

Scriptures and Doctrine :: What Should We Think Of Evangelism and Calvinism?**What Should We Think Of Evangelism and Calvinism?, on: 2007/9/8 12:39**

What Should We Think
Of Evangelism and Calvinism?
by Ernest Reisinger

One of the greatest evangelists ever to set foot on American soil was George Whitefield. Read carefully the following quote and note his pleading with sinners.

I offer you salvation this day; the door of mercy is not yet shut, there does yet remain a sacrifice for sin, for all that will accept of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will embrace you in the arms of his love. O turn to him, turn in a sense of your own unworthiness; tell him how polluted you are, how vile, and be not faithless, but believing. Why fear ye that the Lord Jesus Christ will not accept of you? Your sins will be no hindrance, your unworthiness no hindrance; if your own corrupt hearts do not keep you back nothing will hinder Christ from receiving of you. He loves to see poor sinners coming to him, he is pleased to see them lie at his feet pleading his promises; and if you thus come to Christ, he will not send you away without his Spirit; no, but will receive and bless you. O do not put a slight on infinite love--he only wants you to believe on him, that you might be saved. This, this is all the dear Saviour desires, to make you happy, that you may leave your sins, to sit down eternally with him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let me beseech you to come to Jesus Christ; I invite you all to come to him, and receive him as your Lord and Saviour; he is ready to receive you. I invite you to come to him, that you may find rest for your souls. He will rejoice and be glad. He calls you by his ministers; O come unto him--he is labouring to bring you back from sin and from Satan, unto himself: open the door of your hearts, and the King of glory shall enter in. My heart is full, it is quite full, and I must speak, or I shall burst. What, do you think your souls of no value? Do you esteem them as not worth saving? Are your pleasures worth more than your souls? Had you rather regard the diversions of this life, than the salvation of your souls? If so, you will never be partakers with him in glory; but if you come unto him, he will supply you with his grace here, and bring you to glory hereafter; and there you may sing praises and hallelujahs to the Lamb for ever. And may this be the happy end of all who hear me!

George Whitefield was a staunch Calvinist. There is one thing certain--Whitefield's Calvinism did not in any way dampen his holy zeal for the souls of men.

What is Calvinism?

The great Princeton theologian, Dr. B. B. Warfield, describes Calvinism as follows:

Calvinism is evangelism in its pure and only stable expression, and when we say evangelism we say sin and salvation. It means utter dependence on God for salvation. It implies therefore, need of salvation and a profound sense of this need, along with an equally profound sense of helplessness in the presence of this need, and utter dependence on God for its satisfaction. Its type is found in the publican who smote his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" No question there of saving himself, or helping God to save him, or of opening the way to God to save him. No question of anything but "I am a sinner, and all my hope is in God, my Saviour!" This is Calvinism, not just something like Calvinism, or an approach to Calvinism, but Calvinism in its vital manifestation. Wherever this attitude of heart is found and is given expression in direct and unambiguous terms, there is Calvinism. Where this attitude of mind and heart is fallen away from it however small a measure, there Calvinism has become impossible.

The Calvinist, in a word, is the man who sees God. He has caught sight of the ineffable Vision, and he will not let it fade for a moment from his eyes--God in nature, God in history, God in grace. Everywhere he sees God in His mighty stepping, everywhere he feels the working of His mighty arm, the throbbing of His mighty heart...Calvinism is just Christianity. The super-naturalism for which Calvinism stands is the very breath of the nostrils of Christianity; without it Christianity cannot exist...Calvinism thus emerges to our sight as nothing more or less than the hope of the world.

John A. Broadus, one of the great and respected Southern Baptist fathers, described the Calvinism of his fellow-founder of Southern Seminary, Dr. James P. Boyce, as nothing less than the technical name for "that exalted system of Pauline truth."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, that great soul-winner, once said,

We only use the term "Calvinism" for shortness. That doctrine which is called "Calvinism" did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Holy Spirit of God, from diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them from the Holy Ghost and from Jesus Christ, the great founder of the Christian Church. We use the term then, not because we impute an extraordinary importance to Calvin's having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with the fact.

Spurgeon went on to say,

The old truths that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, is the truth that I preach today, or else I would be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. And that gospel which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again.

Diverse Attitudes Toward Calvinism

The subject of this article is one which arouses diverse feelings in the minds of men. History has witnessed no small amount of controversy over "Calvinism." The subject remains vitally important at the present time. This is particularly true in light of modern deviations from historical and biblical orthodoxy.

Unfortunately many harmful yet fashionable opinions have invaded almost every area of religious life. On nearly every side we hear the voice of inquiry with Pilate's old question, "What is truth?" There are a thousand different religious opinions regarding the answer to this query. Sometimes this question is asked by the skeptic, who doubts even the existence of an objective answer. Often, however, it is asked by serious, troubled souls desirous of finding their way through the rocky religious shoals of life's storm-tossed sea of religious confusion. It is the latter I hope will find help in this study.

As diversified as the modern professing religious world may be with regard to its numerous sects and communions, split up as it is with its irreconcilable creeds and contentions, it will nevertheless be found, upon close and critical examination, that among those who can (reasonably) be called Christian, there are basically only two sections or parties. Practices may vary, diverse views on many subjects may be held, different attitudes may be taken up in relationship to many questions, and the outlooks may be fixed at widely differing angles, but the fundamental positions occupied will be found to center on one or the other of two distinct forms of belief. Perhaps it is more correct to say that all such perspectives derive from one of two systems of theology. The root principles of all are to be found embedded either in Calvinism or in Arminianism. Such, at least, are the modern terms used to distinguish and describe these widely differing systems of theological thought and teaching. These terms, however, have a tendency to confuse and mislead.

Christianity should bring us to the feet of the apostles, and, indeed to the feet of our Lord Himself. Any understanding of revealed truth which fails to do so is not worthy of the name "Christian." The views which are stated and defended in the following pages, when properly embraced, have precisely this effect.

We call it Calvinism. It might with equal justice be called Augustinianism. We might, with the same cogency of reasoning, go even further back into the pages of ecclesiastical history and designate it Paulinism. Whichever name we use, however, it should be regarded only as a mere convenience now rendered necessary because of its general adoption. Personally, we regard the name as an entire mistake seeing that it has been the means of fostering many of the ignorant cavilings which have been heard not only in these days but also in days which are past.

There is a genuine resurgence today of this grand and glorious Pauline system of biblical truth--particularly among Southern Baptists. For those of us who are numbered among this group, it is nothing less than coming home to our doctrinal roots. The founding fathers of the SBC were immersed in that stream of biblical truth where no man can touch bottom, and which caused the great Apostle to cry "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Do Not Go Further Than The Scriptures

The following warning should guide anyone who embarks on a study of Calvinism:

The importance of the subject discussed should lead us to proceed only with profoundest reverence and caution. While it is true that mysteries are to be handled with care, and while unwarranted and presumptuous speculations concerning divine things are to be avoided, yet if we would declare the Gospel in its purity and fullness we must be careful not to withhold from believers what is declared in the Scriptures concerning the truth of Calvinism. That some of these truths will be perverted and abused by the ungodly is to be expected. No matter how plainly it is taught in Scripture, the unenlightened mind considers it as absurd, for instance, that one God should exist in three persons, or that God should foreknow the entire course of world events, as that his plan should include the destiny of every person. And while we can know only as much about Calvinism as God has seen fit to reveal, it is important that we shall know that much; otherwise, it would not have been revealed. Where Scripture leads we may safely follow (L. Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pp. 54-55).

There are many misrepresentations by those who do not know what biblical Calvinism really is. Most of this group call real Calvinism "hyper-Calvinism." Some think that if you believe in the antinomian view of "eternal security" you are a Calvinist and everyone else is either an Arminian or a hyper-Calvinist.

There is no question that many Calvinists are not as evangelistic as they should be, but this is not because of Calvinism but because of a cold and indifferent heart. Many Arminians are not evangelistic but it is not because of their Arminianism. Again, it is because of a cold and indifferent heart.

It is also true that Calvinism will kill some kinds of evangelism but it will never kill real biblical evangelism. Some people do not like rock-and-roll music but that does not mean that they do not like music. So it is with shallow, unbiblical evangelism. It is repulsive to Calvinists, but this does not mean that they do not love and embrace true, God-centered, biblical evangelism.

Calvinism may kill man-centered evangelism, but true, biblical Calvinism gives evangelism its only proper doctrinal foundation. Furthermore, it guarantees evangelism's success. God saves sinners--that is Calvinism. He does not merely make salvation possible, but actually saves by plan and power.

Doctrine Is Vital to Evangelism and Election

The doctrine of unconditional election is one of the foundational doctrines of Calvinism. Before considering some of the biblical evidence for election, let us distinguish the difference between means and cause.

God elected the means of salvation as well as the recipients of salvation. His Word reveals that He chose to save His own people through preaching and witnessing: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

But we must always remember that preaching and prayer are the means and not the cause of anyone's salvation. The cause is God's unconditional, electing love. For God so loved the world that the "whosoever" will believe and will not perish.

Who are the "whosoever"?

Answer:

"All that the Father giveth . . . shall come . . ." (John 6:37).

"My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

Why is it that some do not believe?

Answer:

"But you believe not because you are not My sheep . . ." (John 10:26).

The Father gave His Son some sheep and He has sent us out to preach and witness because that is the means He employs to call them. "As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 17:2).

They will come because Christ died for them and Christ has prayed for them. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but

t for them which Thou hast given me: for they are thine" (John 17:9). Jesus prayed for the future sheep who would come . "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" (John 17:20). "Father, I will that they also, Whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Why is God's electing love so important to the preacher and missionary? It is the doctrine that assures the success of our missionary efforts. The greatest preacher-evangelists in the history of the church believed in the biblical doctrine of election. It is an important part of the doctrinal foundation of Calvinism .

It would be wise for our present day Southern Baptists to heed the exhortation found in Isaiah 51:1--"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug."

The Israelites were commanded to call to remembrance their past. Remembrance of God's mercy in the past will be profitable in many ways. A recollection of the past will be sure to excite our thankfulness. God's people are always happy when they are grateful. But at this particular time in our history it will be profitable to examine our doctrinal foundation, "the rock from whence we were hewn." An honest looking back will teach us the importance of sound doctrine, especially, as the foundation for gospel preaching. Southern Baptists, (all Baptists for that matter) have always been marked by their zeal for evangelism and missions. That is why we have over 3,000 foreign missionaries in 91 different countries and about 3,200 home missionaries and nearly 40,000 churches with over 15,000,000 members.

Looking back to the great warriors in the work of evangelism and missions we should ask, "What did these men believe about God, man, sin and salvation?" By looking back it is easy to find that they were mostly Calvinists and their evangelistic efforts were grounded in the doctrinal foundation of Calvinism. A biblical, doctrinal foundation is more important than most Baptists believe. Sound doctrine undergirds all true worship and witness, and that is what Christianity is all about. Doctrine not only expresses the true conversion experience but it determines the message and methods of evangelism.

The doctrinal foundation of biblical evangelism is as important to the work of evangelism as the back bone is to the human body. Doctrine gives unity and stability.

It is the doctrinal foundation that produces the spiritual strength that enables evangelism to endure the storms of opposition, hardship and persecution which so often accompany it. Therefore, the church that neglects the true doctrinal foundation of biblical evangelism will soon weaken its efforts.

The lack of a doctrinal foundation will work against unity and will invite error and instability in all evangelistic efforts. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of a sound biblical foundation for true God-centered evangelism.

Doctrine shapes our destiny, and we are presently reaping the fruits of unbiblical evangelism. The great apostle, instructing a young minister to do the work of an evangelist, tells him that doctrine is the first purpose of Scripture. "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for DOCTRINE" (2 Tim. 3:16).

When I speak of doctrine I am not speaking of any doctrine but that which the founders of our first seminary believed and taught. The doctrines that Boyce believed and taught were the foundation of his devotion and the devotion that he inspired in others. Now, many recognize the importance of doctrine and keep using the term. Jehovah's Witnesses have doctrine, as do Mormons and Christian Scientists. All Baptists have some doctrine. But what doctrine?

What doctrines am I talking about? I mean those doctrines that were defined, defended, expressed and set forth by the Synod of Dort in 1618; the doctrines that were set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism; those doctrines expressed in the Old Baptist Confession of 1689, later adopted by the Philadelphia Association, out of which Southern Baptists came.

These precious doctrines that set forth a God who actually saves, and does not just makes salvation possible for sinners to somehow save themselves by a decision, or by cooperation in their salvation. Rather, these doctrines declare a God who actually saves by plan, by purpose and by power.

I mean those doctrines that reveal the three great acts of the triune God in recovering poor lost sinners, that is:

1. The loving election by the Father.

2. The powerful redemption accomplished by the Son.
3. The effectual calling by the Spirit.

Each Person of the Trinity works for the salvation of the same people, thus securing the salvation of those people infallibly.

These doctrines make salvation depend on the work of God, not on the ability or will of man. These doctrines give all the glory to God for the saving of sinners--not dividing that glory between God and sinners. These doctrines reveal that history is nothing less than the working out of God's preordained plan. These doctrines set forth a God who is sovereign in creation and sovereign in redemption; the Trinity working together for the salvation of the sheep. God the Father planned it. God the Son achieved it. God the Spirit communicates and efficaciously applies it. There is no war in the Trinity. They all work together for the same people: "My sheep hear My voice...."

We do not support the erroneous idea that God has done all He can, and is now standing idly by waiting to see what sovereign sinners are going to do with an impotent, pathetic Jesus. No! God saves sinners--salvation is of the Lord. We must not weaken this great truth by disrupting the unity of the Trinity or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man.

Calvinists believe and teach that the cross was not a place just to make salvation possible but rather, to actually secure the salvation of His people (Isa. 53:11). These doctrines show the cross as revealing God's power to save, not His impotence. God was not frustrated at the cross. He was the Master of Ceremonies. As Peter declared, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

A Calvinist does not believe that God's decision to save man by a decree leaves man passive or inert. No! No! The very opposite takes place! The covenant of grace does not kill man, it does not regard him as a tin can or a piece of wood or a robot; it takes possession of the man, it lays hold of his whole being with all his faculties, his power of soul and body--for time and eternity.

God's sovereign grace does not annihilate man's powers, rather it overcomes his powerlessness. It does not destroy his will but frees it from sin. It does not stifle, or obliterate his conscience but sets it free from darkness. It regenerates and recreates man in his entirety and in renewing him by grace, causes him to love and consecrate himself to God most freely.

I am aware that as I write these words a deep-seated prejudice exists in many parts of the church against the systematic exposition of the doctrines of the Bible. It probably falls within the experience of every pastor to see the gathering frown, the averted shoulder, and the drooping head, as soon as certain doctrines are announced as the theme for discussion. It does not excite or surprise us that the world of the ungodly should manifest this displeasure; for the same "carnal mind" which is enmity against God, is enmity likewise against the truth of God. However, that professing Christians should engage in this unholy crusade against doctrinal religion, and that even ministers of the gospel should sigh over the earnest proclamation of its truths, and accuse the faithful witness of "daubing with untempered mortar," is certainly a most afflictive and atrocious scandal.

Look Back

I have a long-cherished conviction that, next to the Bible, from which all that relates to God and the soul must be drawn, there are no books I would rather recommend for an experimental and devotional use than those written by our Calvinistic fathers, such as, John Bunyan, Andrew Fuller, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Basil Manly, James P. Boyce and John L. Dagg.

In looking back to the rock from which we are hewn we cannot overlook some of our great Southern Baptist Convention fathers and leaders who were committed, articulate Calvinists:

Basil Manly, Sr.--One historian said Manly played the part of concertmaster in orchestrating the events that resulted in the call for a conservative convention of Baptists. Manly produced a strongly worded six-point resolution which led to the separation of Northern Baptists and Southern Baptists. This resolution was "passed standing and unanimously." Basil Manly was a Calvinist of the first order.

James P. Boyce--He was the principal founder of our first seminary (Southern Seminary). Long after Boyce's death, one of his former students, Dr. David Ramsey, gave a Founders Day address on January 11, 1924. His message was entitled

d, "James Petigru Boyce: God's Gentleman." A few quotes from Dr. Ramsey's address will tell the story that Boyce was a committed Calvinist who loved the souls of men.

Dr. Ramsey said:

My contention is that no other theology than that of an overwhelming and soul consuming love for men will account for James P. Boyce and his career. This passionate love was the motif that directed his thinking in those early conferences and in the preparation of those papers which led to the establishment of the seminary.

This purpose to help his fellowmen ran through all his plans, through his conversation, his writings and his preaching and teaching as the scarlet thread that runs through every foot of cable of the English Navy.

This zeal for souls called out the finest of his being as the morning sun causes the dew laden flowers and plants to bend toward the god of day."

Dr. Boyce not only loved men, he loved God. Dr. Ramsey said, concerning this point, "Let the thought embrace both the subjective and objective love; man's love for God and God's love for man."

Boyce's close friend and fellow founder of the seminary, John A. Broadus, expressed his own feelings about the theology of Boyce: "It was a great privilege to be directed and upborne by such a teacher in studying that exalted system of Pauline truth which is technically called Calvinism, which compels an earnest student to profound thinking, and when pursued with a combination of systematic thought and fervent experience, makes him at home among the most inspiring and ennobling views of God and the universe He has made."

Dr. Boyce's legacy to us and to our posterity is the biblical theology expressed in the Abstract of Systematic Theology, which is nothing other than his classroom teaching. It is pure Calvinism.

William A. Mueller, author of A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, "As a theologian Dr. Boyce is not afraid to be found 'in the old paths'. He is conservative, and eminently Scriptural. He treats with great fairness those whose views upon various points discussed he declines to accept, yet in his own teaching is decidedly Calvinistic, after the model of 'the old divines'. Difficulties as connected with such doctrines as the federal headship of Adam, election and the atonement he aims to meet, not so as to silence the controversialist, but so as to help the honest inquirer."

Rev. E. E. Folk, in the Baptist Reflector commented on Boyce's abilities and fruits as a teacher of theology: "You had to know your systematic theology, or you could not recite it to Dr. Boyce. And though the young men were generally rank Arminians when they came to the seminary, few went through this course under him without being converted to his strong Calvinistic views." Boyce was a strong Calvinist.

W. B. Johnson--First President of the SBC was a Calvinist.

R. B. C. Howell--Second President of the SBC was a Calvinist.

Richard Fuller--Third President of the SBC was a Calvinist.

Patrick Hues Mell, who was known as "The Prince of Parliamentarians" was Professor of Greek and Latin at Mercer University, Georgia. One of the outstanding things about P. H. Mell is that he was president of the SBC 17 times--twice as many times as any other man. Mell was a polemic defender of Calvinism. Mrs. D. B. Fitzgerald, a member of the Antioch Church and a resident in Mell's home for a number of years, recalls Mell's initial efforts at the church:

"When first called to take charge of the church Dr. Mell found it in a sad state of confusion. He said a number of members were drifting off into Arminianism. He loved the truth too well to blow hot and cold with the same breath. It was a Baptist church and it must have doctrines peculiar to that denomination preached to it. And with that boldness, clearness, and vigor of speech that marked him, he preached to them the doctrines of predestination, election, free-grace, etc. He said it was always his business to preach the truth as he found it in God's Word, and leave the matter there, feeling that God would take care of the results" (A Southern Baptist Looks at the Doctrine of Predestination, pp. 58,59).

Names of other Southern Baptist leaders who were committed Calvinists and strong on evangelism could be multiplied. One more, however, will have to suffice.

John A. Broadus, a great preacher and one of the founders of our mother seminary said, "The people who sneer at what is called Calvinism, might as well sneer at Mont Blanc. We are not bound in the least to defend all of Calvin's opinions or actions, but I do not see how any one who really understands the Greek of the Apostle Paul or the Latin of Calvin or Turretin can fail to see that these latter did but interpret and formulate substantially what the former teaches."

No preacher or evangelist since the day of the Apostle Paul ever laid so much stress on the absolute sovereignty of God as did that great soul-winner, Jonathan Edwards. And it may come as a surprise to the promoters of man-centered evangelism of our day to discover that the preaching of God's sovereignty was very fruitful. Under the ministry of Edwards, revival swept through his church. He said, "I think that I have found that no discourses have been more remarkably blessed than those in which the doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty with regard to the salvation of sinners were stressed."

The man who did more for biblical evangelism internationally than anyone in our generation was the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Dr. Lloyd-Jones saw himself primarily as an evangelist. Those who knew him best also saw him in the same way. Mrs. Lloyd-Jones was once present with a group of men who, in her husband's absence were paying compliments to his abilities. As she listened to them she evidently thought that they were missing the main thing and surprised them by quietly remarking, "No one will ever understand my husband until they realize that he is first of all a man of prayer and then, an evangelist."

As a convinced Calvinist, Dr. Lloyd-Jones opposed some of the most popular features of modern evangelism. This led those who were uncomfortable under his strictures to allege that he was "a teacher, not an evangelist." A critic once challenged his commitment to evangelism with the question, "When did you last have a campaign at Westminster Chapel?" The answer he received was not intended to be humorous, "I have one every Sunday." When Martyn Lloyd-Jones was instructing students for the ministry he said, "I contest very strongly and urge that there should always be one evangelistic service in connection with each church every week." In his case it was the Sunday night service which had this purpose, and he continued that practice from the beginning of his ministry in 1927 until he concluded his pastoral oversight in 1968. Where is the hope for the success of evangelism?

Calvinism is the certainty of success in the work of evangelism. It is the foundation and hope of missionary endeavor.

If the hope of preachers and missionaries was in their own power and ability to convert sinners, or, if our hope was in the power or ability of dead sinners to give themselves life, all would despair. But when the worker's hope for results is in the work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can quicken, we labor with the expectation that God will do what no preacher can do. We can be sure that He will effectually call His sheep by His own will and power through prayer and preaching.

Much of the modern confusion about Calvinism stems from distortions and caricatures of its actual teachings. For this reason it is vital to understand what Calvinism does not teach.

What Calvinism Is Not

Calvinism is not anti-missionary: Rather, it gives the biblical foundation for missions (John 6:37; 17:20,21; 2 Tim. 2:10; Isaiah 55:11; 2 Pet. 3:9,15).

Calvinism does not destroy the responsibility of man. Men are responsible for whatever light they have, be it conscience (Rom. 2:15), nature (Rom. 1:19,20), written law (Rom. 2:17-27), or the gospel (Mark 16:15,16). Man's inability to do righteousness no more frees him from responsibility than does Satan's inability to do righteousness.

Calvinism does not make God unjust. His blessing of a great number of unworthy sinners with salvation is no injustice to the rest of the unworthy sinners. If a governor pardons one convict, is it injustice to the rest (1 Thess. 5:9)?

Calvinism does not discourage convicted sinners, but welcomes them to Christ. "Let him that is athirst come" (Rev. 17:17). The God who convicts is the God who saves. The God who saves is the God who has elected men unto salvation. He is the same God who invites.

Calvinism does not discourage prayer. To the contrary, it drives us to God, for He it is who alone can save. True prayer is the Spirit's prompting, and thus will be in harmony with God's will (Rom. 8:26).

Words Of Caution

1. It is not wise to make derogatory remarks about what is in the Bible whether you understand it or not.
2. It is not wise to reject what the Bible teaches on any subject, especially if you have not studied what the Bible has to say about it.

3. It is not wise to make a hobby out of any one doctrine. Although this doctrine is of vital importance, it must not be separated from all Christian truth.

4. It is not wise to reject any doctrine because it has been abused, misused and confused. All the key doctrines have been perverted and abused.

5. It is not wise to try to learn what a Calvinist is from those who are not Calvinists.

A Word Of Warning

Calvin's warning against undue speculation in respect to the lofty doctrine of Predestination can well be applied to all the doctrines of Calvinism:

"Human curiosity renders the discussion of predestination, already somewhat difficult of itself, very confusing and even dangerous. No restraints can hold it back from wandering in forbidden bypaths and thrusting upward to the heights. If allowed, it will leave no secret to God that it will not search out and unravel. If this thought prevails with us, that the Word of the Lord is the sole way that can lead us in our search for all that it is lawful to hold concerning him, and is the sole light to illumine our vision of all that we should see of him, it will readily keep and restrain us from all rashness. For we shall know that the moment we exceed the bounds of the Word, our course is outside the pathway and in darkness, and that there we must repeatedly wander, slip and stumble. Let this, therefore, first of all be before our eyes; to seek any other knowledge of predestination than what the Word of God discloses is not less insane than if one should purpose to walk in a pathless waste (cf. Job 12:24), or to see in darkness. And let us not be ashamed to be ignorant of something in this matter, wherein there is a certain learned ignorance" (Institutes, III. 21. 1-2).

Conclusion

The harmonious relationship between Calvinism and evangelism has often been expressed in our evangelical hymnody. Two such hymns provide a fitting conclusion to this study.

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true,
No, I was found of thee.

Thou didst reach forth thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,
'Twas not so much that I on thee took hold,
As thou, dear Lord on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord to thee;
For thou wert long before-hand with my soul,
Always thou lovedst me.

--Anonymous

'Tis not that I did choose thee, For, Lord that could not be;
This heart would still refuse thee, Hadst thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me hast cleansed and set me free;
Of old thou hast ordained me, that I should live to thee.

'Twas sov'reign mercy called me and taught my op'ning mind;
The world had else enthralled me, to heav'nly glories blind.
My heart owns none before thee, for thy rich grace I thirst;
This knowing, if I love thee, Thou must have loved me first."

--Josiah Conder

Re: What Should We Think Of Evangelism and Calvinism? - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/1/16 10:47

Good article. Thanks Abe.

Re: What Should We Think Of Evangelism and Calvinism? - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/1/16 13:38

Quote:
-----I invite you to come to him, that you may find rest for your souls. He will rejoice and be glad. He calls you by his ministers; O come unto him

An image that surfaces in my mind is a prisoner on sitting in a jail cell, suddenly startled that his iron door has been swung open. He looks up from the card game he's playing with his fellow inmate and hears the above imploring cry.

He stares at the open door, confused. Total freedom beckons beyond the glorious light now spilling into his cell. He sits there with his cards in hand and looks back quizzically to his fellow card player.

"It's a trick," his partner says. "Don't fall for it. Just keep playing..."

"But the door is open!" he cries.

"So what. Do you see anyone coming in here to lead us out?"

They again hear the desperate cry from beyond the cell: *"Come out! The door is open! O, ye prisoners, now is the time to come out! The Master Warden is waiting outside the cell with arms outstretched, granting free pardon!"*

"Don't fall for it," he says again. "I know of many who believed this hoax. They tell us this is death row, scare tactics. When we believe them and come out, they make fools of us."

The two at last go back to their card game as the iron door slowly closes, the bright light gradually receding until finally they are left alone again in the dank cell with their cards.

Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2008/1/16 15:56

Should I have the opportunity to pick which I would rather have appear on my tombstone, I would rather have the word "Evangelist" than "Calvinist."

Being an Evangelist is a sacred calling, and one that was highly regarded in the New Testament... unfortunately it may be my translation, but I've never found the word Calvinist in my New Testament. Evangelism is a tradition of the early church and of God, Calvinism is a tradition of man, while it may work to explain God's nature more clearly, it is not how I would like to be identified in either life or in death.

Re: What Should We Think Of Evangelism and Calvinism? - posted by ShawnAnderso, on: 2008/1/19 13:05

Anyone see this? It's in Grand Rapids, MI

Conference on Practical Theology
(<http://www.firststp.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/conference.pdf>) <http://www.firststp.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/conference.pdf>

Presenting Jesus to a dead world. Looks good!