



Why I Cannot Accept Calvinism

MARK BULLEN

In a sermon on “Free Grace”, John Wesley charged Westminster Calvinism’s doctrine of predestination with

“making vain all preaching, and tending to destroy holiness, the comfort of religion and zeal for good works, yea, the whole Christian revelation by involving it in fatal contradictions...a doctrine full of blasphemy...it represents our blessed Lord as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity, as mocking his helpless creatures by offering what he never intends to give, by saying one thing and meaning another.”

He said it destroys

“all the attributes of God, his justice, mercy, and truth, yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust.”

Satan has always used as his best weapon the words of God wrested and twisted from their original purpose with assumptions and false interpretations (false prophets). It is amazing how those so concerned with predestination and foreknowledge can be so short-sighted.

Satan quoted Scripture to the Lord Jesus,

(Matt. 4:6 “And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.)

and what he quoted was true, BUT HE QUOTED IT WITH A SUGGESTED FALSE ASSUMPTION OF WHAT JESUS COULD DO WITH IT. There is a relationship between what is SAID, and WHAT I AM SUPPOSED TO DO WITH IT — What can I assume? What can I expect? What other principles come to play here? Does this take away my responsibility, or must I exercise my will in obedience? If I fail, is it God’s fault or mine?

To focus on verses that speak of what God does or knows, and then, by reasoning with my finite mind, decide that I have escaped from the responsibility God puts on man, causes one to become extremely imbalanced. I do believe in the foreknowledge, election, and predestination of the Scripture, but not as the Calvinists. I admit I *don’t know* all God foreknows or how exactly he predetermines to act; but I *do know* what God has said about human responsibility. God will never condemn a man because he cannot figure God out (as nobody can); but God *will* condemn a man for not obeying the clear commands of God’s Word (as everyone can). To take high and lofty concepts in the Word of God that we dare not assume the ability to thoroughly define; and then teach an unconditional eternal security is presumptuous at best.

It is easy to understand how God would, in order to obtain the “precious fruit” he is working for, create a world and free moral agents who could fall, suffer from sin, and therefore more appreciate God’s righteousness and love. That it may have been a necessary step to obtain what God wanted is easy to see — if we are dealing with free moral agents whom God wants to have a love relationship with. However, if we are speaking of people without free will, then it becomes a vain and empty enterprise.

Every Bible Scholar believes that God is Sovereign, but how does this relate to Angels and men, who are represented with a freedom to obey or disobey — who are rewarded for obedience and judged for disobedience? Is God capable of sovereignly creating free moral agents over whom He is the great governor and judge? Sovereign does not mean that God is the doer of all that is done, but that God is the judge and ruler over all as he sees fit. Is it wise scholarship to take things we can never fully comprehend or understand, and by our limited and finite reasoning, overthrow concepts that are blatant, obvious, repeated thousands of times, and inescapable — like:

- Man is responsible for his actions before a just and righteous Judge
- God’s judgments are justly based on man’s obedience or disobedience
- God is represented as pleased with obedience and displeased with disobedience
- Man is commanded to repent, obey, seek God, and believe God’s Word
- God is represented as... desirous of man’s good and salvation,
 - ... Angry at man’s refusal to submit and believe
 - ... Saddened at man’s destruction (Ez. 18, etc.)

- ... As calling those who won't listen (Rom. 10:21)
- ... As “provoking his people to jealousy” in order to save them (Romans 11:13,14 w/10:19)
- ... As blessing those who will listen,
- ... Warning those who are in danger of falling,
- ... Providing salvation for whosoever will...
- ... As merciful, patient, gracious, forgiving, etc.
- Etc. etc.

All of these obvious and often repeated truths are turned into mockery, hypocrisy, and deceit by the false doctrines of Calvinism. God cannot be patient, merciful, gracious, forgiving, loving, etc. unless He is dealing with free moral agents, otherwise he is patient with himself, merciful to himself, gracious to himself, forgiving himself, loving himself, angry at himself, and punishing people for no sin of their own. This is a mockery of the basest sort.

If Calvinistic interpretations be true, then it is all a show, and God is every actor on the stage — all just a drama with no other meaning than God's pleasure. O, but doesn't the Bible say it was all created for God's pleasure? Yes, but do you think so lowly of God that such a shameful show would please him? Do you perceive God as this vain and shallow? What kind of lunatic do we presume to paint God up as? One who sits and laughs at his own jokes, and cries at his own stories? Unless God indeed created man in God's own image with freedom to choose right or wrong, then God is just playing chess with himself.



It is the work of Satan to throw back on God the ultimate responsibility for Satan's fall, the angel's fall, and man's fall. Irenaeus quotes Justin Martyr as saying,

“Before the advent of the Lord, Satan never ventured to blaspheme God, inasmuch as he was not yet sure of his own damnation, since that was announced concerning him by the prophets only in parables and allegories. But after the advent of the Lord, learning plainly from the discourses of Christ and His apostles that eternal fire was prepared for him who voluntarily departed from God, and for all who, without repentance, persevere in apostasy, then, by means of a man of his sort, he, as if already condemned, blasphemes that God who inflicts judgment upon him, and imputes the sin of his apostasy to his Maker, instead of to his own will and predilection.”

No, this man is not infallible, but the fact that early Christians believed such is quite interesting, and is what we would expect from that subtle serpent - Satan. The early Christians had wonderful explanations about predestination and foreknowledge when combating the Gnostics and pagans who taught “fate”, which is basically what Calvinism teaches. Luther himself admits

that his teaching is the same as the pagan Romans, and freely quotes them to back up his doctrine. Even Luther saw the fatal contradictions in his doctrine when he says,

“This is the highest degree of faith — to believe that He is merciful, the very One who saves so few and damns so many. To believe that He is just, the One who according to His own will, makes us necessarily damnable.”

The claim of “proper hermeneutics” is also misleading. Let me give you an example from some antinomian notes on Romans sent to me,

“‘Analogy of faith’ means that Scripture is to be interpreted in light of Scripture and in accord with Scripture. The infallible rule of the interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. Any verse must be understood in light of the overall teaching of the Bible and it cannot contradict what the Bible clearly teaches elsewhere. The Bible cannot contradict itself.”

So far we all say, “AMEN”; but now lets see where this man goes with it,

“Example: Hebrews 10:26-30 at first glance may appear to teach that a true believer can lose his salvation, but by analogy of Scripture we know that his cannot be so (John 10:27-30; John 6:37-40; etc.).”

Now, do you see how we could turn around and use the same “good” rule for the opposite side? We could say that, “At first glance John 10:27-30 and John 6:37-40 may appear to teach unconditional eternal security, but by analogy of Scripture we know that this cannot be so (Hebrews 10:26-30; Romans 11:22; etc.).” So much for “proper hermeneutics”.

In light of our present discussion, I’m going to paste some points made on another occasion:



SOME ISSUES THAT CALVINISTS NEED TO PONDER:

1. Explain "man not having free-will", and "God's will always being done" in the light of the following passage: **Mt 23:37 "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, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!*"**
--Is Jesus being honest? Would he have gathered them if they were willing?
--Was it the will of God that they be willing or unwilling?
--Did they have power to exercise their will contrary to God's will?

2. Explain Proverbs 23:13,14 in the light of unconditional predestination:

13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell
(Strong's 7585 lwav sh@'owl, sheh-ole' or shol {sheh-ole'}; from 7592; Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates:--grave, hell, pit.
--Does child discipline really have anything to do with whether or not your child goes to hell?
--What is the use of child rearing, evangelism, and prayer, preaching, etc. if it all is unconditionally predestined one way or another, and man is passive in it?

3. Look up all the times God instructed the Children of Israel concerning "free-will" offerings, and tell us how this could be. Was this mockery? Is every command to obey, submit, repent, believe, etc. mockery? In the light of Calvinistic predestination, how is it not mockery?

4. Explain Calvinistic predestination and "sovereignty" in the light of Genesis 6:5-7

" And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. "

-- *How could God repent of His own Sovereign will?*

-- *How could God be displeased, if everthing was going according to plan?*

-- *Didn't God know exactly what would happen, and how?*

-- *Did God's Spirit striving with men not have the desired effect? (Gen. 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man,)*

5. *Does it do any good for us to pray?* What about the "LORD's prayer" Lu 11:2 " And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

--*Is God's will done in earth as it is in heaven?*

--*Why do we pray for his will to be done in earth as it is in heaven?*

6. *Is God a "respector of persons"?* The Bible says, NO; but unconditional predestination & election; limited atonement, etc. says that God is a respector of persons - He chooses some men, and rejects others without any regard to their actions, but simply His choosing of their persons. How can you explain Calvinism in light of this?

ROMANS 2: 5-11 "...the righteous judgment of God;

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

11 For there is no respect of persons with God."

Col 3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

1Pe 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

7. *Consider the following verses:*

Joel 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Two very important things need to be seen:

1. Calvinists say God created "evil"; but it must be understood that "evil" often and usually means "harm" — "natural evil", not "moral evil".

These two verses are an example. God brings harm upon people in righteous judgment. This is not SIN or WICKEDNESS, but righteous judgment, because He is the judge and Lord of the earth.

2. The Lord is represented as acting in relation to man's choices. Are we to believe this? Is this just part of the false drama? We may not understand how God's foreknowledge fits here, but what we cannot understand CANNOT BE USED to destroy the clear and plain revelation of God's Word. Was Joel's message true? Did it depend on the people? Verses such as these could be multiplied by the hundreds where God puts the responsibility on man and claims to act according to man's choices. I believe God is being truthful with us, and is not just playing chess with himself.

8. *The Bible says clearly that a man may indeed PERISH for whom Christ died:*

Romans 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

Destroy not him with thy meat, *for whom Christ died.*

Adam Clarke "From this verse we learn that a man for whom Christ died may perish, or have his soul destroyed; and destroyed with such a destruction as implies perdition; the original is very emphatic, mh-ekeinon apollue, uper ou cristov apeyane. Christ died in his stead; do not destroy his soul. The sacrificial death is as strongly expressed as it can be, and there is no word in the New Testament that more forcibly implies eternal ruin than the verb apolluw, from which is derived that most significant name of the Devil, o apolluwn, the DESTROYER, the great universal murderer of souls.

Romans 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Vine's Apollumi: signifies to destroy utterly — to perish, same word used in JOHN 3:16 &



I Cor. 8:9 “But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother *perish*, for whom *Christ died?*

12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Just listen to what the Bible is clearly saying! One may indeed perish for whom Christ died -- One who was a brother, and on the narrow road before you made him stumble -- thus Calvinism falls flat.