

Calvinism #2

In the last article, we begin examining the basis of Calvin's premise: the depravity of man. Calvin rightly reasoned that if the depravity of man is total, he can have no part in his own salvation. His every thought and intent is evil. He is incapable of doing good. Even the attempts to do good are evil, as his depravity is total. Since this is the case, it is God alone who determines who will be saved and who will be lost. Never mind that this makes God a respecter of persons, and a capricious Being who condemns at His whim those who are not culpable in their sin. This fatalistic attitude toward redemption has its comforts. After all, if God saves me, I am saved, and there is nothing I can do to invalidate my redemption. Conversely, if I am lost, I can do nothing about it, so there is no use in concerning myself with spiritual matters. Now we will turn to examining the major tenants of the doctrine.

Total Depravity. The Calvinist teaches that the little child is born into the world totally depraved. This contradicts the statement of our Lord regarding the little children, when He said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). Now, unless the Calvinist is willing to concede that the kingdom of Heaven is made up of those totally depraved, he must admit to the purity of the little children, and the invalid nature of that tenet. Further, rather than inheriting the sin of our forbears, the Lord informed Ezekiel that we are responsible only for our own sins (Ezekiel 18:20). No, man is not born totally depraved. He is born with free will, and can choose whether he will or will not serve God (Mark 16:16).

Unconditional Salvation. The belief that salvation is unconditional is a logical outgrowth of the assumption that man is born totally depraved. If one's depravity is total, then he is incapable of doing anything to secure his salvation. If this is so, then the salvation of man is wholly dependent upon God's choosing. He must do nothing. However, the Bible paints a different picture. One has only to read Mark 16:16 to see clearly that our salvation is conditioned upon faith and baptism. The fact that Jesus demanded action on this occasion reveals clearly that there are conditions ascribed to a person's redemption. Too, Peter indicated to the Jews on Pentecost that there are conditions attached to their escape from condemnation. When they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do" (Acts 2:37), he did not tell them that salvation was unconditional, but rather exhorted them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). We will conclude next week.

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