think so. However, the words “unconditional,” “irresistible,” and “grace” are not there—nor can they be found anywhere in the Bible. And God “limits this drawing to those given by the Father to the Son”? That is not what Christ says. Whatever Christ means, it must be in agreement with the message of God’s entire Word—and both Unconditional Election and Irresistible Grace contradict the entire tenor of Scripture.

Of course, the “enablement” of God is essential not just for coming to Christ but for *anything* a saved or even unsaved man does—even to draw a breath. *Enablement*, however, is far from *irresistible enforcement causing* man’s action. Yet Yarbrough asserts, “whoever comes to the Son does so as the result of the Father’s forceful attraction.”⁶ Forceful? Where does one find such teaching in this passage?

R. C. Sproul insists that a “crucial point of dispute between Rome and the Reformation [by this he means Calvinism] ... was the efficacy of divine grace. Is grace irresistible and efficacious on its own, or is it resistible and dependent on human cooperation?” Claiming that it is irresistible, he quotes Thomas Aquinas for support. But Aquinas is ambivalent: “divine help ... the help of God ... the help of grace, etc.”⁷ To help someone is not to irresistibly force them. We help people do what they desire to do; without such desire on their part, such “help” would be coercion!

A Troubling Tendency

Attention has already been called to a troubling apparent lack of sympathy for the lost among Calvinists. And how could it be otherwise? They wouldn’t dare to have sympathy for those whom God has been pleased to predestine to eternal doom.

Such a theory logically leads to apathy toward evangelism, though many Calvinists do not succumb to the practical consequences of their belief. Arthur C. Custance reasons, “If Election guarantees the salvation of all that are predestined to be saved, why should we be bothered with evangelism ...? What possible difference can it make whether we speak to men or not?”⁸ He is right.

It would only be reasonable for a Calvinist to think, “I’m one of the elect. Let those whom God has damned be damned; there’s nothing I can do for them. To be concerned would be to complain against God for

predestining them to their just fate.” But the conscience God has placed within even the ungodly condemns such an attitude.

Yet God himself does not love the lost enough to save them all? He lacks sufficient mercy for the lost to give them the faith to believe unto salvation—and is even glorified in sovereignly damning so many and saving so few? Is this the biblical God?

Morey writes approvingly, “Calvin taught that God loved the elect and planned their holiness and salvation while ... He hated the reprobate and planned their sin and damnation.”² “Planned” even *their sin*? Yes, even “the mistake of a typist”—that’s Calvinism! If that is the God of the Bible, Calvinism is true. If not, Calvinism ought to be condemned for its misrepresentation of God.

The Overwhelming Testimony of Scripture

Literally hundreds of scriptures express God’s genuine concern for rebellious Israel. He sends His prophets to plead with them to repent so He will not have to punish them. Surely, Paul reflects God’s heart in his desire to suffer even eternal damnation if that would rescue his brethren, the Jews, from hell. He has an equal passion for the salvation of Gentiles—a selfless passion, which could only come from the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem, identifying Himself as Yahweh, the One who has wept over His rebellious children (Isaiah 1:1–9) for centuries.

We have heard Jesus call out to *whosoever* was weary, burdened or thirsty, “Come unto me.” We have heard our Lord repeatedly declare that *whosoever* would believe on Him would be saved. And we have seen the many scriptures which offer salvation to the whole world and declare that God wants all mankind to be saved, that He gave His Son for the salvation of the whole world, that He is not willing that any should perish, and that Christ died for the sins of all.

To annul this clear teaching of Scripture, the Calvinist changes “world” to “elect” in twenty scriptures. He changes “whosoever” and “all” into “elect” at least sixteen times each. In addition, he turns the phrase “every man” into “elect” six times and “everyone” into “elect” three times. In no case is there anything in the text to justify substituting “elect.” The change has been made for one reason only: to support Calvinism! Thus, when Christ says He would draw “all men” to Himself (John 12:32), the Calvinist

claims, “The ‘all’ plainly refers to all of God’s *elect*.”¹⁰ *Plainly?* Only if one is a Calvinist.

One would think that the overwhelming testimony of Scripture that God *is love*, that He is ever merciful to all and wants all to come to the knowledge of the truth, would be accepted gratefully and joyfully by all of Christ’s true followers, and that this good news would be proclaimed to the world as Christ commanded. Instead, we have seen that in those places where God’s desire for the salvation of all mankind is clearly stated, Calvinists still insist that God has chosen to save only a select number. Great effort is made in order to deny what is so clearly affirmed of God’s undeserved and unlimited love for all.

One must interpret passages such as “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (John 6:37) and “no man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him” (John 6:44) in harmony with the overall message of God’s love for everyone. Yet Piper goes to great lengths to “show from Scripture that the simultaneous existence of God’s will for ‘all persons to be saved’ (1 Timothy 2:4) and his will to elect unconditionally those who will actually be saved [John 6:37 is among verses referenced] is not a sign of divine schizophrenia or exegetical confusion.”¹¹ In fact, this is a hopeless contradiction unless one recognizes man’s God-given power of choice.

Consider Christ’s words: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” does not say that “all that the Father draws shall come to me.” Nor does “No man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him” say that all that the Father draws come to Christ. And surely “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40, 44, 54) refers to those who actually come to Christ, and not all who are drawn—certainly not those who are drawn and then “draw back unto perdition” (Hebrews 10:39). Let us accept what Christ actually says.

The Calvinist’s Best Foot Forward

In defending our God’s honor and character, great care is being taken to accurately understand Calvinism. So let us carefully consider White’s arguments as he develops them from John 6:37–45, a scripture that he calls “the clearest exposition of what [critics] call ‘extreme Calvinism.’” White writes:

Literally Jesus says, “No man is able to come to me.” These are words of *incapacity* and they are placed in a universal context. All men ... lack the ability to come to Christ in and of themselves. ... That is Paul’s “dead in sin” (Ephesians 2:1) and “unable to please God” (Romans 8:8). It is the Reformed doctrine of total depravity: man’s inability [here being] taught by the Lord who knows the hearts of all men. ...

All men would be left in the hopeless position of “unable to come” *unless* God acts, and He does by drawing [some but not all] men unto Christ. ... No man can “will” to come to Christ outside of this divine drawing. ... Reformed scholars assert that the ones who are drawn are the ones who are given by the Father to the Son: i.e., the elect. ...

It cannot be asserted that ... the Father is drawing *every single individual human being* [or] universalism [everyone is saved] would be the result, for *all* who are drawn are likewise *raised up* at the last day.¹²

Where in this passage does Jesus mention “total depravity” or “dead in sin” or “*incapacity*” or “unable to please God” or anything about an “elect”? None of these Calvinist theories is there—nor is any part of TULIP even implied. Jesus does not say that the drawing must be limited to the elect, or universalism would be the result. Nor does He say that the drawing is *irresistible* or *unconditional*. Yet Sproul says “draw” means to “compel,”¹³ and Arthur W. Pink insists it means “impel.”¹⁴ Yarbrough writes, “It is hard to imagine a more explicit description of the Lord’s selective and effectual drawing activity.”¹⁵

On the contrary, those ideas are imposed upon the text because Calvinism requires them. They are not stated by Christ.

Christ does *not* say that everyone who is drawn will actually come to Him and be saved. Yet White is joined by a host of others who consider this to be one of the premier “predestination passages”¹⁶ and a proof text for Irresistible Grace. Laurence M. Vance cites no less than thirteen authors of that persuasion.¹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware also claim that “the one who is drawn is also raised up on the last day.”¹⁸ Yet Christ clearly says it is those who actually come to Him whom He will raise up at the last day. Calvinists read into Christ’s words what isn’t there. He actually said:

1. All that the Father giveth me [not all He draws] shall come to me;
2. and him that cometh to me [not everyone the Father draws] I will in no wise cast out.
3. And this is the Father’s will ... that of all which he giveth me [not all whom He draws] I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.
4. Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him [not all who are drawn], may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up, ...

5. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him [all who come have been drawn—not all who are drawn come]: and I will raise him up at the last day [all who will be raised up have been drawn, but not all who have been drawn will be raised up].

Read the entire text again carefully (John 6:35–65). Christ does not say that all whom the Father *draws*, but all whom He *gives* to the Son, will come to Him, and He will lose none of them whom the Father gives Him; they will all be raised at the last day. Of whom is Christ speaking? We have seen that the Bible teaches that in God’s foreknowledge He knew who would believe and who would reject the gospel. The former are those whom the Father has given to the Son. There is nothing here about causing a select number to believe unto salvation and choosing not to save the rest of mankind.

Christ says that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him. But He doesn’t say that everyone whom the Father draws actually comes to the Son and is saved. All Scripture testifies to a genuine desire on God’s part for all to be saved. Salvation has been procured by Christ and is genuinely offered to whosoever will believe—but not everyone believes. God’s sincere desire for all to be saved is stated so often and clearly by prophets, Christ, and His apostles that we dare not see a contrary interpretation in this passage.

The element of the Father “drawing” is mentioned by Christ only in this one passage. On the other hand, the promise is encountered repeatedly throughout John’s gospel “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. ... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ... he that believeth not the Son shall not see life. ... If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink,” etc. (John 3:16–17, 36; 7:37).

Christ’s statement is clear that not everyone who is *drawn*, but “everyone which *seeth* the Son, and *believeth* on him may have everlasting life ...” (John 6:40). In this passage we encounter not Unconditional Election or Irresistible Grace but human responsibility.

The Burden of Proof

Without question, Scripture repeatedly presents God’s love, compassion, and concern for all Israel and the whole world to be saved. Nor is there any doubt that He offers salvation to all in the clearest language possible. In

contrast, not one scripture can be produced where any of the tenets of Calvinism is clearly stated. The burden of proof is upon the Calvinist to show where the Bible clearly teaches his doctrine. Yet even in this passage, which White calls “the clearest exposition of Calvinism,” the theory is not plainly stated but must be read into it.

Indisputably, the phrases represented by the first four letters in the acronym TULIP never appear in the Bible. That fact speaks volumes. Never does the Bible say that men are by nature incapable of believing the gospel or of seeking God. Never does it say that a select group is chosen unconditionally to salvation, or that grace is irresistible, or that Christ died only for an elect. Never is sovereign regeneration taught as preceding faith in Christ. *The Calvinist cannot produce for any part of TULIP a clear, unambiguous statement from any part of Scripture!* But we can show hundreds of passages that refute TULIP.

Never does Scripture declare that God desires billions to perish and that it is His good pleasure (and even to His glory) to withhold from them salvation. Never is God’s love limited to a select group whom alone He desires to save. In contrast to a few verses that Calvinists must strain to support TULIP, hundreds proclaim plainly God’s love and desire for the salvation of all.

The burden of proof is on the Calvinist to show clearly from the Bible that his doctrine is true—and he cannot do it.

Those Who “Draw Back unto Perdition”

Even in this passage about the Father drawing, there is nothing to indicate that only certain ones are drawn or that the drawing is irresistible or without the willing desire of the one being drawn. Moreover, to “draw” someone in the ordinary sense of that word doesn’t mean they will necessarily come all the way, nor is there anything in either the Greek or the context to suggest, much less to demand, that conclusion.

Hundreds of times throughout the Old Testament, God calls through His prophets to Israel, to the hungry and thirsty, to all who will repent, to turn to Him, to seek Him, to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). Surely He is seeking to “draw” them to Himself. *Not once* is there any

suggestion that God will irresistibly cause anyone to come to Him, much less that He would do this for less than all. And so it is all through the New Testament. The call is given to “whosoever will” again and again. The invitation is open to all who are willing. For the Calvinist to attempt to make John 6 the exception that supports TULIP is to pervert the clear message of the totality of Scripture.

Contrary to the eisegesis forced upon this text to produce an irresistible drawing unto Christ (which He never taught), many souls are drawn partway to Christ by the Father and then turn back: “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition [Greek, *apoleia*]; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:38–39).

The same Greek word, *apoleia*, is found eight times in the New Testament. It is often translated “perdition,” and in each case means eternal damnation. Piper acknowledges that “Most commentators agree that ... [*apoleia*] indicates clearly the eternal perdition. ...”¹⁹ Consider the following: “judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7); “And the beast ... goeth into perdition” (Revelation 17:11). Clearly, those who “draw back unto perdition” cannot be among Calvinism’s elect since the elect cannot lose their salvation and be damned. Yet those who “draw back” must have been *drawn* to some extent. Otherwise, to “draw *back*” would be meaningless.

White avoids Hebrews 10:38–39. So do Pink, Sproul, Piper, and a host of other Calvinists, at least in their books that we have been able to peruse. In his exhaustive treatment, Vance is unable to quote a single Calvinist commenting on this passage.

One of many similar letters I have received declared, “You make God out to be a heavenly wimp who would sure like to save folks, but He just can’t do it unless they cooperate. But the God of the Bible is mighty to save, and He does it in spite of the proud, stubborn, self-righteous will of fallen sinners!”

So God could *cause* anyone and *everyone* to believe the gospel and irresistibly draw them to heaven—but He only does this for a select number? This is Calvinism—whether one calls it “moderate” or “extreme”! It has been imposed upon the Bible in violation of the entire tenor of

Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It is a libel upon the character of God, a denial of the nature of love, and an offense to the conscience which God has placed in the heart of every man.

Unquestionably, salvation is a gift of God's love. Neither a gift, nor love, as God has designed them and as the Bible presents them, can be forced upon the unwilling, not even by God. This does not indicate any weakness in God, much less make of Him a "wimp," but simply reflects the nature of love and a gift, as we have amply shown.

That man may rebel against God, disobey His laws, and refuse God's offer of the gift of His grace does not in the least demean God's sovereignty. In fact, in His sovereignty He has ordained that love and a gift would require a choice, and He makes that clear in His Word. Another letter argued similarly:

You say God loves every person in the world and it is His will that each one be saved. ... To even think that God sovereignly allows man to thwart His divine will is heretical, demeaning to God's greatness and a fabulous invention of the mind to accommodate your bias. God controls every animal, every person and all events. ... Your views, dear brother, make God's will subordinate to man's will, and represent God's plan of salvation as a failure since all men are not saved. ...²⁰

Those who maintain this position could hardly have thought it through very carefully. We've noted the obvious: If God controls every person and event, then rape, murder, and all crime and wars and suffering must be His doing according to His will—clearly not the case. In the *counsel* of His will He *allows* that which is not His perfect will in order to give man the power of choice. Evil is surely the opposite of God's will. Therefore, we can be certain that it is not God's will for evil to reign on earth. Satan is the god of this world, and "the whole world lieth in wickedness [i.e., in the wicked one, Satan]" (1 John 5:19). God allows this state of affairs only for a time.

Without the power of choice, we could not love God or one another. Man has been given the awesome responsibility to choose for himself. Sadly, most choose evil over good and self instead of God. He does not force salvation upon man any more than He forces anyone to obey the Ten Commandments.

Is It All a Charade?

The Calvinist claims that God, in His sovereignty (if He so desired), *could* stop all sin and cause everyone always to keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. This would be possible only if man had no free will. If that were true, however, what would be the point of giving the Law? God could have controlled human thoughts, words, and deeds so that without even knowing the Law, everyone would do exactly what the Law required.

Incredibly, Calvinism teaches that God gave the Ten Commandments, caused man to break them, then damned him for doing so. The Bible is thereby turned into a charade, man into a puppet, and God into a monster whom the atheist rightly rejects.

There can be no doubt, however, that man, not God, is the cause of evil on earth, having selfishly and foolishly chosen to oppose God's will. Nor can it be doubted that God's Spirit has written His laws in every conscience and seeks to draw all men unto Christ. Yet, sadly, even those to whom God has revealed Himself in great power and miracles have often rebelled and gone to hell.

God said of Israel, "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself ... because the LORD loved you ..." (Deuteronomy 7:6–8). Similar statements are made throughout the Old Testament, God even calling Israel His wife. Again, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him. ... I drew them with ... bands of love. ... My people are bent to backsliding from me ..." (Hosea 11:1–8). All Israel was drawn—many drew back.

Israel is called God's elect in both Old and New Testaments (Isaiah 45:4; 65:9, 22; Matthew 24:31, etc.). There is no question that God chose Israel, called her, and drew her with "bands of love" (Hosea 11:4) unto Himself. Yet most Israelites went into idolatry, refused to repent, and were surely not among the redeemed. God had to say repeatedly, "my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32); "they have burned incense to vanity" (18:15).

Many who are drawn to the Lord refuse to believe on Him unto salvation. Christ said, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 20:16; 22:14). And even some who are chosen are not willing to fulfill their calling but betray the One who they claimed was their Lord. Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot ..." (John 6:70–71).

Jesus called Judas, drew him, and chose him to be a disciple. Judas followed Jesus with the other disciples, called Jesus “Lord,” and went forth with the other disciples “to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:2). But Judas was like those who will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ... cast out devils? ... done many wonderful works?” and yet Jesus will say to them, “I never knew you: depart from me” (Matthew 7:22–23). These have not *lost* their salvation, since they were never saved. “I *never* knew you: depart from me!” will be Christ’s pronouncement upon those who were drawn to Him but never came all the way to know Him as Savior and Lord.

Except the Father Draw Him: What Does That Mean?

No one naturally seeks the Lord; we all seek our own selfish desires, and no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him. But the Holy Spirit is in the world to convict all of their sin and need (John 16:8–11), the gospel is being preached, the Father is drawing everyone (even through the witness of creation and conscience). Sadly, many like Judas come partway, even seem to be disciples, then draw back unto perdition.

Jesus did not and could not teach an irresistible drawing in this passage or elsewhere, because it would have contradicted the rest of Scripture. Throughout her troubled history, God sought to draw Israel through weeping prophets. At times she heeded, but the next generation “drew back unto perdition.” His dealings with Israel offer proof of God’s desire for the salvation of all mankind, all of whom He draws—though few respond.

Yes, Christ clearly said, “No man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him.” White claims that statement indicates a total incapacity on man’s part to come to Christ—that man can’t cooperate in any way but must be irresistibly drawn without faith or consent. That’s not being drawn but propelled against one’s will.

Eisegetical Illusion

To support his assertions, White quotes Calvin, to whom he refers with great admiration. Apparently, Calvin’s tyrannical rule of Geneva, where he even resorted to torture of those who disagreed with him, gives no cause for suspecting Calvin’s understanding of and fidelity to Scripture.

In fact, such behavior, so completely contrary to the Spirit of Christ and God's Word, is a compelling indication that Calvin's understanding of God's sovereignty, mercy, and love was flawed. As the Apostle John writes, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk [conduct himself], even as he [Christ] walked" (1 John 2:6). That standard applies to every Christian everywhere at every time in history—and at times, Calvin acted so far from it that no excuse can justify his behavior.

Yet apparently oblivious to the historic facts, reflecting an admiration common among Calvinists, White writes:

John Calvin is admitted, even by his foes, to have been a tremendous exegete of Scripture. Fair and insightful, Calvin's commentaries continue to this day to have great usefulness and benefit to the student of Scripture. Here are his comments on John 6:44:

"To come to Christ being here used metaphorically for believing, the Evangelist, in order to carry out the metaphor in the apposite clause, says that those persons are drawn whose understanding God enlightens, and whose hearts he bends and forms to the obedience of Christ ... hence it follows that all are not drawn, but that God bestows this grace on those whom he has elected.

"True, indeed, as to the kind of drawing, it is not violent, so as to compel men by external force [such as Calvin himself used!]; but still it is a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, which makes men willing who formerly were unwilling and reluctant. It is a false and profane assertion, therefore, that none are drawn but those who are willing to be drawn, as if man made himself obedient to God by his own efforts. ..."²¹

Calvin was right that Christ uses "coming to Him" for "believing on Him." Schreiner and Ware write, "The 'coming' of John 6:37 is synonymous with 'believing.' That the words *coming* and *believing* are different ways of describing the same reality is confirmed by what Jesus says in John 6:35, 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.'"²²

Once again we see that faith in Christ through the gospel precedes, and is, the condition of the new birth and salvation (1 Corinthians 4:15). Faith is not bestowed after one has been regenerated. The fact that *coming* is the same as *believing* also contradicts Unconditional Election and Irresistible Grace, for which "coming" must be without faith, as though a dead man were being carried. Yes, the Father draws men to Christ—but unless they truly believe in Him, they have not "come" all the way but have drawn back unto perdition.

[8] Persuasion, the Gospel, and God

A THOROUGH EXAMINATION of the passage in John 6, which is extolled as the clearest presentation of Calvinism in Scripture, fails to uncover any support for TULIP. But if Calvinism were actually true, then Jesus would indeed have been “taunting and mocking”¹ the Jews exactly as Luther approvingly believed He did. According to Luther and Calvin, Christ said something like this to the Jews:

You must believe on Me as the bread of God come down from heaven to give life unto the world. But you lack the ability to believe unto salvation, and My Father is only going to give that ability to some of you.

By “world,” of course, I really mean “elect.” Though no one recognizes that yet, one day it will be revealed through a system called Calvinism.

You must by faith eat My flesh and drink My blood [i.e., believe that I, as God, became a real flesh-and-blood man to die for your sins, fulfilling the Levitical sacrifices which the priests ate]. If you don’t believe on Me, you will perish in your sins. Of course, you can’t believe on me unless my Father causes you to, and He gives that grace to only a select number.

You naively think the gospel is a real offer of salvation, but in fact, it is intended the better to damn you. You couldn’t believe on Me if you tried.

Come, you wretches, come. These are the terms. But you are all so totally depraved that you can’t come to Me except My Father regenerates you and gives you the faith to believe. And He has already decided in a past eternity (for reasons hidden in His will and to His glory) that He will only do that for some but not all of you. But you are all held accountable anyway. Yes, He could cause all of you to believe on Me, but it is His good pleasure to rescue only some from hell. And don’t think I’m going to die needlessly for those of you whom My Father has predestined to eternal destruction—that would be a waste of My blood. I will die only for the sins of the elect.

What love is this? Some Calvinists willingly admit that the real issue is “whether ... God *desires* the salvation of all men.”² Most Calvinists insist that God has no such desire. Incredibly, MacArthur says God *desires* the salvation of all but *decrees* the salvation of only some³—though He can do anything He decrees. Others say that God has two wills, one to save all and the other to damn multitudes—and the latter somehow overcomes the

former. Zealously defending God's sovereignty, Calvinism reproaches His character.

If God *could* by His power bend anyone and everyone's heart "to the obedience of Christ" without any desire on their part, why doesn't He do it for all? And why didn't He do this for Adam and Eve at the very beginning, and thereafter for all their descendants? Why needlessly create sin and foreordain man to be its slave, bringing the horror of evil and suffering that would plague billions—and then save only *some* when *all* could be rescued? Why would God *cause* Adam and Eve and all mankind to sin, and then punish them for doing what He caused them to do? This is *not* what the Bible teaches (and conscience rises up against it), but this *is* Calvinism.

In support of this abhorrent doctrine, Calvin quotes Augustine: "Wherefore, it cannot be doubted that the will of God (who hath done whatever he pleased in heaven and in earth ...) cannot be resisted by the human will. ..."⁴ So in breaking the Ten Commandments, men are not resisting God's will but fulfilling it! This unbiblical belief created the appalling dogma that everything happening on earth, including all wickedness—even of the grossest nature—is willed by God. How could it be otherwise, if man can do nothing contrary to God's will? Thus Calvinism leads to fatalism, from which come both predestination to damnation and Irresistible Grace. It makes nonsense of the prayer "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10), if God is the cause of all, as Calvinists insist.

Calvinism and Evangelism

If grace truly is irresistible, if only those elected by God to salvation can be saved, if no one can believe the gospel until regenerated by God and thereafter given the faith to believe, would it not be vain to attempt to persuade anyone to embrace the gospel—or for those who hear to voluntarily believe in Christ? Since there is nothing one can do to change one's eternal destiny (if among the elect, nothing can keep one out of heaven; if not, nothing can be done to escape hell) shouldn't one just let the inevitable take its course? Although many Calvinists would object to this view, inevitably, this is the practical conclusion to which that fatalistic dogma leads. After all (they say), regeneration takes place sovereignly

without any faith on the part of the recipient—or even knowledge of its occurrence.

Yet Calvinists, like Spurgeon, often contradict themselves out of a sincere concern for souls that conflicts with TULIP. At times, D. James Kennedy, founder of Evangelism Explosion, makes it sound as though salvation is available to all and even that faith precedes regeneration: “Place your trust in [Christ]. Ask Him to come in and be born in you today.”⁵ Likewise, contrary to his professed Calvinism, Spurgeon taught that “soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian. ...”⁶

But soul-winning is an oxymoron if Calvinism is true. The eternal destiny of every person has already been pre-determined, so *winning* is impossible. Yet Kennedy trains others to evangelize—and in the process, further contradicts Calvinism: “For if it is true that we must be born again, then it is also true that we *may* be born again. ... That, my friends, is the *good news*.”⁷ Does he seriously mean that salvation for the elect alone is *good news* for *everyone*? Doesn’t such language mock the non-elect?

In attempting to show that evangelism has some place in Calvinism, Loraine Boettner declared that every preacher should “pray for them [to whom he presents the gospel] that they may each be among the elect.”⁸ But since the number and identity of the elect is already determined, isn’t such a prayer in vain? Indeed, what is the point of either praying or preaching, if it is not the gospel but sovereign regeneration that brings men to Christ, and the fate of each has been predestined from a past eternity?

As for Kennedy’s “*good*” news, are those who have been predestined to eternal torment expected to rejoice that their doom is sealed and there is nothing that can be done to change it? Can he and other evangelistically inclined Calvinists seriously think their practice matches their belief? In disagreeing with Hoeksema, another Calvinist rightly points out that “for them [the elect] alone the gospel is good news.”⁹

Many Calvinists are convinced, and logically so, “that the doctrines of grace are contrary to soul winning.”¹⁰ David J. Engelsma callously declares that the call of the gospel “does not express God’s love for them [the non-elect]” nor is it “a saving purpose. On the contrary, it is his purpose to render them inexcusable and to harden them.”¹¹ No wonder that by their own admission so many Calvinists lack the Apostle Paul’s zeal for winning

the lost. Laurence M. Vance quotes a Sovereign Grace Baptist leader who admits that:

Our preachers are not soul winning men. We do not have soul winning members ... we almost never give any instructions on why and how to win souls. We do not really work at soul winning in our churches.¹²

But this is Calvinism. Why “work at soul winning”? There is no *winning* those whose eternal destiny has already been decided. R. C. Sproul insists, “Those whom [the Father] regenerates come to Christ. Without regeneration no one will ever come to Christ. With regeneration no one will ever reject him.”¹³ Evangelism, then, has little significance. James E. Adams declares: “Repentance and faith are the acts of *regenerated* men, not of men *dead in sins*.”¹⁴ Contradicting his quote above, Boettner says, “Only those who are quickened (made spiritually alive) by the Holy Spirit ever have that will [to come to Christ].”¹⁵

We have already asked: If God is able to regenerate totally depraved sinners, why couldn't He cause the elect to live perfect lives after He has regenerated them? Why doesn't God's Irresistible Grace that is so powerful toward sinners create perfect obedience after they are saved? Why is grace irresistible for lost sinners, bending their wills to His, but not for saved sinners who so often fail to do His will? Something is wrong with this theory!

Another Favorite Verse

John 1:13 is cited by Calvinists as proof that man can have no part whatsoever in his salvation, not even in believing the gospel (hence the necessity of Irresistible Grace): “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Gise J. Van Baren writes, “It is only by the irresistible grace of God that one is born again.”¹⁶ In spite of saying that the will plays an important part in salvation, Spurgeon declared, “It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does. ...”¹⁷

Since a baby has nothing to do with its birth, Calvinists reason that neither can the sinner have anything to do with being regenerated. That

spiritual birth is nothing at all like physical birth, however, is a major point of this very passage: “not of blood ... flesh ... will of man.” Edwin H. Palmer even reasons that because an unborn baby doesn’t exist, neither does an unsaved person: “a nonbeing does not exist and therefore can have no desires to go to Christ.”¹⁸ Neither can it sin or reject Christ or have the least need of being regenerated, if it “does not exist.” But how can it be said that those who are not yet “born again” don’t even exist?!

Calvin said “infants ... are saved ... regenerated by the Lord,”¹⁹ even though too young to understand the gospel.²⁰ Garrett declares, “John the Baptist was born again while in his mother’s womb.”²¹ In fact, the new birth was not experienced by Old Testament saints. Furthermore, it comes only by believing “the word of God ... which by the gospel is preached” (1 Peter 1:23–25)—hardly possible for infants, much less for a fetus.

Palmer continues his unbiblical reasoning: “A baby never desires or decides ... [or] contributes one iota toward his own birth. ... In a similar fashion, the unbeliever cannot take one step toward his rebirth.”²² Even such a firm Calvinist as Arthur W. Pink points out the fallacy: “Regeneration is not the creating of a person which hitherto had no existence, but the renewing and restoring of a person whom sin had unfitted for communion with God. ...”²³ Vance explains the obvious contradictions inherent in this theory:

Is a baby responsible for any of its actions before it is born? If not, then [by this reasoning] neither would an unsaved man be responsible for any of his [so he could hardly be a sinner].²⁴

The Simplicity of What John Says

John 1:11–13 simply states that flesh and blood have no relationship to the new birth, which is spiritual and completely unrelated to physical birth. Treating the two as analogous was the very mistake Nicodemus made: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born” (John 3:4)? Christ makes a clear distinction: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). These are two different births, and any seeming similarities are only superficial and cannot become the basis of sound conclusions.

John also explains that the new birth—which Christ tells Nicodemus is essential for entering the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5)—does not come by man’s will but by the will of God. Man did not conceive of the new birth nor can he effect it by his efforts. Nor does the non-Calvinist believe that he can. Yet we are accused of that. Bishop imagines he is refuting the non-Calvinist when he declares that the sinner “cannot renew his own will, change his own heart, nor regenerate his bad nature.”²⁵ Of course not.

How does maintaining that we must believe the gospel to be born again suggest that we can regenerate ourselves? It doesn’t.

Of course, only God can regenerate a sinner. But verse 12 declares that God regenerates only those who receive Christ and believe on His name. Yet this verse is commonly overlooked or even avoided by most Calvinists, who reason from verse 13 alone with no regard for content.

Is the new birth imposed upon man by a sovereign God’s irresistible grace? Certainly not! It comes by faith in Christ. Moreover, dozens of passages declare that eternal life is a gift from God to be received by “whosoever believeth.” Even Calvin said, “Now it may be asked how men receive the salvation offered to them by the hand of God? I reply, by faith.”²⁶ Yet non-Calvinists are criticized for saying the same.

Staggering Deductions

Commenting on John 1:12–13, Calvin links it quite biblically and logically with James 1:18 (“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth ...”). Clearly James, like John, is saying that regeneration was God’s idea, “of his own will,” and that He effects it (“begat he us”). James likewise confirms Peter’s declaration that we are born again by “the word of truth,” i.e., through believing the gospel of Jesus Christ—impossible for infants, and something that baptism cannot effect, even in adults. Calvin himself acknowledges that faith in the “word of truth” is essential to salvation—then contradicts himself:

We confess, indeed, that the word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny the inference that, therefore, the power of God cannot regenerate infants. ... But *faith*, they say, *cometh by hearing*, the use of which infants have not yet obtained. ... But they observe not that where the apostle makes hearing the beginning of faith, he is ... not laying down an invariable rule. ...²⁷

There is nothing about *beginning* of faith or “invariable rule.” The “word of truth” by which we are born again *is* invariable. Moreover, if hearing the “word of the Lord” is the beginning of faith, then an infant, baptized or not, hasn’t even begun to possess what Calvin admits is “the only seed of spiritual regeneration.”

Calvin retained throughout his life the unbiblical view of baptism, which, as a devout Roman Catholic, he learned from Augustine. As a result of that error, baptism became a substitute for the faith in Christ through the gospel, which Christ and His apostles declare so plainly is essential to salvation or the new birth. His own baptism as an infant was the only “born again” experience we know of for John Calvin.

Calvin’s unbiblical ideas led to another astonishing heresy: children of believers are automatically among the elect and thus already regenerated from the womb. That false assurance has probably led multitudes astray! Millions are baptized, confirmed, married, and buried by state churches across Europe—and that is all they know of God and Christ. Listen to Calvin:

Hence it follows, that the children of believers are not baptised, in order that ... they may then, for the first time, become children of God, but rather are received into the Church by a formal sign, because in virtue of the promise, they previously belonged to the body of Christ.²⁸

Following Calvin, the Counter-Remonstrance declared that “the children of believers, as long as they do not manifest the contrary, are to be reckoned among God’s elect.”²⁹ So a well-behaved baby, toddler, or young child of believing parents is automatically a regenerated child of God without understanding or believing the gospel! Behavior rather than faith in Christ becomes the Calvinist’s assurance of salvation—another deadly error, considering the undeniable capacity of many unsaved to live seemingly good lives.

What might “manifest the contrary” mean? And whatever it means, suppose this contrary manifestation didn’t show itself for many years? Prior to that time, the person would have been one of the elect but after wrong behavior would no longer be? Could one of the “elect” be lost? And how could behavior either confirm or undo God’s election from eternity past? Thus we see again why the fifth point is called “Perseverance of the

Saints,” and not “The Keeping Power of *God,*”— and why this last of Calvinism’s five points, contrary to what one expects, breeds uncertainty instead of eternal security.

If a child of one of the “elect” is by that fact alone also among the elect, then his or her children would also be among the elect—and grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great grandchildren, and so forth, endlessly. Is not this the logical conclusion to which Calvin’s teaching inevitably leads? Why don’t leading Calvinists today, instead of highly praising Calvin’s *Institutes*, warn of his errors?

Although the belief that children of the elect are themselves elect might be compared to the belief that young children who die prior to reaching an understanding of the gospel are covered by the blood of Christ and taken to heaven, there is a grave difference between the two concepts. The former ultimately involves those who, rather than having been taken to heaven in infancy, continue to live into adulthood. Why should the Calvinist youth, when he comes of age, be challenged to believe the gospel, inasmuch as both by birth and infant baptism he has been declared to be one of the elect?

Later, confirmation merely reinforces confidence in what infant baptism—or being born into a Calvinist family—already allegedly accomplished. Indeed, what need is there to preach the gospel to *anyone*, since the elect are regenerated without it and the non-elect cannot believe it? To defend his dogmas, Calvin managed to rationalize an interpretation of John 1:13 and James 1:18 that actually contradicts both:

Hence it follows, first, that faith ... is the fruit of spiritual regeneration; for the Evangelist affirms that no man can believe, unless he be begotten of God; and therefore faith is a heavenly gift. It follows, secondly, that faith is not bare or cold knowledge, since no man can believe who has not been renewed [reborn] by the Spirit of God.³⁰

On the contrary, verse 12 clearly states that those who *receive* Christ and *believe on His name* are as a result given authority to *become* the sons of God. Faith in Christ clearly precedes and is essential for the new birth. Far from teaching that “no man can believe, unless he be begotten of God,” both James and John teach the opposite: it is through believing “the word of truth” that one is regenerated. It couldn’t be said more clearly that receiving Christ and believing on His name are required by God for Him to regenerate the sinner.

Calvin contradicted himself on this subject as on others: “It is said that believers, in embracing Christ, are ‘born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’ (John 1:13). ...”³¹ Here he clearly admits the biblical order: one embraces (believes in) Christ and, as a result of this faith, is born of God (regenerated). In this same section of his *Institutes*, however, he again refers to regeneration as “preceding faith.”

Directly Contradicting Scripture

How can Calvinists claim that these verses teach that one must be born again *before* one can believe on and receive Christ? They teach the opposite! From this unbiblical twisting of Scripture flows the doctrine of Irresistible Grace: God must irresistibly regenerate the elect before they can even believe on Christ.

Calvinists make some surprising deductions from John 1:13, such as that “man does not have a free will when it comes to the matter of salvation.”³² Pink insists, “In and of himself the natural man has power to reject Christ; but ... not the power to receive Christ.”³³ Palmer asserts, “Only when the Holy Spirit regenerates man and makes him alive spiritually can man have faith in Christ and be saved.”³⁴ Arthur C. Custance declares, “What could possibly be a plainer statement than this of the fact that salvation is conferred upon a select number who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born again by the will of God alone?”³⁵ Yet each of these statements contradicts the passage, which clearly says that those who have “received him ... [and] believe on his name ... become the sons of God [being] ... born ... of God” (1:12–13).

Vance provides astounding quotes from Calvinists contradicting John 1:11-13:

- A person is regenerated before he believes.³⁶
- A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved.³⁷
- A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he has been regenerated.³⁸
- We do not believe in order to be born again; we are born again in order that we may believe.³⁹

- Being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, [man] is thereby enabled ... to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.⁴⁰

Read John 1:11–13 and James 1:18. Meditate upon these passages and pray about them. Such statements as the above, which are integral parts of Calvinism, contradict God’s Word. They are not derived from but are imposed upon Scripture. Bob Thompson challenges any Calvinist “to point to one instance in the Bible where God implanted His Holy Spirit in ... an individual *before* he or she took God at His Word and was saved. ...”⁴¹

It is no coincidence that most Calvinists avoid John 1:12. No reference is made to it in the 600 pages of the *Selected Writings of John Knox*,⁴² and Pink avoids it in *The Sovereignty of God*. Piper makes two oblique references to it in *The Justification of God*, but without substantive comment.⁴³ Not one of the thirteen authors in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge and Grace* confronts it. To his credit, James White gives it four and one-half pages⁴⁴ because Norm Geisler mentions it in his book, *Chosen But Free* (Bethany House, 1999), and White’s book was written specifically as a rebuttal to Geisler.

White attempts a response to Geisler’s statement that “verse 12 [John 1:12] makes it plain that the means by which this new birth is obtained is by [*sic*] ‘all who receive him [Christ]’.”⁴⁵ Geisler means that verse 12 gives the qualification (“as many as received him ... who believe on his name”) for receiving the new birth mentioned in verse 13, and that the new birth is totally “of God.” This is what verse 12 clearly says.

Confusing Man’s Faith with God’s Work

The problem in White’s response is simple and twofold: 1) He introduces (without any biblical support) the favorite argument about faith being impossible without the new birth. That assertion is not only contrary to this passage but also to the numerous passages calling upon the unregenerate to believe and offering salvation through faith; and 2) He fails to distinguish between man’s believing and God’s regenerating. Neither Geisler nor anyone else critical of the Calvinist interpretation of John 1:13 imagines that man’s faith *causes* regeneration. Thus the Calvinist is arguing against something his critics don’t even espouse.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of the Spirit of God. He makes it equally clear that man must believe in order to be saved: “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ... He that believeth ... is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already ...” (John 3:16, 18). And as we’ve seen, salvation and the new birth are one and the same. Yet White proceeds to demolish the same old straw man:

Nothing is said in the text that the new birth is “received” by an “act of free will.” In fact, *the exact opposite is stated clearly*, “the ones born *not* of the will of man. ...” It is an amazing example of how preconceived notions can be read into a text that CBF [Geisler’s *Chosen But Free*] can say the text makes the new birth dependent upon an act of the “free will” when the text says the opposite.

[Furthermore], if a person can have saving faith without the new birth, then *what does the new birth accomplish?* Evidently one does not need the new birth to obey God’s commands or have saving faith.⁴⁶

White confuses what man must do (believe) with what God does (regenerate). That the new birth is “not of the will of man, but of God” does not deny that man must believe for God to effect this work in him. Man’s faith in Christ no more causes the new birth than faith causes forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God. Forgiveness of sins, the new birth into God’s family, and the many other blessings we have in Christ are all the work of God—but they are only bestowed on those who believe. Believing did not *create* these blessings; it merely fulfilled God’s condition for receiving them. Yes, regeneration is not by man’s fleshly will but is all of God; however, God regenerates only those who have received and believed on Christ, as the passage clearly states.

Unquestionably, not only James 1:18 (“begat he us with the word of truth”) but numerous other passages teach that believing “the word of truth” is essential for and must precede the new birth. The gospel is the specific “word of truth” that must be believed for the new birth to occur: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Peter puts it succinctly: “Being born again ... by the word of God ... which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:23, 25). Believing the gospel is the means God uses to effect the new birth—thus faith cannot be imparted by God *after* regeneration, as Calvinism insists.

In response to Nicodemus's question about how a man can be born again into God's kingdom, Christ explains that He is going to be "lifted up" for sin upon the cross like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:15–16). Salvation is not of works, but by faith: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). As Paul repeatedly says, the sinner is "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1).

The sinner must hear and believe the gospel *before* regeneration, not after it. That is why we must preach the gospel and seek, like Paul, to persuade men. Calvin reversed the biblical order, as do his followers today, declaring that no one can believe the gospel until he has first been regenerated. As Spurgeon said, however, one who has been regenerated has no need of the gospel, being saved already.

Is Faith, or Salvation, the Gift of God?

More than one of the critical letters I received charged me with ignorance on this count: "You don't seem to understand that *faith itself* is a God-given gift." That faith is a gift is a major foundational principal of Calvinism. The favorite passage offered as proof is Ephesians 2:8–10. Keith A. Mathison says, "Saving faith is a gift of God, a result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁷ Storms claims, "Numerous texts assert that such [saving] faith is God's own gracious gift (see especially Ephesians 2:8–9 ...)."⁴⁸ Clark declares:

A dead man cannot ... exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is an activity of spiritual life, and without the life there can be no activity. Furthermore, faith ... does not come by any independent decision. The Scripture is explicit, plain, and unmistakable: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Look at the words again, "It is the gift of God." If God does not give a man faith, no amount of will power and decision can manufacture it for him.⁴⁹

On the contrary, the subject of the preceding seven verses is *salvation*, not faith. Verse 8 then declares concerning salvation, "by grace are ye saved ... it [obviously salvation] is the gift of God." It is not saving faith, but *being saved* that is God's gift. We are repeatedly told that eternal life is "the gift of God" (Romans 6:23; see also John 4:10; Romans 5:18; Hebrews 6:4,

etc.). No less definitive, as Calvin admitted and then tried to deny, is the statement that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” There is no biblical basis for suggesting that God gives saving faith to a select group and withholds it from others.

Furthermore, the construction of the Greek in Ephesians 2:8–10 makes it impossible for faith to be the gift. Such is the verdict of many Greek authorities, including Alford,⁵⁰ F. F. Bruce, A. T. Robertson,⁵¹ W. E. Vine, C. I. Scofield, and others.⁵² Vance notes that “A witness to the truth of Scripture against the Calvinist ‘faith-gift’ interpretation can be found in the Greek grammarians.” He lists W. Robertson Nicoll,⁵³ Kenneth S. Wuest,⁵⁴ Marvin R. Vincent,⁵⁵ and others.⁵⁶

Among the reasons the experts cite is the fact that the word *faith* is a feminine noun, while the demonstrative pronoun *that* (“and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift”) is neuter and thus could not refer to faith. Nor will the grammar, as W. G. MacDonald says, “permit ‘faith’ to be the antecedent of ‘it.’”⁵⁷ Of course, “it is” is not in the Greek but was added for clarity by the KJV translators and thus is italicized. Nor does it require a knowledge of Greek, but simply paying attention to the entire context of Ephesians 2:8–10, to realize that salvation, not faith, is “the gift of God”—as all of Scripture testifies.

A number of other Greek authorities could be cited to that effect. Though a Calvinist, F. F. Bruce explains, “The fact that the demonstrative pronoun ‘that’ is neuter in Greek (*touto*), whereas ‘faith’ is a feminine noun (*pistis*), combines with other considerations to suggest that it is the whole concept of salvation by grace through faith that is described as the gift of God. This, incidentally, was Calvin’s interpretation.”⁵⁸ Calvin himself acknowledged, “But they commonly misinterpret this text, and restrict the word ‘gift’ to faith alone. But Paul ... does not mean that faith is the gift of God, but that salvation is given to us by God. ...”⁵⁹ Thus White and other zealous Calvinists who today insist that faith is the gift are contradicting not only the Greek construction but John Calvin himself.

We Must Believe—God Doesn’t Believe for Us

Furthermore, even if saving faith were the gift (which it could not be), there is nothing in Ephesians 2 (or anywhere else) to indicate that it is irresistibly

implanted by God only after He has sovereignly regenerated the totally depraved sinner. Indeed, that very passage says we are “saved, through faith”; i.e., faith is the *means* of our salvation/regeneration—not something that follows it.

That saving faith is not only by God’s enabling but is something man is responsible for is made clear from many scriptures. When we are told, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31) or “have faith in God” (Mark 11:22) there is no suggestion that God will regenerate the unregenerate and then give him that faith; rather, believing is something man is expected to do. When Jesus said, “O ye of *little faith*” (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 16:8; Luke 12:28), He was not putting the blame upon His Father for giving the disciples so little faith, but upon them for not believing. When He said, “I have not seen so *great faith* ... in Israel” (Matthew 8:10; Luke 7:9) he was crediting the centurion with that faith as his own—not as a gift from God.

For Peter to speak of “the trial of *your faith*” (1 Peter 1:7) would be meaningless if faith were a gift of God. The purpose of the gospel is to bring men into “the faith” (Jude 3), making it their own. Believing the gospel and God’s Word is something we must do—God doesn’t believe for us.

The epistles use the phrase “*your faith*” 22 times. Paul writes, “*your faith* is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8); “when *your faith* is increased” (2 Corinthians 10:15); “I heard of *your faith* in the Lord Jesus” (Ephesians 1:15); “we heard of *your faith* in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:4), and so forth. In the story of the man “sick of the palsy” brought to Jesus by friends, Jesus, “seeing *their faith*,” forgave him his sins and healed him (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20). There is no indication that these men had been regenerated and faith given to them as a gift from God. We are told that “the just shall live by *his faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4). Of the person who “worketh not, but believeth” we are told “*his faith* is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5).

That believing God through His Word is man’s responsibility is either taught directly or clearly implied in numerous passages from Genesis to Revelation. Calvinists reject the entire message of the Bible when they attempt to interpret a verse here or there to read that faith is God’s responsibility to be given as a gift to man.

The Biblical Order: Faith Brings Salvation

In fact, John 1:12 is only one of many verses that make it clear that God effects the new birth/regeneration only in those who believe on Christ. Beside the verses already quoted proving that salvation is by faith in Christ, there are many others.

For example, Galatians 3:14 declares that we “receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*”; and verse 26 says, “ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus.” Likewise, Paul tells the Ephesian believers, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *after that ye believed*, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance ...” (Ephesians 1:13–14). It could not be stated more clearly that a permanent relationship with the Holy Spirit begins only *after believing the gospel*. No wonder White and other Calvinists avoid this scripture as well.

Consider Christ’s own words, “that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life” (John 6:40). It is evident that seeing the Son and believing on Him precede receiving eternal life. Calvin turned it around to say that everyone who is elected and sovereignly given everlasting life by Irresistible Grace will then see the Son and believe on Him. Numerous verses disprove Calvin’s reversal of the biblical order.

Jesus said, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life” (John 5:24). Again, hearing and believing precede receiving eternal life, which comes through the new birth. Surely no one could be regenerated by the Holy Spirit without receiving simultaneously the gift of eternal life—so how could regeneration come before faith? Galatians 3:22 presents the same truth: “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” The promised new birth and eternal life are given “by faith ... to them that believe.” Clearly, faith precedes the new birth.

Indisputably, salvation comes by faith. But if regeneration sovereignly comes without and before faith, then the elect, as we have already shown, are regenerated without being saved. To maintain that unbiblical theory, the Calvinist argues that salvation and regeneration are two distinct events, regeneration coming first by God’s sovereign act without any faith, then the gift of faith is given so that the person can believe the gospel unto salvation.

We have already seen that such an idea was rejected by Spurgeon: “a man who is regenerated ... is saved already ... it is ... ridiculous ... to preach Christ to him.”⁶⁰

But that raises another problem: How could anyone be sovereignly regenerated by God without being born again of the Spirit? Surely regeneration must be synonymous with the new birth. But if Calvinism is true, there must be *two* new births—one that *precedes* faith and another that comes by believing the gospel unto the new birth (and salvation) that Jesus explained to Nicodemus.

To Whom Is Salvation Offered?

We have already noted that the Old Testament lays the foundation for the New. Specifically, God’s provisions for Israel looked forward to Christ and the salvation He would procure for the world of sinners. For example: “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Unquestionably, the provision of the Passover was for every person in Israel without exception: “they shall take to them every man a lamb ... the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening ... and the children of Israel ... did as the Lord had commanded Moses ...” (Exodus 12:3, 6, 28).

The manna, also, was for *every* Israelite. And that, too, was a picture of Christ, “the true bread from heaven ... that bread of life” (John 6:32, 48, etc.). Of the manna, we are told: “Gather of it every man ... take ye every man ... and they gathered every man according to his eating” (Exodus 16:16-18). Every Israelite gathered and ate and for 40 years lived on the manna God provided—but most of them were ultimately lost. So the fact that God provided for all did not guarantee salvation to all. Individual faith was required. God did not gather the manna, much less eat it for each of these. Again, we see human responsibility, which pictures individual faith.

Every Israelite was “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did *all* eat the same spiritual meat [manna]; and did *all* drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” Yet “many of them ... were overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:2-5). *Baptized and ate and drank of Christ*—yet lost? There is no escaping the fact that God’s salvation was graciously

provided for *every* Israelite. Israel as a whole is called, “Israel mine elect” (Isaiah 45:4)—yet most of them perished eternally.

The Calvinist has only two choices. He must either accept the possibility of true believers falling away from the faith, or he must admit that salvation is offered to all and that it is effective only for those who believe. Nowhere in any of these Old Testament types is there even a hint of a select group among the Israelites who were elected to salvation, sovereignly regenerated, and then given faith to believe. No wonder Calvinist apologists give these Old Testament types of Christ a wide berth.

The Sabbath pictured the eternal “rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9), found in Christ alone. No Israelite was exempt from any of the Ten Commandments, which included, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8), “abide ye every man in his place” (16:29). Nor does the rejection of Christ and the salvation in Him dilute God’s sovereignty or His sacrifice for all upon the Cross, any more than does mankind’s universal refusal to keep the Ten Commandments.

The Serpent and Christ

No picture of the Cross in the Old Testament life of Israel is more insightful than the incident of the “fiery serpents” that bit the people in judgment for their sin, and the provision God made to heal all who would believe and look: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent [of brass], and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Numbers 21:8-9).

The serpents were a picture of the deadly bite of sin on the entire human race without exception. Just as healing was for “every one ... bitten” by a fiery serpent, we can only conclude that healing is for everyone bitten by the “serpent” of sin. And as none is exempt from sin, so none has been left without the remedy God has provided in Christ.

Christ himself pointed to this incident as a picture of His being lifted up on the Cross. The lifting up of the brazen likeness of the serpent foretold one of the most amazing aspects of the Cross—and one most difficult to comprehend. Christ would become the very thing that had “bitten” the

human race: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Calvinists avoid all of these examples that pointed forward to Christ, because they were so clearly for *all of Israel*, showing that the sacrifice of Christ is for *all the world*. As surely as every provision was for each and every Israelite, so surely do we know that many if not most Israelites were eternally lost—in spite of God’s provision for them in so many ways.

One will search books by Calvinists long and hard to find any reference to these passages. White avoids them in his book *The Potter’s Freedom*. And in my debate with him in book form, *Debating Calvinism: Five Points, Two Views*, he refused to respond to any of these powerful pictures that I pointed out from the Old Testament—even daring to declare that they were “irrelevant.” And that included the brazen serpent!⁶¹

John says of Jesus, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men ... the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:4, 9). Once again, the words “every man” tell us clearly that the unregenerated can be given the light of the gospel. “I am the light of the *world*,” said Jesus. “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). White has no comment on these verses in his book, nor upon other similar passages such as John 16:8, where Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came, He would “reprove the *world* of sin, righteousness and judgment.” Many other verses could be cited in the same vein, which Calvinists also avoid.

[9] He Loves Me — He Loves Me Not?

IN A RADIO DISCUSSION with James White, I referred to Christ's weeping over Jerusalem. I pointed to His expression of desire ("how often would I ...!") and His lament over Jerusalem's hard-hearted response ("ye would not") as proof of His sincere offer of grace, and of man's right and ability to receive or reject salvation:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37)

White countered that Christ was not weeping over Jerusalem and that the ones He wanted to gather were Jerusalem's children, not the religious leaders who rejected Him. "Ye would not," he insisted, expressed the attitude of the rabbis, not of Jerusalem's "children" whom He wanted to gather under His care.

This argument, however, is of no help to White or other Calvinists who use it. Very few if any of Jerusalem's "children," any more than her leaders, ever believed on Christ. Therefore, even if Christ only meant the children, He was expressing a desire for the salvation of many who were never saved.

Did Christ Really Weep over Jerusalem?

Here is one more example of the way in which Calvinists must twist Scripture in defending their strange doctrine. In fact, the expression, "children of Jerusalem" or "children of Israel," etc., is used throughout Scripture to indicate "the people" of a city or country or race—*never* its non-adults. When only the young children are meant, the context always makes that fact clear, as "the wives also and the children rejoiced ..." (Nehemiah 12:43).

The expression, “children of Israel” is found 644 times, “children of Ammon” 89 times, “children of Benjamin” 36 times, “children of God” 10 times, and *not once* in those 779 instances is the reference to non-adults! The specific phrase, “children of Jerusalem,” is used in Joel 3:6 for the “inhabitants of Jerusalem”—exactly as Christ meant in His lament. Among many similar references to “children” and “Jerusalem” (*none* of which means its non-adults exclusively) we find:

And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh ... (1 Chronicles 9:3); the children of Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 28:10); And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 30:21); all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem (Ezra 10:7); children of the province ... that ... came again to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:6); Jerusalem ... thy children have forsaken me ... and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. ... Every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. ... Saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? (Jeremiah 5:1-9); etc.

There are numerous other similar references, all of which clearly refer to the *inhabitants* of Jerusalem or some other city or country and *none* of which refers exclusively to non-adults. In His great love, Christ is clearly pleading with Israel—as He has through His prophets for centuries, and as He still pleads with the world for which He died.

Disagreement in the Ranks

Not only is White's argument (which is used by many Calvinists) both irrational and unbiblical, but even some Calvinist leaders disagree with it. John MacArthur, Jr., recognizes that Christ is expressing the same desire for the salvation of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem that He has expressed for centuries as the God of Israel through His prophets.¹ He declares that “Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem ... we cannot escape the conclusion that God's benevolent, merciful love is unlimited in extent. ... Luke 19:41-44 gives an even more detailed picture of Christ's sorrow over the city. ...”² And MacArthur even suggests that “the city of Jerusalem [represents] the Israelite Nation.”³

Martin Luther also declared, “In Christ, God comes seeking the salvation of all men; He offers Himself to all; He weeps over Jerusalem because Jerusalem rejects Him. ... Here God incarnate says: ‘I would, and

thou wouldest not.’ God incarnate ... was sent for this purpose, to will, say, do, suffer and offer to all men, all that is necessary for salvation albeit he offends many who, being abandoned or hardened by God’s secret will of Majesty ... do not receive him. ...”⁴

In a further contradiction of his affirmation at other times of Limited Atonement, Charles Spurgeon also applied Christ’s words both to all of Jerusalem and to all sinners:

In Christ’s name I have wept over you as the Saviour did, and used his words on his behalf, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. ...” Oh! God does plead with ... everyone of you, “Repent, and be converted for the remission of your sins. ...” And with divine love he woos you ... crying, “Come unto me. ...”

“No,” says one strong-doctrine man, “God never invites all men to himself. ...” Stop, sir. ... Did you ever read ... “My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. And they that were bidden *would not come*. ...” Now if the invitation is ... made [only] to the man who will accept it, how can that parable be true? The fact is ... the invitation is free. ... “*Whosoever will*, let him come. ...”

Now ... some of you [may] say that I was ... Arminian at the end. I care not. I beg of you to ... turn unto the Lord with all your hearts.⁵

Spurgeon makes an excellent point. Christ likens the kingdom of God to a supper to which men are invited (Luke 14:15-24). In the parable, there is no question that a bona fide invitation was extended, nor that many if not most of those sincerely invited refused and even scorned the invitation and suffered the Lord’s wrath: “For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (v. 24).

The problem for the Calvinist is to explain how God can sincerely invite into His kingdom those for whom Christ did not die, whom He has not elected to salvation, whom He has from a past eternity predestined to eternal torment and who can’t accept because He withholds from them the grace they need—then punish them for not responding to His “invitation.” How, indeed! And why does He send his servants to “compel” those “in highways and hedges ... to come in, that my house may be filled” (v. 23), if regeneration is a sovereign act of God without human response? And if faith is a gift and grace is irresistible, how could the elect refuse the earnest invitation? Spurgeon leaves these questions unanswered, knowing he will be accused of being “Arminian at the end.”

Nor have we found any Calvinist who attempts to answer Spurgeon. The only reasonable and biblical response is to abandon Calvinism, which Spurgeon would not do, although he continued to contradict it in his preaching. And for pointing out these contradictions, I am criticized for allegedly misquoting and misrepresenting Spurgeon.

Contradictions, Contradictions ...

Calvinists speak out of both sides of their mouths in order to avoid the valid charge that Calvinism denies God's love for all mankind. Those who try to separate themselves from what they call "extreme Calvinism," or "hyper-Calvinism," go to great lengths to make it appear that Calvinism's God truly loves all. As already noted, John MacArthur spends an entire book in that vain attempt.⁶ There is no escaping the fact that his book, which purports to show that God loves all, basically says the opposite.

MacArthur makes it clear that though God supposedly loves everyone, He never intended to save everyone, claiming that had He done so, all would have been saved. No place is allowed for anyone to accept or to reject a genuine offer of the gospel by his own choice. He thus falls into inescapable contradictions. For example, MacArthur condemns those who "deny that God loves everyone,"⁷ but what he calls God's "love" for the non-elect is not love at all! He confesses that "to abandon logic is to become irrational, and true Christianity is not irrational."⁸ Yet he argues irrationally that loving "the elect in a special way reserved only for them ... does not make His love for the rest of humanity any less real."⁹

He has just declared that "God chose ... unto salvation ... certain individuals and passed over others, and He made that choice in eternity past ... without regard to anything He foresaw in the elect; simply according to the good pleasure of his will and to the praise of the glory of his grace ... (Ephesians 1:5-6)." In his next breath, however, he admits, "It seems reasonable to assume that if God loved everyone, He would have chosen everyone unto salvation. ... It is folly to think that God loves all alike, or that He is compelled by some rule of fairness to love everyone equally."¹⁰

On the contrary, "degrees of love" cannot explain the difference between predestining a select group to heaven and the rest to hell, though all could have been received into heaven! It is *not love at all* to predestine

to hell *any* who could have been saved! So MacArthur attempts a further “explanation:”

God’s love for the reprobate is not a love of value; it is the love of pity ... a love of compassion ... of sorrow ... of pathos ... the same deep sense of compassion and pity we have when we see a scab-ridden derelict lying in the gutter ... a genuine, well-meant, compassionate, sympathetic love. ...¹¹

Here we see the depths of complete irrationality into which the Calvinist falls in trying to balance on the tight rope of “God loves all but not in the same way”!

Kinds or Aspects of Love?

One is aghast at such astonishing statements. God has genuine “compassionate, sympathetic love” for those whom He has predestined to eternal torment, whom He could save but never intended to, and for whom Christ did not die? Words seem to have a different meaning for the Calvinist than for the ordinary person who understands love and sympathy by the God-given conscience, of which the Calvinist seems bereft!

Genuine compassion for a derelict would not just leave him there but would do all that could be done to rescue him. Otherwise it is not the compassion of the good Samaritan who cared for the derelict (Luke 10:33-35) but the hypocrisy of the priest and Levite who “passed by on the other side” (Luke 10:31-32) and left the robbed and wounded victim to die—and worse, predestined that condition. The “love” MacArthur attributes to God is like that of those condemned by James who say to one naked and starving, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled,” but give him nothing (James 2:15-16).

God through the Apostle James condemns such double-speak, yet God himself is guilty of such hypocrisy? MacArthur attempts to escape the conscience by suggesting that “in some sense God loves His enemies,”¹² and by hiding behind the idea of “two aspects of God’s love—His universal love for all humanity and His particular love for the elect [which] must not be confounded.”¹³ But an “aspect” of love, whatever that might mean, must still be *love*—and it is not love of any kind, nor is it any aspect thereof, to predestine to damnation any who could just as well have been saved!

Luther tries to defend the same contradiction. Having declared that Christ came to “offer to all men all that is necessary for salvation,” he adds that “the will of Majesty purposely leaves and reprobates some to perish. Nor is it for us to ask why. ...”¹⁴ *Why?* There is no answer to this blatant contradiction—and to hide behind mystery is irresponsible!

All that is necessary? Then all would be saved! What an uncalvinistic statement, yet Spurgeon agreed. How could anyone disagree, since this is what God himself declared: “What could have been done more to my vineyard [Israel], that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes (Isaiah 5:3-4)?

Here is the message of the entire Bible: God himself says He has done all He could in providing salvation, which He offers freely in His love and grace to all mankind—but it can’t be forced upon anyone; it must be received by faith in His promise. God is genuinely mourning over Israel!

What more could God have done? That question is mockery if Calvinism is true! He could have predestined them to salvation, extended Irresistible Grace, sovereignly regenerated them, and given them faith to believe the gospel—if this is imposed by sovereign will, with no choice by man required.

The only way that God could have done all He could, yet men remain unsaved, is if man may choose to accept or reject the salvation He offers. That conclusion is inescapable—but that biblical logic cannot be acknowledged, for it would destroy Calvinism.

This passage in Isaiah 5 is generally given a wide berth by Calvinist apologists. White avoids it. MacArthur attempts to support his misrepresentation of God’s love with an equally mistaken statement from 17th-century Calvinist pastor and writer Andrew Fuller: “Likewise God gave no effectual grace to those who are accused of bringing forth wild grapes instead of grapes; yet *He looked for* and asked what He could have done more for His vineyard that He had not done (Isaiah 5:4).”¹⁵ Well, He could have given “effectual grace”! Except that this term isn’t biblical but is an invention of Calvinists to support their theory.

How can it be rationally said that God “offers all that is necessary to salvation” to those whom He “purposely leaves and reprobates ... to perish”?

The conflict would be resolved, the contradiction disappear, the misrepresentation of God be erased, and God's love be vindicated by the simple admission that man has a God-given genuine power of choice. But the Calvinist cannot admit to that fact—nor could Luther, after writing an entire book against free will.

Christ Is Speaking as the God of Israel

How do we understand Christ's lament over Jerusalem? From comparing the gospel accounts, we know that Jesus had just made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and was in the temple when He made the statement in Matthew 23. Luke specifically declares that as He rode into the city on the colt of an ass He wept as He beheld Jerusalem from a vantage point:

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For ... thine enemies shall ... lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ... because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. (Luke 19:41–44)

There is no doubt that Christ wept over the city of Jerusalem as He looked upon it. Nor can there be any doubt that when in the temple He lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He was referring to the city and all of its inhabitants down through history, not to any certain segment of the population. "Thy children" could only mean the inhabitants of Jerusalem, not the babes and youth. To suggest, as White stated in a letter, that "those who were 'unwilling' were not those Jesus sought to gather" does violence to what Jesus says: "How often would I ... but ye would not." He is specifically saying that He wanted to gather them, but they were unwilling. As He had so often as Yahweh in the past and now as their Messiah come in the flesh, He is addressing the inhabitants of Jerusalem as that city's children: "Return, ye backsliding children ..." (Jeremiah 3:22). Non-adults only were addressed? Hardly.

Furthermore, Christ's very words, "How often would I," were a direct claim to deity, a claim that White, in his zeal to defend Calvinism, misses completely. Christ is claiming multiple prior pleadings over Jerusalem, yet no such instances are recorded in the gospel accounts during His incarnation. Unquestionably, Christ is presenting Himself as the God of

Israel who had sent His prophets generation after generation to warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem, often called “the children of Israel ... the children of Judah,” that if they did not repent, His wrath would be poured out upon them.

Many passages could be quoted, each of which by itself could explain Christ’s statement. Here are but a few of such lamentations and warnings from God at the mouth of only one of His prophets, Jeremiah. Only in this context, and as the God of Israel, is there justification for Christ to use the words “how *often* would I ... but ye would not.”

Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem ... Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness. ... Israel was holiness unto the LORD ... [but] my people have ... forsaken me. ... My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart ... O my soul, the sound ... of war. Destruction upon destruction. ... For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children. ... Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not. ... I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me. ... Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place ... because they have forsaken me ... and have burned incense ... unto other gods ... and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; they have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal. ... I will make this city desolate ... because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day ... because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah ... they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ... Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. (Jeremiah 2:2–3,13; 4:19–22; 7:13, 25–26; 13:27; 19:3–13; 32:31–33; etc.)

If these and hundreds of similar declarations from the prophets, echoed by Christ, do not express a genuine loving concern on God’s part for Israel to repent so that His wrath need not be poured out upon her, then words have no meaning. Such sincere concern in the face of Israel’s refusal to repent completely refutes TULIP. Otherwise, God’s pleadings and warnings are a sham.

If men are totally depraved (as by the Calvinist definition), then there is no point in God’s pleading with them. If only a few are among the elect and God is not sincerely offering salvation, but withholds the Irresistible Grace

without which they cannot repent, then hundreds of pages in the Bible are a farce, the pretended pleadings from a Calvinist God who has no real love except for the elect, and no intention of helping those over whom He supposedly weeps. To support TULIP from the Bible, the Calvinist must do violence to Scripture.

Is There a Real Battle for Souls?

Paul tells us that Satan, “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ ... should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Why would it be necessary for Satan to blind the totally depraved who are as spiritually blind as one could be? Indeed, they are *dead*, and dead men can’t see. Calvinism makes this passage (and many others) meaningless.

As for the elect, if, as Calvinism declares, they are sovereignly regenerated and by Irresistible Grace given the faith to believe, and nothing can prevent them from hearing and believing the gospel, it would be impossible for Satan to blind them and therefore, there would be no point in his even trying. And since the non-elect are already damned, there would be no real battle between God and Satan for souls, no real conflict within the human heart, the whole thing having already been decided by God with nothing Satan or man could do to change that fact. Paul would have been wasting his time disputing and persuading—and the same would be true of our seeking to win to Christ those whom God has predestined to hell.

Calvinism, if it were true, would make a joke of the Bible’s warnings about Satan. God’s withholding Irresistible Grace does a better job of damning souls than Satan ever could. That enemy of souls could go on a long vacation. Yet the Bible declares, “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8); “The great dragon ... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan ... deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

“As many as received him ...” sounds as though the volitional act of receiving is required on the part of the convicted sinner. Eternal life is a free gift. A gift cannot be merited, earned, or paid for in any way, but it *must* be received. Surely, to “receive” requires some acquiescence on the part of the

recipient. Anything imposed upon someone by a grace that is “irresistible” is not a gift received.

Indeed, how can grace be irresistible? The very term “irresistible grace” is self-contradictory. How can it be an act of “grace” to impart to someone something the person neither believes nor desires? “God doesn’t force anyone,” says the Calvinist. Then what does “irresistible” mean? “God is just removing their resistance,” is the reply. *Irresistibly* removing it? If it is not against their will, why must it be irresistible?

Would that not fill heaven with those who had been unwilling to believe in Christ, to love God, or even to be there, but who had been irresistibly *made* willing? “Not so,” counters the Calvinist, in defense of his theory. “God through Irresistible Grace has wrought a regenerative transformation so that those thus blessed truly love God from their hearts.”

But if this could be done for the elect, it could be done for all mankind. How could the infinite love of God leave anyone out? That brings us back to the compelling question: What love is this that loves so few? And why would the God of love and truth plead with those whom He had already predestined to doom to repent and believe the gospel? Calvinism turns most of the Bible into a pretense, a mere charade.

Luther’s Astonishing “Answer”

In his debate with Luther, Erasmus argued that God’s pleadings with a man to repent, who could not do so, would be like asking someone whose hands were tied to use them. Luther countered that God, by calling us to do what we can’t do, is “trying us, that by His law He may bring us to a knowledge of our impotence, if we are His friends ... [and] deservedly taunting and mocking us, if we are His proud enemies.”¹⁶ He argued that Erasmus might just as well conclude from ““If thou wilt keep the commandments, they shall preserve thee” ... therefore, man is able to keep the commandments.”¹⁷

Luther seemed to have forgotten that even unsaved men keep at least much of the Law most of the time. Even Calvin himself admitted that “total depravity” doesn’t mean man is necessarily as wicked as he could be. Both Scripture and experience prove that all men do some good; and some

“totally depraved” men at times exceed in goodness the behavior of some apparently genuine Christians.

Furthermore, to show man his impotence to keep the Law *is* to taunt him unless there is a remedy available. That remedy is the gospel, which requires that I come to Christ in faith, believing on Him as the One who paid the penalty for my sins. Nor does the fact that I cannot perfectly keep the Law prove in the least that I cannot come to Christ and believe on Him and receive by faith the benefit of His payment for my breach of the Law. Here is the classic distinction between works and faith. And if my only hope is sovereign regeneration by God, and He for His good pleasure will not grant it to me, what is the point of showing me my hopelessness?

Paul declares that “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24). To the Calvinist, “us” refers to the elect. Yet even they were unregenerate before coming to Christ. If being “dead in trespasses and in sins” means that man is morally a corpse, how could the Law bring *anyone* to Christ? This is not the Father irresistibly dragging the elect to Christ and sovereignly regenerating and then giving them faith to believe. This is the Law working upon the conscience like a “schoolmaster.” How could the Law affect the conscience of “moral corpses”?

If men could not keep even one commandment for one moment, then the Law would not only be a mockery but to no purpose. But if unregenerate man (as is the case) does understand the Law, keeps it at least some of the time, and has a guilty conscience for breaking it, then how can he morally be a corpse? And if unregenerate man can choose to obey or disobey the Law, why cannot he choose to believe the gospel—and where does the Bible say that he can’t? It doesn’t.

That Inescapable Will Again!

It is interesting to see how The Canons of Dort handle this problem. The fact that man has a will with which he could make moral choices is admitted, but it became depraved by the fall. As a consequence, man is supposedly impotent to respond to the gospel. The Holy Spirit must therefore sovereignly regenerate him in order to “heal” that deficiency:

But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature, endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind, deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also the grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor takes away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully ends it; that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist.¹⁸

Dort offers a strange solution: “the grace of regeneration ... spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully ends [the will]. ...” What an odd “healing” that puts an *end* to what it “heals”! Why wasn’t this “ready and sincere spiritual obedience” implanted in Adam and Eve? And now that the elect have this new will through regeneration, why don’t they always obey God perfectly?

The reason can only be that a “will” is *no will* unless the person whose will it is wills with it. The will can be used for good or evil. The will cannot be denied or dismissed. Calvin and Luther tried to explain it away, but that is not possible. The will is one of the subjects most frequently referred to in the Bible. Unregenerate men are repeatedly called upon to exercise the will in choosing to obey God.

Even the regenerated have a fleshly will that, despite Dort, apparently wasn’t *ended* at the new birth: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other ...” (Galatians 5:17).

As we have seen, the words “will,” “willing,” “free-will,” “freewill,” “free will,” along with related expressions such as “voluntary,” “choose,” etc., are found nearly 4,000 times in Scripture. The requirement of willing obedience is a theme that runs all through the Bible: “If ye be willing and obedient ...” (Isaiah 1:19), “If thou believest with all thine heart” (Acts 8:37), etc.

God does not impose Himself upon us. He wants our hearts, and the very concept of “heart” used all through Scripture is meaningless without free will.

“Where Is Boasting Then?”

The Calvinist counters that if man could choose whether or not to believe the gospel, he could boast that he had contributed to his salvation. And it is asserted that man's will is not free to act in that manner. In declaring that "of the great body of mankind some should be predestined to salvation, and others to destruction,"¹⁹ Calvin argues that there is "no other means of humbling us as we ought, or making us feel how much we are bound to him [Christ]. ... It is plain how greatly ignorance of this principle detracts from the glory of God, and impairs true humility."²⁰

On the contrary, Paul says that since all we can do is to *believe*, there is nothing to boast about. "Where is boasting then?" asks Paul. "It is excluded," he declares definitively, "by ... faith" (Romans 3:27). So rather than faith giving cause for boasting, it is the very reason why there can be no boasting. Once again, Calvin is seen to be in direct opposition to Scripture. Nevertheless, Edwin H. Palmer insists that "Calvin simply expounded the Bible ... [he] uncovered truths that had been in the Bible all the time."²¹

A Calvinist author declares, "If God only saves people who of their own supposed free will accept Jesus, then they merit salvation. They *deserve* to be saved. ... The notion of free will exalts man because man elects God and God only ratifies man's choice."²² Again, the necessity to defend Calvinism drives its defenders into irrationality.

To accept salvation by faith no more means that the person who does so has thereby merited that gift of God's grace than the acceptance of a free meal and a night's lodging by a destitute person means that he or she has thereby merited this charity. "*Deserve to be saved*"? The mere acceptance of a gift does not mean that the person *deserves* it. "God only ratifies man's choice"? No, it is God who sets the terms of salvation, which man must accept to be saved—and if he doesn't, he is lost eternally. And *that* brings merit to man and basis to boast? Hardly.

There is great confusion on this matter of the will because there is no escaping the fact that, as Spurgeon admitted, "Man's will has its proper place in the matter of salvation. ... When a man receives the Divine Grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. ... Nor again, mark you, is the will taken away. For God does not come and convert the intelligent free agent into a machine."²³

In the same sermon, however, Spurgeon denounces the idea that man can choose whether to believe in Christ or not as making “the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent [upon man’s will].” His objection is to man’s “coming to God [being] the result of his unassisted nature.”²⁴ Not *unassisted* by God’s grace and Holy Spirit conviction, of course. But man’s will must still make its own choice, or God has not won the heart.

Who would say that man can come to God “unassisted” by the Holy Spirit? Not even the rankest Arminian! But Calvinism makes that false charge against those who disagree with its extremism. Indeed, to insist that unbelieving man must first be regenerated and irresistibly *caused* to come takes “grace” far beyond man’s being assisted [i.e., drawn by God through the conviction and power of the Holy Spirit and the Word]. That word “irresistible” associated with grace creates the problem, because it allows no willingness or faith on man’s part. And that libels God, as we have stated repeatedly. If man is totally incapable of believing and must be irresistibly dragged to Christ, then surely it denies God’s love to declare that He will not to do this for *all mankind*.

Man Is Meaningless without a Will

There is no escaping the fact that the will is essential in any meaningful relationship between man and man, or between man and God. After denouncing “free will,” Spurgeon contradicts himself again, ending that sermon by quoting, “Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.”²⁵ Unless one can say yes or no to the offer of salvation, it could not be a gift of God’s love. Nor does God ratify man’s choice; man either accepts on God’s terms the free gift of salvation—or he doesn’t. Thus, all who will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire will be there by their own choice. They cannot say, as Calvinism does, that it was God who sent them there.

Is it not foolish to suggest that receiving a gift means that we *deserve* it? Calvinism denies the very distinction the Bible makes: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Wages are earned, but a gift cannot be earned or merited; thus receiving a gift provides no cause for boasting.

We are commanded to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, believing in Him as our Savior, but that does not mean that anyone is forced to do so. And, yes, the Father draws us. But without our willingness, for Him to irresistibly cause us to believe in and receive Him would not be a gift received, nor would it establish a love relationship between us and God, either on His side or ours.

A drowning man who allows himself to be rescued has nothing to boast about, nor can he take any credit for his rescue. So it is with the lost sinner who allows Christ to rescue him: he has nothing to boast of, for he has contributed nothing to his salvation.

Calvinism, as we have seen, makes nonsense of such scriptures as “he that winneth souls is wise ... they that turn many to righteousness ... we persuade men” (Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; 2 Corinthians 5:11). To win someone over to believe in Christ requires persuasion. This is the job of the Holy Spirit through the gospel, and He graciously uses human instruments to present the gospel. Our hearts are won as the Father draws us and as Christ’s love arouses a response of love within us: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19)—not because He caused us to do so by changing our wills.

Commissioned by God to Persuade Men

Calvinism denies that there is any winning or any persuading—salvation comes by sovereign regeneration and Irresistible Grace imposed. If one must be regenerated and then made to believe, the gospel would have no part in the new birth, preaching it would be pointless, there would be no persuading the unregenerate sinner, and it would be a waste of time to attempt to do so. Yet Paul expended himself for Christ doing exactly that: disputing and persuading in the attempt to win people to Christ.

As soon as he was converted, Paul “confounded the Jews ... at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ ...” (Acts 9:22). Everywhere he went, Paul “disputed ... in the synagogue ... and in the market daily ...” (Acts 17:17). The last chapter of Acts tells us that even while under house arrest in Rome, Paul was still at it: “... there came many to him ... to whom he expounded ... persuading them concerning Jesus ...” (Acts 28:23).

Paul said, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Through his powerful preaching of the gospel, he won many to Christ wherever he went. There is not a word about Irresistible Grace regenerating the sinners to whom Paul preached and God then giving them faith. *Never* is there even a hint of this process! The consistent tone of Scripture is clear. The Calvinist must search diligently to find a passage here and there that he can “interpret” to seemingly support TULIP.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The Holy Spirit brought conviction and assurance *through the gospel preached*, and the lives Paul and his companions lived before them were part of that conviction. Why all of this explanation, if God sovereignly regenerates and then irresistibly imparts “faith”? Calvinism just doesn’t fit the diligent and fruitful preaching of the gospel by the Apostles to sinners from city to city—nor Christ’s command for us to do likewise.

Through the Word of God preached by Paul and Barnabas, Jews and Greeks were *persuaded* to believe, and as a result of that belief in Christ, they were regenerated. Paul said to those at Corinth whom he had won to Christ, “for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 4:15). Clearly, their acceptance of the gospel that Paul preached brought about their regeneration. TULIP denies this clear biblical pattern. Palmer reasons, “Only when the Holy Spirit regenerates man and makes him alive spiritually can man have faith in Christ and be saved.”²⁶

Paul’s Fervent Preaching and Example

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul diligently persuaded multitudes by the preaching of the gospel. To this he devoted his life: “Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11). Where did Paul get this notion, so contrary to Calvinism, that men had to be *persuaded* to believe the gospel? He received this clear understanding from Christ

himself. When Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, He sent him to Jews and Gentiles

...to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith. ... (Acts 26:18)

What would be the need of Paul opening men's eyes and turning them from darkness to light through the Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel if it all happens through sovereign regeneration, with Irresistible Grace and faith imposed as a result? Calvinism is refuted by the very commission Christ conferred upon Paul and the other Apostles. In relating this encounter with Christ to King Agrippa, Paul declared:

I was not disobedient ... but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God. ... I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say. ... (Acts 26:19–23)

In spite of his staunch support for Calvinism at times, what Spurgeon said at other times undermined it. As though he rejected Irresistible Grace and upheld free will, just as he rejected regeneration without faith and before salvation, Spurgeon argued:

Now, Brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is *persuasion*. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before. He pleads with us. Puts it in a new light and then we say, "Now, I see that," and our hearts are changed towards the thing. ... The Spirit makes a revelation of the Truth of God to the soul, whereby it sees things in a different light from what it ever did before. And then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron and wears the yoke which once it despised. ...

Yet, mark, the will is not gone. ... If you are *willing*, depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if you are anxious after Christ, He is more anxious after you. ... Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

As we have already noted, he ended the sermon with, "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. Yet —'whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.'"²⁷

The Bottom Line

In a personal letter accompanied by some of his writings, author and apologist Rob Zins states, “The Word of God teaches that all men are responsible before God and *accountable*. That all men are equally ‘unable’ to please God is also undeniable. But, inability does not diminish responsibility.” God’s *love* seems to be forgotten. Zins goes on to argue:

To say that God “allows it” but does not “will it” but *lets* it take place, puts you in no better position than the Calvinist who says that God *could* give irresistible grace to all but does not want to do so. How is it that one can feel better about God *allowing* corruption, abortion, murder and lust, when He *could* stop it ...?[28](#)

We’ve covered this already. Yes, God *could* stop all evil immediately (by wiping out mankind), but God gave man the genuine power of choice so that he could receive God’s love and love Him in return. The cessation of sin could come only by destroying the human race as He once did by the flood. However, in His grace and love He allowed Noah and his family to survive. Sadly, through them sin survived and grew into the horror we see occurring daily. The God of the Bible, however, has a loving solution for sin for all who will believe the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Calvinism, on the other hand, claims that God *could* rescue everyone from hell by imposing His will upon them—which He does for the elect only. He *could* deliver everyone from all suffering and disease and death—but foreordained the wickedness rampant today. He *could have* left this world a paradise without sin ever invading it, because man has no real choice under Calvinism, and therefore, God himself is even the author of evil.

There is a huge difference between Calvinism’s view of God, sin, and salvation—and that which we present herein as the biblical teaching. The difference is “Calvinism’s love,” which isn’t love at all.

This teaching, that “God,” being the cause of even the typist’s error, could have a world without any sin or suffering or death, but for His own good pleasure chose the world of rampant evil and suffering as it is today, is a libel upon God’s character. At the root of this libel is a denial of God’s sincere love for man.

The issue we have been dealing with is very simple: Which God is the biblical One—the God of Calvinism, or the God of love who is not willing

that any perish, but has given them the right to choose? There is no question which God rings true to the conscience that is given even to the unsaved. And this is the God of the Bible.

Man is a created being. As such, he is necessarily less than his Creator. That being the case, man can only make less-than-perfect choices. The amount and degree of evil on this earth will be limited only by man's imagination and the extent to which constituted authority controls human behavior. As Paul foretold, so it has happened: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). Nor is that condition what God desires for man, but contrary to His will, though He allows it.

God Contrasted with False Gods

Suffering and rampant evil are the fault of man's willful choices, which have corrupted everything he touches. Sin, suffering, and death are not God's doing or desire, nor anything God could stop without destroying the world—which He will do one day: "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ... Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10–13).

Until then, God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). God himself has come as a man to pay the infinite penalty demanded by His infinite justice for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). He offers pardon to all and sends forth the gospel of salvation to "whosoever will believe."

Men are responsible for their sin and for their eternal destiny, because salvation is offered to all as a free gift and all have the ability either to receive it or to reject it. Calvinism insists that man has no such capability, yet he is responsible anyway. To hold someone responsible for failing to do what he cannot do would be like saying that a baby is responsible to run the 100-meter high hurdles in world-record time.

How can a just God hold sinners responsible to repent and believe in Christ, when He withholds from them the essential ability to do so? The very sense of justice that God himself has instilled in human conscience

cries out against such a travesty! And here we confront once again the real issue: God's holy, just, merciful, and loving character is maligned by Calvinism's misrepresentation.

Zins quotes R. L. Dabney to the effect "that the absence of volition in God to save all does not imply a lack of love. God has true love which is constrained by consistent and holy reasons known only to Himself."²⁹ Such rationalizations fail because genuine love never fails. There are no "holy reasons" why God could not do for the reprobate what He does for the elect! There is no whitewashing Calvinism's God from His failure to rescue those whom He could rescue. Nor can this evident lack of love and compassion be excused due to "reasons known only to Himself." The so-called hyper-Calvinist frankly admits these simple facts; the self-professed "moderates" deny them.

The Bible contrasts the truth, purity, love, and mercy of the true God with the capricious destructiveness of pagan gods. In the process, the prophets appeal to our reason and to the conscience God has given us. Baal is exposed as a false god not worthy of worship because of its demand that children

be sacrificed in the sacred fires on its altars. Can Baal be excused by "reasons known only to himself"? Would the true God, for reasons known only to Himself, cause billions to burn eternally in the Lake of Fire, whom He *could* deliver as He delivered the elect? Never!

It is legitimate to appeal to conscience and reason in exposing false gods. Surely no lesser standard should be applied to the true God. Therefore, any supposed deity that is less gracious, less loving, less kind, and less merciful than man's conscience tells him he must be cannot be the true God. To attribute to Him *any* lack of love and mercy is surely to misrepresent the God revealed in the Bible.

A Final Word

MY HEART HAS BEEN BROKEN by Calvinism's misrepresentation of the God of the Bible, whom I love with all my heart, and for the excuse this has given atheists not to believe in Him. My sincere and earnest desire in writing this book has been to defend God's character against the libel that denies His love for all and insists that He does not make salvation available to all because He does not want all to be saved. It is my prayer that readers will recognize that Christian authors and leaders, ancient or modern and no matter how well respected, are all fallible and that God's Word is our only authority.

God's Word declares that the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to *every one that believeth*" (Romans 1: 16), is "good tidings of great joy," not just to certain elect, but "to *all* people" (Luke 2:10). Sadly, the insistence that only a select group have been elected to salvation is *not* "good tidings of great joy to all people"! How can such a doctrine be biblical?

It is my prayer that Calvinist readers who may have gotten this far have been fully persuaded to misrepresent no longer the God of love as having predestinated multitudes to eternal doom while withholding from them any opportunity to understand and believe the gospel. How many unbelievers have rejected God because of this deplorable distortion we do not know—but may that excuse be denied every reader from this time forth! And may believers, in confidence that the gospel is indeed glad tidings for *all* people, take God's good news to the whole world!

Endnotes

Chapter 1

1. C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Bible Correspondence Course* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1907), III: 445.
2. James M. Gray, *Bible Problems Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 3rd ed. 1913), 45.
3. William L. Pettingill, *Bible Questions Answered* (Just A Word Inc., 3rd ed. 1935), 209.
4. Arthur T. Pierson, *The Believer's Life: Its Past, Present, and Future Tenses* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1905), 24–30.
5. Reuben A. Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1921), 80–81.
6. Edgar Y. Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 4th ed. 1925), 27.
7. Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism* (Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1990), 14.
8. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1983), 2.
9. John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1987), 173.
10. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “God’s Will and Man’s Will,” No. 442 (Newington, Metropolitan Tabernacle; sermon delivered Sunday morning, March 30, 1862).
11. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), 234.
12. Philip F. Congdon, “Soteriological Implications of Five-point Calvinism,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1995, 8:15, 55–68.
13. Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2nd prtg. 1986), 138–39.
14. *Ibid.*, 240.
15. A. A. Hodge, quoted in D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 207.
16. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), 201-2.
17. Jerom Zanchius, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, trans. Augustus M. Toplady (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 88.
18. Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th prtg. 1999), 82.
19. *Ibid.*, 95, 124–35.
20. *Ibid.*, 95, 97–100, 116.
21. *Ibid.*

22. David S. West, *The Baptist Examiner*, March 18, 1989, 5; cited in Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 255.
23. C. Norman Sellers, *Election and Perseverance* (Haysville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1987), 3.
24. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 ed.), I: xvi, 6, 8, 9.
25. Pink, *Sovereignty*, 156.
26. Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1957), 137.
27. Palmer, *Sovereignty*, 87.
28. Will Durant, "The Reformation," Pt. VI of *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 90.
29. Palmer, *Sovereignty*, 97–100, 116.
30. *Ibid.*, 16.
31. Quoted in Alan P. F. Sell, *The Great Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), 7.
32. In Jacobus Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James and William Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 1:213.
33. Quoting from Michael S. Horton, ed., *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 111.
34. Zane C. Hodges, "The New Puritanism, Pt 3: Michael S. Horton: Holy War With Unholy Weapons," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Spring 1994, 7:12, 17–29.

Chapter 2

1. Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th prtq. 1999), 25.
2. *Ibid.*, 85–87.
3. J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 212.
4. Junius B. Reimensnyder, *Doom Eternal* (N. S. Quiney, 1880), 357; cited in Samuel Fisk, *Calvinistic Paths Retraced* (Raleigh, NC: Biblical Evangelism Press, 1985), 223.
5. Alvin L. Baker, *Berkower's Doctrine of Election: Balance or Imbalance?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1981), 174.
6. Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1973), 32.
7. Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2nd prtq. 1986), 218.
8. David S. West, *The Baptist Examiner*, March 18, 1989, 5; cited in Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 256–57.
9. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods; in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 18:V.10.
10. W. E. Best, *Free Grace Versus Free Will* (Houston, TX: W. E. Best Books Missionary Trust, 1977), 35.

11. Edward B. Pusey, *What Is Of Faith As To Everlasting Punishment?* (James Parker and Co., 1881), 22–24; cited in Fisk, *Calvinistic*, 222.
12. Zane C. Hodges, “The New Puritanism, Pt 3: Michael S. Horton: Holy War With Unholy Weapons,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Spring 1994, 7:12.

Chapter 3

1. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dobs. In *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), V.9.
2. Jacobus Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James and William Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 2:120.
3. David S. West, *The Baptist Examiner*, March 18, 1989, 5.
4. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 ed.), III: xxiii, 6.
5. Grover E. Gunn, *The Doctrine of Grace* (Memphis, TN: Footstool Publications, 1987), 13.
6. Michael J. Kane, Ph. D., “Letters,” *Christianity Today*, July 9, 2001, 9.
7. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), 25.
8. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), 32.
9. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 8.
10. *Ibid.*, 7.
11. David O. Wilmouth, *The Baptist Examiner*, September 16, 1989, 5.
12. Calvin, *Institutes*, II: ii, 12–13.
13. *Ibid.*, I: xviii, 1.
14. *Ibid.*, III: xxiii, 7.
15. Andrew M. Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1923), 179.
16. John Horsch, *History of Christianity* (Scottsdale, PA: John Horsch, 1903), 270.
17. George Park Fisher, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1902), 406.
18. A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1970), 72.
19. Albert H. Newman, *A Manual of Church History* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1933), II: 286–87.
20. *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996; 1st ed. 1664), back cover.
21. David Gay, *Battle for the Church, 1517–1644* (Lowestoft, UK: Brachus, 1997), 438.
22. Underwood, *English Baptists*, 72.
23. C. Sylvester Horne, *A Popular History of the Free Churches* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke and Co., 1903), 124–27.
24. John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists* (Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922), I: 296–97.
25. Gay, *Battle*, 367.

26. Quoted in Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 779.
27. Calvin, *Institutes*, II: xvi, 3–4; II: xvii, 2–5.
28. *Ibid.*, II: viii, 55.
29. *Ibid.*, III: xxiv, 2.
30. *Ibid.*
31. John Piper and Pastoral Staff, “TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff” (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 14.
32. Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Election and Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 172.
33. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 7.
34. Pink, *Election*, 155.
35. Marc D. Carpenter, Pt. 1 of “The Banner of Truth Versus Calvinism,” *The Trinity Review*, May 1997, 1–4; cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 24.
36. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 6.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1957, 11th prtng. 1999), 83–84.
39. Leander S. Keyser, *Election and Conversion* (Burlington, IA: Literary Board, 1914), 96.
40. Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n. d.), II: 333–34.
41. Arminius, *Works*, 2:192.
42. Augustine, *The Confessions*, VII: 5; in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), vol. 18.
43. Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th prtng. 1980), 36.
44. Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP: The Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 27.
45. Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 201.
46. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 2:260.
47. Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2nd prtng. 1986), 143.
48. *Ibid.*, 138.
49. *Ibid.*, 135.
50. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Free Will—A Slave* (McDonough, GA: Free Grace Publications, 1977), 3.
51. Pink, *Sovereignty*, 138.

52. Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism* (Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1990), 18.

53. Dewey J. Hoitenga, *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 70.
54. Talbot and Crampton, *Calvinism*, 21.
55. Cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 202.
56. Augustine, *City of God*, V.10.
57. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 6–7.
58. Augustine, *Confessions*, VII: iii, 5; and *City of God*, V.9–10.
59. Augustine, *City of God*, V.9.
60. *Ibid.*, 10.

Chapter 4

1. *Straight Talk Live* (KPXQ, Phoenix AZ, 11 August 2000). Compact Disc CD073, available through The Berean Call, P. O. Box 7019, Bend, OR 97708.
2. David Nettleton, *Chosen to Salvation* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1983), 16; cited in Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 345.
3. James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 186–90.
4. Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th prtg. 1980) 29.
5. White, *Potter's*, 187–88.
6. Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's One-Volume Commentary* (Cook Publications, 1989), 995.
7. J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts* (Lexington, KY: Transylvania Printing and Publishing Co., 1863).
8. T. E. Page, *The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Text with Explanatory Notes* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1897), 169.
9. Frederic C. Cook, ed., *The Bible Commentary* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1895).
10. Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), I: 745.
11. R. J. Knowling, *The Acts of the Apostles, The Expositor's Greek New Testament* (Pennsylvania: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1900), 300.
12. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1930), III: 200.
13. *Acts, An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), additional notes 110.
14. Robertson, *Word Pictures*.
15. White, *Potter's*, 125–26.
16. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. Henry Beveridge. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998 ed.) III: 21:1.
17. John Piper and Pastoral Staff, "TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff" (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 14.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xx, 15.

20. Ibid., 3.
21. Ibid., iii, 4.
22. Ibid., ii, 8, 2.
23. White, *Potter's*, 177.
24. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 14.
25. Ibid., xxi, 1.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 7.

Chapter 5

1. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1964), 153.
2. H. A. Ironside, *Full Assurance* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1937), 93–94.
3. Edward Maslin Hulme, *The Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the Catholic Revolution* (New York: The Century Company, 1920), 299.
4. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 ed.), III: xxiii, 5.
5. Edwin H. Palmer, foreword to *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th prtg. 1980).
6. John H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, rev. ed. 1981), 103.
7. Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2nd prtg. 1986), 52.
8. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxi, 5.
9. Ibid., xxiii, 1, 4.
10. Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 248.
11. Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987), 181.
12. Arthur C. Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 7.
13. Numbers 16:5; 1 Kings 19:18, Psalms 65:4; 80:18–19; 110:3; Proverbs 16:1; Isaiah 26:12; Jeremiah 10:23; 31:18–19; 50:30; Lamentations 5:21.
14. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), 346.
15. “Five Common Questions on the Doctrine of Election Simply and Clearly Answered,” *The Baptist Examiner*, November 20, 1993, 5; cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 248.
16. Alfred S. Geden, *Comparative Religion* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), 102–103.
17. John Horsch, *History of Christianity* (John Horsch, 1903), 104–105.
18. R. C. Sproul, Jr., *Almighty Over All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999), 54.
19. Henry C. Sheldon, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper and Bros., 2nd ed., 1895), II: 163.
20. Palmer, *five points*, 24–25.

21. A. W. Harrison, *Arminianism* (London: Duckworth, 1937), 189.
22. Jennifer L. Bayne and Sarah E. Hinlicky, "Free to be Creatures Again: How predestination descended like a dove on two unsuspecting seminarians, and *why* they are so grateful," *Christianity Today*, October 23, 2000, 38–44.
23. Paul K. Jewett, *Election and Predestination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985 ed.), 5.
24. Boettner, *Reformed*, 365.
25. Horsch, *History of Christianity*.
26. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 1.
27. Boettner, *Reformed*, 104.
28. Michael Scott Horton, *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 96.
29. John Piper and Pastoral Staff, "TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff" (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 3.
30. *Ibid.*, 27–28.
31. John L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology and Church Order* (Harrisburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 309.
32. Piper and Staff, "TULIP," 19.
33. John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1993), 64–67.
34. Vance, *Other Side*, 522.
35. John MacArthur Jr., *Saved Without A Doubt—MacArthur Study Series* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Books, 1992), 58.
36. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1963), 16.
37. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Treasury of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1950), II: 72.
38. Piper and Staff, "TULIP."
39. S. Raymond Cox, "What Caused God To Choose His People?" (self-published paper, 1980), 3.
40. MacArthur, *Saved*, 59.
41. Piper and Staff, "TULIP," 22.
42. Dave Breese, "The Five Points of Calvinism" (self-published paper, n. d.).
43. Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman, 1960), 94–99.
44. Robert M. Zins, "A Believer's Guide to 2nd Peter 3:9" (self-published monograph, n. d.), 2–3.
45. Piper and Staff, "TULIP," 22.
46. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Best Bread: Sermons Preached in 1887* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1891), 109.
47. Steven R. Houck, "God's Sovereignty In Salvation" (The Evangelism Committee, Protestant Reformed Church, South Holland, IL, n. d.), 10.
48. Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), IV: 16.
49. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxii, 2.

50. John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, for the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Conference Office, 14 Crosby Street, 1831), II: 39.
51. Ibid.
52. Andrew Telford, *Subjects of Sovereignty* (Harvest Time Ministries, 1980), 55–56.
53. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxii, 1.
54. Ibid., I: xvii, 2, 3.
55. Ibid., III: xxi, 5.
56. Ibid., xxii, 1.

Chapter 6

1. R. C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 189.
2. Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 478.
3. Canons of Dort (Dordrecht, Holland, 1619); reproduced in Vance, *Other Side*, 607–26.
4. Canons, III, IV, “Of the Corruptions of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof,” 17/8.
5. Ben Lacy Rose, *T. U. L. I. P.: The Five Disputed Points of Calvinism* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 37.
6. Westminster Confession of Faith (London: n. p., 1643), X, 1.
7. Pastor in Australia to Dave Hunt, September 8, 2000. On file.
8. Editor of British Christian publication, England, to Dave Hunt, September 8, 2000. On file.
9. R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1993 ed.), 20.
10. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 ed.), IV: xxv, 17.
11. Ibid., IV: xxv, 22.
12. Piper, *Legacy*, 135–47; citing Henry F. Henderson, *Calvin in His Letters* (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1909), 77–79.
13. James R. White, *The Potter’s Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 101.
14. Ibid.

Chapter 7

1. James R. White, *The Potter’s Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 155–56.
2. Robert W. Yarbrough, “Divine Election in the Gospel of John.” In *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 50–51.
3. John Piper, “Are There Two Wills In God?” In Schreiner and Ware, *Still*, 107.
4. D. A. Carson, “Reflections on Assurance,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 54.
5. J. I. Packer, “The Love of God: Universal and Particular.” In *Still*, 283.
6. Yarbrough, “Divine.” In *Still*, 50.
7. R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 137–38.

8. Arthur C. Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 277.
9. Robert A. Morey, *Studies in the Atonement* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1989), 296.
10. Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 682.
11. Piper, "Two Wills." In *Still*, 107.
12. White, *Potter's*, 158–60.
13. R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 69.
14. Pink, *Exposition*, 338.
15. Yarbrough, "Divine." In *Still*, 51.
16. D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 174.
17. Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed., 1999), 508.
18. Schreiner and Ware, Introduction to *Still Sovereign*, 15.
19. John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 201.
20. To Dave Hunt, n. d., received September 10, 2000. On file.
21. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, The Comprehensive John Calvin Collection* (Ages Digital Library, 1998); cited in White, *Potter's*, 161.
22. Schreiner and Ware, *Still*, 14.

Chapter 8

1. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, translator (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 153.
2. John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Free Offer of the Gospel* (n. p., n. d.), 3.
3. John MacArthur, Author and General Editor, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997), 1862.
4. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998 ed.), III: xxiii, 14.
5. D. James Kennedy, *Why I Believe* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1980), 140.
6. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 15.
7. Kennedy, *Believe*, 138.
8. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), 285.
9. James Daane, *The Freedom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 24.
10. Joseph M. Wilson, "Soul Winning," *The Baptist Examiner*, February 15, 1992, 1.
11. David J. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980), 17–18.

12. Wilson, "Soul," 1–2; cited in Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), 542.
13. R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 125.
14. James E. Adams, *Decisional Regeneration* (McDonough, GA: Free Grace Publications, 1972), 12.
15. Boettner, *Reformed*, 11.
16. Gise J. Van Baren, "Irresistible Grace," in Herman Hanko, Homer C. Hoeksema, and Gise J. Van Baren, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1976), 77.
17. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "God's Will and Man's Will," No. 442 (Newington: Metropolitan Tabernacle; sermon delivered Sunday morning, March 30, 1862).
18. Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th prtg., 1999), 17.
19. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV: xvi, 16–19.
20. Ibid.
21. Eddie K. Garrett, "The Purpose of the Gospel" (*The Hardshell Baptist*, December 1990, 4); cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 525.
22. Palmer, *five points*, 17.
23. Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 26–27.
24. Vance, *Other Side*, 522.
25. George S. Bishop, *The Doctrines of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 146.
26. John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 11:144.
27. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV: xvi, 18.
28. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV: xvi, 18–21; IV: xv, 22.
29. Vance, *Other Side*, 151–52.
30. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 43; cited in James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 183.
31. Calvin, *Institutes*, II: ii, 19.
32. Manford E. Kober, *Divine Election or Human Effort?* (n. p., n. d.), 31; cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 216.
33. Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2nd prtg. 1986 ed.), 128.
34. Palmer, *five points*, 27.
35. Arthur C. Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 188.
36. W. E. Best, *Simple Faith (A Misnomer)* (Houston, TX: W. E. Best Book Missionary Trust, 1993), 34.
37. Boettner, *Reformed*, 101.

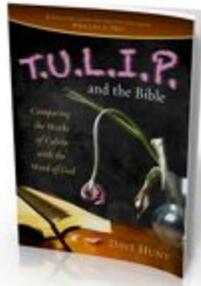
38. Arthur W. Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 55.
39. Grover E. Gunn, *The Doctrines of Grace* (Memphis, TN: Footstool Publications, 1987), 8.
40. Westminster Confession of Faith (London: n. p., 1643), Chapter X.
41. Bob Thompson, "The 5 Points of Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination" (self-published monograph, 4056 Skyline Rd., Carlsbad CA 92008, n. d.), 6.
42. John Knox, *Selected Writings of John Knox* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1995).
43. John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 31, note 154.
44. James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom: A Defense of the Reformation and a Rebuttal of Norman Geisler's Chosen But Free* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 182–86.
45. Cited in White, *Potter's*, without footnote reference.
46. *Ibid.*, 185.
47. Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1995), 99.
48. C. Samuel Storms, "Prayer and Evangelism under God's Sovereignty;" in Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 221.
49. Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987), 102; cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 515–16.
50. Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 3:216.
51. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1930), 4:525.
52. Cited in Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1973), 32–36.
53. W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n. d.), 3:289.
54. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 69.
55. Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 3:376.
56. Vance, *Other Side*, 517.
57. W. G. MacDonald, *Grace Unlimited*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Bloomington, MD: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976), 87; quoted in Samuel Fisk, *Calvinistic Paths Retraced* (Raleigh, NC: Biblical Evangelism Press, 1985), 22.
58. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 220–21.
59. John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 11:145.

60. C. H. Spurgeon, "The Warrant of Faith" (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1978), 3. [one-sermon booklet from 63-volume set].
61. Dave Hunt & James White, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 277.

Chapter 9

1. John MacArthur, Author and General Editor, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997), 1437-38.
2. John MacArthur, *The Love of God* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1996), 111-112, 121.
3. MacArthur, *Love*, 134.
4. Cited by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston in their "Historical and Theological Introduction" to Luther, *Bondage*, 56.
5. Excerpted from *The New Park Street Pulpit*, "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility," a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon delivered August 1, 1858 at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.
6. MacArthur, *Love*.
7. *Ibid.*, 101.
8. *Ibid.*, 102.
9. *Ibid.*, 16.
10. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
11. *Ibid.*, 120.
12. *Ibid.*, 103.
13. *Ibid.*, 95.
14. Packer and Johnston, "Introduction," 56.
15. MacArthur, *Love*, 196.
16. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1957, 11th prtg. 1999), 153.
17. *Ibid.*, 154.
18. Canons of Dort (Dordrecht, Holland, 1619), sec. III/IV, para.16; cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 619.
19. Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxi, 1.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Palmer, foreword to *five points*, 2.
22. Wm. Oosterman, "Take a Long Look at the Doctrine of Election" (Ottawa, Canada: The Lord's Library Publications, n. d.), 3. Available from Westboro Baptist Church, Ottawa.
23. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "God's Will and Man's Will," No. 442 (Newington: Metropolitan Tabernacle; sermon delivered Sunday morning, March 30, 1862).
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Palmer, *five points*, 27.
27. Spurgeon, "God's Will."
28. Robert M. Zins to Dave Hunt, August 23, 2000. On file.
29. *Ibid.*

Readers may also enjoy . . .



TULIP AND THE BIBLE: COMPARING THE WORKS OF CALVIN WITH THE WORD OF GOD

—by Dave Hunt

*SELECTED MATERIAL FROM THE BESTSELLING
HARDCOVER, WHAT LOVE IS THIS?*

In spite of many differences of opinion among Calvinists today, Calvinism is generally explained by the acronym, T.U.L.I.P. Philip F. Congdon writes that “a tulip is a beautiful flower, but bad theology.

“The fruit of the flower is appealing; the fruit of the theology is appalling...works, as an inevitable result, are necessary for salvation. To be fair, Classical Calvinists usually object to this by describing the gospel message as not ‘faith + works = justification,’ but ‘faith = justification + works’.... This is no more than a word game. It is best seen in the old Calvinist saying: ‘You are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves you is never alone....’”

Some readers may have never heard of T.U.L.I.P. Others, though knowing that it has something to do with Calvinism, find it difficult to remember what each letter stands for:

“T” STANDS FOR TOTAL DEPRAVITY

“U” STANDS FOR UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

“L” STANDS FOR LIMITED ATONEMENT

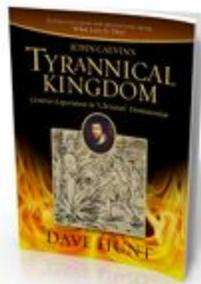
“I” STANDS FOR IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

“P” STANDS FOR PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

In *TULIP and the Bible*, Dave Hunt invites readers to reconsider the accuracy and veracity of this beloved acronym: “With all due respect, I would suggest that the Bible alone is our authority, not the beliefs of either John Calvin or Jacobus Arminius—or any council, synod, assembly, or creed. In the following pages, the points of TULIP are compared with the Bible, one point at a time, and in order.”

PAPERBACK • THE BEREAN CALL • ISBN 978-1-928660-75-0

Also by Dave Hunt:



JOHN CALVIN'S TYRANNICAL KINGDOM: GENEVA'S EXPERIMENT IN "CHRISTIAN" DOMINIONISM

—by Dave Hunt

*SELECTED MATERIAL FROM THE BESTSELLING
HARDCOVER, WHAT LOVE IS THIS?*

From 1541 to 1549, French theologian John Calvin attempted the perfect marriage of Church and State in Geneva, Switzerland. Determined to transform the city into a model of God's kingdom on earth, Calvin established numerous detailed "reforms."

Historian Will Durant reports that Calvin even dictated "The allowable color and quantity of clothing, and the number of dishes permissible at a meal.... Jewelry and lace were frowned upon. A woman was jailed for arranging her hair to an immoral height.... Censorship of the press was taken over from Catholic and secular precedents and *enlarged*: books...of immoral tendency were banned....

"To speak disrespectfully of Calvin or the clergy was a *crime*. A first violation of these ordinances was punished with a reprimand, further violation with fines, persistent violation with *imprisonment* or banishment. Fornication was to be punished with exile or *drowning*; adultery, blasphemy, or idolatry, with death...a child was *beheaded* for striking its parents. In the years 1558–59 there were 414 prosecutions for moral offenses; between 1542 and 1564 there were seventy-six banishments and fifty-eight *executions*; the total population of Geneva was then about 20,000." (*emphasis added*)

Calvin has been acclaimed as a godly example who based his theology and actions upon Scripture alone. But much that he did was unbiblical in the extreme. Is not that fact sufficient reason to examine Calvinism carefully from Scripture? Should today's Christian leaders continue to laud a man whose behavior was often so far removed from the commandments of Christ, and the example of Paul? Should believers seek to emulate and celebrate Calvin's theology, which led to his ungodly practice?

These and other questions are examined according to historical record, in the light of God's Word.

PAPERBACK • THE BEREAN CALL • ISBN 1-928660-76-7

About The Berean Call

*The Berean Call (TBC) is a non-denominational,
tax-exempt organization which exists to:*

ALERT believers in Christ to unbiblical teachings and practices impacting the church

EXHORT believers to give greater heed to biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently promoted in the church

SUPPLY believers with teaching, information, and materials which will encourage the love of God's truth, and assist in the development of biblical discernment

MOBILIZE believers in Christ to action in obedience to the scriptural command to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3)

IMPACT the church of Jesus Christ with the necessity for trusting the Scriptures as the only rule for faith, practice, and a life pleasing to God

*A free monthly newsletter, THE BEREAN CALL, may be received
by sending a request to: PO Box 7019, Bend, OR 97708; or by calling*

1-800-937-6638

*To register for free email updates, to access our digital archives, and to order a variety of additional
resource materials online, visit us at:*

www.thebereancall.org

