

Free Will or Calvinism

The Bible is clear that God is sovereign, eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent!¹ Furthermore, the Lord alone is the Author of salvation.² We are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.³ Scripture also explains that fallen man's "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"⁴ "And there is no one who...stirs himself up to take hold of [God]."⁵ Additionally, the "natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."⁶

Creation

However, there are two revelations that God has made known to every person. One is the testimony of creation. The 19th Psalm tells us that: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."⁷ Many other Scriptures elaborate on this,⁸ but none so clearly as Romans chapter one: "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."⁹

Conscience

The second revelation that God has given to every man is conscience. We are told in the Bible that after Adam and Eve sinned they knew both good and evil.¹⁰ They and their descendants now had an inward knowledge of right versus wrong. The Bible calls this *conscience*, and explains that every person shows the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.¹¹ *Conscience* literally means *with knowledge* or *perception*.¹² Conscience is the moral compass that the Lord has given to every person.

The Holy Spirit's main ministry to the lost world is to convict each conscience – revealing to every person his or her need for the Savior. "And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."¹³ The Holy Spirit convicts the entire world of sin against God, of Christ's righteousness, and of the Lord's coming judgment. Through the quickening of conviction, the Holy Spirit calls all to repent.

¹ Genesis 1:1; 1 Timothy 6:15; 1 John 3:20; Genesis 17:1

² Psalm 3:8; 68:20; Jonah 2:9; Revelation 7:10

³ Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6

⁴ Jeremiah 17:9

⁵ Isaiah 64:7

⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:14

⁷ Psalm 19:1-3

⁸ See also: Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:6, 23; Job 12:7-10; Psalm 97:6; Isaiah 40:21-26; Acts 17:26-30; Revelation 14:6-7; etc.

⁹ Romans 1:19-20

¹⁰ Genesis 3:22

¹¹ Romans 2:15. See also: Job 38:36; Psalm 40:8; Proverbs 1:20-33; Acts 9:5; Romans 1:32; John 8:9; etc.

¹² In the New Testament *conscience* is derived from the Greek word *sundeido* meaning: to see completely, to understand or become aware, and to be conscious or informed of: consider, know, be privy, beware of.

¹³ John 16:8

Scripture also explains that God “commands all men everywhere to repent.”¹⁴ *Repent means to change your mind.* When the Holy Spirit convicts each man of his sin, he can choose to resist the Holy Spirit, or acknowledge his sin. Concerning salvation, this is where man’s free will is exercised. Throughout the Bible we find many examples of those who repented when they were convicted, and others who hardened their hearts. Here are examples of each:

“Then [Jesus] said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.’”¹⁵

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart [convicted], and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent...’”¹⁶

“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves.”¹⁷

“It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”¹⁸

God’s life-giving Word

In addition to the revelation of creation and conscience, God’s Word itself is a life-giving source:

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”¹⁹

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”²⁰

“[God] said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!” Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.’””²¹

And what does the Lord’s energizing word command? –

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”²²

Jesus said: “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own

¹⁴ Acts 17:30-31

¹⁵ Luke 7:50

¹⁶ Acts 2:37-38

¹⁷ Luke 7:30

¹⁸ Acts 13:46

¹⁹ Hebrews 4:12

²⁰ 1 Peter 1:22-23

²¹ Ezekiel 37:4-5

²² Acts 17:30

authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. **And I know that His command is everlasting life.**”²³

God’s life-giving Word commands all men everywhere to repent. God’s Word commands everlasting life. The Lord could not be clearer! God convicts and enables, but man must choose to respond by repentance and faith – this is consistent from Genesis to Revelation.

God’s Word is the seed of life.²⁴ God’s Word is compared to life-giving water.²⁵ God’s Word is light.²⁶ When the Lord sends forth His Word, His life-imparting Word quickens and enables those dead in trespasses and sins. Throughout Scripture when the Lord sends out His Word some repent while others harden. They are enabled/quickened/convicted to be “born...of God” but they still must choose to respond to His grace. If they reject, the life-giving seed will be stolen or aborted. Thankfully, God’s grace is long-suffering – He repeatedly sends forth His Word which enables the dead to live.

Summary

When God said, “Let there be light”, there was light! The light did not argue, resist, or delay. When God commands the deer to give birth, she does. When the Lord directs a new-born spider to weave an intricate web, it acts without reservation. Only mankind was created in God’s image with a free will.²⁷ From Genesis to Revelation we see this. To teach that man has a will, but that he is unable or unwilling to choose good unless God forcibly regenerates first, contradicts the whole counsel of God and undermines the character of God.

Remember also that it is God who gives believers His heart to reach the lost. This sincere desire to reach every soul comes from our Creator – Who is love.²⁸ God cannot violate His nature. Our God-given regenerated conscience agrees with His inspired Word: “‘I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Therefore turn and live!’”²⁹

God is sovereign – the Bible is clear. Yet within His sovereignty God has chosen to give every person a true free will that He enables by His Holy Spirit. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is clear: “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”³⁰ God cannot lie, He can do no unrighteousness, and He is no respecter of persons. His promise is clear and true: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”³¹

²³ John 12:48-50

²⁴ Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23

²⁵ Isaiah 55:10-11

²⁶ 2 Peter 1:19

²⁷ Genesis 1:26-27. Angels also have a free will, but they were not created in God’s image, but rather as ministering spirits.

²⁸ 1 John 4:16

²⁹ Ezekiel 18:32

³⁰ Revelation 22:17

³¹ Romans 10:13

Calvinism

Today a dangerous error is growing in the church known as Calvinism. Calvinistic philosophy combines biblical truth with human reasoning, rather than relying solely on the inerrant Word of God. Calvinism correctly asserts that: God is sovereign; God has perfect foreknowledge; God alone saves; Salvation is by God's grace; and God elects whom He will. While these assertions are biblical, Calvinism draws certain conclusions that are unbiblical, including: man does not have a true free will; God's election is without condition; Jesus' atonement was limited to the elect; man cannot respond to the gospel unless God regenerates first; God damns those He does not elect.

Though this philosophy appeals to man's logic, it contradicts the entire theme of the Scriptures. The Bible teaches that: every man has a true free will; any man can respond by faith to the gospel; God elects those who accept His offer of salvation and choose to serve Him; Jesus died for all; God lovingly desires all to be saved.

God's sovereignty and man's free will are only a paradox within our time domain. This mystery will be resolved in eternity. Until then, we must teach and believe in the entire Word of God, not human philosophy that appeals to man's knowledge and pride. Let's now examine the five points of Calvinism.

Tulip

The five points of Calvinism have been summarized using the acronym T.U.L.I.P. Below, is the Calvinist's definition for each point, followed by a biblical refutation.

T – Total Depravity: By this the Calvinist means that man is spiritually dead in trespasses and is incapable of responding to the gospel unless God regenerates first.

Biblical response: Hundreds of Scriptures reveal that the unregenerate man – though a sinner by nature and choice – is able to respond to the gospel. God has given every man a conscience which is capable of choosing good or evil. God has chosen to save all who will repent and place their faith in Him.

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:11). Though the natural man is disposed toward evil, his God-given conscience allows him to know and choose good (righteously).

“Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22). After the curse, man knows both good and evil, and is able to choose good – including the Good News.

“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.” (1 Corinthians 11:7). Even after the curse, God's Word explains that man “is the image and glory of God”. Man knows good as well as evil (see also: James 3:9).

“So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire

is for you, but you should rule over it” (Genesis 4:6-7). Even after Cain rebelled in his heart, God pleaded with him to turn back to the Lord’s way. Sadly Cain chose to resist and reject God’s will (Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11).

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments” (Deuteronomy 30:15-16). God not only offers man a choice, He also commands (with His living Word!) that we choose to love the Lord.

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). *Choose* means we have a free will to choose.

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

“He who believes...will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:1-2). Cornelius feared God and responded to the light he received, and the Lord gave him more revelation. There is no indication that God forced Cornelius to respond to the gospel.

“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). On the day of Pentecost these men were called “devout” before being saved. They were upright – fearing God and desiring to do right – before being regenerated. Peter presented the gospel to them and 3,000 repented and believed.

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him” (Luke 2:25). Simeon was just (upright) and devout (careful) before being born again.

“‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved’” (Acts 16:31-32). Scripture reveals many examples of God-fearing men and women who responded to their conscience and turned to the Lord.

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). Over and over God pleads with man’s free will – “Trust Me and you will live!”

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). Faith in Christ means freely entrusting our lives to Him. Again, it is a choice.

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). This is God’s will!

U – Unconditional Election: Calvinism teaches that God decides on no basis whatsoever but by the mystery of His will to save the elect and to allow the rest to go to hell even though He could save them all.

Biblical response: This is not the God of love, mercy, grace, faithfulness, and righteousness revealed in the pages of Scripture. According to Calvinism, God is capricious and unpredictable. The true God of love has revealed His nature as merciful, loving, forgiving, patient, compassionate, dependable, and just to all. According to Scripture, God has revealed Himself to every man through creation and conscience.

Here is God's condition for election: Any who fear Him and turn from their way – trusting in Jesus Christ – will receive His grace unto salvation. God does not arbitrarily provide eternal life to some and withhold it from others. The Lord is righteous. He is no respecter of persons.

“Then they said to (Jesus), ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent’” (John 6:28-29). God's condition for election is repentance and faith.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). God's condition for election is belief in Jesus Christ!

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16).

“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is God's condition for election. God's election is not a mystery in the Scriptures.

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1).

“Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality” (2 Chronicles 19:7). God doesn't play favorites.

“The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails” (Zephaniah 3:5).

“No unrighteousness is in Him” (John 7:18).

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable ...without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty” (Exodus 34:6-7).

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy” (Psalm 103:8).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“God is love” (1 John 4:8).

“I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:47).

“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them” (Luke 9:56).

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

“For there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).

“God shows personal favoritism to no man” (Galatians 2:6). He accepts all who come to Him in faith.

“Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:11). Everyone is lost, therefore Jesus came to save all. This is God’s will for every man. It’s not a mystery!

“He will surely rebuke you if you secretly show partiality” (Job 13:10). If we show partiality or claim that God shows partiality, we will be rebuked.

The condition given in the Scriptures for election is “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Two sides of the same coin – turn/believe.

L – Limited Atonement. Calvinism asserts that Christ died only for the elect and His death is not efficacious for any others.

Biblical response: This is purely human reasoning (Greek humanism) and has no biblical basis. Of course Scripture teaches that Jesus died for the church and that His vicarious death saved the elect. Paul also writes that Christ “loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Does Paul mean that Jesus only loved and died for him? No, of course not. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture declares that Jesus died for every man.

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). Notice that the Lord *bought* their souls. He redeemed them on the cross, but they denied Him and refused His gift – and face certain destruction unless they repent.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29).

“Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world’” (John 4:42).

“We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:10). Over and over Scripture reiterates that Jesus is the Savior of every single person – however each person is responsible to appropriate God’s gift by faith. Sadly, many neglect His great gift of salvation and perish.

“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).

“By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14).

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). This is God’s will!

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

“Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Romans 5:18). God’s gift is presented to all.

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). Every person was under the law (Galatians 3:22-23), therefore Jesus came to redeem all.

“For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all” (Romans 11:32).

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:19-20).

“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28).

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus experienced death and hell for every person.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

“Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:10-11). This is good news *to all people!*

“For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:30-32).

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

“Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation” (Mark 3:28-29). In this verse, Jesus makes it clear that all sins will be forgiven the sons of men (every single person), except those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit (reject the testimony of Jesus Christ).

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11).

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Again, God commands and sends out His life-giving and quickening Word to all. And His command to all is repent and be saved.

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes...will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16).

“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).

I – Irresistible Grace. According to Calvinism, God causes the elect to respond to the gospel. He provides Irresistible Grace to the elect and damns the rest.

Biblical response: There are countless biblical examples of people (including God’s elect) resisting God’s grace. The Israelites – God’s chosen and elect people – were called to be a kingdom of priests and a light to the Gentiles (Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 42:6). Did they all fulfill their calling? Were they all saved and sanctified witnesses? No. God provides the grace, but we are responsible to respond by faith and obedience.

“Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 78:41).

“Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it” (Numbers 14:22-23).

“Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen” (Nehemiah 9:30).

“He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

“For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.’ But you would not” (Isaiah 30:15). Over and over again, free will is taught in the Bible.

“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea” (Isaiah 48:18).

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk in it’” (Jeremiah 6:16).

“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come” (Matthew 22:2-3).

“Now [Jesus] could do no mighty work there (because of their unbelief), except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them” (Mark 6:5).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34).

“You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51). We can resist God’s good will.

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’” (Romans 10:16).

“But to Israel He says: ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people’” (Romans 10:21).

“My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. ... So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please,

between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:1-4). God did everything needed to save and bless, yet many of His chosen people still resisted God's will.

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Here we have God's will expressed, yet we know that not all of Jesus' enemies repented.

P – Perseverance of the saints. God will not allow any of the elect to lose the salvation that He has sovereignly given them. The Westminster Confession states: "They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the degree of election." (Op. cit., XVII:i,ii.)

Biblical response: Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit seals those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). Jesus promised His sheep: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). However the gift of eternal life and the sealing of the Holy Spirit are for those who repent and believe. It is not because God arbitrarily zaps someone – forcing them to believe. All through the Bible, God offers man the freedom to choose to follow Him or reject Him.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3).

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

Furthermore, there are many Scriptures that warn that those who do not abide in Christ will perish. Therefore, God's Word teaches that we maintain our free will even after coming to Christ:

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6).

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance..." (Hebrews 6:4-6).

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20).

"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that" (1 John 5:16).

Conclusion

God created mankind in His image for fellowship and His good pleasure: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

God created us for His good pleasure and He assures us that His good pleasure is that all would repent and be saved: “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways!” (Ezekiel 33:11).

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

God's Word is clear. Creation testifies to all that there is a glorious Creator. The Holy Spirit convicts all of their sin against the Creator. Everyone has been given creation and conscience. This is the light that Jesus Christ – as Creator and Lawgiver – gives to every man coming into the world (John 1:9). Each individual can either accept or reject the gift of salvation. Denying this fact is unbiblical, misrepresents the character of God, and undermines the urgency of sharing the gospel. God is love, He desires to save all, and He passionately persuaded sinners to repent – so must we!

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38).

“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23).

Though God's sovereignty, wisdom, and ways are far beyond man's comprehension (Romans 11:33), “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3) – He has given us what we need to know. Therefore, may we obey God by reaching out in service and love and the proclamation of the gospel.

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17)!

More Biblical Reasons to Reject Calvinism

1) *The Love of Christ*. When a person is born-again, he is a new creation in Christ. God's Holy Spirit now resides in him (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17). A regenerated person has a love for the lost that was not present before conversion. For example, Saul was not praying for all people to be saved, nor was he risking his life to spread the gospel, until after he was converted. But once he was converted by God's grace, Paul, as a new creation in Christ, desired every person to be saved (Acts 26:29; Romans 10:1; 1 Corinthians 9:20-22; 1 Timothy 2:1-4). Paul's new love for the lost was not innate, but a gift from God's Spirit. What motivated Paul to reach every soul? Paul tells us "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). A believer's new desire to win all souls to Christ comes from God's love for all men (John 3:16). In contrast "limited election" makes it appear that believers are more loving and merciful than God. This is blasphemous. The only reason believers can love sacrificially is because God first loved us and placed His love in our hearts (1 John 4:19-21).

2) *Conscience*. The Bible has much to say about conscience. Conscience is our God-given knowledge of right versus wrong. Our conscience is a gift from God (actually it is the voice of God), leading us to the Savior (Romans 2 and 3). Once saved, we can draw near to God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:22). Our new, cleansed, and good conscience reveals that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). In contrast an evil conscience wants souls damned (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

3) *Ecclesiastes*. The context of the Book of Ecclesiastes is of a man who is "under the sun". In fact, this expression is used throughout Ecclesiastes and is repeated 27 times in this book. It describes the natural man's perspective and perception of life. And while it is true that the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit, Ecclesiastes reveals several things that the natural man can understand. Chapters 1, 2 and 5 explain that the man "under the sun" can realize that all his temporary works and lusts are vain and of no lasting value. Chapter 3 explains that the natural man perceives that there are cycles to life and that God "has put eternity" into man's heart (3:11). Therefore unsaved people are aware that there is an eternal realm, that there is a God, and there is past, present and future. Throughout Ecclesiastes it is also clear that the natural man knows good versus evil. In other words, every man has a God-given conscience. Chapter 7 explains that the natural man realizes that every person is a sinner (7:20), and that God originally made man upright, but man has since rebelled (7:29). Chapter 8 shows that we all know that death comes to all. And several passages reveal that every man knows that God will judge each person (3:17; 11:9; 12:14). Finally, in the last chapter, the natural man is exhorted to remember his Creator while he is young, and concludes with "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Therefore, this book reveals that Total Depravity (as taught by Calvinism) is incorrect. While man is inclined toward evil, selfishness and vanity, he also knows good, justice, knows about God, knows about future judgment, eternity, and has been given the grace and insight to choose life!

3) *Christ's Bride*. Believers are called the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7; 21:9). "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). The Lord has proposed to any who will listen (Matthew 22:2-9). And He draws all with cords of love, by His sacrificial offering (John 12:32; Hosea 11:4). Just as Isaac through his servant proposed to Rebekah, so too the Lord through His Holy Spirit proposes to each person. And just as Rebekah had a choice: "Then they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go.'" (Genesis 24:58), we too have a choice. God's love proposal demands a choice. Though the Lord is altogether lovely, and He woos all, He will not force Himself upon a person. Therefore "irresistible grace" runs contrary to the free marriage proposal revealed in Scripture.

4) *Witness of Creation*. There are countless examples in creation that reveal God's personal love for all of His creation. One such example is snow crystals (Job 38:22). Snow crystals form in the clouds where water vapor condenses and crystallizes into ice. As the crystals grow, remarkable patterns emerge. Each crystal is complex, symmetrical, and beautiful. And every day trillions of God's transparent treasures fall to earth for our discovery and joy – yet no two are exactly alike. The spiritual application is clear: As each snow crystal is distinctly patterned, so each human, each soul, is unique and of special concern to our Lord. As God's creative hand forms ice crystals with loving care, so too, He intends to form each person to reflect His glory. Compared to the rest of creation, snow crystals are simple, yet the Great Architect's attention – even to the countless snow crystals He forms each day – is an unmistakable mark of His care. This runs counter to special election and double predestination.

5) *All Have Sinned*. A foundational, biblical truth is that all have sinned. There is none righteous except Christ. As lost sinners, we all need a Savior. Thankfully, the Bible repeatedly states: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); "Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6); "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). God makes no distinction here. Christ came to save all!

6) *Age of Accountability*. Even many Calvinists will acknowledge that all aborted children and young children (and any who have not reached understanding such as those with Down's syndrome), are covered by Christ's atoning sacrifice and will be in heaven. Jesus Himself said: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). More biblical support is found in the incident when Israel complained in the wilderness. God said that all those from twenty years old and above would fall in the wilderness, but He swore to bring their little ones – who had no knowledge of good and evil – into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:29-32; Deuteronomy 1:39). It is clear that God did not hold the children accountable for this sin. Another case is when King David's young child died. David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). And, of course, David joined his son in Paradise when he died (Psalm 23:6). Further indication is found in the Book of Jonah. God reasons with Jonah, "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left...?" (Jonah 4:11). Here God is apparently referring to the children and anyone who could not discern between right and wrong. Most importantly Scripture states that Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, these and other Scriptures indicate that those who do not yet understand good

and evil are covered by His blood (John 1:29; Romans 5:18; Colossians 1:19-20; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 11:24; etc.). This fact flies in the face of arbitrary election, total depravity, and limited atonement. Sometimes we as fallen human beings foolishly think that we are more upright or compassionate than God. This is utter nonsense. The truth is we would not even know right from wrong unless the Lord gave us His moral law in the first place. Remember the Judge of all the earth will always do what is right (Genesis 18:25).

7) *God's Universal Love*. Starting in Genesis, God pronounced judgment on the serpent – declaring that the Seed of the woman shall bruise his head.³² Jesus is the Seed of the woman and He has destroyed the works of the devil on the cross.³³ As this first prophecy in the Bible anticipated, Jesus is the Savior of the world and the Savior of all men.³⁴

After this, God restated His love for the whole world with the Noahic covenant, which promises an “everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”³⁵ Following this, to Abraham God promises: “I will make you a great nation ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”³⁶ Later, in the Law of Moses and the Prophets God again shares His wider perspective and His great heart of love for all people by declaring Israel to be a kingdom of priests on behalf of the rest of the nations,³⁷ and a light to the Gentiles.³⁸ And in the New Testament, Jesus states clearly “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”³⁹ God’s great love, forgiveness, and salvation are available to all! When you encounter someone who thinks they’re beyond God’s reach, assure them that God’s love extends to all!

Conclusion: Calvinism presents only one side and misrepresents God’s character. It can also produce a fatalistic attitude in believers which may undermine the real urgency to share the gospel with whosoever. Or it may produce a pride in believer that “we are the chosen ones” but the rest are damned. Remember God is not capricious. He has revealed His good will to us. Therefore may we renounce any “ism” that is not biblically balanced and may the love of Christ compel us to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

³² Genesis 3:15

³³ Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8

³⁴ 1 Timothy 4:10; John 4:42; 1 John 4:14

³⁵ Genesis 9:16

³⁶ Genesis 12:2-3

³⁷ Exodus 19:5-6

³⁸ Isaiah 42:6

³⁹ John 3:16-17

Witnessing in the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts records the actions of the first century believers. These apostles and disciples learned how to witness from the Master. We are told in Acts, that the first century disciples walked in the fear of the Lord, proclaimed the Word of God everywhere, and a great many souls were saved.

How did the disciples preach in the Book of Acts? Here is a summary of their sermons throughout the entire book.⁴⁰ When sharing with the lost, the disciples referred to:

Old Testament prophecies no less than 17 times.⁴¹

The Law of Moses approximately 14 times.⁴²

Christ's resurrection at least 12 times.⁴³

Repentance at least 8 times.⁴⁴

The coming judgment 5 times.⁴⁵

The historical background a few times.⁴⁶

And there were 2 significant references to creation.⁴⁷

Why did they witness this way? Well, God's moral law reveals the knowledge of sin and convicts us of our need for the Savior. The prophets point us to the only solution. The resurrection proves Christ's claims and assures us that there is hope. And, of course, without repentance there is no salvation. The cross is where God's justice was served and His mercy shown, and the reality of eternal judgment makes our decision urgent and imperative. The historical background explains God's grand plan for mankind, and special creation declares to all our accountability to the Creator.

While this summary is not exhaustive, it does reveal the biblical method and emphasis that the early church used to reach the lost. Please note: Predestination and election are not preached in any of their public messages. There are a few references to God's sovereignty and foreknowledge (Acts 2:23; 2:39; 15:18), however, the doctrine of predestination/election was not the focus, and never the sermon, of the early church. They knew God to be sovereign, omnipotent, and omniscient, but their commission was to declare the simple Gospel to whosoever.

⁴⁰ We are repeatedly told that they preached Jesus and the Word of God. This list highlights specifically how they preached Jesus and His Word. In addition to the main themes listed above, they preached the cross several times (Acts 2:23; 2:36; 5:30; 10:39); baptism; and personal testimonies and miracles, etc.

⁴¹ Acts 2:16-21; 2:24-35; 3:18; 3:19-21; 3:22-25; 4:11; 7:37; 8:28-35; 9:20-22; 10:43; 13:33-41; 13:44-48; 17:2-3; 18:28; 24:14; 26:22-23; 28:23-29

⁴² Acts 2:23; 2:36; 3:13-16; 4:10; 5:30; 7:39-43; 7:51-53; 8:20-23; 13:28-41; 14:15-17; 17:24-31; 24:24-25; 26:9-11; 28:23-29

⁴³ Acts 2:24-35; 3:13-16; 3:19-21; 3:26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40-41; 13:23-41; 17:2-3; 17:31; 24:15-21; 26:4-23

⁴⁴ Acts 2:38; 3:19-21; 3:26; 5:31; 8:20-23; 14:15-17; 17:29-31; 26:20

⁴⁵ Acts 3:22-25; 10:42; 13:44-48; 17:31; 24:24-25

⁴⁶ Acts 3:13-16; 7:2-53; 13:16-41

⁴⁷ Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31 (See also: Acts 2:11; 7:50). Specifically they preached creation when sharing with non-Jews (Greeks) – those who did not yet believe in the one, true Creator.