

***God's Sovereignty***  
***and***  
***Man's Salvation***

*Evaluating the  
Biblical Basis for  
Calvinist and Non-Calvinist  
Theological Constructs*

*Lecture Notes by Steve Gregg*

# ***The Distinctive Points of Calvinism and of Non-Calvinism***

## ***Calvinism***

### ***1. Total Depravity or Total Inability***

The fall has left man totally dead, blind and deaf to the things of God, and thus incapable of responding to the gospel. Faith in God is out of the question unless God sovereignly creates a new life in (regenerates) the sinner. Thus regeneration precedes faith. Faith is not what man contributes to salvation, but it is God's gift to the sinner.

### ***2. Unconditional Election***

God chose certain sinners to be saved before the foundation of the world solely by an exercise of His sovereign will. God's choice was not conditioned upon any foreseen response of faith, repentance or obedience on the part of the sinner, since the sinner is incapable of such actions. In fact, God provides faith and repentance to the individuals that He has chosen. These acts are the result of God's choice— not its cause.

### ***3. Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption***

Since God never intended that all men should be saved, Christ died only to redeem the foreknown elect. His death did not only make salvation available to the elect, but actually secured everything for their salvation particularly, thus guaranteeing their particular redemption and salvation.

### ***4. Irresistible Grace or the Efficacious Call***

Though the outward call of the Gospel goes out to all men and can be resisted, there is a special inward call that God extends only to the elect, and which is never resisted. This call works in the sinner the ability and the desire to come to faith and repentance, thus precluding any possibility of resistance.

### ***5. Perseverance of the Saints***

All the elect will necessarily persevere in saving faith, since that faith was never in their power to generate in the first place, but was from first to last God's gracious gift. Whom God has chosen as His own, He mightily preserves in the faith, so that the salvation of the elect is eternally secure.

## ***Non-Calvinism***

### ***1. Free Will or Human Ability***

Though no man can come to God without God's first drawing him, yet, man's free will allows him to decide whether to cooperate with the prevenient drawing of God or to resist it. The fall has affected man's nature significantly, but not to the point of rendering him incapable of choosing to receive the grace of God.

### ***2. Election Conditioned upon Faith***

Though God has elected to save all who are "in Christ," He has not determined which persons will actually come to be in Christ. This decision rests with the individual. God foreknows which individuals will choose to believe and to persevere in Christ, and elects to include them as His children based upon that foreknowledge.

### ***3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement***

Christ's death makes salvation available to every man, but in itself does not secure the salvation of any. It provides a means of reconciliation between man and God, but does not guarantee that any particular person will be in fact agree to the terms of reconciliation.

### ***4. The Holy Spirit can be Resisted***

The drawing of God is persuasive, but does not preclude the resistance of sinful and rebellious man, so that not all whom God would draw to salvation actually realize this salvation in experience.

### ***5. Falling From Grace***

Salvation is by faith alone. It is possible to cast off faith and a person, having done so, is not in a state of grace.

## ***The Doctrine of Human Free Will: A Historical Survey***

***1519-1605: Theodore Beza*** (Calvin's successor in Geneva, commenting on Romans 11:2—"God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.")

**"Nor are we on any account to listen to the Fathers, who refer this to *faith foreseen*."**

### **100-165 AD: Justin Martyr**

"God, wishing men and angels to follow his will, resolved to create them free to do righteousness. But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall certainly be punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably (wicked), but not because God created them so. So if they repent all who wish for it can obtain mercy from God." (*Dialogue CXLi*)

### **100-165 AD: Justin Martyr**

"We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, chastisements, and rewards are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is in our own power. For if it be predestinated that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise or the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions—whatever they may be." (*First Apology ch.43*)

***[About the year 180, Florinus had affirmed that God is the author of sin, which notion was immediately attacked by Irenaeus, who published a discourse entitled: "God, not the Author of Sin." Florinus' doctrine reappeared in another form later in Manichaeism, and was always considered to be a dangerous heresy by the early fathers of the church.]***

### **130-200 AD: Irenaeus**

"This expression, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldst not,' set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man a free (agent) from the beginning, possessing his own soul to obey the behests of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God...And in man as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice...If then it were not in our power to do or not to do these things, what reason had the apostle, and much more the Lord Himself, to give us counsel to do some things and to abstain from others?" (*Against Heresies XXXVII*)

### **150-190 AD: Athenagoras**

"men...have freedom of choice as to both virtue and vice (for you would not either honor the good or punish the bad; unless vice and virtue were in their own power, and some are diligent in the matters entrusted to them, and others faithless)..." (*Embassy for Christians XXIV*)

### **150-200 AD: Clement of Alexandria**

"Neither praise nor condemnation, neither rewards nor punishments, are right if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary." (*Miscellanies, book 1, ch.17*)

### **154-222 AD: Bardaisan of Syria**

"How is it that God did not so make us that we should not sin and incur condemnation? —if man had been made so, he would not have belonged to himself but would have been the instrument of him that moved him...And how in that case, would man differ from a harp, on which another plays; or from a ship, which another guides: where the praise and the blame reside in the hand of the performer or the steersman...they being only instruments made for the use of him in whom is the skill? But God, in His benignity, chose not so to make man; but by freedom He exalted him above many of His creatures." (*Fragments*)

### **155-225 AD: Tertullian**

"I find, then, that man was by God constituted free, master of his own will and power; indicating the presence of God's image and likeness in him by nothing so well as by this constitution of his nature." (*Against Marcion, Book II ch.5*)

### **185-254 AD: Origen**

"This also is clearly defined in the teaching of the church that every rational soul is possessed of free-will and volition." (*De Principiis, Preface*)

### **185-254 AD: Origen**

"There are, indeed, innumerable passages in the Scriptures which establish with exceeding clearness the existence of freedom of will." (*De Principiis, Book 3, ch.1*)

### **250-300 AD: Archelaus**

"There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he chooses." (*Disputation with Manes, secs. 32, 33*)

### **260-315 AD: Methodius**

"Those [pagans] who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils." (*The Banquet of the Ten Virgins, discourse 8, chapter 16*)

### **312-386 AD: Cyril of Jerusalem**

"The soul is self-governed: and though the Devil can suggest, he has not the power to compel against the will. He pictures to thee the thought of fornication: if thou wilt, thou rejectest. For if thou wert a fornicator by necessity then for what cause did God prepare hell? If thou wert a doer of righteousness by nature and not by will, wherefore did God prepare crowns of ineffable glory? The sheep is gentle, but never was it crowned for its gentleness; since its gentle quality belongs to it not from choice but by nature." (*Lecture IV 18*)

### **347-407 AD: John Chrysostom**

"All is in God's power, but so that our free-will is not lost...it depends therefore on us and on Him. We must first choose the good, and then He adds what belongs to Him. He does not precede our willing, that our free-will may not suffer. But when we have chosen, then He affords us much help...It is ours to choose beforehand and to will, but God's to perfect and bring to the end." (*On Hebrews, Homily 12*)

### **354-430 AD: Augustine**

Born in Roman North Africa of a devout Christian mother (Monica), Augustine departed from his Christian roots to pursue philosophy at age 19 or 20. He embraced Manichaeism for more than 10 years, which emphasizes election and asceticism. He was converted to "Christian" Neo-Platonism—which held to a dualism of matter versus the divine principle, much like Gnosticism—in 386. Made bishop of Hippo in 396, he began writing against Manichaeism, gradually replaced his Neo-Platonism with "a more biblically radical diagnosis of man and history," but lived and advocated a monastic life. His theology ripened in controversy: in conflicts against Manichaeism, he taught that man had free will, but seemed to deny this in later conflicts with Pelagius, who overrated the power of human nature to live perfectly apart from grace. Augustine was the true originator of the ideas later associated with Calvinism. "There is nothing in Calvin's view of predestination that was not earlier propounded by Luther and Augustine before him." (R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, p.15)

### **1517: Martin Luther (The Bondage of the Will)**

"This is the highest degree of faith—to believe that He is merciful, the very One who saves so few and damns so many. To believe that He is just, the One who, according to His own will makes us necessarily damnable." (p.70)

"But why should these things be difficult for we Christians to understand, so that it should be considered irreligious, curious, and vain to discuss and know them, when heathen poets, and the common people themselves, have them in their mouths in the most frequent use? How often does Virgil alone make mention of fate? 'All things stand fixed by unchangeable law.' Again, 'Fixed is the day of every man.' Again, 'If the Fates summon you.' And again, 'If you will break the binding chain of Fate.' The aim of this poet is to show that in the destruction of Troy, and in raising up the Roman empire, Fate did more than all the devoted efforts of men...From which we can see that the knowledge of predestination and of the foreknowledge of God was no less left in the world than the notion of divinity itself." (pp.43, 44)

"For if this is not known, there can be neither faith nor worship of God. Actually, to not know this is to be ignorant of God. And with this ignorance salvation—it is well known—cannot exist. For if you doubt, or disdain to know, that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and unchangeably, how can you confidently believe, trust in, and depend upon His promises?...You will regard Him as neither true nor faithful—which is unbelief, the greatest of wickedness, and a denial of the Most High God!" (p.44)

### **1509-1564: John Calvin**

French, second-generation, reformer. He was the first great theologian of the Reformation, writing his famous work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* when he was only 26 or 27 years old. With reference to

doctrines of God's sovereignty, grace and election, his views were largely a reestablishment of the later opinions of Augustine, restated for a new generation. Five years later, he settled in Geneva, Switzerland, where he became the leading figure and sought to make the city a Christian commonwealth. Calvin's views became the official position of the French churches, the Church of Scotland, and the churches of the Netherlands. His influence has been great in Protestant churches ever since.

### **1545-63: Council of Trent**

There was a contest between the Dominicans and the Franciscans upon the subject of God's decrees.

The Dominicans, with St. Thomas Aquinas, believed that God had unconditionally elected some for glory, and effectually prepared the means of their obtaining it; that their number is determined and could not be added to. The others, who are not predestinated, cannot complain since God has afforded them sufficient assistance to this purpose, though only the elect could be saved. They sought to prove this doctrine by appeal to Paul's writings and those of Augustine.

The Franciscans said that this view was injurious to the attributes of God, since He would be acting with partiality, if without cause He would elect one and reject another—and unjustly, if He would damn men for His own will, rather than their own faults, and create so great a multitude of men for the purpose of condemning them.

Catarinus, who favored a medium between the two opinions, observed that the doctrine of Augustine was not heard of before his time, and that Augustine himself had confessed that it cannot be found in the works of any preceding writer.

### **1560-1609: Jacobus Arminius**

Dutch reformer who, while pastoring a Reformed congregation in Amsterdam, began to question some of the tenets of Calvinism. Disputes arose and he left his pastorate to become professor of theology at the University of Leyden.

### **1610: Arminianism: the Remonstrance of 1610**

Followers of the late Arminius laid out the five major points of Arminianism:

1) With reference to his salvation, each man has freedom of choice the Holy Spirit must help men; 2) The decree of salvation applies to all who believe on Christ and who persevere in obedience and faith; 3) Christ died for all men; 4) God's saving grace is not irresistible; 5) it is possible for those who are Christians to fall from grace.

### **1618 Calvinism**

The Synod of Dort condemned Arminianism, which was refuted point by point. Five points of Calvinism are: 1) Total depravity, 2) Unconditional election, 3) Limited atonement (or particular redemption), 4) Irresistible grace, and 5) Perseverance of the saints.

## ***Rules of Reasoning from the Scriptures***

1. The Scripture is the final authority for the Christian. Regardless how firmly entrenched a tradition may be, or how respected or heroic are its historical advocates, the direct testimony of Scripture overrules all contrary testimony and opinion—even if the contrary opinion comes from "an angel from heaven" (Gal.1:8).
2. Where two opposite opinions appear to find support from Scripture, those on one side of the debate or the other must be misinterpreting the passages that seem to support their position.
3. A passage that can be used for the support of both sides cannot support either of the two. Thus, if a proof-text for one position is as easily and naturally accommodated by the opposite system as well, it is of no value in settling the question under discussion.
4. It is thus instructive to pay close and critical attention, not only to a debater's explanation of those scriptures that appear to establish his cause, but more especially his ability to soundly expound upon those which appear to contradict his position.
5. Some basic rules of interpretation must be observed in the handling of Scripture
  - a. The words of the original languages (Greek and Hebrew) must be accurately translated.
  - b. The meaning of a statement must be understood by consideration of both its micro and the macro contexts
  - c. The meaning of a passage of Scripture cannot contradict the properly understood meaning of another passage of Scripture.
  - d. The best interpretation is that which most naturally accommodates all of the biblical data
  - e. Obscure statements in the Scriptures should be interpreted in the light of plain statements in the same
6. In reasoning from scripture, as in all reasoning, one's position is weakened when one resorts to misrepresentation of the opposite position—giving the impression that the actual position of the opponent cannot be refuted until it has been substituted with a caricature of itself. Argument is also weakened by resort to logical fallacies such as:
  - a. *petitio principii* (begging the question, or circular reasoning)
  - b. winning by arbitrary definition of terms
  - c. abusive *ad hominem* ("cheap shot")
  - d. the *non sequitur* (does not follow necessarily)
  - f. cavalier dismissal
  - g. the false analogy
7. The burden of proof:
  - 1) the obligation to offer evidence which the court or the jury could reasonably believe, in support of a contention, failing which the party will lose its case. 2) the obligation to establish an alleged fact by convincing a tribunal of its probable truth. (*The American College Dictionary*)

The burden of proof usually falls more heavily upon one side of an argument than upon the other. It rests predominantly upon the side that is challenging what common sense, conventional wisdom, or plain initial evidence would ordinarily suggest.

For example: If common sense or plain evidence suggests that a God who did not control all human decisions could not be God, then the burden of proof would fall upon the Non-Calvinist debater to show convincingly that God could still be God while deferring to man's free choices.

On the other hand, if conventional wisdom and common sense suggest that God could not inevitably ordain sin without becoming the responsible party for sin, or that God could not at the same time will that all men be saved, while willing for some to be reprobate, then the burden of proof in the discussion would necessarily rest most heavily upon the Calvinist debater to show conclusively that the Scriptures nonetheless affirm such things.

## Lecture 2: The Sovereignty of God in Scripture

### I. Definitions and their implications

#### A. The Classical approach of Augustine/Calvin/Westminster Confession

##### 1. All is foreordained by God

"God, from all eternity, did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, neither is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established..." (Westminster Confession of Faith, III: 1)

"When we speak of divine sovereignty we are speaking about God's authority and about God's power... That God in some sense foreordains whatever comes to pass is a necessary result of his sovereignty... To say that God foreordains all that comes to pass is simply to say that God is sovereign over his entire creation... If God refused to permit something to happen and it happened anyway, then whatever caused it to happen would have more authority and power than God himself. If there is any part of God's creation outside of God's sovereignty, then God is simply not sovereign. If God is not sovereign, then God is not God." (R.C. Sproul, *Chosen By God*, pp.24, 26)

MY NOTE: In saying, "When we speak of divine sovereignty we are speaking about God's authority and about God's power," Sproul omits the principal distinctive of the Calvinist system as opposed to Non-Calvinist theology, namely, *Meticulous Providence*. There is no dispute between Calvinists and non-Calvinists over the issues of "God's authority and about God's power." All Christians accept both concepts. By leaving out this key issue, Sproul insinuates that Arminians, in rejecting the Calvinist view of sovereignty are in fact denying what no Christian has ever dreamed of denying.

##### 2. Everything man does, including sin, is ordained (instigated) by God

"He has decreed that...all events take place by his sovereign appointment...Everything done in the world is according to his decree...so ordained by his decree."

—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III: xxiii, 6; id., I: xvi, 6-7

"The basic principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God... [He] creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul." —Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Faith* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1983), 2; Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, N.J. Presbyterian & Reformed, 1932), 32.

"God foreknows what will be because He has decreed what shall be."  
—Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Election and Justification* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1974), 172.

"God foreordains. All things."  
—Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1986), 240.

"God wills all things that come to pass."  
—R. C. Sproul, *Almighty over All* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 54.

"God has wisely and perfectly decreed whatsoever comes to pass in this universe."  
—James White, *Potter's Freedom*, 45.

"...the counsels and wills of men...move exactly in the course which [God] has destined.... Augustine everywhere teaches...that there cannot be a greater absurdity than to hold that anything is done without [God's] ordination...No cause must be sought for but the will of God.... [Ail] events are...produced by the will of God."  
—Calvin, *Institutes*, I: xvi, 8-9.

"...that it could not be but that Adam would sin is equally true, considering Adam was subordinate to the decrees of God, determining what Adam would do out of the freedom of his own will."  
—Christopher Ness, *An Antidote Against Arminianism*, 1700, p.54

"The first man fell because the Lord deemed it meet that he should." —Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 8.

"God desired for man to fall into sin...God created sin." —R.C. Sproul, *Almighty Over All*, 54.

“The Reformed Christian may even biblically say that God has foreordained sin. For if sin was outside the plan of God, then we would have to maintain that God does not control all things, and that some things come into being apart from His sovereign will...He is not to be considered the Author of sin. God was the divine first cause; whereas godless men were the second cause...Nothing is outside His sovereign purpose, including sin. But the decree with reference to sin is permissive, rather than an efficient decree. That is, it is a decree that renders sin an absolute certainty, but it is not brought about by a direct divine act.”

—Kenneth Talbot & W. Gary Crampton [Calvinists], *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism & Arminianism*, 1990, pp.67, 68, 70-71

“God ordains sin, and man is to blame.... Sin is...foreordained by God...God ordained...every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history.”

—Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 24-5, 82, 97-100, 116.

“if he [God] did not will it, we could not do it... Men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God....What he has previously decreed...and brings to pass by his secret direction...whatever we conceive in our minds is directed to its end by the secret inspiration of God.”

—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), I: xvii. 5- xviii, 4.

“Men do [only] what [God]...brings to pass.”

—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), I: xviii, 1.

“...natural reason itself is forced to admit that the living and true God *must* be one who by his freedom imposes necessity on us, since *obviously* he would be a *ridiculous God* ... if he could not *and did not* do everything, or if anything took place without him. ”

—Martin Luther, in 2Watson, *Luther’s Works*, 33:189 (emphasis added).

Sproul Vs. Calvin:

“We know that God is sovereign because we know that God is God. Therefore we must conclude that God *foreordained* sin. What else can we conclude? We must conclude that God’s decision to *allow* sin to enter the world was a good decision. This is not to say that our sin is really a good thing, but merely that God’s *allowing* us to do sin, which is evil, is a good thing. God’s *allowing* evil is good, but the evil he *allows* is still evil. . . . The fact that God decided to *allow* us to sin does not absolve us from our responsibility for sin.”

—R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, 31-32 (emphasis added)

“...how foolish and frail is the support of divine justice afforded by the suggestion that evils come to be, not by His will but by His permission...It is a quite frivolous refuge to say that God otiosely permits them, when Scripture shows Him not only willing, but the author of them...Who does not tremble at these judgments with which God works in the hearts of even the wicked whatever He will, rewarding them nonetheless according to desert? Again it is quite clear from the evidence of Scripture that God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills just as he will, whether to good for His mercy’s sake, or to evil according to their merits. ”

—John Calvin, *The Eternal Predestination of God*, 10:11

### 3. Does man have free will?

#### **a) Hard determinism: Luther and Calvin**

“‘free-will’ is an utter fallacy.” Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1957), 65

“those who...seek for free-will in man...labour under manifold delusion.”

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), I: xv, 8.

“Free will is nonsense.” Charles H. Spurgeon, “Free Will—A Slave,” [www.the-highway.com/freewill\\_spurgeon.html](http://www.the-highway.com/freewill_spurgeon.html).

Calvinist James White: “Calvinists believe fully that man has a will.”

—*Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White, 328

Arminian Dave Hunt: “Calvinists contradict themselves and then say that we don’t understand them.”

—*Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White, 328

#### **b) Soft determinism (Compatibilism): Westminster Confession of Faith**

The Westminster Confession of Faith, art. 3.1 —

“God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”



“In addition to affirming universal causality, soft determinists also believe that we are responsible for our actions, and they agree that we must be free in some sense if this is the case. In other words, soft determinists want to affirm both complete determinism and freedom. This position is also called compatibilism because it holds that freedom and determinism, contrary to what hard determinists and libertarians claim, can be compatible.”

—Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 107f

“As a creature, the slave to sin is naturally free to do what he wants, which is to continue in sin. But he is not morally free to desire righteousness, because his sinful heart does not love what is right. Like all men, he is not free to choose what is repulsive to him, and true godliness is repulsive to him.”

—Douglas Wilson, in *Back to Basics: Rediscovering the Richness of the Reformed Faith*, David G. Hagopian, Ed. 22

#### Genesis 50:20

“But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.”

#### Acts 4:27-28

“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”

In instances where God’s will is accomplished through man’s sinful actions:

1. There is no indicator that their sinful decisions were inspired by God, rather than simply being the outworking of the sinful patterns of their lives;
2. If God did indeed create the sinful decisions, these may not be universal statements about all sinners’ behavior, but special cases, mentioned because they are exceptions to the norm;
3. God can justly harden the hearts of specific sinners to accomplish His will. This is only done when they have previously, freely set themselves in a pattern of sinning.

#### 4. Decrees of God in election to salvation

*“By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death,”* (John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:21:5)

*“If what I teach is true, that those who perish are destined to death by the eternal good pleasure of God, though the reason does not appear, then they are not found but made worthy of destruction...The eternal predestination of God, by which before the fall of Adam he decreed what should take place concerning the whole human race and every individual, was fixed and determined...God chose out of the condemned race of Adam those whom he pleased and reprobated whom he willed.”* (John Calvin, *The Eternal Predestination of God*, 8:5)

*“We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction.”*  
—John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:21:7

*“Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.”* (The Westminster Confession of Faith, III: 5)

*“To understand the Reformed view of the matter, we must pay close attention to the crucial distinction between positive and negative decrees of God. Positive has to do with God’s active intervention in the hearts of the elect. Negative has to do with God’s passing over the non-elect.*

*“The Reformed view teaches that God positively or actively intervenes in the lives of the elect to insure their salvation. The rest of mankind God leaves to themselves.”*  
—R.C. Sproul, *Chosen By God*, pp.142)

*“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.”*  
—John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:23:1)

*“How could a sovereign Deity, who has foreordained all things from all eternity, have his decrees changed by the wiles of man, who is a creature of God and is dependent upon Him for his own existence?”*

—Kenneth Talbot & W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism & Arminianism*, 1990, pp.11-12

### *B. Classic questions raised by the classical approach*

1. If there is only One Will in the universe, how can man be held responsible?
2. Is God's will always done? If so why does He frequently complain?
3. If God sovereignly instigates sin, how is He not its author, and why does He object to it?
4. Does prayer really affect anything?
5. Why are evangelism and, especially, *persuasion* necessary?
6. Why do actual events not always conform to God's stated will?
7. Does this "meticulous providence" model of God's sovereignty have any biblical basis?

## **II. What the Bible declares about God's authority, ability, and intervention**

### *A. God's right to rule (Adonai YHWH "Sovereign Lord" - Gen.15:2)*

1. As Creator/Owner of all things (Rev.4:11/Rom.9:21/Matt.20:15)
2. As King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev.19:16/Ex.9:16/Dan.4:17)
3. As Redeemer of creation (Rev.5:9-10)

### *B. God's omnipotence (El Shaddai "God Almighty" - Gen.17:1/Rev.1:8)*

1. Nothing is too difficult for God (Gen.18:14/Jer.32:17, 27)
2. He cannot act contrary to His own nature or character (II Tim.2:13/Tit.1:2/Jas.1:13/ Gen.19:22)
3. This also means he cannot act other than according to truth. He cannot create a contradiction, as if He were to make 2 + 2 equal 5, or make something exist and not exist simultaneously, or make man both free and a puppet, or responsible and not responsible at the same time.

### *C. God's intervention (Eph.1:11)*

1. God limits His intervention according to His own policies and purposes, and does not always get precisely what He wants in men's lives (Isaiah 5:7)
2. With reference to specific circumstances, God's intervention is often conditioned on man's exercise of faith in prayer (Matt.13:58/James 4:2)
3. With reference to man's obedience, God generally does not override man's will to rebel (Isaiah 1:2)
4. God's ability to intervene guarantees that ultimately God's macro-purposes will be fulfilled in history (Psalm 115:3/Dan. 4:35/Rom.8:28)

## **III. God's general rule over history**

### *A. God's sovereignty over rulers*

1. He can raise up or depose rulers (Dan.2:21; 4:17) and can direct their decisions (Pr.21:1/Ex.4:21/Rev.17:16-17)
2. Though God can and often does direct rulers, He is not the author of every political development (Hos.8:4), nor does he approve every decision of rulers, though He remains sovereign over the ultimate outcome of events (Isa.54:15; 37:36/Ps.46:6).

### *B. God's rule over particular circumstances*

1. He governs the elements of nature (Mark 4:41)
2. He can and sometimes does thwart plots of evil men (Ps.21:11/Acts 23:14)
3. He turns evil acts to good purposes (Gen.50:20/Ps. 76:10)

## **IV. God's particular rule in the lives of believers**

- A. By giving commands (John 8:31/Matt.28:19-20)
- B. By inward direction (Phil.2:13/Jer.31:33/Rom.8:14)
- C. By providences (I Cor.16:9)
- D. By chastening (I Cor.11:32/Heb.12:7)

## **V. God's "drawing" of sinners**

### *A. God's desire for all to be saved*

1. He died for all (I John 2:2/I Tim.2:6; 4:10)

2. All are called to repent (Acts 2:38; 17:30)
3. He desires that all would repent (II Pet.3:9/Ezek.33:11/I Tim.2:4)

*B. How God draws sinners (John 6:44)*

1. By display of grace (Ps.145:9/Matt.5:45/Rom.2:4)
2. By manifestation of truth (Rom. 1:19-20/II Cor.4:2)
3. By conviction of sin (John 16:8/Acts 2:37; 7:54)
4. By appeal to man's self-interest
  - a. Persuasion (Acts 2:40/Ezek.33:11/Luke 13:3/Acts 9:5)
  - b. Pressure of circumstance (Jonah/Prodigal Son)
5. Encouraging a "godly sorrow" (II Cor.7:10/Acts 11:18/II Tim.2:25)
6. Helping a willing but weak faith (Mark 9:24)

*C. Man's resistance of God's rule*

1. God draws animals irresistibly, which is a major difference between men and beasts (Jer.8:7/Isa.1:2-3).
  - a. Those "given" Christ by the Father came to Jesus (John 6:37). However, they were already those who were God's faithful prior to Christ's coming (John 17:6) and were capable of falling away (John 17:12).
  - b. God's predestination did not determine man's choices, but the consequences of man's choices (Isa. 65:12; 66:3-4/Jude 4/I Pet.2:8/Rom.8:29/Eph.1:5)
  - c. Inequality of result is man's doing, not God's (Ezek.18:25)
2. Man resists God's sovereignty to his own hurt, but does so nonetheless (Prov.1: 24-25,29/Isa.65:12/Jer.32:33/Luke 7:30/Matt.22:3; 23:37/Acts 7:51)

**A Non-Calvinist Summary:**

"In trying to read the Bible cautiously and on its own terms, we see a sovereign God who has freely chosen to create a world fully dependent on him yet different from him, a world open to divine causation but not comprehensively determined by its divine Sustainer, a world inhabited by God but not utterly overwhelmed by divine presence. We are not seeking to establish human freedom at the expense of divine sovereignty; rather we are seeking to *affirm God's freedom to create whatever Kind of world he desired*, even a world whose every movement is not to be traced back ultimately to specific divine determination. *If God has in fact chosen to create this kind of world, we neither glorify him nor magnify his sovereignty by insisting that he has created a world of a different sort.*"

—Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 65

## Lecture 3: Defense of the Five Points of Calvinism

### I. Total Depravity (Inability)

Gen.6:5

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Jer.13:23

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

Jer.17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

Rom. 7:18

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.

Rom. 8:7-8

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. **8** So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Eph.2:1-3

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, **2** in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, **3** among whom also we all once...were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Eph.4:17-19

...the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, **18** having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; **19** who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Rom.3:9-12

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

John 6:44, 65

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day"... And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

John 15:5

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

1 Cor. 2:14

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

### Regeneration prior to faith

Acts 16:14

Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

1 John 5:1

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

### II. Unconditional Election

John 1:13

who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 6:37-40

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39** This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. **40** And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Acts 13:48

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Rom.8:28-30

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. **29** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. **30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Rom. 9:10-23

And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac **11** (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), **12** it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." **13** As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." **14** What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! **15** For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." **16** So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. **17** For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." **18** Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. **19** You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" **20** But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" **21** Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? **22** *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, **23** and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.

Eph.1:4-6, 11

just as He chose 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 to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

1 Thess.1:4-5

knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. **5** For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

2 Thess. 2:13

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

### **III. Limited Atonement (particular redemption)**

*Not only making salvation possible, but secured*

2 Cor.5:19

that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Heb.9:12

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

John 10:11, 15, 26-27

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep...**15** As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep...**26** But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. **27** My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

John 17:9

"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

Acts 20:28

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God[a] which He purchased with His own blood.

Eph.1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Eph.5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...

#### ***IV. Irresistible Grace (Efficacious Calling)***

John 6:37, 44-45

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

Acts 13:48

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Rom.8:30

Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Phil.2:13

...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

#### ***Repentance "granted" by God***

Acts 5:31

Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 11:18

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

2 Tim. 2:25

in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth...

#### ***Faith a "gift" from God***

Eph.2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Phil.1:29

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

Heb.12:2

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith.

2 Pet.1:1

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Acts 16:14

Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 18:27

And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.

1 Cor.1:30-31

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— **31** that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

## ***V. Perseverance of [or Preservation of] the Saints***

### *Eternal Security?*

“...rejecting the perverse new version of the doctrine of eternal security, according to which salvation is a moment of decision that compels God to save you even if you later abandon the Christian faith altogether...[we affirm] with the Calvinist tradition, that true saving faith is necessarily a faith that perseveres.” (Phillip Cary, *Christianity Today*, 2013, March, 53-55)

Matt.7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22** Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ **23** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 5:24

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

John 6:35

And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 6:37

“...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

John 8:51

Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

John 10:28-30

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. **29** My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand. **30** I and My Father are one.”

John 11:26

And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

Rom.8:38-39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9

“...who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God *is* faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Eph.4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Phil.1:6

being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

1 Pet.1:5

who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

## Lecture 4: Challenges to Total Depravity

“We do not think that faith precedes and causes new birth. Faith is the evidence that God has begotten us anew.” John Piper and Pastoral Staff, *TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 11

“The Reformed view of predestination teaches that before a person can choose Christ...he must be born again... One does not first believe, then become reborn. A cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim, ‘Regeneration precedes faith.’”  
—R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Chicago: Tyndale, 1986), 72, 10

[Yet, the prodigal “came to himself [and] said...I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:17-18) “[The] good ground are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit” (Luke 8:15)]

“No more soul-destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please...”  
—Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1960), II: 277.

### I. Re-examining the positive case

- A. Prophetic denunciations of specific groups: Gen.6:5 / Jer.13:23/Jer.17:9/ Eph.4:17-19/ John 8:44/ Rom.3:10-18
- B. The corruption of the sinful nature: John 6:44, 65/John 15:5/ Rom. 7:18/Rom. 8:7-8
- C. Irrelevant to the discussion: 1 Cor. 2:14
- D. “Dead” in sin (see discussion below): Eph.2:1-3/ Col.2:12

### II. Contrary Witness of Scripture

Deuteronomy 30:11-14, 19 (NASB) — “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult\* for you, nor is it out of reach. **12** It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **13** Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **14** But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it... I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants...”  
\* “hard” (ESV, NRSVC), “mysterious” (NKJV), “wonderful” (Young’s Literal)

Proverbs 1:28-30—“Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. **29** Because they hated knowledge<sup>SEP</sup>And did not choose the fear of the Lord, **30** They would have none of my counsel<sup>SEP</sup>And despised my every rebuke.

Isaiah 7:15-16—Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. **16** For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.

Isaiah 56:4-5—For thus says the Lord: “To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, **5** Even to them I will give in My house<sup>SEP</sup>And within My walls a place and a name<sup>SEP</sup>Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off.

Ezekiel 33:11—Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

Acts 17:30—Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

Romans 1:20-21—For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

### III. What Comes First? Regeneration or Faith?

“The matter may be presented in this simple thesis: either God is the first cause of salvation by His sovereign will, or man is the first cause in salvation by his sovereign will. Either regeneration precedes faith or faith precedes regeneration. Both systems cannot be correct.” (Kenneth Talbot & W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism & Arminianism*, 1990, p.4)

Acts 16:14—Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.



1 John 5:1—Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

John 1:12-13—“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born... of God.”

John 3:9, 14-15—Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” ... And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 6:40—“Every one who...believeth on him, may have everlasting life.”

John 11:25—“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

John 20:31—“...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Acts 16:31—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

Romans 5:2—“...through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Galatians 3:26—“For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 1:13—In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...

Ephesians 2:8—For by grace you have been saved through faith

Colossians 2:11-12—In Him you were also...**12** buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. **13** And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses...

1 Timothy 1:16—“[those who] should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

***R. C. Sproul, emphasizing that faith and repentance are impossible prior to regeneration:***

*“I don’t see why an Arminian...even bothers to preach the gospel. He must have a lot more confidence in the power of the gospel than I have, because I don’t believe that the power of the gospel ever will bring to repentance the person who is not born again!” (R. C. Sproul, *Interact Tapes: Romans #48* [Rom.9:14-16])*

***The answer of Scripture: The Word of God comes “in power,” enabling the hearer to believe and be saved:***

Romans 1:16—For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

1 Thessalonians 1:5—For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance...

Romans 10:17—So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

John 8:31-32—Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. **32** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

1 Peter 1:23—having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...

Hebrews 4:2—For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

***IV. How can one who is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph.2:1-3/ Col.2:13) believe or repent?***

*“How can a person who is dead in sin, blinded by Satan...exercise saving faith? A corpse could no sooner come out of a grave and walk.”* —John MacArthur Jr., *Saved Without a Doubt* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Chariot Victor, 1992), 58.

***If we are to understand the meaning of "dead in trespasses and sins," we must recognize the frequent metaphorical use of "dead" in Scripture:***

**A. Meaning "as good as dead" for some specific purpose defined by context**

Compare: Hebrews 11:12—"Therefore from one man [Abraham], **and him as good as dead**, were born as many as the stars of the sky..."

with: Romans 4:19—"[Abraham] did not consider his own body, **already dead (since he was about a hundred years old)**, and the **deadness of Sarah's womb**..."

**B. Meaning "condemned to death"**

Genesis 20:3

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

Exodus 12:33 (Young's Literal)

And the Egyptians are urgent on the people, hasting to send them away out of the land, for they said, and "We are all dead."

II Samuel 9:8

Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"

II Samuel 19:28

For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king."

Romans 8:10

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

**C. Meaning "dead to God" or alienated from God**

Romans 7:9-11

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. **10** And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. **11** For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Luke 15:24

"...for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Do the metaphorical expressions "dead to sin" (Romans 6:2) and "crucified to the world" (Galatians 6:14) preclude any wrongdoing by the believer? (see also Colossians 2:20/3:3) If not, then how can one's being dead in sin be forced to mean incapable of doing any good?

**V. Does Anyone Seek God? (Rom.3:9-12)**

"...if the words in Romans 3 [vv.10-12] mean anything, not one unregenerate person has ever sought after God—not one."

—Douglas Wilson, in *Back to Basics: Rediscovering the Richness of the Reformed Faith*, David G. Hagopian, Ed. 26

Deuteronomy 4:29—If...you shall seek the LORD your God, you shall find him, if you seek him with all your heart

2 Chronicles 15:2 —If ye seek him, he will be found of you

Jeremiah 29:13—You shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart

Hebrews 11:6—[God] is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him

2 Chronicles 15:4—When they...did turn unto the LORD...and sought him, he was found of them

2 Chronicles 15:15—All Judah...sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them

2 Chronicles 19:3—You...have prepared your heart to seek God

2 Chronicles 34:3—He began to seek after the God of David his father

Psalms 34:4—I sought the Lord, and he heard me”

Acts 17:11-12—These [the Bereans] were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. **12** Therefore many of them believed...

Acts 10:1-4—There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, **2** a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. **3** About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!...Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.”

Isaiah 55:6—Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.

2 Chron.11:16—And after *the* Levites *left*, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem...

2 Chron.12:14—And [Rehoboam] did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord.

2 Chron.15:12—Then they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart...

2 Chron.20:3—And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

Hosea 10:12—Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

*VI. Why does God have to “harden” or “blind” certain sinners, if they are already blind and dead??*

John 12:40—“*He has* blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with *their* eyes, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”

Romans 9:18—“Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”

*“If, as some argue, God does not harden the nonelect, then we must reject the notion that God chooses the elect, since hardening is simply the flip side of election.”*

—Douglas Wilson, in *Back to Basics: Rediscovering the Richness of the Reformed Faith*, David G. Hagopian, Ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1996), 35

## Lecture 5: Challenges to Unconditional Election

“Indeed, all [non-Calvinist] answers must at some point be ‘because I was better than those who did not believe.’...That is the vast difference between man’s religions and the Christian faith: One is focused upon man and his abilities (synergism); one upon God and His (monergism).”

—James White, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, 100, 66

“Of course salvation is all of God. But to be able to accept it by faith or reject it no more gives any credit to the believer than accepting a gift of a million dollars gives the recipient credit for earning the money.”

—Dave Hunt, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, 140

### I. Re-examining the positive case

#### A. Saved according to God’s will, not man’s

John 1:13

who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

#### B. Given by God to Jesus

John 6:37-40

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39** This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. **40** And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

#### C. Vocational election

John 15:16—“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

#### D. Unconditional

Rom. 9:10-23—And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac **11** (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), **12** it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” **13** As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” **14** What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! **15** For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” **16** So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. **17** For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” **18** Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. **19** You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” **20** But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, “Why have you made me like this?” **21** Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? **22** *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, **23** and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.

#### E. Predestination

Acts 13:48—“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

“...none of the seven other usages of *tasso* in the New Testament connotes a divine decree from eternity past. Had that been what Luke meant, he would have used *prooridzo* (predestinated).”

—Dave Hunt, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 103

Rom.8:28-30—“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. **30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Eph.1:4-6, 11—“just as He chose 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 to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”

1 Thess.1:4-5—“knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. **5** For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”

2 Thess. 2:13—“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

“The meaning of “from the beginning” is the question. Paul uses this expression three other times: ‘who knew me from the beginning’ (Acts 26:5); ‘from the beginning of the world’ (Ephesians 3:9); and ‘in the beginning of the gospel’ (Philippians 4:15).”  
—Dave Hunt, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White, 370

## II. Contrary Witness of Scripture

### A. According to foreknowledge

Romans 8:29— For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

1 Peter 1:2— ...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ

“But it is a piece of futile cunning to lay hold on the term foreknowledge, and so to use that as to pin the eternal election of God upon the merits of men, which election the apostle everywhere ascribes to the purpose of God alone...”

—John Calvin, *The Eternal Predestination of God*, p.48

“We would not give all the praise for our election to God, if it were not free and undeserved. It could not be so if God based it on the future good works of any individual.”  
—John Calvin, *Institutes*, 21:3

### *Huh? Is “faith” a “good work” or a “merit”?*

Romans 3:27/4:4-5, 16 — Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith... Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness... Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace...

Eph.2:8-9 — “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

“The standard criticism leveled against a theology of this kind is synergism. It is supposed to bring into the event of salvation a decisive human work, and thereby destroy its purely gracious character. But this is simply not the case. Faith is not a work at all (Rom. 4:16). It is not an achievement and has no merit attaching to it. It is simply the surrender of the will to God, the stretching out of an empty hand to receive the gift of grace. In the act of faith, we renounce all our works, and repudiate completely every claim to self-righteousness. Far from encouraging conceit and self-esteem, faith utterly excludes them (Rom. 3:27).”

—Clark Pinnock, *Grace Unlimited*, 15

### B. God responds to man’s choices

“How could a sovereign Deity who has foreordained all things from all eternity, have his decrees changed by the wiles of man, who is a creature of God and is dependent upon Him for his own existence?”

—Kenneth Talbot & W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism & Arminianism*, 1990, pp.11-12

“All the religions of man require the creaturely will of man to stand sovereign over God, so that no matter how much weight is given to God and His grace, in the final analysis, it is man who is in control of the final decision regarding his salvation.”

—James White, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 414

“Non-Calvinists do not ‘require the creaturely will of man to stand sovereign over God’ so that man ‘is in control of the final decision regarding his salvation.’ That is like saying that because a criminal broke the law, he stands sovereign over the judicial system and controls his own sentence!”

—Dave Hunt, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 416

Genesis 4:6-7—So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup> If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.”

Jeremiah 18:7-10—“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, <sup>8</sup> if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. <sup>9</sup> And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, <sup>10</sup> if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.”

Proverbs 3:34—“Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble.”

James 4:6—“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:5—“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

Psalms 18:25 —“With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful”

Matthew 5:7 —“Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.”

Romans 10:9 —“...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

### III. Election as Corporate, not Individual

Ephesians 1:1, 4—Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him...

Ephesians 5:26-27—“...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

1 Peter 2:9-10—But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

1 Thessalonians 1:1, 4—the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

#### **Olive tree & branches [Israel] (Rom.11:16-23)**

For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches. **17** And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, **18** do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root *supports* you. **19** You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” **20** Well *said*. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. **21** For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. **22** Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, [**a**] if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. **23** And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

#### **Christ and disciples [New Israel] (John 15:5-6)**

**5** “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

#### **Make your election sure (2 Peter 1:10)**

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, **6** to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, **7** to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. **8** For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble

[“sure”= Gr.bebaios. “Firm, secure.” Same word = “steadfast” in Heb.3:6, 14]

“...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope *firm* to the end... For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence *steadfast* to the end...”

## Lecture 6: Challenges to Limited Atonement

### I. Re-examining the positive case

#### A. Not only making salvation possible, but secured

*“Yet if Christ actually saved all of the elect at Calvary, they could never have been lost and would not need to be saved later. Scripture doesn’t say that a man is “saved already.” It says that he is “condemned already,” and not because Christ didn’t die for him but “because he hath not believed” (John 3:18)...If Christ’s death in itself saved, the elect wouldn’t need to believe”*

—Dave Hunt, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White 182-183

2 Cor. 5:19—“that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

Heb. 9:12—“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

#### Contrast:

1 Corinthians 8:11—“And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?”

2 Peter 2:1—“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

Hebrews 10:29—“Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”

#### B. Jesus died only for His own “sheep,” “friends,” “church”

John 10:11, 15, 26-27—“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep...**15** As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep...**26** But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. **27** My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 15:13—“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

Acts 20:28—“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Eph. 1:7—“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...”

Eph. 5:25—“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”

John 17:9—“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.”

### II. Contrary Witness of Scripture

#### A. Jesus died for those whom He “loves”

*“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are...foreordained to everlasting death...to the praise of His glorious justice.”* Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999). 124-5.

*“God is not at all that loving toward [those] not elected unto salvation.... It would have been more loving of God not to have allowed them to be born.”* R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Chicago: Tyndale, 1986), 32.

1 John 3:16—“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us...”

1 John 4:9-10—“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Galatians 2:20—“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

John 3:16—“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Mark 10:21—“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ““One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.””

## B. Christ died for “sinners”

Luke 5:32—“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Luke 7:34—“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’”

Romans 5:7-8—“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 Timothy 1:15—“This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners**, of whom I am chief.”

## C. He died for “all men”

*“As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him...No man knows except Christ himself who are his elect for whom he died.”* Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1970), 70.

Isaiah 53:6—

All **we** like sheep have gone astray;<sup>[1]</sup>  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;<sup>[1]</sup>  
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of **us all**.

Romans 5:18—“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to **all men**, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to **all men**, resulting in justification of life.”

1 Timothy 2:1-6—“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for **all men**, **2** for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. **3** For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **4** who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. **5** For there is one God and one Mediator between God and **men**, the Man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave Himself a ransom for **all**, to be testified in due time...”

1 Timothy 4:10—“For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of **all men**, especially of those who believe.”

Hebrews 2:9—“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for **everyone**.”

2 Peter 3:9—“The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

*“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.”*

—Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1932), 104.

“For the sake of maintaining clear distinctions, let us call this will ‘the perceptive will of God’...the perceptive will of God can be disobeyed...But there is another sense in which Scripture refers to ‘the will of God.’ This is what we call ‘the decretive will of God,’ which refers to the fact that God has decreed what will happen.”

—Douglas Wilson, in *Back to Basics: Rediscovering the Richness of the Reformed Faith*, David G. Hagopian, Ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1996), 15-16

“Carson affirms God’s wish that all be saved, he believes that God’s will has already decided to distribute saving grace selectively. God’s love, in Carson’s view, compels God to issue an earnest invitation for all to repent and believe, but it does not provide to all the ability to respond appropriately.”

—Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 54



[Commenting on Jer.13:15-17: “Hear and pay attention, do not be arrogant, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he brings the darkness. . . . But if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord’s flock will be taken captive “]:

“Knowing that Judah did not turn and listen, the Calvinist concludes that God had already chosen to withhold his transforming grace from them, though he could easily have granted it. So while the text appears to identify Judah’s pride as the root cause of punishment, the Calvinist instead concludes that Judah’s ability to repent depends on God’s eternally fixed plan. Again, although the text seems to identify salvation as God’s deepest desire, the Calvinist must conclude that at a deeper level God never intended to bestow transforming grace on Jeremiah’s hearers. In other words, *the true intentions of God cannot be discerned from his words.*“

—Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 57

#### D. His death was for the sins of “the whole world”

John 1:29—“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of **the world!**”

John 3:17—“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that **the world** through Him might be saved.”

II Corinthians 5:19—“that is, that God was in Christ reconciling **the world** to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

I John 2:2—“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for **the whole world.**”

Matthew 13:44, 38—“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field...The field is the world.”

*“To think that my Savior died for men who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain.”*

—James White, *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White, 172

*“We consent to Paul’s judgment that God ‘desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ and to Peter’s conviction that God is ‘not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance’ (I Tim.2:4, 2 Pet.3:9). If it seems controversial to assert this conviction boldly and unashamedly, then it ought at least to be admitted that here is a truth far more deserving of controversy than many which are debated. On it hangs, we believe, the validity of the universal offer of the gospel, and the possibility of Christian assurance. If we do not know that God loves all sinners, we do not know that God loves us, and we do not know that he loves those to whom we take the gospel.”* —Clark Pinnock, *Grace Unlimited*, p.11

## Lecture 7: Challenges to Irresistible Grace

### I. Re-examining the positive case

#### A. Inevitability

John 6:37—“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out...”

[*Who was “given” to Jesus?* John 17:6—“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. **They were Yours**, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”]

Acts 13:48—“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

[This verse makes no mention of predestination. It says that those who “believed” had been “appointed” or “disposed” (Gr. *tasso*) to eternal life. If “appointed,” there is no indication of predestination before all ages. If “disposed,” there is no mention of who or what disposed them (cf. 1 Cor.16:15). These people are contrasted to those in Acts 13:46]

#### B. “Dragged” by God?

Phil.2:13—“...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

John 6:44-45—“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. **45** It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

[“Draw” = Gr. *helkuo* (John 12:32; Hos.11:3-4)]

#### C. Effectual call

Rom.8:30—“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

*“There is a universal call, by which God through the external preaching of the word invites all men alike, even those for whom he designs the call to be a savour of death, and the ground of a severer condemnation...There is the general call, by which God invites all equally to himself through the outward preaching of the word—even those to whom he holds it out as a savor of death [cf. 2 Cor. 2:16], and as the occasion of severer condemnation. The other kind of call is special, which he deigns for the most part to give to the believer alone, which by the inward illumination of his Spirit he causes the preached Word to dwell in their hearts. Yet sometimes he also causes those whom he illumines only for a time to partake of it; then he justly forsakes them on account of their ungratefulness and strikes them with even greater blindness.”* —John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.24.7-8

“This is a remarkable passage, but it is difficult to make sense of it on Calvinistic premises. Notice, Calvin says that God causes some of the non-elect to partake of the inner illumination of the Spirit but only for a time—because of their ungratefulness.

“Surely it is natural to infer that these persons *could* actually respond favorably to the inner illumination they receive. Otherwise, it is hard to make sense of how their ingratitude can be the just cause of even more severe condemnation. In other words, Calvin appears to imply that these persons have been enabled to believe and pursue the good but have perversely refused to do so: they could have, but they freely chose otherwise.

“However, this reading does not square with Calvin’s doctrine of election. For if these persons are not among the elect, they simply cannot respond with this sort of gratitude. But if they were among the elect, they would surely do so.”

—Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*, 169

### II. Contrary Witness of Scripture

#### A. The call of a sovereign can be rejected:

Mark 10:21-22

Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Matthew 22:2-7—“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, **3** and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. **4** Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ **5** But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. **6** And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. **7** But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Isaiah 5:3-4—“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.<sup>[1]</sup> What more could have been done to My vineyard<sup>[1]</sup> That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?”

Isaiah 65:12/66:3-4—“Therefore I will number you for the sword.<sup>[1]</sup> And you shall all bow down to the slaughter.<sup>[1]</sup> Because, when I called, you did not answer.<sup>[1]</sup> When I spoke, you did not hear.<sup>[1]</sup> But did evil before My eyes.<sup>[1]</sup> And chose *that* in which I do not delight.”

Jeremiah 7:13—“I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer...”

Matthew 20:16/22:14—“...for many be called, but few chosen.”

Matthew 23:37—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!

[*Who is addressed here?* Luke 19:41-44 / “sons of Zion” (Lam.4:2; Zech.9:13) / “Daughters of Jerusalem [or Zion]” (Song of Songs; Isaiah 4:4; Luke 23:28) / “O Zion” or “O Jerusalem” = The city personified, or its population collectively (Ps.137:5; 146:10; 147:12; Isa.40:9; 51:17; 52:1; 62:6; Jer.4:14; 6:8; 7:29; Zech.2:7; 9:13)—not the leadership]

Acts 7:51—“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit.”

## B. Repentance “granted” by God

Acts 5:31—“Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 11:18—“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’”

2 Tim. 2:25—“...in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth...”

### But, a privilege granted is not always seized upon

Acts 17:30—“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

2 Peter 3:9—“The Lord...is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Ezekiel 33:11—“Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”

Jeremiah 13:17—“But if you will not hear it,<sup>[1]</sup> My soul will weep in secret for *your* pride.<sup>[1]</sup> My eyes will weep bitterly<sup>[1]</sup> And run down with tears...”

Revelation 2:21—“And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.”

Luke 7:30—“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by [John].”

## C. Faith a “gift” from God

Eph.2:8-9—“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, **9** not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

*“Paul...does not mean that faith is the gift [but that] salvation is given to us by God.”*

—John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* 11:145.

Phil.1:29—“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

Heb.12:2—“...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...”

2 Pet.1:1—“To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”

Acts 18:27—“And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.”

1 John 5:1—“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.”

1. *A true “gift” is not imposed upon unwilling recipients*

Rom.5:18—“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”

Luke 9:53—“But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.”

John 1:11—“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”

John 5:43—“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me...”

John 12:48—“He who rejects Me...”

2. *Jesus marveled at the faith of some, and the lack of faith of others. Why?*

Matthew 8:10—“When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”

Matthew 15:28—“Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith!’”

Mark 6:6—“And He marveled because of their unbelief.”

3. *Why are people held responsible for their lack of faith?*

Psalm 78:21-22—“Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Mark 16:14—“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.”

John 3:36 (Young’s Literal)—“...he who is believing in the Son, hath life age-during; and he who is not believing\* the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God doth remain upon him.” [\*Gr. *apeithéo* “Not to allow oneself to be persuaded or believe, to disbelieve, be disobedient.” (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*)]

## Lecture 8: Challenges to Perseverance of the Saints

### I. Re-examining the positive case

#### A. Many were never really saved

Matt.7:21-23—“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22** Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ **23** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

1 John 2:19—“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”

#### B. Unconditional security?

John 3:16—“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 5:24—“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

John 6:35—And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 6:37—“...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

John 8:51—“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

John 10:27-30—“My sheep know my voice...and they follow me. **28** And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. **30** I and My Father are one.”

John 11:26—“And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

[Consider the grammar of these statements in light of the similar one in John 3:36—“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”]

#### B. God is faithful (but are we?)

II Timothy 2:11-13—“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him,<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>we shall also live with Him.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> If we endure,<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>We shall also reign with Him.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> If we deny Him,<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>He also will deny us. **13** If we are faithless,<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>He remains faithful;<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>He cannot deny Himself.”

1 Corinthians 1:8-9—“...who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God *is* faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Philippians 1:6—“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Romans 8:35-39—“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...**37** Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. **38** For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ephesians 4:30—“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

1 Pet.er 1:5—“who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

### II. Contrary Witness of Scripture

#### A. Salvation is “in Christ”

I John 5:11-12—“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **12** He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Galatians 5:4—“You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

1 John 2:24—“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.”

John 15:6—“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Romans 11:22—“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

## **B. Continuing in the faith is not inevitable**

1 Peter 1:5—“...who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time...”

2 Timothy 3:14—“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of...”

Acts 11:23—“When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”

Acts 13:43—“...many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.”

Acts 14:21-22—“...they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith...”

Colossians 1:21, 23—“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled... if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Hebrews 3:6, 14—“...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end...For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

## **C. It is possible to “believe for a while” and then “fall away”**

Luke 8:13—“But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.”

1 Timothy 4:1—“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...”

Hebrews 6:4-6—“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away,[a] to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”

1 Corinthians 9:26-27—“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Hebrews 10:26-29—“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”

## **D. There is a warfare to fight, and the world and the devil to overcome**

1 Peter 5:8-9—“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist...”

James 4:7—“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Ephesians 6:13—“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

2 Peter 2:20-22—“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”

2 Timothy 4:10—“...for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica...”

I Corinthians 9:26-27—“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Revelation 3:5/22:19—“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels...and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book [or Tree] of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

### **Why are there these warnings, if it is impossible for the believer to fall away?**

*“The essence of the arguments of many [Calvinists] is as follows: The mere fact that travelers are warned that there is a ditch alongside the road does not mean that they will fall into it. The warnings must not lead us to suppose that they will or can. God warns believers simply because, as rational beings, they are so constituted as to require motivation. He therefore appeals to their fears to keep them on the path. But the warnings are God’s means of ensuring that they shall not fall.*

*“One will not read long from advocates of the doctrine of unconditional security before encountering this “explanation” of the presence of so many urgent warnings against apostasy so obviously addressed to believers. The folly of their contention is seen in the fact that, the moment a man becomes persuaded that their doctrine of unconditional security is correct, the warning passages immediately lose the very purpose and value which they claim for them. Strong quotes Dr. A. C. Kendrick on Hebrews 6:4-6: “The text describes a condition subjectively possible, and therefore needing to be held up in earnest warning to the believer, while objectively and in the absolute purpose of God, it never occurs.”<sup>9</sup> But how can there be any earnest warning” to the believer who is sufficiently “instructed” to understand that the “warning” is directed against an impossibility? How can something be subjectively possible for the person who knows it to be objectively impossible? The only possible circumstance under which the warning passages could serve the purpose and function which they claim for them would be the total rejection of the doctrine of unconditional security and inevitable perseverance.*

—Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, p.165

## Lecture 9: What Does it Matter?

### I. Our view of God

*“How we understand the person and character of God the Father affects every aspect of our lives.”*

—R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Chicago: Tyndale 1993), 20.

#### A. Is God the friend or the enemy of sinners?

Cottret describes Calvin’s Geneva as being characterized by “an irrational determination to punish the fomenters of the evil.” He tells of a man who “died under torture in February 1545 without admitting his crime”:

*The body was dragged to the middle of town, in order not to deprive the inhabitants of the fine burning they had a right to. Sorcerers, like heretics.. were characterized by their combustible qualities.... The executions continued. Yet those detained refused to confess; the tortures were combined skillfully to avoid killing the guilty foolishly... [Some] were decapitated.... Some committed suicide in their cells to avoid torture.... One of the arrested women threw herself from a window.... Seven men and twenty-four women died in the affair; others fled.*

—*Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James, 234-235

In a letter Calvin advised a friend:

*The Lord tests us in a surprising manner. A conspiracy has just been discovered of men and women who for three years employed themselves in spreading the plague in the city by means of sorcery.. Fifteen women have already been burned, and the men have been punished still more rigorously. Twenty-five of these criminals are still shut up in the prisons.*

—*Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White, 235

#### B. Does God love my unsaved family members and friends?

*“If I truly love my daughter as myself, then God cannot love (or will the good for) me unless he also loves (or wills the good for) her. For I am not an isolated monad whose interests are distinct from those of my loved ones, and neither is anyone else. If God should do less than his best for my daughter, he would also do less than his best for me; and if he should act contrary to her best interest, he would also act contrary to my own.”* —Thomas Talbot, *The Inescapable Love of God*, 138

### II. Our view of people

#### A. Are all unbelievers this wicked?

*“He justly condemns rebel sinners who love their sin and spit in His face on a daily basis....God is under no obligation to extend His grace to the rebel sinner, and every single person who enters into eternal punishment would, were they given the opportunity, freely choose to remain under punishment rather than bow the knee in loving adoration of the God they hate. The idea that those who are punished are innocent victims or denied a “chance” is scandalously false. The thrice-holy God is under no obligation to grant “chances” in the first place...”*

—James White *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*, by Dave Hunt and James White, 19

#### B. Are there God-seekers outside Christianity? (Acts 10:1-4, 34-36)

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, **2** a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. **3** About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”...Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.”

[Peter said]: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. **35** But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. **36** The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—”

#### C. If God hates people, shouldn’t we?

*“As the souls of heretics are to be hereafter eternally burning in hell, there can be nothing more proper than for me to imitate the divine vengeance by burning them on earth.”*

—Queen Mary I of England (“Bloody Mary”)



### III. Our assurance of salvation

#### A. If Jesus didn't die for everybody, how do I know He died for me?

"'It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish' (Matt. 18:14)...[On this promise] hangs, we believe, the validity of the universal offer of the gospel, and the possibility of Christian assurance. If we do not know that God loves all sinners, we do not know that he loves us, and we do not know that he loves those to whom we take the gospel."

—Clark Pinnock, *Grace Unlimited*, 11

#### B. If perseverance is the ultimate proof of election, how can I know, before I die?

"...if the reprobate may believe that God is merciful towards them, how can we [the elect] be sure our believing the same thing is any different from theirs?"

—R.T. Kendall, *Calvinism*, 24

"...there are people in this world who are not saved, but who are convinced that they are."

—R.C. Sproul, quoted in Philip F. Congdon, "Soteriological Implications of Five-point Calvinism," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 8 (Autumn 1995): 15.

"...nearly all of the Puritan 'divines' went through great doubt and despair on their deathbeds as they realized that their lives did not give perfect evidence that they were elect."

—R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, cited by Bob Wilkin in *The Grace Report*, July 2000.

### IV. Our view of biblical hermeneutics

"...if a person believed that God has chosen only a limited number of people to be saved out of chosen only a limited number of people to be saved out of universal texts do not mean what they appear to say, or that God has two wills in the matter, one which is well disposed toward all sinners, and another secret will which purposes only to 1 be gracious to a few."

—Clark Pinnock, *Grace Unlimited*, 13

"Somewhere along the way, the burden of reading myriad passages throughout the Bible in such a counterintuitive fashion should anxiously bring us to this sort of question: since the Calvinist view of divine sovereignty routinely requires such an awkward "decoding" of biblical texts, should not we reexamine the Calvinist view of divine sovereignty itself?"

—Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*, 57

#### John Greenleaf Whittier

Then up spoke the little maiden,  
Treading on snow and pink:  
"O father! these pretty blossoms  
Are very wicked, I think.

"Had there been no Garden of Eden  
There never had been a fall;  
And if never a tree had blossomed  
God would have loved us all."

"Hush, child!" the father answered,  
"By his decree man fell;  
His ways are in clouds and darkness,  
But he doeth all things well.

"And whether by his ordaining  
To us cometh good or ill,  
Joy or pain, or light or shadow,  
We must fear and love him still."

"O, I fear him!" said the daughter,  
"And I try to love him too;  
But I wish he was as good and gentle  
Kind and loving as you."