

What In The World Is Calvinism? (IV)

“A man’s steps are DIRECTED BY THE LORD. How can anyone understand his own way?” Proverbs 20:14

In our efforts to continue to understand “Calvinism” (better known as “Reformed Theology”), last week I introduced to you the basic five (5) points this system of doctrine is based upon when it comes to the salvation of a human soul. They were:

- Point 1) **T**otal “depravity” of a Human Soul – (Man is so effected by sin...He has no free will “NOT” to sin!)
- Point 2) **U**nconditional ELECTION – (Although all men deserve hell, God foreordained to save SOME of mankind by divine election, not based on any merit of the “elect”, but rather totally by God’s grace.)
- Point 3) **L**imited ATONEMENT – (When Christ died on the cross, it was to make “atonement” only for the sins of the ELECT!)
- Point 4) **I**rresistible GRACE – (God makes sure all of the “elect” are ALL saved! ALL He has “chosen” WILL accept His grace!)
- Point 5) **P**reservation of the Saints – (God ensures that the “elect” never fall from His grace. They can never lose salvation!)

The “Tulip” of Calvinism is based foremost on the “sovereignty” of God. Meaning, whatever God wants to happen... will ALWAYS happen (Psa 115:3; Psa 135:6; Prov 21:1; Isaiah 46:10; etc.). Man can not use his so-called “free will” to keep God from doing ANYTHING He really wants to do. Therefore, Calvinists surmise that IF God truly wanted everyone to be saved (i.e. IF it really was God’s WILL for everyone to be saved) then no person could stand against God’s will and refuse to be saved. Thus, they logically conclude that the Scriptures must be teaching that God never WILLED for “everybody” to be saved!

John Calvin, although living in the 1500’s, was heavily influenced by the writings of Augustine, the famous Catholic Theologian (354-430 AD). Augustine believed that man’s sin in the Garden of Eden changed the nature of man’s initially God-given FREE WILL. Before the fall, man could choose to “obey” God or to “disobey” God. However, after eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam’s human nature became totally (or “utterly”) depraved. This effected man’s ultimate ability to use his “free will”. According to Augustine, although man still has a limited “free will” to make choices (i.e. what to eat?, what to wear?, what to say?), SIN now controls mankind’s “free will” to the point where an unsaved person is absolutely “incapable” of doing anything but sin. Even when a person does what is known as “good things”, Augustine believed they are totally motivated by the “self-interest” of the person, not their desire to please or obey God. This means, to Calvinists, no person (since Adam) has ever had the capability of “choosing” whether or not they want to be saved...because SIN would ALWAYS cause a person to REJECT God’s grace and His offer of salvation. This belief is based on Scriptures such as:

Romans 3:10-12 *“There is NO ONE righteous, not even one; there is NO ONE who understands, NO ONE seeks God. ALL have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is NO ONE who does good, NOT even one.”*

Romans 9:15-16 *“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”*
It (i.e. divine election) DOES NOT DEPEND on man’s DESIRE or EFFORT, but (only) on God’s MERCY.”

Ephesians 1:11 *“In Him (i.e. Christ) we (i.e. the elect) were also CHOSEN having been PREDESTINED according to the plan of Him who works out EVERYTHING in conformity with the PURPOSE of HIS WILL.”*

Using these, as well as numerous other verses, Calvinists believe that it is UNSCRIPTURAL and ARROGANT for any person to believe they have the “power” of FREE WILL to resist the “sovereignty” of God’s DETERMINED WILL (Isa 43:12-13). Therefore, Calvinists would summarize God’s will and actions (as it pertains to salvation of mankind) to be:

- 1) God decreed that He would create man. Man would originally be created with free will to obey or disobey.
- 2) God decreed that He would permit man to use his free will to “disobey” and be corrupted completely by SIN.
- 3) God decreed that this SINFUL nature would deprave the entire human race so that ALL would deserve damnation.
- 4) God decreed that He would ELECT some of depraved humanity to be SAVED solely by, and to the glory of, His grace.
- 5) God decreed that MOST of depraved humanity would receive the punishment THEY DESERVE for their sins in Hell.
- 6) God decreed that His Son would go to the cross to pay the ATONEMENT for the sin of the ELECT, only.
- 7) God decreed that those He chose to be SAVED, would be “enlightened” and “regenerated” unto salvation by Holy Spirit.
- 8) God decreed that ALL of the ELECT would accept God’s grace and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- 9) God decreed that NONE of the ELECT would ever have “free will” to choose to “not be saved” or to “lose salvation”.

NOTE: All of this was decided by God, according to Calvinists, before the world and Adam were even created!

Next week, I will explain to you why I believe that Calvinists have NOT accurately interpreted nor thoroughly considered ALL verses of Scripture pertaining to man’s salvation. Until then, please understand that most “Calvinists” are (in my opinion) true Christians who have simply chosen the “sovereignty” of God as their LENS (i.e. like “rose colored” glasses) for understanding and interpreting God’s Word. Hopefully, with God’s help, I will show you a BETTER WAY to look at the Scriptures so that God can reveal His truth to you! (HINT: Read 1Corinthians 13, John 3:16; and 1John 4:7-10.) - **Pastor Louis**

References used: *What is Reformed Theology?*; R.C. Sproul, (BakerBooks, Grand Rapids, Michigan), 1997.
Debating Calvinism; Dave Hunt & James White, (Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, Oregon), 2004.
Lectures in Systematic Theology; Henry Thiessen, (Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, Michigan), 1979.
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