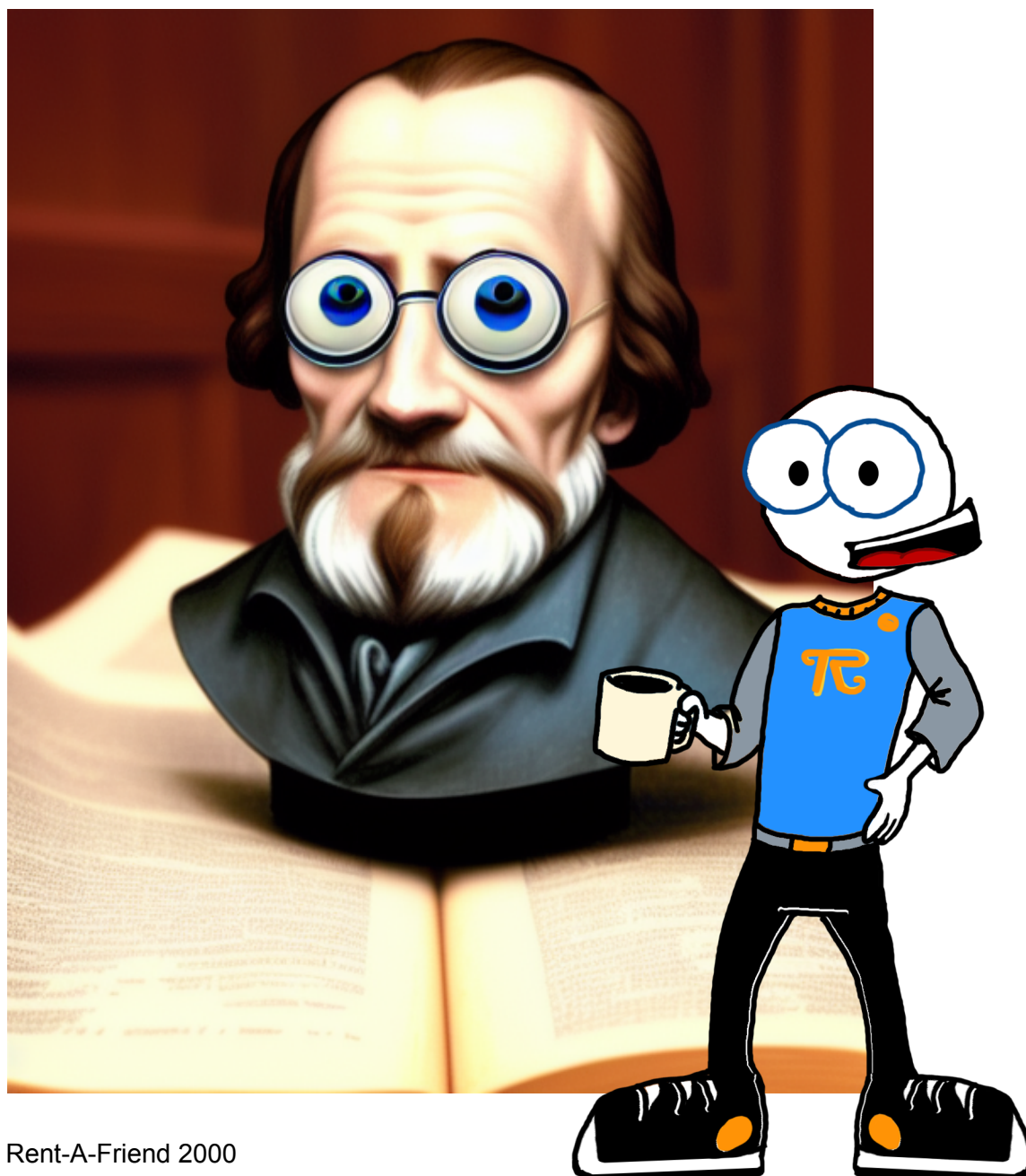


Tip Toeing Through the TULIP

Or, Why Calvinism seems to be Bafflingly Stupid



Written by Rent-A-Friend 2000

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INTRO: Tip Toeing Through the TULIP

(or, I watched nine hours of John Piper so you don't have to)

I wasn't raised a Calvinist, but I have been immersed in Calvinistic churches for a long many years now, and most of the pastors I listened to online have been Calvinists. So, I knew it existed, and I knew Calvinism was locked in an eternal struggle against the evil forces of Arminianism.

Those filthy heretics.



This is the hand that slapped a thousand Arminians like Will Smith slapped Chris Rock!

And the fact is, it's not something a lot of pastors tend to address directly. It's sort of a background assumption that they hold, but don't talk about, like the value of the Electoral College, or the benefits of Vitamin D. And with the knowledge that Calvinism is rooted in the clear teaching of scripture, I occasionally wondered how ANYONE could be foolish enough to be an Arminian. But it slowly began to occur to me that, as long as I had been aware of this debate, I couldn't name a single Arminian. Eventually I realized that I had only heard ABOUT Arminianism, but I had never heard about it FROM an Arminian.

As someone who debunks Evolution by quoting evolutionists, and who debunks Islam by quoting the Quran, and as someone who spent weeks watching far more videos about the flat earth model than is necessary to cause lasting brain damage, I decided I needed to find an Arminian to tell me, in his own filthy heretical words, why he rejects the Bible. Assuming he did. Which, of course he did. Heretics.

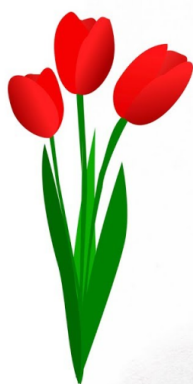
By Googling for a bit, I discovered Dr Leighton Flowers of Soteriology 101, and here's the weird thing: He's not a Calvinist OR an Arminian. No one ever told me there was another position. It was like discovering that there are people whose computers aren't running Windows OR Mac OS. It blew my tiny mind. Dr. Flowers calls himself a Provisionist, which just means that he believes that God provided salvation for all people through Jesus, whether they accept it or not. And I was all, "well, yeah, duh."

And then I was all, "Wait... Calvinists don't believe that? Hold up. What DO they believe?"

I listened to a lot of Leighton Flower's programs wherein he goes through the doctrines and arguments and proof texts of Calvinists showing that Calvinism isn't Biblical. So now I knew that Calvinists were heretics who rejected the clear teaching of scripture... so I needed to go back and listen to Calvinists explain themselves in their own words so I could get a clear understanding of both sides again.

And that brings me to John Piper.

I found a teaching series from popular Calvinist pastor John Piper teaching on TULIP, which is the acronym through which the main doctrine of Calvinism is summed up. I'm going to teach you what Piper said, so you can see why I'm confused by the whole thing, and how this debate doesn't encourage me to be optimistic about the future of the human race. But I was pretty cynical to begin with, so it's not all Piper's fault.



Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irrresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints

TULIP stands for:

Total depravity,
Unconditional election,
Limited atonement,
Irresistible grace, and
Perseverance of the saints.

Unless they are teaching on these issues directly, and from a Calvinistic point of view in order to teach Calvinism itself, almost no Calvinist would describe these in a way that anyone in a Christian church would disagree with. All of us would just join hands and sing Kumbaya together. Because nothing in that list sounds anything but Biblical, right? And when these Calvinists preach the gospel, they preach THE GOSPEL. So, it MUST be Biblical, right?

Not so fast. Let's look at these one at a time. Remember, I listened to NINE HOURS of John Piper so you don't have to.

I did that for you.

Total Depravity: While a lot of people define this to merely mean that all of creation is touched by sin, and thus that the depravity- the evil- of our rebellion against God has touched everything, including every part of us- this is NOT what Total Depravity means to Calvinism. On Calvinism, Total Depravity means that EVERY SINGLE HUMAN is born, not only a sinner, but as someone who instinctively HATES GOD and CANNOT understand nor accept the Gospel. Remember that word "Cannot" because we're going to come back to it.

This is not just a belief that we are born bent toward sin and selfishness, but rather that we are born HATING God and unable to change, and also unable to even WANT to stop hating God. Our depravity is total, not because we are always as evil as we could possibly be, but because our sinful selves are totally bent against God and totally unable and unwilling to change.

Maybe this is a terrible metaphor, but I don't watch professional sports. I don't want to. I don't even WANT to want to watch sports. I hope I never develop an interest in any professional sport or team. It's kind of like that if you swap out Major League Baseball for the Gospel.

Unconditional Election is the doctrine that God chooses who will and who will not be saved. FULL STOP. No alternatives, no options. And you may be thinking, "Oh, sure, they mean God chose to save those who put their faith in Jesus Christ..." and you are 100% wrong. That is NOT what they mean, and they curse you as a heretic who is putting your faith in the works of man. What Calvinism means is that when people get to heaven, it is because GOD chose to put them there, and when people get to hell it is because God chose to put them there, and you will notice I didn't just now say anything about their choice to put their faith in Christ or their choice to reject Christ. On Calvinism, it is not the Christian Church who is elect the way that Israel was elect, but

rather that each individual Christian is a Christian because God decided before time began that they would be. Keep your theological seatbelts on, because we're about to dive deeper into this idea.

Limited Atonement is not about the *application* of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross, it is about the scope of its *intent*. According to Calvinism, Jesus did NOT die for the sins of the whole world like the Bible seems to say. Jesus ONLY died for those select people who God picked to be saved. A consistent Calvinist CANNOT preach "Jesus died for you!" to a room full of sinners. He can only preach "Jesus might have died for some of you, but probably not most of you. He hates most of you and wants you to go to hell, because somehow that gives Him glory." You think I'm being sarcastic or exaggerating or something, right? I'm not. Hold on. The rabbit hole gets deeper.

Allow me to clarify. On Calvinism, Jesus went to the cross with a predetermined list of those persons for whose sins he was dying. He was not- on Calvinism- merely dying for the sins of the whole world so that, whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. He was, if you pardon the metaphor- like Santa on Christmas Eve. That sleigh is not loaded up with toys for all the children of the world. It ONLY has toys for the boys and girls he has already put on the NICE list. In a sense, Jesus went to the cross the same way- with salvation and grace ONLY for those on the NICE list- although in this case, it's not based on their niceness or anything else we can know. That list doesn't get made after you choose to be naughty or nice. You're on one of those lists before you are born and the sleigh was loaded up from eternity past. And in case you are tempted to think Calvinism is teaching that we are put on the "Nice" list through faith, and not by works so that no one can boast, you are about to learn that faith is not something we CAN do. It's one of the gifts on the sleigh for those who were put on the Nice list before they were born.

Irresistible Grace is just as it sounds- no one can resist the grace of God. At first, this sounds good, right? Sure! The love of God is powerful and overwhelming! Some of us have felt that! But this is not what Calvinism is teaching. Remember when I said "EVERY SINGLE HUMAN is born, not only a sinner, but as someone who instinctively HATES GOD and CANNOT understand nor accept the Gospel"? That was Total Depravity. And remember when I said "when people get to heaven, it is because GOD chose to put them there"? That was Unconditional Election. Now we put these ideas together to ask, if people are born totally depraved, and salvation is based on God's application of LIMITED Atonement to individuals chosen by His Unconditional Election, then how are people saved?

We all know this. “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast...” (Ephesians 2:8-9) We choose to put our faith in Jesus, and He gives to us his righteousness, as our sins are paid for on the Cross...

Oh, wait, no. In order to choose to put our faith in Jesus, we would have to overcome our innate instinct to hate God and reject the Gospel. We can't do that. We can't even WANT to do that. This is where the Calvinist points to the part of Ephesians 2 that says “It is the gift of God.” Yes, they say, it is through faith you are saved, but if it was by choosing to put your own trust in Jesus, you would be DOING SOMETHING to save yourself (by WORKS so that you COULD boast). That means you cannot choose to have faith in Jesus. Also, that whole total depravity thing. You don't even want to. You're like a child being offered broccoli. You can't want it. You don't even want to want it. You hate it. But like a good father, God can take that plateful of faith broccoli and shove it down your unwilling throat. But once he does, you're glad he did.

That's actually a fairly accurate metaphor.



Let me clarify again. On Calvinism, if you are saved, you are chosen before time began, for no reason we can know, and are among the “elect.” Jesus died for the elect, and ONLY the elect. Then you are born, the same God hating sinner as everyone else. At some point, God forces you to believe in the gospel, and after that you discover that, as a result, you have faith in Jesus. Where most of us

assumed that Jesus taught that when we put our faith in Him, we are born again, the Calvinist says, NO! When you are born again, *then* you are given the gift of faith. When Santa lands the renewal sleigh on the roof of your heart, you are given the gift of faith, and it is a gift you cannot refuse.

That's a terrible metaphor but I stand by it.

So you cannot choose to have faith, and you cannot choose to accept the Grace of God. And you can't resist it. God chooses you, and applies that grace and faith to you. You are ENTIRELY PASSIVE. You don't even choose to accept the free gifts of salvation and faith. You CANNOT choose. You cannot even want to. While not necessary to the rest of this, it is worth noting that a lot of Calvinists argue that you

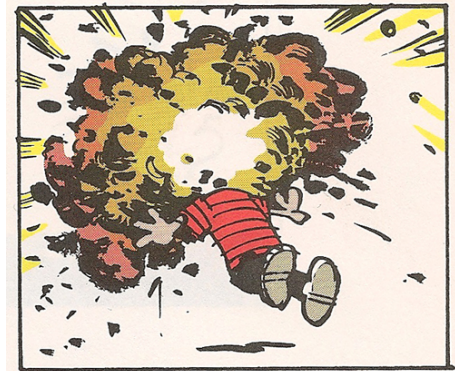
cannot choose ANYTHING. And I mean, you can't choose to be saved, you can't choose to reject the Gospel, you can't choose what sins to commit, and you can't choose what cereal to have for breakfast this morning. Everything that ever happens anywhere- every action, thought, feeling, behavior and result are all entirely determined by God. EVERYTHING.

But when you do bad things, it's still your fault. How do they square that circle?
"Mystery." And that's the best answer you're going to get.

Perseverance of the Saints is where I feel like John Piper's whole Calvinism falls apart completely. As he explains this, he presents the Perseverance of the Saints, not as a gift like faith, but as a RESPONSIBILITY. He includes a story where a woman- a Calvinist- decided that, since she is ELECT, and CHOSEN BY GOD, and has been given IRRESISTIBLE GRACE, that her faith and salvation- both the choice of God alone for His glory- are gifts she cannot choose and thus cannot lose, and so her salvation is entirely secure without question. And to celebrate, she takes a lover and cheats on her husband. After all, if she can't even choose to have faith, then her sins can't undo God's eternal election of her- a choice that Jesus died for. Right?

And Piper tells her that, if she doesn't stop cheating on her husband, she will go to hell.

This almost made my brain explode.



See if you can follow the logic here: We are born sinners who hate God and who CANNOT understand nor accept the gospel- and we CANNOT do any different. God picks a small select few of us to give his irresistible grace to, the result of which is we have faith in Jesus. But then we apparently have the ability to sin enough to lose the irresistible grace and go to hell.

But as a Calvinist who rejects our ability to make choices, isn't Piper actually saying that IF GOD CHOOSES TO MAKE US SIN, we can sin enough to lose the salvation that we didn't choose? Because, again, on the view of many Calvinists, we don't even choose which shoe to put on first, let alone whether or not we will be faithful to our spouses. So if that woman was choosing to cheat on her husband, and her choices are all determined by God, then Piper's view would be that she can lose her salvation if God

determines that she is going to keep sinning. Do you see the theological merry go round this turns into when you start to fall down the rabbit hole?

Other Calvinists would argue that Piper is wrong here, and that **Perseverance of the Saints** is not about our ability to lose our salvation because we choose to sin. As RC SPROUL puts it, “.. the perseverance of the saints is this: If you have it—that is, if you have genuine faith and are in a state of saving grace—you will never lose it. If you lose it, you never had it.”

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tulip-and-reformed-theology-perseverance-saints>)

So not every Calvinist believes the same things, but it does little to fix the whole situation.

TULIP in a nutshell is, You hate God when you are born, and you can't even want to repent. Before Time began, God made a Naughty/Nice list (which is actually a Saved/Damned list) which is not actually based on who is Naughty or Nice. At some point in your life, the elect (Nice List) are saved through the slice of salvation Jesus earned just for their sins on the cross. They cannot choose this salvation, nor can they resist it when God decides it is time to receive it. After they are saved and changed they are able to admit they are sinners and repent, and they are given the gift of faith. And depending on who you ask, you either continue in that faith until you die, or you never had it, or maybe you have to work hard to keep it by avoiding sin, or maybe you have the option to sin away your irresistible grace. Like I said, it depends who you ask.

The debate over this can spread over a lot of Bible passages, arguments, metaphors and proof texts. When it comes to most doctrine, I find it saves a lot of time to simply see what Jesus said. He said this:

*Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel of God. “The time is fulfilled,” He said, “and the kingdom of God is near. **Repent and believe in the gospel!**”*

Mark 1:14-15

Repent in the Greek is **metanoéo** and it means to change one's mind or purpose. Jesus is giving a command- change your mind. Reject lies and embrace the truth- the good news. DO THIS.

Calvinists will say that we CANNOT choose to do that. After all, salvation is by grace, and doing ANYTHING would be adding our own work to Jesus, even just putting our faith in Jesus. So, again, what did Jesus say?

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

John 6:28-29

Apparently Jesus said, "OK, if you want to call faith a work, it's a work, but it's the one you have to do."

If the Calvinists are right, then Jesus is giving a command that he KNOWS that no man is capable of obeying. But Jesus calls all people to repent- to change their minds. He is not preaching that SOME of you will be given faith by God. He is not saying that repentance will HAPPEN TO some of you. He is not visiting those select few he knows he is going to die for to let them know in advance that, someday soon they will be his disciples. He is telling all to repent and believe. It's a command, not a warning, and it's the same message he sends his disciples out with.

But that means it's not irresistible. Jesus thinks we can resist the command.

And it means it's not forced on us from the outside. Jesus thinks we can choose to obey the command.

But that means we aren't born unable to obey the command. Jesus thinks we have the ability to respond to His command to repent.

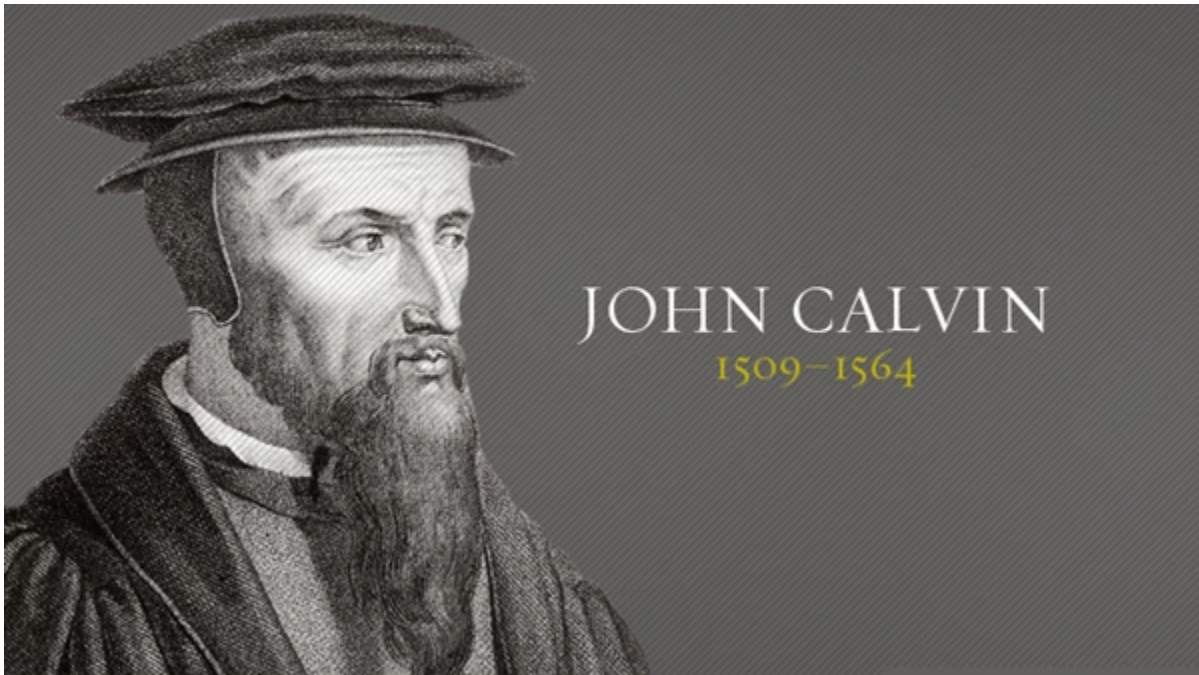
So maybe Jesus wants all people to be saved. Maybe he really wants all people to respond to His command and repent, and be saved. So maybe he died for all of them. But one thing seems clear- Jesus was not a Calvinist. For me, that's all that matters.

Chapter 1: Questions for Calvinists part 1- *WHY T?*

As you may know, I have been writing occasional articles about Calvinism where I always start by saying I don't want to become the kind of blog that writes articles about Calvinism. But when something seems to me worth deep and Biblical questions, as well as being potential for a cheap and easy laugh, I start typing away. I don't get paid for this, so I'm always looking for ways to make my job easy, to cut corners, and to give you the worst possible experience.

Oh, wait, no, that's not me. That's the Biden Administration. (*rim shot*)

See? Cheap and easy, like Dollar Store Cookies. But now I'm thinking about "She Hulk" and wondering if I should have said Disney +... Anyway...



I have been trying to get Calvinists to explain Calvinism to me, because I find it to be astoundingly absurd and incompatible with the Bible. Look, like most things I disagree with, I can see why people *think* they accept it.

"Pollution bad!" Ok, I'm a Climate change activist.

"Women's rights!" Fine, I'm pro-choice,

"Love is Love!" Right, fly that rainbow flag and such...

Like, if all you have is the bumper sticker, and you're too lazy to look any deeper, which, let's face it, most people are...Well, remember "Black Lives matter"? That's all I'm saying.

So when a lot of Christians hear "Calvinism teaches that people are sinners and God is Sovereign and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves so God must do everything to save us from sin, etc." I get it. All of that is true. The Bible teaches it. Also, it's called "Reformed Theology," implying that this is the Biblical theology the reformers went back to when they abandoned the Catholic Church, so it *MUST* be in the Bible, and it's called the *Doctrines of Grace*, which doesn't even need additional marketing. But it does need more explaining, and thus all of my questions.

I went Tip Toeing Through TULIP a while back, and since then I have tried to ask some Calvinists to explain things to me, but so far I haven't learned a whole lot. These are people who make sometimes very lengthy YouTube videos defending Calvinism and attacking non-Calvinists, but thus far what answers I have gotten have only made me more confused. So, I just started posting questions on my blog and hoped that my readers would point me in the right direction so I could learn. For once, I'm not telling you what I think and making arguments to prove you should agree. I'm telling you what *I think I know* in the hopes you can help me learn more. Because either I have a lot to learn, or Calvinism is ridiculous heresy. I'm trying to be charitable.

Let's Start with the T of TULIP: Total Depravity

This sounds fine on a bumper sticker, but the more I think about it, the more it unravels like a cheap Christmas sweater. In short, **TOTAL DEPRAVITY** means **EVERY human is born, not only a sinner, but as someone who instinctively HATES GOD and CANNOT understand nor accept the Gospel.**

Every single person, BORN this way. That's where Calvinism starts.

This is not just a belief that we are born *bent* toward sin and selfishness, but rather that we are born HATING God and unable to change, and also unable to even WANT to stop hating God. Some would even argue that we are born unable to recognize that we hate God and don't understand the Gospel. We're trapped in a prison of sin but we can't see the chains and bars, and we fight to stay in our cell. Our depravity is total, not because we are always as evil as we could possibly be, but because our sinful selves are totally bent against God and totally unable and unwilling to change, and unable to realize this about ourselves. And who decided this would be the case? God did.



My main question about this system is: **WHY?**

WHY would God do that? And WHY do you think God would do that?

I would suspect that any Calvinist would say that this is how God decreed it to be, and He brings His will to pass, and so the reason we are all born hating God and the Gospel is because God wants it that way and makes it that way. But that is literally

their answer for EVERYTHING: Because God decreed it and He controls EVERYTHING.

But doesn't this mean that we are all sinners *because God decided that we should all be sinners?* Like, God COULD have made us all willing and able to follow his moral commandments, or even SOME of us, but after thinking about it He said, *"Nah. They should all be BORN hating me."*

Really? But this is the same God who gave us the moral law and demands we NOT sin... which we cannot obey because He made us sinners. REALLY? Calvinism teaches that God is HOLY and commanded us, *"Thou Shalt NOT Lie,"* but then He also decided to make us so that we were BORN LIARS WHO WANT TO LIE. Which means, His commandment is essentially, *"I command you to always tell the truth, which you can't do because I made you liars."*



Am I getting this wrong somehow? Because it sounds insane. It's like God commanding Cows to nest in the tops of trees like sparrows and then condemning them as evil when they do not. I have difficulty ascribing that to God's holy justice, since He made cows incapable of climbing trees and with absolutely no desire to.

A few years back I had a disagreement with another blogger who said *"God made us to rebel"* and I said this was absurd heresy, but perhaps he was just being a

consistent Calvinist? Although, it still sounds like absurd, unbiblical heresy.

The point of my question is, WHY would God decide to make us break His moral laws? But then **some** Calvinists think we **can choose** to accept any belief or fact **EXCEPT the Gospel**. I think this is actually worse. They have decided that Total Depravity means that God has given us the capacity of thought and reason, where by we can understand and accept as true anything- facts of history, economic theories, even false religions- except the one thing on which our eternal destinies depend: the Gospel. For SOME reason, it brings glory to God to make us incapable of understanding or accepting the Gospel? WHY? Seriously. WHY would God do something like this, and what in the Bible makes this idea seem at all reasonable to you? Because the Bible seems to say the opposite over and over, from cover to cover.

David Did Not Teach This

Let me give you at least one bad reason that some people are going to offer to head it off at the pass. Psalm 51:5 says

**“Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”**



And people will try to argue that this teaches that **we** are all sinful AT BIRTH, and, in fact, sinful from conception. But this is a Psalm from David, and he doesn't say **WE**. He is only talking about **himself**. This is not a verse of doctrine talking about what it means to be human, but a reflection on his own sinfulness, which here he describes his own evil as staining his whole life, all the way back to the beginning. He is not saying that he was literally sinful from the moment

he was conceived, but rather he is saying this is how heavy his present guilt feels. This is a Psalm, thus poetry, thus the least literal of all Bible passages. Also, in the very next verse David says,

**“Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.”**

So unless we are to believe David was literally learning theology in utero, as a fetus, then we have reason to think that some of this is literary imagery, meant to poetically express ideas and not to teach hard doctrine. Either way, David isn't talking about EVERYONE, but only himself, so this cannot be used to ground a doctrine about the entire human race.

I Don't Think Jesus Believed This

Mark 1: 14-15 says,

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The word "repent" in Greek is *metanoieite*, which Strong's Concordance defines as "*from meta and noieo; to think differently or afterwards, i.e. Reconsider.*" Essentially, Jesus is saying "Change your mind!" He also says "Believe the Gospel (The Good News)."

Think about it: Jesus is COMMANDING these people to change their minds, and to believe the Gospel. But if Total Depravity was true, Jesus would know that NONE of the people hearing him were capable of obeying this command. Calvinism teaches that all people are TOTALLY incapable of changing their own minds and choosing to believe the truth. Believing, or FAITH, is a gift that God gives in Calvinism. So faith is, on Calvinism, *something that God does TO YOU* and something you would NEVER choose to do even if you could, which you cannot. Changing your mind is something God does TO YOU.

In fact, most Calvinists would teach that you can't believe until AFTER God saves and "regenerates" you. They teach that God takes the dead, inert sinner, and brings him to life, and AFTER THAT the sinner, now forgiven and made alive, is capable of seeing that he was a sinner, and having been given the gift of faith, he is now able to repent.

So, if Jesus was a Calvinist, wouldn't he be preaching, not a command, but a prophecy that SOME of them were going to be given the gift of faith, and after they were changed by God, they would repent? Also, the L of Calvinism's TULIP is Limited Atonement, which means Jesus didn't die for ALL sinners, but only for those who were chosen to be given the gift of faith. So, are we meant to think Jesus didn't know who the elect were, or are we meant to assume Jesus didn't preach to everyone, but only picked out those

elect in the town he was in and preached some warning of impending repentance and faith to them? I don't see any way to make this compatible with Calvinism.

Reading the Bible, it looks an awful lot like Jesus just went around telling everyone to repent and believe, as if it was something any of them could do. But I only say that because it is in fact exactly what the Bible says.

OK, my Calvinist friends. Head on over to your email application of choice and explain this Total Depravity thing to me. WHY would God do that to us? Why do you think it compatible with the Bible to say God did that? And how do you explain Jesus' preaching in light of Calvinism?

Thanks for helping me learn. And thanks for letting me be your Rent-A-Friend.

Chapter 2: Questions for Calvinists part 2- Casting a Vote Against Election

Welcome back to my “Questions for Calvinists” series wherein I am charitably assuming it possible that I simply do not understand Calvinism at all. From what *I THINK* I understand, Calvinism is a ridiculous pile of heretical nonsense, but it is professed by SO MANY smart and Godly men that I can’t yet accept that I understand it properly. So I am asking questions to see if I can learn to understand it, or if I already do.

If you remember my explanation of Calvinism’s TULIP, which I got from watching 9 hours of John Piper, you’ll recall that the U is **Unconditional Election** .

Unconditional Election is the doctrine that God chooses who will and who will not be saved.

FULL STOP. No alternatives, no options. No choices to be made. God already decided.



And you may be thinking, “Oh, sure, they mean God chose to save those who put their faith in Jesus Christ...” and **you are 100% wrong**. That is NOT what they mean, and they curse you as a heretic who is putting your faith in the works of man. Because on this system, “putting your faith in Jesus” is doing a work to save yourself, which means you are claiming to be your own savior. I’m not even making that up.

What Calvinism means is that when people get to heaven, it is because GOD chose to put them there, and when people get to hell it is because God chose to put them there, and you will notice I didn’t just now say anything about their choice to put their faith in Christ or their choice to reject Christ. On Calvinism, we don’t choose. Our “choices” are determined by God. Not merely foreknown, and not merely allowed- DETERMINED.

Salvation, on Calvinism, is not something that God grants us because we choose to put our faith in Jesus. Faith is something God does to us, not something we choose to do. When Jesus preaches “repent and believe” the Calvinist interprets this to mean, “you

were born incapable of repenting or choosing to put your faith in God because God determined that you would be born a spiritually dead and blind hater of God. He will choose some of you to put faith into, causing you to become spiritually alive and no longer blind, after which you will see you are sinners and repent.”

Unconditional Election

But, who is God going to put that faith into, so that they can be spiritually alive and no longer blind? Whoever He chooses. Or to be more specific, those whom He already chose before time began. The eternal fate of every single person who would ever live was not only KNOWN by God before time began, but *decided by Him*.

These people are called the “elect,” which just means “chosen.” And it is called “unconditional election” because this choosing has NOTHING to do with the actions, choices, characteristics, or any knowable factor of those people. It appears completely random and arbitrary, though it is assumed to be built on some unknowable reasons that God alone knows. The saved were chosen by God to be given the gift of faith for no reason we can know, and it was chosen before time began.

Consider some of the logical extensions of this idea.

First, this means that every person who ever lived was BORN already heading to heaven or hell, no matter what they did or believed for all of their lives. They had NO CHOICE in the matter. It was decided LONG before they were born, and decided by God Himself.



But, if God decided before time itself which individuals would go to heaven and which would go to hell, such that they are born with their fate sealed and no choice, then what is the point of evangelism? Why tell people that Jesus died for them, when it might not be true (*and statistically probably isn't*) and they can't repent and believe anyway? Some Calvinists will generally agree with my assessment but then argue that they share the Gospel because God commanded them to, which doesn't really help because it boils down to God demanding them do something pointless and ineffective, and then also determining if they will obey that command.

To me this seems like sending out advertisements for the cure to a deadly disease which you aren't selling. Even if someone is persuaded to want it, they are only going to be given the cure if you already chose them to be one of the recipients. So why advertise to those who you know won't be getting it? Also, it seems that the only people who are capable of admitting that they need the cure is those who have already been given it. So... I just don't understand any of this on Calvinism.

Secondarily, you cannot have hope for anyone's salvation.

If you are a Calvinist with five kids, it doesn't matter how often you take them to church, or pray for them, or encourage them to read the Bible or ANYTHING ELSE. If your son or daughter is born headed for hell, it's already over. No doubt every Calvinist you know will optimistically claim that their kids or grandkids are going to be saved, but if Calvinism is true (*just going by basic statistics*), God HATES some of those kids and determined them for hell before the world began. Odds are that three of those five were hated by God and destined for hell before time began, so you may as well stay home and watch cartoons on Sunday mornings because no amount of preaching or scripture is going to change that.

Are you starting to see why most Calvinists are men? No mom or grandmother in the world could hold this doctrine. Find a new mom at church this weekend and tell her, "*Your baby is beautiful! But odds are that God hates her and wants her to go to hell.*" She will probably respond with some language which is not appropriate for church.

But wait, it gets worse.

Calvinism Destroys the Ability to Know You Are Saved

According to the doctrine of Total Depravity (*the T in TULIP*), we are born sinners, hating God, and incapable of understanding or accepting the Bible. Ask a Calvinist why some random sinner misunderstands the Bible, such as any cultist or bitter atheist, and they will tell you that an unregenerate sinner CANNOT understand the Bible, nor the Gospel. God has determined that they are born BLIND to the truth, and so no amount of study, reading, or preaching will help them understand the Bible until AFTER God saves them, gives them the gift of faith, and makes them repent. Sure, they might THINK they understand it, but they CANNOT.

Now here's the immediate Catch 22 for the Calvinist:

Why does a Calvinist say they believe Calvinism? Because (they believe) it is what is taught in the Bible.

But how do they know they understand the Bible? Because they are a regenerated, forgiven sinner. God has opened their eyes to the truth.

But, isn't that what every Catholic, cultist, Mormon and Jahova's Witness will say too?

Yup.

And aren't all of them wrong about what the Bible teaches because they are LITERALLY INCAPABLE to understand it, blinded by God before birth so that they CANNOT understand it and accept the truth?

Yes again.

So, how does the Calvinist know he is not blindly misinterpreting the Bible like those lost cultists are?

They will try to argue that they can prove it from the scripture, because "Sola Scriptura" and all of that, but if they were blinded by God from birth so that they COULD NOT understand the scriptures, then, they would not be able to properly interpret the scripture. So, they have to know they are capable of properly interpreting the Bible **before they can argue that the Bible teaches Calvinism**. But if Calvinism is true, they cannot know that they are capable of properly interpreting the Bible, because Total Depravity says we are born blind, and incapable of even admitting to our blindness.

Let me put a point on this: Calvinism rejects the idea that a person can, with the sense God gave them, read the Bible and understand what it actually teaches, and choose to believe it because they are persuaded to believe the Bible based on an understanding of what it teaches. Calvinism says that NO ONE can understand the Bible unless God determines that they will understand it, and if they are blind to the truth and believe some lies about it, they cannot be educated into the truth because GOD DOES NOT WANT THEM TO BELIEVE THE TRUTH.

So if God makes ALL PEOPLE to be born spiritually blind, and part of that blindness is the inability to even realize that you are blind, then how does the Calvinist know that he is not still spiritually blind when he interprets the Bible to be teaching Calvinism? How does he even know he is saved?

He cannot. He has to ASSUME that he has been saved and made capable of understanding the Bible, because unless he is right about that, he cannot use the Bible to defend his position. Which means he has to assume not only Calvinism, but also his own salvation and enlightenment BEFORE he can use the Bible to defend his position. But then, what sense does it make to say that these Calvinistic doctrines are taught in the Bible? That cannot be his REASON for believing them, because he could not have understood that the Bible taught them until AFTER he was saved and regenerated. But he only believes he is saved and regenerated because he believes he understands what the Bible teaches.

It becomes an endless circular argument where the Calvinist has to assume Calvinism true to begin with, and then assume his understanding of the Bible is accurate, and he assumes his understanding to be accurate BECAUSE he is a Calvinist. Ultimately, it gets founded on the fact that he is a Calvinist, and not on what the Bible actually teaches. The Bible itself CANNOT educate and persuade (on Calvinism) because God has blinded EVERYONE to the truth, until He chooses to heal their blindness.

But can't I immediately turn this around on the Calvinist and argue that, the only reason they think the Bible teaches Calvinism is because they are unregenerate in their thinking and INCAPABLE of understanding what the scripture is actually teaching? How can they use the Bible to demonstrate that they understand the Bible when Calvinism says the spiritually blind CANNOT understand the Bible?

Another problem the Calvinist must face is this:

MOST Christians are not Calvinists.

This puts the Calvinist in the horns of a dilemma: Either the non-Calvinist can never be truly saved, or the saved, regenerate believer can potentially be only PARTIALLY unblinded by God so that, while the recipient of saving grace and faith, they still believe false doctrines because God chose to NOT lift their blindness, thus determining them to hold to false doctrine.

To me this makes my rejection of Calvinism a dilemma for the Calvinist. I have questions because it seems to me that Calvinism is heretical nonsense. But if they argue with me, are they not doing so assuming that I can be persuaded by reason and scripture to see that Calvinism is true and then to accept it? But if they think that I can be persuaded by reason and scripture, then are they not REJECTING Calvinism? Doesn't that make the very act of arguing FOR Calvinism an argument AGAINST it?

Finally, we start to see how Calvinism puts the blame on God.

The sinner sins because GOD determined that he would. The Hater of God hates God because God determined that he would. The cultist, pagan and atheist all reject Jesus because God determined that they would. People go to hell, not because they chose to reject the merciful love of God, but because God hated them from eternity past and refused to provide salvation for them. The Christian who is saved but embraces heresy and lies does so because God determined that he would. God did not merely foresee these things, or allow these things, but he CAUSED THEM ALL.

No one is actually responsible for their sin, their lies, or their heresy in Calvinism because NO ONE can choose to do anything except God alone. Only God determines these things, and they are always and only the way HE WANTS THEM TO BE. But if only God is choosing what every person will think, feel, believe and do, then how is anyone but God responsible for what happens? The Calvinist MUST logically declare God the author of ALL EVIL. God is not merely giving us the ability to choose evil, and then letting us make the real choice with real consequences, but, on Calvinism, God makes those choices for us. If there is a murder, all of us are bullets. Only God alone holds the gun. Only he takes aim and pulls the trigger. How is the Calvinist to blame the bullets for the murder when they have no ability to choose? How are they to absolve God from blame when only he HAS the ability to choose?

I have all of the questions. If you are a Calvinist, or know of one who has answered these questions in a way which is clear, please share what you know. And thanks for letting me be your Rent-A-Friend

Chapter 3: Questions for Calvinists Part 3- My Limited Understanding of Limited Atonement

Welcome back to Questions for Calvinists where I admit that it's just entirely possible that I have NO IDEA what I'm talking about when it comes to Calvinism. That's why I'm asking all of these questions.

This installment brings us to the L of TULIP, which stands for **Limited Atonement**. This doctrine, just like it sounds, teaches that the atonement- *payment for sins, purchased by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ*- is limited. Jesus didn't die for EVERYONE's sins. He only died for the sins of the "elect." Those are the people who are given the gift of faith in the U of TULIP. There's no known or knowable reason, but for maybe reasons God alone knows, a small group of random people were chosen before the world began to receive the gift of faith so that they could repent, believe, and be saved. Jesus died for THOSE people's sins, and no one else's.

For God So Hated MOST of the World

"What about all of those non-elect people?" you may be asking. God hates those people, so obviously Jesus wouldn't die for the sins of sinners God hates. Even if somehow they COULD understand the Gospel (*which they cannot because God blinded them to the truth*), and even if they COULD put their trust in Jesus to save them by paying for their sins (*which they cannot because God refuses to give them the gift of faith*), Jesus would say, **"Sorry kids, but I didn't pay for YOUR sins. Off to hell you go!"**

At this point, I don't feel like I even need to make a case against the Calvinist position. Like, if you have read the Bible at all, you should already have a pretty good understanding of why I reject this position. Let me give you just one of many reasons why I feel the Bible doesn't teach this.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

I don't mean to be condescending, but doesn't it seem like Jesus is saying God loved **the world**? Like, he doesn't say "*A handful of people from various parts of the world.*" He just says, "**The world.**"

And he says "**whoever believes in Him.**" Like, whoever sort of sounds like, well, **whoever**. You know? Like, this is not what you would say if you were referring to a select group of people already elect from before the foundation of the world. Imagine if Willie Wonka announced that "*Whoever wants to can come tour the candy factory,*" but later it's revealed that by "**whoever**" he means "*five kids who have special golden tickets which were hidden in Wonka Chocolate Bar wrappers.*"

Is anyone going to say, "*Oh, sure, THAT'S what he meant by "whoever." We should have guessed.*"

No, there is going to be an angry mob of parents burning that chocolate factory to the ground.



Now, the answer that I have heard from Calvinists about this verse is that, it's just a bad translation. It shouldn't say, "*whoever believes in him,*" but rather it should say, "*All of the believing ones.*" Some people actually just leave it there, as if that answers the question. But it doesn't because this means exactly the same thing. To me this is like saying, I didn't ask you to bring me the red pen, I asked you to bring me the pen which is red. OK, technically different, but without any difference.

Other Calvinists argue that, while the text here tells us who will be saved (*those who believe*) it does not address **who can** believe. Let me translate for you:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Doesn’t mean, *“Because God loves all people, anyone who puts their faith in the love and mercy of God will be saved by the Son whom he sent.”* It means ***“For God so loved a handful of people from various parts of the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever HE chose before the foundation of the world to receive the gift of faith shall not perish but have eternal life.”***

It’s a bit of a stretch. I’m not going to lie. After all, a perfectly Calvinist interpretation of this verse, if I understand Calvinism correctly, would be: ***“For God so hated Most of the world, that He did absolutely NOTHING to pay for their sins, but He sent his only Son, that the few to whom he gives the gift of faith, irresistibly and unconditionally will not perish but have eternal life.”*** I’m not seeing how that can mean the same thing as the original. Calvinists? Let me know if there’s something about your doctrine that I am not understanding.

Jesus Taught Repentance

Let me remind you of something else Jesus taught which we already looked at in this series:

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Mark 1: 14-15

Jesus is going to be gathering crowds of up to 5,000 men, plus women and children, for years, all the while preaching the command to repent, yet (*according to Calvinism*) knowing that God hates most of those people and wants them to go to hell. Also, Jesus would know better than any Calvinist that no one can choose to put their faith in him- to repent and believe. So why would he say things like this? Or this:

Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

John 6:28-29

God requires us to do... what exactly? Jesus answers: ***“Believe in the one he has sent.”*** Are we to assume that this also doesn’t address who can believe? Because

Jesus isn't just describing belief as a condition for salvation, but now he's calling it the work that God requires. God REQUIRES you to believe in Jesus. But... also refuses to give most of you faith? So, God blinds you so that you cannot ever put your faith in Jesus, and also requires you to put your faith in Jesus, and then selects a random collection of "elect" people which He gives the gift of faith so that they will have faith in Jesus...

Sinner: What Does God require I do to be saved?

Calvin: Believe In Jesus.

Sinner: How do I do that?

Calvin: You can't. God has to give you faith.

Sinner: How do I get God to give me faith?

Calvin: You can't. He doesn't want you to have faith.

Sinner: So, God refuses to let me do what He Requires?

So, when people are lost sinners, *it's because God forbids what He requires?* Calvinists? Am I getting this right? God sends people to hell because God forbids what God requires?

Jesus Made a Clear Comparison

One more from Jesus Himself:

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

John 3:14

Jesus is referring to the incident in Numbers chapter 21, where in verses 8-9 we read:

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

Numbers 21:8-9

Jesus is making a comparison between himself being lifted up so that ***"everyone who believes may have eternal life"*** and Moses lifting up the bronze snake so that ***"anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."*** There are only so many options.

Either the account in Numbers means by **“anyone who is bitten can look at it and live”** that Moses was to sneak around and only show it to certain people selected for no apparent reason, and THEY would live while everyone else died, or, it means that **“anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.”**

The first option clearly forces us to shove all kinds of things into the text which it does not say, so the only option is that Moses was providing salvation for anyone who chose to look at it. After all, it says they CAN look at it and live. It’s not something Moses did TO them without their consent. It was something he brought to them and they had the option to look at it and live. The Lord says to Moses **“ANYONE who is bitten CAN look at it and live.”** That seems as clear as it can be.



It seems Jesus selected this comparison to indicate that **“everyone who believes may have eternal life”** and by “everyone” he means “everyone.” After all, he is comparing himself to something lifted up so that ANYONE who was bitten (*suffering because of their own sin and rebellion against God*) COULD look and live. What sense would it make to compare himself to this historical event only to actually MEAN that ONLY a select few chosen before the foundation of the world will be MADE to look to Jesus and be saved? His comparison would be, *“Just like anyone COULD look to the bronze snake, a select few will be MADE to look to me, and just like ANYONE who was bitten could be saved and live, I’m only dying for a handful of the elect and not just anyone can look to me to be saved.”*

The only thing that makes sense is that Jesus chose that comparison because he understood the story he was referencing, and he intended to say that there was a clear similarity. Anyone can look to the one lifted up, and live. Forcing Calvinism into John chapter 3 makes Jesus bizarrely misleading, and intentionally misleading. You can't get Calvinism OUT of this text. You can only cram it in with a crowbar.

Let's look at a few Bible verses.

John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29

Once again, are we expected to interpret "The world" to be "a handful of people from various parts of the world"? How do Calvinists equate "The World" with "The Elect"? I can see no way in which those two ideas are equivalent.

We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

1 Tim 4:10

1 Timothy says God is the Savior of ALL PEOPLE- and ***especially*** those who believe. But how is God the Savior of ALL PEOPLE if Jesus didn't die for those who DON'T believe? If Jesus' death was provided to be the sacrifice that ***"takes away the sins of the world,"*** then Jesus is the Savior of all people, even if some people choose to die in their sins. This is just like the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses was the method of salvation for anyone who was bitten and chose to look at it. That bronze snake on a pole was God's mercy for everyone- ESPECIALLY for those who looked to it and lived. He has offered salvation to them, but some have chosen to reject it. He is still the one who offers them salvation, and so he is still the savior. But on Calvinism, Jesus didn't die for them because he hates them and wants them to go to hell. How is he their Savior?

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

1Tim 2:3-6

Again, are we expected to interpret **“God our Savior who wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth”** to mean “God the Savior *of some*, who wants *some* people to be saved but wants *most* people to go to hell because he hates them and intentionally blinded them so they could never know or understand the Gospel.”? And are we to understand **“Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people,”** to mean **“Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for some people, but not most people.”**? Again, it seems that Calvinism keeps demanding that some verses mean the EXACT OPPOSITE of what they are saying.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

So Peter says, **“The Lord is not wanting anyone to perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance,”** and by this he means, “The Lord wants *most* people to perish, but wants *a select few chosen* to come to repentance,” by which he means **“receive** the gift of repentance, which is irresistible so they don’t have a choice.” Am I getting this right?

God Gets What He Wants

The main argument I have heard from Calvinists about this is the philosophy that, **IF God wanted everyone to be saved, then EVERYONE would be saved. Not everyone is saved, so God obviously doesn’t want everyone to be saved.** That’s how we know Atonement is LIMITED, and thus Jesus only died for SOME people- the “elect.”

But let’s think about how God treats people in the Bible.

Did God have Moses sneak up behind people and smack them with that bronze snake for it to heal them? Or did he have it lifted up so that **“Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live”**? Was this salvation IRRESISTIBLE? Or did the people have to choose to look to God’s salvation? Was this salvation LIMITED? Or did God provide it for ALL of the people- ANYONE who looked at it?

In Exodus Ch. 12, when The Lord tells the people of Israel to **“take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat**

the lambs” (v7) does God put the blood on the doorpost, or does he leave it to them to follow his instructions? Was this salvation from death IRRESISTIBLE? Or was it contingent on the people obeying the instructions from The Lord? Was it LIMITED? Or did God tell Moses to **“Tell the whole community of Israel”** so that anyone could obey and be saved?

Noah had to build the Ark. God did not just make him and his family waterproof. And in 2 Peter 2:5 Noah is called “a preacher of righteousness.” If the salvation from the flood was limited to Noah and his family, who was he preaching to? Yet, if the Ark was never available for anyone else to be saved, then wouldn’t his preaching be dishonest?

When Naaman went to Elisha because of his leprosy, Elisha didn’t just heal him with the power of God, but rather said **“Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”**

It seems to me that, while God certainly CAN make things happen without the involvement of others, or even without or against their wills, He also often gives commands with conditional promises. Do THIS and I will do THAT. Don’t do THAT or THIS will happen. And it seems pretty clear that God allows people to make their own decisions.



Jonah Ch 1:1-3 says,

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish.

If everything that happens is what God wants, and everything He wants always happens, then did God want Jonah to go to Nineveh, or to run away from Nineveh? This story makes much more sense if God gave a command and then let Jonah make his own choice. Otherwise God wants Jonah to go to Nineveh and He wants Jonah to disobey and NOT go to Nineveh. But there’s that whole “law of non-contradiction” to contend with.

Jonah Ch 3 says

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

Jonah 3: 1-4

Jonah did not carry a message of LIMITED salvation whereby SOME would be saved. He did not bring a message of irresistible grace whereby SOME would be given faith and repentance. Jonah told the whole city that God would destroy them for their wickedness, and they threw themselves on God's mercy and he forgave them ALL and let them live.

My Conclusion

It seems that the idea of Limited Atonement, like the ideas of Total Depravity and Unconditional Election do not match what the Bible actually teaches. Jesus was not a Calvinist, but rather called whole crowds to repent. He told Nicodemus that, like that bronze snake Moses lifted up, ANYONE who looks to him for salvation will be saved. God seems to offer the opportunity for salvation to anyone who will listen, but He does not FORCE people to make that choice. They have to board the ark. They have to go wash in the Jordan. They have to look at the bronze snake. They have to put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. WE have to put our faith in Jesus, trust in the love of God, and accept his salvation with open hands. I don't believe that there is any indication in the teachings of Jesus that he would ever tell anyone in the world *"I didn't pay for your sins. I don't want you to be saved."* That's not the Jesus I find in the Bible. From cover to cover, the Jesus of the Bible makes a way for sinners. All sinners.

Ok Calvinists, hit that caps lock key, write me a long email and let me know what I got wrong. And thanks for letting me be your Rent-A-Friend.

Chapter 4: Questions for Calvinists part 4- I'm Resisting the Irresistible

Welcome once again to Questions for Calvinists, where I am tiptoeing through TULIP saying to myself, *"There is no way I am understanding this correctly. Am I?"*

But that's the purpose of the series. I want Calvinists to explain to me how I am misunderstanding their theology, or admit that I am understanding it correctly. This installment is about the I of TULIP, Irresistible Grace.



This is one of the parts of Calvinism which doesn't need any marketing. It sells itself. The Grace of God is IRRESISTIBLE! Doesn't that sound like the feel-good, romantic comedy that is taking the country by storm this Holiday season? Doesn't it feel like a warm theological hug from John Calvin's beard on a cold day, and his beard is soft as kittens and smells like fresh baked cookies?

It sure SOUNDS good, which is one of the reasons why I think people smarter than me accept it. Again, I am NOT claiming that I am smarter than Calvinists. I state as a matter of observable fact that there are LOTS of Calvinists out there not only smarter than I am, but more versed in the Bible, Hebrew and Greek. My questions are not an attack on any person or anything based on how smart I think I am. It's literally me saying, *"THIS? This is what Calvinism is? And you think the Bible teaches this? Am I getting this right?"*

So here's my understanding of what Irresistible Grace is, and you can leave me some comments telling me if I don't understand it, or if it's as wackadoo as it sounds to me.

Irresistible Grace

Just as it sounds- no one can resist the grace of God. At first, this sounds good, right? Sure! The love of God is powerful and overwhelming! Some of us have felt that! But this is not what Calvinism is teaching. Remember when I said “**EVERY SINGLE HUMAN is born, not only a sinner, but as someone who instinctively HATES GOD and CANNOT understand nor accept the Gospel**”? That was **Total Depravity**. And remember when I said “**when people get to heaven (or hell), it is because GOD chose to put them there**”? That was **Unconditional Election**. And **Jesus ONLY died for the sins of the people chosen for heaven**– that's **Limited Atonement**. Now we put these ideas together to ask, if people are born totally depraved, and salvation is based on God's application of **LIMITED Atonement** to individuals chosen by His **Unconditional Election**, then how are people saved?

We all know this. “**For it is by grace you have been saved** through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast...” (Ephesians 2:8-9) We choose to put our faith in Jesus, and He gives to us his righteousness, as our sins are paid for on the Cross...

Oh, wait, no! In order to *choose* to put our faith in Jesus, we would have to overcome our innate instinct to hate God and reject the Gospel. We can't do that. We can't even **WANT** to do that. This is where the Calvinist points to the part of Ephesians 2 that says “*It is the gift of God.*” Yes, they say, it is through faith you are saved, but if it was by choosing to put your own trust in Jesus, you would be **DOING SOMETHING** to save yourself (*by WORKS so that you COULD boast!*). That means you cannot choose to have faith in Jesus. Also, that whole total depravity thing. You don't even want to. You're like a child being offered broccoli. You can't want it. You don't even want to want it. You hate it. But like a good father, God can take that plateful of faith broccoli and shove it down your unwilling throat. But once he does, you're glad he did.



That's actually a fairly accurate metaphor.

This comes back to the Philosophy of Calvinism, which is, **IF God wanted everyone to be saved, then EVERYONE WOULD be saved. Not**

everyone is saved, so God obviously doesn't want everyone to be saved. That's how we know Atonement is LIMITED, and thus Jesus only died for SOME people- the "elect."

Irresistible Grace is an extension of this. Why is one person saved and not another? Because they are "elect." God wanted them to be saved, so he chose them to be saved, and since they are so TOTALLY depraved from birth that they can only hate God, they have Faith imposed on them against their will. God does not *draw them* with an invitation. Jesus does not *offer* the gift of salvation. God flips the "Faith" switch to *ON* and they believe. They cannot accept and they cannot reject. The elect have no more choice than the damned. God decided before the world was made, and that is the ONLY choice in this process. When God decided to throw you into the ocean, you don't get to decide if you want to get wet. You're fully submerged before you even know what happened.

Dead man Walking

The metaphor a lot of Calvinists like is the example of Lazarus. (see *John Ch 11*) If you recall, Lazarus had died of some sickness, and several days later Jesus and the 12 roll up and visit the tomb. Jesus has them roll the stone away from the tomb and he calls Lazarus, and Lazarus comes out now fully alive again.

The Calvinist says, *"That's what salvation is like. Lazarus is dead, and can't decide to accept the offer of life from Jesus. Jesus calls him to life and he lives. Jesus makes that choice, and all Lazarus can do is realize that he was dead but he's not anymore."*

And if your goal is to give credit to Jesus for your salvation, this sounds like a GREAT metaphor. After all, what can we do to save ourselves? NOTHING. So isn't it like a dead man being brought back to life? We can't HELP Jesus save us. We certainly can't do anything to bring ourselves to life. ALL credit for our being brought back from the dead belongs to Jesus. So, we're like Lazarus, right?

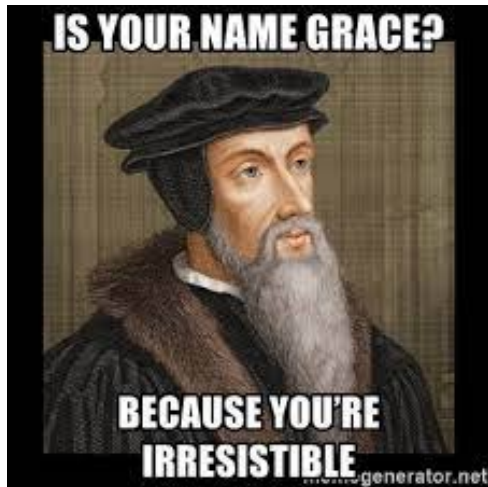
Now, let me be clear. I am NOT about to argue that we save ourselves, or that we HELP Jesus to save us. The Calvinist is absolutely right that all credit and all glory belongs to Jesus for our salvation. Where the Calvinist seems to be in error is taking the language of being dead too literally.

The Calvinist says we can no more "accept the gift of salvation" than Lazarus could accept the gift of life. Jesus didn't consult him. He simply raised him to life. He was

DEAD. A dead man cannot hear an invitation to be raised and consider it, and then voice his decision. The Calvinist says we are the same spiritually. We CANNOT hear the gospel, we cannot accept the Gospel, and we cannot repent.

Well... the problem is that the rest of the New Testament exists.

Jesus Didn't Teach This



Again let me clarify that I am NOT arguing that we HELP Jesus to save us, or that we can take credit for being saved. I am saying that Jesus did not teach that faith and repentance were something God does to a select few. Jesus taught that we are called to repent and put our faith in Jesus. We are responsible to respond to the call.

Consider the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.”

Matt 22:2-3

I find it completely incompatible that people can be given an Irresistible Invitation and yet REFUSE to come. Furthermore, in verse 7, Jesus tells us how the King responds; **“The king was enraged.”** But on Calvinism, EVERYTHING is according to God’s will and desire and decree. This would be the King being ENRAGED because his command was obeyed. After all, the people rejected his invitation, but on Calvinism those who reject the invitation do so because God determined it and left them in their total depravity. To be more Calvinistic, I feel the King’s servants would have to tell those people, *“You’re NOT invited. The King doesn’t want you there.”* And when they refuse to come to a feast which they are not invited to... the King is ANGRY about that?

But the King does not have a list of guests chosen before the story begins. Instead, once his invitation has been rejected by those who REFUSED to come, he tells his servants **“go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.”** Where is the unconditional election? Where are the ELECT? Invite ANYONE you find? Where is the LIMIT to the guest list?

Now some will try and use the end of this story to show Jesus teaching Calvinism, as it says,

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Matt 22: 11-14

Because this uses the word “chosen” a lot of Calvinists assume that it MUST be referring to the unconditionally elect. But the man was not tossed out because he wasn’t invited. It wasn’t because the king hadn’t offered him an invitation. It’s because the man was not dressed right.

This wasn’t about fashion. It was about coming to the King’s banquet on the King’s terms. It was a wedding feast, and so you dress for the occasion. But this man decided to come on his own terms as if he deserved a place there merely because he showed up. The metaphor is not spelled out here by Jesus, but it is elaborated on by other New Testament writers:

clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ

Romans 13:14

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 3:27

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Colossians 3:12

OH! There’s the word “elect” again! Doesn’t this mean the Bible is teaching unconditional election? No. Jesus himself teaches the condition of election. Clothe yourself in Christ. Jesus says ***“many are invited, but few are chosen”*** which means many are given the Gospel, but only those who come on the terms God sets- *through*

Christ, in Christ, dressed in Christ, etc. -are chosen to have a seat at the feast. You don't get to come to God on your own terms. You don't say to the King, "I'll wear what I want. Deal with it." If you won't honor the King, you will not attend the feast. If you do not come to the gates of heaven covered in the righteousness of Jesus, you will not be let in. The King CHOOSES to let in those dressed in the righteousness of Christ, and so those who are saved (*"clothed in Christ"*) are chosen. The Calvinist puts this in the wrong order and insists that the chosen are saved. Then they assume that only those saved and chosen were invited. But this is not what Jesus taught.

"This son of mine was dead and is alive again!"

Consider the Prodigal Son. In Luke 15:11-31 Jesus tells the story of the son who takes his father's money and runs off to live the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Let me hit the point at which Jesus fails to be a Calvinist:

WHY does the son decide to go home? If Jesus was teaching "Irresistible Grace," wouldn't the father come DRAG him back home? Surely he would not offer him the choice of coming home. The whole point of the Lazarus metaphor is that a dead man CANNOT accept an offer or make a choice. He is DEAD. Yet, this kid not only *is not dragged home against his will*, but Jesus tells it this way:

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

Luke 15:17-20

Did you see how UNCALVINISTIC this is? He *CAME TO HIS SENSES*? He used his faculty of reason to take an honest look at what his wickedness had accomplished and he realized that it was better to be a servant in heaven than be rich and famous in hell? It's almost as if Jesus has never heard of Total Depravity! He tells the story so that this rotten kid goes off in search of his father's mercy! But... that's impossible! Doesn't Jesus know that people CANNOT come to God and ask for mercy?

Apparently not because he says this

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

John 5:39-40

But if Depravity is TOTAL, and Grace is Irresistible, how could anyone REFUSE to come to Jesus? If they were totally depraved, they would not refuse. They would simply be INCAPABLE of coming to Jesus. They would be UNABLE not unwilling. And if atonement is LIMITED, then what are they refusing? If they are not being offered the grace of God, what is there to refuse?

A very similar passage in Matthew shows Jesus saying,

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Matthew 23:37

Again, if Jesus was a Calvinist, wouldn't he have said, "*I would have gathered your children together, but I didn't want to and I made you unwilling*"? Yet it seems like Jesus is under the impression that these people had a choice. He seems UPSET by the fact that they were UNWILLING, almost as if it was not him who made them that way.

If he was offering Irresistible Grace, HOW could they be **unwilling** to accept the **irresistible**? But, if he was NOT offering them grace, then what are they rejecting? If they are simply outside of the elect, and they are not covered by Jesus's Limited Atonement, then there is nothing for them to accept or reject. If Jesus is NOT desiring to gather them in his grace, then to what are they unwilling? None of this makes sense when you try to force it to teach Calvinism.

Finally, something to note about the metaphor Calvinists love to use about Lazarus. Jesus never uses that metaphor, and neither do any of the other authors of the Bible. Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, Luke, etc. all knew the story of Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, and yet they never use this to teach us what salvation is like. Jesus offers the wedding banquet and the Prodigal Son.

Jesus has the Father say this as he welcomes back his Prodigal son in Luke 15, "*...this son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.*"

Luke 15:24

Jesus has the Father say of the son who came to his senses and went back home that his son was “Dead,” but he also says he was “lost.” So when the Calvinist insists that being “dead” means completely incapable of doing ANYTHING, even hearing, understanding, and responding to the Gospel, they are limiting the word to a bizarre absolute which Jesus himself does not do. Besides which, if we are “spiritually dead” such that we can do NOTHING, how are we capable of sinning?

Paul says this is Romans 6:11 ***“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*** And in Ephesians 2:1-2 we read ***“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world...”***

We are capable of sinning, but we must consider ourselves dead to sin. Dead, like the son was dead to the father. LOST. Separated. Far apart.

You WERE dead, yet, you used to walk. While you were dead. So *dead* doesn't always mean the kind of inactive, 100% passive state that physical death implies. The Prodigal son didn't die, he ran away from home to pursue his selfish desires. But while his son was gone, the Father felt as if his son was dead to him.

More Jesus Seems to be Less Calvin

TULIP describes humanity as totally depraved- incapable of anything but sin and hate toward God. It describes all of us as being BORN already elect and destined for heaven or abandoned and destined for hell. It describes salvation as being available only for those who were chosen by God before the world began, and says Jesus only died for those elect. It says the totally depraved go from spiritually dead to spiritually alive when God bestows on them the gift of irresistible grace- not an invitation, but the miraculous work of raising a dead man who cannot help, or even do as much as consenting. He can't seek it, and he can't agree to it. He can only be brought to life and then realize that he used to be dead.

While I get why people tend to think of these doctrines as Biblical, I can't help but look to the teachings of Jesus and see that he DID NOT teach these Calvinistic doctrines. Jesus doesn't talk of God's love for the chosen few, but for the world. Jesus does not talk of lost sinners as being born incapable of doing anything but hating God, but he talks as if they could choose to come to him. Jesus does not talk about the sinner as a dead man who can do nothing but lie dead until he is raised, but he tells us that a sinner can come to his senses and go home to the welcoming arms of his father. Jesus tells us

that the King offers invitations which go to everyone, but which many reject, and which carry with it the condition that we come dressed for the event.

Again, my position is that I think many smart and Godly people are Calvinists, but I have to wonder if they are because they have agreed to the surface of things and not dug deeper. Yes, the saved are called the “chosen” or the “elect.” But what does the Bible mean by those things? I do not think it means what Calvin means. I think it means that, while everyone is invited, those who are chosen to sit at the King’s table must come “clothed in Christ.” Everyone has been invited, and those who come “clothed in Christ” will be chosen to sit at the King’s Table.

Yes, the Bible describes sinners as being spiritually dead, but what does that mean? Instead of the completely inert picture from Calvinism, the Bible seems to indicate that the dead are dead the way the Prodigal son was “dead.” Not because they are without the ability to do anything like an actual corpse. But because they are separated from the Father of Life. They are lost. But they are all called to come home. The King has sent invitations. The Father watches the horizon to rush out to meet us when we start back home.

The reason all of this matters is because the truth matters. The Bible matters. The Gospel matters. And I think the truth is, the Bible presents a Gospel which is good news for ALL people. The invitation has gone out to everyone, and we don’t make disciples because we hope to stumble upon the chosen few who were already selected, but we want people to be prepared to meet the King so that he will find them acceptable and invite them to the feast.

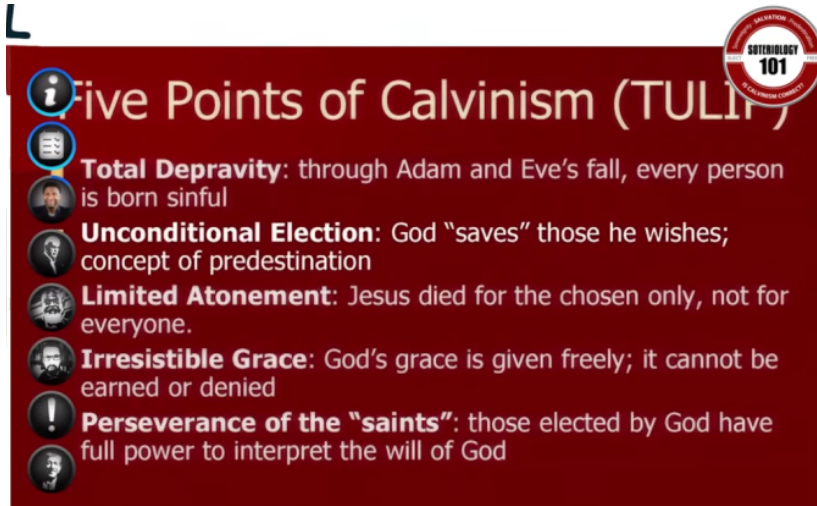
As always, let me know what you think, and thanks for letting me be your Rent-A-Friend.

Chapter 5: Some Calvinists Aren't Calvinists

If you have followed the old Bit of Orange for any amount of time, you have seen me explaining to Atheists and Evolutionists that they are not actually Atheists and Evolutionists. I've had to show people who believe the Big Bang cosmology that they don't actually believe it because they don't know what it is. This kind of thing happens on the regular around these parts, because people are a lot quicker, it would seem, to adopt a label than to completely research it and make sure they want to adopt it.

Our latest group to join the club of *"I didn't actually do all that much research"* is Calvinists. Here is a screenshot from an apologetics YouTube channel (*a Calvinistic youtuber that goes by "TreasureChrist" or "reformedwiki"*) which was explaining the difference between Calvinism and non-Calvinism by critiquing Mike Winger and Allen Parr (*both of whom I recommend*).

L



This image is a screenshot of a Soteriology 101 video about that video, which you can watch on Soteriology 101, on a video called Most Christians Get This Wrong: A Response, uploaded Oct 6, 2022 (*about 18 min in for this screen shot*).

This brings us to my article about Dr Flower's video about Reformedwiki's video about Mike and Allen's videos about Calvinism. If you're confused, all I can say is... Welcome to the internet.

Let's just take these one at a time:

T- Total Depravity

What Reformed Wiki has described here is not Total Depravity or total inability, but Original Sin. Those are VERY different ideas. Allow me to contrast:

Original Sin is the idea that we are born sinners as a result of the Fall. Adam and Eve sinned, and we inherited a sin nature from them ever since. That's kind of it, and I'm not certain I believe that the Bible teaches it, but that is besides the point. The point is, this is only the TIP of the Calvinist iceberg.

Total Depravity/inability is the belief that we are born HATING GOD, and so addicted to our sin that we CANNOT and WILL NOT accept that we are sinners and repent, nor understand and accept the Gospel. It's not just a BENT toward sin, but **a complete blindness and inability** to turn to God which they often call being "dead." As the dead cannot admit to his state and ask for help, the spiritually dead cannot either.

As a metaphor- it's possible to be born addicted to drugs because your mother was a drug-addict. This is original sin. You inherit their sin nature. Total Depravity means you CANNOT AND WILL NOT accept the fact that you are an addict and you absolutely will not go to rehab. You are born not only addicted to drugs, but HATING rehab and sobriety and can do no other. Only, *drugs* here is **sin**.

Can you see how those are different? Because they are.

U- Unconditional Election

The image above says **God "saves" those He wishes**. It's worth noting that they did not define it in a way which clearly distinguishes this concept as uniquely Calvinistic, or different from what non-Calvinists profess. Yes, God "saves" those he wishes (*and I'm not sure why "saves" is in quotes like that. It's weird, right?*) but the difference between what Calvinism and non-Calvinism means by this is rather pivotal. The Non-Calvinist says the Bible teaches that God "saves" those who are "in Christ," or those who put their trust in, believe in, call on the name of, etc. Jesus Christ. There are a lot of ways in which it is expressed in the Bible, both in the words of Jesus himself and in the writings which follow the Gospels. But however you put it, Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life, died as the blood sacrifice for our sins, giving his life for ours to pay for our sin debt. Three days later he rose bodily from the tomb, defeating sin, death and hell.

Jesus describes himself as a door: **John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture**. A door is the opportunity to enter or exit, but you have to actually take advantage of the door to go in or out. Jesus' death and resurrection unlocked the door. The door is open, and he invites us to "enter in" through him, because he alone is the way.

Calvinism says *“No! That’s Man-Centered heresy! WE can’t enter in by the door. God PUSHES us through that door. We don’t even WANT to enter in until we’re on the other side! Otherwise you are claiming that you HELPED God to “Save” you.”*

Of course I am paraphrasing a little, but the idea is what I have heard from many Calvinists, and which seems to follow logically from TULIP. God chooses those who he wants to save- but his choosing happened long before any of us were born. Before the world began, God chose the “elect” to be “saved.” Like everyone else, they are born desperately and totally depraved, God-hating sinners, but at some point God “regenerates them,” by which they mean brings the spiritually dead to life so they can look back and say, “Goodness! I used to be dead! But I am alive now!”

Because of the T of TULIP, we cannot and will not enter in through the door. Jesus was... being sarcastic? I’m not actually sure what they say here but I guarantee they say something. If I had to guess, they would say this verse is about who **can** get to salvation (*those who believe/enter through Jesus*) but it’s not about who **will** believe/enter through Jesus (*those who are the “elect”*). This is what they do with John 3:16, and I don’t buy it there either.

L- Limited Atonement

I think the way he defines Limited Atonement is pretty much how I have heard it. So, well done *“TreasureChrist”* (or *“reformedwiki”*).

I- Irresistible Grace

This says **“God’s grace is given freely; it cannot be earned or denied.”** And I think we’re all in agreement up until *“or denied.”* But it’s a little misleading to call it “given freely” when it CANNOT BE DENIED. This is like saying **the police offer criminals jail time free of charge**. Technically it is true, but to call it an OFFER, or to say it is GIVEN FREELY sort of implies that it can be accepted or not accepted. But on Calvinism, it is not a free gift, as a gift can be rejected. Those last two words, “OR DENIED” are the core of this doctrine of Calvinism, as they explain how a Totally Depraved person can be saved. God doesn’t wait for you to accept His offer of grace, because you Totally cannot. Thus, if anyone is to be saved, God must force grace onto them and change them with absolutely no consent. Again, this is not just my interpretation, but a lot of Calvinists will come right out and say that ACCEPTING is an act, a work, and thus a means of helping God to save you. They will say, “Why are you saved when your neighbor is not?” and when you say “Because I accepted the Gospel,” they say “Aha!

You claim you DID something that the other person did not! You are claiming that your work of accepting the Gospel was the thing which YOU had to do to save you, as if God could not save you without your help!" And then they toast each other with locally crafted beers, which they spill onto their locally crafted beards.

I think it would be more accurate to Calvinism to say "**God's grace is imposed irresistibly. It cannot be accepted or denied.**" Again, this is not what I think the Bible teaches, but what Calvinists have explained as the doctrines of Calvinism.

P- Perseverance of the "Saints"

He says, "**Those elected by God have full power to interpret the will of God.**"

I'll be honest, I don't think there is any consensus about the P of Tulip. So I can't fault him for this one even though I'm not entirely sure what he means here. Not only is this VERY different from what John piper said about it, but this seems to imply that a person who does not properly interpret the will of God is NOT elect, which is double talk for "if you don't interpret the Bible to teach Calvinism, you're going to hell," or something of that nature. But this is not only the least consistent part of the TULIP, but also the least important as far as I am concerned.

A guy who calls himself "reformedwiki" (which is basically another way of saying "All of the info about Calvinism") has presented a version of Calvinism that a LOT of Calvinists would absolutely reject. What we learn through this examination is two things:

1. Calvinism means something specific, but a lot of people who claim to be Calvinists may have absolutely no idea what that is. This may help to explain its popularity.
2. A lot of people take labels without really finding out what all of it means. Calvinists aren't unique in this manner. But when I hear people call themselves a four point Calvinist, or a three point Calvinist, or when they define Calvinism this way I just think, "*Hey. You're not really a Calvinist.*"

I guess what I want is for people to do their homework. If you're going to adopt a label, then do us all a favor and find out what it means first. Thank you.

Chapter 6: I See a Black Door and I Want It Painted Red

Calvinists like to use the raising of Lazarus as a metaphor for what salvation is like. Our boy Lazarus is dead, and lying in his grave for a handful of days. He has expired, shuffled off his mortal coil, and assumed room temperature. He clearly is not going anywhere on his own. He is a stiff, bereft of life, pushing up daisies.

But then Jesus shows up.

Jesus goes to the tomb and prays, and then *he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."*
John 11:43-44

Our friend Calvin says that THIS is what salvation is like. We're ALL dead, and Jesus comes to some tombs and calls us out of them, and we are alive again, or what we might call, Born Again. And to some extent, this is something no one who believes the Gospel would argue with.



So naturally, the Calvinists had to find a way to get people to argue with them about it, because Calvinists love an argument like I love a pizza so loaded with cheese and toppings that people at the next table can hear my arteries begging for mercy.

Our Calvinist friends over at the Gospel Coalition put it this way (1):

*The terms monergism and synergism refer to the working of God in regeneration. **Monergism** teaches that we are born again by only one working (mono is Greek for "one," erg is from the Greek word for "work"). **Synergism** teaches that we are born again by human cooperation with the grace of God (the syn prefix means "with" in Greek). The Protestant Reformers strongly opposed all synergistic understandings of the new birth. They believed that given the spiritual deadness and moral inability of man, our regeneration is owing entirely to the sovereign work of God. We do not*

cooperate and we do not contribute to our being born again. Three cheers for monergism.

In much the same way they like to present the false dichotomy of Calvinism Vs Arminianism, they also like to present the false dichotomy of Monergism (*God saves you and you do NOTHING*) and Synergism (*God tries real hard to save you, but you need to help Him out a little to actually get the job done*). Calvinists will ask, "Why are you saved when your neighbor is not?" and I reply, "Because I put my faith in Jesus," and they say, "AHA! You are claiming to have DONE SOMETHING that your neighbor didn't do! You are claiming to be saved by your own works!"

And I say, "No, I'm not claiming to save myself by believing, I am believing in Christ who died to save me. He did the work, I'm just trusting in him." And the Calvinist says, "AHA! You are saying Christ did MOST of the work but YOU had to help him out because he couldn't save you unless YOU CHOSE to put your trust in him! You are claiming to be saved by your own works!"

And so I bust out Romans chapter 1 and read:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 1:18

And I say, "I'm not claiming to have done a work to save myself, I'm claiming to have STOPPED doing the wicked work of suppressing the truth. I have surrendered to Christ as my Lord and Savior. And the Calvinist says, "Well, yes, but you only did that because He MADE you do it. You didn't choose to trust Jesus. If you claim to do anything, you are saying you had to help God to save you."

In their defense, the Calvinist is pushing back against the idea that there is anything we can do to help Jesus to save us from our sins. As they understand it, Synergism means a wicked, unsaved sinner can look to Jesus and say, "OK, I will accept your gift of salvation," and the Calvinist imagines God, who up until this point has been holding his breath, sighing in relief and saying, "Oh, thank me. I wanted SO BAD to save you, but I did everything I could and you still weren't saved yet! I was just sitting here, powerless, waiting for YOU to do what needed to be done in order to finish the work Jesus started on the cross!"



And it brought to mind all of the times that the Jews had to help God rescue them in the Old Testament. In Exodus God came to Moses and said, *“I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord.”*

And Moses said, *“Are our firstborn to be killed as well?”* and God said, *“Yeah, about that. See, protecting the family in a home is as easy as painting the doorposts with the blood of a lamb, and I was totally going to do that for you, but these plagues have me running short on time and way over budget. Can you guys help me to save you from death and slavery by doing the painting yourselves?”* And Moses said, *“Oh, sure. We can help you out.”*

And then later when the children of Israel were on the shore of the Red Sea, with the army of Egypt hot on their tails, once again God came to Moses and said, *“Hey, Moses, I need some help again. I was going to split the Red Sea and then carry all of you across on dry land, but the sea is just bigger than I remembered, and I need to get a whole mess of paperwork done, so I can’t spare the effort to get all of these kids across. Can you help with the Red Sea?”* And Moses said, *“Sure Lord, I can help you out.”*

The Lord said to Moses, *“Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And then tell them they’re going to have to walk across on their own. I would love to stay and carry them across so I could take credit for the entire rescue from slavery, but I just can’t right now. A bunch of angels just took vacation time off, and one of the printers is on the fritz again. You understand, right?”* And Moses said, *“Of course. I’ll divide the water and we can all do a little more walking. We’ll still give you most of the credit.”* And God said, *“Thanks Moses, you’re a friend.”*

In Exodus 15 they sing a song about their rescue which says:

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying,

*“I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously
with JUST A LITTLE help from us;*

*the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea, almost totally by himself.
The Lord is MOST of my strength and my song,*

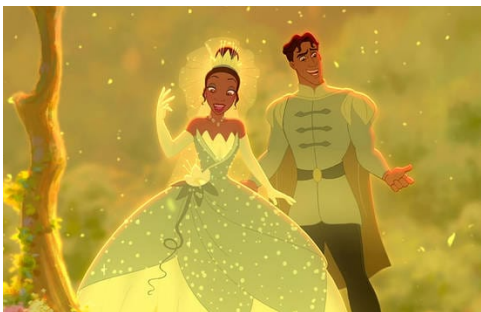
*and he has become MUCH of my salvation,
once we did our part and helped him out a little;
this is my God, and I will praise him, and I will praise myself a little too,
since I painted the door post and walked across the Red Sea,
my father's God, and I will exalt him. And myself, but just a little. He still did most of
the heavy lifting. It was a team effort and there is no "I" in TEAM!"*

Wait a minute... I thought I was quoting from the ESV, but it looks like I was using **The Message** this whole time! Let me read these passages again in the ESV...

Huh. So it turns out that, even though the Israelites painted the blood on the doors of their homes with their own hands, none of them are recorded as saying that they "Helped God" to save them from death. And when they walked across the Red Sea, none of them seems to have claimed to "Help God" save them from the Egyptians, merely because they used their own feet to get to the other side. Moses doesn't even take credit for parting the Red Sea even though he was the guy lifting his staff and stretching his hands to get the ball rolling.

In fact, in the Gospel of John, Jesus doesn't go into the tomb and carry Lazarus out of it. He calls him to come out and then just waits for Lazarus to get up and come out! Weirdly, none of the Gospel writers record Lazarus saying he "Helped Jesus" to bring him out of the tomb.

So MAYBE when God rescues people in a way which is mighty and miraculous, he still expects them to do something and not be inert, lifeless lumps as if he is moving chairs around the kitchen. Maybe when God makes a way through the water, he expects us to walk the way he made, not because he couldn't carry us, but because he wants us to have the faith that moves us to action. And maybe when we get to the other side, we have the sense to say, "God saved us."



Maybe when the king comes for his bride and proposes marriage, he doesn't take her as a slave- as property. Maybe he proposes and waits for her to say "I do." And when she is made his queen, she probably has the sense to tell her friends, "The king chose to love me and make me his own," instead of bragging, "Did you see that? All I said was two little words and I made myself the queen."

And maybe when Jesus saves us from our sins and makes us right with God by paying for our sins with his death on the cross and glorious resurrection, we have the sense to realize that **the acceptance of a gift is not a method of earning it**. When we stop rebelling, put down our weapons and just open our hands, he puts the gift of eternal life into those hands and adopts us as sons. Claiming that the choice to accept the Gospel is earning our own salvation is like saying we pay for a gift by accepting the gift. We don't help Jesus pay for the grace of God by accepting the grace of God.

The Calvinist distinction is not between a view of salvation where God saves and another where we help him save us. The distinction is one between a view of humanity as robots, where Jesus uploads the antivirus to a selection of robots to save them from corruption, and simply chooses not to upload the antivirus to the rest, allowing them to malfunction and ultimately come to destruction. The Bible does not view us as robots awaiting our programmer to make decisions for us. It views us as being made in the image of God, with the ability to choose between obedience and rebellion. Jesus himself talks about us as though we have the ability to repent, or to reject him. But never does he describe our need to repent as though it is also his need for us to help him save us. Jesus doesn't need our help, and without him, we can't help ourselves.

Although, and I know I'm getting distracted here, but as soon as the waitress brings me my pizza, I am totally going to help myself. But unlike salvation, my pizza is something I have to pay for, both now and with my impending heart attacks. When I get home, I'm going to paint my doorposts with marinara and see if it saves me from death. I need all the help I can get.

1. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/is-sanctification-monergistic-or-synergistic-a-reformed-survey/>

Chapter 7: A “Consistent” Calvinist Clears Things Up

Ok, look. I don't want to become one of those people who writes about Calvinism all of the time. The ONLY REASON I'm doing this is because I love you guys, and I want to save you a huge amount of time. I watched NINE HOURS of John Piper so I could explain TULIP to you. Now I'm going to tackle one of the strangest parts of Calvinism that I only discovered recently: **Divine Determinism**.



Divine Determinism teaches that EVERYTHING that EVER HAPPENS is DETERMINED by God. Not merely allowed and then used by His Wisdom to bring about His good plans, but DETERMINED. God is the great puppet master, and we are his puppets (*But don't say that to a Calvinist because they hate it even though, technically, they agree with it*).

In short, they have decided that ***we do not have free will***.

I wrote to a Calvinist who calls himself *the Consistent Calvinist* to ask about this whole lack of free will thing. What I wrote was a lot longer and more detailed than this, but the summation was:

1. Calvinism rejects free will. Is this merely because Calvinism defines “Free” will as “Completely unobstructed by sin” as Mark Driscoll seems to think (*i.e Free Will= Free from the influence of Sin*), or because Calvinism claims that EVERYTHING that ever happens is ALWAYS determined by God, as James White (and John Calvin) seems to say?

And if the latter, how do you ignore your own constant, daily experience of making free will choices in order to hold onto a doctrine that teaches that you cannot make those choices you make? Is this not like trying to convince yourself that the color blue does not exist even though you have an unobstructed view of the sky?

2. If determinism, how are we not robots? And how is God not directly responsible for all evil? I've heard a lot of Calvinists mock this metaphor, but I've yet to hear one answer it. So, let me clarify: if our choices are determined by our nature, and our nature is determined by God, and the Calvinist system admits freely that we are

not making free will choices but merely obeying our desires/nature and we can do no other, then how are we different from robots? And how does this system not NECESSARILY give the blame to God for evil?



Goodbye free will. Helloooooo Calvinism!

In reply, he sent me the names of several of his podcasts, the first of which (**Abandoning Our Free Will Intuitions**) was 3 1/2 hours long. I suppose he expected that I have a LOT of time on my hands. Which is true, but he doesn't know that, so who does he think he is? The nerve.

I listened to the first podcast while I was playing video games.

This was actually very helpful, and in less time than I thought it would be after I saw that 3 1/2 hour runtime on the first video. I actually got most of my questions cleared up in the first 12 minutes (*even though I listened to most of the first two hours*). It came when the Consistent Calvinist equated "Free Will" with "Freedom FROM God," even using those phrases interchangeably. Once I realized this, the little cartoon lightbulb over my head went on.

Free Will Vs. Freedom FROM God

Free Will is NOT Freedom FROM God, just as God's Sovereignty is NOT a practiced control of everything that ever happens, but rather the position of authority and power to control everything- including the power and position of authority to grant real choices to those under your authority. I have the freedom to walk into the bank because they choose to unlock the front door. I don't HAVE to go to the bank, but I can if I choose because they have given me the choice. I do not have the freedom to walk into the vault and swim through the money like Scrooge McDuck. This makes me sad, but it is what it

is. The bank has decided which choices I have to make. I then get to make them. God similarly uses his position of divine authority to decide what decisions I get to choose for myself and what choices will be made for me. God can do that BECAUSE He is both powerful and sovereign.

Free will is freedom to make real choices, NOT Freedom FROM God. Once you have those two ideas clarified and separated in your head, The Consistent Calvinist and Leighton Flowers have very little to disagree about. But let me show it to you from my Calvinist friend's own words:

9 min 46 sec in he says: **“If every particle of your existence relies upon the sustaining power of God at all moments, then by definition, the very definition of your existence as a finite being reliant upon God, freedom from God is impossible.”**

No one is arguing that we have freedom FROM God, as if free will somehow puts us in an Atheistic bubble where God does not exist or act. Free will is not an ability to make God powerless. Free Will is not a literal separation from God where we must make choices because He is powerless to act in those instances.

In fact, this is not a response to those arguing for Free Will. This is, with all due respect, a textbook example of a Straw Man. He SAYS he is replying to Free Will, but is in fact replying to the idea of being Free FROM God.

Do you see the clear distinction between those two ideas?

Obviously being free FROM God would necessitate either free will or a puppet master other than God, but it is NOT true that free will necessitates freedom FROM God. It only necessitates that God has the character, power and ability to give us free will, and that the choices we make are chosen by us.

That I can choose whether or not to go to the bank doesn't somehow put me in a position of authority over the bank, but merely over myself. I don't take away the bank's control over itself when I make that choice, but rather, I have that choice because they have given it to me to make.

God can influence our free choices. He can even completely override our free will if He chooses. But FREE will doesn't mean uninfluenced, but merely that an actual choice was made.

Of Men and Toasters

If you stimulate a person's brain so that their arm moves, they will say, "I didn't do that. YOU did that." This has actually been done in medical experiments. And I'm not for a moment suggesting that you try this at home.

We innately distinguish between what WE choose to do and what happens to us, even if what happens involves part of our own bodies. This is a real distinction, and one which we all naturally accept. It is self evident.



When I set my toaster to medium, put in bread and push down the little handle, I have determined the outcome. The toaster CANNOT make any choices, and so the result is entirely determined by what I have decided. If the toast is burnt, I have only myself to blame, even though it was the toaster which did the burning. If I sin because God determines that I will sin, then I am merely His toaster. If he doesn't like the toast, he

needs to change the settings, but it would be unjust to punish me for what he decided I would do. God's justice only makes sense if we are capable of making real choices- if we are not toasters.

If I give in to peer pressure and join some friends to see an Adam Sandler film, I may whine that I was *forced* to see that movie, but the fact is, I chose of my own free will to allow myself to be influenced. I COULD HAVE gone home and played video games. I had the ability and opportunity to do otherwise, but I chose to let the crowd pressure me. I made a free choice, although an influenced choice. But even if they put a gun to my head and said "Watch *Jack and Jill* or die," I can choose to die. And from what I can tell, it would be the more enjoyable experience. Again, even a strongly influenced decision is made freely, because only I can make MY choices. FREE choices only mean that I am not a toaster. Gravity is constantly pulling me down, but I can choose to stand.

And if my friends want me to watch Adam Sandler films, I need new friends.

In short, my Calvinist friend is not responding to the actual claim of free will, but rather he is dramatically changing the subject to talk about a completely different matter (can we be free FROM God?), which may be why he thinks non-Calvinists are being unbiblical.

CC Says the Quiet Part Out Loud

He actually proves that he agrees with the existence of free will in his very next statement. 10 min in, he says,

“So you see how, I can start with the intuition that I have free will, that I’m free from God, but when I go to the Bible and I find out that I’m not, I have a choice to make. Do I abandon my false intuition and adapt it to what the Bible says? Or do I try to hold onto that intuition, and basically, interpret it through my lens which I am refusing to let go of?”

Wait, let me highlight a few parts of that statement: ***“I HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE.”***

So we are in agreement. That was easy! And let me add some clarification to what he said next;

“Do I CHOOSE to abandon my false intuition and adapt it to what the Bible says? Or do I CHOOSE to try to hold onto that intuition, and basically, interpret it through my lens which I am refusing to let go of (i.e CHOOSING to hold onto).”

What he says here is correct, but what it seems he doesn’t understand is that he is affirming Free will choices. We are in agreement. He also affirms our ability to make free will choices, by which of course I mean he affirms our free will.

With that cleared up, I suspect the rest of my questions become answered by association. This has been very helpful. And now I guess it is up to him to consider whether he can be a *Consistent Calvinist* now that he realizes that he also believes in free will.

Chapter 8: Fixing the Prodigal Son for Calvin

And now, "Fixing the Prodigal Son" by internet celebrity pastor, Calvinist Big Beardo the Baptist:

Brothers, I can say with confidence that we Calvinists have a faith and respect for the Bible that far outweighs that of the Arminians. I think we all know that the non-Calvinists are still lost in their fleshly sin, relying upon the wisdom of MAN instead of the WORD OF GOD. They worship at the altar of FREE WILL, rejecting the sovereignty of God, and instead insisting that we can make choices. This heresy is the result of their own blindness, given to them by God, and the result of the total depravity with which we are all born. The Bible clearly teaches Calvinism, and as such we know that Jesus was a Calvinist. This much is obvious. Jesus would not have taught anything like Free Will. He would have ONLY taught that God alone has the ability to make choices, and that God meticulously determines ALL THINGS.



So what do we do when we get to something like Luke 15, where Jesus tells the Parable of the Prodigal Son? Common sense will tell us that, since Jesus was a Calvinist, he wouldn't have told this parable the way we find it in Luke. Either the text was corrupted by Arminian scribes in the 1400s, or Jesus was being sarcastic for some reason. So when we see a teaching of Jesus which seems to teach that sinners choose to sin, and that they can also choose to repent and return to God, we have a choice to make. Do we conclude that Jesus was being sarcastic, like he was with that whole "Camel through the eye of a needle" thing? Or do we choose to accept the difficult idea

that the Arminians could have corrupted the holy, perfect and inerrant King James Bible?

Either way, I have taken it upon myself to fix this parable, and I now present it to you in the way Jesus WOULD have originally told it, so that it teaches the truth of Calvinism.

The Story of the Totally Depraved Son

“There was a man who had two sons. Well, actually he had three, but he hated that third one and sent him away to die in the wilderness, and we don’t talk about him anymore. He hated that one before he was even born. His hate for that child, even before his birth, showed how just and good this father was, and if you don’t get that, you are a sinner. So now there were only two sons living at home.

And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ The reason he did this is because the Father had hypnotized him when he was a baby, giving him the worst selfish desires and disrespectful attitude. This was the same thing he did to all of his children, including that one he hated that we don’t talk about. It was so complete, that the boy could not resist his selfishness, and didn’t even have the capacity to want to. Often were the times this son would act out on those selfish desires, and the Father would justly punish him for his wickedness. After all, the boy was doing what he WANTED to do, so it was right to punish him, even though the boy could literally do no other.

This time, the Father chose to divide his property between the two sons. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, to a place his Father chose for him to go to, and there he squandered his property in reckless living as determined by his father. In order to prove his justification for casting out his son, he used his powers of influence to cause the boy to throw his money away on prostitutes and alcohol, even determining which prostitutes and what alcohol would be consumed, as he was still in total control over everything his son did.

And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country (as he was determined to do by his father), who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. He eventually starved to death because of his own selfishness.

The father came to the place where his dead, lifeless son lay, unable to do or say or think or believe anything, because of being dead, and he caused him to come back to life with a new heart and a new personality, with his selfishness removed and a new love and respect for his father that he never had before, on account of his father determining that he should not. Before the boy awoke, the father used his powers of hypnotism to once again put thoughts into his mind, saying; 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose with those thoughts in his head, falsely thinking he had repented on his own because he was still foolish and worshiping at the altar of free will, and intended to set out to his father. But when he looked around, he saw his father had carried his dead, lifeless body home already because he, being dead, could not have walked home on his own power. He had been brought home before he was capable of wanting to come home, and now he found himself there.

And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again. And by dead, I mean he was literally dead and I had to bring him back to life and give him a new heart, which is why he is able to stop being selfish. He did nothing, because of being dead, and he's only admitting to having sinned against me because I made him say these things.' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, because the father carried his dead, lifeless body back from the place where he died in his sin, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound, unlike that other brother of yours who we don't talk about because your father hates him for reasons we can't know.'

The older son with the amazing beard and solid understanding of Greek was angry and refused to go in (just as his father determined he would). His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours was dragged back here by you, because he was dead and could not go anywhere unless you did all of the work, who has devoured your property with prostitutes just as you determined he would do through

your irresistible power and meticulous control of all things, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; And by dead, I mean he was literally dead and I had to bring him back to life and give him a new heart, which is why he is able to stop being selfish. He did nothing, because of being dead, and he's only admitting to having sinned against me because I made him say these things.'"

There it is my brothers- just as Jesus would have originally taught it. I wonder what other parts of the Bible I can fix?

Chapter 9: Did Judas Really Have a Choice?

How did God determine that Judas would betray Jesus without overriding Judas's own free will?

Calvinist will frequently point toward the events surrounding and leading toward the crucifixion of Jesus as being a clear example of God's meticulous decree controlling historical events. James White likes to mock the non-Calvinist position by saying things like, "I guess God had to just hope REALLY HARD that somehow all of the events he wanted to happen just accidentally happened!" as if there is no middle ground between steering the events around the life of Jesus and controlling every choice of every person in all history.



Sarcasm is not his greatest strength, but bless his little heart, he keeps on trying.

Obviously, because God needed certain things to happen according to His plan, He needed to control the events which would take Jesus to the cross so that he could die for our sins (*or, on Calvinism, the sins of those few chosen to be the elect*). The Calvinist will then extrapolate out from that, the idea that God meticulously controls **all events and all of human history**. Which to me is quite the jump. I mean, it's one thing to say God directed a LOT of things to make sure that the prophecies were fulfilled and Jesus completed his mission of salvation, but to decide that this divine decree of God to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus somehow means that God is determining what snack I choose at 3pm on a given Tuesday more than 2,000 years later seems, to me, hard to defend from the Biblical text.

But I digress.

As a non-Calvinist who believes in Free Will, how do I explain the idea that Judas was chosen to fulfill a prophecy and determined by God to betray Jesus, if I believe Judas had the free will to choose whether or not he was going to? If God chose Judas to be the betrayer, did Judas have a choice in the matter? If it was prophesied, wasn't it determined? And if it was determined, doesn't that mean Judas didn't have a choice?

Three things are important to consider in my answer:

1. Judas was the man he was in large part because of the many choices he had made in his life.

This is true of all of us. We are deciding every day who we will be by accepting or rejecting various truths and lies, and by choosing or rejecting certain actions.

2. God is not trapped in time.

God MADE time, and so he is not trapped inside of it, having to wait just as we do for the future to arrive. When God told the prophets of old what was to happen, He did not need to get out a telescope and peer down the corridors of time, hoping his vision was clear, and neither did He have to work constantly to make those things happen like some kind of divine juggler on *America's got Talent* so that no one could call Him a liar.

He knows the end from the beginning, not because He is controlling every choice ever made, and not because He is just really lucky at guessing what is going to happen. He can act in time without being trapped in time. Calvinists and Open Theists both forget this.

3. To KNOW something is going to happen is NOT the cause of the thing to happen.

When I watch Star Wars ep IV, I know Luke is going to fire the shot that destroys the Death Star, but my knowing this doesn't CAUSE it to happen. Similarly, there is no causative relationship between what God knows a person will do and the person's choice to do it. Because God exists outside of time, He doesn't need to wait until something has happened to know it's going to happen, and he doesn't need to CAUSE something to happen in order to know before it happens that it will happen.

So do I even think God **determined** Judas to be the one who betrayed Jesus? Yes I do. But not by controlling all of Judas's choices.

Very simply I think **Judas was determined** by God to be the one who betrayed Jesus **by being chosen** by Jesus to be one of the twelve. Certainly God, being all-knowing, would know who in Israel would be willing to choose money over the Messiah. God knows the hearts of men.

We can assume that there might have been dozens or even hundreds of other men in Israel at that time who, given the right circumstances, would have been willing to betray Jesus. Judas was not unique in this aspect. He was only unique in his position, a

position given to him by Jesus himself. Judas could only be in that position to betray Jesus because Jesus chose to put him in that position.

So in short, the way in which God **determined** that Judas would betray Jesus was not by removing his free will choices, but by knowing what kind of free will choices he would have made and then putting him in the position to be able to carry out those choices. The only way in which Jesus determined that Judas would betray him was by choosing Judas to be one of the twelve.

Judas made his own choices. Jesus determined that Judas would be in a position to make those choices by choosing him to be part of the twelve.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Chapter 10: Keith The Calvinist Joins the Fail Army

You may remember a while back when I asked a bunch of questions to a Consistent Calvinist. Well, I found another Calvinist on YouTube named Keith, and I decided to ask him the same questions, as I had not yet gotten good answers I could understand.

Keith recently posted a video called *“Leaving Calvinism With Alana L” Reaction | Leighton Flowers | Biblical Rebuke* where he plays a clip from this video of Dr Leighton Flowers interviewing Alana L about her journey into and then out of Calvinism. I figured, if this Keith guy is posting videos rebuking Dr Flowers, then he must be a Calvinist who knows what he’s talking about and would be able to answer a few questions.

But to be fair, Keith’s “Biblical Rebuke” consisted of almost no Bible, and “rebuke” such as **“these people know Calvinism is true but they don’t like it.”**

and **“Calvinism is Biblical. Point blank, period. It’s biblical. If you disagree with that, you are wrong and that’s a fact. IT’S NOT UP FOR DISCUSSION.”**



So clearly we’re dealing with an educated person who is open minded and ready for an honest dialogue.

I sent him all of the questions I had previously sent the Consistent Calvinist and Keith replied with this:

“Tune in and continue watching my series on Leighton and Alana L.”

This was the entirety of his email. So, while he doesn’t actually SAY he would be addressing my questions in the upcoming videos, I suppose it is *slightly implied*. So I watched the next video when it came out. It didn’t answer any of my questions.

Keith plays a few minutes of Dr Flowers and Alana talking about how they were arrogant when they were Calvinists, and then he follows it up with a minute and a half of personal attacks against them. He doesn’t address any of the many reasons they

discuss which lead them from being Calvinists to no longer thinking Calvinism is Biblical, and he didn't get anywhere near answering the questions I had emailed him.

So I wrote Keith this:

Hello again Keith,

I watched part 2, but I feel like, instead of accepting that the two of them used to be arrogant Calvinists who looked down on other people for "not being able to understand Calvinism" you have decided that "**People like Alana don't like the confidence that Calvinists have because they don't like Calvinism and it puts a bad taste in their mouth.**" But they were not talking about YOU, *they were talking about themselves.*

But you decided to make it all about you, which... kind of proves their point about Calvinists being arrogant, doesn't it? But I digress. I do appreciate you allowing them to speak for themselves. That is charitable.

But what argument do you provide? The video title says "Biblical Rebuke" but... Any argument or evidence for your position or against theirs? None. You end with "**Now Just ADMIT IT. Because that's true and YOU KNOW it's true. And then repent of it. Because the truth is, you do not worship the God of the Bible and that's the problem.**" You'll forgive me for saying, but that doesn't quite earn the name of "rebuke" does it? It's certainly not Biblical. Perhaps future installments will be more Biblical and rebuking of specific points of contention?

But while I am still unfamiliar with all of the ins and outs of Calvinism, I must ask about your demand that they repent. Are you really **demanding non-Calvinists REPENT?** Like, you think they can just choose freely to create their own repentance? To decide for themselves to become repentant and enlighten their own minds to the theology you ascribe? Because you are **telling them to** repent, whereas, if Calvinism was true, wouldn't you simply voice hope that God would grant them repentance? Isn't **telling them to repent, as if it is up to them**, the very heresy you are attacking them for? I am confused. It seems that in your Biblical rebuke of Non-Calvinists, you are being non-Calvinist. Am I wrong?

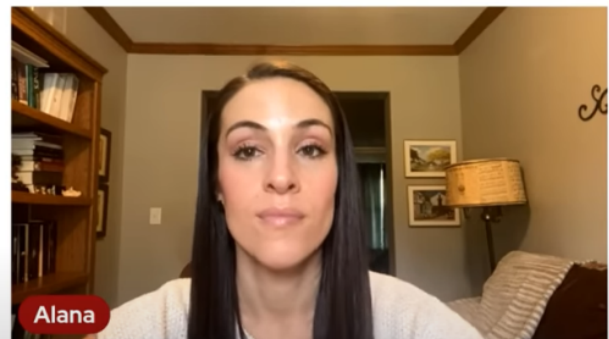
I still have all of the questions Keith.

Might you be addressing the points of contention in the videos which might follow, or are you going to simply assert that you are right without making any effort to tell the viewer

what you believe and why you think it is true? I personally have no problem with you declaring your position confidently, but I am hoping you can bring a little more reason to the defense of your position than **“Now Just ADMIT IT. Because that’s true and YOU KNOW it’s true.”** Because it is neither informative nor persuasive.

But you still have all of my questions, so if you have the time and inclination, and you are in fact a Calvinist, I would appreciate you explaining it to me.

And thanks for letting me be your Rent-A-Friend



Naturally, Keith took time out of his busy schedule to apologize for his lack of clarity and then proceeded to explain Calvinism in a way which answered all of my questions and allowed me to see that it is not only reasonable, but entirely Biblical.

And then a magical unicorn pony appeared and gave me a croissant! And eating it gave me the power of the magic of friendship, and together, we flew to the moon to harvest snoozleberries to use to bake pies for all of the orphan kittens in the world.

Oh, wait, no. That’s the dream I had that let me know I need to get my prescription changed. Hang, on, let me check my email and see what Keith actually said...

Keith Said:

I know you have questions, they won't be answered, not by me. You are the exact type of person I am talking about in my video's and I don't mean this as a disrespect, it's just the truth. Please do not email me again regarding this matter or I will have to block your email.

Yup. That was his ENTIRE email. I must say, the mind does reel. This is what I am used to receiving from Atheists, but I suppose anyone who decides that they have no free will is going to fall down the same rabbit hole. But I digress.

I replied to Keith one last time. I said:

"Keith,

The reason you refuse to answer questions or respond to people like Leighton Flowers with Biblical reason instead of personal attacks is because Calvinism is unbiblical heresy that can't be defended with anything except arrogance. ***You are the exact type of person Dr Flowers is talking about in his videos. Now Just ADMIT IT. Because that's true and YOU KNOW it's true. And then repent of it. Because the truth is, you do not worship the God of the Bible and that's the problem.***

See how persuasive that is? I'll bet you're repenting of Calvinism right now.

But before you block me, ask yourself, why would God decree me to send this email? And then let me know because I have no idea.

Ok, go ahead and block me. And thanks for letting me be your Rent-A-Friend"

So I still have all of the questions. If any of you know of any Calvinists who can answer a direct question with a reasonable answer instead of personal attacks or merely insisting that I already know Calvinism is true, please let me know. And if you're a Calvinist, do not leave me comments like this because it will make you look stupid. ***Now Just ADMIT IT. Because that's true and YOU KNOW it's true. And the repent of it.***

See how persuasive that is?

Chapter 11: I Believe in Free Will Because I Have No Choice

I have a collection of questions outside of TULIP about the various doctrines in and associated with Calvinism. The primary collection revolves around free-will and determinism. Some people who call themselves Calvinists believe we have free-will and the ability to make real choices, but others, including John Calvin himself, seem to think that God meticulously determines ALL THINGS, and as such, free-will is an illusion.

So naturally, I have all the questions.

1. Calvinism rejects free will.

Calvinism claims that EVERYTHING that ever happens is ALWAYS *determined* by God. Not merely ALLOWED, or overseen or guided. DETERMINED.

How do you ignore your own constant, daily experience of making free will choices in order to hold onto a doctrine that teaches that you cannot make those choices you make? Is this not like trying to convince yourself that the color blue does not exist while having an unobstructed view of the sky?



The fuzziness comes when Calvinists start discussing what is meant by FREE, or WILL or CHOICE, etc. I'm sure in their little hearts they intend to clear things up by being very specific and particular, but as I try reading the MANY articles over at monergism.com, I start glazing over at the endless paragraphs which don't actually SAY ANYTHING.

So let me describe the point of contention:

Inanimate objects, like 9mm bullets, have no free will. They do not make choices. They are not responsible in ANY sense for what they do. If a man is shot to death with 9mm bullets, no reasonable person would blame the bullets, or the gun. They would blame the man who fired the gun.

IF divine Determinism is the belief that humans are no more free than those bullets, and God is the only being with a free-will, then He is the only person who can ultimately be the cause of anything and everything that ever happens. We are all bullets, and only God has a hand on the gun.



Or if you prefer, we are all dominos falling into each other, but only HE sets us in a line and pushes us over.

2. If determinism is true, how are we not robots?

I've heard a lot of Calvinists mock this metaphor, but I've yet to hear one answer it. In a recent email exchange, a Calvinist told me that we are DIFFERENT from robots because we can think and have emotions. But if God determines all things, then he is also determining our thoughts and our emotions, so this is a pointless distinction. All of that merely becomes a part of our programming.



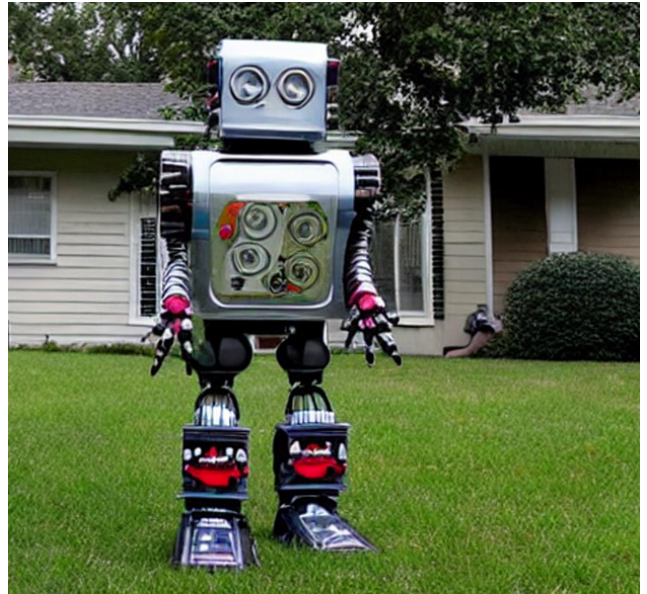
Let me clarify: if our choices are determined by our nature, and our nature is determined by God, and the system teaches that we are not making free will choices but merely obeying our desires/nature and we can do no other, then how are we different from robots?

And how does this system not NECESSARILY give the blame to God for evil?

If I build a robot and I program it to hate my neighbor and I also program it with the ability and desire to kill what it hates, such that this is the ONLY programming it has to access, it will kill my neighbor. I could certainly say *“I didn’t kill my neighbor. My evil robot did.”*

But anyone with any sense would say, *“You programmed the robot!”*

And I could say, *“Yes, I determined its nature and will, but it made its own choices according to its programming. So, since it made those choices, it is guilty of its actions and I am not.”*



In this fantastic Sci-Fi scenario, should the police let me go as an innocent man, or charge me with murder?

Similarly, I hear Calvinists say, *“God isn’t guilty of our evil, because we choose to do it according to our sinful nature.”* But when I ask, *“Why do we have a sinful nature?”*, Calvinists say, *“God determines your nature.”* But then when I say, *“If God DETERMINES my nature, and my nature CAUSES me to do evil, and I CANNOT CHOOSE TO DO OTHERWISE, then how is God not directly responsible for the evil I do?”* and Calvinists say, **“When you do evil, you get the credit, but when you do good, God gets the credit.”*

*(*quote from Todd Friel of Wretched Radio)*

And I hope I don’t have to explain why this doesn’t answer the question.

Again, if we are programmed by God, and we cannot act against that programming, and we do evil because we are programmed to do evil, how does this make us something other than robots, and how does it not necessarily give God the blame for all evil?

Here's what the Bible seems to say about it:

*"...then **choose for yourselves** this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*

Joshua 24:15

*"Each of you should give **what you have decided** in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

2 Corinthians 9:7

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but **because you are willing**, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but **eager to serve**"*

1 Peter 5:2

And of course there are endless verses where God gives people options and choices and tells them to do certain things and not others. In short, nothing about our experience or the Bible makes any sense when you try to view us as having no ability to make choices. If any of our Calvinist friends can make sense of it for me, you are welcome to share in the comments.

If you choose to.

Chapter 12: I Don't Understand Calvinism (Yes I do)

My feed brought up a link to a video where in James White (Calvinist) and Doug Wilson (Calvinist) debate each other about Child Communion (I don't care). I was the first person in the comment's section, and so I put on the Snark Locks Key and typed the following:

Calvinist Vs Calvinist! Each presenting the position they were determined to hold and praying that God determines the other to change his mind because we don't have the free will to be persuaded and choose to believe!

As you can imagine, the comments under my comment have been lively. Some non-Calvinists got the gist right away. Weirdly, some Calvinists have not been as accepting of my brilliant summation.



James White and Doug Wilson

In case you don't get why this is funny, Calvinists teach "Divine Determinism," which says God determines ALL THINGS, and thus we have no free will with which to make choices. It presents a world where we are actually complex robots programmed by God to want certain things, and so He uses this programming to determine everything we will think, do and believe. Calvinists will also say that it does NOT make us robots, and I suspect that the only reason they don't like the robot analogy is because we are not run on batteries, but rather on calories, such as those contained in our daily bowl of breakfast cereal. But then they will also say that God determines even what cereal we choose each morning. I'm not even making that up.

(See Sovereign Over Cereal? Posted by Soteriology 101 Streamed live on YouTube Feb 25, 2022)

The Calvinists in the comments had some good things to say, and a handful of silly things to say. One simply said, "**This is Arminian will worship nonsense.**" And this was **spot on**, because of how I said in my comment that I am an Arminian who holds his free will to be the holiest thing of all (*Note: sarcasm*).

Another said, "**You should probably make sure you know what Calvinists believe before you make silly comments like this.**"

This comment was my favorite, because it made me laugh. And it made me laugh because two of the Calvinists from whom I have heard the most about divine determinism are James White and Doug Wilson. While he doesn't know it, this Calvinist has shown up here to essentially tell me that those two men don't understand Calvinism, because they are responsible for what I think about it.

Is that irony? I think that's irony. Someone get Alanis Morrissette on the phone...

I would like to also point out that this comment is yet another example of something that is my chief complaint about Calvinists: They argue like Atheists.

That is his ENTIRE comment up there. He didn't tell me what I got wrong. He offers no information or correction. He merely lets me know that I don't understand Evolution. Excuse me, I mean Calvinism. It's the same stupid, waste of time comment I have gotten from a thousand angry atheists* about Evolution, or about the fact that Atheism has no moral foundation, and a handful of other things. They stop by to say "You're wrong," and then they're gone like a fart in a hurricane.

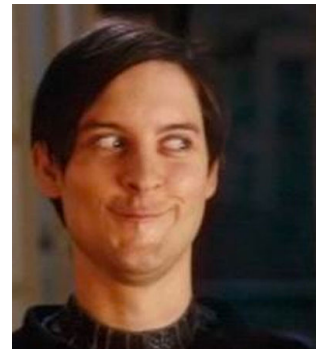
I don't know if these guys are in a hurry, like, they're driving while they leave those comments and so they have to keep them short because they're about to hit the onramp

for the interstate, or maybe they're almost out of time on their coffee break and they have to put the phone down so they can flush and wash their hands. All I know is, it seems pretty weak sauce that they can't add another sentence so that first sentence has enough context to mean something. It's like being handed an empty waffle cone. Why even bother?

I'm willing to learn, but if the comments section doesn't teach me, then I guess I'll just keep getting my information about Calvinism from people who have no idea what they're talking about, like, oh, I don't know... James White and Doug Wilson? Yeah. I wish I could learn the truth about Calvinism, but the comments section have left me to their devices.

I mean, I would represent Calvinism accurately if I could, but...

it seems like I don't have any choice.



*A Thousand Angry Atheists would be a terrible name for a band.

Chapter 13: Calvinism SMACK DOWN! (James White Vs James White)

I know I keep saying this, but I have no interest in making this one of those blogs that talks about Calvinism Vs Arminianism all of the time. First, because it's a false dichotomy and I am neither. Secondly, because it's just not my thing. I have LOTS of other opinions that make people uncontrollably leave comments telling me that I am an idiot.

But, well, sometimes a man has to do what a man has to do, and this is one of those times because I enjoy laughing at other people. Haven't you ever watched Fail Army? Don't judge me.



So [THIS VIDEO](#) (*Leighton Flowers vs. James White: Homosexuality and Determinism*) is an archive of a podcast from Leighton Flowers from Soteriology 101. This podcast is a master class in trolling from a man who is much too polite for his own good. Leighton is not a troll, but he shows here that he could take a professional swing at it.

First, some background:

James White is the kind of Calvinists that makes other Calvinist make videos called "Why are Calvinists Jerks?" He is, in his own right, a very educated guy who is a Jedi Master at debate rhetoric, but he has a MASSIVE blind spot in his Calvinism. Part of his Calvinism, which he admits in this podcast, is a rejection of Free Will. His Calvinism includes Determinism, which means it is the decree of God which **determines** ALL THINGS. Everything that happens, including everything you ever think, feel or do is all determined by God. Not just allowed, and not merely permitted, but DETERMINED.

There is a guy named John Hendryx, himself a Calvinist who James White respects, who wrote an article explaining this view of determinism that he and White both agree on. Leighton Flowers took that article and reposted it, but anywhere that Hendryx said "desire," or "Sin" or something vague like that, Flowers replaced it with "Homosexuality," "homosexual desire," etc. ALL Dr Flowers has done is put a specific sin or sinful desire in place of the vague references to sin or sinful desire in the original article. Then he put it on line and shared it with James White.

James hilariously tore it to shreds.

Much like the people who don't watch past the first 6 seconds of one of my YouTube videos before they head to the comments to explain why I'm an ignorant savage, Dr White apparently didn't read to the bottom of the article where Dr Flowers admits to what he's done. So Dr White spends a significant amount of time ranting about how Hendryx (*who White agrees with, but he thinks was Dr Flowers*) doesn't understand Calvinism, and is misrepresenting Calvinism, and on and on.

It's really funny.

JAMES WHITE VS JAMES WHITE

James White spends a lot of time debating Calvinism because he thinks the Calvinistic things being said by another Calvinist are being said by Dr Flowers. And this brings us to the part where James White debates himself. Leighton included **a quote from Dr White** in this article that Dr White was ranting against, **to show that White disagreed with the Deterministic Calvinism** that his article (*Actually Hendryx's article*) was describing. Did you get that? Read it a few more times if you need to.

Here is that quote of James White:

“If I have a desire toward arrogance, if I have a desire toward boasting and I act upon those desires then I’m acting upon the desires of my heart and that is what I’m judged for! Since I am made in the image of God I do not have to act upon those things, that is what makes us human beings, over against just animals.” – James White (emphasis mine)

And Dr White goes on to rant about how THIS quote is NOT his affirmation of human free will. He goes on to say,

“The point is, as human beings, we experience common temptations. But because we’re human beings, we don’t have to act on them. We have the ability to say NO. We have the ability to discipline ourselves. We have the ability to order our priorities.”
-James White replying to himself (emphasis mine)

In the quote he's replying to, he says essentially, "If I have a sinful desire and I choose to act on it by sinning, I am judged for that choice to sin. But I don't HAVE to do that just

because I desire it.” And in his reply to that quote (himself) he says, “We are all tempted to sin, but we can choose NOT to sin.”

On White’s own view of deterministic Calvinism, God determines ALL THINGS. Everything that ever happens is **controlled and determined** by God, and is the result of God’s specific decree. One of those things decreed by God is that every single person is born in a state of Total Depravity (*aka: Total Inability, meaning inability to respond to God with obedience and love*). And just to clarify, James White has stated that every act of evil IS DETERMINED BY GOD. Murderers murder BECAUSE God determined that they would. This is White’s publicly stated position.

Another article on **monergism.com** (*the website that posted Hendryx’s original article*) says this: “We deny that choice is **free**, because through man’s innate wickedness it is of **necessity** driven to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil.” This is the foundation of the T in TULIP.

TO THE ESCAPE PODS!

So it seems that James White is arguing not only with himself, but with John Calvin as well. But then White ends this part of his rant by saying, “*I am NOT affirming Libertarian free will. But because I don’t know what God’s decree is, I can only act based upon the prescriptive will of God.*”

This escape pod is meaningless. What’s worse, it again offers an example of White Vs White. Consider what he just said in an attempt to prove that he is a Determinist/Calvinist who rejects free will. **He can act-** (*by which he MUST mean “Can CHOOSE to act” otherwise the word “can” becomes meaningless*) **upon the prescriptive will of God**, by which he means the moral law found in the Bible.

So again, he is saying “I can choose to obey (or not to obey) the moral laws of the Bible.” But why does he bring this up? Because he does not know the DECREE OF GOD- the DECREE which meticulously DETERMINES all things. The DECREE by which God sovereignly **controls EVERYTHING EVER**. Since he hasn’t been told what God decrees, he just has to choose something to do, like the things taught in the Bible. And he has to choose to do them, just as God commands people to do in the Bible.

But if God is determining everything that ever happens.... why do you need to know what He is decreeing? Doesn’t the idea state as a matter of definition that what God

decrees WILL HAPPEN? But if that is the case, then how CAN you act on the prescriptive will of God? You CANNOT. You either will, or will not. There is no try.



You will or you won't. There is no CAN.

The take away from this is several key ideas:

1. The best way to win an argument is to quote a person back at themselves. It's a lot less work than creating a counter argument, and a whole lot more funny.
2. James White isn't a Determinist, and most likely no one else is either.
3. The only thing funnier than your own jokes is someone else's pain. But since that's true for all of us, then the next time you fall flat on your face, take comfort in the fact that you've made someone laugh, even if that someone isn't you. Yes, you failed. Join the army. We've got matching jackets.

The entire original podcast, article, and related links can be found here. Enjoy.

<https://soteriology101.com/2015/02/05/god-made-me-this-way-did-god-determine-homosexuality/>

Chapter 14: Dr Calvin and the Cancer Restaurant

Our intrepid reporter is on location to interview the one she has been told is the Great Physician. A beautiful restaurant is full of people from all walks of life, enjoying a meal and drinks in a grand hall. The restaurant is owned by Dr. Calvin, and he is telling his story to the reporter who has joined the event to record the goings on- to get to know the one she has heard about.

“I am the Great Physician you have heard and read about,” he says.

“Who are all of these men and women, Dr Calvin?” she asks.

The Doctor looks over the grand hall and says, “This room is full of smokers- 100 smokers to be exact- each with lung cancer because of their smoking.”

“My goodness!” the reporter exclaims. She looks through the mist of cigarette smoke at the men and women filling the tables all across the ornate room. “Are these your patients? Are you treating them for their cancer?”

“No,” says the Doctor. “They are too addicted to their smoking. They know that coming to me would mean I would make them stop smoking, so none of them would ever come to me. In fact, they *cannot* come to me, so great is the slavery of their addiction.”

“If they are not your patients, then why are they all here?”

“I invited them to my restaurant for lunch because I have a surprise for them,” Dr Calvin tells her. “I have created a substance I call “Grace,” which is the cure that not only heals them of their cancer,” he explains, “but begins to remove from them the desire to smoke, breaking their addiction. I can change their lives! Cured and made new! It won’t cost them anything, and they can’t do anything to help make it work. It’s 100% effective all by itself.”



“Oh my goodness!” the reporter exclaims. “They will be cured of their cancer?”

“Entirely.”

“And they will no longer want to smoke?”

“Well,” he replies, “I’m not saying none of them will EVER light up again, but those who are cured will grow to see more and more the disgusting habit for what it is, and come to hate the thing that causes their former disease. Someday the cigarette they light will be their very last, whereas if I merely left them as they are, they would smoke to their final breath.”

“How do they get this cure from you?” the reporter asked. “Will there be an auction? Is that why they are gathered here?”

“No, of course not!” the Doctor laughed. “I do not have a limited supply that it needs to be fought over. I can make enough Grace for as many as I wish.”

“And you’re simply giving it away?” asks the reporter, dumbfounded.

“In fact, I already have,” the Doctor says with a smile.

“My goodness!” the reporter says with delight. “You are truly generous and merciful!”

“As they lunch,” the Doctor explains, “I have walked among them, filling their drinks. I’ve slipped this cure into the drinks of ten of those people, who I chose for reasons of my own. It will cost them nothing and it does for them what nothing else could. At each table, someone I have chosen will find that, by the time dessert has been served, they are healthy and new, and they may find that they are the only person at their table not reaching for an after lunch cigarette.”

“Wait,” the reporter begins hesitantly, “did you say **ten** of them?”

“Yes, ten of these sick and dying smokers have been given the gift of Grace and will find they have already been cured before they are done with their entrées!”

“Like, you’re only giving it to ten of them NOW?” The reporter is confused as she attempts to grasp the plan at work. “But you’re giving it to the rest of them later? Like, in the after dessert coffee? Or as a gift basket for them to choose to take when they get home?”

“No, it’s not something they can choose. It’s something I have to give them. They can’t give it to themselves.”

“But they can come to you later and ask for it,” the reporter says. “Because when they see how this Grace has affected the others, they will want it too, right?”

“No,” he says. “They are too addicted to their smoking. They cannot and will not come to me for Grace, even after they see its effects and are told the testimonies of those I have helped.”

“But the other ninety people- you are giving it to them too, aren’t you?”

“No, I’m only giving it to ten of them,” explains the doctor. “Just the ten I chose.”

“Why aren’t you putting it in all of their drinks?” she asks. “You could cure all of them by dessert.”

“I’ve only made enough for ten of them,” the doctor answers.

“But if you invited one hundred of them, why would you only make enough for ten of them?”



“Because,” the Doctor replies, becoming frustrated with this reporter’s apparent unwillingness to understand, “I have only chosen ten people to give it to. Why would I make more Grace if it was going to sit around unused? That would be wasteful. I don’t do things that way.”

“No,” she stutters, “what I mean is... Why not cure all of them? Why didn’t you make enough for one hundred of them and give it to all one hundred of them?”

“What do I owe any of them?” Doctor Calvin replies. “It’s because of their decision to smoke that they have cancer. Each of them is suffering the wages of their own decisions. I don’t owe a single one of them a cure, but ten of them are receiving it nonetheless. My actions prove I am generous and merciful.”

“But, you COULD cure them all?”

“Yes, of course I *could*,” he explains, “but letting some of them die shows how horrible smoking is, which helps people see how kind I am to cure some of them who I’ve chosen to help.”

“How can you let most of them die when you have the ability to save them?” the reporter despairs. “Are they just nameless strangers to you? Don’t you know they have families?”

“Of course I know that,” the Doctor tells her. “I’ve known their families for generations. I love all of these people and I know them by name. I can tell you the name of the great great great grandmother they had in common. They all come from families of smokers, which is why they are smokers.”

“But why are these people all smokers if you’ve known their families? Haven’t you told them not to smoke?”

“Of course I told them not to smoke!” Dr Calvin laughs. “They are smokers because, despite my warnings, their greatest of grandparents chose to smoke. Then I got their mothers hooked on cigarettes before they were born so they would all be born addicted to cigarettes.”

“These people were all…” The reporter paused and looked around the crowded room. “They were BORN addicted to cigarettes?”

“That’s right. They were born smokers, born into smoking families.”

“But, they were born smokers because…?”

“Because I determined that they would be smokers. It was my plan from the beginning.”

“You… gave these people cancer?” the reporter shouts in a whisper.

“Don’t be absurd,” replies Dr Calvin indignantly. “I never gave anyone cancer. The cigarettes they chose to smoke gave them cancer.”

“But you chose to make sure they were born addicted to smoking!”

“But I also warned them that smoking would cause cancer and kill them,” the Doctor reminds her. “And now, I have generously given ten of them a completely effective and completely free cure so they can live.”

“You said you love all of these people!”

“Yes, in a sense.”

“But what of the ninety people who are still going to die? Don’t you love them?”

“Yes, in a sense. But, then in another,” he explains, “I hate those people. I’ll be glad to see them die.”



“How can you say that!” the reporter shouts, this time not in a whisper.

“Who are you to question me? Are you a great doctor? Are YOU the Great Physician? Have you made a cure for cancer? CAN you do such a great thing?”

“No,” she admits quietly. “But I still don’t see how you can hate people enough to let them die when you can help them.”

“I don’t expect you to understand my complex nature. In a general sense, I love all of these people, but some of them... well, they’re SMOKERS. It’s a disgusting, filthy habit that causes cancer! And I have told them over and over not to smoke and they continue to ignore me and do it anyway. They are only getting what they deserve.”

“I don’t understand how you, a doctor...”

“Look, it’s very simple,” he explains. “These people are, all of them, slaves to their desire to smoke, addicted from birth. Because of that, they are incapable of coming to me to give them help, because they will always choose cigarettes over health- over coming to me. Therefore, the only way to help them is to choose some of them to cure, and give them the gift of Grace without their help or consent. I chose some of them for my own reasons, not because they earned it in any way, and they will be cured and shortly afterwards will understand what I’ve done for them.

“I made a limited supply of Grace,” he continues, “and I have given it to those I have chosen. I won’t waste it by making it for people who I’m not giving it to, so I have made just enough to help those people I have chosen to help. And once they have been helped, they will be cancer free and lose the desire to smoke until they become totally smoke free. Am I not generous and merciful?”

“I’m not sure what I think,” she says, looking around the room. “To those being cured, you are generous and merciful, but when the number you hate is so much higher than the number of those you help, I’m not entirely sure I believe that you’re a doctor.”

The article she went on to write was greeted by a lot of overly confident men in beards telling her that she doesn’t understand Dr Calvin, and that she is merely misrepresenting him. Some accused her of worshiping at the altar of free health care. A growing number of people, however, think that the man she was introduced to was not the real Doctor at all.

I encourage my readers to see the four biographies which were written by the Great Physician’s friends and see if the man you find in those books is the same man she spoke to, or if perhaps she was introduced to an imposter.

Share with me what you discover.

Chapter 15: John Calvin Clause is Coming to TOOOOOWN!

I think the Santa Claus mythology needs to be updated to make it more Calvinist. This easy believism of Santa, where you can just choose to believe and he rewards your niceness is nonsense. No one is nice! That's a heresy fest right there! So I'm going to fix it to include the Calvinistic TULIP and some James White approved Divine Determinism!



Santa Determinism

Santa Claus lives at the North Pole, from where he controls everything in the universe. His elves obey his every command, including those that rebelled against him and became evil dark elves, and the dark elf Saruman who tempted the first child onto the naughty list. He sees all, and he controls all. He doesn't just see you when you're sleeping, he

decides when you sleep and he decides when (and if) you are going to wake up. He decides if you cry or pout, or if you're going to be good for goodness sake.

Total Naughtiness

The children of the world are all evil, born with only naughty intent. Santa used his special Santa magic to make sure that ALL of the children of the world are naughty, and that they are born hating him. SO COMPLETE is their naughtiness, that the only thing that they want to do is be naughty, and they can't even want to be nice. You can try and explain it to them, maybe by letting them read "Twas the Night Before Christmas," but they are born unable to understand Santa or being Nice. The desires of their hearts are naughty continually. There are none who seek niceness, no, not one.



Nice List Election

Before the world began, Santa made his “Naughty” and “Nice” lists. While some people think that Santa watches you and judges you on your choice to be nice or your choice to be naughty, and then puts you on the list you have earned with your choices, the truth is, Santa picks which list you are going to end up on LONG before you are born and long before you have done anything either naughty or nice. Everyone starts out naughty (even the kids on the Nice List), because Santa used his Christmas magic to insure you are born incurably evil. But sometimes, and for reasons only he knows, Santa takes kids who are naughty (but whose names are already on the Nice list), and he makes them nice. Only the kids on the Nice list get presents. The kids on the Naughty List get stuffed into a burlap sack and beaten with reeds. Santa’s not messing around. Those naughty kids are getting what they deserve.

Irresistible Presents and Limited Stockings

One of the first gifts a kid on the Nice list will get is the gift of BELIEF. As a naughty child, he doesn’t believe in Santa and he doesn’t even want to. He hates Santa. But then Santa slides down his chimney in the dark of night, while the children are asleep, and he pours the gift of BELIEF into their hearts so that they wake full of belief in Santa! Once they have received this gift, they are capable of seeing that they have been naughty and they can sometimes be nice. For the first time, they WANT to be nice.

No child can resist the gift of BELIEF. His or her heart is immediately changed from that moment on. Some people ask, “Why doesn’t Santa bring the gift of BELIEF to ALL of the boys and girls so they can all be on the Nice List?” and the reason is because he doesn’t want to. While Santa has a general love for all children, he really loves the nice children, and he hates those rotten naughty kids whose names he put on the naughty list. This is right, because, after all, they are on the naughty list.

“But,” some may ask, “why doesn’t he deliver the gift of BELIEF to all of the children so they can ALL be nice?” and the answer is, Santa doesn’t actually have enough gift boxes of BELIEF to give one to every boy and girl. He only made enough of those special gifts to cover all of the boys and girls who he put on the Nice list. Imagine what a big failure he would be if he had a bunch of boxes of BELIEF left over that naughty kids didn’t want to open on Christmas morning! No, he hates those kids and doesn’t even WANT them to believe in him. So not only does he refuse to *bring* them that gift, he

didn't even *make* one for them. He wants them to be stuffed into a burlap sack and beaten with reeds. They deserve it.

Perseverance of the Nice

There seems to be some disagreement about the Perseverance of the Nice. Santa once said "If you are on the Nice list, you will be Nice for the rest of your life." Or something like that. So either he meant, once you receive the gift of BELIEF you will always want to be Nice, or he meant, if you want to stay on the nice list, then you HAD BETTER stay Nice or you will discover that you were never on the Nice list at all.

The debate rages on.

Either you better avoid being naughty, because naughtiness will put you on the Naughty list for all of eternity (and you will be stuffed into a burlap sack and beaten with reeds), or you can relax because once you believe in Santa, that will make you Nice enough to stay on the list forever. After all, you were already on the Nice list when you were born, so you can probably be pretty darn naughty and not have to worry about it. I guess it depends on which of Santa's elves you ask. But then, whatever you do, you will do it because Santa makes you. His control is absolute. I guess you had better just hope he decided to make you stay nice so you don't discover that you were never actually Nice at all. I've heard bad things about how itchy burlap can be.

Chapter 16: Pulling the Weeds out of the TULIP Garden

Most of this book has been me explaining what I think are the logical fallacies of Calvinism, but I would like to take a few pages and explain what the Gospel is. In order that you may see what I think and not just what I disagree with, let me take a brief walk through TULIP and offer another point of view so I can clarify what it is I think the Bible actually teaches. Yes, I'm going to drag the Bible into this discussion. I know, it sounds crazy, but humor me if you would. This is what TULIP would look like if it were based on the teachings of Jesus instead of John Calvin.



I can already hear the Calvinists hitting their CAPS LOCK keys as they prepare to answer me. Bring it on.

Total Depravity

Depravity- the stain left by sin- is totally everywhere. This is true, easy to observe in our own hearts and neighborhoods, and clearly taught by the Bible.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

Jeremiah 17:9

Every part of us is touched by sin, from our physical bodies that get sick and die, to our hearts which are quick to adopt fear, selfishness and greed.

We're not PURE EVIL, and we're rarely as bad as we COULD be. Even an atheist can love his wife and children. Even an atheist can care for widows and orphans. Even a politician tells the truth every now and then, even if only by accident. We're not TOTALLY depraved in the sense that we're overflowing with evil and nothing else. We're just living in a world where no part of it isn't stained by sin.

Even our good deeds are often stained by our pride as we hope someone sees us doing good so they can praise us for our goodness, or by greed as we hope we get rewarded for doing good. But we are still human, made in the image of God and therefore capable of great good. A stain doesn't destroy the fabric, it just miscolors it. Our sin doesn't remove from us the image of God we were created with, it only distorts and dirties it. Our deceitful hearts aren't incapable of love, compassion, kindness, and even repentance. They are simply difficult to trust because they are *also* capable of much worse things.

Our depravity doesn't remove from us the ability to know we need God. We are incomplete without Him, and restless until we find our rest in Him, like a dirty pig feeder wishing he was

back in his father's house. We're poor and dirty because of our own foolish sin, but we're still capable of admitting that. Some of us still try to find the way back home. Some people do search for God and all who search find Him. Others prefer another god of their own making and fail to find Jesus for the same reason criminals fail to find a police officer. But those are choices we make, not a program we are given before birth which we must follow like robots. It's not a determination which was made for us before we were born.

We are not incapable of accepting the love of God, but rather we are called by Jesus- in fact commanded- to accept His mercy, put our trust in Him, and be forgiven and adopted as sons and daughters. Jesus taught repentance, and it is still the message the church preaches 2,000 years later.

We may be addicted to our sin, but we are entirely capable of admitting that addiction and crying out to Jesus for help. The prodigal son came to his senses, acknowledged what a mess he had made of his life and decided to ask his father for forgiveness. That's the story Jesus told, and it's the one I believe.

Unconditional Election

To be "elect" means to be "chosen." Who were the chosen people of God in the Old Testament? It was the Jews. Does that mean that being born a Jew was all that was needed to be saved? Did it mean that no gentile could be saved? No on both counts. It meant that God chose the Nation of Israel to be his messengers, carrying to the whole world the truth of who God was and how EVERYONE could have a relationship with him. They were also chosen to be the people through which Jesus would come to the world.

It wasn't the Jews who decided to be the people God used in this way- God chose them. The nation of Israel was chosen- Elect.

The salvation of the individual Jew depended on their choice to worship God alone. They had the ability to choose to give their heart to the one true God, or to one of the many demons masquerading as a god, which sadly many of the chosen people did through Israel's history. The nation was a chosen nation, but the individuals still had a choice to make. The choosing was corporate- a nation was chosen- a people. But the salvation was a matter of the individual.



“Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if

it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:14-15

The chosen people of God today is the church. The body of believers which we call the church is, like the Jews before us, the group chosen to bring the message of God’s love to the world, but also like the Jews, being born into the group was never how one is saved. I was born to parents who went to church because they were born to parents who went to church. I was not saved because I was born into a Christian family, and no one who is not born into a Christian family was born without hope of salvation. We each have a choice to make- whom will we serve? Being Jewish, Baptist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, or any other will not save you from your sins. The church is the chosen nation to bring Jesus to the world, and those chosen for salvation are not those in the church, but those who are in Jesus Christ.

The Church is the kingdom of God, where King Jesus waits to adopt new children into his family. This election- this being chosen- is not based on those of us in the church. We did not earn a place by being smart or beautiful or important. Jesus earned our place and offers it to us as a gift. The condition for being chosen is not found in us. It is found in Jesus. OUR election is unconditional. Jesus met the conditions for our election, and we are saved and made new when we are in him.

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3:26-27

Limited Atonement

The limit to the atonement is the number of doors which lead from hell to heaven: one, and it is Jesus Christ.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

But where Calvinism teaches that Jesus only died for a small group of people chosen before time began, Jesus himself teaches that he was lifted up on that old rugged cross so that ANYONE who looks to Him will be saved from death and given life.

*“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that **whoever believes in him** may have eternal life.*



*“For God so loved **the world**, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him** should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that **the world might be saved through him.**”*

John 3: 14-17

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38

Irresistible Grace

This just falls on the heels of the previous ones. Atonement is not limited- Jesus died for the sins of the whole world so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

...if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 2: 1-2

I feel like that's as clear as it can get. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. EVERYONE is offered the grace of God. So why are some not saved? Because they resist the grace of God.

Why then does Calvinism teach *irresistible grace*? It's the logical continuation of the first parts of TULIP. If we are totally depraved so that we are totally unable to repent, and if our unconditional election isn't about how we are saved or the election of the church to carry the Gospel to the world, but rather about how certain individuals are chosen to be given the gift of faith, then it logically follows that a totally depraved person would only reject faith and the grace of God, so they must not be ABLE to reject it. Grace must be irresistible. But what does the Bible say?

**For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts**

Psalms 95:7-8

**Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion”**

Hebrews 3:7-8

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Matthew 23:37

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

Romans 1: 18-19

Over and over the Bible says that we hear the call of God and have the ability to either accept His love and turn away from our sin, or to harden our hearts and be unwilling to be gathered to Him as His children. We are commanded NOT to harden our hearts, and told that the wicked suppress the truth which is plain to them. It does not say that we are totally unable to hear and understand the invitation, and it does not say we are only capable of hating God, and it does not say that the grace of God is irresistible. We are told that the love and mercy of God is a gift that he offers to us, and that we are told to accept. **“Choose this day whom you will serve.”**

That choice is real.

Perseverance of the Saints

This one is hazy even among the Calvinists, but here's my take.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 10: 27-28

The idea that there is a set limit on how many times you can sin before you lose your salvation seems to me to be one of the more absurd ideas I've had to ponder. When you have ETERNAL life, it isn't like a house plant that you have to keep alive. It's ETERNAL.

This is why Jesus and the New Testament writers compare our relationship with Jesus with a marriage. We make vows to each other, and it is till death do we part- but Jesus is eternal and gives us everlasting life, so there is no we parting. Being married is a lifetime commitment, and if you're a selfish idiot, then maybe you're a bad husband, but you don't lose your husbandness by being a bad husband just as you don't lose your fatherhood by being a bad father. A bad Christian is still saved, because Jesus is still committed to him, even though he is a bad Christian. We don't obey Jesus to continually earn that salvation, but to celebrate it and be thankful for it. I don't do the dishes to maintain my marriage, but because I love my wife. If I never washed another dish again, it would not make me less married, even though it might make my wife less happy.

If you have eternal life, it is eternal. But being engaged is not the same as being married. Living together is not the vows of marriage. Being religious or calling yourself a Christian is not the same as making the vows to the bridegroom of the church. Choose this day whom you will serve. If you're still dating other gods, or dress shopping because you're PRETTY SURE He's the one... you're not married. Raised in the church, talking with Christianese, listening to Christian pop radio hits, or even eating at Chick-Fil-A are not the same as being a Christian, any more than living together is the same as being married.

You need to take the step of faith, make the vow, and be the bride.

I promised you to one husband, to Christ

2 Corinthians 11:2

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5: 31-32

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Revelation 21:2-3

My Big Fat Calvinism Conclusion

Ok kids, we've made it to the end of the yellow brick road and we have no more answers now than when we started, but that isn't going to stop me from making some conclusions. If I've learned anything from the comments on social media, this is it.

1. Do Some Homework

First of all, we all need to do a little homework before adopting a position or a label. Too many self-professing Calvinists will hear Calvinism accurately described and then attack it as a "misrepresentation," which means they are using the word "Calvinism" to mean something other than John Calvin taught. A little research would reveal that they don't actually believe the same things as any of the Calvinists who actually did enough homework to know what TULIP stands for.

Let's make sure we know what a position actually means before we adopt it or attack it. There's nothing wrong with saying, "I'm not sure. I need to look into that." If everything you know can fit on a bumper sticker, you don't know enough to start a fight or claim a label. And you don't know enough to vote about it either.

2. TULIP Isn't a Flower- it's a Travesty

Second, when we actually look into the doctrine which is laid out by TULIP, we find that it's a terrible mess that is refuted merely by looking at the teaching of Jesus. We don't need to get into the Greek words chosen by Paul in Romans chapter 9. We can just look at almost anything Jesus ever said. Jesus was very clearly not a Calvinist.

We also find that the God described by the doctrines of Calvinism is not the same God described in the Bible. Now, I'm now saying that Calvinists aren't Christians or anything of that sort. I'm just saying that, of all of the descriptions they may have for God, the Calvinist one is one of the wrong ones. We all have this going on in our heads, like when we picture God looking like one of those old bearded white dudes from Renaissance paintings, or like Morgan Freeman. They may believe all KINDS of true and right things about God, but when they get to the part where they think he hates most people before they were born so much that Jesus looked at them and said, "No way. I'm NOT dying for the sins of THOSE people," well, I think we've jumped the theological shark in the worst way possible.

3. Determinism Is A Heresy I Freely Reject

While not all Calvinists fall down the rabbit hole far enough to reach Divine Determinism and a rejection of our free will, enough do that it's worth discussing, and I think it's consistent enough with TULIP to take those guys seriously. If we follow Calvinism as far as Divine Determinism, we

find that no one can explain this nonsense, let alone defend it. I've yet to find a Calvinist who holds to Divine Determinism that can even TALK as if they believe it, let alone make sense of it. Just like the atheists, the Calvinists run face first into their own free will, find it is incompatible with their doctrines, and are forced to pay lip service to a stupid idea which they spend every day refuting merely by existing. It would be funny if it weren't so sad. Well, OK. It's a little funny.

4. Everyone Has a Blind Spot

Let me defend my Calvinist friends and brothers before I end. I need to remind you that I said at the start that MANY of these guys are smarter than I am, know the Bible better than I do, and are godly men worshiping Jesus. My attack on Calvinism is not an attack on any of them, nor a claim of superiority on my part. All I am saying is, even the smartest man can have a blind spot, and when there's a lot of other things going on, sometimes that blind spot gets covered by a conveniently placed bumper sticker that says, "God is sovereign and we don't do anything to help Jesus to save us from our sins." And if all you have is that bumper sticker, then I can see why you wouldn't think to question it. Remember Black Lives Matter? I mean, sure that sounds like simple common sense. But then, if you find out that the CORPORATION of "Black Lives Matter" (LTD), which was taking millions of dollars in donations, had publicly dedicated themselves to communism, perversity, and the death of the family, and then hoarded those millions of dollars for themselves such that not a single Black school, business or neighborhood benefited from them... well, the bumper sticker doesn't seem like quite enough in hindsight, does it? But I digress.

The point is, a lot of Calvinists only know the bumper sticker. "God is sovereign." This is true, but they fail to look into what John Calvin and today's modern Calvinist philosophers MEAN by that. It's not what the Bible means, yet Calvinists respond to non-Calvinists by saying silly things like, "They hate the sovereignty of God." But we don't.

"God alone is responsible for our salvation." This is true, but again, the Bible does not mean the same thing Calvinism means by this. Calvinism means we are inert inanimate objects, like jars, and some were made for heaven and others were made for hell and that is that. The Bible, on the other hand, gives us commands like "Repent," and "Choose this day whom you will serve."

"The saved were chosen by God." This is true but... well, you see where I'm going with this. Black lives DO matter, but that doesn't mean you should send your money to a bunch of communist, god-hating, anti-American, greedy perverts who encourage acts of terrorism. You need to do a little more homework than reading that bumper sticker. Sometimes the truth doesn't fit on a bumper sticker.

Thanks for reading my questions and arguments. I hope at the very least I have helped you to think about what the Bible teaches and what it means. If you don't remember anything else, at least remember this: Jesus Loves You! And thanks for letting me be your Rent a Friend.