

Calvinism #3

In the last article, we looked at total depravity and unconditional salvation. We will finish the series by an examination of the three remaining tenants.

Limited Atonement. This tenet of Calvinism is necessitated by the belief that salvation is unconditional, and the reality that some will be lost. So, the logic is that Jesus only came and died for those predestined to salvation. However, that plainly denies what Jesus said of Himself in John 3:16. Clearly the redemptive blood is available not to only a few, but to whoever believes in Him. Consider also the rather distasteful consequence of such a position. If God sent his Son to die only for the predestined few, then God has condemned for eternity the large number who, through no fault of their own, lay outside the scope of that redeeming blood. This makes God unfair in His judgment.

Irresistible Grace. According to the Calvinist, if God chooses to redeem you, you can not resist his advances. Again, this is not born out in scripture. In fact, Stephen accused the Jews of doing exactly what the Calvinist says cannot be done (Acts 7:51). In scripture, the grace of God is always extended by invitation. No one is compelled to respond. In freely responding to the invitation, we are able to, "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40).

Perseverance of the Saints. Finally, the idea is promoted that if salvation is solely the work of God, then once you are saved, you can not so sin as to be eternally lost. But the Bible is replete with warnings of the possibility of Christians losing their souls (Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:18-22) and with actual names of those who have lost their redemption (such as Hymenaeus and Philetus). Simon, a former sorcerer, is recorded in Acts 8:13 to have obeyed the gospel, thus becoming a Christian. But Simon sinned and Peter stiffly rebuked! The question obviously arises, why would Peter threaten Simon with condemnation when Simon was incapable of so sinning as to lose his soul? The answer is that Calvinism has it wrong on this point as well!

In reality, the salvation of man is predicated both upon God's extended grace, and man's response to that redemptive work. In affirming this we do not state that man earns or merits his salvation. Salvation is the freely given gift of God. But, we must be willing to accept the gift. Salvation is conditioned upon our faithful obedience to the commands of God. The theology of Calvin offers false comfort. The underlying assumptions have been long held, and the tenants have been accepted without sufficient examination. The doctrine fails the test of scripture, and should be rejected by all Bible believers.

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