

Four Implications of Calvinism

by Mark Huss

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Calvinism—preachers preach it, authors write of it, seminary students discuss it, and theologians pass it on to others. By all appearances, Calvinism, or its more popular name, the "Doctrines of Grace," looks and sounds biblical to many ... but is it? Writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul told Timothy to "...charge some that they teach no other doctrine ... which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do" (1 Tim. 1:3, 4). Is Calvinism a doctrine of Scripture, or a philosophical argument that ministers questions to believers and unbelievers alike, rather than godly edifying? In the preface of his book *Subjects of Sovereignty*, Andrew Telford, former pastor of Berachah Church of Philadelphia, wrote, "It is dangerous for God to give high truth to highly educated people. There is a danger that in the furtherance of that truth it becomes mixed with an alloy of human reason. It pleased God on that first Christmas morning to give high truth to humble men, even shepherds in the fields."

The purpose of this article is to analyze certain implications of Calvinism in light of biblical revelation and to call back those who have left God's pure Word to pursue the alloy of human wisdom which John Calvin and his followers teach so that they might say with the Psalmist, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works" (Psalm 119:27). In writing to the church at Colosse Paul warned, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Paul also wrote these words of concern to the church at Corinth, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Bible believing Christians must be careful not to be led away from the simplicity that is in Christ! We must never idolize any system of thought that contradicts God's Word. A. W. Tozer once said that the essence of idolatry is to imagine things about God and then preach them as truth.

Implication One: Death Before the Fall

The first implication of Calvinism to consider deals with death and when this death occurred. According to John Calvin, "The reprobate like the elect are appointed to be so by the secret council of God's will" (*Calvin's Institutes II*, chapter xxii, page 11) and "...their doom was fixed from all eternity and nothing in them could transfer them to a contrary class..." (*Calvin's Institutes III*, chapter iii, page 4). Also, according to Calvin, "...Not all men are created with similar destiny but eternal life is

foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is either predestined either to life or death" (*Calvin's Institutes III*, chapter xxiii).

In John Calvin's thinking, God appointed some of His future creation to eternal damnation. If John Calvin is to be believed, then we must understand that God placed death upon certain men before the creation of man and before the fall of Adam. Is this consistent with biblical revelation?

God, in His omniscience, knew that death would not come into existence until Adam fell. Genesis 2:17 states, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was at the time of Adam's fall that God placed death (physical and spiritual) upon the human race, not before the creation of man, and certainly not before man's fall into sin. The Bible says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Death did not pass unto men until man's sin, "For since by man came death..." (1 Cor. 15:21). Notice also that at the time of Adam's sin, death (physical and spiritual) passed "upon all men" not a "class" of men as Calvin taught. It is worth noting that the Bible clearly teaches that men will suffer God's eternal judgment of their sin after they are righteously judged by God at the future Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). Nowhere does the Scripture teach that God has appointed certain men to perdition prior to their creation by Him.

We know from the biblical record that all of God's creation was good including man, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good..." (Gen. 1:31). We also know that God created all men for His pleasure as Revelation 4:11 states, "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Ezekiel 18:23,32 and 33:11 teach that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God would not have placed eternal death upon men and separation from Him before He created them, and at the same time say He created them for His pleasure. Much less would God pronounce His creation good if before its existence He had plagued His creation with the death of certain men. However, this is exactly what Calvin and his followers teach.

Steven Houck in his booklet *God's Sovereignty in Salvation* states, "His will is so sovereign that He has determined just exactly what comes to pass in this world. God has determined and appointed absolutely everything... What is even more amazing is that this determination took place in eternity ... Since God is the sovereign God, Whose counsel stands forever, Whose will can never be frustrated, and Whose purpose

is not disannulled; we must conclude that His will and determination is sovereign particularly in salvation... For He is the infinite Creator Who has the right and power to do with His finite creatures exactly what he pleases ... even with respect to eternal destiny. For since God is sovereign, His will must not only be the determining factor in salvation, but also in everlasting destruction. God not only selects some to be saved and glorified, but He also appoints others to destruction" (pp. 5-7). Is this true? Did God appoint some to eternal destruction? Did it please God to determine eternal death to some before their creation by God? In Ezekiel 33:11, the Lord makes a very interesting statement about Himself. He says, "Say unto them, as I live, sayeth the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked..." Notice that God prefaces His statement with, "As I live." How long has God lived? The Scriptures teach that God is eternal and immutable ... that is, He changes not. Therefore, from eternity past (that is throughout all of eternity and even before the creation of man) God has never had any pleasure in the death of the wicked. How then can Houck say, "God not only selects some to be saved and glorified, but He also appoints others to destruction"? When man fell into sin, the two-pronged dagger of death (physical and spiritual) entered the human race. These two points of the dagger are not mutually exclusive of one another and never have been. To say that God applied spiritual death to certain men prior to the fall of man not only makes God a liar regarding His statements about His creation work, but also displays a significant lack of trust in God's revealed word. It is also doctrinal error since predestination in the Scripture only concerns itself with making a believer's future adoption certain. Dr. H. A. Ironside wrote concerning predestination, "It is the Father who has predestinated us to the adoption of children. Nowhere in the Bible are people ever predestinated to go to hell, and nowhere are people ever predestinated to go to heaven. Look it up and see. We are chosen in Christ to share His glory for eternity, but predestination is always to some special place of blessing. Turn to Romans 8:29. Predestinated to what? Predestinated 'to be conformed to the image of His Son.' You see, predestination is not God from eternity saying 'This man goes to Heaven and this man goes to hell.' No, but predestination teaches me that when I have believed in Christ, when I have trusted Him as my Saviour, I may know on the authority of God that it is settled forever that some day I am to become exactly like my Saviour" (*In the Heavens, Expository Addresses on Ephesians*, pp. 34-35). In Romans 8:29 we are told, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Concerning this verse, (Romans 8:29), Dr. W. L. Pettingill wrote, "Whosoever will may come. He [man] is only to come, and God does all the rest. God will ... undertake for him, and thereafter see to it that all things work together for good unto him. This is His eternal purpose which He purposed before the world was... The word 'for' in verse 29, has the force

of 'because' and it introduces the reason for our assurance that all things are working together for our good... The past tense continues through the whole passage, although the glorification is yet future, for God is able to count things done even when they have not been done. Our glorification is according to His purpose, and nothing is to be suffered to thwart His purpose. Having been foreknown and predestinated and called and justified, we shall also be glorified" (*Bible Questions Answered*, p. 374). Predestination has nothing whatsoever to do with sending certain people to heaven and others to damnation as Calvin taught. Predestination's purpose (according to Scripture) is to conform the believer to the image of God's Son. Mark G. Camron, a Baptist leader and professor wrote, "Scripture teaches that God has predestinated those who have believed (and those who will believe) to be conformed to the image of His Son. In other words, it is the plan of God, determined beforehand, that every believer is going to be made like unto the Lord Jesus Christ ... God has determined that those who are saved are going to be like His Son" (*The New Testament ... A Book-by-Book Survey*, pp. 200-201). C. H. Spurgeon declared, "Mark then, with care, that OUR CONFORMITY TO CHRIST IS THE SACRED OBJECT OF PREDESTINATION" (*Treasury of the New Testament, Vol. II*, p. 72; emphasis Spurgeon's). This conformity to the image of Jesus Christ will take place when the body is redeemed at Christ's future appearing and this will be the time of our adoption. Romans 8:23 says, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Ephesians 1:5 says, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." This verse explains that the believer is predestined to adoption. However, as mentioned, adoption is defined for us in Romans 8:23 as future, occurring at the redemption of our body. Adoption is what we are predestined for. Adoption is receiving the full privileges of being a child of God, whereas presently we only have the firstfruits of the Spirit. Adoption is not our salvation. We are born again into the family of God, not adopted. The belief that adoption and the new birth are the same thing is error and is not the teaching of God's Word. Adoption takes place when a believer receives his glorified body and is conformed to the image of God's Son. Writing on the subject of adoption the well known Baptist pastor I. M. Haldeman explained, "There are great facts concerning us as believers which relate us to the dispensation of the fullness of times... He has predestinated us to the place of sons in that dispensation, as it is written (Ephesians one)... The expression, 'the adoption of children' in the Greek is *uiothesia*... The compound word, therefore, signifies 'son placing ... the place of a son.' Thus, as believers, we have been predestinated in that coming dispensation to the place of sons" (*The Book of the Heavens*, pp. 4-5).

The teaching of predestination by Calvin and his followers is clearly in contradiction to biblical revelation. Recognizing there are only two chapters in Scripture where the words predestinate or predestinated are found (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5,11) and understanding that there is no reference in these four verses to Heaven or hell, but only to believers ultimate conformity to Jesus Christ, John Calvin's teaching on predestination must be rejected. It is human wisdom attempting to mix itself with God's pure Word. Let us close the first implication with the clear, succinct teaching of former pastor Edward Drew. "People have had it drilled into them that away in the past God foreordained [predestined] that certain people should be lost and certain others should be saved. I would like to get that out of your minds this morning. Just let me begin by saying that that isn't in the Bible... God's predestination is not salvation. God's predestination is that those who receive the Lord shall be like the Lord Jesus. That is predestination and nothing else is. God from the beginning, by His foreknowledge, predestinated that every believer should be made like Christ, and nothing else in the Book is predestination. That predestination is that God ordained one to be saved and another to be lost in hell eternally is not within the covers of this Book... God has ordained from the foundation of the world that if you will trust His Son, He will make you like His Son. That is what we have here... Those whom God predestinated to be like Christ, He called out ... not before He saved them, but when He saved them, He called them out to be like Him... It isn't that God called you and didn't call somebody else. God's predestination is being worked out now. In eternity past He determined that you should be like Jesus, and now that you are saved He calls you out, that while you are here you should show forth the Lord Jesus Christ" (Morning message on Romans 8:29-32; March 1, 1942).

Implication Two: Man's Will Is Non-Existent

The second implication of Calvinism deals with mankind's unique ability to choose. John Calvin says, "The only time free-will might be reasonably asserted to have existed was in Adam before the fall. Adam could have resisted if he would, since he fell merely by his own will. In this integrity man was endowed with free-will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life." Notice that Calvin emphatically stated that if man ever had a free-will it was only true of Adam. However, he goes on to make it clear that even Adam never had free-will to choose. "Nevertheless, there is no reality in the free-will thus attributed to man, in as much as God had decreed the fall, and therefore must have in some wise already biased Adam's will. It was not left in neutral equilibrium, nor was his future ever in suspense or uncertainty. It was certain that sooner or later Adam would fall into evil, and with that inevitable fall there disappeared every trace of the free-will which man may have had. From that time the will became corrupt along with the whole of nature. Man no longer possessed the capacity to choose

between good and evil" (*Calvin's Institutes II*, chapter iv, page 8). Is Calvin's teaching that man has no free-will consistent with biblical revelation?

In Genesis chapter two, Adam (before the fall) is told by God to keep His commandment, "...of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Would God require Adam to obey His command if Adam had no ability to obey? If God had, according to Calvin's teachings, "biased Adam's will" to disobey God, then God would be the responsible agent of man's sin! God's biasing of Adam's will is not found in Scripture, rather it is a presupposition by Calvin to support his errant teaching.

Dr. S. H. Kellogg, Presbyterian missionary to India and noted author of numerous books and commentaries, wrote, "When a man acts, it is he himself who acts, and not God. He acts moreover under no necessity or external constraint, but in the fullest and most unhindered exercise of that freedom of personal choice without which indeed he could not be regarded as in any true sense a responsive moral agent... The Holy Scriptures unmistakably teach that in the life to come God will punish many of the human race with extreme severity, yet they never represent this as proceeding from arbitrary caprice, but always as based on moral reason, namely the free choice by such men of sin, and their incorrigible persistence in rebellion against the infinite Love" (*Handbook of Comparative Religion*, pp. 16-18). Gleason Archer in his commentary on the book of Romans writes, "The choice of accepting or rejecting God's grace is made by each individual without prior causation. Since man is created in the image of God and God's own moral choices are not caused by any outside predetermined force, it is fair to conclude that men too retain the prerogative of uncaused choice" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 61).

If man lacks free-will to carry out any decision between good and evil other than those determined in eternity past, then man has no choice but to carry out an already determined plan. It is important to realize that the teaching of Calvinism regarding free-will is actually no different than what is taught by ungodly materialists, fatalists, and others who deny any free-will in man. For example, materialistic psychology teaches that man is at the mercy of whatever stimuli that would appear in his environment. Dr. Thomas Szasz, Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus, puts this view into perspective, writing, "The materialistic interpretation of nature, as the term implies, entails viewing all signs as the manifestations of physiochemical processes, such as human beings observe when they look at nature. Joy and sadness, fear and elation, anger, greed ... all human aspirations and passions ... are thus interpreted as the manifestations of unintentional, amoral, biochemical processes. In

such a world, nothing is willed; everything happens" (*Insanity...The Idea and Its Consequences*, p. 350). This kind of thinking is no different than the evolutionist's idea that man is simply a product of nature; that is, nature has determined for him to act a certain way. Interestingly, the idea that man has no free-will is also the teaching of the New Age and other false religious systems that say man is simply an agent by which a greater power (cosmic conscience) acts out its will in the life of man to bring him into a "perfect oneness." This is known as determinism (the doctrine that outer events and human choices are the results of antecedent conditions, physical or psychological).

Therefore Calvinism, like most secular philosophies, actually reduces man to the level of an animal since man, like the animal, can only carry out that which has already been determined for him whether by God or nature. Essentially Calvinism does not recognize man as the highest order of God's creative work (capable of independent choice), even though God created man in His own image. In Calvinistic thought, man simply carries out that which God has determined, as an animal does when it carries out its basic instincts. This is the same determinism that saturates secular thought. For the Calvinist, the choices that one makes are not really the choices that he thinks he makes; rather, they are predetermined choices that God has made for him.

Calvinism also promotes the secular doctrine of fatalism. Fatalism is the teaching that all things are subject to fate, or that they take place by inevitable necessity. It is indeed odd that Bible believing Christians would allow themselves to think the same thoughts regarding predestination and free-will as those who follow Islam and Hinduism. Samuel M. Zwemer, writing from a vast knowledge of the Muslim mind, said, "The terminology of their teaching is Calvinistic, but its practical effect is pure fatalism. Most Muslim sects 'deny all free agency in man and say that man is necessarily constrained by the force of God's eternal and immutable decree to act as he does.' God wills both good and evil; there is no escaping from the caprice of His decree... Fatalism has paralyzed progress; hope perishes under the weight of this iron bondage..." (*Religions of Mission Fields*, pp. 224, 245). A.S. Geden also speaks plainly concerning fatalism. He writes, "The Muslim is a fatalist... The Divine will is irresistible, and has decreed in every detail the entire course of the universe which He governs, and the fate each moment of every creature therein... The only attitude possible for man is that of complete and passive resignation... Its dogma of predestination and of fate is based upon its conception of the Divine nature... The Divine government ... leaves no room for human free-will, forethought or choice" (*Comparative Religion*, pp. 102,103). J.N.D. Anderson, an authority on Islam, says, "A Muslim is required to believe in God's Decrees. As we have already seen, the orthodox belief is that everything ... good or evil ... proceeds directly from the divine will, being

irrevocably recorded" (*The World's Religions*, p. 82). Lastly, a statement from Nicol MacNichol, speaking in the Wilde Lectures at Oxford, said, "If there is no room for free choices life becomes a mere puppet-show... 'The doer and the Causer to do are one,' says the Hindu peasant, and so saying accepts and justifies everything that happens, whether it be called good or ill" (*Is Christianity Unique?* p. 56).

From Genesis to Revelation man is continually shown to be exercising his God-given ability to choose, even after the fall of Adam. In 1 Kings 18:21, the worshippers at Mt. Carmel were invited to choose that day whom they would serve, either Baal or God. Was Elijah asking the people to do something they could not do or were the people only carrying out that which God had already determined in eternity past? In Isaiah 5:20, the people were certainly capable of choosing between good and evil. The Scripture reveals how they changed good for evil and evil for good: "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." They had the ability to discern between good and evil, otherwise how could they have changed it? Romans 1:17-32 is clear that man has chosen evil and is not predetermined to do so. Romans 1:28 clearly says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind..." The Calvinistic teaching that man has no free-will is not only contrary to biblical revelation but also to the writings of the church fathers of the first centuries. British Authors Forster and Marsten in their work, *God's Strategy In Human History*, point out, "The doctrine of 'free-will' seems to have been universally accepted in the early church. Not a single church figure in the first 300 years rejected it and most of them stated it clearly... The only ones to reject it were heretics" (*God's Strategy in Human History*, p. 244).

Throughout the Bible man is seen to be responsible for his actions and accountable for his responses to God's overtures. All of this indicates that man has a free-will. That this is so obvious in both the Old and New Testaments little more needs to be said about it. To do so would be to recount the story of man from Genesis to Revelation. In closing the second implication it would do well to ponder the words of M. R. Vincent, a gifted Presbyterian scholar and writer. "That the factor of human freedom [free-will] has full scope in the divine economy is too obvious to require proof. It appears in numerous utterances ... and in the entire drift of Scripture, where man's power of moral choice is both asserted, assumed, and appealed to" (*Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III*, p. 136). Also, the author of the article on *Will* in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* helpfully points out, "The words employed and passages cited show clearly that man is always regarded as a responsible being, free to will in harmony with the Divine

will or contrary to it. This is further shown by the various words denoting refusal" (Vol. V, p. 3085).

*Though God be good and free be heaven,
No force divine can love compel;
And though the song of sins forgiven
May sound through lowest hell,
The sweet persuasion of His voice
Respects the sanctity of will.
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
To walk in darkness still.*

—Whittier, THE ANSWER

Implication Three: Jesus Did Not Die for the Whole World

The third implication of Calvinism has to do with evangelism. Calvinism teaches that only those to whom God has determined in eternity past to come, will come. Let us remember that Calvin believed, "The reprobate like the elect are appointed to be so..." (*Calvin's Institutes II*, chapter xxii, page 11), and "Their fate was the direct immediate appointment of God" (*Calvin's Institutes III*, chapter iii, page 4). Houck said, "Christ did not die for everyone. He died for the elect of God and for them alone" (*Subjects of Sovereignty*, p. 13). While a Calvinist can be busy telling everyone the gospel message, he believes that only those whom God has chosen (or elected to believe) will ultimately believe. This means that the Calvinist can actually communicate to the unbeliever that if he or she is not one of those chosen by God before the foundation of the world, then Jesus Christ did not die for them and that they cannot be saved. Houck said, "He sent Christ to die, not for all, but for only those whom He intended to save" (ibid. p. 13). The bewilderment for any unbeliever listening to this kind of teaching is significant. After hearing the teaching that Jesus Christ only came to save some and not all, many unbelievers will continue to live a life of sin rejecting the salvation message of Jesus Christ having realized that they may not be part of the group that He came to save. Others will reject the gospel and become the catalyst of unbelief for many others since they have been told that the God of the Bible created certain people predestined to hell.

As a point of historical note, Charles Taze Russell, the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, experienced this very bewilderment I have spoken of. In the book, *Jehovah's Witnesses, Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* it explains, "Charles' parents sincerely believed the creeds of Christendom's churches and brought him up to accept them too. Young Charles was thus taught that God is love, yet that he had created men inherently immortal and had provided a fiery place in which he would eternally torment all except those who had been predestined to be saved.

Such an idea repulsed the honest heart of teenage Charles. He reasoned: A God that would use his power to create human beings whom he foreknew and predestinated should be eternally tormented, could neither be wise, just or loving. His standard would be lower than that of many men." The article concludes with "...turning away from church creeds and searching for the truth..." (page 43). Did young Charles find the truth? No he did not, and neither have millions of other Jehovah's Witnesses. One can only wonder how many false cults and other heretical groups had their beginning from the ideas of John Calvin and others who taught that God only came to die for a select group of people.

Arno C. Gaebelein, a well-known writer of biblical expositions as well as doctrinal and prophetic books, and for many years the editor of *Our Hope* magazine, was asked to comment on a question regarding a very pronounced Calvinistic book. The name of the book was *The Sovereignty of God* by author A. W. Pink. The question was, "Do you think Mr. Pink's book is scriptural? I recently read this book and it has upset me as no other book I ever read. I was attacked by terrible doubts as to God's justice and His very Being!" Dr. Gaebelein's strong reply followed: "Mr. Pink used to be a contributor to our magazine. His articles on Gleanings on Genesis are good, and we had them printed in book form. But when he began to teach his frightful doctrines which make the God of Love a monster we broke fellowship with him. The book you read is totally unscriptural. It is akin to blasphemy. It presents God as a Being of injustice and maligns His holy character. The book denies that our blessed Lord died for the ungodly. According to Pink's perversions He died for the elect only. You are not the only one who has been led into darkness by this book. Whoever the publisher is, and whoever stands behind the circulation of such a monstrous thing has a grave responsibility. It is just this kind of teaching which makes atheists" (*Our Hope*, Vol. 37, No. 11, May 1931, p. 684).

For example, consider the words of the famous agnostic Col. R. G. Ingersoll who wrote over a century ago these poignant words to Christians who had saturated themselves with Calvinistic teaching and thought. "The Bible was the real persecutor. The Bible burned heretics, built dungeons ... and trampled upon the liberties of men. How long, O how long will mankind worship a book? How long will they grovel in the dust before ignorant legends of the barbaric past? How long, O how long will they pursue phantoms in a darkness deeper than death? Unfortunately for the world, about the beginning of the sixteenth century a man by the name of Gerard Chauvin was married to Jeanne Le Franc, and still more unfortunately for the world, the fruit of the marriage was a son, called John Chauvin, who afterward became famous as John Calvin... This man forged five fetters for the brain. These fetters he called points. That is, predestination, particular redemption, total

depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. About the neck of each follower he put a collar, bristling with these five iron points... Who can estimate the misery that has been caused by this most infamous doctrine of eternal punishment? Think of the lives it has blighted ... of the tears it has caused ... think of the millions that have been driven to insanity by this most terrible of dogmas. This doctrine renders God the basest and most cruel being in the Universe. Compared with Him, the most frightful deities of the most barbarous and degraded tribes are miracles of goodness and mercy. There is nothing more degrading than to worship such a God. Lower than this the soul can never sink. If the doctrine of eternal damnation is true let me have my portion in hell, rather than in heaven with a God infamous enough to inflict eternal misery upon the sons of men" (From Col. R. G. Ingersoll's *Forty-Four Lectures Complete: Heretics and Heresies*, circa 1875). It would seem obvious that if an erudite unbeliever such as Col. R. G. Ingersoll can see the terrible discrepancy of Calvinistic teaching that a born again believer who is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit should be able to do so as well.

A Calvinist must understand that the belief system he is attached to gives the unbeliever an excuse not to believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian would never give an unbeliever any reason to remain in unbelief would he? If unbelievers are told that God died for some, and not for all, would they question God's love and will for them, personally? Would not Satan use this to confuse them and keep them from the gospel message that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins? Regrettably, this is exactly what the teaching of Calvinism does. This writer has met many angry people who have rejected the gospel because they have understood and now believe the teaching of Calvinism that they were very possibly not a part of the group Christ died for. Is this consistent with biblical revelation? Are these the kinds of questions that God's Word seeks to raise in the minds of the lost? Certainly not! "Whosoever will..." is the consistent biblical invitation to the lost (Revelation 22:17).

Jesus Christ has given the church His mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:14-21). It is very clear from the Scripture that God is a saving God. From Genesis to Revelation, God voices His desire for the lost to be saved. The Scripture teaches, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3,4). Divine language cannot be made any more clear!

Who did Jesus Christ come to save and to die for? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Romans 5:6-8 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly... But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The benefits of His death were directed toward sin in providing redemption (paying our indebtedness to sin and breaking its dominion over us). Ephesians 1:7 declares, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." 1 John 2:2 states that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. That is, propitiation is God's recognition of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross in behalf of the world, whether man enters into its blessings or not. To say anything different than what God's Word says concerning our Lord's death and its application to men will not only bring God's reproof, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6), but also God's judgment (Rev. 22:18,19). It is important to realize that our Lord's death provided reconciliation towards man and the world in relation to Himself. Second Corinthians 5:19 states, "...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." What other conclusion can be reached but that God desires all men to be saved and has made provision for all men to come to Him?

According to John Calvin a sinner can only be saved if they are a part of God's elect. However, election in Scripture only concerns itself with service that is according to the purpose of God. British author Dr. H. H. Rowley writes, "Whom God chooses, He chooses for service. There is variety of service, but it is all service, and it is all service for God... The divine election concerns exclusively the divine service... Election is for service. This is not to ignore the fact that it carries with it privilege. For in the service of God is man's supreme privilege and honor... To those who willingly and consciously accept the task to which they are called, the resources of God are open for the fulfillment of their mission, and here again is high privilege. Yet it is never primarily for the privilege but for the service that the elect are chosen... Their election is for service, and it is only valid insofar as, and so long as, they fulfill that purpose [God's]" (*The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, pp. 42,45). M. R. Vincent, writing from his vast knowledge of Biblical languages explains, "Election and the kindred words, to choose, and chosen or elect, are used of God's selection of men or agencies for special missions or attainments; but neither here nor elsewhere in the New Testament is their any warrant for the revolting doctrine that God has predestined a definite number of mankind to eternal life, and the rest to destruction... Election ... the act of God's holy will in selecting His own methods, instruments, and times for carrying out His purposes ... is a fact of history and of daily observation" (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 16; Vol. III, p. 137). H. H. Hobbs clearly states, "When reduced to its simplest elements election is twofold. First, God elected a

plan of salvation which He accomplished in Christ. Man may either reject this plan or accept it... Secondly, God elected a people to make known His plan of salvation... Thus election is to both salvation and evangelism. In both, the free-will of man determines the final result" (*What Baptists Believe*, pp. 106-107). That is, by free-will a man can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, yet doubt God's elective purpose for him resulting in a fruitless and barren life for the Saviour. Conversely, he who is saved can believe in God's elective purpose resulting in a fruitful and productive life for the Saviour. The apostle Paul realized God's elective purpose for him and so have many other faithful believers throughout church history. Like Paul, all believers should understand God's elective purpose for them. Quoting Dr. Rowley once again he says, "To be the elect of God is not to be His pampered favorite. It is to be challenged to a loyalty and a service and a sacrifice that knows no limits... Just as the prophets in the moment of their consciousness of their election to their office felt a trembling humility and a burning sense of the task to which they were called, so should all the elect who compromise the Church of Christ feel an ever renewed humility of spirit and wonder at the greatness of their privilege, together with a burning of heart at the greatness and urgency of the task to which they are elect... And when a Church turns in on itself and becomes a mutual improvement society, and regards itself as a little Ark of safety in a troubled world, instead of charged with a mission to the world, it turns its back on its election. The corollary of election is ever purposeful service, and its demand is for consecrated zeal" (*The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, pp. 168,173,174).

In Ephesians 1:4 the Scripture teaches that the saints are chosen in Him to be holy and without blame before him in love, not chosen to salvation. Robert McClurkin writes, "We are not chosen to be put into Christ, 'but chosen in Him'... God places every believer 'in Christ' to share His election. Christ is God's Elect, 'Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth' [Isaiah 42:1]. He was elected to fulfill a mission and to perform a task... Keep in mind then that election is 'in Christ.' We are not among the elect until we come into Christ by repentance and faith" (*Biblical Balance on Election and Free Will*, pp. 29,40). Living holy lives and doing those good works that God has created us for in this present age of grace is God's elective purpose for His saints. How will this be accomplished? By allowing the Spirit of God to have His way in our life so that a consecrated and obedient walk before Him is the result. Ephesians 2:10 explains, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (See also Titus 2:14; 3:8; 3:14).

The doctrine of Election is dynamic Biblical truth that correctly orients all believers to the purposes of God, and as such, demands responsibility and decision.

If men are not elected or chosen to salvation as John Calvin taught then how are men to be saved? Galatians 3:8 says that, "...God would justify the heathen through faith..." Faith is the means for salvation and Jesus Christ has provided the way of salvation. Faith always has an object and for the sinner this will be Jesus Christ and His work on the cross for them. Men put their faith on the perfect finished sacrifice of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ whose blood was shed for them for the remission of their sins and who rose again bodily from the grave. This salvation is given to anyone who will admit his lost condition as a sinner. Then when he, by faith, receives the Lord Jesus as the one who died for him and rose again, he shall be saved from the guilt and penalty of sin.

How does faith come? Dr. C. I. Scofield explains, "There are three things, grace, faith, salvation, and these are all the gift of God. But here is the significant fact, dear friends, here begins your responsibility: of this wonderful trio ... grace, faith, salvation ... you have already received the gift of faith. Now you are saying: 'If I have faith, if already God has given me faith, why am I not saved?' Because you have not used it rightly ... that is all... Dear friends, do not make difficulties about things where there are no difficulties. Faith is a gift and you have it" (*In Many Pulpits With C. I. Scofield*, pp. 90-91). Dr. H. A. Ironside said, "Faith is the gift of God... All men may have faith [in Christ Jesus] if they will; but alas, many refuse to hear the Word of God, so they are left in their unbelief. The Holy Spirit presents the Word, but one may resist His gracious influence. On the other hand, one may listen to the Word and believe it. That is faith. It is God's gift, it is true, because given through His Word" (*Full Assurance*, pp. 98-99).

A Calvinist will teach that if man expresses his faith toward God and His Word (regarding salvation) it would be a work of man. But faith defined in Scripture is not a work. Romans 4:5 clearly teaches, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The teaching of Ephesians 2:8,9 is also clear, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Commenting on these verses Washington Gladden said, "What says the text? 'By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' ...the pronoun translated 'that' cannot refer to faith, and must refer to salvation by grace. Read the next verse. 'Not of works, lest any man should boast.' What is not of works, faith, or salvation? To say that faith is not of works, is nonsense; to argue that salvation is not of works, is to do just what Paul is doing. The grace of God, the pardon and sympathy and help of God, is God's free gift; it is nothing that we have earned or merited; it is gratuity... The act of accepting salvation is surely man's act, and that act is faith. The free act

of God in bestowing salvation is grace; the free act of man in accepting it is faith" (*A Homiletic Encyclopedia*, R. A. Bertram, editor, p. 32).

J. F. Strombeck in his book, *Shall Never Perish*, writes concerning faith, "There is no merit in faith. If there was the slightest merit in faith, it could not be a channel through which grace could work. It would be a counter agent to grace which, by its very nature excludes merit on the part of the saved one. Faith does not only exclude the thought of merit, it actually includes the idea of helplessness and hopelessness. In faith one calls upon another to do that which one is unable to do for oneself. A child in the family is sick and near death. The family physician is called. In so doing the parents confess their own inability to deal with the illness and express their confidence in the doctor. There is no merit in calling the doctor. Their faith in the doctor merely gives him the opportunity to work. The object of the sinners faith is Christ. [Hebrews 11:1 states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"]. He did not come into the world to help men to be saved. He came to save that which was lost ... that which was beyond all human help. As Savior, He came to give His life as a ransom ... to die, and thereby take upon Himself the judgment for sin.

Jesus gave a clear illustration of what faith in Him means. He said to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15). The Israelite in the wilderness showed his faith by looking on the serpent of brass that hung on the pole (see Num. 21:5-9). In this one act of faith was expressed a confession of sin and utter helplessness and an acknowledgment that God's provision was his only hope. He did not understand the significance of the serpent, nor why it was made of brass. He did not analyze his faith to see if it was sufficient. He did not question the intensity of his look. He surely claimed no merit for looking. There were just two things in his mind: his own absolute hopelessness and the sufficiency of Gods provision. And this is all that there is to that faith through which the lost are saved. There is no power in faith that contributes to salvation... Sometimes one hears sinners invited to come to the cross and lay their sin burden there. If this were possible, it might be contended that faith is a work, but even this is impossible. No person can take the sin burden off of himself. The sin burden must always rest upon a person and it stays on the sinner until it is taken and placed upon Christ and that can be done only by God. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

If man is totally incapable of doing anything to remove the sin burden from himself, he is much more incapable of contributing anything to the doing of all of the things already mentioned as being true of the one who is saved. Through faith (that is the acknowledgment of one's own utter

helplessness and hopelessness and the casting of one's self upon God's provision) God is able to act in grace. That is the meaning of: "It is of faith that it might be by grace." That is also the meaning of: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). The meaning of faith then, as well as the meaning of grace, excludes every possible vestige of human merit" (John Strombeck, *Shall Never Perish*, pp. 25-28). Romans 10:17 is clear about the origin of faith when it says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is clear from the Scripture that man is the one who must hear and believe. John 5:24 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." If the Word of God is distorted and the gospel is skewed by saying only certain ones can believe and Jesus Christ may not have died for them, then man will not hear and faith will not come. That is, man will not apply his faith to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ for him. The unbeliever is then given an excuse not to believe.

Why would any believer ever want this to be an end result? Biblical revelation contradicts Calvin's teaching and understanding of the gospel and its application to men.

Implication Four: God's Judgment Is Distorted

The fourth implication of Calvinism pertains to the timing of God's judgment. John Calvin taught that before the world began God had already declared eternal judgment on some for reasons man cannot understand. Calvin teaches, "Who then shall be saved? That is what His sovereign will decides and nothing else. It is purely a matter of the divine sovereign will which, doubtless for good reasons known to God Himself, but none of them relative to anything distinguishing one man morally from another, chooses some and rejects the rest" (*Calvin's Institutes III*, chapter xxiii, page 10). A Calvinist will make God judge man and his sin before God's time of judgment as given in His Word. This judgment, according to Calvin, will not be relative to anything that would morally distinguish one man from another, but rather is purely a matter of God's will. Is this what the Scripture teaches?

It is true that God has judged sin throughout history. One only has to recall the "great deluge" of Genesis chapter six, or the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary to appreciate God's righteous judgment on sin. It is also true that God's wrath abides on those who remain in their unbelief. However, it is not until the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation chapter twenty that God's eternal judgment for man's sin takes place and God's official declaration to those who chose not to believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ is applied to the unbeliever. When this happens, these unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire

forever. This is the teaching of God's Word: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 11-14).

A Calvinist would believe that those who are described as "cast into the lake of fire" are those who, before the foundation of the world, were decreed by God to be there. Is this true? No, it is not! According to the Bible, men will be judged to the lake of fire because their name was not found written in the Book of Life... "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). The Scripture also teaches that men are judged according to their works (Rev. 20:13). According to the Scripture, an unbeliever's judgment is qualified by God in two ways: first, his works; and second, his name being found in the Book of Life. Nowhere in Scripture can we find the false teaching that God in eternity past decreed some to the lake of fire. According to Jesus Christ, the lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41) who fell from their right standing with God before the fall of man. That is, the original intent of the lake of fire (prior to man's fall into sin) was punishment for Satan and his angels because of their rebellion against God. After the fall of man into sin at Eden, God broadened the lake of fire to include those of the human race who would choose not to believe in God's promised redeemer effectively taking their names out of the book of life and proving their unbelief by their works (Genesis 3:15). This is worth noting since nowhere in Scripture do we find a place of eternal residence other than the lake of fire and the New Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2). It is also revealing since it tells us that God never had any desire or plan for mankind other than for man to always be with Him. This truth is consistent with Scripture (1 Tim. 2:3-6; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30; John 3:16-17; Ezekiel 33:11). Indeed, an unbeliever's eternal residence will be the lake of fire, but not because our Lord decreed it to be!

Regrettably, some will be lost, but God will not be the agent of their perdition. They are the ones who by their works have proven they knew not the Saviour and are thus cast into the lake of fire. Presently, God is acting in mercy and grace and is not dispensing such judgment until the Great White Throne. God has not consigned anyone to the lake of fire as

yet. The Calvinist believes and teaches that God has already judged some to the lake of fire, even before their creation by God. It is true that God will be the judge, but not until grace and mercy have been expended, the tribulation has come and gone, and Jesus Christ has reigned on the earth for one thousand years. Until then, His grace and mercy are extended to man. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord ... is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." In other words, God is longsuffering to us (giving us who know Him time to proclaim the message of salvation) so that others might be saved. The Scripture teaches this in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. It says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The love of Christ and the duty that accompanies our being an ambassador for Him requires us to proclaim God's reconciliation to all men. All were dead, He died for all, all need to be saved, and all who believe will be! We are to view the lost as such so that in giving them the gospel some will truly believe and be saved.

What terrible loss awaits the Calvinist who makes God to be something that He is not. God is a saving God. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). God's Word concludes with a Gospel invitation to "whosoever will." We must be careful not to fall into the errant teaching of Calvinism, but cling to God's Word alone and not man's teachings that contradict Biblical truth. 2 Timothy 2:23-26 says, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

For the Calvinist, there are many 'why' questions that can never be answered. Reconciling their understanding of election, predestination, adoption, and foreknowledge is an impossible exercise for the Calvinist. This inability to reconcile these terms of Scripture is answered by the Calvinist with such statements as, "God is sovereign, and man cannot understand these doctrines until we get to heaven." Whatever cannot be explained or understood is placed under the sovereignty of God. Yet the Scripture teaches the meaning of these terms. When understood in their biblical context, they beautifully come together to present a perfect picture of God and His saving grace. G. B. Stevens in his work *The Theology Of The New Testament* writes, "Theology has often applied these ideas to the subject of man's final destiny. Whatever may be the logic of such an application, it is exegetically unjustifiable. It is a use of Paul's words which he does not sanction, and which misapprehends the point of his argument... I reply that Paul does not teach the eternal, unconditional predestination of some men to final salvation and of others to final condemnation. He does not teach the doctrine of predestination which Calvin taught, nor does he teach the doctrine as held by historic Calvinism... If we should assume, for the sake of argument, that in Romans 9-11 Paul was speaking of human destiny, [Paul is not speaking about human destiny in these chapters, rather he is discussing the historic missions of men and nations i.e. Pharaoh, Jacob and Esau] and that he held the Calvinistic view of God's purpose, we might summarize his argument thus: God has from eternity appointed some to eternal salvation and others to eternal perdition, 'in order that he might have mercy upon all.' On the contrary, Paul's whole doctrine of sin assumes that Adam fell freely and voluntarily. His sin was contrary to the will of God. It equally assumes that all men who perish do so by their own fault. The salvation of all is the aim of the gospel. God "willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Christ came to be the "Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10). The maxim which emerges from Paul's discussion of the mysteries of God's providence and purpose is: "That he might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32). God may choose some and reject others; he may appoint some to one career, others to another; his ways are past finding out; he may do what he will; but whatever he does, it is to the end 'that he may have mercy upon all.' It would be a glaring contradiction for Paul to affirm that God does not will the salvation of some, but has eternally appointed them to perdition. Happily for his consistency, he has never recorded such a statement or its equivalent. It is reasonable to suppose that consequences which Paul has not himself drawn from his own doctrine of predestination, and which if drawn would contradict his explicit teaching regarding the universality of God's purpose of grace, are not a part of his system of thought" (pp. 385, 386). If one will come to God's Word in humility and believe what God has written, the believer will learn God's truth. Paul told Timothy that he

"...hast fully known my doctrine..." (2 Tim. 3:10). The Scripture admonishes the believer to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). My prayer for those who are caught in the error of Calvinism would be that they fully know, like Timothy, God's truth as well, leaving the alloy of human wisdom that defines Calvinism and come back to the humble fellowship that believers have with the Spirit of God who leads and guides His people into all truth.

C. H. Mackintosh, a noted writer and Bible commentator wrote concerning God, "He, blessed be His name, has not confined Himself within the narrow limits of any school of doctrine, high, low, or moderate. He has revealed Himself. He has told out of the deep and precious secrets of His heart. He has unfolded His eternal counsels, as to the church, as to Israel, the Gentiles, and the wide creation. Men might as well attempt to confine the ocean in buckets of their own formation as to confine the vast range of divine revelation within the feeble enclosures of human systems of doctrine. It cannot be done, and it ought not to be attempted. Better far to set aside the systems of theology and schools of divinity, and come like a little child to the eternal fountain of Holy Scripture, and there drink in the living teachings of God's Spirit" (*Miscellaneous Writings of C. H. Mackintosh*, Vol. V; p. 168). May God enlighten your heart to His truth as you consider these very serious implications of The Doctrines of Grace, otherwise known as Calvinism.

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