



# CALVINISM

“Bitter for Sweet”

(Isa 5:20)

J W de Silva

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## **Close encounters of the Calvinist kind**

Some Christian friends were recently told that their salvation did not depend on their choice to believe the gospel, but upon whether or not God in eternity past had chosen them for salvation. They were informed that if man had a will to reject or accept the gospel it would deny God's sovereign will in all things. They were also told that through selective grace God only elected some to salvation, giving them the needed faith; all others get what they deserve in Adam – eternal damnation. One young believer had his assurance shaken after being told that he must be “persevering” in his faith in order to be sure that he is one of God's elect – and thus be assured of his salvation. The creed responsible for such teaching is generally known as **Calvinism**. If what it says is true, our willing acceptance of Christ as Saviour is a sham. Our assurance of eternal security shifts from resting in Christ's finished work to whether we are persevering sufficiently in order to be sure we are among God's elect. Some, influenced by Calvinism's “absolute election” and “irresistible grace” have declared gospel outreach to be an incidental occupation for the believer and the local church.

The aim in writing this booklet is to gain our brethren, as well as to strengthen our faith and resolve by bringing into view the glory of Christ and His redeeming work for all. Our intention is not to offend, vilify or misrepresent any person or congregation, but to judge in the light of God's word the specific claims of Calvinism presented by its past and present advocates. By focusing upon these claims we avoid meandering into the meaningless debate over “moderate” and “hyper” Calvinism and bypass the equally unprofitable discussion relating to “four” and “five” point Calvinism. Our mandate is to apply the test of Scripture to see if these things are so, rightly dividing the word of truth (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15). Of particular note is the essential agreement between John Calvin and present-day Calvinists. We acknowledge that the views of the latter noted in this booklet are sincerely held. Our disagreement with those views while profound is presented in deference to that sincerity.

## The issues

- Is divine election biblical?
- Does man have a free will and a moral responsibility to accept the gospel?
- Does man having a free will deny God's sovereignty?
- Does God elect people unconditionally to eternal life and damnation?
- Do I have to be persevering in my faith in order to be assured of my salvation?
- What degree of perseverance is required to be assured of salvation?
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## Election

Divine election - God choosing people unto Himself is biblical. It is a truth clearly revealed in Scripture and it holds a singular blessedness for the believer in Christ. However the Bible also speaks of man having a will to choose or reject God. Calvinism regards the coexistence of these two truths as inconsistent. It has therefore devised a creed centered on the idea that God as Sovereign must will and foreordain *everything* and man as a fallen creature cannot will or ordain *anything*.

### Does man have a free will? Does free will deny God's sovereignty?

Some Calvinists assert man has a "free will" but only to choose evil. Others strangely assert man's free will is controlled by God. "*God so governs the inward feelings, external environment, habits, desires, motives, etc., of men that they freely do what He purposes.*"<sup>1</sup> Yet others deny man's free will absolutely. "*Palmer defines "free will" as "the kind of freedom no man has," not only "to believe on Christ or to reject Him," but even "the ability or freedom to choose good or evil."*"<sup>2</sup> But what of God's word? It tells us God is pleased that man should not be bridled but have a will. "*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle*" (Ps 32:9). Proverbs and Job testify to God's appeal to man's will and its testing. Peter tells of men being "*willingly ignorant*" (2 Pet 3:5). Paul acknowledges "*his own will*" (1 Cor 9:17). In Hebrews we have "*if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth*" (Heb 10:26). Fallen man is able to "*know good and evil*" (Gen 3:22). The existence of "choice" is proof of it. God rebuked the people "*and [you] did choose that wherein I delighted not*" (Isa 65:12). Joshua spoke of a choice between good and evil. "*If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve...as for me and my*

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<sup>1</sup> L Boettner, *Objections Answered – God Controls the Minds of Men and gives His people the will to come*. This glaring paradox is expediently dismissed by claiming it is a mystery how God can manipulate man's will yet preserve his free agency.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in D Hunt, *What Love is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God*, Berean Call 2004 p 198

house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15 cf Job 34:4; Ps 34:14; Pr 11:27; Isa 56:4; Amos 5:14). Isaiah acknowledged man can choose obedience. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isa 1:19). The Lord rewarded free will in choosing faith. “Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.” Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your [own] faith be it unto you” (Matt 9:28-29 cf Luke 7:50; Luke 18:42 etc). The Bible closes with the Lord’s universal appeal to man’s free will. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). Scripture reveals man has a free will to choose between good and evil or faith and unbelief. We take this up again when we examine the Calvinist doctrine of Total Depravity.

But does man’s free will deny God’s sovereignty? Given that man’s free will is taught in Scripture it cannot do so. Calvinism however persists with its claim that “*The heresy of free will dethrones God and enthrones man.*”<sup>3</sup> The reason lies in its limiting idea of God, blinding it to the truth that giving man a free will was a sovereign act of God and an act of a sovereign God. Man having a free will *demonstrates* God’s infinite sovereignty. Scripture reveals God’s will is not always done by man. Does that mean God is not in control? By no means. The Jews rejected Christ and wicked, willful hands crucified Him. This did not stumble but fulfilled God’s purposes.<sup>4</sup> “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18), those infinite sovereign works that foresaw and allowed for every moral choice of man (as evident in biblical prophecy). God has determined the destinies of all who exercise their will for good or evil, for faith or unbelief. We may ask, “What of the value of prayer”? Does it challenge God’s will and deny His sovereignty? It cannot alter God’s eternal purposes; but God can alter circumstances in response to prayer and still “work all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas 5:16 cf Gen 20:17; 1 Sam 1:27; 2 Kings 6:18; Jas 5:18). So Paul having every confidence in divine foreknowledge and power exhorts “let your requests be made known unto God” (Php 4:6); and we pray “Thy will be done.” Ironically it is Calvinism that diminishes God’s sovereignty giving us a *lesser* God whose purposes can be thwarted by man having a will. Calvinism’s God is not the God who knows the “end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:10). As said by another, “A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creation. He would be afraid to do so.” Calvinism’s God is fashioned by a mind seemingly unwilling to accept God’s revelation of His sovereign determination and intervention coexisting with man’s free will. We are not required or able to reconcile these truths (anymore than Christ being both God and man). We must preach

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<sup>3</sup> W E Best cited in D Hunt p 178 Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> In His omniscient Sovereignty God used the moral choices of Judas, the priests, the Jews, Pilate etc. to determine His plan for Calvary’s Cross. How? It is beyond our finite understanding but this must not cause us to reject the coexisting truths of God’s election and man’s will.

both and not err by siding with Calvinism or Arminianism.<sup>5</sup> The truth is *apart* from them, not in some middle ground between them. Another has well said, “*Calvinism is a house with no door; Arminianism is door with no house.*”

## God’s foreknowledge and foreordination

Underlying Calvinism’s view of God’s sovereignty and election is its idea that God’s *foreknowledge* is essentially His *foreordination*. The reason given is that God cannot foreknow something unless He has predestinated, foreordained or determined it. Calvin claimed God “*foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed them.*”<sup>6</sup> Those after Calvin agree. “*God foreknows only because He has predetermined*”;<sup>7</sup> “*God foreknows what will be because He has decreed what will be*”;<sup>8</sup> “*God’s foreknowledge...is not a reference to His omniscient foresight but to His foreordination.*”<sup>9</sup> These claims are philosophical not biblical. God is the timeless “*I am.*” His foreknowledge embraces the past, present and future which are all “present” to Him. It includes facts, events and about persons – the saved and unsaved, their thoughts and deeds. This must be so if He is a God who “*searcheth all hearts, and understand all the imaginations of the thoughts*” (1 Chron 28:9), who knows the “*end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done*” (Isa 46:10). God’s foreordination too, is in the realm of timelessness and according to His infinite foreknowledge, otherwise He acts in ignorance. But Calvinism asserts God “*creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul.*”<sup>10</sup> This is because He cannot foreknow all unless He determines all. However it is not that God *causes* or *foreordains* all but that He knows all. “*There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether*” (Ps 139:4). Finite man cannot know the interplay of God’s foreknowledge, foreordination and intervention other than to accept in faith what He has been pleased to declare in His word. In this we are confident, having two complementary truths revealed in Scripture.

1. God’s foreknowledge is *distinct* from His foreordination (Appendix 1).
2. The “*foreknowledge of God is the basis of His foreordaining counsels.*” Whom “*he did foreknow, he also did predestinate*” (Rom 8:29).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Arminianism is the theology of Jacobus Arminius. It opposes Calvinism by espousing man’s free will, unlimited atonement, conditional election and resistible grace. It falsely claims that through his free will man can fall from grace – be saved today and lost eternally tomorrow.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* III: xxiii, 6-7 (cited in D Hunt Ibid, p 202).

<sup>7</sup> L Boettner, *Unconditional Election*, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

<sup>8</sup> A W Pink, cited in D Hunt Ibid. p193.

<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, cited in D Hunt Ibid. p280.

<sup>10</sup> L Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, cited in D Hunt Ibid. p 185

<sup>11</sup> W E Vine, *Expository Dictionary of NT Words* p 119. God did not foreordain His plan of redemption and then consult His attributes of righteousness, love etc. Redemption’s plan was the outcome of all His divine attributes, one of which is His omniscient foreknowledge.

God's foreknowledge is seen as distinct *and* preceding His foreordaining work, as in the case of Jeremiah. "*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations*" (Jer 1:5). Beyond this we cannot go and say with David, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it*" (Ps 139:6). "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?*" (Rom 11:33-36). Now carefully note the dire consequence of Calvinism. If God only foreknows what He has foreordained and, given that He foreknows all things, then He has foreordained all things - including every *sin* in thought, word and deed, otherwise He would be ignorant of them. This is a grave error of Calvinism which we now take up.

### **God's sovereignty and sin – the holiness of God impugned**

Calvinism generally stops short of asserting God created sin preferring to say "*Sin is something God meant to happen. He planned for it, ordained it.*"<sup>12</sup> This link between God and sin is Calvinism's most serious error. It is the inevitable outcome of its reasoning that:

- (1) God's sovereignty means there can be no will besides God's will. God "*freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass.*"<sup>13</sup>
- (2) God can only foreknow what He has foreordained. "*In fact, because God foreordained it [sin]. He foreknew it [sin].*"<sup>14</sup>

This means literally everything that happens is God's desire and decree alone. Therefore God not only elected who would be saved from sin but He foreordained sin and willed that man fall into sin. So we get the unbiblical assertions from Calvinism: "*Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance...it was so ordained in the secret counsels of God.*"<sup>15</sup> "*To emphasize the sovereignty of God even more, it is necessary to point out that everything is foreordained by God...It is even biblical to say that God foreordained sin.*"<sup>16</sup> Here too contemporary Calvinists bow to Calvin. "*The first man fell because the Lord deemed it meet that he should.*"<sup>17</sup> The Bible utterly condemns such notions. "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*" (Js 1:13-14). Sin is rebellion against God. Calvinism has God decreeing rebellion against Himself and man guilty even though God willed him into

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<sup>12</sup> John MacArthur, *Vanishing Conscience*, Word Publishing 1995 p113, cited in D Dunlap, *Limiting Omnipotence*, Gospel Folio Press p 54.

<sup>13</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith

<sup>14</sup> E H Palmer, cited in D Hunt Ibid p 162.

<sup>15</sup> L Boettner, cited in D Hunt Ibid. p 159. (How does Calvinism know this if God's counsels are secret?).

<sup>16</sup> E Palmer *The Five Points of Calvinism*, Baker Books 1997 pp82-83, cited in D Dunlap Ibid. p 54.

<sup>17</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, III xxiii, 8

sin. This is an abomination to a holy God who is of “*purser eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*”; One who was so offended by sin that He forsook His Son as He suffered as the Sin Offering to put sin away (Hab 1:13; Heb 9:26; Ps 22:1). It is a heinous affront to One who “knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21), who “did no sin” (1 Pet 2:22) because “in Him was no sin” (1 Jn 3:5). If Calvinism fails here as it most surely does, it fails everywhere, giving bitter for sweet as we continue to note.

## **The creed of Calvinism and “logic”**

Calvinist theology is often represented by the acronym **TULIP** (five point Calvinism): **T**otal depravity of man; **U**nconditional election; **L**imited atonement; **I**rrresistible grace; **P**erseverance of the saints. As noted Calvinism rejects God’s sovereignty coexisting with man’s free will. It protests in part that Christianity cannot hide behind such a “mystery.” It responds by devising “logical” theories to avoid it. The apologetics of a leading Calvinist devotes a chapter to “*Unconditional Election – Proof from Reason.*”<sup>18</sup> Another laments, “*A growing antipathy to logic in theology is manifesting itself widely... logic should play a role in developing our understanding of election.*”<sup>19</sup> Again, “*To abandon logic is to become irrational, and true Christianity is not irrational.*”<sup>20</sup> In the matters before us Calvinism it seems prefers logic to faith as the basis of spiritual wisdom. “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ... Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*” (Heb 11:1-3). The highest court man’s wisdom can appeal to is reason; the highest court for the believing heart is divine revelation. True Christianity invites faith not reason. “*The world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” (1 Cor 1:21). Yet, when it is convenient Calvinism abandons its “logic of true Christianity” and seeks refuge in mysteries – mysteries of its own making. “*The ultimate question of why God chose some for salvation and left others in their sinful state is one that we, with our finite knowledge, cannot answer.*”<sup>21</sup> It even invents reasons for such mysteries. “*The reason that God did not choose all to eternal life was not because He did not wish to save all, but that for reasons which we cannot fully explain a universal choice would have been inconsistent with His perfect righteousness.*”<sup>22</sup> Where is the biblical basis for such an assertion? Note how this divides and isolates God’s moral attributes to support a creed. Why single out God’s perfect righteousness? What about His perfect love, mercy or grace all of which demand equal expression? Again, “*His reasons for saving particular ones while passing others by have*

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<sup>18</sup> L Boettner, *Unconditional Election*, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html).

<sup>19</sup> R C Sproul, *Double Predestination*, [www.the-highway.com/DoublePredestination\\_Sproul.html](http://www.the-highway.com/DoublePredestination_Sproul.html)

<sup>20</sup> John MacArthur, *The Love of God* Word Publishing; cited in D Hunt, *Ibid* p 464.

<sup>21</sup> John MacArthur, *What does the Bible teach about election?*, *Grace to You* Website.

<sup>22</sup> L Boettner, *Unconditional Election*, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)



not been revealed to us.”<sup>23</sup> His will in this has not been revealed simply because it is not His will. His will in regard to salvation *has* been revealed repeatedly and unequivocally. “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” (Jn 3:16); that He is “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). As Sir Robert Anderson noted, God’s election and man’s free will may appear inconsistent; but to say they *are* is to place man’s reasoning ahead of divine revelation (so, too C H Spurgeon – Appendix 2). In what follows we identify further instances where Calvinism uses logic, word manipulation and expedient ideas to try and shore up its creed.

## Total depravity of man

Calvinism asserts that fallen man is *totally depraved*, likening him to a “dry bone” or a “stone” incapable of moral will. “Man by nature is dead in his trespasses and sins. A dead man is utterly incapable of willing anything.”<sup>24</sup> “Logically,” it claims, God must give fallen man life (rebirth) *before* he can become morally aware and repent unto salvation, concluding rebirth *precedes* faith in Christ (examined below). Yes, fallen man is spiritually dead in sin; the natural disposition of his mind is “enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). But this does not mean he has no ability to know right from wrong, no moral conscience, no responsibility and no will. Did the Fall make man a mere beast of the field? Let the Bible speak. First, as noted earlier Scripture teaches that fallen man has a will to choose between good and evil. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children...” (Matt 7:11). Second, the word “dead” in Scripture does not always mean inability. In Romans 6:2 believers are “dead to sin” yet Paul exhorts the dead not to yield their “members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin” (v 13). In John 5:25 the dead are those dead in trespasses and sins. Yet, “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (cf Eph 2:1, 5; 5:14).<sup>25</sup> Note the order – hear and *then* live; not live and then hear! “Can these dry bones live?” Yes! How? “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD” (Eze 37:3-4). Again note what the spiritually dead hear and *then* respond to for life – the word of God, His voice. Third, the Fall did not eradicate man’s moral conscience. It subjected his mind to carnal flesh and, while subject to it, his mind cannot be subject to the law of God. But his conscience is there none the less. In God’s call “Where art thou?” we have the beginning and pattern of His dealing with fallen man. It is not first giving him new life, but a *divinely initiated* call in *grace* to awaken his moral conscience unto life. So we hear fallen man confess “I did eat” (Gen 3:12-13).

We acknowledge “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11); “There is none that doeth good” (Rom 3:12). No righteous inclination

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<sup>23</sup> L Boettner, *Unconditional Election*, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

<sup>24</sup> A W Pink *Sovereignty of God*, Baker Books

<sup>25</sup> This is the spiritual rebirth now through the gospel - “the hour now is,” distinct from vv 28-29.

can originate from man - if left to himself (cf Jn 1:11-13). But wondrous truth, the God of universal love, grace and mercy has not left fallen man alone, as seen in the garden after the Fall. God expects fallen man to acknowledge His Being through creation and worship Him. *“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; [in their hearts and consciences]<sup>26</sup> for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”* (Rom 1:19-20). What is this but an appeal to fallen man’s moral conscience unto spirituality? The fact that fallen man is “without excuse” admits he is capable of moral responsibility towards God.<sup>27</sup> So God’s word acknowledges fallen man’s moral responsibility and gives him the divine promise that *“if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby”* (Eze 33:19). Isaiah exhorts the spiritually dead to *“Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live”* (Isa 55:3). Again, hear and *then* live. Today God’s voice also calls fallen man in grace through His gospel and the convicting work of His Spirit, provoking him to consider his ruin in sin and remedy in Christ. And, like God’s first call in the garden it demands a response. The gospel is preached in the power of the Spirit to convict man’s moral conscience, enabling it to rise above the enmity of his natural mind against God. **Jn 5:24**: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life”*; **Rom 10:17**: *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”*; **1 Cor 1:21**: *“The world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”*; **2 Tim 3:15**: *“thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”*; **Heb 4:12**: *“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”*; **1 Pet 1:23**: *“Being born again...by the word of God....”* The spiritually dead must hear and *then* they will live - rebirth upon willing faith, which we now consider.

**Regeneration (rebirth/new birth) precedes faith and repentance:**<sup>28</sup> According to Calvinism God’s elect are totally depraved and they cannot respond to His call. Therefore God must *first* regenerate them by giving them new life (rebirth) enabling them to have faith. *“Regeneration precedes faith...the first step is the work of God and of God alone [i.e. “monergism” – a work solely by God].”*<sup>29</sup> *“We believe that new birth is a miraculous*

<sup>26</sup> *“Manifest in them (phaneron en autois). In their hearts and consciences.”* A T Robertson *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol IV. It is not “among” them.

<sup>27</sup> Which the theory of evolution seeks to deny.

<sup>28</sup> Paul speaks of rebirth as *regeneration* (Tit 3:5). Regeneration specifies a particular aspect of rebirth. Rebirth is the *communication* of the new life; Regeneration refers to the new *circumstances* accompanying that new life. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [the new life]: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new [regeneration]”* (2 Cor 5:17).

<sup>29</sup> R C Sproul, *Regeneration Precedes Faith*. <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/sproul01.html>.

creation of God that enables a formerly “dead” person to receive Christ and so be saved. We do not think that faith precedes and causes new birth.”<sup>30</sup> Note what this means.

1. God’s elect *do not* desire new birth (regeneration). As totally depraved sinners it is repugnant to them. It is *imposed* upon them by God *unconditionally* and *unknowingly*.
2. Sinners are reborn *without* repentance and faith in Christ.
3. New birth (regeneration) still leaves a sinner *unsaved* and under God’s judgment.

As noted earlier this is unscriptural. Let us consult biblical *principle* even further.

1. Rebirth places a person in God’s *family* as His child. Note how this comes about and the vital condition of faith in **Christ**. John 1:11-13 tells us “*as many as received him [Christ], to them gave he [the] right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name: which were born...of God [i.e., reborn after belief on His name].*” Becoming a child of God (rebirth) is conditional upon *receiving* Christ. Receiving means believing faith as defined in the verse.<sup>31</sup> The Lord taught the associated truth, “*No man cometh unto the Father [into His family] but by me*” (Jn 14:6). Paul reminded the Galatians “*For ye are all the children of God [reborn, in God’s family] by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:26). Faith in Christ is required for rebirth and life. “*He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*” (1 Jn 5:12). *Knowingly* and *willingly* accepting **Christ** through the Gospel brings new birth. Peter reminds us we were “*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever ... And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*” (1 Pet 1:23-25 cf Acts 10:36).
2. *Knowingly* and *willingly* accepting **Christ** also brings **salvation** and eternal security. “*In whom ye also trusted [Christ], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also having [not “after”] believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*” (Eph 1:13). Paul noted Timothy’s maternal legacy, “*from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim 3:15).
3. In Colossians “quickenings” refers to rebirth (conversion). Note again it is through **Christ**, “*And you, being dead...he has quickened together with him [Christ]*” (Col 2:13 cf Eph 2:5).
4. Believers are a “new creation” because they are in **Christ**. “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new*” (2 Cor 5:17). The contrast is between the old creation in Adam and the new creation in Christ. It parallels the biblical principle of being reborn – coming out of Adam’s family into God’s family. In principle then, if rebirth precedes faith in Christ, rebirth does not make a person a new creation; he/she is still a creation in Adam and in his family – even though they have new life.

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<sup>30</sup>John Piper © Desiring God. Website: [www.desiringGod.org](http://www.desiringGod.org). *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*.

<sup>31</sup>Some alter the Greek text to read “which *having been* born by God” because it fits their theory of rebirth before faith in Christ. This is sheer manipulation. The tense of these verbs is aorist and refer to a completed act in the past. “Which were born (hoi egennêthêsan). First aorist passive indicative of gennaô, to beget, “who were begotten.” A T Robertson. *Word Pictures in the NT Vol V*.

Clearly, *faith* in **Christ** in response to God's word brings *rebirth, salvation* and the Spirit's *indwelling* and *sealing*, simultaneously and instantaneously. The new birth (new life), the new creation and being born into God's family are synonymous and all begin with faith in Christ. The resounding biblical principle unknown to Calvinism is that there can be no spiritual life **at all** outside of **Christ**, and to have Christ is by **faith**.

Now let biblical *example* speak. The gospel accounts in the Bible *always* speak of faith as a condition *for* salvation; never rebirth as a condition for faith and salvation. Nicodemus was dead in trespasses and sins yet he sought the Lord *before* rebirth. He heard of the Lord and sought Him under the *convicting* work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:2). He was *then* informed by the Lord of the need to be reborn. Calvinism ignores or confuses the convicting work of the Holy Spirit with the new birth. Then we have Cornelius. Prior to meeting Peter he was under the Spirit's conviction (Acts 10:2). He was saved and reborn when he believed the gospel of Christ preached by Peter. "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*" (Acts 10:43). It was the Holy Spirit who directed Peter to Cornelius. But suppose Cornelius was already reborn as Calvinism requires. Then either the Holy Spirit was ignorant of this or Cornelius as a reborn person was unsaved and under God's judgment, because the Spirit led Peter to preach the remission of sins to him. Despite early Calvinist leanings Spurgeon was sufficiently insightful to declare: "*If I am to preach faith to a man who is regenerated [reborn] then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him.*"<sup>32</sup> This contradiction is compounded and Calvinism becomes more ridiculous when preaching salvation to the reborn involves faith through "irresistible grace." Calvinism's "Total Depravity" is not in Scripture. Predictably, the theory desperately needed for its support – rebirth before faith, is not there either.

## Unconditional (absolute) election

Unconditional or absolute election was popularized by John Calvin during the *Protestant Reformation* with much of it rooted in the 5<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic theology of Augustine. It is fundamental to *Calvinism, Reformed Theology, the Westminster Confession* and *Presbyterianism*. Many "evangelical Christians" are Calvinistic. Calvinism has evolved over time with shades of doctrine and dissent represented within it. However the doctrine of unconditional election has remained intact and is universally accepted among Calvinists. "*Eternal and unconditional election has sometimes been called the "heart" of the Reformed Faith.*"<sup>33</sup> What then does Calvinism mean by unconditional election? "*Election is the act of God whereby in eternity past He chose those who will be saved. Election is unconditional, because it does not depend on anything outside of God, such as good works or foreseen faith (Romans 9:16).*"<sup>34</sup> "*God chose those whom He chose because it seemed good to Him*

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<sup>32</sup> C H Spurgeon, *Sermon: Warrant of Faith* Pilgrim Publications 1978 p 3.

<sup>33</sup> L Boettner, "[www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

<sup>34</sup> John MacArthur, *What does the Bible teach about election?*, *Grace to You Website*.

to do it.”<sup>35</sup> “God according to the good pleasure of His will, without any regard to merit, elects those He chooses for sons, while He rejects and reprobates [condemns] all others.”<sup>36</sup>

It will be noted this view of election stands in direct contrast with Arminianism which proposes “conditional election” – God elects upon man’s faith. We are not concerned with the debate between these two theological camps, and focus instead on that which underlies Calvinism’s unconditional election - God’s election and man’s will to choose salvation being inconsistent. Unconditional election rules out absolutely man’s free will and moral choice in salvation. But there is also a vital “flip-side” to unconditional election – God’s dealing with the non-elect, those who He has *not* chosen for salvation. This crucial matter is taken up next. But first note two things.

1. Calvinism’s unconditional election is the “logical” outcome of its “Total Depravity.”
2. Calvinism’s unbiblical methodology recurs with predictable emphasis. “*If the doctrine of Total Inability or Original Sin be admitted, the doctrine of unconditional Election follows by the most inescapable logic.*”<sup>37</sup> We observed Scripture does not admit Calvinism’s “Total Depravity.” It follows by “inescapable logic” that unconditional election too is not admitted by Scripture.

## **Unconditional (absolute) election and reprobation**

Under Calvinism people are saved because God has unconditionally chosen and predestined them to salvation. All others are lost because they were *not* chosen by God. These are the non-elect, the *reprobate* (the condemned). So we get the “doctrine of reprobation.” Calvin declared, “*Whom God passes by, therefore, he reprobates [condemns], and from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his children.*”<sup>38</sup> Yet again we have contemporary Calvinists consenting. “*Reprobation is the name given to God’s eternal decision regarding those sinners whom he has not chosen for life.*”<sup>39</sup> “*It must be emphasized that the truth of election and reprobation stand or fall together.*”<sup>40</sup> “*The case of Pharaoh [Romans 9] is introduced to prove the doctrine of Reprobation as the counterpart of the doctrine of Election.*”<sup>41</sup>

When speaking about reprobation Calvinists try to avoid “double predestination.” This is the idea that God not only predestines the elect to salvation but He also predestines the non-elect to damnation. To say God foreordained or predestined the non-elect unto wrath makes Him responsible for their sin and doom. Some Calvinists therefore seek to

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<sup>35</sup>*The Five Points of Calvinism*, Herman Hanko, Homer Hoeksema, and Gise J. Van Baren, Copyright 1976 by Reformed Free Publishing Association. <http://www.prc.org/fivepoints/chapter2.html>

<sup>36</sup> John Calvin *Institutes* III:xxxiii, 1

<sup>37</sup> L Boettner, “*Proof From Reason*,” [http://www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

<sup>38</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, Book. III, Chp. XXIII, Para. 1

<sup>39</sup> J I Packer, <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/packer/election.html>.

<sup>40</sup> H Hanko *et al* *Ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> A W Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* Chp 5.

evade double predestination by speaking little about it; others invent spurious assertions to escape it. They claim that God simply “passes by” the non-elect. *“To the non-elect God withholds this monergistic work of grace, passing them by and leaving them to themselves...God grants the mercy of election to some and justice to others.”*<sup>42</sup> *“The non-elect...suffer no unmerited punishment, for God is dealing with them not merely as men but as sinners [emphasis in original].”*<sup>43</sup> These are philosophical not biblical arguments and feeble ones at that. Are we to believe that a God who saves sinners and who alone *could* save the non-elect, by withholding His grace and mercy is not *actively* pursuing and willing their damnation? If I a rescuer stand by and allow a physically blind man walk off a cliff when I alone could have saved him, am I not as morally culpable as if I had pushed him over its edge? *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (Js 4:17). Does the Lord condemn Himself when He condemns the Levite and priest who “passed by,” leaving the destitute man to die on his way from the place of promise (Jerusalem) to the place of the curse (Jericho)? Calvinism vainly seeks to avoid injustice imputed to God by its own doctrine by asserting *“to be reprobate is to be left in sin.”*<sup>44</sup> But what is unperceived and alien to Calvinism is the truth of CALVARY. There God in His infinite mercy **did not pass men by!** No man need be left in sin because at Calvary we have God’s provision of mercy to all men, in that His Son *“tasted death for every man”* (Heb 2:9). So whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved (Jn 3:16). *“Where sin abounded grace did much more abound”* (Rom 5:20). *“Will a man rob God?”* (Mal 3:8). Through its vain reasoning Calvinism robs God of His redemptive glory and man of God’s redemptive mercy - “bitter for sweet”! Again, *“Reprobated sinners receive what they deserve...Every sinner in hell will have to say, “Lord, I am here because of my sin.”*<sup>45</sup> But tell us of the sinner in heaven who deserves to be there! Ironically, the totally depraved non-elect in hell acquire the ability and opportunity to repent of their sin denied to them by Calvinism in life.

In the final analysis despite Calvinism’s specious pleadings, the *foreordination* or *predestination* of the non-elect to wrath is the *unavoidable* consequence of unconditional predestination of the elect. Boettner, a foremost Calvinist betrays the terrible reality of Calvinism’s unconditional election when he acknowledges that *“The doctrine of absolute Predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life.”*<sup>46</sup> If God foreknew the eternal wrath of the non-elect as Calvinism admits, then He must have predetermined it. This must be if as Calvinism insists *“God foreknows only because He has predetermined.”*<sup>47</sup> Claiming immunity from injustice by asserting God simply “passes men by” is therefore utterly spurious, for God must have

<sup>42</sup> R C Sproul, *Double Predestination* , [www.the-highway.com/DoublePredestination\\_Sproul.html](http://www.the-highway.com/DoublePredestination_Sproul.html)

<sup>43</sup> L Boettner, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

<sup>44</sup> R C Sproul, *Double Predestination* , [www.the-highway.com/DoublePredestination\\_Sproul.html](http://www.the-highway.com/DoublePredestination_Sproul.html)

<sup>45</sup> Free Presbyterian Church, [http://www.freepres.org/pamphlet\\_details\\_print.asp?election](http://www.freepres.org/pamphlet_details_print.asp?election)

<sup>46</sup> L Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Eerdmans, 1932).

<sup>47</sup> L Boettner, *Unconditional Election*, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

*preordained* that He would “pass by” the non-elect. Preordained reprobation is the repugnant corollary of unconditional election, making God decree the sin and eternal doom of the non-elect.<sup>48</sup>

**Calvinism’s two types of divine love:** Some Calvinists try to deny the universal *scope* of God’s saving love revealed in Scripture by altering the *nature* of His love. “*God’s love for the reprobate is not a love of value; it is the love of pity...the same deep sense of compassion and pity we have when we see a scab-ridden derelict lying in the gutter...a genuine, well-meant, compassionate, sympathetic love.*”<sup>49</sup> But where is this taught in Scripture? Divine love which springs from a holy and righteous God, even a “lesser” divine love, must find expression in *spiritual* blessing - engaging and enlivening man’s heart towards God. Every provision bestowed on man by God has this spiritual object. But where and what is it in regard to the reprobate? Again we have Calvinism limiting, isolating and manipulating the moral attributes of God to suit its theories, offering us “bitter for sweet.”

## Calvinism’s election tested by Scripture

In this segment we examine the texts Calvinism uses to support its doctrine of election. Do they teach unconditional election/reprobation? Do they deny divine election coexisting with man’s will and moral responsibility to God?

**Matthew 20:28:** “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Also Mk 10:45). Calvinism claims election is taught in this verse. “*This verse does not say that He gave His life a ransom for all, but for many [the elect].*”<sup>50</sup> Other verses are quoted in support, i.e. “*feed the Church of the Lord [sic] which He purchased with His own blood*” (Acts 20:28). “*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*” (Eph 5:25). “*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us...a peculiar people*” (Tit 2:14). But it is sheer invention to read “many” as “His [elect] people.” Furthermore, Scripture does not say Christ died *only* for the many, *only* for the church or *only* for us. When Paul declared [The Son of God] “*loved me, and gave himself for me*” was he limiting Christ’s death to himself (Gal 2:20)? Scripture declares [Christ] “*gave himself a ransom for all*” (1 Tim 2:6 cf Jn 3:16 etc). God’s offer of salvation is to all; but its acceptance is not by all (Jn 1:12). “*He made provision for all, but he died in the place of many.*”<sup>51</sup> Paul declares the universal provision of salvation through God’s will; Matthew the acceptance determined by the will of man, the *many* that choose salvation – those who in faith accept Christ as

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<sup>48</sup> Calvinism’s idea that God elects people unconditionally in eternity past means that among infants and children there are those who are elected and those who are not elected. Non-elect infants and children are thus reprobate. This is counter to the biblical truth that all infants and children are embraced by the Lord in His own assurance that “of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14 cf Matt 18:3). Calvinism forbids those whom the Lord receives.

<sup>49</sup> John MacArthur, *The Love of God* p 120, cited in D Hunt, *Ibid.* p 465

<sup>50</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_Boettner.html)

<sup>51</sup> H S Paisley *Mark – What the Bible Teaches* John Ritchie Ltd 1984 p 523.

Saviour. This verse has nothing to do with election, election unto salvation, unconditional election or limited atonement (see below).

**Matthew 22:14:** “For many are called, but few are chosen.” This case though particular has a general application – to the many called of which only a few are chosen. There is no warrant to read Calvinism’s election when applying the parable to the gospel. The Lord’s statement was made in reference to the man who *willingly* responded to the invitation to the marriage feast but came without the proper garment. He was the recipient of grace. He came according to His *own* estimation of things and so he was not chosen to partake of the feast.

**John 1:11-13:** “But as many as received him, to them gave he power [authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” This verse does not teach nor support unconditional election (nor total depravity or rebirth preceding faith, noted earlier). We have here the *origin* and *provision* of the new birth stated as being solely of God. It involves divine descent (it is of the Spirit, Jn 3:6), divine desire and divine wisdom. New birth has no origin or provision from blood (natural descent); none from the will of the flesh (natural desire); and none from man’s will (natural design). Rebirth is solely God’s *provision*, but Scripture teaches it requires man’s *appropriation*. “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, [how?] by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (1 Pet 1:23). It is appropriated by faith which “*cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom 10:17). Rebirth and its eternal life are all God’s work, but this never precludes man’s responsibility to accept that work – it is “*as many as received Him.*”

**John 6:37:** “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (cf John 17:2). Some say that God in His *foreknowledge* sees all (the entire number) who will come to the Son in willing faith, and on *this* basis He gifts them to the Son. Others see God’s *foreordaining* choice but are correct to note man’s responsibility in that he must come. Both views rule out Calvinism and are consistent with man’s responsibility stated in the previous chapter. “*And [yet] ye will not [are not willing] come to me, that ye might have life*” (Jn 5:40). The Lord declares unsaved man has a will to choose whether or not to come (cf King Agrippa, Acts 26:28). There is another truth in John 6:37 regarding those given and the obligation of divine Sonship. The Son in reciprocal deity receives and eternally secures all gifted by the Father – “*him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” So again “*My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one*” (Jn 10:29-30).

**John 6:44:** “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” Calvinism assumes God’s “drawing” means the absence of man’s responsibility to come. It ignores the context which presents God’s sovereign will and man’s responsibility to believe. God is not an impassive Deity. He is a God of sovereign love not willing any should perish who responds with paternal love to every heart that moves towards His Son in faith – they are in



prospect His children. He is a “rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). Scripture speaks of the universal *availability* of God’s love and grace (Jn 3:16; Tit 2:11; Heb 2:9). “*The power of the Father to draw is available for those who are willing to come.*”<sup>52</sup> Here in John 6:44 we have the *indispensability* of His love and grace, God’s loving and gracious response to seeking hearts. Salvation comes when hearts seek God in response to His paternal pleas through His word and Spirit. The Father’s drawing is not inconsistent with man’s responsibility and free will; it is *complementary* to them. “*Whereunto He called you [how?] by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess 2:14).

**John 12:39-40:** “Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” These Jews were not unconditionally elected to wrath. God blinded them judicially because of *their* persistent unbelief. They represented Israel’s *national* rejection of the Messiah. “*The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they [not God] closed...and should be converted*” (Acts 28:27). Verse 42 tells of *individuals* who believed. So in verse 46 we have the universal offer of salvation in Christ and man’s responsibility to accept it. “*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever [anyone] believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*” Isaiah foretold the rejection of Christ by these Jews. God who had stretched forth His hand to an unbelieving people (Rom 10:21) withdrew His mercy allowing their rebellious hearts to be hardened (cf pharaoh, Rom 9). If they were “totally depraved” and unable to choose Christ as Calvinists allege, why would God need to blind their eyes?

**John 15:16:** “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” It seems wherever Calvinists see the word “chosen” in the Bible their theology drives them to read into it their idea of election and the absence of man’s will and responsibility. The Lord “chose” but who and for what purpose? He chose these men as His *disciples* to *serve* Him. There is nothing here about them being unconditionally chosen unto eternal life. There could not be given Judas was chosen. Further, the statement “*you have not chosen me*” does not mean the disciples were unwilling robots. The initiating call unto discipleship was the Lord’s, but it required willing hearts to follow Him. The Lord in His foreknowledge knew these hearts and called them unto His purposes - even the traitorous heart of Judas.

**John 17:6, 9, 10:** “*Christ declared that the elect and the redeemed were the same people when in the intercessory prayer He said. “Thine they were, and thou gayest them to me,” and “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine: and all things that are mine are*

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<sup>52</sup> W E Vine – *Collected Writings* Vol 1 p 258

*thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*"<sup>53</sup> Yes, the elect are the redeemed. But the claim is that unconditional election (and limited atonement) is given in that the Son prays *only* for an elect number - "*those whom thou hast given me*" and "*not for the world.*" The world it is said refers to the non-elect. Again Calvinism reads its ideas into Scripture. The Lord prays in His *priestly capacity* in regard to *believers*, and not for the unbelieving world unto which He was sent as the *Saviour* (Jn 4:42; 1 Jn 4:14 etc). Christ's *priestly* work is *only* on behalf of believers, those then and now, all who in willing faith accept salvation. His *saving* work is unto the world. The world here is not the unelected world but the *unsaved* world.

**Acts 13:48:** "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The expression "*as many as were ordained unto eternal life*" simply emphasizes and acknowledges *God's* elective work in salvation, and so the passive voice is used signifying an action by an external source. But its mention does *not* exclude man's part in salvation – the assumption made by Calvinism when it isolates such statements and imposes its ideas irrespective of the context. The portion explicitly acknowledges man's responsibility alongside divine election, consistent with Scripture. Verse 46 emphasizes that it was an exercise of *free will* that committed the disbelieving Jews unto eternal loss. "*Seeing ye put it [thrust it - the gospel] from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.*" Here the middle voice is used to represent a willing action from within them. In 14:1 man's responsibility is also emphasized - the Jews and Gentiles having to believe in response to the gospel for salvation. "*And so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed*" (cf v 2). Therefore in the case of the Gentiles (v 48) who *heard the word of God*, the expression "*ordained unto eternal life*" cannot be taken to exclude free will and deny the coexistence of God's choice and man's responsibility – the passage explicitly testifies to it.<sup>54</sup>

**Acts 16:14:** "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." The Lord opened Lydia's heart. What was this in response to? What was its purpose? This godly seeker and worshipper "*heard us*" i.e., the gospel. The Lord opened her heart in response to her ears being opened by her earnest will; He enabled her to *understand* the message.<sup>55</sup> He did so for His disciples. "*Then opened he their understanding*" (Lk 24:45). "*Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (Lk 11:9). God is a "*Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*" (Heb 11:6).

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<sup>53</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_Boettner.html)

<sup>54</sup> The word "ordained" has been taken here to mean – "ordained," "appointed," "inclined" or "to set."

The "passive" voice of the verb suggests ordination from an agent source. Some scholars see the verb in the "middle" voice, implying "an action done by oneself with a view to one's own aims and interests."

<sup>55</sup> "Heard us (*êkouen*). Imperfect active of *akouô*, was listening, really listening and she kept it up." A T Robertson *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol III.

**Romans 8:29:** “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.” Election (*ekloge*) is *not* the subject of this verse. Election is *not* predestination. Election refers to “choice” whereas predestination relates to “purpose,” here conformity to the image of God’s Son. This verse speaks of God’s foreknowledge and His predestination, the distinction between them is clearly established in NT grammar (Appendix 1).<sup>56</sup> Because of its idea God only foresees what He has foreordained Calvinism must falsely equate “foreordination” with foreknowledge<sup>57</sup>, as noted above. Further, this verse must not be taken to exclude God’s foreknowledge of the unsaved (non-elect) – His omniscient prescience. The context is about *believers* (vv 14-17; 24-39); so here His foreknowledge *focuses* on believers - those who He foreknew who would believe, as *they* upon their belief become the objects of the predestination declared in the passage.<sup>58</sup>

**Romans 8:30:** “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Verses 29 and 30 declare what God has done for believers to assure them that “*If God be for us, who can be against us.*” Those who God foreknew and predestinated (*proorizo*) to be Christ-like (v 29) are those He *also* called, those He *also* justified and those He *also* glorified. The sense is: “*Those who God foreknew (v 29) He purposed [predestined] that they would be conformed to the image of His Son. These are also those whom He called, justified and glorified.*” What is meant by His calling? In regard to those foreseen and predestined the word means “*the Divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption.*”<sup>59</sup> There is nothing about God’s calling here that conflicts with man’s responsibility. Scripture also speaks of another call. “*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Rom 10:13).

**Romans 8:33:** “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.” This verse simply declares the existence of an elect of God (cf 2 Tim 2:10; Tit 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1-2).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> (1) *Proorizo*: “This verb is to be distinguished from *proginosko*, to foreknow; the latter has special reference to the persons foreknown by God; *proorizo* has special reference to that which the subjects of His foreknowledge are predestinated.” (2) “They [believers] are given by God the Father to Christ as the Fruit of His Death, all being foreknown and foreseen by God, Jn 17:6 and Rom. 8:29.” W E Vine *Expository Dictionary* pp 203 & 22 respectively.

<sup>57</sup> “God foreknew what the end of man was to be...because He had so ordained by His decree.” John Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiii, 6.

<sup>58</sup> “Did foreknow (*proegnw*). Five times in the New Testament. In all cases it means *foreknow*. Acts. xxvi. 5; 1 Pet. i. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 17; Romans xi. 2. It does not mean *foreordain*. It signifies *prescience*, not *preelection*...This is the simple, common-sense meaning. The attempt to attach to it the sense of *preelection*, to make it include the divine decree, has grown out of dogmatic considerations, in the interest of rigid predestinarianism. It is to be remarked...That *proegnw* foreknew is used by the apostle as distinct and different from predestinated (*prowrisen*).” M Vincent *Word Studies in the New Testament* Vol III p 95.

<sup>59</sup> W E Vine *Expository Dictionary of NT Words* p 163.

<sup>60</sup> “In the NT the word “election” (*ekloge*) and like words – “chosen or elect, are used of God’s selection of men or agencies for special missions or attainments; but neither here or elsewhere in the NT is there any warrant for the CALVINISM – BITTER FOR SWEET © J W de SILVA

**Romans 9:** The Roman epistle divides into 3 sections. Chapters 1-8: *doctrinal*; Chapters 9-11; *dispensational* Chapters 12-16: *practical*.

**Chapters 1-8 – doctrinal:** The sublime yet simple theme is God’s offer of salvation through faith to all because all are condemned in sin. “*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*” (Rom 5:18). All are condemned in Adam; but all can be justified in Christ through faith in Him. These chapters amplify the “whosever will” of the Gospels. The question is not “*Am I a candidate for divine election?*” (A question Scripture never invites); but “*Am I a candidate for divine condemnation?*” Indeed yes, for “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). The latter question provokes man to consider his sin before God (5:19); the former allows him to avoid the question of sin and guilt.

**Chapters 9-11 – dispensational:** These chapters address the position of Israel the **nation**. In chapter 9 we have Israel’s *past* where Paul traces Israel’s national election. In chapter 10 we have Israel’s *present* position. In chapter 11 Israel is in *prospect*. Why does Paul deal here with the nation of Israel? It is because God is now gathering out a new people - Jew and Gentile as the Church – which is not Israel. The Jew would be concerned where the *nation* and all the promises made to it stand in relation to the Church, its composition and calling (Eph 3:10). Israel was granted special promises by God as noted in 9:4-5 and various OT passages.<sup>61</sup> God has not cast away Israel by bringing in the Church, the one new man in Christ. The nation was elected to receive the divine promises. In chapter 11 we read that even now there is a *spiritual* remnant of the nation according to the election of *grace* i.e., the Jews saved by their willing acceptance of the gospel of God’s grace.

**Election of Israel:** Calvinism ignores the context declaring - “*We are pointed illustratively to the sovereign acceptance of Isaac and rejection of Ishmael, and to the choice of Jacob and not of Esau before their birth and therefore before either had done good or bad; we are explicitly told that in the matter of salvation it is not of him that wills, or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy, and that He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens.*”<sup>62</sup> But there is no reference to *individual* salvation or wrath in the passage referred to (or in Malachi). The context relates to Israel’s *national* election unto God’s sovereign purposes. Paul is teaching that God has not cast away the nation of Israel. He establishes this in chapter 9 by tracing Israel’s divine election beginning with the election of Sarah, Rebecca and then Jacob (vv 1-14). When God chose Jacob over Esau before they

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revolting doctrine that God has predestined a definite number of mankind to eternal life, and the rest to eternal destruction.” M Vincent, *Ibid.* Vol IV p 16.

<sup>61</sup> “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut 7:6).

<sup>62</sup> Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, p. 50, cited in L Boettner, [www.the-highway.com/election\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html)

were born (v 11) and declared that He loved Jacob and hated Esau (v 13), He was not speaking of them as individuals, but as the heads of two nations and their respective descendants, Israelites and Edomites. Note the national context. “*The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness*” (Mal 1:2-3). Note also God’s confirming word to Rebecca. “*And the LORD said unto her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger*” (Gen 25:23). This national election is not based on works and rests solely upon God’s sovereign determination regarding His earthly purposes (v 11, cf v 15). Israel has not been cast away (Rom 11:1). However due to its rejection of the Messiah the nation is set aside until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled (Luke 21:24). We can outline the chapters as follows. Chapter 9 - Israel’s past *election* by God; Chapter 10 - Israel’s present temporary *rejection* by God (10:16 - 21); Chapter 11 - Israel’s prospective sure *restoration* unto God (11:26).

**God’s sovereign mercy:** Having traced the racial election of the nation Paul introduces the principle of God’s *sovereign* mercy (v 15). While his discourse invites an application of its principles to individuals, when doing so we must never lose sight of the correlative biblical truths in regard to individuals unappreciated by Calvinism, viz:

1. God’s mercy through the cross is unto **all** individuals.
2. God’s mercy through the cross requires man’s individual response in **responsibility**.
3. God’s mercy through the cross reveals His **forbearance** and **longsuffering**.

God’s mercy is brought in here by Paul because some may charge God with being unrighteous in choosing Jacob and his descendants over Esau and his descendants (v 14). This says Paul is unjustifiable because God is sovereign in mercy. “*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*” (v 15). The essential principle is that the **source** and **exercise** of mercy is solely from and by God. “*It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*” (v 16). Verse 16 we note admits man has a will - but he cannot *will* down divine mercy (for nations or individuals); nor can he appropriate God’s mercy by *striving* (for nations or individuals). The “willing” and “running” here it must be stressed, is *not* in regard to eternal salvation. It simply emphasizes the exclusive divine origin and operation of mercy - related here to the election of Israel.

Divine mercy occurs when God *withholds* judgment deserved by sinful man. God had every right to wipe out man after the Fall but in His sovereign mercy He withheld judgment. So, too, in the lives of each and every person God administers His mercy as He sees fit (Php 2:27; 1 Tim 1:2; Heb 4:16 etc). There are times when God withholds judgment despite

disobedience, for He is “*longsuffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Pet 3:9). This is true for the individual and for Israel - “*despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*” (Rom 2:4). On other occasions He withholds His mercy allowing judgment to fall i.e., Pharaoh, the Flood and Israel: “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together ...and ye would not!*” (Matt 23:37). He withheld His mercy and Jerusalem was razed (70 AD). God’s mercy is administered each day in regard to every individual and all nations. But, praise God, it is never apart from His divine forbearance and longsuffering. The essential and eloquent teaching in regard to God’s will in mercy, unappreciated by Calvinism is again CALVARY. Here Calvinism blinded by unconditional election, imposes selective mercy, whereas Scripture declares that at Calvary God’s sovereign mercy was granted to all men, for He is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,*” evidenced in that He gave His Son “*to be a ransom for all*” and “*taste death for every man*” (2 Pet 3:9; 1Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9).

**The case of Pharaoh:** Paul now cites Pharaoh as an example of God’s sovereign mercy (v 17). Firstly, it shows God’s sovereign work in mercy in regard to an individual in association with His longsuffering. Secondly, it especially relates to the subject in hand – God’s election of Israel through His dealings with Pharaoh. We are told that God *hardened* Pharaoh’s heart. This can never mean God fitted Pharaoh’s heart with evil.<sup>63</sup> As noted earlier the idea that God decrees sin is an abomination to a holy God (Hab 1:13; Heb 9:26). God who “*searcheth the hearts*” (Rom 8:27) knew of Pharaoh’s irretrievable self-will, even noted in Exodus 3:19 and 10:3, “*And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.*” “*How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.*” This evil intent and self-will was inherent in Pharaoh.<sup>64</sup> In what sense then did God harden his heart? God finally *withheld* His mercy and allowed the stubborn disobedience of Pharaoh to run its inevitable course unto judgment. This principle is brought out early in the Roman epistle. We read of the ungodly that “*God gave them up*” after they spurned His mercy in revelation (they were not foreordained unto wrath) (Rom 1:20-24, 26, 28). “*And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man*” (Gen 6:3). Many continue to resist God’s mercy to mankind through the Cross. It must be said of Pharaoh and multitudes like him, “*but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Rom 2:5). God never predestined Pharaoh unto wrath. He

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<sup>63</sup> Js 1:13-15, noted above. To have God fitting a person to eternal damnation means He has pleasure in the death of the wicked. “*Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live*” (Eze 33:11).

<sup>64</sup> In Exodus 8:15 we are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart as well. “*But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he [not God] hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*”

knew of Pharaoh's rejection of His mercy and end in wrath according to His foreknowledge. But note the main reason why Pharaoh is mentioned – Israel's national election. The withdrawal of divine mercy hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would emancipate an emerging nation. *"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth"* (Ex 9:16; Rom 9:17-18). Pharaoh's obstinate rebellion was inherent. It was used by God to demonstrate His longsuffering and determine His purpose for Israel.

**The potter and the clay:** Paul introduces this analogy to address another claim against God's sovereignty. The analogy is not meant to be pressed into all possible detail. It simply serves to show God's sovereign discretion in dispensing mercy. We are again careful to note that while the analogy invites personal application, its lesson here as *Scripture* teaches relates to God's dealings with Israel and not individuals. *"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel"* (Jer 18:6). God as the Potter has absolute sovereignty in mercy. But if God withdraws His mercy it is *His* fault I am what I am – for He hath *"mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"* (v 18). No, says Paul, He withdraws His mercy in judgment only after much longsuffering and enduring the impenitent heart. It is man's stubborn will in rejecting divine mercy that fits him unto wrath not God, as seen by man rejecting God's mercy provided in His offer of salvation through the gospel (Rom 2:5). God however will use vessels that have fitted *themselves* unto dishonor to serve His purposes as in the case of Pharaoh. The Spirit of God in keeping with these truths is careful not to give any credence to the view that God fits vessels unto dishonor/wrath (v 22). It is *"the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction"*; not *"the vessels of wrath "He (God)" fitted to destruction."*<sup>65</sup> *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isa 55:7). Yet, without coincidence when it comes to the *"vessels of mercy"* it is stated *God* has *"afore prepared them unto glory"* (v 23). This does not refer to election.<sup>66</sup> The preparation refers to God's *provision* for their justification, salvation and sanctification in Christ through His Person and work (Romans 1-8), unto both Jews and Gentiles (vv 25-29).

God's **will** is matched by His universal **provision** in mercy, as it must be in a God whose moral attributes are in perfect balance and harmony. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet 3:9). *"For this*

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<sup>65</sup> "Fitted" is *descriptive* (Vincent) which assumes (but gives no clue) of an agent to do the fitting. Who/what is this agent? God or man's sinful will? Surely the latter given the context, and the biblical truth of man's will. 1 Thess 2:15-16, *"Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved."*

<sup>66</sup> The grammar is against it, the word is *proetoimasen*, "prepared before" (to make ready); which is never *proorizo*, "foreordained." "Fitted" (*katarizo*) (v 22) is not "foreordained" (*proorizo*) (Vincent).

*is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved*” (1 Tim 2:3-4). So He provided His Son “*to be a ransom for all*” and “*taste death for every man*” (1Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9). When Paul writes “*according to His mercy He saved us*” he is not referring to God’s mercy *selectively* given through election. He refers to God’s mercy *universally* given through the gift of His Son at Calvary to be appropriated by faith (Tit 3:5). In this **all** men are recipients of God’s mercy. Some accept it unto salvation; others despite God’s mercy in longsuffering and forbearance reject it to their damnation. God extends mercy to faith and in judgment withdraws it to impenitence; the selection and timing are His sole prerogatives. God is not double- minded in His mercy desiring all to be saved yet predestining some to eternal damnation.

**Ephesians 1:3-6:** “3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” The Ephesians are reminded that God has (1) blessed them with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places *in Christ*; (2) chosen them before the foundation of the world *in Christ*; (3) predestined them to be adopted children *in Christ*. Paul is addressing believers who are God’s elect. In verse 4 the collective pronoun “*us*” refers to each member of the Church, a grand subject of this Epistle. The Church and its members were chosen *in Christ* and they are one – as the Body of Christ. The Church came into being because of Christ. It exists in Him and was seen *prospectively* chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. There is nothing in this passage to define “chosen” as denying man’s will and moral responsibility in salvation. The positional truths “in Christ” create a practical obligation to be holy and without blame before God in love. In verse 5 believers are *predestined to sonship in standing*. Note again choosing (electing) is not predestinating. As children and sons of God believers enter into a place of inheritance through Christ, sealed by the Spirit of Promise which is its earnest (pledge). This standing was predestined (purposed) by God to be the position of every believer upon faith in Christ.

**1 Thessalonians 1:4:** “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Divine election is not in question. There is nothing here to reject man’s responsibility in salvation.

**2 Thessalonians 2:10-12:** “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” God sends a strong delusion that they should believe a lie. “*They*” refers to those who have resisted God through stubborn self-will, having pleasure in unrighteousness. The sending of the delusion is God withdrawing His mercy in judgment; judgment *after* His longsuffering and *after they* resisted the truth. God gave them up (cf Gen 6:3; Jn 12:39-40; Rom 1:24, 26, 28 etc). Note the clear witness to man’s responsibility and free will. This judgment was “*because they received not [rejected through choice] the love*



of the truth, that they might be saved” (v 10). Note too that those who rejected the truth (revealed to them in divine mercy) *could* have been saved evident in the expression that “*they might be saved.*” Even though they were “dead in trespasses and sins,” Scripture declares the possibility of their salvation prior to God’s judgment - if only they had believed, negating all notions of them being predestined or fitted unto eternal damnation.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13:** “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” These Thessalonians chose to believe and were set apart and convicted by the Spirit by which they “*turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*” (1 Thess 1:9). They were also chosen by God. Regardless of how we interpret the expression “*from the beginning,*” it is evident their salvation required their moral choice for it was “*through the Spirit and belief of the truth.*”<sup>67</sup> We have again divine choice alongside man’s responsibility to accept or reject the *word of God*, confirmed by the following verse. “*Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” And, the gospel as preached in the NT commands sinners to choose Christ.

**2 Timothy 1:9:** “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” The fact of God’s calling is stated here. It cannot be extrapolated to deny man’s responsibility to respond to His call in faith unto salvation. We know it is not of works (Eph 2:8 etc).

**1 Peter 1:2:** “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” Peter speaks of the *believers* as elect. Scripture never speaks of the unsaved as the elect of God. It is a truth reserved for the redeemed for their edification and practical sanctification. Peter refers to *Jewish* believers as *individuals*, though the truth is for all believers (Eph 1:4). He presents three facts about election. Its *origin* – it is according to the foreknowledge of God; Its *operation* – it is through the sanctification of the Spirit; Its *object* – unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. God’s foreknowledge and His foreordination (predestination or determinate counsel) are distinctive truths (Appendix 1). It is significant that Peter does not identify believers as being “*Elect according to the foreordination or the determinate counsel of God the Father.*” This verse teaches that God in eternity past knew those who would be His chosen people and, that He purposed they should be sanctified by way of “*the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*”

**1 Peter 2:8-9:** “And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an

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<sup>67</sup>“From the beginning” *ap archv* may mean from the beginning of time; the time of their conversion; the beginning of the Church period: even firstfruits (i.e., God hath as firstfruits chosen you to salvation; see Hogg & Vine *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* Pickering & Inglis pp 270-271). Others say it is unlikely to mean eternity past given the definite article and Paul elsewhere refers to this as *pro cronwn aiwniwn* (2 Tim 1. 9; Tit 1. 2). In all this however God’s choosing remains.

holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Scripture teaches unequivocally that God cannot ordain or appoint anyone to disobedience (v 8). It is against His holy nature as James confirms (Js 4). The appointment refers to judgment *because* they were willingly disobedient. Their stumbling at the word was due to their disobedience. There is no unconditional reprobation here. Verse 9 reminds believers of the blessed truth of their election, but it has nothing to say about election excluding man’s responsibility.

**2 Peter 1:10:** “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure [firm]: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” Peter is saying, “You have been called and elected by God. Let this truth be firmed in your hearts and live up to it, otherwise you will “fall” i.e., become stumbled into sin.” There is nothing here that excludes man’s responsibility.

## Limited atonement

Let us note first that “atonement” is strictly an OT provision that related to a temporary “covering” for sin, such as took place yearly on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). The NT speaks of something far better – the “putting away” of sin. Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26 cf Jn 1:29), and so as believers we can speak of our sins being put away, not simply covered. With this in mind let us then look at Calvinism’s “limited atonement.” Here too Calvinism invokes its preferred method of biblical interpretation – logic. “*Calvinists hold that in the intention and secret plan of God Christ died for the elect only.*”<sup>68</sup> “*These two doctrines [unconditional election and limited atonement] must stand or fall together. We cannot logically accept one and reject the other.*”<sup>69</sup> “*Limited atonement; in the typical reformed view, means that the atonement, in its actual work, the actual efficacy of the atonement, was only for the elect.*”<sup>70</sup> Scripture teaches us however that God speaks of **unlimited** atonement repeatedly and explicitly through His offer of salvation to *all* men – to *whosoever* will. Christ’s death “put away sin” and so it is efficacious (effective) in meeting the sins of *all* men for *all* men have sinned. The following portions are a few among many that deny limited atonement:

**Jn 1:29:** “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” **Jn 3:16:** “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.” **Jn 4:42:** “Christ, the Saviour of the world.” **Jn 7:37:** “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” **Acts 10:43:** “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” **Rom 5:6:** “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” **1 Tim 1:15:** “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” All men are ungodly and sinners (admitted by Calvinists under their notion of man’s

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<sup>68</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_Boettner.html) (Again Calvinists are privy to God’s secrets!).

<sup>69</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_Boettner.html)

<sup>70</sup> John MacArthur – “*Bible Questions and Answers.*” <http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/70-19-6.htm>.

Total Depravity). **Rom 3:9:** “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” **Rom 3:23:** “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; **Rom 5:12:** “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 5:18:** “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” **Gal 3:22:** “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” **1 Tim 2:4:** “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” **1 Tim 2:6:** “[Christ] Who gave himself a ransom for all” **1 Tim 4:10:** “The living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” Christ died for all and His death avails for all but especially for those who believe, because they (like the Israelites of old) have applied the blood in faith, and to them He is effectually their Saviour. So Peter can say to all who have applied the blood, “Who his own self [Christ] bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24). **Heb 2:9:** “But we see Jesus ... that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man,” again the provision of the cross is available to all if all would come. **2 Pet 3:9:** “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” **1 Jn 4:14:** “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

Beware! Calvinism admits the “all-sufficiency” of Christ’s redeeming work; but it denies the “unlimited efficiency (efficacy or effectiveness)” of it for all men. “While the value of the atonement was sufficient to save all mankind, it was efficient to save only the elect.”<sup>71</sup> “There is atonement, and therefore removal of guilt and forgiveness of sins and righteousness and all the benefits of salvation and eternal life, for the elect only in the cross. For all the rest...there is no benefit, in that cross. Christ did not die for them.”<sup>72</sup> There are a number of reasons advanced by Calvinism to support such claims. (1) Unlimited atonement results in double jeopardy “because if your sins are paid for already by Jesus and you go to hell, then that’s double jeopardy.”<sup>73</sup> But Scripture does not teach the sins of the world were borne by Christ on the cross.<sup>74</sup> (2) Unlimited atonement is folly on God’s part because “He would not have sent Christ intending to save those who he positively foreknew would be lost” ... “[to] say that Christ died for all men; for what is that but to

<sup>71</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_Boettner.html)

<sup>72</sup> H Hanks et al *The Five Points of Calvinism* <http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter3.html>

<sup>73</sup> John MacArthur – “Bible Questions and Answers.” <http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/70-19-6.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Christ’s death “put away sin” (not sins, Heb 9:26). It is “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin (not sins) of the world” (Jn 1:29). Sin is a defeated foe its penalty paid on the cross. God’s holiness has been vindicated by Christ’s death. Sin need no longer separate God and man. Thus “there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:18). For the believer “there no more conscience of sins (not sin, Heb 10:2); there is no more remembrance of sins by God (not sin, Heb 10:17). Peter speaks of believers when he says “Who his own self [Christ] bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24). It is unscriptural to tell the unsaved that Christ bore their sins on the cross. In 1 John 2:2 Christ is the propitiation of the sins of believers and of the sins of the world – propitiation meaning Christ’s death is sufficient and efficient to meet the sins of every person. Propitiation is not substitution.

*attribute folly to Him.*”<sup>75</sup> Was Christ foolish when He offered Himself to Israel as their King knowing they would reject Him (Matt 23:37 cf Matt 21:32)? His offer revealed His love and mercy to His own and reprovved their rebellion showing why Israel would be set aside and the Church brought in. Was the Lord foolish offering eternal life to those who He foreknew would reject it (Jn 5:37-40)? Was the Spirit of God foolish (even fraudulent) in leading the apostles to preach salvation to those who He foreknew would reject it (Acts 7:54-59; 14; 17:11; 32-34; 18:5-6; 28:23-28, cf Heb 4:6)? “*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?*” (Rom 3:3). God was not foolish in offering salvation to all though foreknowing many would reject it. Calvary expresses His unlimited love, grace and mercy and, that as far as **He** was concerned, **He** is ever faithful “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Pet 3:9). And, for *this* reason a sinner in hell can only blame himself for being there. Again Calvinism sells God short in His divine attributes and redemptive glory.

**Mandatory manipulations:** Calvinism cannot find scripture stating that Christ’s atoning death is limited to the elect. So it **must** do two things. First it must manipulate limited atonement into selected verses i.e., (1) Mark 14:24. “*And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.*” Calvinism assumes “many” to be a number *God* has limited. The catalog of verses above teaches explicitly of God’s unlimited offer of salvation. Any limitation in the word “many” is due to man’s failure in acceptance and not God’s limitation in His provision. The “many” refers to “all” and “any” who in faith accept Christ as their Saviour (cf Matt 20:28 “ransom for many” above). In Luke 22:20 it is “*shed for you.*” Does this mean Christ’s shed blood was limited to those in the upper room? (2) John 10:14-15: “*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine...and I lay down my life for the sheep.*” Calvinism claims the sheep for whom Christ died “*are those whom the Father gave to Christ, that is, the elect.*”<sup>76</sup> But the Lord does not say “I lay down my life *only* for the sheep.” He “*tasted death for every man*” (Heb 2:9). (3) John 10:26: “*But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.*” But this does not mean they could not become one of His sheep as assumed by Calvinism. The Lord later tells them how to become one of His sheep. “*Though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him*” (v 38). (4) “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust...to bring us to God*” (1 Pet 3:18). All men are born in sin and unjust. So Christ died for all men. His desire was to lead “us” to God – but it does not say “*only*” us. We noted earlier the same spurious exegesis by Calvinism (Matt 20:28; Jn 17:9; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25; Tit 2:14).

Second, Calvinism must alter the meaning of key words in biblical passages that speak *explicitly* of unlimited atonement, i.e., “*Whosoever*” in John 3:16 is limited to the elect, ignoring the Lord’s analogy where salvation was provided for *every* Israelite in the

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<sup>75</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_Boettner.html)

<sup>76</sup> H Hanko et al. *The Five Points of Calvinism*, <http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter3.html>

brazen serpent. “The ‘world’ in John 3:16, in the final analysis must refer to the world of God’s people (the elect). It cannot mean the whole human race.”<sup>77</sup> 1 John 2:2, “the ‘whole world’ refers to the children of God [the elect] scattered throughout the whole world.”<sup>78</sup> When “world” is altered to the “elect world” in any one passage, Calvinists must alter the meaning of every text and word in Scripture which contradicts this interpretation. “All such passages which speak of the “world” and of “all men” must needs be interpreted in harmony with the current teaching of Scripture that Christ atoned for the elect only.”<sup>79</sup> Calvinism’s reasoning is circular, interpreting the Bible upon what is to be proved – limited atonement. So we get the preposterous claim that the word “all” in 1 Timothy 2:4-6 means “all sorts of persons” or “all classes of men”<sup>80</sup> i.e., [God] “Who will have [all classes of men] to be saved.” “[Christ] Who gave himself a ransom for [all classes of men]”; These are brazen manipulations especially in the light of verse 5, “there is one God, and one mediator between God and **men** [not all classes of men], the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>81</sup> Where in Scripture does God’s saving mediation deal with “classes of men”? Job cried for a Daysman – a Mediator between *himself* and God (Job 9:33). The clear truth of Hebrews 2:9 is also perverted. “But we see Jesus...that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Calvinism falsely claims “*pas*” (all) refers to all the elect, the sons brought unto glory and sanctified (vv 10-11). Its self-deception is evident. Such expedient manipulations give us a fuzzy and fallible word of God – twisted to mean whatever we wish it to mean.

**God’s two wills in salvation?** When biblical evidence that “the world” means the human race and that “all” means everyone becomes overwhelming, Calvinism invents another idea - God has **two** wills. Yes, God does want all men to be saved. This it says is the “*will of His desire.*” However, there is also the “*will of God’s decree.*”<sup>82</sup> God offers salvation to all but He decreed to save only some unconditionally and damn all others. Earlier we asked why. Here is a restatement of the idea of His “perfect righteousness.” “*The condemnation of the non-elect is designed primarily to furnish an eternal exhibition, before men and angels, of God’s hatred for sin.*”<sup>83</sup> Again we have bitter for sweet and Calvinism stumbling at the Cross of CALVARY where God’s hatred of sin was revealed in all its depth and sin was “put away.” God’s holiness was vindicated so **no person need be lost to sin.** All can be saved if they will. This expedient maneuver by Calvinism gives us a fallible, unbalanced and a double-minded God, whose actions fall short of His desire, One who can deny

<sup>77</sup> A W Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, Baker Books 1992

<sup>78</sup> John Piper, *Piper and Staff, TULIP 16*, cited in D Hunt, *Ibid* p 320

<sup>79</sup> H Hanko et al. *The Five Points of Calvinism*, <http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter3.html>

<sup>80</sup> J Piper; James R White *The Potter’s Freedom*, both cited in D Hunt, *Ibid.* pp 343, 253 respectively.

<sup>81</sup> Calvinists claim that in John 12:32 “all men” refers to “all the elect.” But the context is ignored – the passage refers to a future time when literally all men will be drawn to Christ. At a future time Satan too will be cast out. The Cross upon which He was “lifted up” was the judicial basis of these two future events.

<sup>82</sup> *John MacArthur Study Bible* p 1862; cited in D Hunt, *Ibid.* p 442

<sup>83</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/election3\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election3_Boettner.html)

Himself and, One who fails in sovereignty because His decree does not equal His desire. Calvinism again destroys what it seeks to defend - God's sovereignty.

## Irresistible grace

Calvinism needs a mechanism to remove the rebellion of God's totally depraved elect. This mechanism is the doctrine of "irresistible grace." *"If our doctrine of total depravity is true, there can be no salvation without the reality of irresistible grace. If we are dead in our sins, totally unable to submit to God, then we will never believe in Christ unless God overcomes our rebellion."*<sup>84</sup> *"God is sovereign and can overcome all resistance when He wills...irresistible grace refers to the sovereign work of God to overcome the rebellion of our hearts and brings us to faith in Christ so that we can be saved."*<sup>85</sup> Salvation is *"wholly ascribed to God, who as he has chosen his own from eternity in Christ, so he confers upon them faith and repentance."*<sup>86</sup> God it seems removes all resistance, but only for the elect sinners, giving them rebirth and the will to repent. This is unbiblical. First, repentance imposed is not true repentance. Calvinists may recoil and protest, but if something is made irresistible then it cannot be refused – it is effectively compelled, as even noted by some Calvinists. *"The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit...thereby guaranteeing their salvation."*<sup>87</sup> Calvinists insist justification is by faith. *"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God"* (Rom 5:1). Do not be deceived! This "saving" faith comes by imposed grace upon an elect few. *"It is God that justifieth"* (Rom 8:33). God does the justifying as He alone can, but upon an exercise of man's faith. Second, divine grace is not just God giving undeserving man what he does not deserve. It is God giving *every* undeserving man what he does not deserve – His saving grace without limitation. We have its universal **expression** - *"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men"* (Tit 2:11). We have its universal **provision** - *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"* (Heb 2:9). Note now the perfect harmony in God's moral attributes unappreciated by Calvinism. God's saving grace is unto *all* men because it cannot be less than His saving love, which is unto *all* men. We have its universal **expression** - *"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared"* (Tit 3:4). Then we get its universal **provision** - *"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"* (Jn 3:16). And so we have the harmonious universal **expression** and **provision** of divine mercy. *"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee"* (Ps 86:5). Third, the biblical truth that God's grace is unto *all* men, means that every sinner in hell is a testimony to the truth that God's

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<sup>84</sup> John Piper, <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/irresistible.html>

<sup>85</sup> John Piper Piper and Staff "TULIP," 9. cited in D Hunt, Ibid. p 362

<sup>86</sup> The Canons of Dort Article 10.

<sup>87</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/gospel\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/gospel_Boettner.html)

grace is “resistible.” Scripture is replete with examples where God’s gospel of grace is declared by Christ and His apostles yet resisted unto eternal loss – Judas being a case in point (see too Acts 7:54-59; 14; 17:11; 32-34; 18:5-6; 28:23-28, cf Heb 4:6). Fourth, again we must allow CALVARY to be our interpreter regarding God’s *saving* grace, for there “*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*” (Tit 2:11).

## Is saving faith an irresistible gift?

There are a number of texts conscripted by Calvinists to support their idea of irresistible saving grace and that it is a gift from God.

**Ephesians 2:8:** “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” “*Numerous texts assert that such [saving] faith is God’s own gracious gift (see especially Ephesians 2:8-9).*”<sup>88</sup> The context establishes that God’s gift here is *not* faith, but **salvation** - which is through faith by grace. The grammatical construction also demands salvation as the gift and not faith.<sup>89</sup> Further, if faith here is a gift then it must be *willingly* received – not imposed. If it was imposed – made irresistible, then it ceases to be a gift.

**John 6:37:** “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (cf John 17:2). The expression “*shall come to me*” simply states the fact that those given by the Father are those who shall come to His Son. The verse says nothing about *how* they will come – by free will or even irresistible grace. But we know from Scripture their coming is through willing faith in Christ in response to the gospel. There is a *giving* to the Son (divine election) and a *coming* to the Son (man’s individual responsibility), the latter amplified and attested by the Lord’s assurance “*and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” To read irresistible grace into this verse is erroneous.

**John 6:44:** “*In John 6:44 Jesus says, ‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.’ This drawing is the sovereign work of grace without which no one can be saved from their rebellion against God.*”<sup>90</sup> We noted earlier this verse teaches that God’s love and grace are *indispensable* to the seeking heart. It says nothing about them being *irresistible* gifts to an elect. Indispensability is not irresistibility. God moves towards the heart that seeks Him in response to His pleas through His word and the conviction of His Spirit. This verse does not deny that God’s love and grace are universally *available*; nor does it deny that man is *responsible* to accept it.

**John 6:65:** “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” It is claimed “*coming to Jesus is called a gift. It is not just an*

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<sup>88</sup> C S Storms cited in D Hunt, *Ibid.* p 452

<sup>89</sup> Confirmed by NT Greek authorities such as A T Robertson, W E Vine, Alford, Scofield, W Nicoll, K Wuest, M Vincent.

<sup>90</sup> John Piper, *Irresistible Grace*, <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/irresistible.html>

*opportunity. Coming to Jesus is "given" to some and not to others.*"<sup>91</sup> First, there is nothing in this verse or the context that prevents the gift of coming to refer solely to the opportunity to come. Second, where in this passage is there even a hint that the gift is "irresistible" or "limited" to some people? Third, the verse and Scripture allows the gift to be the divine response to *any* seeking heart – God is a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). We noted this earlier in the case of Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened" and above in John 6:44 – the indispensable power of the Spirit given in response to the seeking heart.

**Romans 5:15:** "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of [the] one [the] many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by [the] one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto [the] many." The free gift here is Jesus Christ in His coming to die and salvation through His death (Jn 3:16 etc). It is *not* the gift of grace – the giving of grace to an elect, but the gift of Christ and salvation coming *by* (*through*) grace. The expression "the many be dead" refers to all men and is used grammatically to contrast with "the one" man. The gift of Christ and salvation abounding to "the many" however refers to the many who accept Christ. It is in contrast to "the many" that do not accept Him and die in Adam. So too Romans 5:19: "For as by [the] one man's disobedience [the] many [i.e., all men] were made sinners, so by the obedience of [the] one shall [the] many [i.e., all who believe] be made righteous" (otherwise we have universal salvation). "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom 5:18).

**1 Corinthians 1:23-24:** "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." "Among those who hear there are some who are "called" in such a way that they no longer regard the cross as foolishness but as the wisdom and power of God. What else can this call be but the irresistible call of God out of darkness into the light of God"?<sup>92</sup> Through Calvinist eyes this verse cannot be anything else! But "Those who He called" in verse 24 – the "called," simply refers to those who heard the call of God when they *willingly* opened their hearts to the gospel in contrast with those in verse 23 who rejected it and so they did not hear the call of God. They are therefore not among the "called." Lydia was among the "called."

## Is faith a work?

The Bible speaks of a believer's "work of faith" (1 Thess 1:3), but Calvinists want us to accept that faith is a "work." If faith is a work then they can use Ephesians 2:8 to deny man's willing faith in salvation – i.e., salvation is not of works (willing faith). However Ephesians 2:8 explicitly distinguishes *between* faith and works. Further, the Bible never separates grace and faith for salvation. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace" (Rom 4:16). If faith is a work we have the monumental contradiction in this verse and throughout

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<sup>91</sup> John Piper, Irresistible Grace, <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/irresistible.html>

<sup>92</sup> John Piper, Irresistible Grace, <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/irresistible.html>



Scripture i.e., “It is of works, that it might be by grace.” Grace demands faith is *not* a work, not “doing” but willingly “receiving.” Faith willingly receives the gift of salvation. “*The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom 6:23).

## The perseverance of the saints

The believer’s assurance of eternal life is a vital matter. Where do we to find it? Calvinism asserts assurance lies in our perseverance – our faithfulness to God. “*True believers [saints] for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith.*”<sup>93</sup> If we are persevering we can be assured we are one of God’s elect and as one of His elect we can never be lost. So we get the claim “*It is idle to seek assurance of election outside of holiness of life.*”<sup>94</sup> Holiness of life is perseverance, which means “*that one continues in the state of holiness and righteousness to which he has been elevated through the work of the Holy Spirit, and he continues in this state through all of his way through the valley of the shadow of death until he is brought finally to glory.*”<sup>95</sup> But there is more to the Calvinist claim. It also involves divine preservation. God guarantees the elect will persevere. “*This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints...God Himself guarantees it.*”<sup>96</sup> The entire claim then is this - If I am persevering in faith, then it is a sign that God is in me and He has given me the power to persevere. I must therefore be one of His elect and eternally secure.

Note that Calvinism speaks of the perseverance of the “saints” – those who are saved and in Christ. “*A saint is one chosen by the living God from all eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord...who is “...regenerated, called, converted....*”<sup>97</sup> Once again Calvinism falls into dreadful error giving us bitter for sweet. As saints of God our assurance of salvation is *never* based on our *striving* for Christ but upon our *standing* in Christ. Satan seeks to disturb the saints of God by getting them to look at themselves for assurance rather unto Christ and His redeeming work. Upon our faith in Christ we were *reborn, saved and sealed* by the Spirit unto eternal life and cannot be lost. Our assurance of salvation rests upon Christ’s purchase never on our perseverance. We are not our own; we have been ransomed, bought with a price – that precious shed blood. Again Calvinism fails to appreciate CALVARY (1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:19). Now mark well how error breeds error. First, it leads to the terrible Calvinist idea that “*We must also own up to the fact that our final salvation is made contingent upon the subsequent obedience which comes from faith*”<sup>98</sup>. Second, claims such as “*Election, sovereign election, is an immovable rock upon which we stand*”<sup>99</sup> make “election” the basis of eternal security. Focus is shifted away from

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<sup>93</sup> Confessions of the Reformed churches - the *Canons of Dordt*

<sup>94</sup> Warfield, cited in L Boettner, “*Personal Assurance...*,” <http://www.mbrem.com/shorttakes/boe-assu.htm>

<sup>95</sup> *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Herman Hanko et al, <http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter5.html>

<sup>96</sup> John MacArthur *Perseverance of the Saints - TMSJ* 4/1 (Spring 1993) pp. 5-24

<sup>97</sup> *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Herman Hanko et al, <http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter5.html>

<sup>98</sup> John Piper & Staff, TULIP “What we Believe..” cited in D Hunt, *Ibid.* p 482

<sup>99</sup> H Hanko et al *The Five Points of Calvinism* *Ibid.*

the biblical ground of assurance – Christ’s finished work. Our salvation *is* assured because of the efficacy of **Christ’s** redeeming work on the cross. How do we know? It is declared in God’s word! Yes, the Bible exhorts us as saints to persevere; not in order to be assured that we are saved, but because we **are assuredly saved** and so we should be living lives unto Christ! This truth also lies undiscovered by Calvinism. There are of course “false professors” who claim to be saints. They are exhorted to examine their lives to see if it is marked by the “*the things that accompany salvation*” (Heb 6:9). Here it is a question of being a saint or *not* being a saint – not one of a saint being assured of salvation. Again beware! Calvinism claims salvation is secure for the saint of God. “*And the Christian shall persevere... The Scripture does not state that this one [who perseveres] might finally obtain eternal life, or that he shall conditionally receive it; but he has it already. It is his now. And that one shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life. The promise is sure.*”<sup>100</sup> Sounds true? Note carefully, assurance under Calvinism is not centered upon what Christ has done on the Cross, but upon what the believer does in life through God-given perseverance unto preservation, “*whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion, that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life.*”<sup>101</sup> How tragic – and we have not touched on the subjective and insoluble matter of the amount of perseverance needed to “*arrive at the certain persuasion*” of assurance – space constrains! Let us not look to self and perseverance for assurance, but look unto Christ. “Therefore being [having been] justified by faith [at the moment of our exercise of faith in Christ], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:1-2). Calvinism offers no hope, for as we have seen it knows nothing of the redemptive glory of God in Christ.

## **Bible texts Calvinists use to support their “perseverance of the saints”**

**Matthew 24:13:** “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” This verse speaks of the faithful during the Tribulation and has no reference to the Church. Those who live through (endure) the persecution of the Antichrist will be saved from further trials and death by Christ’s coming to earth.

**John 8:31-32:** “If ye continue in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The first part of the verse deals with fidelity in *discipleship*; the second with fidelity in the *truth* which will equip and encourage the disciples to serve the Lord free of the religious trappings and bondage under the rituals of Judaism.

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<sup>100</sup> H Hanko et al *The Five Points of Calvinism* Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Confessions of the Reformed churches, the *Canons of Dordt* in H Hanko et al, Ibid.

**Philippians 1:6:** “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>102</sup> The “good work” here is not “for you” but “in you.” Further, the good work is not in regard to salvation. It refers to the Philippians’ good work in giving to the gospel ministry which Paul expects will continue until the Rapture (the Day of Christ which is always seen as imminent in the NT). This is confirmed by the context given by the preceding verses. “*Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.*”

**Hebrews 3:6:** “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” This verse has nothing to do with the saints being asked to assure themselves about their salvation. The perseverance here is in regard to whether a person is a mere *professor* of Christ *or* a saint of God, as evident from the context. The Jews who professed faith in Christ were urged to examine their perseverance, that is, were they of a truth *saved* and of His house? If they were falling back into Judaism i.e., not persevering in Christ, then it would indicate that their profession of Christ was untrue and they were not in fact saved and of His house at all.

**Hebrews 3:12-19:** The context continues. The Jews who professed Christ are given another warning to examine their perseverance to determine if they were saints or mere fellow-travelers with Christianity (v 14) – as some of old were mere fellow-travelers with the Israelites when they left Egypt (v 16). This passage is not about saints assessing their perseverance to be assured of eternal security – they have it in their purchase by Christ.

**Hebrews 6:4-6:** “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.” “Enlightenment” and “tasting” is not salvation. “Partaking” of the Spirit is not His indwelling or sealing. This portion has mere professors in view, not the saved. The writer speaks to those Jews who merely professed to be Christians, who had received enlightenment through the oracles of God and the apostles’ preaching. They had thus tasted God’s goodness in mercy and so partook of the work of His Spirit. They knew of the powers of the world to come through the promised Messiah. Their falling back into Judaism proved they were not saved. Its effect was to crucify Christ again, for it was Judaism that crucified Him. There is nothing here about the believer losing salvation.

**2 Corinthians 13:5:** “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” Paul is speaking to genuine believers – those “called saints” (1:2). They doubted his apostleship seeking “proof of Christ speaking” through him (v 3). He exhorts them to examine themselves to see if Christ spoke in them. He expects them to find that He did unless of course they were

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<sup>102</sup> John MacArthur *Perseverance of the Saints - TMSJ 4/1 (Spring 1993) pp. 5-24.*  
CALVINISM – BITTER FOR SWEET © J W de SILVA

reprobates – (which they were not). They would then cease to doubt Paul’s authenticity as an apostle also in the faith. This has nothing to do with the assurance of their salvation.

**2 Peter 1:10:** “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure [firm]: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” Peter writes to genuine believers so there is no questioning of their eternal security. He says in effect, “You have been called and elected by God. Live in the light of this otherwise you will “fall” i.e., become stumbled into sin.”

## **Blessed biblical assurance**

Assurance of salvation for the believer rests solely upon God’s *sovereign word*. Exodus 12 is a wondrous illustration of it. Many applied the blood of the spotless lamb and were saved from divine wrath. Their assurance rested exclusively on God’s word that “*When I see the blood I will pass over you*” (Ex 12:13). It was *God’s* estimate of the blood not theirs that mattered. All were invited to shelter under the blood of the lamb, every man and his neighbor (Ex 12:4); but not all chose to accept God’s offer of salvation. This divine ground of salvation and assurance and man’s responsibility in regard to it has never changed. As those of old we are required in obedient faith to take the hyssop and apply the shed blood of the Lamb to the door-posts and lintels of our hearts. By doing this we take God at *His word* that we are eternally redeemed and secure in the double-clasp of John 10. “*I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*” and “*none shall pluck them out of my Father’s hand*” (10:28-29); that we are “*accepted in the beloved*” (Eph 1:6) and members of the Church against which the “*gates of hell shall not prevail*” (Matt 16:18); that we are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph 4:30); that our “*sins and iniquities*” God “*will remember no more*” (Heb 10:17). All who by faith accept Christ’s redeeming work confess “*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*” (1 Cor 5:7). We are “*made the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Cor 5:21). “*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*” (Gal 3:6; Gen 15:6). Calvinism passes by these sovereign pledges of assurance, depreciating God’s sovereignty in *redemption* by preferring assurance in an irrelevant and irreverent theory called the “*perseverance of the saints.*”

## **Concluding comments**

Calvinism offers bitter for sweet and puts darkness for light (Isa 5:20). First, it libels the character of God. It isolates, manipulates and depreciates God’s moral attributes. According to Calvinism God has *two* wills in regard to salvation; *two* types of love, a greater love to the elect and a lesser love to the reprobate even though both are equally dead in trespasses and sins. His grace is selective, imposed upon an elect few and is apart from His love. He is double-minded because His desires are denied by His decrees. He is a lesser sovereign because His purposes can be thwarted by man’s free will. He is a God of diminished holiness, who despite His hatred of sin ordained sin and according to some He created it.

Second, by libeling God Calvinism libels His gospel of unlimited saving love and grace. It fails to see that at CALVARY God provided mercy and grace for all, for all men are under the curse of sin; that all may come to salvation through faith in Christ. So it informs men that God has preordained some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation; that He denies multitudes moral choice, even when it involves the eternal torment of their soul. The Calvinist idea that God in His eternal redemptive counsels “passed some men by” is not of God. It is a doctrine that requires us to praise God not because His love, redemption, grace and mercy are unlimited and universally available, but because they are limited and selective. The *biblical* motive for praise by the elect is God’s grace in sending His Beloved Son to die at Calvary and His unlimited mercy in that whosoever will may come. Under Calvinism the elect praise God because they are chosen in *preference* to the *preordained* reprobate. “*The decree of reprobation enables the elect to appreciate more deeply the riches of divine love which raised them from sin and brought them into eternal life while others no more guilty or unworthy than they were left to eternal destruction...It furnishes a most powerful motive for thankfulness that they have received such high blessings.*”<sup>103</sup> Such self-serving elitism feeds the cause of the atheist and skeptic especially when they are informed they may be among the eternally damned but cannot do anything about it and, worse, that God ordained their sin. How many of them have been driven to hell because of it only eternity will tell! Calvinism’s election demands that God has predetermined everything in regard to the elect’s salvation and therefore predetermined everything in regard to the non-elect’s damnation. Fallen man is a puppet incapable of moral responsibility toward God. His thoughts, words and deeds are all predetermined by God. The unsaved who hear the gospel are led into spiritual indifference and perilous procrastination. If they are one of the elect then no matter what happens they will be saved in the end. Because of its rigid and unbiblical determinism Calvinism *must* reverse biblical order placing rebirth before faith. It *must* make God’s grace irresistible; faith *must* be imposed and guaranteed by God – man has no choice, the faith God foresees in the elect is “*the faith He Himself creates.*”<sup>104</sup> Calvinism renders a free-willed confession of faith in Christ meaningless. Assurance of salvation rests upon the shifting sands of “perseverance” and not on the solid rock of God’s promise. Third, Calvinism is a deceptive interpretation of the Bible. By its own admissions it seeks to apply logic where Scripture is silent and appeals to faith. It is an intellectually devised creed which seeks biblical validation but has none. It seeks validity from within itself, deducing its ideas one from the other. “*The five points of Calvinism are closely related. One point presupposes the others.*”<sup>105</sup> This means its abject failure biblically, for as one point presupposes another, one point opposed by Scripture deposes all others, as we have noted. Simple and sublime truths declared by the Spirit of God are convoluted and corrupted by rationalism. We have noted some of the

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<sup>103</sup> L Boettner, [http://www.the-highway.com/election3\\_Boettner.html](http://www.the-highway.com/election3_Boettner.html)

<sup>104</sup> John MacArthur, *Saved*, p 59 cited in D Hunt, *Ibid.* p 280

<sup>105</sup> H Hanko et al. *The Five Points of Calvinism*, <http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter5.html>

misrepresentations where words are flagrantly altered in meaning and the biblical context is ignored or perverted in order to fit a determinist theology into Scripture.

## **Practical considerations**

Calvinism and Reformed Theology are aggressively promoted today by fashionable evangelists. We must be as the Bereans of old (Acts 17:11). Young believers watch what you read; when you are reading you are feeding. Advice from elder brethren will assist in avoiding the popular but often poisonous pastures. Assemblies need to be discerning as to whom they receive. For instance, a person's mere claim to be saved, justified by faith in Christ and belief that His atonement was "sufficient" for all men, is not a scriptural basis for reception. It is highly probable in the dark ecumenical days in which we live, that such a person may harbor sympathy with limited atonement – that His shed blood was not "efficient" for all men. To "break-bread" with that person perverts the true corporate profession of the Lord's death. It causes the saints to be unwitting accessories to it and in God's eyes we render bitter for sweet.<sup>106</sup> To preach the gospel with such a one would proclaim darkness for light. If we admit to local responsibility as to who is received, as we should, then let it be exercised having in view the glory of Christ. If not let every man do what seems right in his own eyes. But God will not be mocked for He is jealous of the glory of His Beloved Son and His sacred work. He will in a day to come call all in responsibility to give an account of their stewardship and for every stumbling of His children caused by spiritual indifference or indiscretion. May we prayerfully exhort and encourage each other to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb 10:23-25).

It is our earnest prayer that our many beloved friends, sincere in their belief and who harbor Calvinist views, are convicted of the terrible and far reaching implications of the depressing creed known as Calvinism and its cradle - Reformed Theology.

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<sup>106</sup> Calvinism's idea is to partake of the Lord's Supper to "receive virtue" from the Lord. This is utterly foreign to the real purpose of the Lord's Supper.

## Appendix 1

Biblical **grammar** rules out God's foreknowledge and His foreordination (predestinating or determinate counsel) being one and the same thing. Foreknowledge as the verb is *proginôskô* which is a combination of the Greek preposition *pro* meaning before and *gnosis* which means knowing (not "doing"). Foreknowledge as the noun is given in 1 Peter 1:2 and Acts 2:23. "*Foreknowledge (prognwsin). Only here and Acts ii. 23, in Peter's sermon at Pentecost. He is distinguishing there between foreknowledge and determinate counsel.*"<sup>107</sup>

Biblical **usage** preserves the distinction between: a. God's *foreknowledge* and His *determinate counsel*. In Acts 2:23 we have: "*Him [Christ], being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge [prognosis] of God.*" If God's foreknowledge in any sense means His determinate counsel (His foreordination), we have a nonsensical redundancy, "*Him [Christ], being delivered by the determinate counsel and the determinate counsel of God.*" b. God's *foreknowledge* and His *predestination* as the verb in Romans 8:29. "*For whom he did foreknow [proginosko] he also did predestinate [proorizo] to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" If foreknowledge means predestination we have another redundancy, "*For whom he did predestinate he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" Predestination, "*Proorizo ... is to be distinguished from proginosko, to foreknow; the latter has special reference to the persons foreknown by God; proorize has special reference to that which the subjects of His foreknowledge are predestinated.*"<sup>108</sup> Vincent states, "*Did foreknow (proegnw). ...In all cases it means foreknow...It does not mean foreordain. It signifies prescience, not preelection...This is the simple, common-sense meaning.*"<sup>109</sup> Clearly God's foreknowledge is not the same as His determinate counsel, His foreordination or predestination.

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<sup>107</sup> M Vincent, *Ibid.* Vol 1 p 628. Also A T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol VI p 79.

<sup>108</sup> W E Vine, *Expository Dictionary of NT Words* p 203.

<sup>109</sup> M Vincent *Ibid.* Vol III p 95.

## Appendix 2 – C H Spurgeon

“First, it is clear that *the divine will is accomplished, and yet men are perfectly free agents*. Haman acted according to his own will, Ahasuerus did whatever he pleased, Mordecai behaved as his heart moved him, and so did Esther. We see no interference with them, no force or coercion; hence the entire sin and responsibility rest with each guilty one, yet, acting with perfect freedom, none of them acts otherwise than divine providence had foreseen. "I cannot understand it," says one. My dear friend, I am compelled to say the same, - I do not understand it either. I have known many who think they comprehend all things, but I fancy they had a higher opinion of themselves than truth would endorse. Certain of my brethren deny free agency, and so get out of the difficulty; others assert that there is no predestination, and so cut the knot. As I do not wish to get out of the difficulty, and have no wish to shut my eyes to any part of the truth, I believe both free agency and predestination to be facts. How they can be made to agree I do not know, or care to know; I am satisfied to know anything which God chooses to reveal to me, and equally content not to know what He does not reveal. There it is; man is a free agent in what he does, responsible for his actions, and verily guilty when he does wrong, and he will be justly punished too, and if he be lost the blame will rest with himself alone; but yet there is One who ruleth over all, who, without complicity in their sin, makes even the actions of wicked men to sub serve His holy and righteous purposes. Believe these two truths and you will see them in practical agreement in daily life, though you will not be able to devise a theory for harmonising them on paper.” C H Spurgeon: “Providence-As seen in the Book of Esther,” *The Treasury of the Bible* Vol II. pp 164-5.

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