

SOVEREIGNTY AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

I am going to look at some of John Calvin's errors, and how they still affect us today. The reason I am doing this is because I don't think most Christians are aware of just how much this one man has influenced their views and their doctrines. The vast majority of Christians, whether in or out of the Religious System, are influenced by Calvin in some way. They may not be 5-point Calvinists, or 4-point Calvinists; they may not even know what John Calvin taught; but most of us have been affected—or should I say *infected*—by the errors of this man. So tonight I want you to put on your “thinking caps”.

The Scripture says: “*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter*” (Prov. 25:2). You don't have to be a mental giant or a brilliant theologian to search out a matter; you just have to be diligent and use your mind. God is not glorified by mental laziness and stupidity. We are commanded to love Him with all our minds, as well as our hearts (Matt. 22:37). Loving God with the mind means using whatever intellect He has given us to glorify Him. “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord...*” (Isa. 1:18). Paul reasoned with the Jews when he preached the gospel to them (See: Acts 17:1-3; 18:2-4; 24:24-25).

Of course, it is true that we are not to be wise in our own eyes (Prov. 3:7 & Isa. 5:21), or in our own conceits (Rom. 11:25), or with the wisdom of this world (I. Cor. 3:18). But we are to be wise in the wisdom of God. This is why Jesus said: “*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*” (Matt. 10:16). God doesn't want us leaning on our own wisdom or the wisdom we have learned from this world system. But He does want us to rely on the wisdom which is from above (James 3:17), which is not of this world (I. Cor. 2:6-8).

Another kind of wisdom God doesn't want us leaning on is religious philosophy. For many centuries the Church System has been teaching religious philosophy instead of Biblical truth—and of course, for the past 25 years it has also been teaching *humanistic* philosophy instead of Biblical truth. The religious philosophy that has been infecting the Church System for many centuries is called Calvinism. People refer to Calvinism as a certain type of “theology” but it's not really theology. It's *speculation*—religious speculation (ie: religious philosophy) wrapped in theological terms and ideas.

I won't spend a lot of time tonight, describing what kind of man John Calvin was. Maybe I'll share that in another message. But I do want to say this—Calvin was a philosopher who became a Catholic Priest, and then a Protestant reformer. As far as I am aware, he never gave a testimony of having a genuine conversion. Instead, he continued to identify with his *Catholic* infant baptism because he saw nothing wrong with it. This can be seen by what he wrote in his famous “*Institutes Of The Christian Religion*”:

“At whatever time we are **baptized**, we are washed and purified once for **the whole of life**”.

Institutes, IV

“By **baptism** we are **ingrafted into the body of Christ**...infants are to be baptized...children of Christians, as they are immediately **on their birth received by God as heirs of the covenant**, are also to be admitted to baptism”.

Institutes, IV

Calvin was *vicious* toward his enemies. He acted more like a devouring wolf than a sheep. Historian William Jones wrote that the: “...*most hateful feature of popery adhered to Calvin through life, the spirit of persecution.*” Calvin described his theological opponents as “filth and villainy”, and as “mad dogs who vomit their filth against the majesty of God and want to pervert all religion”. He hated the Anabaptists as well and called them “henchmen of Satan.” This fact alone reveals what kind of spirit John Calvin was of. The Anabaptists were the purest expression of Christianity at that time, yet he hated it.

Calvin was also a murder. He had dozens of people in Geneva killed and many others, including the elderly and little children, banned from the city, just for disagreeing with him. In one case, he had four men who challenged his view of who should be admitted to the Lord’s Supper, beheaded, quartered, and their body parts hung in strategic locations in Geneva as a warning to others who might have the audacity to challenge the “Pope of Geneva” (as he was called). He had one opponent, named Michael Servetus, burned at the stake because he rejected infant baptism and denied Christ’s deity. Speaking of Servetus, Calvin said: “*One should not be content with simply killing such people, but should burn them cruelly.*”

These facts alone—and there are more which show that Calvin was an *unconverted* scoundrel—should be enough for all true believers to reject all of his doctrines, regardless of what they were. Such a man was not fit to even bear the name of Christ, let alone teach foundational Christian truths in that name. To have his philosophy become “*the gospel*” of the Protestant Church was a crime that staggers the imagination. How the leaders of the Reformation could take an unconverted philosopher and murderer and declare him a hero of the Protestant Church is a mystery that I’ll never be able to fathom.

As we look at Calvin’s doctrine, let me capsulize my view of it this way: every error that Calvin taught stems from his perverted view of God’s sovereignty. If you can show that his view of God’s sovereignty is off, then his whole system collapses.

Calvinism goes by different names: Calvinism, Reformed Theology, The Doctrines of Grace—so called because the individual elements of the theology use the term “grace: “Sovereign Grace”, “Elective Grace”, “Adoptive Grace”, “Atoning Grace”, “Regenerative Grace”, “Persevering Grace” and “Temporal Grace”. It’s also known by the acronym—TULIP—which stands for the main five points of the philosophy. Calvin didn’t actually invent the TULIP acronym. It was invented after his death by those who followed his teachings. But the ideas and concepts represented by it are all Calvin’s doctrines.

T: Total Depravity (*or Total Inability*)

U: Unconditional Election (*or Elective & Adoptive Grace*)

L: Limited Atonement (*or Particular Redemption, or Atoning Grace*)

I: Irresistible Grace (*or Regenerative Grace*)

P: Perseverance of the Saints (*or Eternal Security, or Persevering Grace*)

Total Depravity: Whenever we hear the term “Total Depravity” it probably doesn’t mean the same thing to us as it did to Calvin. To us it simply means that man was born with a sin nature and as a result, he must be saved to escape the punishment that comes upon that nature. To Calvin it meant that since men are dead in sin they *cannot even respond* to the gospel unless God sovereignly enables him. God must actually *regenerate* the sinner before he can even respond. In other words, we basically have to be born again (without our approval) in order to have the “ability” to then *choose* to accept salvation.

Unconditional Election: This means that God *unconditionally* and sovereignly elects who will be saved. This sovereign choice has nothing to do with anything the sinner does *after* he has been born; nor does it have anything to do with God's foreknowledge of the sinner *before* he is born. Calvin expresses the doctrine of unconditional election this way: "*Predestination we call the decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny: but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others*". (*Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book III, chap. 21*)

Limited Atonement: This means that the death of Christ was only for those who God has sovereignly elected. Calvin denounced the concept that Jesus died for the sins of the world and called it a "...*a corrupt prostitution of that which is declared to be reserved particularly for the children of the church*" (*Institutes, Book III, chap. 22*).

Irresistible Grace: This means that God's call to the elect will be "effectual". It cannot be resisted and it will not be resisted. The reason it cannot be resisted is because the sinner is *sovereignly regenerated* (before he has a chance to say yea or nay), and is then granted the gift of faith. Being given the gift of faith, he now has *the ability* to choose God and he *will* choose God every time because God has made sure that he will choose Him. The (Calvinistic) Westminster Confession puts it this way: "This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

Perseverance of the Saints: Those who are sovereignly elected and regenerated will also, through God's sovereignty, continue in the faith. Though they may fall into sin temporarily through neglect and temptation, and may even grieve the Spirit and bring reproach upon the Church and temporal judgments upon themselves, yet in the end, they will be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the sovereign power of God unto salvation.

Now, one of the first things you will run into whenever you start talking against Calvinism is the "straw-man" accusation. Calvinists always cry foul because (in their minds) non-Calvinists continually misrepresent what they teach. They accuse us of setting up a *straw man* that is supposed to represent what they believe, but which in fact does not represent what they actually believe. One famous Calvinist put it this way:

"The most infamous allegations have been brought against us [*ie: us Calvinists*], and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, **invent and make for themselves a man of straw**, call that John Calvin and then shoot all their arrows at it."

Charles Spurgeon
Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace
(Sermon preached April 11, 1861)

Therefore, tonight I'm not just going to quote Calvinist ministers who are universally recognized as genuine Calvinists, and who therefore *correctly represent* Calvin's teachings, I'm going to quote Calvin *himself*. Calvin was an articulate thinker, and he knew how to communicate what was in his head, so his statements will speak for themselves. I don't need a straw man because I intend to expose the *real* man.

Another thing you will run across is the accusation that non-Calvinists lump all Calvinists together and claim they all believe the same thing, when in fact there are several different strains of Calvinism, and various doctrinal positions *within* each of these various strains. There are 5-point Calvinists, 4-point Calvinists and 3-point Calvinists; there are moderate Calvinists, classical Calvinists and hyper-Calvinists; there are Calvin Calvinists, Charles Spurgeon Calvinists, Arthur W. Pink Calvinists, Presbyterian Calvinists and Baptist Calvinists. Some Calvinists have never even read Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion* for themselves and are merely following someone who follows someone who allegedly follows Calvin.

Therefore, whenever you try to explain and refute TULIP philosophy, there will always be some Calvinist who accuses you of misrepresenting Calvinism, even though you may be directly quoting Calvinist ministers, or even John Calvin himself. The problem isn't that you are misrepresenting Calvinism; the problem is that you are misrepresenting *their particular brand* of Calvinism.

The real dilemma Calvinists face is not so much that non-Calvinists misrepresent them or lump them all together. It's that when they are faced with the logical and inevitable consequences of their views, they just don't like what they hear. They can't face the truth. So they resort to various *tactics* which serve to confuse the issues. They cry foul, or they play the straw man card.

Over the years they have invented a whole theological *vocabulary* to confuse the person who suspects that Calvin was deceived. You will see terms like: supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism, total depravity and total inability, reprobation and preterition, synergism and monergism, free will and free agency, compatibilism and determinism, double predestination and single predestination, common grace and special grace, general calling and effectual calling, perseverance and preservation, etc. By the time you learn what all these things mean, you are too tired and confused to even go on.

Another thing they do is, they just *deny* the logical outcome of their doctrines without bothering to even explain to why their statements don't really mean what they seem to mean. Consider, for example, articles one and two of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

"God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably **ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet** so, as thereby **neither is God the author of sin**, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established"

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, **some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.**"

Here it is plainly stated that from eternity, God *ordained* what ever would comes to pass. This is the same as saying God *causes* everything, both good and evil, to come to pass—and that's the same as saying God is the author of sin. But the framers of the Westminster Confession were loath to admit that this is what such a statement means. So they said that even though God ordains everything that happens, somehow He is *not* the author of sin. They don't bother explaining how it's possible that God could ordain everything that ever happens in this world, yet not be the author of sin. They just said He's not—and all the *sheeple* are supposed to accept what they say, because *they* said it.

Sorry boys; denying the obvious implication of such a statement is not good enough. If the writers of that confession don't want to be charged with attributing sin to God, then they need to do more than just *deny* the charge; they need to *answer* it. They must explain in clear terms *why* God pre-ordaining every single thing that happens does not make Him the author of sin.

How is a non-Calvinists supposed to expose and refute Calvinism when we have to deal with so many variables, and so much obfuscation? Well, there is only one way. First we must answer a fundamental question: *What makes a Calvinist, a Calvinist?* Of course, this would not be an easy question to answer, even for a Calvinist, but there is an answer. Another way to put the question is like this: *What do all Calvinists have in common?* There is a common denominator which unites *all* these different kinds of Calvinists, and that denominator is the doctrine of Unconditional Election.

All Calvinists, whether they be Presbyterian or Reformed, Primitive Baptist or Sovereign Grace Baptist; whether they be premillennial, amillennial, dispensational, or covenant theologian; whether they call themselves Calvinists or not, believe the “U” in the TULIP acronym. They all believe that before the foundation of the world, God made a *sovereign* decision regarding who would be saved.

Many Calvinists don't understand just how tightly Calvin's doctrines are woven together. They don't realize that once you accept the idea of unconditional election, in order to be consistent, you must accept the rest of TULIP. Spurgeon once prayed: “*Lord, hasten to bring in all Thine elect—and then elect some more*” (*An Intimate Interlude*). Sounds cute, but when you realize the eternal aspect of predestination—that the decision as to who would be “the elect” was only made once, and it was made before the beginning of the world—then such a statement is a logical absurdity. God cannot decide to elect somebody now, or next month, or next year, who has not already been elected by Him from before the world began. If He did, His sovereignty would not be absolute.

Once you embrace the “U” in TULIP, the rest logically follows. The one who has been unconditionally elected by a sovereign decree of God before the world began, *must* end up saved. They cannot *refuse* salvation, which leads to the concept of “I”—Irresistible Grace. Nor can they ever *lose* that salvation, which leads to the concept of “P”—Preserving Grace (Eternal Security). If the person who had been sovereignly elected by God to salvation refused that salvation or lost it, then the absolute sovereignty of God would be compromised.

On the flip side, God's sovereign choice of some people to be saved means that He also sovereignly chose the rest of mankind (the non-elect) to be damned. In order to make sure that His sovereign choice is not usurped or thwarted, and that some of the non-elect don't end up saved *by accident*, Calvin came up with the concept represented by “T”—Total Inability. This means that man is totally incapable of choosing God even after hearing the gospel. God must do everything that pertains to salvation *for us*. This naturally leads to the idea of “L”—Limited Atonement because it's absurd to think that Jesus would die for billions of people who He has no intention of even *trying* to save, but who were predestined to eternal destruction from before the foundation of the world.

As I said, Calvin's distorted view of God's sovereignty is the basis for all his error. In his mind, the only way God could be *truly* sovereign is if He was in complete control of every decision every person ever makes. Again, in order for God to be truly sovereign, He would have to *predestine* or *pre-plan* everything

that ever happens in His creation; the good as well as the evil. This is the fundamental premise Calvin started off with when he began putting together his philosophy, and since that premise is completely wrong, his entire philosophy is just as wrong.

One of the more interesting things about John Calvin, which most people don't know, is that the doctrines which bear his name did not come from him at all. They came from a *Catholic* Church Father named St. Augustine (354-430), of whom Calvin himself writes:

"Further, Augustine is **so much at one with me** that, if I wished to write a confession of my faith, it would abundantly satisfy me **to quote wholesale from his writings**. But, not to be too prolix on the present occasion, I shall be content with three or four passages by which it will be established that **not even in a single point does he differ from me**. From the whole course of the work, it could be established even more fully how solidly he agrees with me **in every particular**."

Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God; p. 63

So according to Calvin, the doctrines of St. Augustine were so much in agreement with his own philosophy, if he were to write a confession of his own faith, he could "quote wholesale" from Augustine's writings. According to Calvin, he and Augustine didn't differ "even in a single point". They agree in "every particular". So then, why isn't Calvinism called *Augustinism*? It's called Calvinism because John Calvin is the one who made Augustine's doctrine of predestination popular.

Now if you know anything about St. Augustine, it will be hard for you to believe that Calvin actually said he agreed with him on every point because Augustine was clearly a *Catholic* theologian. He taught many of the Catholic errors that we are familiar with today, including:

- ~ *The sacrament of penance*
- ~ *Mary was a perpetual virgin*
- ~ *Baptismal regeneration and grace*
- ~ *Necessity of baptism for salvation*
- ~ *Real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (Lord's Supper)*
- ~ *The Mass is a sacrifice*
- ~ *Purgatory and praying for the departed*
- ~ *Saintly intercession*
- ~ *Authority of the Catholic Church*
- ~ *Apostolic Succession*

Obviously, Calvin wasn't referring to Augustine's *entire* theology when he said they agreed on every point. He was only talking about Augustine's doctrines of predestination. It's strange that Augustine is revered by *both* Roman Catholics and Protestants, seeing how he was clearly a Catholic theologian. It seems that more and more Protestants walk in confusion regarding this man. If anyone were to preach Augustine's theology in a Protestant church, he would still be branded an heretic, yet many Protestant ministers view him as a hero of the faith. Maybe this confusion is in part due to the fact that Protestant religious leaders are themselves confused.

Consider Dr. R. C. Sproul, a leading Protestant (Calvinist) theologian and writer, who has such a high regard for St. Augustine that he calls himself an “Augustinian”. This same Mr. Sproul also says that anyone who believes in Purgatory knows *nothing* of the gospel. *Hmm*. Would that include St. Augustine as well, Mr. Sproul? Confusion indeed!

Calvin’s distorted view of God’s sovereignty requires *absolute control* over every move every human being who has ever lived makes. It also requires that God alone decides who will be saved and who will not be saved. According to Calvin, this decision was made in eternity past and has nothing to do with the person who has been chosen to be saved. The decision was made in the secret council of God and nobody will ever understand it but God Himself. Calvin says:

“First, the eternal predestination of God, by which before the fall of Adam **He decreed** what should take place concerning the whole human race and every individual, **was fixed and determined**”.

Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, p.120 - 121

“God had no doubt decreed before the foundation of the world what He would do with every one of us and **had assigned to everyone by His secret counsel his part in life**”.

Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries; p.20

“...the reason why God elects some and **rejects others** is to be found in His purpose alone...before men are born **their lot is assigned to each of them by the secret will of God**...the salvation or the destruction of men depends on His free election”.

Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries; p.203

Calvin says that God “decreed what should take place” concerning the whole human race and “every individual”. According to him, the life of every individual has been “fixed and determined” by God before the fall of Adam. Before the foundation of the world, God decreed “what He would do with every one of us” and He “assigned to everyone” who would ever live, their “part in life”. Before men are even born, “their lot is assigned to each of them by the secret will of God”.

I think it’s safe to assume that the terms “everyone”, “every individual”, and “each one of them” would include the wicked along with the elect, don’t you? So then, according to Calvin, God decrees and ordains the life of the wicked. He assigns the life of the wicked to the wicked before they are born. Their lot in life is fixed and determined by God. In other words, God pre-determines that the wicked will *be* wicked before they are even born.

Every once and a while a Calvinist will speak the truth, without realizing it, as he is analyzing the meaning of his doctrines. R.C. Sproul made one such slip on page 51 of his book, “Chosen By God”:

“Predestination **seems** to cast a shadow on the very heart of human freedom...If God has decided our destinies from all eternity, **that strongly suggests that our free choices are but charades**, empty exercises in predetermined play acting. It is as though **God wrote the script for us in concrete and we are merely carrying out his scenario.**”

No Dr. Sproul; it doesn't just **SEEM** like that's the outcome of your doctrine; that **IS** the outcome of your doctrine. If Calvin was right, mankind has no free will. God wrote a *divine script* in eternity past and every person on this earth who has ever lived is simply following that script. What "free will" they think they have, or seem to have, is just an illusion. In the end, we all end up doing exactly what God predestined us to do. In Calvin's mind, without this kind of "script" God would not be truly sovereign (ie: in control).

One of the reasons so many people are confused about Calvinism is because they just don't understand what Calvin really taught. This is not only true of the average person, it has also been true of quite a few religious leaders—one of them being Charles Spurgeon, who publicly declared himself a Calvinist.

"There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it...I have my own private opinion that there is no such a thing as preaching Christ and him crucified, unless you preach what now-a-days is called Calvinism. I have my own ideas, and those I always state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else".

In Defense Of Calvinism

"The doctrines of original sin, election, effectual calling, final perseverance, **and all those great truths which are called Calvinism**—though Calvin was not the author of them, but simply an able writer and preacher upon the subject —are, I believe, **the essential doctrines of the Gospel** that is in Jesus Christ. Now, I do not ask you whether you believe all this—it is possible you may not, but I believe you will before you enter heaven. I am persuaded, that as God may have washed your hearts, he will wash your brains before you enter heaven. **He will make you right in your doctrines".**

Sermon: The Peculiar Sleep of the Beloved

Spurgeon is held in such high esteem by today's Christians, anyone who says anything negative about him is immediately suspected of being a religious nutcase. But the fact is, for all of his wonderful insight and great preaching, Spurgeon was a *confused* Calvinist. He said all the great truths that Calvin taught were "the essential doctrines of the gospel" yet he rejected Calvin's teaching on double predestination. Instead, he taught what is called single predestination, or "*pass by*" Calvinism.

"That God saves from corruption and damnation **those whom he has chosen from the foundations of the world**, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ Jesus his Son, **passing by** all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of his own free-will and justice".

Spurgeon's Sermons, Vol. 2, p.69

Single predestination means that God did not actually predestine billions of people to be thrown into Hell. Rather, what He predestined was the elect to be saved. Those who end up lost will be lost because they continue on in their sin, and the wages of sin is damnation. And *why* do they continue on in their sin? They do so because God decided to "*pass them by*". He did predestine them to be lost; He just didn't choose to save them! But you see, there's really no difference between single and double predestination. It's just semantics. If God has the power to choose who He will save, and if He has the power to save those people

regardless of their own choice, then the decision *not* to save billions of people is the same as ordaining them to eternal destruction. Unfortunately, Spurgeon could not see this truth. So he accepted *single* predestination, while rejecting double predestination. Speaking of double predestination, he says:

“My soul **revolts** at the idea of a doctrine that lays the blood of man’s soul at God’s door. I cannot conceive how any human mind, at least any Christian mind, can hold any such **blasphemy** as that”.

Jacob and Esau

Maybe Calvinists ministers like Spurgeon were confused because Calvin himself was confused! Calvin spoke with a forked tongue regarding the issue. In one breath he talked about those who God merely “passes by”. Since they were already dead in sin and deserve eternal punishment, the result of God passing them by is that they simply continue on in that sin and in the end, they receive the just penalty for it. They are destroyed because *they deserve to be* destroyed, for they are unrepentant sinners.

“The Lord in His unmerited election is free and exempt from the necessity of bestowing equally the same grace on all. Rather, He **passes by** those whom He wills, and chooses whom He wills”.

Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries; p.200

“When predestination is discussed, it is from the start to be constantly maintained, as I today teach, that all the reprobate are **justly left in death**, for in Adam they are dead and condemned”.

Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God; p.121

“Those therefore whom God **passes by** he reprobates, and that **for no other cause but because he is pleased to exclude them** from the inheritance which he predestines to his children”.

Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 23, Section 1

However, in the next breath Calvin talks about those who, in the secret council of God before the world began, were sovereignly predestined to destruction, and that they are not destroyed because they deserve it (ie: because they are unrepentant sinners); they are destroyed simply because it is God’s will.

“When God prefers some to others, choosing some and passing others by, the difference **does not** depend on human dignity or indignity. It is therefore **wrong** to say that the reprobate **are worthy** of eternal destruction...If what I teach is true, that those who perish are destined to death **by the eternal good pleasure of God** though the reason does not appear, then they are not found but **made worthy of destruction**”.

Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God; pp.120-121

“Solomon also teaches us that not only was the destruction of the ungodly **foreknown**, but the **ungodly themselves have been created for the specific purpose** of perishing (Prov. 16:4)”.

Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries; pp.207-208

"[God] devotes to destruction whom he pleases...they are predestinated to eternal death **without any demerit of their own, merely by his sovereign will**...he orders all things by his counsel and decree in such a manner, that **some men are born devoted from the womb to certain death, that his name be glorified in their destruction**...God chooses whom he will as his children...while he rejects and reprobates others".

Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book III, chap. 23

"At this point in particular the flesh rages when it hears that **the predestination to death of those who perish** is referred to as **the will of God**".

Calvin's New Testament Commentaries; p.208

"But here he runs full sail against God for **determining some** from their very creation to destruction."

Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, p.78

Any questions?

Once again, the reason people get so confused at this particular point is because they allow Calvinists to maintain that there is a difference between single predestination (ie: God simply chooses to pass someone by) and double predestination (ie: God actually predestines them to destruction). But in fact there is no difference whatsoever. If it's true, (as Calvin says), that God is totally responsible for our salvation, and if it's also true (as Calvin says) that God *can* save anyone He chooses to save because He is absolutely sovereign, then the fact is, if God decided in eternity *not* to save you, that's *the same* as pre-determining your destruction—and no amount of Calvinistic double talk can change that fact.

According to John Calvin himself—not a straw man named Calvin—the God of heaven, according to His own council and for His own purposes, sovereignly wrote a script for the entire human race before the earth was created. In that script, He decreed and fixed the life and destiny of every living person. Thus, mankind really has no free will. Regardless of what we may *think* we are doing, or what we may *think* we are freely choosing, it's just an illusion. In the end we will discover that we actually had no choice at all. We all did exactly what God ordained us to do. Those of us who are lucky enough to end up saved will end up that way because *the script* called for our salvation. Those of us who are not so lucky will end up lost because *the script* called for our damnation.

The "god" of John Calvin was not the God of the Bible. It was the god of this world. Not only did Calvin act like a murderous Roman Pope, he was totally deceived in his views of God's character and ways. And he has been used more than any man in history to deceive *millions* of genuine Christians. Therefore, it's my personal opinion that when the dust settles, you *won't* see him in God's kingdom.

Whenever you challenge the philosophy of Calvin, one of the first charges you will hear leveled at you is that you are denying the sovereignty of God. Calvin said: "*There are some, too, who allege that God is greatly dishonored if such arbitrary power is bestowed on Him...they should look up to the sovereignty of God and not evaluate it by their own judgment...We must simply remember this, that God is deprived of part of His honour if He is not allowed authority to be arbiter of life and death over men.*" (*Calvin's New Testament Commentaries; pp.209-210*).

Other Calvinists put forth this same argument.

“God is not going to be frustrated throughout all eternity because He was desperately trying to save some people who just could not be persuaded. If that’s your view of God, then **He’s not really sovereign.**”

*Phil Johnson
For Whom Did Christ Die? The Nature of the Atonement*

“God desires that his sheep are saved. God desires that his people are saved. He does not desire that every single individual who has ever lived, live in glory with him forever. If that were the case, **we have an incompetent, unhappy, and impotent God.**”

*Alan Kurschner
The Calvinist Gadfly*

“I reject anything which makes God a cosmic bell-hop tending to the commands and demands of sinful men as another gospel. **I reject anything which removes God’s sovereignty to place man as the Sovereign** as another gospel. I reject anything **which denies the sovereign decrees of God** and His electing grace to put salvation into the hands of sinful men as another gospel. I reject anything which denies man’s total depravity and **exalts his fictitious free will** as another gospel. I reject anything which places the perseverance of man to glory in the incapable hands of a sinful man as another gospel. I reject anything which endeavors to treat God as the great Grandfather in the sky beckoning and pleading with man to be saved as changing the true God into a pitiable wimp.”

*Matthew McMahon
Why I am a Calvinist*

“...the Father can seek the salvation of each individual, the Son can die to secure it, and the Spirit come to bring conviction of sin, and **yet the entire desire and work of the triune God collapse because of the unwillingness of the sovereign creature, man?**”

*James White
Debating Calvinism, p.332*

“Arminians teach that **God is frustrated by the free will of his creatures.** He decrees to save as many as possible, but the numbers are comparatively few. He plans and wills the salvation of all, but his goals remain unfulfilled. In fact, since God granted man free will, it is theoretically possible that no one would have even been saved.”

*Erwin Lutzer
The Doctrines That Divide, pp.212-213*

Calvin and all his followers have *missed* the entire point of *why* God created man. This issue at the heart of everything is “love”. For reasons that I may never fully understand, God desires to share the love that exists in the Trinity, with mankind, His creation. He already loves us. What He desires is that we love Him—and the simple fact is, because of the very nature of love, it cannot be demanded; it cannot be required; it cannot be forced; it cannot be purchased; and it can’t be *coerced* in any way. Love must be freely given. If it’s not given by the *free will* of the one giving it, then it is not love. It will be duty; it will be obligation; but it will *never* be love. In order for a human being to love God, they must be given the choice **NOT** to love Him. Without a human free will, God will *never* have what He desires.

The reason Calvin could never grasp this simple concept is because he *had no love*. His heart was filled with worldly philosophy, religion, hatred, pride and murder. His understanding of God's character did not come from the Scripture or from the indwelling Holy Spirit. It came from the world of religious philosophy and the religious *hierarchy* of Roman Catholicism. In fact, I believe his whole view of God's sovereignty came from that Roman System of *total control* over people. He simply transferred the corruption of the Roman Catholic power grid onto the God of the Bible.

God has given every person a chance and a choice to love Him. He will never demand or force anyone to choose Him. When He calls us, if we say, "Not your will but *mine* be done", then on the day of Judgment, we will hear Him say, "Not My will be done, but yours". And he will give us what we have chosen—eternal separation from Him. For the Calvinist, this would destroy God's sovereignty. This kind of a God would be a *weak* God who can neither be trusted nor depended upon.

The Calvinist *begins* with the presumption that God is sovereign, but in a way that *pre-loads* the definition of sovereignty according to John Calvin. They then dismiss any charge against Calvinism on the grounds that it diminishes or destroys that sovereignty. Non-Calvinists like myself *also* believe in the sovereignty of God. It's just that we don't accept Calvin's definition of it. We believe what the Scripture teaches, which is that God is always control, but not necessarily controlling everything that everyone does. God sets the boundaries for what a man *can* choose and determines the consequence for what a man *will* choose.

Calvinists have placed God in a philosophical box, determining in their own mind *how* God exercises His sovereignty. To them, any thing other than what Calvin taught would produce a weak God who surrenders His sovereignty to men. He would be incompetent and impotent. But since the Lord clearly says: "...*my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways*" (Isa. 55:8), we would be wise to believe what the Scripture says about God, His character, His ways His will. We've been looking at the ideas of an unconverted murderer; now lets look at what God's Word says. The first thing the Word tells us is that it's *not* God will, nor is it His desire that anyone perish eternally.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

Isaiah 45:22

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: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 33:11

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.

II. Peter 3:9

*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **Who will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

I. Timothy 2:3-4

*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation **hath appeared to all men**,*

Titus 2:11

The second thing the Word of God tells us is that God seeks to draw all men to Himself, and that He gives everyone a chance to come to the Light.

*Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men unto me**.*

John 12:31-32

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that **all men** through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, **which lighteth every man that cometh into the world**.*

John 1:6-9

God offers salvation to *every* person who comes into the world. This is what the Scripture means when it talks about salvation being *by grace*. No one deserves an opportunity to be saved, and there is nothing we can do to earn such an offer. It's God's grace and mercy *alone* that causes Him to offer salvation to any one. I don't know exactly *how* God has made salvation available to everyone down through the ages, but the Scripture says He has, so I accept what it says. Also, Jesus said He would draw *all men* to Himself—which means He would draw all men to God. So everyone who comes into this world has an opportunity to be saved from eternal destruction. Everyone has an opportunity to accept and/or follow whatever "light" God has provided for them. That choice is the *free will* of man in operation.

But what about the sovereignty of God? How can man have a truly free will and God still be sovereign over His creation. The answer lies in the awesome power of God's foreknowledge.

*Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **Declaring 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:**

Isaiah 46:9-10

God declares "the end from the beginning". He knew before the foundation of the world exactly who would *freely respond* to the light they were offered. He knew before the foundation of the world exactly who

would *freely respond* to the drawing power of the Holy Spirit—and He laid out His eternal plan of redemption based upon *that* foreknowledge. This is the *sovereignty of God* in operation. This is why the Scripture talks about *both* the free will of man and the sovereignty of God. They both operate full-bore, side by side, at the same time—and the only way to understand how this is possible is if you understand the incredible *power* of God's foreknowledge.

Whenever I start reading or listening to someone's view on the sovereignty of God, the first thing I look for is an understanding of God's foreknowledge. If that *key* is missing, I know that whatever I am about to read or hear is going to be off in some way. So let's look carefully at what the apostles taught regarding this issue.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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.*

Romans 8:28-29

The term "foreknow" means, "to know beforehand". Paul says that God elects and predestines people, not arbitrarily, but *according to foreknowledge*. He knows before hand who will respond to His call, and who will not. He knows before hand just how far those who have responded to His call will go in the process of transformation into the image of Jesus. He knows before hand exactly what decisions every person who ever lives will make and where those decisions will lead them in the end.

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **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.***

I. Peter 1:1-2

Again, the apostle Peter says the same thing—God elects (or predestines) people “according to foreknowledge”. He goes on to say that this election (by foreknowledge) is “though sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience”. In other words, Peter is telling us *exactly what it was* that God foreknew when He elected us. He foreknew that the ones He elected would allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify them and bring them to a place of obedience. God knows the end from the beginning, but we do not. He knows whether or not we will endure to the end, but we do not. Since we cannot see our end, Peter tells us to make our calling and election *sure*.

*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling **and election** sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*

II. Peter 1:10

Peter is telling us that we not only carry a certain amount of responsibility in our own personal salvation, but in our own *election* as well! There is no other way to interpret this passage. Once we have accepted

God's offer of salvation, once we realize we have been elected, *it's up to us* to make that election sure. How do we make it sure? By yielding to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, as He sanctifies us and brings us to a place of obedience. If we do this we are making our election sure. Coming to a place of perfect obedience is what sanctification is all about, for you see, the thing that has brought death and destruction on mankind for the last 6000 years is disobedience—which is also called self-will. Man was created sinless and with a free will. But once Adam chose to disobey God, his free will became a slave of his own selfishness and turned into self will. Being born again *does not* automatically solve the problem of self will. All it does is *provide the opportunity* to deal with the problem.

The reason brilliant theologians and doctors of the Law can't understand the foreknowledge of God is because they do not understand the difference between *religious self-effort* and a *response* to the moving of God's Spirit in a person's life. Since they do not know the difference between these two things, they lump them both together and call them religious works. Then they quote passages which state that we cannot be saved "by works" (*Gal. 2:17; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5, and Rom. 11:6*), and declare very piously that if we can't be saved on the basis of anything we do, then neither can we be *elected* on the basis of anything we do. If we were elected on the basis of anything God saw foresaw us doing, then election would not be based on grace, but rather, at least partially, if not fully on our performance.

This false mind-set came from the *Total Inability* error of Calvin. That foul doctrine is at the root, doctrinally speaking, of so much of the apostasy we see right now because over the centuries the idea that we *can't* do anything—and indeed we *must not even try* to do anything—with regards to our salvation has polluted the entire Evangelical understanding of salvation by grace. Paul said: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). The "T" in TULIP has removed *man's* "faith" from the gospel message of salvation by grace *through* faith. Man can have no faith, even after responding to the gospel. In like manner, man can do nothing concerning his walk in Christ. God must do it all or grace is no more grace.

Anything a person *does* is seen as an attempt to be "saved by their own works". But you see, just as there is no comparison between a person who is trying to *earn* salvation through performance and the one who is *responding* to the saving power of the Holy Spirit; so there is no comparison between God electing a person based on a foreknowledge of their own self-effort, and electing that person on the basis of a foreknowledge of their *response* to His work in their lives. Responding to *God's* work in our lives does not constitute the kind of "works" the Bible says can never save us.

Since most people don't realize just how powerful God's foreknowledge is, they are not only ignorant of the basis upon which God elects people, they also *misinterpret* passages of Scripture which make reference to that foreknowledge. For example, in the following passage, God tells Jeremiah He knew him before he was even born:

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.

Jeremiah 1:5

The way this is worded has caused some teachers to believe we pre-existed as *disembodied spirits* before we were conceived, and that God had some kind of tangible relationship with us in that state. But in reality, this is simply a statement of God's foreknowledge. He didn't know Jeremiah in some pre-existing state. But He did know Jeremiah *in His foreknowledge*. He knew before hand what kind of person Jeremiah would turn out to be. He knew before hand what kind of relationship He would have with Jeremiah, both as a person and as a prophet. He knew before hand what kind of choices Jeremiah would make throughout His entire life—and He knew before hand his final, eternal destiny. Another passage that is misunderstood is the one where God says he loved Jacob and hated Esau.

*(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that **the purpose of God according to election** might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob **have** I loved, but Esau **have** I hated.*

Romans 9:11-13

Calvinists love to use this particular passage to prove that man really has no free will. "See", they say, "God shows His *absolute* sovereignty by choosing one brother over the other, *before* they were even born. Yes, it is true that God chose Jacob over Esau before they were born. However, it is *not* true that His choice was an *arbitrary* one. But there was *a reason* God chose one child above the other. In His foreknowledge, He saw that one of them would value greatly his Hebrew heritage, his birthright, his inheritance, and his relationship with the God of Israel; while the other one wouldn't care about these things at all, and would be a man who lived only for the immediate desires of his flesh. It was on the basis of *this* foreknowledge that God made His choice of Jacob over Esau.

What Calvin believed was that God's choice of Jacob was completely arbitrary, and that once He chose Jacob, He then made sure *Jacob* turned out the way He wanted, and that *Esau* turned out the way He wanted. In other words, God *predestined* Esau to be evil; then He made sure Esau turned out to be evil; then He hated Esau because he turned out to be what he was pre-destined to be; and on the day of resurrection God will cast him into eternal torment. This is the kind of "god" John Calvin served; and this is the view of God many Christians still have.

It's because of the power of God's foreknowledge that He was able to "rest" on the Seventh Day of creation and declare that *all* His works were finished. Because of His foreknowledge, even though we are free to choose whether or not we will accept His offer of salvation, and even though we are free to turn our backs on that salvation at any time, His sovereignty will never be affected or held captive by those fickle choices. He has finished the work; and nothing we do can hinder or change that finished work..

*And on the seventh day God **ended his work** which he had made; and **he rested** on the seventh day from **all his work** which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from **all his work** which God created and made.*

Genesis 2:2-3

The “work” being referred to in Genesis is not simply the creation of the material universe and this planet with it’s inhabitants. The Scripture says *all* God’s works are known to Him *from eternity* (Acts 15:18). This is also made clear by the writer of Hebrews.

*Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, **They shall not enter into my rest.**)*

Hebrews 3:10-11

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into **his rest**, any **of you** should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, **if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.***

Hebrews 4:1-3

The works God rested from here are not the work of creation. God was not angry at the Hebrews because they refused to enter into His *past* work of creating the material universe! The “rest” they were to enter (which is specifically called “*my rest*” by God), was the conquering of the Promised Land and being a light to the nations. This was all part of the work God had *completed* by the seventh day. In other words, by the seventh day, *everything* was finished (in God’s foreknowledge). By the seventh day, everything that was ever going to happen had *already* happened (in His foreknowledge). By the seventh day, God knew each and every person who would ever be born; He knew every choice every of those billions of people would ever make; He knew where all those gazillions of choices would lead those billions of people; and He knew the *final destiny* of every one of them. *Think of how awesome our God is when you go to bed tonight.*

*From Our Vantage Point...*in this realm of time and space, nothing is set in stone. We do not know the end from the beginning. When we are saved, we do not know if we will endure till the end, or if at some point we will fall away. That’s why Peter tells *us* to make our calling and election sure.

*From God’s Vantage Point...*outside of time and space (and with His foreknowledge), things are set in stone because the work has *already* been completed. Therefore, He is able to calmly build His Eternal Temple in this realm of time and space. He’s not busy replacing dead stones with living stones every day, as people fall away from the faith. Nor is He up in heaven, frantically shuffling a million destinies around as a result of those who have failed to make their calling and election sure.

While we are making our calling and election sure in the realm of time and space, God stands outside of time and space, and He knows who will make their calling and election sure and who won’t. He knows who will start the race and finish it, and who will start the race and at some point, drop out. In fact, from God’s vantage point, everyone who is going to make it has *already* made it. Every one who is going to end up in God’s kingdom when the dust settles is *already* there. They have *already* been assigned their place and role in the kingdom, based on the choices God foresaw them making throughout their entire lives—such is the power of God’s foreknowledge!

This is why, even though I know I am saved, and even though I believe I am called and elected to be a son, I also know there is always a possibility that I may miss that mark if I fail to make my calling and election sure down here in this realm of time and space. God already knows where I am going to end up. *Indeed, in His foreknowledge I am already there.* I am already in the place that I have made for myself, based on the choices I have made throughout my life. God already knows where I *have* ended up. The problem is, He's not telling! I have to wait until the end of my earthly pilgrimage to discover what He already knows, and has known all along. This is the power of God's foreknowledge. Everything is already done and settled on His end. But on our end there are a few questions that have to be answered:

~ *Will we enter into His finished work?*

~ *Will we remain in that work till the end by making our election sure?*

Let me say again that *knowing* something is going to happen in advance is not the same as *causing* that thing to happen. Just because God foreknows what we will do, just because He foreknows the choices we will make and where those choices will eventually lead, that does *not* mean He *causes* us or predestines us to make those choices. Just because He knows before hand that a person (based on their own free will choices) will end up eternally lost, that does not mean He *planned* for them to be lost, or that He *willed* that they be lost, or that He *caused* them to be lost.

If I see you walking down some railroad tracks, and off in the distance I see a train coming, and if I tell you about the train but you refuse to listen to my warning, then I will be able to exercise some foreknowledge of my own. I will know before hand that within 20 minutes you will be dead. But that does not mean I caused you to walk on those tracks. Neither does it mean I caused that train to come down those same tracks at that time. Neither does it mean I caused you to ignore my warning.

This is why Calvin's view of God's sovereignty is so wicked—and this is why all Calvinists are guilty of dishonoring the very God they claim to serve. They say that knowing in advance what people will do (and then planning things accordingly) is the same as *predestining* people to do what they will do (and then planning things accordingly). Friends, there's a big difference between these two views. One exalts the majesty and justice and righteousness of our God. The other one ascribes wickedness and injustice to Him.

Which view will you choose?