

PREDESTINARIANISM IS NOT A BIBLICAL TEACHING

It was **Augustine** of Hippo (354-430), who first taught the idea of predestination of individuals to salvation, showing that this doctrine was developed within the earliest stages of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet Protestants recoil at the many heretical teachings of Augustine: Infant baptism, no difference between John's baptism and baptism into Christ, baptismal regeneration, worship of Mary, purgatory, apostolic succession from Peter, priests receiving divine authority, allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, the acceptance of the Apocrypha, the placing of church tradition on a level with the Scriptures, and condoning the persecution of dissenters.

In the 1500s **Calvin**'s basic beliefs were already formed while he was still a devout Roman Catholic and referred to himself as "an Augustinian theologian." His teachings on this are set down in his volumes called *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Much of what he expressed was based on the highly corrupted Latin Vulgate with its terms such as: "do penance", "sacrament", and "priest" instead of "elder." Eventually Calvin became known as "the Protestant Pope" and "the Genevese dictator" and acted as a tyrant toward any who disagreed with him. His victims included: Jerome Bolsec, John Trollet, Jacques Gruet, Michael Servetus and dozens of others.

CALVIN'S TEACHING

This is set out with the acronym TULIP

Total depravity, **U**nconditional election (Predestination),
Limited Atonement, **I**rresistible calling, **I**nevitable **P**erseverance (OSAS)

OSAS means 'Once Saved, Always Saved'.

All of these concepts are unbiblical and are founded upon the premise that God does not love everyone and does not want all to be saved.

1. TOTAL DEPRAVITY [*INABILITY*]?

Calvinism holds that God, by His sovereign will, foreordained that some (most) men are **incapable of responding** to His offer of salvation. Such men are unable to repent and believe the gospel yet will be held accountable for failing to repent. This false teaching is supposedly based on Ephesians 2:1 which says "*you were dead in your trespasses and sins...*" However, verse 2 says "***in which you formerly walked***" which shows that these individuals became Christians and have been initially saved indicating that anyone who is "*dead in his sins*" is capable of responding if they choose to do so. Jesus, too, spoke of the spiritually dead who hear his voice and then live (John 5:25). So the **Calvinist analogy** that the spiritual dead can be compared to those who are **literally dead**, and therefore cannot respond to God is not only unbiblical and therefore false but also illogical because the literally dead are also incapable of evil thoughts or actions.

CAN NO INDIVIDUAL BE ETHICALLY UPRIGHT?

Romans 3:9-20

"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.' 'Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.' 'The venom of asps is under their lips.' 'Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.' 'Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.' Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that

every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

Paul is here quoting from the following OT Septuagint passages: Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ps.10:7; Proverbs 1:16; Isaiah 59:7, 8, and Psalm 36:1. I have presented three examples to show that, when viewed in context, these verses cannot be taken to apply to every individual of humanity as basically wicked because Paul’s quoted verses are in the context of those who are godless and are contrasted with “the generation of righteous” i.e. God’s own people:

- ❖ “**The fool** says in his heart, ‘There is **no God.**’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is *none who does good*. The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have *all turned aside*; together they have become corrupt; there is *none who does good*, not even one. Have they no knowledge, all **the evildoers** who **eat up my people** as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD? There they are in great terror, for God is with **the generation of the righteous**. You would shame the plans of **the poor**, but the LORD is his refuge. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad” (*Ps.14:1-7*).
- ❖ “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction...if sinners entice you, **do not consent** ... ¹⁶for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood” (*Prov. 1: 8, 16*).
- ❖ “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot **save** ... ⁷Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways. The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace ... ¹⁵Truth is lacking and **he who departs from evil** makes himself a prey” (*Isa. 59:1, 7, 8, 15*).

When the context of the other verses that were quoted by Paul is examined it will be seen to provide a similar result showing that those who are godless and corrupt do evil things to God’s righteous people “**the upright of heart**” (Ps. 36:10), and “he murders **the innocent**” (Ps.10:5). So clearly Paul is presenting just one side of this matter, a technique he uses in other parts of Romans. Therefore he has a different purpose in making these quotations, one which concerns Israel, inasmuch as corporate Israel can no longer rely on its special relationship with God as separated from the ‘depraved’ Gentile world. So Paul’s use of the quotations in support of his argument is not for the purpose of attempting to prove that all individuals are so depraved that none can play their part in response to God’s call, and so become of “the righteous generation.”

GOD DOES NOT VIEW EVERY MAN AS DEPRAVED

- ❖ “...what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and **crowned him with glory and honor**. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet” (*Ps. 8:4-6*).
- ❖ “For a man ought not to cover his head, since **he is the image and glory of God...**” (*1 Cor. 11:7*).

Although man now “falls short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) he nevertheless still is “the image and glory of God.” How could this possibly be if he has a totally depraved nature? *So from these passages it is clear that God has quite an exalted view of mankind.*

SALVATION IS AVAILABLE TO ALL MEN

- ❖ “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to **all men** ...” (*Titus 2:11*).
- ❖ “God, who is the saviour of **all people**, especially of those who believe” (*1 Tim. 4:10*).

- ❖ "...and I [*Jesus*], when I am lifted up from the Earth will draw **all** men to myself" (*John 12:32*).
- ❖ "...so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that **whoever** believes in him may have eternal life"
(*John 3:14, 15*).
- ❖ "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that **the world might be saved** by him" (*John 3:17*).
- ❖ "...the Father has sent his son to be **the saviour of the world**" (*1 John 4:14*).
- ❖ "I am the door. If **anyone** enters by me he **will be saved**" (*John 10:9*).
- ❖ "If **anyone** thirsts let him come to me and drink" (*John 7:37*).
- ❖ "...let the **one who wishes** take the water of life without cost" (*Rev. 22:17*).

Jesus is the saviour inasmuch as he has purchased salvation for all men. It is up to them to accept this gift:

- ❖ "That was the true light which gives light to **every man** coming into the *world* ... but as many **as received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name..." (*John 1:9, 12 NKJ*).

Calvinists sometimes try to change the meaning of the word "*world*" as meaning only the elect and "**all men**" and "*every man*" to mean only those of the elect. This would be a reading of this meaning into the text—a case of eisegesis. Nevertheless, God invites people to use their thinking ability and so make choices:

- ❖ "Come now, and **let us reason together**, says the LORD, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow" (*Isa. 1:18*).

It would be both cynical and cruel for Christ or God to make these offers to any individual who was incapable of responding. The ability to make choices is required for a person to reason on differing options.

ANYONE CAN DO GOD'S WILL

- ❖ "If **anyone's will** is to do **God's will**, he will know whether the teaching is from God..."
(*John 7:17*).

ALL WHO SEEK GOD FIND HIM

- ❖ "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me. When you **seek me** with all your heart, I **will be found** by you" (*Jer. 29:12-14*).
- ❖ "...for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he **rewards** those who **seek him**" (*Heb. 11:6*). Similarly at *Acts 17:24-28*.

ALL MUST REPENT

- ❖ "...but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (*Acts 17:30*).
- If there was an inability to repent there would be no reason for God to urge men to repent.*

FAITH/ REGENERATION/INITIAL SALVATION ALL OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME

Calvinism requires that the predestined individuals are regenerated before they can believe. However, it is only:

- ❖ "...when you **heard the word** of truth, *the gospel of your salvation*, and **believed in him**, [*you*] were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit" (*Eph. 1:13*).
- ❖ "Of his own will he brought us forth **by the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (*James 1:18*).

- ❖ “...you have been acquainted with the sacred writings from childhood, which are able to make you wise for **salvation through faith** in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).
- ❖ “For by grace you have been **saved through faith**” (Eph. 2:8).
- ❖ “you are all sons of God **through faith**” (Gal. 3:26).
- ❖ “**Believe** in the Lord Jesus and you will **be saved...**” (Acts 16:31).
- ❖ “...the gospel, for it is the power of God for **salvation** to everyone who **believes**” (Rom. 1:16).

Calvinism holds a faulty view of the role of faith as essential to one’s salvation. Salvation by faith requires that man make a genuine choice which must, therefore, involve the exercise of free will. Clearly the hearing of **the word of truth** leads one to faith which then brings about salvation at which point one is regenerated.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOSPEL BRINGS SALVATION

- ❖ “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord **will be saved**” (Rom. 10:13).
- ❖ “...the gospel, for it is the power of God **for salvation** to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

Calvinism’s teaching of God’s regeneration of a person before he believes makes the gospel of no effect. There is no need to win anyone to Christ. Paul evidently wasted his time trying to persuade both Jews and Gentiles concerning Christ (Acts 28:23). Such ones would not need any enlightenment because they have already been sovereignly regenerated.

CHRISTIANS ARE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR SALVATION

- ❖ “**Enter** by the narrow gate...those who **find** it are few” (Matt. 7:13).
- ❖ “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Individuals are to make a response to God’s love—“We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This does not allow for an irresistible drawing of people to God.

SOME INDIVIDUALS MAKE THEMSELVES UNABLE TO RESPOND TO GOD’S OFFER OF SALVATION

- ❖ “...because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them ... They did not honour him as God...but they **became** futile in their expectations ... and just as **they did not see fit** to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, to do those things which are not proper” (Rom. 1:19-28).

- ❖ “So I [*God*] gave them over to their **stubborn hearts**, to follow their **own counsels**” (Ps. 81:12).

It is not man’s inability to repent but the unwillingness of some to do so. Satan would not need to blind the unbelievers (1 Cor. 4:4) if all men were totally depraved and unable to respond. This false teaching is a denial of God’s infinite love for all. Furthermore, even the ungodly are capable of some good thoughts and actions (Luke 6:33). So Romans 3:12b must not be read in absolutist terms.

2. UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION? (*PREDESTINATION OF INDIVIDUALS*)

This teaching is that, before the foundation of the world, God chose, from the whole human race, **a certain number of particular individuals** for redemption through Christ. However, this cannot be true because of the condition of acceptance by each individual:

- ❖ “...all who **did receive** him [*Jesus*], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).
- ❖ “God shows no partiality, but in every nation **anyone** who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34).

WHO ARE THE ELECT?

The words “elect,” “election,” “elected,” and “elect’s” occur 27 times in the Bible. However, the Scriptures never use these words in reference to a select group of particular individuals who alone have been unconditionally predestined to be saved. The elect or “chosen ones” are those only within the context of **CORPORATE ELECTION** of “the Israel of God.” They are those who, by faith, come to be in “the body of Christ.” They are “in him” (Eph. 1:4) and as symbolic branches must remain attached to the true vine (John 15:4, 5).

ELECTION IS TO SERVICE

Individuals are chosen to fulfil responsibilities and a course of life to which they were called. They remain “chosen” only as they stay within “the body of Christ” with the predestined goal of **becoming conformed to his image**:

- ❖ “...in order that God’s purpose of **election** might continue...” (Rom. 9:11 ESV).
- ❖ “...so that God’s purpose according to His choice might stand” (Rom. 9:11 NASB).
- ❖ “So too at the present time there is a remnant, **chosen** by grace (according to the election of grace - KJV)” (Rom. 11:5 ESV).
- ❖ “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you (your election of God – KJV), because our gospel came to you...” (1 Thess. 1:4 ESV).
- ❖ “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and **election** sure...”
(2 Pet. 1:10 ESV).

If election is to salvation by Irresistible grace without any choice on the part of the individual, it would be impossible for one to be sure of one’s actual election.

THE PROCESS OF ELECTION FOR INDIVIDUALS

- ❖ “For those whom he **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son ... and these whom He **predestined**, He also **called**; and these whom he called, He also **justified**; and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**” (Rom. 8:29, 30).

Therefore one is, within the body of Christ, **predestined** to be **called** to become **conformed to the image of His Son** and not predestined to a final destiny. The predestination simply ensures that that will happen. It is not the result of God’s sovereign will regarding any one individual from eternity, but of His foreknowledge of *a living individual* so as to predestine him to be called to become **conformed to the image of His Son**. Also verse 28 shows that the context is with reference to “*those who love God*” They are therefore *living persons*. Verse 27 states that God is “*He who searches the hearts*” Why? If they are individually foreknown from eternity there would be no need to search hearts. Hence, God foreknew that *some men* would love Him; but He would have to search hearts to determine who particularly would become conformed to the image of His Son. Therefore they would have to be *living people* at the time they were predestined and called to such conformity:

- ❖ “He **chose us in Him** (whoever comes to be within the body) **before the foundation of the world**, that we would be *holy and blameless*...He **predestined** us to adoption as **sons through Jesus Christ** to Himself, according to the kind **intention of His will** ... also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:4, 5, 11).

Throughout Ephesians the individual believer gains blessings only because of his being a member of the body, the corporate group i.e. “*in Christ*”, “*in him*” (verses 1 and 4). This is further shown in Ephesians 5:27 which says: “*that he might present to himself the church...holy and blameless.*” Such

predestination to **adoption of particular individuals** comes “*through Jesus Christ*” that is through the **agency** of Jesus and therefore not “*before the foundation of the world*” as is the case with the corporate body of Christ so that:

❖ “...you have been marked with the seal of the holy Spirit that was promised, which is **the guarantee** of our inheritance” (*Eph. 1:13, 14 S & G*). Also see *ESV*.

If one is predestined from eternity what point would there be in having a **guarantee**. So the Calvinist teaching blasphemously degrades the work of God’s spirit.

IF PREDESTINATION OF PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS TO SALVATION WERE TRUE THEN:

1. The many appeals made by God through his prophets to Israel and others would have been meaningless.

2. There would be no point in God causing the conditional prophecies to be proclaimed by the prophets if there is only one outcome anyway.

3. There would be no point in God having provided the Bible for our guidance.

4. Praying to God for deliverance from problems would be meaningless.

5. There would be no point in any Christian following the scriptural admonition to preach.

6. What would be the point of God judging us according to our actions if they were all predestined.

7. Predestined individuals could never fall away.

8. Yet God does not judge us until He has seen how we judge others: “*Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For **in the way you judge you will be judged**; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you*” (*Matt. 7:1, 2*).

Therefore there can be no predestination for individual salvation.

INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT PREDESTINED TO BECOME CHRISTIANS

❖ “**IF** anyone **wishes to** come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (*Mark 8:34*).

❖ “...since you repudiate it [*the word*] and **judge yourselves unworthy** of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles” (*Acts 13:46*).

SECURITY IS NOT UNCONDITIONAL

❖ “...whoever **believes** (*present participle—continuously be believing*) in him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life” (*John 3:16*).

❖ “...he who **hears my word**, and **believes** (*present participle*) Him who sent me, has eternal life” (*John 5:24*).

❖ “*My sheep* know my voice, and I know them and they **follow me**; and I give eternal life *to them*, and they will never perish...” (*John 10:27, 28*).

❖ “...whoever **denies me** before men, I will also **deny him** before my Father” (*Matt. 10:33*).

❖ “...for if **you** [*the saved man*] are living according to the flesh, you **must die**” (*Rom. 8:13*).

❖ “...unless you **believed in vain**” (*1 Cor. 15:2*).

❖ “He who **overcomes**...I will not **erase** his name from the book of life” (*Rev. 3:5*).

❖ “God will **take away his part** from the tree of life” (*Rev. 22:19*).

- ❖ “I have forewarned you [*saved Christians*], that those who practice such things **will not inherit** the kingdom of God” (*Gal. 5:21*).
- ❖ “...there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus**” (*Rom. 8:1*).
Being “in Christ” includes doing all that the receiver of the gift of salvation must do.
- ❖ “...you, who are protected by the power of God **through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (*1 Pet. 1:5*).
The false teaching of unconditional security is held to by most Baptists.
- ❖ “...no one who is born of God practices sin, because His **seed abides in him...**” (*1 John 3:9*).
*That is providing that the seed remains in him because he remains connected to the Vine. Only then does one have the assurance that: “...I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (*Heb. 13:5b*).*

This was first said of Israel who forsook God who, therefore, forsook them (*Deut. 31:6, 8, 17*). This verse applies if we never forsake God. It is a conditional promise.

PAUL DID NOT BELIEVE THAT HE HAD UNCONDITIONAL SECURITY

- ❖ “...in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or already become perfect, but I press on **so that I may lay hold of** that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 3:11-12*).
- ❖ “...but I discipline my body and make it my slave, **so that**, after I have preached to others, **I myself will not be disqualified**” (*1 Cor. 9:27*).
Part of Paul’s message to everyone was that Christ died for them.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF CONDITIONAL SECURITY

The parable of the sower

Type B. “Those on the rocky soil...receive the word with joy...they **believe for a while**, and in time of temptation (persecution) fall away” (*Luke 8:13*).

Type C “...seed sown among the thorns,...*hears the word*, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it **becomes unfruitful**” (*Matt. 13:22*).

Types B and C believed and were saved; then died spiritually.

That slave

“...says in his heart, My master will be a long time in coming, and begins to **beat the slaves...**, and get drunk; the master will assign him a place **with the unbelievers**” (*Luke 12:45, 46*) *i.e. in the lake of fire.*

The slave who had received one talent—a saved person

“...I hid your talent in the ground...Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping...” (*Matt. 25:24-30*).

The Apostle Judas Iscariot

“Did I myself not choose you, and yet one of you **is a devil**” (*John 6:70*).

*Judas was honoured by being chosen from among many other disciples. Would Jesus have chosen an unsaved man? Would Jesus have sent an unsaved man along with eleven saved men to do the following things? “As you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (*Matt. 10:7, 8*). “For he knew the one who was betraying him; for this reason He said, Not all of you are clean” (*John 13:11*).*

This does not say that Judas was never clean, but merely that at that point in time he wasn’t clean.

The Prodigal Son

“...for this son of mine *was dead (spiritually) and has come to life again*” (Luke 15:24).
Therefore, one can get saved, die spiritually and get saved again.

Demas “...having **loved this world**, has deserted me” (2 Tim. 4:10).
Therefore he lost a salvation which he previously had.

Simon (the magician)

“...himself **believed** ... when Simon saw the spirit was bestowed...he offered them money ... Peter said to him, ‘May your silver *perish with you* ... You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible the intention of your heart may be forgiven you’”
(Acts 8:13, 18, 20, 21, 22).

Hymanaeus and Philetus “...who have **gone astray** from the truth” (2 Tim. 2:17, 18).

Younger widows “...some have already **turned aside** to follow Satan” (1 Tim. 5:14, 15).

Those who want to get rich

“...fall into temptation and a snare...which plunge men into ruin and **destruction**...have **wandered away from the faith** and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim 6:9).

3. LIMITED ATONEMENT?

This false teaching is that Christ’s sacrifice is offered only to those who are eternally predestined as God’s chosen ones. If true, this teaching would mean that God had no love for the rest of mankind. This teaching is considered by some to be the Achilles Heel of Calvinism because the Scriptures so plainly demonstrate that Jesus’ sacrifice was for all mankind. It is also recognized that if this teaching falls then the teaching of Unconditional Election falls with it. The following Scriptures demonstrate God’s *universal offer of salvation*:

- ❖ “...he **gave his only Son**, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life”
(John 3:16).
- ❖ “God our saviour, who desires **all men** to be saved ... and one mediator...Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a **ransom for all**” (1 Tim. 2:3, 5, 6).
- ❖ “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of **the whole world**” (1 John 2:2).
- ❖ “...the living God, who is the saviour of **all men**, especially of believers” (1 Tim. 4:10).
- ❖ “...so that he [*Jesus*] might **taste death for everyone**” (Heb. 2:9b).

So the atonement is available for all men even though it is only effective for some i.e. the ones who accept it. This is similar to the slain lamb before Israel left Egypt. The blood only became efficacious after the Israelites obeyed by splashing it on the doorposts as a demonstration of their faith. Yet, some redeemed Christians will bring destruction upon themselves because:

- ❖ “...there will also be false teachers among you...denying the Master **who bought them**, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Pet. 2:1).

These were redeemed, saved Christians, yet the atoning sacrifice does not remain effective for them. Also statements such as “Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8) or “the free gift...abounded for the many” cannot be used to say that Christ died only for the Church; otherwise the absurd thought would be

construed when Paul said: “the Son of God who loved **me**” (Gal. 2:20) as meaning that no one else but Paul was loved by Jesus.

ALL MANKIND ARE THE SINNERS FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

- ❖ “Christ died for the ungodly” (*Rom. 5:6*).
- ❖ “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (*1 Tim. 1:15*).

Christ died and paid the penalty for sin itself (John 1:29; 2 Cor.5:21; Rom. 5:12) not just for individual sins. This is similar to the “sin offering” which Israel offered to make possible the forgiveness of all sin (Leviticus). So Christ’s payment for sin cannot be divided up in order to apply to individuals or a select group of individuals. Neither can Christ’s blood be divided up—all of it had to be shed even to redeem one person. However, it only becomes effectual when the sinner believes the gospel. So Calvinism misunderstands the nature of the atonement itself.

MODERATE CALVINISM

In contrast to traditional Calvinism, Moderate Calvinism attempts to deny or limit “reprobation” [*double predestination*] and say that God simply leaves the non-elect to the just consequences of their sin. Those who hold to this view reject or water down the Calvinist teaching of Limited Atonement. However, each of the five points of Calvinism logically follow as a consequence of all the points preceding it. So four-point moderate Calvinism becomes disjointed and inconsistent.

4. IRRESISTIBLE CALLING (or GRACE)?

Because *grace* means ‘gracious favour’ the phrase Irresistible Grace is an oxymoron because to impose anything on anyone is the very opposite of a favour. Also, in all of its 170 occurrences, the word grace is never described as irresistible. Calvinism turns grace into some kind of programming of the elect. Yet Paul says:

- ❖ “We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (*2 Cor. 6:1*). *So grace has to be received and then it can be lost.*

GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL DETERMINE THE CALLING

The Greek word **Kaleo** = to call aloud, *invite*.

- ❖ “Those whom he predestined he also **called** (*kaleo*) ...” (*Rom. 8:30*).
- ❖ “...be all the more diligent to *make certain about His calling and choosing you*; for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble” (*2 Pet. 1:10*).

So being called by God is simply the invitation by God because He has provided the atoning sacrifice and made available the Gospel of the Kingdom message. A number of parables show this calling to be a bona fide invitation e.g. the parable of the invitation to the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24). The individual must then remain faithful so as to stay in his calling.

ALL ARE CALLED

- ❖ “For many are called (*invited*) but few are chosen” (*Matt. 22:14*).
- This must mean that all are called because Jesus “will draw **all** men to myself” (John 12:32).*
- ❖ “...but now he [*God*] commands all people everywhere to repent” (*Acts 17:30*).
- So all people are now invited to repent so that they also become part of the Christian community. Also a number of Jesus’ illustrations indicate that the invitation is made to all.*

BEING DRAWN

The Greek word **Helkuo** = the definition does *not imply anything compulsory*.

- ❖ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me **draws** (*helkuo*) him...” (John 6:44).
This is not an irresistible drawing because Jesus said that he would draw all men to him:
- ❖ “...and I [*Jesus*], when I am lifted up from the Earth will draw **all** men to myself” (John 12:32).

Yet scripturally not all men will be finally saved as in the false teaching of Universal Salvation. (Please see STUDY 8). However, God and Christ “draw” individuals toward them by the invitations made in the Scriptures, but this is a far cry from any forcing of individuals. Jesus showed that rejection of him was genuine when he said to the Jewish leaders:

- ❖ “Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:40).
This refusal would not be the case if such ones were irresistibly drawn. Some who have allowed themselves to be drawn may later draw back (Heb. 10:38, 39). Judas Iscariot was an example of this. So the process is that:
- ❖ “...whoever would **draw near to** God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who **seek him**” (Heb. 11:6).

BEING GIVEN or GRANTED BY GOD

The Greek word **Didomai** = to grant, give to one asking, let have:

- ❖ “All that the Father **gives** (*didomai*) to me will come to me ... No one can come to me unless it is **granted** (*didomai*) him by the Father” (John 6:37, 65).

This is a very different aspect of God’s work than is the drawing of all men. This concerns those who have responded to God’s love and are now given to Jesus. All of these factors still allow complete free will for the individual and no one is force-fed “the bread of life.” On other occasions *didomai* is used to indicate something given by God which may or may not be received—He simply gives the opportunity. This makes men responsible for making their own choice as to how to respond. Certainly salvation is not something that anyone can demand—God is the One who gives it.

YET GOD’S KIND WILL WAS RESISTED

- ❖ “...not knowing that the kindness of God **leads you to repentance?** But because of your **stubbornness** and unrepentant heart you are **storing up wrath** for yourselves in the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:4, 5).
- ❖ “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears **always resisting the Holy Spirit**; you are doing just as your fathers did” (Acts 7:51).
- ❖ “But the Pharisees and the lawyers **rejected God’s purpose for themselves**, not having been baptized by John” (Luke 7:30).

If the grace or calling of God were irresistible then one would expect God to impose it upon everyone including every Israelite and Adam and Eve; yet even the general disobedience of Christians shows that grace is not irresistible.

5. INEVITABLE PERSEVERANCE - ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED.

This last aspect of Calvinism is dealt with in the earlier STUDY 9: ‘ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED’ IS NOT A BIBLE TEACHING. However, at this point we need to examine the Calvinist explanation of the many statements in the NT concerning those who fall away or apostatize from Christianity. Supposedly these ones were never genuine Christians – they were simply impostors and so not predestined.

IT IS ONLY THOSE WHO WERE GENUINE CHRISTIANS WHO CAN “FALL AWAY” OR APOSTATIZE

Certainly it is true, according to the Scriptures that there would be imposters in the Christian congregation as Paul told Timothy (2 Tim. 3:13-15); but were ALL such imposters never genuine Christians? Jesus gave a principle which refutes that idea:

- ❖ “**If anyone is willing** to do His will, he **will know of the teaching**, whether it is **of God** or *whether I speak from Myself*” (John 7:17 NASB).

Similarly the ESV presents it as: “*If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*” So clearly Jesus shows that if a person has no genuine desire or motivation to do God’s will in the first place, then that person will not have any real understanding of the teachings that originate from God. So Jesus later says:

- ❖ “Why do you **not understand** what I say? It is **because you cannot bear to hear my word**...⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ **Whoever is of God hears the words of God.** The reason why you do not hear them is that **you are not of God.**” (John 8:43, 46-47 ESV).

APOSTASY REQUIRES THAT ONE ORIGINALLY BE A GENUINE BELIEVER

The Greek words used in the Scriptures with reference to apostasy are: *apostasia*, meaning “rebellion,” “abandonment” “breach of faith;” *apostasis* meaning “renunciation;” and *apostates* meaning “a deserter” or “rebel.” This also involves the synonymous phrase “to fall away.”

So evidently a person who apostatizes is one who has “the faith” which he then proceeds to repudiate – he becomes a deserter, a defector from what he had previously genuinely believed. Therefore, such unbelievers as Jesus described in John 8:43, 46-47 can never apostatize or “fall away” because they have nothing from which to “fall away.” All these terms refer to someone who had a genuine understanding and a genuine faith i.e. a desire to do God’s will and so the terms cannot refer to someone who never genuinely believed.

WARNINGS AGAINST “FALLING AWAY”/APOSTATIZING

There are a very great number of warnings throughout the NT for genuine Christians not to “fall away.” These can be found in the following passages: Matthew 24:4-5, 11-13; John 15:1-6; Acts 11:21-23; 14:21-22; Col. 1:21-23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:1, 16; 6:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:13-15; 4:2-5; James 5:19-20; 2 Peter 1:8-11; 3:16-18; Jude 19-21; 1 John 2:23- 25; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:1, 6-8, 12-14. However, Hebrews 10:19-39 present one of the more fully encompassing warnings to genuine Christians concerning falling away:

- ❖ “Therefore, brothers, **since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,** ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,** for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. ²⁶ For **if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth,** there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by **the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God,** and has profaned **the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,** and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again,

“The Lord will judge his people.”³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.³² But recall the former days when, **after you were enlightened, you endured** a hard struggle with sufferings,³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.³⁵ Therefore **do not throw away your confidence**, which has a great reward.³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.³⁷ For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith, and **if he shrinks back**, my soul has no pleasure in him.”³⁹ But we are **not of those who shrink back** and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls” (*Hebrews 10:19-39*).

So it is evident that the writer to the Hebrews is concerned about his genuine Christian brothers and sisters – ones who “**have confidence to enter the holy places**,” and who have already “[**received**] **the knowledge of the truth**,” already “**were enlightened**,” and who have been “**sanctified**” by “**the blood of the covenant**.”

Nevertheless, he admonishes them to “**not throw away your confidence**” but to “**hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**” i.e. not to fall away. Yet, “**if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth**, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,” and so the person becomes no longer a Christian – he has apostatized.

So it is clear the Calvinist explanation for which says that those who fall away from Christianity were never genuinely converted and so were never predestined does not bear up under scriptural scrutiny.

MISUNDERSTOOD TEXTS

The most misunderstood passage in reference to predestination is Romans 9. This passage is examined in STUDY 12. Nevertheless, there are four other prime passages used by Calvinists which bear examination to see if they really do support the Calvinist views:

Ephesians 2:8:

“For by grace you have been **saved** through *faith*; and not *that* [*salvation*] of yourselves, [it is] **the gift** of God.”

It is evident from Hebrews 11:6, Romans 3:21-5:2 and Galatians 2:16-3:29 that God does take into account a man’s **faith**. Calvinism misunderstands Ephesians 2:8 as stating that faith is God’s gift to men. However, the Greek grammatical construction requires that **the gift of God** is *salvation* rather than *faith*. The word *faith* is a feminine noun, yet the demonstrative pronoun *that* is neuter and so does not refer to *faith*. Most Greek grammarians recognize this: e.g. Alford, Bruce, Robertson, Vine, Wuest, and Vincent. So it is clear that the verse is saying that it is salvation which is the gift. Nevertheless, salvation does come through the individual’s faith. The Calvinist faulty view of faith seems to have resulted in the confusing of predestination with election (choosing) and then the misconstruing of the meaning of Romans 9:10-23 which now appears to be the definitive passage for Calvinism and so needs to be thoroughly examined.

Ephesians 1:11: “...him who works (*energo*) all things according to **the counsel** of his will.”

The Greek word *energo* doesn’t mean controlled manipulation of every situation. So this verse does not say that God “works all things according to his will” but rather “according to **the counsel** of his will.”

Acts 13:48 NASB:

“As many as were **appointed** (Greek *tetagenoi* from *tasso*) to eternal life believed.” (The KJV gives *ordained*).

Calvinists use this verse in an attempt to prove Unconditional Election. However, this text does not say ‘**foreordained**.’ Because this is a present influence and not an eternal decree, Rotherham translates this passage as: “and they believed—as many as had **become disposed** for life age-abiding.” Dean Alford also translated it as: “as many as were disposed to eternal life believed.” Furthermore, in the NT there are seven other passages with *tasso* that do not mean predestined to salvation. The lexical definition of *tasso* is “to put in order.” However, the context (v. 46) shows that these ones ‘put themselves in order’ by acceptance of the word.

The Theological Dictionary of the NT states that: “their conversion is obviously not connected with the thought of predestination” (vol. 8, p.29). Also S.T. Bloomfield and others assert that the passive voice of *tasso* often conveys the middle sense and so the use of the passive. And Bartlet comments concerning the phrase:

ordained to eternal life. A bad rendering...The idea is simply preparedness of heart, without any thought as to how this has come about. This is clear from the Jews’ unreadiness: they ‘judged themselves unworthy’...Like the Pharisees in Luke 7:30, the Jews ‘rejected for themselves the counsel of God’...The best rendering then would be, ‘were (found) disposed to eternal life,’ which preserves the exact shade of the verb (‘to set in order, arrange, dispose’) and has just that degree of ambiguity which belongs to the original.

Similarly p. 995 of the Adam Clark one volume commentary shows that predestination is not involved in Acts 13:48. This is also shown by the McGarvie Commentary on Acts which notes that: “Luke says, many of the Gentiles ‘were determined’ for everlasting life. It is an act of mind in the Gentiles...”

Romans 3:10-12:

“None is righteous, no, not one ... no one seeks God ... no one does good, not even one.”

This is used in Calvinism to prove inability. However, it does not say that man is unable, unless first regenerated by God, to believe the gospel (Rom. 6:17). When one examines the OT quotations that Paul makes it becomes clear that he was not condemning all men. These statements merely show man’s propensity to sin and his failure to do good rather than his inability to do good. Also the statement that “*God chose you as firstfruits to be saved*” (2 Thess. 2:13) does not say that they were chosen to be saved from before the foundation of the world. Even though Israel was chosen to be God’s special people it did not mean that they would fulfil that calling, which in fact they did not. So being chosen to be saved does not necessarily bring about that salvation, but maintaining belief does:

- ❖ “He who believes in the Son *has* eternal life” (John 3:36).
- ❖ “...the *free gift* of God is eternal life **in** Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:23).
- ❖ “...he **who believes** *has* eternal life...He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has* eternal life, and I will raise him up **on the last day**” (John 6:47, 54).

So the free gift only comes to those who are currently in Christ. This is the meritorious thing about Christians.

- ❖ “And the testimony is this, that God *has given us* eternal life, and this life is in His Son ... These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that *you have* eternal life” (1 John 5:11, 13).

These are all **proleptic statements** where the past tense is used by John to refer to future events to emphasize the certainty of their outcome. This is proved by the fact that the actual granting of eternal life occurs on the last day and as a future hope: “**In the hope of** eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago” (Titus 1:2).

A DISTORTED VERSION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

All God's attributes are in perfect balance (Ps. 86:15). God is not the less sovereign because He cannot lie or operate in a way that is contrary to his character. He is sovereign because He sets the requirements for salvation. The big mistake of Calvinism is to have distorted and misunderstood how God's sovereignty works and to have elevated it at the expense of His holiness, love, mercy and justice; and then to have ignored the scriptural statements showing that man has free will (Please see the section on *GENUINE FREE WILL* in STUDY 10).

Now we will examine some of the faulty assumptions made by teachers of Calvinism and some of the serious damage it does to a Christian's position before God.

CALVIN'S FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

1. That the sovereignty of God produces the inevitable corollary of unconditional election and reprobation of individual men.
2. That God's will has only one aspect (monothetic) and ignores the possibility of complex cause.
3. That God takes no factors into account about the individual man when granting him salvation (monergism).

FURTHER ANOMALIES IN CALVINISM

1. If the majority of mankind are predestined to destruction then Jesus would have been going against his Father's will when he said "Father forgive them." Similarly, for Paul to wish for the salvation of his unbelieving fellow Jews (Rom. 9:3) would contradict God's will.

2. Concerning those who are supposedly predestined not to be saved we ask: How can it be true that: "God our saviour...**desires all men to be saved...**" (1Tim. 2:3, 4) if, at the same time, He has determined that some will never be saved? Clearly God is attempting to reconcile the world:

- ❖ "...in Christ God was reconciling **the world** to himself, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

From other passages it is clear that God only counts "their trespasses against them" after they have finally rejected His attempts at reconciliation. So they cannot be predestined before creation to be rejected.

3. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (Tim. 1:15). *This does not simply say sinners among the elect, but the offer of salvation is to sinners in the world.*

4. Calvinism speaks of individuals as "made willing." This, however, is an oxymoron.

5. Calvinism speaks of anyone who accepts the gift of salvation by faith as then having something to **boast about** rather than boasting in God. This is nonsense. A rescued person does not boast in anything. He is simply thankful. No one has cause to boast when receiving a gift—they are simply grateful. Faith is the very reason why there can be no boasting: "Then what becomes of our **boasting**? It is excluded...by the law of **faith**" (Rom. 3:27).

6. One who has been regenerated has no need of the gospel.

7. Were the elect not previously totally depraved, yet have been drawn to God? If God could make each Calvinist to be one of the chosen, without any desire on their part, why does He not do so for everyone?

8. How can God sincerely invite (Luke 14:15-24) into his kingdom those for whom Christ did not die, whom He has not elected for salvation? Why the need for the servants to “compel” those who already have been predestined?
9. How does a Calvinist reconcile his lack of compassion for the non-elect with the parable of the good Samaritan?
10. As with Muslims and Mormons, Calvinists are not interested in evidence concerning their belief system because they claim to have an inner conviction. Yet the Scriptures are not only filled with evidence, but advocate that one search out this evidence and then use it to persuade others.
11. How, in Calvinism, does one really know that one is one of the elect? Indeed, because regeneration supposedly occurs before the individual comes to believe in Christ he has no assurance that he actually was regenerated and is therefore one of the elect. What if what he now believes is a false faith?

CALVINISM’S DENIGRATION OF GOD

Calvinist teachings imply that:

1. God controls men’s and Satan’s every move and so God would be the ultimate author of evil. Yet it is impossible for God to be the author of evil because:
 - ❖ “This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be **disorder and every vile practice**. But the wisdom that comes down from above is first pure, then peaceable, then gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits...” (*James 3:15-17*).
2. God is the author of all sin. However, because sin is rebellion against God this would make no sense and can therefore not be willed by Him. Calvinism sometimes confuses *tempting* with God’s *testing* of individuals. God never tempts anyone to sin (*James 1:13*).
3. God’s offer of salvation to “the one who wishes” (*Rev. 22:17*) is insincere.
4. God created most people for them to be condemned to destruction.
5. God offers to save the non-elect **if** they will do what is impossible for them to do because they are already predestined to destruction. So God is really taunting the condemned.
6. God can save all, and desires to save all, but chooses to condemn them for no apparent reason. This attributes to God an immoral deliberate withholding of salvation.

AN ATTACK UPON GOD’S LOVE, MERCY AND JUSTICE

The teaching of Calvinism leads us to believe that God doesn’t love all men enough to want to save them from eternal destruction. Why must God’s mercy be limited to a select group when *Ephesians 2:4* tells us that He is “rich in mercy”? And His love and justice are confirmed:

- ❖ “..so that he might be **just** and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (*Rom. 3:26*).
- ❖ “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast **love** to all who call upon you” (*Psalms 86:5*).

THE FRUITAGE OF CALVINISM

1. Calvinism views God according to the Platonic/Stoic model. Such a view would cause Christians to be **worshipping a God who is not the God of the Bible**.

2. Such 'another God' is one who, by cold calculation, pre-programmed or predestined all individuals from eternity. If this were true then it would result in predestination to condemnation for all the majority of mankind. Such an idea is not taught in the Scriptures.
3. A pre-ordained script for the entire life of an individual makes a mockery of Christ's sacrifice and the resultant repentance, forgiveness and salvation.
4. God would be a God who has no confidence in His own creation and so allows for no real free will and has to be totally controlling so that whatever happens is seen as 'the will of God' and leading to a mindset steeped in superstition.
5. Such a doctrine must of necessity diminish the zeal for the preaching of the Gospel.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF HOW CALVINISM WORKS

- It is as when a person sends out an invitation to the 50 workers in the office to come to a party at his house, yet only tells a select group of 5 what the address is and making sure the rest cannot possibly get to know the address.
- If a commercial building known to be occupied by 1,000 employees caught fire and the fire department chief stopped the rescue work after rescuing only the 50 managers and so leaving the rest to die, even though he had all of the circumstances to complete the rescue, would we imagine that this man would have any praise for his action? This highlights just what a libel against God this Calvinist false teaching really is!

CONCLUSION

The Calvinist version of predestination is nothing less than the promoting of superstition whereby the biblical loving God is turned into a capricious and heartless overlord who pre-programmes his creatures, giving them no choice so that they can do nothing about the consequences they will inevitably suffer. Even those who don't accept this teaching are viewed by Calvinists as living out a script set in stone even though they think they are making free will choices. This teaching fails to realize that the genuine free will of humanity enables it to reflect God's own image and so highlight God's sovereignty rather than in any way diminishing it.

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