

Ephesians 2013 Lessons 23 and 24

Ephesians 1:3-14

Election, Predestination and Calvinism

Believer's Adjustment

- *Psalms 66:18 If I perceive sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*
- *Psalms 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*
- *I Cor 11:31 But if we judge ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.*
- *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all other unrighteousness.*

Invitation: If you have never trusted in Christ Alone for salvation...

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- Rom. 11:6, *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."*
- Gal. 2:21, *"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

- *Gal. 3:24, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."*
- *1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'*
- *John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only beotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*
- *"Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" Acts 16:31*

Ephesians 1:3--14

- 3. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 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:*
- 5 *Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

- *6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*
- *7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*
- *8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*
- *9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

- *10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*
- *11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*
- *12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

- *13 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,*
- *14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."*

- This [Predestination] passage in Ephesians deals with God's plan for the believer who is saved by faith.
- Recall Verses 1 and 2:
 - ***1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:***
 - ***2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.***

- This passage in Ephesians deals with God's plan for the believer who is saved by faith. Verse 3 introduces the discourse and states that God has blessed believers with "spiritual blessings in heavenly places."

IS CALVINISM BIBLICAL? A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF CALVINISM AND ITS TEACHINGS

BY Cooper P. Abrams, III

Introduction

For centuries, Calvinism has been one of the most debated subject along with the doctrines of election and predestination as taught by the modern Reformed movement. The importance of the subject is manifest in that it deals directly with the doctrine of salvation by grace.

These two doctrines are widely debated by some professing Christians who have divided themselves into opposing camps of "Calvinists" and "Arminians." However, there is a third group that is often overlooked. This group is made up of those who accept neither of these extreme views and reject the tenets of both positions. It is the view of this group that will be explained and shown to be the biblical view. The scope of this work will be reveal who John Calvin was and his actions as the minister of Geneva.

Further, this paper will address the teachings of Calvinism and show them to be a radical and unbiblical view.

Those who believe the Bible to be the inerrant and infallible Word of God will take its doctrines seriously. The true biblist¹ appeals to God's word to find His truth in the doctrines of predestination and election, freewill and human responsibility. He will insist, that based on God's word, the truth of the matter can be absolutely discerned.

To understand the problem, let us look at the various positions held, the terms used, and a brief history of the topic.

This will present a biblical solution that correctly addresses the issue and avoids the unbiblical extremes of both the Calvinists and the Arminians. The purpose of this paper is not to present an exhaustive study of the subject, but rather to address the practical side of this theological system, pointing out its unbiblical flaws for the average believer in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1 Introduction to Calvinism

Calvinism is a system of theology that is associated with the Protestant theologian John Calvin, a Frenchman, who later became a Swiss reformer (1509- 1564). The term "Calvinism" refers to doctrines and practices that stemmed from his works. The tenets of modern Calvinism are based mainly on his classic work Institutes of the Christian Religion which was published in its final edition in 1559.² It would not be correct to state that John Calvin developed modern Calvinism; rather Calvinism is based on his

work and has been expanded by his followers.

John Calvin was born in Noyon, a small town in Picardy, France in 1509. He was the youngest of four children, all boys. When Calvin was twelve years old his father, Gérard Cauvin (Calvin) sent him to the University of Paris to study theology. It was his father's desire since Calvin's childhood that he would study theology and become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church.³

At age twelve, around 1520 or 1521, Calvin began his education by attending the University of Paris. He received his licentiate⁴ in arts and his masters degree.

However, between 1528 and 1533, his father directed him to abandon his theological studies, and young Calvin worked on a more profitable law degree in the schools of Bourges and Orleans. Subsequently, Calvin completed his studies and was licensed to practice law.

Calvin was raised as a devout Catholic, but it appears that he began to move toward Protestantism after reading Martin Luther's writings. There is no record of Calvin's actual conversion or his salvation, but he changed the direction of his studies from law back to theology in 1557.⁵

His conversion seems to have consisted of a slow transition to becoming a Protestant sometime between 1529 or early 1530.⁶ In Calvin writings, he emphasizes his gradual transition over time from Catholicism toward Protestant Christianity rather than a single event of conversion. He stated, “We are converted little by little to God, and by stages.”⁷ Clearly, Calvin did not accept conversion as an event in one’s life in which one becomes a believer and is at that moment born again. Rather he described his conversion as a gradual evolution towards God. This element in his life casts a

shadow over Calvin's actual salvation.

The true state of his heart cannot be known, but insight can be gleaned from his writings, and most importantly, from his actions in Geneva. However, it should be noted, that there is no example in the New Testament that would support his idea of a gradual process of salvation.

What is clear is that Calvin gradually moved from being a devout Roman Catholic to becoming a devoted Reformed Protestant. However, being converted to Protestantism is not the same thing as being truly converted and spiritually “born again.”

The Protestant Reformation was a reforming of Roman Catholicism, but it did not cleanse it from all its errors. In reality, Protestantism retained much of the errors of Roman Catholicism such as a universal church, pedro-baptism, sacraments, sprinkling as a mode of baptism, and the church as a means of salvation as seen in the practice of ex-communication. It also continued the idea of the state being under the control (in varying degrees) of the church, along with a state paid clergy. There was never in the Protestant Reformation a clear break from Catholicism.

Like all cults and false religions, Protestantism was founded not solely on the Bible (Sola Scriptura), but on the writings, opinions, ideas, and councils of churchmen as to what the Bible teaches or what they thought would be proper religion. Swiss Protestantism was founded by John Calvin and is the foundation of Presbyterianism; Martin Luther, founded Lutheranism; and Henry VIII founded Anglicanism when he broke England away from the Roman Catholic Church. This was the same error that Jesus condemned the religious leaders of Israel for committing.

Israel too followed the writings of the rabbis in the Talmud,⁸ instead of the Torah (the Old Testament). The modern Reformed movement is based on Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion and many of the teachings of the Institutes are not biblical.

Chapter Two

What Does History Record of John Calvin's Character?

It is easily seen in the writings of John Calvin that he considered himself as having a special calling from God. He believed that throughout his life he was following, with great dedication, God's will and was the faithful defender of truth. As the pastor of Geneva he saw his role as purging the city of immorality of all kinds. His method was to use the civil government as an arm of the church to establish correct and strict laws of behavior, but also as executing judgment and punishments of offenders.

A man's true character can be seen in what he does, and not necessarily by what he says. Calvin is lauded as the greatest of Protestant theologian, and his "Institutes of the Christian Religion" is praised as a great work and a foundation of Reformed Protestant theology. There can be no misunderstanding that Calvin had a great respect and biblical fear of God. However, the extremes and false conclusions of this theology can certainly be questioned and shown to be unbiblical.

Calvin based his theology almost solely on applying the Old Testament law, given to the Nation of Israel, to Christianity. He ignored the many passages in the New Testament and that plainly state that Christians, in this dispensation, are not under the law. Paul stated, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:14) He further explained, “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:6)

There can be no question that Calvin misunderstood that the law was given as their constitution and represented both spiritual and civil law to the nation of Israel. God never intended the law to apply literally to Christians. The principles behind the laws apply to all ages, and in our age, the principles are kept willingly by born again believers, not out of compulsion, but out of a love of God, His word, and righteousness. John Calvin had those whom he thought were witches burned at the stake.

However, Christians apply the principle behind God telling Israel not to allow a witch to live, by having nothing to do with witchcraft or any thing associated with the occult.(See Exod. 22:18) The law in Exodus 22:18 was a civil law given to the Nation of Israel to protect its people from the occult. Paul made it clear that Christians are not to follow the letter of the law saying, “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:6)

The Apostle further explained,
“But now being made free from
sin, and become servants to God,
ye have your fruit unto holiness,
and the end everlasting life.”

(Romans 6:22) Speaking of the
freedom from the yoke of bondage
of the law that the believer has in
Christ Paul wrote, “Stand fast
therefore in the liberty wherewith
Christ hath made us free, and be
not entangled again with the yoke
of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1) This
doctrinal truth escaped Calvin’s
reasoning and he incorrectly and
relentlessly applied the civil law of
Israel to the citizens of Geneva.

It is helpful in understanding Calvin's actions, that as the senior minister of Geneva, it was his obsession to purify the citizens of city from all immoral behavior. He thought that applying the law of Moses was the solution to the problem of sinful behavior. However, in looking at the actions of John Calvin, it can be plainly seen that his theology, was based on Augustinian thought, and was administered in a tyrannical, vindictive, cruel, and unloving way. It is difficult to find in the many hundreds of books written about John Calvin many instances of him being a loving, kind, merciful, or caring man, or pastor.

He ruled and lorded over his congregation and using the civil authorities brought swift judgment on dissenters, even unto death. In 1538, Calvin was forced to leave Geneva because of his unpopular views. Later in 1541, he was invited back. He was at first reluctant to return because of the opposition he had faced. What changed his mind was that those governing the city offered him lucrative benefits and position if he would return. The city was in turmoil, and they offered Calvin great power that he could exercise in his new office as the minister to Geneva. Their aim was to restore order to the troubled city.

This power would allow him to, “. . . establish discipline and control behavior throughout the city.”¹⁰ Calvin drafted ecclesiastical ordinances that created the constitution for the Reformed Church of the city-state of Geneva¹¹. The Consistory, one of the three governing bodies of the city, had the jurisdiction over the enforcement of Calvin’s laws. Calvin set about in earnest to remolding Geneva into a “City of God.”¹² Harkness states, “It was the duty of the State, Calvin thought, to use its powers-if need be, its sword-bearing arm- to enforce moral living and sound doctrine.”¹³

According to Harkness, “Before his death Calvin became virtually the civil as well as the ecclesiastical dictator of Geneva.”¹⁴ Calvin’s grave error was in thinking that applying civil law, he could change the moral condition of the citizens of Geneva. Like every attempt to legislate morally, it miserably failed. If he had truly been a man of God he would have sought to bring spiritual revival to the city by preaching the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way to change the sinner’s nature and life. When the sinner repents of his sins, God changes his nature and

he becomes a moral and spiritual person.

Calvin could not have understood 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,” and taken the misguided course he pursued.

Chapter Three

Atrocities for which John Calvin was Responsible.

The truth of the character of Calvin can be seen in the heretic Michael Servetus and others who were accused of violating his laws.

Servetus was a scholarly theologian, and a renowned physician. He was condemned as a heretic by both the Roman Church as well as the Protestants for his rejection of the Trinity and infant baptism. In 1531, Servetus published a book titled “Errors of the Trinity” in which he referred to those who believed in the Trinity as believing in three Gods.

He and Calvin corresponded for some time, but Servetus would not accept Calvin's teachings on the Trinity. Calvin, having failed to convert Servetus, became vindictive and saw him as his devoted enemy. On February 13, 1546, Calvin wrote to his friend Farel "If he (Servetus) comes (to Geneva) I shall never let him go out alive if my authority has weight."¹⁵

For seven years Calvin sought to capture and try Servetus.

When Severtus made the mistake of returning to Geneva and attending on of Calvin's services he was recognized and arrested and put on trial. Calvin wrote that he hoped the verdict in Servetus' trial would be the death penalty¹⁶. Calvin got his wish and Servetus was convicted of two of the thirty-eight charges brought against him. He was sentenced to be burned at the stake along with his books, and on October 27, 1553, his sentence was carried out. Outside of Geneva, he was taken to a hill and Nigg records that a "A wreath strewn with sulfur was placed on his head.

When the faggots were ignited, a piercing cry of horror broke from him. 'Mercy, mercy!' he cried. For more than half an hour the horrible agony continued, for the pyre had been made of half-green wood, which burned slowly. 'Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me,' the tormented man cried from the midst of the flames" 17 It should be noted that Servetus was not a citizen of Geneva, but was only visiting the city. Thus, the misdirected piety of John Calvin claimed but another victim. Nigg said of Calvin, "He (Calvin) did not have the faculty for entering into another person's ideas.

Rather, he tended to decide arbitrarily that such ideas were diabolically inspired. . . no amount of human or historical broad-mindedness can bring us to excuse Calvin's actions."18 This should cause any logical and honest person to question how could this spiritually unsound man be the founder of Protestant Reformed theology. How could Reformed Theology hold him in such high esteem?

Calvin, who had denounced Roman Catholicism for its false beliefs and practices, was giving French refugees asylum from the Inquisition in Geneva.

He himself had also been condemned to be burned at the stake absentia, was now conducting his own Reformed Inquisition in Switzerland.

Other Atrocities for which John Calvin was Responsible.

In February 1545, a man named "Freckles" Dunant was accused of applying plague venom to the removed foot of a man who was hanged. He was tortured to death in an attempt to make him confess. He died under the torture but would not admit to the crime of spreading the plague. His body was then dragged to the middle of town and burned.

This demonstrates the utter lack of compassion or any legal recourse to those who were accused under John Calvin's law. Clearly, Calvin approved and condoned such horrible acts.

On March 7, 1545, Two women were executed by burning at the stake of the crime of spreading the plague. Cottret wrote that ". . . Calvin humanely interceded the same day to keep the poisoners from being forced to languish in prison. The Council followed this happy directive and urged the executioner henceforth to "be more diligent in cutting off the hands of malefactors."19

Calvin's actions are a testimony to his lack of character and warped sense of compassion.

The executions continued unabated and those who refused to confess were tortured skillfully in a way that would avoid killing them using a strappado. The strappado is a form of torture in which the victim is hung in the air by the wrists with their arms tied behind their back. During this time, two people who were accused sorcerers were decapitated. It was said they composed a plaster of grease and other villainous things that caused people to die.

A number of the victims committed suicide to end their torture. One woman who was handcuffed to keep her from taking her life threw herself out of a window to escape the torture. John Calvin not only condoned, but approved of this hideous superstitious torment. Clearly Calvin was ruled by an irrational superstition that has its roots in paganism.

The last execution associated with the plague was on May 16, 1545, in which a total of seven men and twenty-four women were executed. A letter from Calvin attests to 15 of these women being burned at the stake.

Calvin's only concern was that the plague had not come to his house. During this period, a total of thirty-seven people were condemned for spreading the plague. The majority had made confessions, which is not surprising considering the terrible tortures they were made to endure. Calvin also had thirty-four women burned at the stake after accusing them of being witches who caused a plague that had swept through Geneva in 1545.²⁰ In 1568, the plague returned and Calvin wrote that fifteen women had already been burned and men were punished more rigorously.

Calvin's only concern in all this was that his house had been spared from the plague²¹. On June 23, 1547 several women were accused of dancing which John Calvin forbid. Francoise Favre was the wife of his close friend Ami Perrin who had brought him to Geneva. However, she fell in disfavor with the court because the year earlier she had refused to testify against several of her friends before the Consistory. She again refused to testify and stood up against Calvin. She was thus imprisoned for her actions of defying the Consistory and Calvin. Under Calvin, the Anabaptists were cruelly persecuted.

He saw them as his adversaries, mainly because they rejected infant baptism and his unbiblical beliefs

7

and practices. Cottret records “Several Anabaptists from the Netherlands were in fact found in Geneva at this time. Among these were Herman de Gerbihan and Benoit d'Anglen, banished during the winter of 1537 with some of their disciples.”²²

A man named Jacques Gruet, who was a confessed atheist was accused of writing a poster against Calvin accusing him of hypocrisy and hanging it on his pulpit.

He was arrested and tortured until he admitted to the crime. He was then executed by beheading on July 26, 1547 because he spoke out against the tyrant of Geneva, John Calvin.

This and many other atrocities were conducted under the direction of John Calvin and clearly show that man was a religious fanatic, a criminal, and a murderer. What makes his actions so vile is that he committed these heinous atrocities in the name of Almighty God and under the banner of upholding the truth!

These people were not condemned for viable crimes, but because of superstitions, speaking their opinions, or holding beliefs that John Calvin disagreed with. Judging him by his deeds and his warped sense of Christianity, reveals that Calvin was completely devoid of human kindness, and mercy. He certainly had no hint of having the love of Christ in his heart showing no love for his fellow man.

Chapter Four **Unbiblical Beliefs and Failures** **of John Calvin**

Calvin on the Bible. In 1536 Calvin wrote: "The Bible is a knotty, difficult text, whose interpretation demands extensive knowledge. If brought into contact with it unceremoniously, many minds are upset and seized with confusion. The Bible is too old a text in too new a world."²³

God willed that man sin. Calvin wrote "God, in a secret and marvellous way, justly wills, the things which men unjustly do." . . . "Although God and the devil will the same thing: they do so in an utterly different manner."²⁴

God did not will that all men be saved. “. . .that few receive the Gospel; we must fully conclude, that the cause, is the will of God; and that the outward sound of that Gospel strikes the ear in vain, until God is pleased to touch, by it, the heart within.”²⁵

Calvin concluded that if God wills that all should be saved then they would be saved. This was the logical conclusion of his idea of predestinated salvation. However, this contradicts God's own word.

God says: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30)

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)

Calvin believed that God was the author of evil and sin. He said, "For, unless there were this good, --that evil things also existed; those evil things would not be permitted, by the Great and Good Omnipotent, to exist at all. For He, without doubt, can as easily refuse to permit to be done what He does not will to be done, as He can do that which He wills to be done. Unless we fully believe this, the very beginning of our faith is perilled: by which, we profess to believe in God ALMIGHTY!"²⁶

The conclusion is clear that he believed that God was the author of evil because evil could not have existed unless God allowed it. He believed that God, in allowing evil, caused it.

Calvin believed in baptismal regeneration. In *The Institutes* Calvin said, “For as God, regenerating us in baptism, ingrafts us into the fellowship of his Church, and makes us his by adoption, so we have said that he performs the office of a provident parent, in continually supplying the food by which he may sustain and preserve us in the life to which he has begotten us by his word.”²⁷

He further stated, “. . . Baptism is, according to Paul, a seal of our future resurrection.”²⁸ It must also be noted that he taught that baptism was initiatory sign that believers were admitted to the Church. However, he continues and says baptism “. . . is to be a sign and evidence of our purification, or (better to explain my meaning) it is a kind of sealed instrument by which he assures us that all our sins are so deleted, covered, and effaced, that they will never come into his sight, never be mentioned, never imputed.”²⁹ Note the last part of his statement.

Baptism is yes a sign, but it does not a “sealed instrument by he assures us that all our sins are so deleted, covered, and effaced, that they will never come into his sight, never be mentioned, never imputed.” This certainly suggests Calvin believed in a form of baptismal regeneration.

Calvin was not truthful. When Calvin was being severely criticized after the burning of Michael Servetus he sought to defend himself by writing “There was spread abroad, in many places, a rumour, that this vain person (Servetus) was severely bound in prison: whereas, he was

perfectly free, and flying about the city openly, every day.

And with what malignity some virulent ones imagined and stated, that we wished him to be put to death, you are yourselves our best witnesses.”³⁰ However, as noted above, long before Servetus came to Geneva and was murdered, Calvin was planning his death. Calvin failed as a pastor.

Zweig writes that “In 1543, after the plague struck Geneva, Sebastian Castellio was the only divine in Geneva to visit the sick and console the dying; the Geneva Consistory (made mostly of pastors) and Calvin himself refused to visit the sick, Calvin directed his servants to declare him "indispensable" and being “indispensable” he made no effort to comfort, visit, or minister to the sick. Later when criticized for his actions and writing in his own defense that "it would not do to weaken the whole Church in order to help a part of it."31 Clearly, John Calvin thought a great deal of his own worth.

Calvin ignored God's word which explains, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27) Paul instructed believers, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) Calvin's faith seems not to have been strong enough to believe that if he ministered others in their distress, that God could not keep and protect him.

He appears to be more concerned about himself than he his flock he claimed God had sent him to. Calvin believed that “the Church” had the power to excommunicate. Cottret records that “Calvin asked for excommunication without fail of ‘fornicators, avaricious people, idolaters, slanderers, and drunkards, devoted to plunder.’ In the sixteenth century, far from being simple spiritual acts, the Lord's Supper and its complement, excommunication, were powerful levers for directing public morality.”³²

To be excommunicated in Geneva meant one would be denied partaking in the Lord's Supper which was paramount from be removed from the protection of the church, the civil government, and the blessings of God. Calvin saw the Lord's Supper as a sacrament. Calvin wrote, "We therefore confess with one voice that in receiving the sacrament faithfully according to the ordinance of the Lord we are truly made participants in the very substance of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ."³³

That clearly is transubstantiation, which is the false doctrine of Roman Catholicism that the elements of the “Eucharist” literally becomes the actual flesh and blood of Jesus Christ and thereby effects forgiveness of sins.

No where does the Bible present the Lord’s Supper as a sacrament.

There are no sacraments in biblical Christianity that have

saving properties or that are necessary for salvation. (Rom.

3:24, 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9;

Tit. 3:5)

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are simply ordinances of a local assembly that picture symbolically salvation and Christ's atonement. They impart no spiritual benefit other than seeing in them the spiritual truths that they symbolize. No church can excommunicate or remove the salvation of anyone. A local church can and should practice church discipline for its members who are involved in public sin and who are unrepentant. When applied, the disciplined person loses the fellowship of the congregation which is designed by God to shame them into repentance.

A church cannot give salvation, and therefore a church cannot take it away, as salvation is solely the work of God. However, a local church can remove from their fellowship a member, who by his unrepentant sin, brings disgrace on the whole congregation.

Calvin's deeds show him to be an uncaring and uncompassionate man not showing the love of Christ that comes with true salvation.

One can get some insight into John Calvin's capacity toward love and human compassion in his statement to Farel while he was in Strasburg, Germany in May 1539.

Calvin was unmarried and stated his desires toward acquiring a wife saying, “Remember well what I seek for in her. I am not of the insane race of those lovers who, once taken by a woman's beauty, cherish even her faults. The only beauty that seduces me is that of a woman who is chaste, considerate, modest, economical, patient; who I can hope, finally, will be attentive to my health.”³⁴

It is hard to miss the selfishness in his thoughts of the qualifications of one who he would accept as a wife. In 1540, while in Strasburg, Calvin was married to Idelette de Bure, a widow with two children.

Writing about their short honeymoon Calvin said "In truth, out of fear that our marriage would be too happy, the Lord from the beginning moderated our joy." He further explained that one must know "how to keep one's countenance."³⁵

Due to a plague in the city Idelette moved to the country. Calvin was prompted to write in her absence, "My wife is in my thoughts day and night, deprived of counsel because she is deprived of her master."³⁶

Chapter Five

The tenets of Calvinism

The beliefs and teachings of John Calvin became the distinguishing characteristics of the Protestant Reformed churches and some Baptists. Calvinists are divided into several groups: the extremist, are called "Hyper" or "Five Point" Calvinists, and the "Moderate Calvinists." The Hyper and Five Point Calvinists hold to the five points of Calvinism, which are stated in the acrostic TUPLIP. The Moderate Calvinist may accept one or more of these five points, but not all.

The Hyper or Five Point Calvinistic teaching of "Limited Atonement" is generally rejected by the Moderate Calvinist. Simply stated, the heart of Calvinistic theology is the view that claims that God predestined or elected some to be saved and others to be lost. Those elected to salvation are decreed by God to receive salvation and cannot "resist God's grace." However, those that God elected to be lost are born condemned eternally to the Lake of Fire, and He will not allow them be saved. The five points of Calvinism spring from this false understanding of election and predestination.

This controversy began during the Reformation in the 16th Century and grew out of Calvin's teaching. According to Calvinism, those that God, in His sovereignty, has chosen to be saved, will be saved by God's "irresistible grace." The man "elected" by God to salvation cannot reject salvation. The rest of humanity, not chosen by God to receive everlasting life, has no opportunity to be saved. According to the Hyper Calvinist, God in the past has decreed their damnation. Today this theology is found in what is called "Covenant" or "Reformed" theology. This is taught by Presbyterians,

Reformed churches and some Baptists.

A Biblical Look at the Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP)

This teaching is referred to as "Five Point Calvinism." The five points are represented by using the acrostic "TULIP."

T - Total depravity of man. U - Unconditional election. L - Limited atonement.

I - Irresistible grace.

P - Perseverance of the saints.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The first article of Calvinism deals with man as a sinner and teaches that a man is “totally depraved,” unable, having no ability to receive salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that man is born in a spiritually corrupt state that affects his mind, intelligence, emotion, and will. The Bible calls this state “unrighteousness” which means not being right with God. When Adam sinned, he brought into the world both spiritual and physical death and passed his sinful nature to all his progeny. Ephesians 2:1 states man in his natural unregenerated state is indeed “. . . dead in trespasses and sins.”

On this truth, biblical Christians certainly agree. However, the Scriptures do not use the words “total depravity” nor teach this concept in the sense that the Calvinist does. Depravity means to be corrupt, debase, impaired, perverted, etc. The Calvinist goes to the extreme by applying this word to man’s sinful condition and concludes that man’s free will has no part in his coming to Christ and receiving salvation.

The Scriptures clearly teach that man apart from God’s intervention, cannot savingly come to Christ.

Romans 3:10-18 describe all men as being unrighteous and as verse 10 states “As it is written, There is

none righteous, no, not one.”
(Romans 3:10) Man in his fallen state does not understand or seek God, and there is no fear of God before their eyes. God says “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and that man’s righteousness is as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6)
Paul revealed the state of the carnal mind “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:7-8) But that does not mean that a man cannot with God’s intervention believe and be saved. 12

Certainly, salvation cannot be merited or earned as Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches,

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Therefore, a man cannot “will” himself to be saved because in his natural state he has no righteousness nor seeks God.

Jesus explained that, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44)

Jesus' words reveal how an unrighteous man can be saved and receive salvation by faith. It is God the Father who draws the sinner to salvation.

This is the principle that Calvinism confuses and carries to the extreme. God's word explains that after Adam and Eve sinned, they knew good from evil. "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis 3:22)

What the Calvinist does not accept or understand is that man can respond to God, using his will, to accept salvation when convicted by the Holy Spirit. Without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, a person does not seek God or desire to receive God's forgiveness. However, when the Holy Spirit illuminates the man's mind and reveals his lost state, God also gives that man the ability to respond with his will and be saved. The same man can also reject God's offer of salvation, and God will allow him to do so not forcing a man to accept what he does not want.

Carrying man's lost condition to the extreme, the Calvinist teaches that God, exercising His sovereignty, first elected and then decreed certain individuals to salvation in time past. According to them, Christ's death was not for all people as 1 John 2:2 states, "And he is the propitiation (full payment) for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2) In order to support their theology they conclude that Jesus only died for the few whom He chose to save. This belief directly contradicts the clear statement of 1 John 2:2.

God then, according to Reformed Theology, extended "irresistible" grace to those whom He elected, meaning that God save these people without any action on their part. In other words, God forced them to be saved. Following their baseless logic therefore, a man has nothing to do with his receiving salvation because God chooses to save him and make him believe. In other words "Election is God's choice for some persons."³⁷ This logically means that God does not elect to save anyone else but His few chosen "elect."

Even though the Scripture repeatedly, in presenting the Gospel, proclaims that a man must believe in order to be saved, the Calvinist teaches that only those whom God has predestined to be saved can believe and only when God supernaturally causes them to believe.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The concept of unconditional election purports that God predestined who He would save and who He would not allow to be saved by withholding His grace, thus condemning them to the Lake of Fire. Biblical Christians have strong objections to this tenet of Calvinism. The reason is that unconditional election means that God chose to save some and not to save others. Those who reject Calvinism contend that this belief is an attack on God's very character and nature.

This belief contradicts the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ died and paid the sin debt of all men (1 John 2:2); and that God ". . . will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4); and that God's nature is love, which means seeking the best for all men (1 John 4:7-8, 16). These Scriptures and others refute the idea that God chooses to give life to most of mankind and gives them life in order to send them to hell. No-where in the Word of God does He say that He decreed who would be saved and who would not be saved.

Men are saved based on their acceptance or rejection of God's gift of grace which He offers to all men. Romans 1:18-23 plainly teaches that man is condemned because he refuses to believe God and accept God's grace. Jesus clearly stated "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3:19-20) The light without question is Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Jesus said that men choose to reject the “light” because their deeds are evil, and they refuse to come to the “light” because the “light” reproves their sin. The basis of man’s condemnation is not God, but the man himself who knows the truth and refuses to believe and submit himself to his Creator and Savior. Proverbs 1:29 tells us, “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD” (Proverbs 1:29) Those who hated the knowledge of God chose not to believe and fear God and thus they condemned themselves; God has always offered grace and mercy to all who will accept it.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Limited atonement is another natural false assumption of the Calvinist. Calvinists assume that if only those who God has predestined to be saved will be saved, then God limits atonement to only those He elects. All men therefore cannot be saved because God's grace is offered only to those who He has chosen. This is a teaching based on human logic and not on God's word.

1 Peter 1:2 explains who are the elect. “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)

God says He elects according to His “foreknowledge” meaning His knowing in the future. God is omniscient and knows all things past, present, and future. He knew who would believe, and thus He elected what salvation would be provided for those who believed.

The election was not for who would be saved, but what salvation would provide to those who accepted His grace. More will be said about this later.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Being true to their human reasoning, the Calvinists conclude that grace then must be irresistible. If God is sovereign and forces a man to be saved, then the man cannot resist. Those to whom God elected to save will be saved a part from any action on their part. Thus, a man whom God has elected cannot resist God's grace and will be saved.

God says “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

The Scriptures declare that God’s very nature is to love. God’s love is not conditional on a person meriting or deserving His love. No one deserves God’s mercy and grace. But God offers His love unconditionally to all who will believe. God says clearly His desire is that all men come to the knowledge of the truth. This precludes there being anyone whom God has excluded from His offer of grace.

God wants everyone to be saved. If grace is irresistible, as the Calvinist teaches, then why does He not, as a loving God and Creator, save everyone? The answer is plain that most men do not want to believe and they prevent God from giving them His free gift of salvation because they love their sin more than their souls.

PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS.

The Calvinists continue in using human reasoning to confuse the doctrine of the security and assurance of salvation. They change the words the Bible uses of "assurance" and teach "the perseverance of the saints." (See 1 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 6:11, 10:22)

Calvinism correctly teaches that once saved, a person cannot lose their salvation. However, the term "perseverance of the saints" by definition presents a false understanding of the "security of the believer." Their word "perseverance" means to

"continue on a course of action" or refers to steadfastness.

There word implies that God will not allow a believer to “backslide” or fall into sin. This may seem to be a minor point to differentiate between “perseverance” and “security,” but the words have different meanings. A believer can and will sin, and can sin to the point that God will chasten him and even take the believers life if he will not repent. (See 1 John 1:8-10) The believer is assured that he is "secure" in Christ and will go to heaven.

Once saved, a person cannot be lost because he did nothing to earn his salvation and cannot do anything to keep it or lose it. (See Rom. 3:20, 27-28, 4:2, 8:38-39; 9:11, 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:3-5)
Biblically, salvation is totally the work of God and once saved a person is kept secure by the power of God unto salvation.

God said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The Bible clearly teaches that a man can "backslide" and can allow sin to rule his life. Hebrews 12:6-11, 1 Corinthians 11:32, and 1 John 5:16 teach that God will chasten an unrepentant, sinning believer even unto death to end his rebellion. The Biblical doctrine is the "security" not the "perseverance" of the saints. A saint of God can fail God, but God will not fail the saint. God gives eternal life to those who by faith repent and receive His free gift of salvation. Once saved the believer cannot be lost because God has forgiven all their past, present, and future sins.

Thus, a true believer is secure in God's grace. When a man receives Christ he becomes a new creature, a saved child of God and is indwelt by the spirit of God. He cannot be lost once saved. (See 2 Cor. 5:17) When the unrepentant believer dies he will in eternity be judged but not to condemnation. Christ's judgment of believers is for reward, not condemnation. Thus, the unrepentant sinner who dies will receive no reward as 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 states. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he

himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:14-15)
None of the tenets of TULIP meet the biblical test and they present a false view of the doctrines of election, God’s grace, and of salvation.

Chapter Six

Some Famous Preachers of the Past Who were Calvinists

Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers in recent times, dealt with the matter by alternately preaching both salvation by grace and man's responsibility to respond to God's offer of redemption. He compromised God's word by preaching the Calvinist doctrine of election to salvation one Sunday (Calvinism), and the next Sunday preaching that man must exercise his will and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like most Calvinists, he made the error of seeing election as referring to a person being chosen for salvation. He seems not to have seen that biblically election refers to God's plan for how God's elected plan would benefit the believer. The Calvinist takes great stock in asserting that Charles Spurgeon was a Calvinist. Many Baptists use Spurgeon to justify their being Calvinists. Paul warned “. . . God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” (Romans 3:4)

Others, such as the famous writer Arthur Pink, along with most of those of the Five Point Calvinist persuasion, boldly taught that God has predestined some to be saved, and equally predestined others to be damned to hell. The one predestined to salvation will absolutely be saved and there is nothing he can do to prevent it. This is their teaching of "Irresistible Grace." They conclude that if God offers grace then it cannot be refused because God is sovereign in all He does.

The result of their false logic and theology is that they conclude the poor unfortunate soul who has not been chosen by God and who is not offered grace, but is born for hell and cannot receive Christ. What is interesting and also tragic is that Pink, who is hailed as a great theologian, does not see the error in his teaching. For example he quotes Isaiah 59:2 in his book "Gleanings in Genesis." "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)

Yet, he misses what God says in verse 1, “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” The verse says it is the iniquities of the sinner that separate him from God and are the cause of God’s “hiding” His face and not hearing the sinner. Calvinism contradicts God’s word and proclaims it is God’s sovereign choice and action to hide his face and not hear the sinner. As one reads the contents of the Reformers in their vast numbers of their writings, this serious error is made continually.

Popular Modern Day Radio Preachers Who Are Calvinists.

John MacArthur

John MacArthur, of the radio program "Grace to You", is typical of most Five Point Calvinists. He states that the dispute over this matter exists only because man does not want to accept God's sovereignty. Furthermore, he proclaims that the truth of God's sovereignty offends man's pride and offends his sense of fairness. MacArthur resorts to name calling and quotes Arthur Pink, in calling those who reject Calvinism as being "merit-mongers."

He further states that some men reject the sovereignty of God in salvation: ". . . because fallen man wants to assume some responsibility--even if it is a very little--for having believed. He desperately wants some credit for having made the right choice."³⁸ MacArthur makes a straw man of the non-Calvinists of his own imagination and attacks it. There is no more absolute truth than the fact that no biblical student or preacher of the Bible would deny God's complete sovereignty over all things.

Nor would any true believer, who knows anything about the Bible and salvation, teach that salvation is earned and thereby be a "merit monger." That is a foolish, childish, rude, uncalled for, unscholarly, and untruthful statement.

The Bible is emphatically clear that man cannot merit or work for his salvation as it is the work of God. But the Calvinist mistakenly infers that if a man uses his will and believes in Jesus Christ, it means man is earning or meriting his salvation. In other words, if a man uses his will to believe and accept God's free gift of salvation he is earning his salvation.

That is an unacceptable conclusion to those who believe God's word. The one who believes God's word will reject the tenets of Calvinism for the reason that it is not biblical and contradicts God's word. Salvation, as Ephesians 2:8-9 state, is God's gift free gift of grace. A gift is not something merited or earned, and it can be accepted or rejected. If a person receives a gift it is illogical to assume that the gift was earned or merited because that is not the character of a gift. MacArthur further says that man is repulsed by the doctrine of election because it seems unfair that God

would choose to save some, but not others. He is correct.

He concludes, ". . . the reason man so strongly wants to have a part in his own salvation is because he wants to exercise his pride."³⁹

MacArthur should not make emphatic and uninformed statements about what is in people's hearts. This is the kind of judging that Jesus condemned when He said "Judge not, that ye be not judged." (Matthew 7:1) It is a serious error of MacArthur, to judge the hearts of men he does not know. Furthermore, it is tragic that a man of his popularity would equate accepting Calvinism to the status of believing God's word, but that is what he does.

According to John MacArthur, if you reject Calvinism, you are not a Bible believer!

Frankly, there are many believers who do not fit into either of MacArthur's supposed categories and they reject the Calvinistic view based solely on what the Bible says about the matter. These people, as does the author of this article, reject both the Calvinistic and Arminian views and appeal to the Scriptures alone. There is compelling biblical evidence to reject both ideas as being unbiblical. There are many godly people who totally accept the sovereignty of God and reject

human pride or any participation of man in meriting salvation.

David Jeremiah

After listening to David Jeremiah, of the program "Turning Point" several years ago, when he taught a one weeks series on election I wrote him a letter in which I pointed out several inconsistencies of Calvinism with the Bible. He had one of his assistants, Gene Huntsman, reply to my letter. In the letter Huntsman stated, "In the study of predestination and election our poor minds may not reconcile them both, but our faith knows them both and holds them both to be truth. Scripture is addressed to faith not reason."40

Clearly, Huntsman does not seem to understand that God's word is absolutely reasonable in all it says. He further quoted some source and stated "Now do not seek to mix these two things (predestination and election) and still more emphatically . . . do not try to 'reconcile' them. Profitless controversy and partisan feeling will be the only result. Who told us to 'reconcile' in our little minds, these seemingly contradictory things? . . . if you undertake to 'reconcile' God's sovereign election with His free offer of salvation to all, you must sacrifice one truth for another."⁴¹

In other words, he purports the Christian is to blindly accept the Calvinists ideas without question and with no biblical examination. Is this what God's word teaches. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)? He further concludes in this area the truth cannot be understood and it is "profitless" to pursue.

In this reply, David Jeremiah's representative also built a straw man in his poor attempt to defend this unbiblical teaching. His statement that "Scripture is

addressed to faith not reason" is
grossly unsound.

Yes, we do live by faith, but biblical faith is not existential. It is not a “leap into the dark.” True faith is based solely in God's revealed word! Our faith is not blind, but its rests on the stated promises and truths of God’s inspired word. God is certainly not the author of confusion and further He cannot lie, or contradict Himself.

It is a contradiction for God on one hand to state, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4), and on the other hand decree, as David Jeremiah does and as the Calvinists teach, that some men are elected and born to be condemned to hell. The reason the Calvinist wishes to condemn those who disagree with them for trying to "reconcile" the matter is because Calvinism is in direct opposition to what God has plainly stated and cannot be biblically defended.

They correctly state that they cannot 'reconcile' God decreeing to save some and refusing His grace to others. This is true because you cannot "reconcile" truth with error. You cannot reconcile God being a loving and just God, and on the other hand teach that He withholds His mercy and grace and condemns most of the world to hell, not allowing some people to believe and be saved. This is an unreasonable idea that God's word does not substantiate. There is not one verse in the Bible that states that God has limited His grace or decreed that some men will go to

hell without any chance of being saved.

Not one verse in the Bible teaches "irresistible grace." Calvinism and Reformed theogony is a false teaching formed in the minds of men who dogmatically support an indefensible system with a flawed theology. Sadly, and tragically the Calvinist dogmatically holds to his view regardless of whether it contradicts God's word or not. Other well known modern radio and television Calvinists include the following:
R. C. Sproul Jr. is an American Calvinist theologian, philosopher, author, and pastor and the founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries who has the daily radio program "Renewing Your Mind."

Mark Driscoll, is the popular pastor and founder of Mars Hill Church in Seattle.

John Piper, a Calvinistic Baptist preacher and author currently serving as the Pastor for Preaching and Vision of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. is an American theologian and the ninth president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Charles Joseph Mahaney is the president of Sovereign Grace Ministries, and one of the founding pastors and leaders of Covenant Life Church.