

# **GOD'S GREAT SALVATION**

## **THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORIC GOSPEL**

Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple. Psalm 65:4

**By**  
**LOUIS F. DEBOER**

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# God's Way of Salvation

## The Biblical and Historic Gospel Maintained

### CHAPTER ONE

#### THE DEBATE

Calvinists and Arminians have been debating God's plan of salvation for centuries, ever since Arminius' students raised the issue in the Netherlands and their followers, the Remonstrants, were answered by the Synod of Dordt.

The Arminians had a five point protest against the reigning orthodoxy in soteriology, the soteriology of Luther, Calvin, and the Protestant Reformation. The answers to their protests by the synod consisted of a refutation of their five points, leading to what is today called the five points of Calvinism.

This is somewhat unfortunate and was certainly unintentional. Calvinists never intended that their position be characterized by their response to the five errors of the Arminians. Yet any discussion of these important truths, that deal with God's very plan of salvation, generally winds up in a debate over one or another of the five points. Generally, Calvinists like to make the issue the first point, *Total Depravity*. For, if that is established, then all else must logically follow. Arminians like to make the third point, *Limited Atonement*, the issue because they find strength for their position in the texts that appear to teach a universal atonement.

At the time of the Reformation neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor any of the Reformers, thought in terms of these five points.<sup>1</sup> They were attempting to rescue the Biblical gospel from the errors of Rome, including Rome's semi-Pelagianism. Since Arminianism is also a form of semi-Pelagianism, later Calvinists saw Arminianism as constituting a step back towards Rome.

Three of the great Solas of the Protestant Reformation impinge on the Calvinist-Arminian controversy. The first one is *Sola Gratia*, by Grace Alone. In the Calvinist scheme of salvation God regenerates his elect and works in them by his Spirit giving them the grace and ability to believe and repent. It is all by God's grace. Salvation truly is of the Lord. In the Arminian scheme of salvation God gives grace to some, but it is neither effectual by itself, nor irresistible. Rather, the person must add to the grace of God his own free will decision to co-operate with God's grace and accept his offer of salvation, while still in an unregenerate state. Salvation is joint effort between God and man and though it requires God's grace, it is not by grace alone that man is saved.

The next one is *Solis Cristos*, by Christ Alone. According to the Calvinist understanding of God's salvation Christ died for the elect. As their substitute he suffered on the cross and paid the penalty for their sins. This was an actual atonement. The elect were truly redeemed and their sins washed away in the blood of Christ. And while their sins were imputed to Christ, as their penal substitute, his perfect righteousness was imputed to them, delivering them not only from hell, but making them fit for heaven. Their salvation is totally based on the merits of Jesus Christ, on his atoning death, and on his perfect righteousness, received by faith alone. In the Arminian understanding of God's plan of salvation this is radically different. They believe that Christ has died for all men, but this universal atonement has not actually achieved the redemption of anyone. Rather it is a hypothetical atonement and is insufficient in itself to redeem those for whom he died. Christ has died for and made an

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<sup>1</sup> The synod of Dort was held from 1618 to 1619. Calvin, who died in 1564, had been dead for over half a century before the five points of Calvinism were first debated at the synod. Luther, who died in 1546, had been dead for almost three-quarters of a century.

atonement for not only those who are redeemed, but also for those who are lost. He has done exactly the same for the people in heaven as for the people in hell. The former have added to the atoning work of Christ their own free will decision to believe and therefore are actually saved. The merits of Christ are not sufficient as multitudes in hell can testify. Man has to add to the merits of Christ his own act of faith. Salvation is not by the merits of Christ alone.

The final one is *Sola Gloria Deo*, to the Glory of God Alone. If salvation is by grace alone, through the merits of Christ alone, and is the work of God alone, then God receives all the glory. We can say Hallelujah, Praise the Lord, for salvation truly is of the Lord. Now it is true that Calvinists and Arminians almost universally unite in expressing these sentiments. But are Arminians simply better than their theology? Is their heart truer to the truth than their systematic theologies? For are such sentiments truly consistent with the view that the grace of God and the merits of Christ are insufficient to accomplish the redemption of a single soul without the free will acts of faith of unregenerate men? Calvinists think not. If salvation is to be to the glory of God alone then it has to be the work of God alone. This Arminian theology denies, so they can not consistently give God all the glory. That they do so is because their hearts are more Calvinistic than their minds, and in their hearts they acknowledge that it is God, and God alone, who saved them and not they themselves.

Actually, the only Reformation *Sola* that Arminians can truly claim to hold is *Sola Scriptura*. They believe that the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone, are the final, ultimate, and only authoritative source of religious truth. For both Arminians and Calvinists profess *Sola Fide*, that salvation is by faith alone. But Arminians hold that truth in a distinctly different way than the Reformers did. They deny that saving faith is a gift of God and the work of his Spirit in the hearts of his elect. Rather they maintain that it is the work of man, the result of the unregenerate man, in the flesh, deciding to turn to God and accept his offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. This is a radically different view of saving faith and does not really fit logically with the other solas. For an Arminian, believing that faith is the work of man, his contribution to the process of salvation, saying *Sola Fide* seems dangerously close to saying that salvation is by the work of man alone. This is emphatically not what the Reformers believed and taught. Now while it is true that modern Arminians never seem to draw this conclusion, and profess that salvation is from the Lord, nonetheless the logical implications of their theology lead elsewhere.

The Reformers were concerned about how Rome had corrupted the Biblical doctrine of salvation. They were concerned not only that man was being deceived by a false gospel, but particularly that this was robbing God of the glory for his great work of redeeming his people. Rome taught that grace was necessary, but not sufficient. Rome taught that the merits of Christ were necessary, but not sufficient. To all this Rome added the merits of the saints, the merits of the church and her sacraments, and the merits of the good works of individual believers. The intent of the Reformers was to restore to God the glory for his great work of salvation through Jesus Christ. It was to again proclaim, boldly and consistently, that salvation is of the Lord, and of the Lord alone. All this is compromised by the theology of Arminianism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DIFFERENCE

There is a key difference in the Ordo Salutis as understood by the Calvinists and the Arminians. The Ordo Salutis is the order, or sequence of events, as God brings a person into a state of salvation.

Calvinists and Arminians have a different theory about fallen man's spiritual state. Calvinists believe that man is spiritually dead and therefore incapable of any spiritual good, such as turning to Christ in faith and repentance. Arminians believe that although man has been grievously corrupted by the fall, his spiritual nature is only wounded, and not dead. They believe that he is capable of turning to God and believing in Christ while still in his unregenerate state.

Calvinists believe that when God told Adam and Eve that when they ate of the forbidden fruit they would surely die, that he meant it. The moment they sinned, they died spiritually, they became subject to eternal death, and their bodies started decaying, initiating the process of physical death. Calvinists quote such verses as the following in support of their position.

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins. **Ephesians 2:1**

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 1:4-6**

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. **Colossians 2:13**

In these verses it is explicitly stated that Paul's hearers, believers and members of the churches that he is addressing, had been dead. They obviously had not been physically dead. And it is just as obvious that what Paul meant is that they had been spiritually dead. They were, before their coming to Christ, spiritually dead in their sins and trespasses. The Old Testament sacrament of circumcision stood for regeneration. As the Scriptures put it repeatedly, our hearts need to be circumcised. This was the same message that Christ told Nicodemus, marveling that he did not understand, when he said, "*Ye must be born again.*" Being dead in the uncircumcision of the flesh meant that his hearers were spiritually dead when they were still in their unregenerate state.

Paul's teaching is clear that unregenerate men are not just spiritually corrupted, they are spiritually dead. A spiritually dead person cannot respond to the gospel. A spiritually dead person cannot exercise faith and repentance. He is dead to all spiritual things. His heart of stone cannot respond to the proclamation of God's word. He needs to be regenerated. He needs to be given a heart of flesh. And this is exactly what Paul says happened to his readers. They were quickened. That is, they were regenerated. They were granted new spiritual life by God's Spirit. That is what men need when they are spiritually dead. They need a spiritual resurrection. And that can only be done by God working through the power of the Holy Spirit. A corpse cannot resurrect itself. It can do nothing.

To put things in the perspective of the Augustinian-Pelagian controversy, there are three positions. The Augustinian position is that man is spiritually dead and incapable of doing any spiritual good. The Pelagian position is that the effects of the fall were not transmitted to future generations, that all men are born into the same spiritual state as Adam was created in, and have the ability to keep God's law and lead perfect, sinless lives. Then there is the Semi-Pelagian position, which teaches that man's spiritual nature was radically affected by the fall, but is still capable of some spiritual good. This last view is the position of Roman Catholics and of Arminians, both of whom hold to a form of Semi-Pelagianism.

The Augustinian-Calvinist position has, in the response to the five points of the Remonstrants, been termed Total Depravity. This term has been somewhat misleading and the position is better defined as

the Spiritually Dead position. Total Depravity does not mean that man is as wicked or depraved as he can be, that he is totally depraved in degree. Rather it means that man is depraved, or fallen, in all his faculties, in the totality of his being. It means that man's heart, his will, his affections, his mind, etc. are all corrupted by the fall and have become depraved. Strangely, although Arminians strongly object to Total Depravity, yet, as defined by Calvinists, it can also define their position. They agree that man's spiritual nature was radically affected and corrupted by the fall. They would agree that man's heart, will, and mind were all affected. However, they hold that some residual spiritual power for good remains in man's faculties, especially his will, and that he is capable of spiritual good towards God. In point of fact what Arminians oppose is the view that man is spiritually dead, incapable of any spiritual good.

These differences significantly affect how each sides looks at the process of salvation. Calvinists, seeing man as spiritually dead, believe that the first step in man's salvation is initiated by God, when he regenerates man, when man is quickened and restored to spiritual life. As a result of this new spiritual life, the new nature, this new creature in Christ, responds to the gospel in faith and repentance and turns to God. Arminians believe the opposite. They believe that man, in his unregenerate state, responds to the gospel in faith and repentance, and as a result God responds by regenerating them. We will study the significance of these different views of salvation in a subsequent chapter.

In the Calvinist scheme all men are divided into two groups. There are the elect, those whom God chooses to regenerate, and the non-elect, or reprobate, whom God chooses not to regenerate, but rather to leave in their sins. The former group receives divine mercy, and the latter group receives divine justice. In all this God does nothing wrong or unfair. If people complain and demand what is fair they are demanding justice. And justice requires their eternal condemnation in hell. Be careful what you ask for. And mercy on the other hand is by definition unearned. That is why it is mercy, it is undeserved grace. No one can demand mercy or make a claim on God's mercy. That is why God justly, in the Scriptures, claims the prerogative that he can show mercy to whom he will show mercy and compassion to whom he will show compassion.

In the Arminian scheme all men are divided into three groups. First of all there are those whom God does not ensure the hearing of a credible presentation of the gospel and therefore have no opportunity of being saved. Secondly, there are those who God providentially ensures the hearing of a credible presentation of the gospel and have an opportunity of being saved. This latter group is divided into two sub-groups. First of all those who hear and accept the gospel when it is presented to them, and secondly those who reject and deny the gospel when it is presented to them.

Thus it is clear, that as far as the perennial issue of Calvinism being unfair on the grounds that in their view God has denied the non-elect any possibility of being saved, Arminians are inconsistent. In point of fact, both sides have to deal with the sovereignty of God in salvation, in that a portion of the human race has been excluded by God from the possibility of being saved.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FALLEN MAN'S MORAL STATE

What is the testimony of Scripture with respect to unregenerate, fallen man's moral state? What do they say about his moral ability? Let us examine some of the scripture texts that address these issues.

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? **Jeremiah 17:9**

This text is not very hopeful concerning man's ability to turn to God by his own spiritual strength. Can a heart that is deceitful above anything else really turn to and accept the truth? Can a heart that is desperately wicked, so wicked that no one can really know it, or understand it, really turn in righteousness to God? Jeremiah's inspired estimate of the moral condition of the unregenerate human heart does not lend credence to such thoughts.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. **Jeremiah 13:23**

Here Jeremiah teaches that man, in his natural state, is as helpless to change his moral condition as the Ethiopian is to change the color of his dark skin, or the leopard is to change his spotted hide. Yet, Arminians require man, in his sinful, fallen, and unregenerate state to do good. They are to perform two very great and good acts. They are to repent of their sins and turn from them, and to turn to Christ in faith. Jeremiah says that is as impossible as the Ethiopian changing the color of his skin.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one...And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. **Romans 3:10-12, 17-18**

Paul again, in this passage, is describing the natural state of fallen man. He explicitly states that there is none, NONE, that understand, that is, understand spiritual things. How can such a man turn to God in faith and repentance if he cannot understand anything of God's spiritual truth? Paul goes on to state that none, NONE, seek after God. Yet Arminians have unregenerate man seeking God and turning to him in faith and repentance. And Paul reiterates the words of Jeremiah, stating that there is none, NONE, that doeth good. There is no support here for the concept that fallen man can contribute to his own salvation and willingly co-operate with God's grace to come to a state of salvation.

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. **John 8:34**

The Greek word for servant in this text is *doulos*. It means slave. Christ is teaching that sinners are not free to stop sinning. They are slaves of their sins. They are slaves of their sinful natures. Slaves are not free, they are as it were bound by chains. They generally cannot free themselves. It takes outside intervention to free a slave. Jesus emphasizes this teaching saying verily, verily. We need to understand that we cannot of ourselves break the power of sin in our lives and turn from them to God in repentance. It takes the power of God.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. **Romans 6:20**

Paul here teaches that being slaves of sin (the same word *doulos* is used in this text) is mutually exclusive with being righteous. The Scriptures speak of the Lord's people as being righteous, as being the righteous. However, that is after they have been regenerated, justified, cleansed by the blood of Christ and clothed with his righteousness. The Arminian position requires those who are slaves of sin to do that which is righteous, to seek God, to turn to him in faith and repentance. Yet Paul says they are free from righteousness. While they are slaves of sin they cannot turn to God.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God

through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. **Ephesians 4:17-19**

Here Paul continues in the same vein. Here he describes the unregenerate, the natural man as having their understanding darkened, as being alienated from God, as being in a state of ignorance with respect to the truth, and blind in their hearts to that truth. How can those who have no understanding of the truth, who are ignorant of the truth, and blind to it, accept the truth and turn to God in faith and repentance? Paul again is showing the impossibility of that happening.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. **Isaiah 53:6**

Isaiah says that all men have gone astray and turned to their own way. He does not make exceptions and say some men have turned to God's way. He sees the solution to this universal departing from the true God and his ways in the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ. He does not see it in fallen man's ability to turn to God by his own free will.

But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. **Isaiah 64:6**

Isaiah says that all our righteousnesses, our righteous acts, are as filthy rags. In the Hebrew the reference is to menstrual cloths, something that contact with, under the ceremonial law, barred one from communion with God. Yet Arminians believe that their own righteous act of turning to Christ in faith is the basis for their salvation and communion with God. Calvinists do not deny that the redeemed turn to God freely and that this is a righteous act. They deny that it is of themselves. They attribute it all to the power and grace of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **John 3:19**

If men love darkness rather than light how likely is it that they will reject the darkness they love and turn to the light they do not love? When light came into the world, when Jesus who is the light of the world appeared unto men, they rejected the light. They rejected Christ. And that is what John is saying that natural man in his fallen state will do.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **Ezekiel 36:26**

Ezekiel is saying that the natural man has a heart of stone. How can a heart of stone respond to the gospel? It is like preaching to stones. It would be like a man going to a cemetery and preaching to the dead. He would be preaching to tombstones. Ezekiel says that natural fallen man needs a new heart, a heart of flesh. And he needs a new spirit. Who can give him these? Only God, by the power of his Holy Spirit. And until God does so, the hearts of stone will never turn to God in response to the gospel.

But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. **Matthew 19:26**

And where does all this leave us? It leaves us with the words of Christ. Christ comments on worldly man's, especially on worldly, wealthy man's ability to come to God. And Christ says it is impossible. Christ says that man's only hope is that God can do that which is impossible with man. Man can not come to God by his own power no matter how much he comes under the preaching of the gospel. He is spiritually dead, has a heart of stone, is ignorant of and blind to the truth, and prefers the darkness to the light. Only God, by his almighty power to save, and by the power of his Spirit, can save man. This is the lesson Christ is teaching us in this text.

The above are the chief texts that give us an understanding of how God sees man, and of God's evaluation of natural man's spiritual state. And consistently the thrust of these texts is that man is so corrupted in all his spiritual faculties that he is incapable of any spiritual good towards God. Below are



a few additional supporting texts that, though not as explicit and powerful as the above, do comment on natural man's spiritual state.

And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. **Genesis 6:5**

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **Mark 7:21-22**

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. **2 Timothy 2:25-26**

This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that *there is* one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. **Ecclesiastes 9:3**

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. **Genesis 8:21**

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. **Titus 3:3**

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. **John 8:44**

All the above does not paint a pretty picture of man's moral state, of his spiritual condition. It does not give us a great deal of confidence that such men can, of themselves, even with the influence of some resistible grace, turn to God in faith and repentance. God's anthropology, God's view of man in his fallen state is overwhelmingly negative. It does not present man as a viable co-laborer with God in the work of his own salvation.

The Arminian case for how man's salvation is achieved by God is based on the supposition that some men are better than others. Some men continue to resist the truth, the invitations of the gospel, the influences of God's Spirit, and are thus lost. They are incorrigible unrepentant sinners. But there are others, a better class of men, who listen to the truth, who respond to the gospel, who co-operate with the influences of the Holy Spirit. These men come into a state of salvation. However, in the following passage Paul strikes down the very notion that those who are saved are a better class of men, who made better choices.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.*" **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

This passage does not support the concept that God elected or chose to salvation a better class of persons, who on their own, while still in an unregenerate state, exercised faith and repentance in contrast with their neighbors who rejected the gospel. If that were truly the case, then that better class of men would have a basis for boasting that they saved themselves. This passage teaches that God elected not the better, but the poorer, class of men, that there should be no boasting and that none could glory in the flesh, that is the old nature. If the old unregenerate nature can produce faith and repentance

which are then decisive in determining one's salvation, then like the Pharisee of Christ's parable, they can boast that they are better than other men and have contributed the decisive ingredient in their own salvation. This passage really undermines the Arminian concept of salvation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WOUNDED OR DEAD?

In the following Scripture texts, as previously noted above, the Apostle Paul contends that man is spiritually dead. In all three texts he is telling his readers that they were spiritually dead, but that God has quickened them, that is he has made them spiritually alive again. This quickening, this rebirth of spiritual life, we call regeneration or being born again of the Spirit. The very term quickening, *the quick* being an old English term for those that are alive, is a reference to being made alive. And this of course presupposes that they were previously dead.

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: **Ephesians 2:1-2**

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) **Ephesians 2:5**

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. **Colossians 2:13**

The issue here is, is salvation monergistic or synergistic? The issue here becomes, is faith something that unregenerate man brings to the table and to which God responds with the gift of regeneration? Or is faith something that unregenerate man cannot produce and is a fruit of the new nature; the result of being regenerated by the Spirit of God? The issue is whether the Augustinian doctrine of man's spiritual deadness is correct or the Arminian doctrine of semi-Pelagianism is correct.

The former says man can do no spiritual good until he is regenerated because he is spiritually dead, and depraved in all his faculties, by the fall, so that he is incapable of any spiritual good toward God in that state. The latter says that man's spiritual capacity is deeply affected but not eradicated by the fall and he is able to will spiritual good and exercise true faith towards God and Jesus Christ while in an unregenerate state. The issue here is man's spiritual nature. The issue is, are man's spiritual capacities merely wounded, as the Arminians teach, so that he still has some spiritual life in him and is still capable of some spiritual good towards God, or is man spiritually dead and thus incapable of doing any spiritual good? This is the Calvinist position.

A few analogies may be in order. The issue, as stated above is, is salvation totally of the Lord, or is it partially the work of man? Take the following analogy. Men are drowning in the sea. after a shipwreck. They will inevitably die if something is not done immediately to save them. A Hercules C-130 plane flies over the area and opening its tail gate, dumps hundreds of life preservers over the area where the stricken men are drowning. Those who reach out and seize onto a life preserver are saved. Those who fail to do so are lost. This is of course a perfect picture, a reasonable analogy, of how Arminian theology represents our salvation. God has not actually saved anyone. No one really knows what the effect of dumping the life preservers will be. In the same sense, no one really knows what the results will be of an atonement where Christ dies for all men and then it is left up to their free-will decisions to determine if that atoning death will bear any fruit unto eternal life. No one really knows what the results of preaching the gospel and then relying on man's free will to see who will accept it and be saved. The life preservers have merely given the drowning men an opportunity to be saved. As this analogy demonstrates, God does not save men, he merely makes them savable. He gives them an opportunity to save themselves. The Calvinist, by contrast, says that the men have already drowned. Somebody needs to jump into the sea, pull their bodies out of the water, and restore them to life. They have to be raised from the dead. And in all this they can do nothing to save themselves. They are dead and on the bottom of the sea. God needs to save men. He needs to do it all. Men have no other hope.

A common Arminian analogy is that man is very spiritually sick. He desperately needs a dose of a specific medicine which is all that can save him from imminent death. The life-saving medicine is offered to him. However, he has to decide whether he wants to take the medicine or whether he will reject the medicine. If he takes it he will live. If not he will die. He has been offered life, but now it is his decision to determine whether he will live or die. The Calvinist, of course, will say that he is a corpse and is incapable of accepting the medicine. He needs to be raised from the dead. He needs a resurrection first, before he can do anything, including accepting any life-giving medicine.

There is a well known analogy by the Scottish theologian Thomas Boston. I will paraphrase it as best as I can. Man is in a deep pit. The pit has very steep and slippery walls. Man can try to scale the walls and climb out of the pit. This is the way of works. This is way of Roman Catholicism and of religious cults and all false religions. But alas, the walls are impossible to scale and this way is futile. Or man can take hold of the rope of grace that has been lowered into the pit and pull himself out. This is the Arminian way. But alas, man is dead. He can not even see the rope, much less seize hold of it and pull himself up and out of the pit. Someone needs to come into the pit and pull him out. Someone needs to raise him from the dead. And that is the work of God. That is the work of God alone.

The Scriptural testimony seems clear. Man is spiritually dead. He can contribute nothing to his own salvation. In his unregenerate state he is incapable of co-operating in his own salvation. He needs to be regenerated first. Then he can respond to the gospel, exercise faith and repentance and co-operate with the grace of the Spirit. For as these analogies clearly demonstrate, if man is really spiritually dead, he needs to be saved. To make him saveable does nothing for him. He is in no state to take advantage of opportunities to be saved. He needs to be saved. He needs God to save him, not just throw him a life preserver.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE ORDO SALUTIS

The question before us is can man, in his unregenerate state, turn to God in faith and repentance? This is what Calvinists deny when they speak of “Total Depravity.” And this is what Arminians affirm. It is a key and necessary belief in their system. For they believe that it is only as man turns to God in faith, that God elects him, and in response regenerates him. They believe that the election takes place before the foundation of the earth based on God’s foreknowledge of this act of faith, and that the regeneration takes place in time. So, to answer this issue we need to determine whether unregenerate man can turn to God in faith and repentance by an act of his own free will. We will see that the Scriptural testimony is emphatically, definitively, and repeatedly, NO!

It is extremely important to understand that this is a crucial point in the Arminian system. By it, their system stands or falls. If regeneration comes first then the Calvinist position is established. For only God, by the power of his Spirit can regenerate a man. If a man can do nothing to contribute to his salvation before he is regenerated, then only those whom God sovereignly chooses to regenerate will be saved. On the other hand if man can contribute an act of faith while in the unregenerate state, then as Arminians argue, this can be the basis for God’s accepting and regenerating him. The crucial point is does a man’s act of faith, believing on Christ for salvation, take place before or after his regeneration.

We will examine the following Scriptures that specifically address the point before us.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. **John 3:3**

Jesus is teaching that unless a man is born again, unless he is regenerated by the Spirit of God, he cannot even see the kingdom of God. Yet Arminians have unregenerate men seeing the kingdom, desiring the kingdom, and turning to Christ in faith so that they can enter the kingdom. Christ does not say that unregenerate men “will not see the kingdom of God,” putting it all in an eschatological perspective. He says that now, in the present, they cannot see it. They are blind to it because it is spiritually discerned.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. **John 3:5**

Similarly, in this verse Jesus is teaching that unregenerate men cannot enter the kingdom of God. Yet Arminians have unregenerate men seeking to enter that kingdom by an act of faith before they are regenerated. Jesus is teaching that a man needs to be regenerated first, before he can enter the kingdom of heaven.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. **John 6:44**

This is an especially powerful verse. Christ is emphatically teaching that no one, that no man, can come to him, unless the Father draws him. Arminians teach that this verse simply means that the Father works to entice and attract sinners to Christ by the influence of his Spirit, but that the ultimate decision is left up to their free wills. However, the text is not amenable to such an interpretation. The word *draw* is a powerful word meaning to compel by superior force. In the Greek language it is used to describe the actions of fishermen who drag fish out of the sea with their nets and of being compelled to appear or to be dragged before the magistrates. In the New Testament it or its cognate form are used in seven other places. Here are a few examples of how this word is used in Scripture...

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers, **Acts 16:19**

Here it is plain that Paul and Silas are being compelled to appear before the magistrates. They have been seized and are being physically dragged before the court.

But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? **James 2:6**

Here again it is plain that the poor are not being enticed or attracted to appear before the judgment seats. They are not being influenced to please appear as they would. Rather, they are being compelled, they are being dragged into court by the rich and powerful.

And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they were about to kill him... **Acts 21:30-31**

This text also hardly describes an exercise in persuasion. A Jewish mob, believing that Paul has desecrated the temple by bringing Gentiles into it, has seized him, dragged him out of the temple, and is on the verge of killing him.

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. **John 21:6**

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. **John 21:11**

Now it is obvious that in these two texts, they were not attempting to entice and attract the fish to come, but were attempting to drag them ashore or into the boat with the net. This was an exercise in physical compulsion, not in persuasion.

Every use of this Greek word in Scripture involves the use of force and compulsion. Although it is translated as *draw* it really means *to drag*. What Christ is teaching in John 6:44 is that no man can come to him unless the Father compels him. This is strong language. This is the Calvinist language of irresistible grace, not the Arminian language of mere influences on man's free will.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. **John 6:65**

The Arminian position is that men can come to Christ anytime they please. It is only a matter of exercising their free will and making a "decision for Christ." Christ is teaching the opposite. He is declaring that no man can come to him unless it is given unto him by the Father. That is, the ability to come to Christ is a gift of the Father. It is not a natural ability of unregenerate men.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. **1 Corinthians 2:14**

The natural man is the unregenerate man who is still in the flesh, in the old nature. Paul is saying that such a man, in such a state, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Paul is saying that he cannot know them. He cannot receive them and know them because they are spiritually discerned and he is spiritually dead in sins and trespasses. He needs to be regenerated, to be quickened, to be granted spiritual life before he can receive, know, and discern spiritual things. In contrast to this clear teaching of the Apostle, Arminians believe that an unregenerate man can receive the things of Christ and turn to him in faith and repentance. Paul is saying that he cannot.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.. **Romans 8:5-7**

Paul here says that those in the flesh mind the things of the flesh and not the things of the Spirit. Yet the Arminian scheme of salvation requires unregenerate men, while still in the flesh, to mind the things of the Spirit and turn to Christ in faith and repentance. Paul goes on to state that the unregenerate mind is in enmity against God. Arminians teach that the unregenerate man can by his own free will make his

peace with God and turn to him in faith and repentance. Paul is teaching that the unregenerate man cannot be subject to the law of God. Arminians teach that unregenerate men can turn from their sins and come to Christ. Greater contrast between the teachings of Paul and the beliefs of Arminians can hardly be imagined.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. **Romans 8:8**

Here Paul is teaching that those that are in the flesh, those that are unregenerate, cannot please God. Arminians again believe and teach otherwise. They hold that unregenerate men can please God by turning to him in faith and repentance. God is so pleased with them for this that he elects them to eternal life based on his foreknowledge of this act and regenerates them as a reward for doing it. Yet Paul explicitly teaches here that unregenerate men cannot please God.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. **John 6:63**

Here the Apostle John is teaching that the Holy Spirit quickens men and grants them spiritual life. By contrast he points out that the flesh, man's unregenerate nature profits men nothing. As Jesus said, "*Ye must be born again.*" Yet Arminians teach that the flesh profits much. Men in the flesh can turn to God in faith and repentance and bring themselves into a state of salvation. They believe that the actions of unregenerate men in the flesh are decisive in whether they are saved or lost. John is emphatically teaching otherwise.

We have reviewed eight verses here. Seven of them use the word *can*. The word *can* is a word of ability, just as the word *may* is a word of permission. Seven of these texts therefore deal directly with the issue of unregenerate man's ability to turn to God by himself. And the Scriptural answer is emphatically clear. It is NO! I admit that the verses quoted from John 3 are amenable to other interpretations. I have taken, as many commentators do, that seeing the Kingdom of God is apprehending it spiritually. It could be argued that seeing it refers to actually seeing it in its eschatological fulfillment at the end of the age. And when does a man enter the kingdom of God? The Scriptures seem to teach that he enters it spiritually now when he is regenerated and becomes a child of God, but that the ultimate fulfillment of entering the kingdom is at its establishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ. However, even if these two texts are eliminated from the argument, that still leaves five texts that explicitly deny that unregenerate men can come to Christ while in that state.

As Jeremiah stated it...

*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* **Jeremiah 13:23**

Christ summed it up well when he taught his disciples...

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. **Matthew 19:24-26**

As the case of the rich young ruler demonstrated, rich people have extra attachments to the things of this world. Christ is here commenting on the difficulty of such people entering the kingdom of God by their own efforts. He does not give much credence to the view that unregenerate man has the ability to come to God on his own. Just how difficult does he say it is for a rich man to turn to God? Whether one takes the needle as literally being a needle, or whether one understands "the eye of the needle" as being a small gate in the walls of Jerusalem that a stooping man can just fit through, Christ's point is clear. It is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God on his own. The Apostles certainly understood it that way and exclaimed, "*Who then can be saved?*" Christ's answer is very instructive. He flatly states that with men the salvation of such is impossible. And then he gives the key to their

salvation, and indeed the key to the salvation of all men. He states that their salvation is only possible with God.

If all this is true and Scriptural then the Calvinist case is established. The Arminian case rests on man exercising faith and God responding by regenerating him. The Arminian doctrine of election declares that God elects men to salvation based on foreseeing that they will respond to the gospel with faith and repentance. If that faith is the work of God and not of man, the Arminian case fails. If regeneration needs to come first, and no man can regenerate himself, then the Arminian case becomes impossible.

I believe that these texts are conclusive and that they strike a fatal blow against the doctrine of the Arminians. Are we going to believe the explicit statements of Scripture, the personal teaching of our Lord, and the inspired teachings of his apostles, or are we going to believe the words of Jacobus Arminius and his followers? That is the choice before us. Calvinists have made their decision. Arminians need to reflect. They do not have Scripture on their side on this point.



## CHAPTER SIX

### IS SALVATION THE GIFT OF GOD?

Are faith and repentance the work of man in his unregenerate state? Are these his contributions to his salvation? Is salvation a synergistic process where God and man co-operate to bring about man's salvation? Are man's free will acts of faith and repentance the basis of his salvation? Is man the captain of his own soul, the arbiter of his own spiritual fate?

Or are faith and repentance the work of God in man? Are they the fruits of the new nature, the inevitable results of regeneration? Are faith and repentance gifts of God? Are they that which God works in man by his Spirit? Is salvation monergistic? Is salvation the work of God and of God alone? Is salvation truly of the Lord?

Let us examine the Scriptures and seek to answer these questions and resolve these conflicting views. The scriptural testimony seems clear. We will start with texts that deal with the origin of man's saving faith.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* **Ephesians 2:8-9**

This verse by itself seems conclusive as to the source of man's saving faith. Paul clearly states that our faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. The closest previous noun that can serve as an antecedent for the pronoun *it* is *faith* and in the Greek it agrees in number and gender with the pronoun *it*. Paul goes on to emphasize this truth by asserting that it is not of man's works, that is faith is not a work of man, and therefore man has no ground of boasting.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Hebrews 12:2**

This is another powerful verse that expounds the origin of our faith. It states that Jesus is the author of our faith. In the Arminians scheme of salvation man is the author of his faith as it is his own free will response to the gospel. If Jesus is the author or initiator of our faith, then our faith is from God, a divine gift, and not of ourselves. Jesus is also the finisher of our faith. He preserves us in our faith so that we can not fall away and be lost. Most contemporary Arminians are four point Arminians, and accept the fifth point of Calvinism, the perseverance of the saints. They accept the last part of this verse that Jesus is the finisher, the preserver of our faith, but reject the first part that he is the author, or initiator, of our faith as well. This is inconsistent. Clearly these two verses teach that our faith comes from God, not from ourselves.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. **Philippians 1:29**

Here Paul is teaching that two things are given to the Philippian believers. One thing that is given them is to believe. The other thing that is given to them is the privilege of suffering for the sake of Christ. Both are God's gift. This clearly signifies that our believing, our faith, is a gift from God.

Additionally, there a few verses that seem to support and infer the above teaching. Although they are not as clear and conclusive, they do support the truth that our faith is a gift from God.

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: **2 Peter 1:1**

Peter here teaches that faith is not something that we originate in ourselves, but rather it is something that we have obtained. We have obtained this gift of faith through the righteousness of God and through Jesus Christ. This clearly seems to be consistent with and in support of the above two texts on the origin of our faith.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. **1 Corinthians 12:7-9**

Now this passage deals with the gifts of the Spirit. It does not deal with the process of salvation. As it recounts the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, what are sometimes called the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, it includes faith. This may thus refer to an extraordinary gift of faith, faith enough to move mountains and work miracles. The point, though, is that here again faith is a gift of God that is worked in us by his Spirit. It thus supports the Calvinist position on the source of our faith.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied...Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **1 Peter 1:2-5**

We will deal with the issue of the foreknowledge of God and its relation to God's election of his people elsewhere. Our issue here is, what can this verse teach us about the source of man's saving faith? It teaches the perseverance of the saints by stating that the elect are kept by the power of God. And how is this persevering power exercised? It is *through faith unto salvation*. That is, God preserves us in our faith so that we remain in a state of salvation. A God who can work in us to preserve our faith by his Spirit can certainly work in us to create our faith by his Spirit. Historic Arminians saw the consistency of this and rejected the perseverance of the saints. Modern Arminians are better in their theology, but less consistent in their logic.

Next, let us examine some Scripture texts that deal with the origin of our repentance unto life, our turning from our sins to serve the living God.

Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. **Acts 5:31**

Here Peter proclaims that God has exalted Christ. And one of the purposes of this exaltation is that Christ should *give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*. Thus according to Peter, repentance is a gift of God, through Christ, and not the work of man.

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. **Acts 11:18**

When God's salvation first goes out to the Gentiles what is the response of the Apostles? They do not respond as Arminians would and rejoice that the Gentiles are repenting of their sins and turning to God. No, they respond as Calvinists would, and rejoice that God is granting, that is giving, repentance to the Gentiles also. Again, they are affirming that repentance is a gift of God and not the work of man. They gave God the glory because they saw it all as the work of God and not of man.

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. **2 Timothy 2:25**

Again in this text, Paul is instructing Timothy that he is to persevere in teaching those that resist the truth, in case God might be willing to give them repentance. Timothy is not instructed to work on man's free will in an effort to produce repentance. He is to faithfully instruct opposers of the truth in the truth and see if God will give them repentance. This is clearly the Calvinist view and in opposition to Arminian thought on the matter.

For ye know how that afterward, when he (Ed. Note: that is Esau) would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. **Hebrews 12:17**

Here the Apostle Paul, the presumed author of the Book of Hebrews, comments on man's ability to produce repentance by himself. He states that Esau, though he tried to the point of tears, could not

produce true, godly repentance. This supports the Calvinist view that repentance is the work of God in us, it is God's gift to us, and not something that unregenerate man can produce by himself.

All the above, respecting faith and repentance being the work of God in us, being his gifts to us, is supported by the following scripture verse:

*Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-13**

To come to a state of salvation men need to believe the truth and exercise faith in him who is the way, the life and the truth, our Lord Jesus Christ. They need to hear the truth, accept the truth, and believe it to the saving of their souls. Men will not believe and accept the truth if they do not have a love of the truth. And that is why in this passage Paul connects having the love of the truth with being saved. Both sides agree that men perish because they resist and deny the truth of God. However, in this passage, Paul goes deeper into this issue. He answers the question why some men perish resisting the truth. And the answer is because God did not give them the love of the truth. So where does this love of the truth, this saving love of the truth, come from? Is it something that originates in man? Is it something that unregenerate man is able to produce? Is this love of the truth the work of man as by their free wills they turn to the truth of God in Jesus Christ? Paul says no. He speaks of men perishing in unbelief *because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*. It is clear that in Paul's mind having the love of the truth is not a work of man, but the gift of God. If the love of the truth is God's sovereign gift, and if it is necessary to salvation, then the Arminian scheme of redemption collapses. This verse, as the ones above, is fatal to the concept that man can contribute to his own salvation, that he can produce the faith, repentance, and the love of the truth that are prerequisites to coming into a state of salvation.

Additionally, there are a couple of texts that support the above position. These texts speak in a manner that one could only speak if one held the above understanding of God's way of salvation. The first is "*But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*" (**John 10:26**) An Arminian would say, "Because you do not believe, therefore you are not of my sheep." They believe that because we believe, God elects us and regenerates us, thus making us his sheep. Christ expresses himself in the exact opposite way. Christ expresses himself as a Calvinist would. He states that the reason one believes is because he is one of God's sheep, one of God's elect, who has been appointed unto salvation through faith. Our second text speaks in like manner. It says, "*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" (**Acts 13:48**) Again, an Arminian, believing in conditional election based upon foresight of faith, would say, "Because you believed, therefore you are ordained unto eternal life." Luke says the opposite. His inspired statement declares "Because men are ordained unto eternal life, therefore they believe" He is saying, "Because they are God's elect therefore they are granted the gift of faith." These texts clearly demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit express themselves in a way that is consistent with the Calvinist understanding of God's way of salvation.

Paul summed it all up in the following text.

For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*? **1 Corinthians 4:7**

Arminians state that what makes men differ is their free will response to the gospel. Paul refutes this explicitly in this text. He challenges the Corinthians to reflect on what makes them different from other men, from unbelievers. And his response is that everything that makes them different is not something

that they did, but something that they received. And Paul's conclusion is, if everything that makes them a believer rather than an unbeliever, is something they received, then they have no grounds of glorying or boasting. Paul is sustaining the Calvinist view of salvation as being entirely the gift of God, and condemning the Arminian view as providing a basis for man to boast in his salvation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WHOSE WILL?

Both sides in this debate acknowledge that God chooses or elects those who are saved and that those who are saved choose Christ. The question becomes whose choice is determinative, and whose choice is contingent. Arminians complain that if God's choice is determinative then men are mere puppets, as God's choice is inevitably worked out in history. Calvinists object that if man's choice is determinative then God becomes the puppet, having to automatically respond to man's act of faith whenever man chooses to believe by regenerating and saving him. While the epithet "puppet" may be a little strong, it is clear that both choices cannot be determinative. Somebody is in control, initiating the process, and somebody is responding to the other's choice. Both sides cannot be in control. Both sides cannot be sovereign in the matter. Arminians have chosen to make man sovereign over the process, to make him the initiator, and to place God in a subservient role. To them men are proactive and God is reactive. Calvinists are appalled at such thoughts and make God the sovereign initiator of our salvation and make his choice ultimate and determinative and ours contingent.

Arminians believe that God foresees that certain persons will choose Christ by their own free will decision, and based on this foreknowledge he chooses or elects them. In their scheme, man's decision is determinative and God's decision is contingent on man's. God responds to man's decision to believe in Christ by electing and in time regenerating him. In this scheme of salvation man is in control and God is reduced to puppet-like status as man pulls the strings.

Let us examine this teaching for a moment. It is based on a misinterpretation of the following passage in Romans: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." **Romans 8:28-30**

In verse 28 Paul is speaking as a Calvinist. Only a totally sovereign God can work all things for the good of his elect, and only a totally sovereign God can call men to salvation according to his own purpose. However, in verse 29 Paul connects man's predestination with God's foreknowledge. However, the text speaks not of God's foreknowing of events. It does not even speak of foreknowing of, or about, persons. It speaks of him foreknowing the persons themselves. Now there is a problem here with the Arminian interpretation of this text. If it is speaking of having knowledge of certain persons, then, since God is omniscient and has full knowledge of all his creatures, it has to include all men. Whom he did foreknow, whom he had knowledge of prior to the creation, would have to include all men. And since the men in question are being conformed to the image of his son, justified and glorified, then all these men will be redeemed. That would necessitate a belief in universalism. The only other alternative is to deny God's omniscience and say he did not have comprehensive knowledge before the creation of all his creatures. The Arminian understanding of this verse leads to some real difficulties. However, since the text is speaking not of knowledge of events, but of foreknowing persons this gives us the key to understanding this passage. The word *know* is frequently used in Scripture as a synonym for love. For example, take the following verses...

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD...And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, *said she*, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. **Genesis 4:1, 25**

Are we to believe that Adam didn't know his wife, Eve, that he had no knowledge of her before they had children? The text means that he loved his wife and the physical expression of that love resulted in her conceiving and bearing a child. The following text makes this abundantly clear.

Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. **Amos 3:1-2**

In this passage, even as God is rebuking and chastising the Children of Israel, he is stating that they alone has he known of all the families, that is tribes or ethnic nations, of the earth. Is God pleading ignorance of all the other nations on the planet? Of course not. In the previous chapter God was speaking of Moab, Egypt, and the Amorites. What God is saying, is that of all the nations of the world, he set his love on only one, on Israel. All through the Old Testament times God's covenant love was always fixed on Israel and on Israel alone. And that is what this verse is teaching.

Similarly, in this verse, "*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*" (**Jeremiah 1:5**) God is declaring that he loved Jeremiah before he was born and chose him to be his prophet.

And it is in the sense of the above verses that we have to interpret statements about God's foreknowing persons. Foreknowledge of events may be treated differently. But in Romans 8:29 and other passages where God speaks of his foreknowing persons, he is referring to the fact that he loved them, that he loved them from before the foundations of the world. The passage in Romans is teaching that those whom God loved from before the beginning of the creation, he predestinated, and purposed in time to call, justify, and glorify. There is nothing here to support the Arminian's idea that this is a foreknowledge of events, of acts of faith, that are to provide the basis for being the objects of God's predestination unto salvation.

In the Calvinist scheme of salvation God's will is ultimate, and his eternal decrees are determinative of who is saved. God elects, and based on this decree of election in time the elect are regenerated. The fruit of this regeneration is that the new nature, the spiritually awakened, or quickened, person, this new creature in Christ, responds to the call of gospel in faith and repentance. It is all the work of God working his will in the lives of his elect. God's will is ultimate and determinative of who is redeemed. Which side is correct? Which side do the Scriptures support?

That man's will is ultimately determinative in the issue of an individual's salvation is the lynch-pin, the very key to the Arminian position. One would think that it might therefore have some Scriptural support. However, there is not a single Scripture text that states that man's will is the deciding factor in the matter of salvation. Not a single one! There are plenty of texts that do deal with the issue of whose will is determinative in salvation and they all uniformly teach that it is God's will, not man's, that is determinative. These texts can be divided into two classes

The first are texts that generally teach that everything that takes place is according to mind, the will, and the eternal purposes of God. The following are a sample of such texts.

Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: **Isaiah 46:9-10**

And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? **Daniel 4:34-35**

The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. **Proverbs 21:1**

The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand: **Isaiah 14:24**

For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul *it*? and his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back? **Isaiah 14:27**

Secondly, there are texts that specifically teach that God's will is done in the matter of man's salvation, and not man's.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.. **John 1:12-13**

In this verse John is teaching that men are born again, not according to the will of the flesh, the will of man's unregenerate nature, not according to man's will, but according to God's will. This flies in the face of the Arminian teaching that it is in response to man's free will decision to believe in Christ that God regenerates them.

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy **Romans 9:15-16**

This text is just as explicit as the previous one with respect to whose will is determinative in the matter of man's salvation. Paul is saying that God's mercy and compassion are dispensed according to the sovereign will of God and that it is not according to man's will or man's efforts, but strictly according to God's purpose in showing mercy to whom he wills. Clearer texts on this question than the above two texts would be hard to imagine. These texts are fatal to the Arminian position.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. **John 5:21**

Whether one takes the quickening in this verse as a spiritual resurrection when we are born again or as the resurrection of the just at the end of the age doesn't matter, since all those who are regenerated will share in that resurrection. What is important to note in this text is that whichever event is being referred to, it happens to people according to the will of God. The Son doesn't quicken those who meet certain preconditions, such as a free will act of faith, but he quickens whom he wills!

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*. **Romans 8:27**

The work of salvation is the work of the triune God. Paul is here referencing the work of the Spirit in interceding for the saints This intercession is made according to the will of God, not according to man's will, or in response to an act of man's will. Again, it is God's will that is determinative in the matter of man's salvation. Our salvation is of the Lord.

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. **Romans 9:15**

A clearer statement of the sovereignty of God's mercy and that it is not contingent upon man's free will decisions could not be found. God proclaims that it is he that decides who receives mercy, and not man.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? **Romans 18-19**

The sovereignty of God's mercy is restated here. And additionally, Paul states that God's will is ultimate in the matter and that it cannot be resisted or overcome. The Arminian belief that the bestowal of God's mercy is contingent upon, and held hostage to an act of man's free will, is totally contradicted by this verse.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto

the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,  
**Ephesians 1:3-5**

Here Paul teaches that God chose us, that he predestined us to be adopted as his children in Christ, and that he did this not because of anything in us, or what we did, but “*according to the good pleasure of his will.*” It is clear, from all these texts, that according to the testimony of Scripture it is God’s will and not man’s that is determinative in the matter of who is saved.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ROMANS 9

I always marvel that men can read the book of Romans and still be Arminian in their theology. To me Calvinist soteriology just springs out at me from every page. It seems to me that Calvinism is simply the soteriology taught by Paul. And nowhere does Paul teach it so clearly and emphatically as in the book of Romans. And nowhere in the book of Romans does Paul deal with it so directly as in the ninth chapter. Let us examine this chapter carefully. The pertinent section we will concentrate on reads as follows...

<sup>10</sup>And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; <sup>11</sup>(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) <sup>12</sup>It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. <sup>13</sup>As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

<sup>14</sup>What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. <sup>15</sup>For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>16</sup>So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. <sup>18</sup>Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. <sup>19</sup>Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? <sup>20</sup>Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? <sup>21</sup>Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? .

#### **Romans 8:10-21**

Paul is in this chapter defending God from the charge that his purposes have failed, that his word has been of no effect.<sup>2</sup> This charge is prompted by the fact that Israel, the covenant people of God, the elect nation, has rejected the Messiah and has fallen away in spiritual blindness and apostasy. How can this be in light of all the promises and covenants? Paul goes on to explain this in Romans 10 and 11. There he sums his arguments up, stating that not all Israel is lost, but “*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*” (**Romans 11:5**) and that “*...Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*” (**Romans 11:7**). For Paul, the issue is not that much of Israel is lost, but that God’s purposes still stand. This he argues from the fact that the elect portion of the nation is still being saved. God’s purposes are still being fulfilled. God’s decrees of election are still being brought to pass.

In Romans 9 Paul argues that this is nothing new. He demonstrates that this has been the pattern all through the history of the covenant people. God has always saved an elect remnant and the rest were lost. He starts off with the case of Isaac and Ishmael. He states, “*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*” (**Romans 9:6-7**). Paul argues that God is still very much in control, fulfilling his word, and that the election of Isaac and the rejection of Ishmael are all part of his purpose. Paul is saying that God’s electing decrees are still being successfully implemented, his purposes still stand, and everything is working out according to his eternal plan.

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that this is essentially an Arminian charge. It asserts that man’s free will has trumped God’s plan. It asserts that Israel has rejected their God and the Messiah that he sent and that God’s plan has therefore failed.

Then Paul goes on to give an even more dramatic case. Paul is going to defend the sovereignty of God's grace and mercy. His readers might think that Isaac was chosen because he was better. He was the son of the legitimate wife, Sarah. Ishmael was the son of an Egyptian slave woman. He therefore now gives another example of twins, of two brothers, Jacob and Esau, who as far as descent from Abraham could not possibly be more alike. And again he sets forth that they are not all Israel who are of Israel. Again the descendants of Abraham are separated by the electing decrees of God. God sovereignly declares that the elder shall serve the younger, that the younger will inherit the covenant promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. God makes his choice emphatic saying, "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" God's electing decrees continue to separate the true Israel of God out from among physical Israel. And it is according to God's sovereign choice that this is worked out.

To ensure that his readers understand this Paul interjects the parenthetical thought, "*For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.*" Paul makes it explicitly clear that it is nothing in either Jacob or Esau that prompted this choice. No act of theirs, or God's foresight of any act of theirs, had anything to do with God's choice. God's choice of Jacob in time was to fulfill his eternal purposes as set forth in his decree of election. Language could not make this plainer. Then Paul, to re-emphasize that it is God's will, independent of man's will and man's actions, states that this choice was not dependent on man's works, but totally the free choice of God who does the calling.

In this entire passage Paul is arguing against the Arminian view. He denies the Arminian view, that God's purposes can fail, being stymied by man's free will, as Israel rejects the Messiah and the bulk of the nation apostatizes. Rather he maintains that God's purposes, according to his electing decrees, are being fulfilled, and this is how it has always been. A stronger argument for Calvinist soteriology would be hard to imagine.

However, Paul is not done. He anticipates some objections to his teachings. And the objections that he anticipates are exactly the ones that Arminians raise when they are confronted by Calvinist soteriology. As R. C. Sproul states it, he is comforted that whenever he teaches the Biblical gospel and he is confronted with objections, they are the same objections that the Apostle Paul had to face.

And what are these objections? Paul states the first one as "*Is there unrighteousness with God?*" As Arminians would phrase it, "Isn't God being unfair?" or "Isn't God being unjust?" And what is it in God's way of redeeming his people that seems unfair to men? It is that it is all up to God. It is that man has no say in the matter. It is that salvation is based on the sovereign choice of God. It seems so arbitrary and unfair to men. God has just declared through Paul that any good or evil that Jacob and Esau might later do had nothing to do with God's choice. God has just declared that it was all according to his eternal purposes and his electing decrees. God has just said it was because he chose to love Jacob and to hate Esau. And this, man, attempting to judge God by his own perceptions of fairness, will not accept. But what is Paul's response to this objection of men. He exclaims, "*God forbid*" that we should have such thoughts of God's rectitude, and accuse God of such things.

It is interesting to note how Paul defends God from this charge. If Paul really believed and taught the Arminian scheme of salvation, here would be the perfect point in time, the appropriate place, to explicitly say so. All he would have to do is state that this choice was based on God foreseeing the later faith and repentance of Jacob, and the lack of these in Esau. This would answer the entire objection to men's satisfaction and defuse the entire issue. Instead Paul stands by his previous language and rebukes man for having such thoughts about God. He then goes on to defend God and his way of salvation in even stronger terms.

Men object that God's choice of who is saved is sovereign and to them arbitrary. They object that man has no say in it, and that man can do nothing to contribute to his own salvation. They think this is unfair. However, Paul does not shrink from the challenge of these objections, the same ones that Calvinists are met with today. Rather he defends God's right, in his sovereignty, to arbitrarily choose those to whom he will grant salvation. In verse 15 he quotes God's statement to Moses, where God

claims the right to choose to whom he will grant mercy, and to whom he will show compassion. Paul opposes human notions of fairness with God's claim of his rights. Who should we believe? For Christians who understand this issue there should be no doubt. We have to submit to God. His ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts. God is the standard of what is right and wrong, not sinful man. Whatever God does is by definition right. We cannot hold God to some human standard of right and wrong. Rather he holds us to a divine standard of right and wrong. It is presumptuous to challenge God and seek to call him to account to conform to our notions of what is fair and right. That is why the Apostle exclaims, "*God forbid,*" and defends God's right to do as he pleases with his sinful creatures, to show mercy or to withhold mercy. He is the Lord.

It is important to note here, to put things in perspective, that almost all Calvinists believe that God does all this choosing out of a mass of fallen men. That is they believe in an infralapsarian election and not in a supralapsarian election.<sup>3</sup> God is doing no injustice to those whom he passes over and chooses to leave in their sins. It is as if a rich man goes into a cancer ward and sees ten terminal patients. They all need an extremely expensive treatment to be delivered from the cancer, a treatment they have no possibility of providing for themselves. And the rich man chooses to pay for the treatment of five of the patients. He has enough money to easily pay for all ten, but he chooses to show his generosity to these five, and to these five only. Has he done anything wrong? Has he wronged those for whom he chose not to pay? Did they have some claim on him that made it obligatory that he pay for their treatment? No, of course not. Such thinking is only in the imaginations of sinful men, who seek to hold God to some human standard of what they think is fair.

Christ deals with this very issue in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. These laborers were dealt with by various degrees of generosity. Some received no generosity, laboring for all of their pay. Some received a little generosity, laboring for most of their pay. Some received great generosity, laboring for very little of their pay. And those who received no generosity complained. They complained that it was unfair and unequal. And what is Christ's response, "*Friend, I do thee no wrong...Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*" (**Matthew 20:13,15**) Christ is saying of those who object to the sovereignty of God's mercy and question his right to have mercy on whom he will, that their eye is evil. And he states that God, who chooses to show mercy on some and save them, is good. We need to choose between human notions of what is fair and equal, and between Christ's teachings and God's claim that he has a right to extend mercy to whom he will according to his sovereign good pleasure.

Now let us return to Paul's argument. He has taught that God, solely according to the good pleasure of his will, chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael, that he chose Jacob and rejected Esau. Paul now goes on to give a third example, another contrast, Moses and Pharaoh. Although Moses is not mentioned the contrast is striking. Moses was raised in Pharaoh's household as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and could have succeeded to the throne of Egypt, but God called him to be his prophet and to lead his people out of captivity and to the land of promise. Moses was definitely chosen by God. Pharaoh, just as certainly, was not.

However, Paul's argument now centers on Pharaoh. Paul states that not only was Pharaoh rejected of God, denied God's mercy, and passed over and left in his sins, but that God had a definite purpose in that. And that purpose was that God might have an opportunity to display his great power, so that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth. This is certainly not the God of the Arminians who is striving to save all men and being resisted by their free wills. This is the God of the Calvinists who is doing all things according to counsel of his will and according to his good pleasure. The Psalmist says, "*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee,*" (Psalm 76:10) and this is a perfect example of that. As God leaves Pharaoh in his impenitent and unregenerate state, and commands him to submit to his will and let his people go, the results are predictable. Pharaoh, in his pride and arrogance, raised

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<sup>3</sup> It is important though, to note that the Scriptures are indeterminate on this issue, and that the election of the elect angels was a supralapsarian election.

to think of himself as a god, as being divine, scorns to obey God, mockingly stating, “*Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.*” (**Exodus 5:2**) And God in response rains down one plague after another on Egypt, culminating in the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea and the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery. And why was all this accomplished? In God’s own words, “*that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*” God’s sovereignty over his creatures, and his right to use even a sinful and impenitent Pharaoh to fulfill his own purposes, is clearly established by the Apostle Paul.

As Paul continues his argument in defense of God’s prerogatives to do as he pleases with his creatures, his statements become stronger and stronger. He certainly doesn’t flinch in the debate as he answers his critics, including modern Arminians. He goes on to state that God can choose to show mercy to some and he can choose to harden the hearts of others,<sup>4</sup> according to his sovereign good will and pleasure, to fulfill his own purposes. Now it is important to understand the nature of this hardening. God is not the author of sin and he certainly does not compel any man to sin. When men sin they sin of their own free will, according to their choices in pursuit of their sinful desires. Then how does God harden sinner’s hearts? The Scriptural account of all this in the Book of Exodus alternatively states that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. How does this happen?

First of all we have to understand the power of God’s word. God states of his word, “*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*” (**Isaiah 55:11**) God’s word never goes forth in vain. Whether it is accepted or rejected it accomplishes the purposes for which God sent it forth. As Paul states it of the gospel, “*For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.*” (**2 Corinthians 2:15-16**) When one hears the gospel, when one is confronted by the testimony of God’s word, there is always an effect. On the one hand, as one is positively influenced by it, accepts it, and grows in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, one is drawn closer to God. On the other hand, as one rejects it, one is hardening his heart against God’s truth, is growing in his condemnation under God’s wrath, and is becoming riper for judgment. The hearing of God’s word never leaves anybody the same. And, whether it contributes to one’s salvation or to one’s condemnation, it always accomplishes God’s purposes in sending it.

So God’s sends his word repeatedly to Pharaoh, commanding him to submit to him, to obey his will, and to let his people go. And Pharaoh repeatedly scorns to obey and hardens his heart against God’s decrees, against the Lord’s commands to let his people go. But God doesn’t leave Pharaoh alone. He continues to send Moses to confront him. And by continuing the confrontation, that is how the Lord hardens Pharaoh’s heart. And as his word goes forth from Moses it accomplishes his will, hardening Pharaoh’s heart, and setting the stage for that great display of God’s might, in the ten plagues and in the destruction of Egypt, the superpower of the age, that would enhance God’s glory and make his name great among the nations. That is what Paul is teaching. These are hard truths for sinful, fallen man to absorb. These are humbling truths that reveal to him the helplessness and hopelessness of his condition, without divine grace and mercy.

And Paul, as he continues his argument, anticipates more objections. These are probably objections he has encountered while preaching the gospel at other times and places. And the objection now is, if all this is so, if God is sovereign, if he has mercy on whom he wills, and whom he wills he hardens, how can he still find fault? How can God hold man accountable if God is sovereign, even sovereign

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<sup>4</sup> See also Isaiah 63:17 “*O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants’ sake, the tribes of thine inheritance,*” and Joshua 11:20, “*For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.*”

over his spiritual state? Again Paul does not flinch in the face of the same objections that modern Arminians confront Calvinists with. Paul does not give in an inch in the face of these objections. He doesn't infer that Arminians are correct and that God's sovereignty absolves man of his responsibility. Pharaoh hardened his own heart. He persistently maintained his rebellion against the true God. God merely set the stage for the hardening to take place, and for the hardening to continue. Everything that sinful man does, he does because he chooses to do it. He does it without external coercion, according to the free choices of his sinful will, choosing to fulfill the sinful desires of his sinful heart. God does not make anyone sin.

And Paul again scorns the objection, and questions man's right to make it and to sit in judgment on his Maker. Who are we to question God? Who is mere sinful man that he should put God in the dock and cross-examine him? And Paul goes on, without apology, even more emphatically to state the case for God's total sovereignty over his creatures. He declares that God is the potter and we are the clay. In this he echoes Isaiah who warns, "*Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?*" (**Isaiah 45:9**) and "*But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.*" (**Isaiah 64:8**) and Jeremiah who prophesies saying, "*Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*" (**Jeremiah 18:5-6**) Paul declares that even as the potter has power over the clay to make some of it into a beautiful vessel, an ornamental vase for flowers, and of another lump of clay to make a bedpan, so God has power over his sinful and fallen creatures to redeem some of them and make them perfect, and allow others to corrupt themselves into a state of progressive rebellion and degeneracy. Paul's message, his answer is, that God is the potter, that he is sovereign, and that man has no right to question him, and to challenge the righteousness and justice of his ways.

This chapter is an extremely powerful argument for Calvinist soteriology, for the gospel of God's sovereignty in the salvation of his creatures. Arminian objections to this gospel of sovereign grace and sovereign mercy are clearly anticipated, stated, and rejected. I have always wondered how fellow Christians could read the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament or the Book of Romans in the New Testament and not see God's sovereignty in salvation. I especially wondered how they could read the ninth chapter of Romans and not become Calvinists. I know many fellow believers who are persuaded of the truth of Arminianism. Many of them have never heard or been taught anything else. I know they really love the Lord, and read his word faithfully and prayerfully. Yet I am amazed that their eyes are not opened to see these things. I believe that this chapter by itself is a conclusive argument in favor of the Calvinist position. Paul's gospel, his expounding of God's way of salvation, is emphatically the Calvinist one in this passage. If Paul, writing under inspiration, and defending God's prerogatives, is a Calvinist so to speak, can we be otherwise?

## CHAPTER NINE

### LIMITED ATONEMENTS

The truth is that both sides in this debate limit the atonement. Calvinists limit its extent. They believe that Christ died for his people, for those whom the father had given him, for his sheep, for the elect. Arminians limit its effectiveness. Theirs is an atonement that really doesn't atone. Theirs is a redemption that really doesn't redeem. Theirs is a reconciliation that doesn't really reconcile. And theirs is a propitiation that really doesn't propitiate. Since these are universal, Christ has done as much for the people in hell as he has done for those in heaven. He has not provided a real atonement for anyone, but has merely made a hypothetical atonement available for all. The difference between those persons in hell and those in heaven is not in what Christ has done for them, but in what they have done, or not done, for themselves.

The whole concept of a vicarious or substitutionary atonement is inconsistent with the Arminian view. If Christ really died for all, including the reprobate; if Christ really paid the penalty due for their sins in their stead; why are they in hell expiating those same sins for all eternity? Yet the Scriptures consistently set forth Christ's work as vicarious, as substitutionary, as his dying for his people and suffering the penalty of their sins in their stead. If this substitutionary atonement is effectual then all who Christ died for must be saved from their sins. So a universal substitutionary atonement cannot be a real atonement. It cannot be effectual. For the Scriptures are clear that not all men are saved, that many are lost, and that hell is a real place with legions of inhabitants.

The Calvinist position is logical, consistent, and seeks to honor the integrity of the Scriptures. It can be summed up in three points...

- There are a set of texts that appear to teach a limited atonement, that Christ only died for his sheep, his people, the elect whom the Father has given him.
- There are a set of texts that appear to teach a universal atonement, that Christ indeed died for all men.
- There is a resolution of this apparent contradiction in the Scriptures by examining the way that Scripture uses universal terms such as *all* and *all men*, etc.

The general Arminian response to this comprehensive position is to simply quote a few of the texts that appear to teach a universal atonement, and then denounce Calvinists for denying the plain statements of Scripture. As we shall see this is a very weak and entirely inadequate response.

Let us examine the Calvinist position step by step. We will start with the first step and examine those texts that appear to teach a limited atonement. First of all there are texts that speak of Christ dying for his sheep, rather than for all men, for the context makes it clear that his sheep are not all men. Christ is saying he is dying for his sheep and not for the goats.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. **John 10:11**

I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. **John 10:14-16**

In the above texts Christ is specifically saying that he is giving his life, that he is laying down his life, for the sheep. He is not doing so for all men. He is not doing so for the goats. He is dying for his people, his sheep, not for all men.

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,

neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one. **John 10:26-30**

The above verse makes clear that the sheep Christ is dying for does not comprehend all men. Unbelievers, those who do not follow him, those who do not heed the voice of the shepherd, are not of his sheep. His sheep are the same set of men spoken of in the texts below. They are the elect whom the Father has given him to redeem. God the Father has given them to him and they cannot be lost. This is entirely inconsistent with the Arminian concept that Christ is dying for all men, providing a potential atonement for all men, but that multitudes of those for whom he died will be lost.

Secondly, there are a set of men, referred to in the Scriptures, whom we call the elect, that are given by the Father to the Son to redeem as his people. These Scriptures seem to teach that Christ died for these men, rather than for all men.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. **John 6:37**

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. **John 6:39-40**

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. **John 17:2-3**

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. **John 17:9**

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. **John 17:11-12**

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 lovedst me before the foundation of the world **John 17:24**

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one. **John 10:27-30**

Although these texts do not specifically reference the atonement, they teach that it is not Christ's purpose to save all men, but only those whom the Father has given him. This is inconsistent with the Arminian position that Christ died for all men because he is attempting to save all men.

Thirdly, there are some general texts that appear to teach a limited atonement. They teach that Christ only died for those who believe on him, for his church, in short for the elect.

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. **Galatians 1:4**

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. **Ephesians 5:25**

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. **Titus 2:14**

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. **Ephesians 5:2**

Fourthly, there are texts that teach that the nature of the atonement was substitutionary.

It is interesting to note that, historically, Arminians denied the substitutionary nature of the atonement. They denied that Christ paid the penalty for man's sin. They realized the force of the Calvinist logic that if Christ died as a person's substitute, that he paid the penalty for that man's sin, then that man has to be pardoned and cannot be condemned and sent to hell. Since Christ died for all men, and not all men are pardoned and delivered from hell, therefore they concluded that the atonement could not be substitutionary and that Christ could not have paid the penalty for any man's sin.

This led to what was called the Governmental Theory of the Atonement. This theory denied that Christ made any atonement for sin on the cross, but that his death and suffering was merely a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, to justify his moral government, which would then allow him to forgive the sins of men without any atonement or satisfaction of divine justice. Modern Arminians generally do not share those opinions. However, that leaves them facing the Calvinist logic of how can a person, whose substitute has paid the penalty for his sin, be condemned and punished for those same sins? How can divine justice require payment for the same sins twice?

Essentially, what modern Arminians believe is that Christ died for some sins of all men. They believe in a substitutionary atonement, that Christ died in the place of all men. They believe that he made an atonement for sin and paid the penalty for almost all the sins of all men. The sin they except is the sin of unbelief. If man will just believe, if he will contribute his act of faith, then God has taken care of all his other sins, and he can be saved. Of course, not only is there no Scriptural support for such a theory, but it is illogical. An act of faith later in life does not atone for the earlier sins of unbelief. There would remain a problem of unatoned sin, and any sin is sufficient to condemn a person to an eternity under the wrath of God. The Scriptures constantly teach that when we are redeemed all our sins without exception are forgiven. And as John Owen argued in his famous syllogism, if Christ died for the sins of all men, why are not all men saved? You say because of their unbelief. But is not that unbelief a sin? And if unbelief is a sin, and Christ died for our sins, how can it not be forgiven?

One of the clearest passages on the nature of the atonement is found in Paul's letter to the Romans. It reads...

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: <sup>13</sup>(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. <sup>15</sup>But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. <sup>16</sup>And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. <sup>17</sup>For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) <sup>18</sup>Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. <sup>19</sup>For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. **Romans 5:12-19**

This passage compares Christ and Adam and sets forth Christ as a second Adam. Adam was a representative man. Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden and put on probation. He failed the test and all mankind fell with him. He fell into sin and ever since all his posterity have inherited his sinful nature and are "*born in sin and conceived in iniquity*" as Scripture puts it. So, as Paul states it here, in Adam all men died, that is by one man's offence death came upon all men, by one man's sin condemnation came upon all men. This is contrasted with Christ, the second Adam, who succeeded and lived a perfect sinless life on behalf of those that he represented. The question is whom did Christ represent as a second Adam? Paul says "...*the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life." If



*all men* is taken literally, in a universal sense as all men without exception, then this text teaches Universalism, that all men will be saved. However, as we shall see, universals in Scripture generally need to be qualified. What Paul is saying is that even as all men that were represented by Adam died when he fell into sin, so all men represented by Christ are made alive in him. Paul supports this interpretation by stating that as a result of Christ's obedience "*shall many be made righteous.*" If only some men are represented by Christ, if only those that are actually justified are represented by Christ, then that would establish the Calvinist position. Paul clearly teaches that Christ represented, that he was a substitute, that he stood in the place of certain men, and that those he so represented will be saved. As I see it, as we study this passage the choice is between Calvinism and Universalism. Since Arminians hold to neither, this passage has to be a problem for them.

Fifthly, there is the high-priestly prayer of Jesus Christ as he is preparing to go to the cross and offer himself up. For whom is Christ preparing to die? The prayer is as follows...

<sup>1</sup>These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: <sup>2</sup>As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. <sup>4</sup>I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

<sup>6</sup>I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. <sup>7</sup>Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. <sup>8</sup>For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. <sup>9</sup>I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. <sup>10</sup>And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

<sup>11</sup>And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup>I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

<sup>17</sup>Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

<sup>20</sup>Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; <sup>21</sup>That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. <sup>22</sup>And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: <sup>23</sup>I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

<sup>24</sup>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 lovedst me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. <sup>26</sup>And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. **John 17:1-26**

Repeatedly in this prayer Christ is interceding and praying, not for all men, not for the whole world, but for a select group of men, those whom the Father has given him. He specifically states that he is not praying for the whole world, but again only for the elect whom the Father has given him to redeem.

Two things have to strike us immediately as we study this prayer.

- As Christ is going to the cross to offer himself up his entire concern is for a group of men whom the Father has given him to redeem. It is for them and them only that he is concerned. It is for them and them only that he is interceding. This is entirely inconsistent with the Arminian concept that he is offering himself up for all men and seeking to redeem all men.

- Christ is only praying for this select group of people that the Father has given him to redeem. He refuses to pray for the world. He prays for the present believers and for those who will come to believe. But his prayers and intercessions are restricted to believers present and future. He refuses to pray for those who will not believe. Is Christ really going to the cross to die for those he refuses to pray and intercede for? This is totally illogical and inconsistent. If Christ was really preparing to die for all men, for all the world, he would be praying for them, interceding for them, and his petition would be that they would all come to believe in him so that his death for them would not be in vain. This he specifically refuses to do.

This prayer, as one studies it, is a powerful argument against the concept that Christ is going to the cross to die for all men. It just doesn't fit. When one considers that this prayer is universally considered his high priestly prayer, the prayer that accompanies the offering of the sacrifice of himself to the Father, to satisfy the Father's justice, and to make an atonement to the Father, this argument becomes even more conclusive. Christ is praying, interceding, and dying for those whom the Father has given him to redeem, the elect.

Now let us go on to the second step and review those texts that appear to teach that Christ died for all men.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. **1 Timothy 2:6**

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. **1 Timothy 4:10**

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. **1 John 4:14**

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. **2 Peter 2:1**

And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. **1 John 2:1-2**

There is no doubt that these texts "appear" to teach that Christ died for all men. This would then be in contradiction with the earlier texts we studied. How can this apparent contradiction be resolved? To resolve it we need to go on to the third point.

Finally, we come to the third step in the Calvinist position...How are universal terms used in the Scriptures?

First of all we need to consider how we use universal terms in our everyday speech. Let me give a few examples. A teenager is arguing with his parents seeking permission to do something. He argues, "But Mom and Dad, you're so old fashioned, everybody is doing it today." *Everybody* is a universal term. However, it can obviously not be taken in that sense. Parents in general are probably not doing it. Babies, toddlers, and young children are probably not doing it. Old people are probably not doing it. What the teenager really means is that a significant number of his peers are doing this and he wants to do it as well. *Everybody* (another universal that you'll have to take with a grain of salt) understands what the teenager is really saying, but nonetheless a universal term has been used. Similarly, someone complains, "Every time I'm late I get all the traffic lights red." This statement contains two universals, *every time* and *all*. However, again these cannot be taken literally. What the person really means is that frequently when he is late he gets a lot of red lights. But we all (another universal that can be questioned) understand that. No one (a negative universal, again open to question) really believes that every time that he is late every single light is red without exception. We understand this kind of hyperbole as a figure of speech, as a manner of speaking. Take for example the common statement when two people are arguing, "You do that all the time." Obviously, the behavior complained about is not being done all the time, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. But that is what a literal interpretation of the universal *all* requires. The person is unlikely to be doing it when they are sleeping, eating, or at work. What is really meant is that when certain situations arise this is what the person frequently does in response to those circumstances. The activity complained about probably takes up not all, but a fraction of a percent of the person's time. But everyone (another universal) understands how the term *all* is being used and the debate goes on without missing a heartbeat. That is how we use universals in our everyday speech.

Secondly, we need to examine the Scriptures to see if the Biblical authors, if the Holy Spirit, follows the pattern of everyday speech and uses universals in the same way that we do. When we examine the Scriptures we see that they clearly do so. Take for example the following sample texts.

And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee. **Mark 1:37**

Here the universal *all men* is used. Again, it cannot be taken in a universal sense. First of all, most men in the world did not even know of the existence of Christ. They certainly could not seek whom they didn't even know of. Secondly, of those in Palestine who had heard of him, even all of them were not seeking him. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were not seeking him and many others also rejected him like his own people in Nazareth. What the verse is really saying is that all kinds of men from all over Israel were seeking Jesus. But these qualifiers are not explicitly stated in the text. We are expected to understand that the universal *all men* is to be interpreted in a restricted sense.

And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him. **John 3:26**

Again, as in the above text, no one believes that this universal *all men* means that all men in the world, or even all men in Judea, were coming to Christ's baptism. It is again taken in the same restricted sense as the previous verse requires.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. **John 12:32-33**

This lifting up has to do with Christ's crucifixion. The question again is, does Christ's atoning death draw all men without exception to him? The answer is obviously not. Multitudes, the majority of mankind, then, and throughout much of history, have never even heard of Christ much less have knowledge of his atoning death. What the text means is not a universal all men at all times, but that many men, not just Israelites, but from many nations and places and times will be drawn to Christ because of his atoning death.

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. **Acts 2:45**

The deaconate of the church, at that time still run by the apostles, was not distributing these gifts to all men. They were not going out to the Chinese and the Persians. They were not even going out to all Israelites. They were simply being distributed to the needy among the Lord's people. The *all men* has to be restricted to all the needy members of the Church in Jerusalem.

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done. **Acts 4:21**

This is in the aftermath of when Peter and John went to the temple to preach and Peter healed a lame man begging at the temple. They were arrested and charged with preaching in the forbidden name of Jesus of Nazareth. The text says that all men glorified God for this act of healing. But this is patently impossible. Almost all men in the world were ignorant of the fact of this healing. And even of those present and knowledgeable concerning this miracle, not all glorified God. Some like the Pharisees and Sadducees present, tried to suppress this miracle. What the text really means is that of those men present in the temple to witness this miracle many were glorifying God. This is far from a literal interpretation of the universal *all men*.

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. **Acts 19:19**

Here again the universal *all men* cannot mean all the men in the world. It does not even mean all the men in Ephesus. It merely means that a large crowd, representing all the men of the city, young and old, rich and poor, from every quarter of the city, witnessed the burning of these books.

For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. **Acts 22:15**

Here, before the authorities in Jerusalem, Paul is recounting the details of his conversion and his call to the ministry when Ananias told him that he would be God's witness to all men. Now obviously Paul could not literally be God's witness to all men. It would be impossible for Paul to travel to every land and nation and personally witness to each individual. Paul would make extensive missionary journeys through parts of the Roman world and witness to many men in many places. However, even where he traveled he could only personally witness to a minority of those present. Again, the universal *all men* has to be interpreted in a very restricted sense. Paul witnessed extensively to all sorts of men, from many nations, throughout part of the Roman world. And that is how we have to interpret the *all men* in this text.

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: **2 Cor 3:2**

Paul is defending his apostleship to the Corinthian church. He states that the proof of his apostleship is the fruit of his ministry such as the Corinthian Christians, who once were godless immoral pagans and are now transformed by God's Spirit into children of the living God. He states that this proof is known and read by all men. Again the universal *all men* has to be taken in an extremely restrictive sense. It means all men that meet the Corinthian Christians, see the work of the Spirit in their lives, and note that this is the effect of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The *all men* of the entire world becomes the all men of those who meet and get to know the Corinthian Christians.

Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; **2 Cor 9:13**

Again, the deaconal gifts of the Corinthian Church were not directed to all men, but chiefly to the saints in Jerusalem and generally to the needy among God's people. It was limited to the saints and to the saints of those Christian churches in the Roman world of which they had knowledge and with which they had connections through the Apostle Paul. Rather than giving to *all men*, it was a very restrictive giving to the saints in a small portion of the world.

But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was. **2 Tim 3:9**

As Paul is exhorting Timothy about the dangers of certain classes of false teachers he states that the folly of these false teachers will be made manifest to all men. Again, this universal cannot be taken literally. Most men would not even know of these false teachers or their teachings. And some men would follow them and their pernicious ways. The universal *all men* becomes those men who are aware of these false teachers and have their eyes opened to the truth to see the folly of their ways. What it means is that when these men, these false teachers, make open shipwreck of their professed faith it will be manifest to all the Lord's people what folly they are engaged in. The *all men* becomes all the Lord's people aware of the situation.

At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. **2 Tim 4:16**

Again, in this passage the universal *all men* has to be interpreted in a very restrictive sense. First of all the vast majority of all men in the world had no connection with the Apostle Paul and so could not in any real sense forsake him. Secondly, many of those who knew Paul, Luke the physician, Timothy and Titus, many others mentioned in his letters and the majority of the saints in the churches that he founded never forsook Paul, but remained faithful to him. Actually, what apparently occurred is that many of the professing believers in Ephesus when the persecutions of the gospel commenced fell away and forsook Paul. Again, the universal all men has to be interpreted in a very restrictive sense.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **Titus 2:11**

Finally, here also we have to argue that the grace of God has not appeared to all men in the world. Most men in history never even heard the gospel. Of those who do many reject it and only a remnant according to the election of grace receive the grace to believe it. However, this grace, once restricted to the Jewish nation has now gone forth to men of all nations. So the universal *all men* becomes some men from every tribe, and tongue, and nation in the earth..

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. **1 Cor 12:7-11**

And in this passage the universal phrase *every man* becomes every true believer, every man who has truly been regenerated and filled with the Holy Spirit. It cannot, and does not, mean every man without distinction in the whole world.

Now, I have given all these examples, culled from the use of the phrase *all men* in the New Testament, to hammer home the point how frequently and consistently universals are used in the Scriptures when they clearly are not intended to be interpreted in a universal sense. Many more examples using other universal terms and including the Old Testament could be added to the above. Take the universal term *all the world*. It is used by Luke to introduce his account of the birth of Christ when he says "...*there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*" It is clear that Augustus' decree did not encompass the Chinese and the Persians and indeed most of the nations of the world. Instead, it was restricted to those nations that were part of the Roman Empire. And again, the universal *all the world* has to be interpreted in the restricted sense of the Roman world. This is simply how many, in fact most, universals have to be treated as they are used in Scripture. With this in mind let us now review again some of the texts containing universals that appear to teach a universal or unlimited atonement.

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. **1 Timothy 2:6**

If Christ really had ransomed all men, if he had paid the penalty for their sins and ransomed them from the wrath and justice of God, then why are they still bound in hell? What the text is actually teaching is that Christ ransomed not just Jews, but all men, in the sense of men from every tongue and

tribe and nation on the earth. Paul was constantly defending his apostleship to the Gentiles and affirming that God's salvation had now gone out from Israel to all men throughout the world.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. **1 Timothy 4:10**

Obviously, God is not the Saviour of all men, for then all men would be saved and that would be Universalism, which both Calvinists and Arminians reject as unscriptural. However, all men that are saved, are saved by God, so in that sense he is the Saviour of all men. And he is the Saviour of all men in the sense that he saves men from every tribe, and nation and tongue on the face of the earth. But this does not mean that he is the Saviour of all the men in the world or that he sent his Son to die for all men, particularly as Paul adds the qualifier, *specially of those that believe*.

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. **1 John 4:14**

If *the world* is interpreted in a universal sense to mean the world and all its inhabitants then that raises the same objection as the above verse. It would mean Universalism. The Greek word for *world* is *cosmos*, referring to the entire creation. When men fell into sin God could have destroyed the entire creation. Rather he has determined to redeem it and there will be the new heavens and the new earth. God will redeem the entire created order and many of its inhabitants. However, there is nothing in this verse that requires a belief in a universal atonement. Rather, it teaches that through the atoning work of Christ the entire created order will be redeemed. And the use of the definite article teaches that whatever of the created order and its inhabitants are redeemed, it is through Jesus Christ and him alone. He is the Savior, the only Savior of the world.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. **2 Peter 2:1**

The Arminian understanding of this verse is that even reprobate false teachers that deny Jesus Christ are his blood bought purchase and that he died for them also. As we shall see that interpretation does not fit the text at all. The Greek word that is uniformly used for Jesus Christ as our Lord is *kurios*. However these false teachers do not have Jesus as their Lord. They refuse to submit to him and in fact they are denying him. So Peter does not use the word *kurios* here, but the word *despotes*, from which we get the English word *despot*. It means an absolute ruler. Similarly, the word that is used uniformly in the Greek New Testament to signify the purchase or redemption of Christ's people is not used here. Instead another word is used, *agorazo*. It means to purchase, acquire, own. What this text is saying is that these false teachers deny the Absolute, Almighty, Creator God who owns them. It teaches the same truth as Paul is expounding in Romans 1. There Paul teaches that although the knowledge of God as Creator is so clearly manifest as to leave men without excuse, they suppress the truth in unrighteousness, and worship and serve the creature more than the creator. Peter is saying the same things concerning these false teachers.

And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

Again, in this text, we note that the term *world* cannot be interpreted in a universal sense. If the entire world, including all its inhabitants were reconciled to God, then there would be no one in hell. For it would be absurd to state that the legions of persons in hell, under the eternal wrath of God, consigned to that place where the fire is not quenched, and where the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever, are reconciled to God. Similarly, if their trespasses are not imputed to them, then how can they be expiating those trespasses for an eternity in hell? The *word of reconciliation* committed to the Apostle Paul is the gospel and only those who believe the gospel are reconciled to

God in Jesus Christ. And that is why Paul states earlier in the verse, "...*God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.*" Here Paul accurately states that it is only *us*, that is Paul and his fellow believers, such as those that he is writing to, that are truly reconciled to God in Christ. The restrictive *us* denies the universal and demands that the phrase *the world* not be interpreted in a universal sense.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. **1 John 2:1-2**

To expound this text I quote from Gary Long<sup>5</sup>. He states...

"The term 'propitiation' (*hilasmos*) means 'satisfaction,' 'appeasement.'" Theologically, propitiation means that God's wrath against sin, demanded by his justice, is satisfied on account of the death of Christ for sinners."

I note again there is a real problem with the Arminian concept of a universal atonement, a universal reconciliation, and a universal propitiation. If Christ has actually provided a propitiation for all men, if God's wrath against them is actually appeased, and an actual satisfaction has been made to God's justice, then why are legions of men in hell? Ultimately, Arminians have an atonement that doesn't atone, a reconciliation that doesn't reconcile, and a propitiation that doesn't really propitiate. This limits and demeans the work of Christ far more than the Calvinist limiting the atonement to the elect.

Continuing to quote from Gary Long...

"There are four primary references in the New Testament where the word 'propitiation' is used (cf. Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Three of the four references clearly teach that propitiation is strictly limited to a definite people, the elect of God.

"Romans 3:25 states that God set forth Christ 'a propitiation through faith in his blood.' From this reference it may be observed that, if Christ is a propitiation 'through faith,' He cannot be a propitiation to those who never have faith, and 'all men have not faith' (II Thessalonians 3:2).

"Hebrews 2:17 states that Christ was made a 'merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation (should be translated propitiation) for the sins of the people.' In context, 'the people,' are identified as the 'children which God hath given' Christ, (v. 130,) 'the seed of Abraham' (v. 16)... (Ed. Note: See also Galatians 3:7, 29. There Paul teaches that "...*they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*" And "...*if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.*" Clearly if the people for whom a propitiation is made are the seed of Abraham they are those of faith who are in Christ. They are not all men, but the redeemed, the elect.)

"I John 4:10 reveals the motivating cause of propitiation. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.' The propitiation is restricted here to the definite pronouns, 'we,' 'us,' and 'our,' that is, to believers, God's elect."

What we see then, in these four verses, is that three of them teach a definite or limited propitiation. They teach a propitiation that is restricted to believers, to God's elect. They do not teach a universal propitiation that applies to all men. And as previously noted such a propitiation cannot be a real propitiation at all since it applies to those who will spend all eternity under the unappeased wrath of God expiating sins for which no real satisfaction has been made to God's justice. Then we have a fourth verse, the one quoted above that we are expounding that "appears" to teach a universal propitiation. How can we reconcile the teaching of these four verses so that they all teach the same doctrine?

There are three different ways that Calvinists have used to interpret 1 John 2:2 so as to reconcile it with the other three verses and with the rest of Scripture. The first is what is termed "geographic

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<sup>5</sup> Gary Long, *Definite Atonement*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976.

universalism.” John is writing to believers in Asia Minor, to believers in the Roman province of Asia. He tells these believers that Christ has made a propitiation for their sins, but not for their sins alone, but for the sins of all believers in the rest of the world. The second interpretation is the “eschatological interpretation.” This states that not only the believers that John is writing to are propitiated by Christ, but that Christ’s propitiation redeems the whole world, the entire cosmos, so that a redeemed creation, a new heavens and a new earth, populated by a redeemed humanity, are the fruits of Christ’s propitiation. And finally, there is the “ethnological interpretation.” This states that John as a Jewish believer is stating that Christ made a propitiation not only for Jewish believers, but for believers from every tongue and tribe and nation in the whole world. This would make the text teach the same truth that John sets forth in a parallel text, “*And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*” **John 11:51-52** Here the High Priest Caiaphas, under inspiration, states who Jesus would die for. First he would die for the Jewish nation. He would die for believers among the Old Testament covenant people of God, and then, secondly, he would die for the Gentile believers scattered abroad in every nation of the world. The ethnological interpretation is the interpretation held by most Calvinists.

Again it must be emphasized that according to the analogy of Scripture most universal terms not only do not need to be taken universally, but should not be taken universally. They need to be qualified. And the above three interpretations provide qualifications that bring this text into harmonization with the rest of Scripture.

Finally, the weakness and inconsistency of the Arminian position needs to be noted. In the general texts that use universal words or phrases Arminians do not demand that they be taken literally. They are quite content to accept the fact that they need be taken as figures of speech and qualified or restricted in their interpretation. However, when it comes to texts concerning the extent of the atonement, they insist that these universal terms be taken literally. This is, of course, a great inconsistency. This gives them the burden of proof to demonstrate, logically, and from Scripture usage, that these texts should be treated differently. I have never seen Arminians accept this burden of proof or demonstrate why these verses are different. Secondly, the Arminian interpretation of these texts puts them in direct opposition to those that teach a limited atonement and to the many other Scriptures that support the logically consistent Calvinist view of salvation. This again places on them the burden to reconcile this conflict and make all Scripture speak with one voice. This I have never seen done. As stated above, the typical Arminian response of quoting the texts that appear to teach an unlimited atonement and denouncing those who disagree with them is a very weak and inadequate response. It will never convince any Calvinist to adopt their position.

Ultimately, we have to decide how we are going to limit the atonement. A universal, effectual atonement would require a belief in universal salvation, a doctrine that both sides reject. Ultimately we have to decide, how do the Scriptures limit the atonement? We either have to limit its extent to those who are ultimately saved, to believers, to the elect, or we have to limit its effectiveness, its efficacy. We have to say that by itself it really does not provide a real atonement for anyone, or redeem any person for whom it was made, as legions of men in hell can testify if the Arminian scheme is true. Do the Scriptures set forth Christ’s atonement as hypothetical, as insufficient to accomplish its purpose by itself, and as needing additional input from unregenerate men in order to be effective? Or does the Bible teach that Christ has redeemed his people? Does it teach that he has done it all? That he has really atoned for all their sins and really purchased their redemption by his suffering and death? Did Christ really mean it when he exclaimed on the cross, “*It is finished*”? Or was the work of redemption not really finished. Was it left up to sinful, unregenerate men to complete the work of redemption by their free will decisions? These are the choices before us. And Calvinists have made their decision. They believe that according to the Scriptures Christ has made a full and real atonement for all his



sheep and not one of them will be lost. They believe that salvation is of the Lord, and of the Lord alone.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE OF GOD

While we are on the subject of universals, the question arises what is the redemptive purpose of God? Is it God's purpose to definitely redeem a particular set of persons, the elect? Or is it God's purpose to seek to redeem all men? Is God a frustrated bystander, desiring and attempting to save all, while in fact legions go to hell? Or is he in total control as he sovereignly, and most certainly, carries out in time the salvation of all his elect, so that not one of his sheep is lost? Which is it? And of course the ultimate recourse, in maintaining either view, is to the testimony of the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture. And, as above, there are texts that both sides can appeal to. And especially, as above, the texts that the Arminians appeal to contain those same universal terms that we have already discussed.

First, let us review some of the texts that Calvinists appeal to as teaching that God purposes only to redeem some men, namely his elect, and not all men.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. **Isaiah 53:11-12**

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. **Matthew 1:21**

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. **Matthew 20:28**

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. **Matthew 26:28**

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. **John 10:11**

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. **Acts 20:28**

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. **Ephesians 5:25**

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. **Romans 8:32-34**

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. **Hebrews 9:28**

In these texts Christ is set forth as dying for his people, for his sheep, for his church. These texts set forth Christ as dying for many, that is for the seed of Abraham that is as innumerable as the sand of the seashore and the stars of the heavens, for that innumerable multitude that no man can number from every tribe and tongue and nation. They do not teach that Christ died for all men, as *many* does mean all. We have already previously noted those many texts that speak of Christ dying for those whom the Father had given him, a clear reference to the elect.

Secondly, let us review some of the texts that Arminians appeal to as teaching that it is the desire and purpose of God to redeem all men.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. **2 Peter 3:9**

The key to this verse is the statement that God is “*longsuffering to us-ward.*” Who is the “*us*”? Peter’s first epistle is addressed to the elect. This one is “*to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.*” His epistles are addressed to believers, to the people of God. This verse is saying that God is longsuffering, that God is patient. God does not hasten the end of the age, but will wait until every last one of his sheep, his people, have been saved. The end of the age cannot come until all of the elect have been called out and redeemed. The *all*, as is usual in the Scriptures, as it is in every day speech, needs to be qualified. It means all of us, all of the elect. This verse is a powerful verse for the Calvinist view of God’s plan of salvation. It gives no support for the Arminian view.

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is one* God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. **1 Tim 2:4-6**

There are two ways that this verse can be interpreted that is consistent with Calvinist theology. The first is an understanding of what we mean when we speak of the will of God. There are two different senses in which the will of God is used in Scripture. There is what is termed the preceptive will of God. This is the aspect of God’s will that is revealed in his holy law. It is summarized in the ten commandments. It is the revealed will of God that we walk according to his law. Then there is what is termed the secret will of God, because, unlike his law which is revealed to us, we do not know it. This is the will of God that is expressed in his eternal decrees and that he is working out in the unfolding of human history. Let me give an example. It was God’s revealed will that Israel should have accepted Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. It was his secret will that he be rejected by the nation, betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and crucified, to provide an atoning death for his people. Moses refers to this distinction when he says, “*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*” (**Deuteronomy 29:29**). We have to walk according to the revealed will of God. We will be judged according to the revealed will of God. God’s secret will is his business as he carries out his purposes in history.

Now the texts, like the one above, that say that God wills the salvation of all men, can merely be referring to the revealed will of God. God does in his preceptive will desire that all men believe in his Son, repent of their sin, and walk in his ways. However, that does not mean that it is his eternal purpose to bring to pass the salvation of all men.

Secondly, the other argument that can be used to interpret this verse consistent with Calvinist soteriology is the interpretation of the term *all men*. Paul was the great Apostle to the Gentiles. He frequently had to defend himself on this account, especially from the Jews and the Judaizers. At times he even had to justify his ministry to the other apostles. Paul was thus constantly reminding his readers that salvation was not just for the Jews, it was for all men. God’s salvation, with the fall of Israel and the call of the Gentiles, was now for all men, for men from every tongue and tribe and nation on the face of the earth. In that sense of course we can say that God wills the salvation of all men, both in his preceptive and his secret will. In that sense Christ has paid a ransom for all men. But if Christ has made a ransom, has purchased the pardon, for all men without exception then we have to ask the question, “Why are untold legions of these ransomed, pardoned men expiating their sins in hell?”

Thirdly, let us review some texts that seem to indicate that God is rejecting some men.

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. **Isaiah 6:9-10**

For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee:

and he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid. **Isaiah 29:10-14**

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. **Matthew 13:10-11**

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. **Matthew 13:13-16**

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. **Luke 8:10**

(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. **Romans 11:8**

None of the above texts, though not conclusive in themselves, seem consistent with the belief that God is actively seeking the salvation of all men.

Finally, let us examine God's providential acts in history. Let us examine the unfolding of his eternal will in time. If it is God's desire to save all men and if it is God's purpose to save as many as he can, as Arminians believe, then the entire history of the Old Testament makes no sense.

As an aside, consider the life of Noah. Before the flood, from Adam to Noah the godly line of Seth seems to have been in the minority. In Noah's day it was down to one family, Noah's. The Bible states that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He preached for many, many years while he was preparing the ark. Some commentators estimate he preached for 120 years. Yet during all that time he had not as much as one convert. If he was appealing to men's free wills and warning them of judgment to come and calling them to find God's salvation in the ark, one would think that in 120 years he would have some fruit of his ministry. However, The Bible declares that only Noah found grace in the sight of God, and God only rescued Noah and his family from the flood. Only Noah was elect, and some of his family, as Ham does not seem to have been a true believer.

All through the Old Testament God restricts the knowledge of himself and of the coming Messiah to a small remnant. After the flood it is Abraham and his family who, almost alone, with the exception of Melchizedek, who some think is Shem, are the recipients of God's grace, and are granted knowledge of the true God and of his great salvation. And so it remained in the days of Isaac and Jacob, until the children of Israel went into Egypt and into slavery. After the Exodus God made his covenant, and gave his law, and revealed his way of salvation, only to the children of Israel. For centuries, from Moses to Christ it remained so. Christ himself, in his earthly ministry, said "*salvation is of the Jews,*" and "*I am but sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" It was not until the nation of Israel, through its leaders, officially rejected their Messiah, and crucified him, that the gospel went out to the Gentiles. For four thousand years, the bulk of human history, the knowledge of the true God and his salvation was restricted to a small remnant. Are these the actions of a God who is purposing to save all men? Or are these the actions of a sovereign God working all things according to the counsel of his will, and redeeming all his elect, and them only?

Furthermore, is it not astounding that if God was purposing to redeem all mankind, there is not a single command in the entire Old Testament to evangelize the world? Israel is never once commanded to go out and evangelize the Gentiles. Paul states that the call of the Gentiles was a mystery hidden throughout the ages, but revealed in his time. With a few exceptions, such as the Gentile believers Rahab, Ruth and Naaman, God restricted his salvation to the children of Israel. These are not the actions of a God purposing to save all men.

Then consider the historic record of the early church as found in the book of Acts. Paul is on his second missionary journey. As they retrace the steps of their first journey God actively directs their path. *“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”* **Acts 16:6-9** Paul is forbidden to preach in Asia, not permitted by God to preach in Bythinia, and in a vision directed to preach in Macedonia. There he converts Lydia, a woman *“whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”* Paul continues on and winds up in Corinth. There again the Lord directs him. *“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”* (**Acts 18:9-10**) Are these the actions of a God seeking to reach all men and to save all men? Or are these the actions of a God working his sovereign will in history as he orchestrates the calling out of all of his elect? Clearly, the inspired record supports the latter.

Arminians do not seem to have a problem with the historic record in either Testament, and rarely make an issue of it. However, when Calvinists speak of God restricting his salvation to his elect they become radically opposed to such thoughts. But this is inconsistent. It is all right for God to restrict his salvation throughout all the Old Testament to the elect nation Israel, and ultimately only to an elect remnant of that nation, but it is intolerable to accept the same restriction of God’s salvation to his elect in New Testament times. In his providential dealings throughout all of human history God is consistent. He is working all things out for his glory and the good, the salvation, of his elect. It is Arminians who are not consistent.

If it has been God’s plan and purpose to seek to redeem all of mankind then it has been a colossal failure. Throughout all of human history the redeemed, the elect of God, have been a small remnant. Christ himself taught, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* (**Matthew 7:13-14**) But nowhere in the Scriptures is God’s plan of salvation set forth as having failed in any respect. It is always represented as a glorious plan, based on infinite wisdom, everlasting love, and eternal mercy. God’s plan has not failed, except in the imaginations of logically consistent Arminians.

That great chapter on Christ’s atoning death, Isaiah 53, states, *“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”* However, if Christ died for all men, and was seeking to redeem all men, how can he be satisfied that only a small remnant throughout all of human history have been redeemed by his blood sacrifice? On the other hand, if he died for his elect and all of his elect are saved and not one of his sheep are lost, then he might well be satisfied, having accomplished all his holy will, and the will of his Father.

By way of conclusion, we can say that God does everything for his own glory. The two great works for which God is constantly being praised in the Scriptures are his great work of creation and his great work of salvation. But how can God be glorified in his great work of redemption if it has to be considered a failure? If it was God’s purpose to redeem all of mankind then it has not succeeded. Numerically, only a very small remnant of humanity has been redeemed over the past six thousand

years of human history. God has had to stand by as a frustrated observer in his own universe, having sent his Son to die for all men, only to have the vast majority of men scorn that sacrifice and reject his Son. How can men and angels really glorify God for such a failed plan of redemption?

However, if God's purpose was a new creation, if his purpose was a new heavens and a new earth, populated by a new redeemed humanity whom he has saved out from among every tribe and tongue and nation of the earth, then things are entirely different. Then God has accomplished all his holy will. He has brought to pass all his good pleasure. He has redeemed each one of his elect and not one of them has been lost. He has redeemed that innumerable multitude that is like the sand of the seashore and the stars of the heaven for number. He has done that for which men and angels will praise him for all eternity. And if he has done it sovereignly, and by his power alone, so that the glory of this great work of salvation is his alone, then indeed he is greatly to be praised. Hallelujah!!!

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### EVANGELISM

Arminians frequently express the opinion that the doctrines of total inability and of divine election are disincentives to evangelism. Why bother, they say, if man cannot respond and if God is going to redeem his elect, and them only, irrespective of our efforts. However, Calvinists, historically, have been very diligent in evangelism. What is the Calvinist's motive for diligence in evangelism? It is threefold.

First of all, Calvinists evangelize because it is commanded. Ever since that point in time that Israel rejected Christ as their Messiah, God has clearly and consistently given the command to proclaim the truth of his Son throughout the whole world, to preach the gospel to every creature. As Paul stated it,

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles. Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! **Romans 11:11-12**

Christ before his ascension gave his church the Great Commission. It states,

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen. **Matthew 28:19-20**

Or as Mark renders it...

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. **Mark 15:16**

Paul confirms this when he states that he is under a command, under a requirement, to preach the gospel. God confronted him on the Damascus road and gave him a charge, a commission, that he faithfully fulfilled until he had run his race and finished his course.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! **1 Corinthians 9:16**

As the old adage goes, "*Duty belongs to us, outcome belongs to God.*" We have the duty to go to the ends of the earth as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ. However, the results, the outcome of our proclamation of the gospel, is totally in God's sovereign hands.

Secondly, Calvinists evangelize because they believe in the sovereignty of God. They believe that God is sovereign not only over the end, over who is saved, but also over the means. And the means that God has chosen to call out his elect is through the preaching of the gospel. As Paul states it...

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. **1 Corinthians 1:21**

And as he taught elsewhere...

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! **Romans 10:13-15**

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. **Romans 10:17**

Calvinists do not evangelize in spite of God's sovereignty in salvation, but because of it. They believe that this is the appointed means whereby God will call out, from every tribe and tongue and nation, that innumerable multitude that will praise him for a future eternity in the new heavens and the new earth. They realize that they are preaching to men who are spiritually dead, that they are

proclaiming the gospel to hearts of stone. If it were not for their convictions of God's sovereignty over the process they would have to view it as an exercise in futility. But they persevere because they are encouraged. God will work through their puny, sinful efforts to work his eternal purposes. His word will not go forth in vain, as Isaiah taught, but will prosper in the thing unto which he is sending it. God will through these means call out his elect, build his church, and glorify his name. Because these are God's appointed means, Calvinists have great zeal to use them, believing that he will work by his Spirit, by his almighty power, to use these means to accomplish great things.

Thirdly, Calvinists evangelize because it is an incredible privilege to do so. God does not need us. He certainly is not dependent upon the weak and sinful efforts of men to accomplish his holy and eternal will. Yet God, in his goodness and wisdom, has determined to use our efforts in the working out of his plan of salvation. He has chosen to call his saints to be co-laborers with him in the calling out of his elect, in the implementing of his great plan of salvation. This is a great condescension on God's part and an inestimable privilege on our part. As Paul states it of himself...

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. **Ephesians 3:8**

To be used of God in such a glorious and great work is indeed a great blessing. To be called to be God's instruments in the salvation of his people is a calling that is to be highly esteemed. Calvinists have a zeal for evangelism because it is a high calling and a great privilege.

However, the real issue before us is, how do the respective views of God's way of salvation affect how each side in this controversy conducts their evangelistic efforts? To start off, let us examine how we ought to conduct our evangelistic efforts. Paul says...

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. **1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

God's ministers, the preachers of the gospel are required to be, above all, faithful. They are stewards of the mysteries of God. They are entrusted with the doctrines of Scripture. They are to faithfully proclaim, teach, and preserve them. The faithful presentation of God's truth is what is required of ministers of Christ.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God *is* witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. **1 Thessalonians 2:4-6**

Here Paul states that he was "*put in trust with the gospel.*" The gospel was not something he could play around with. It was not something he could modulate in an attempt to make it more palatable or more effectual. He was entrusted with it as with a treasure that he was duty bound to protect and preserve. He did not attempt to make the gospel more appealing by adding to it "*flattering words.*" He preached the plain, unvarnished truth of the gospel that he was entrusted with.

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. **Galatians 1:10**

Here Paul gives the key to faithful preaching, to faithful presentation of the gospel. He does not seek to please men as he preaches to them. He does not seek to minimize the offense of the gospel. He does not seek to avoid those hard truths that unregenerate men find so unacceptable. He is a servant of Christ. He is an ambassador of Christ. He seeks to please Christ by faithfully preaching his word. That was the key to Paul's ministry, so that towards the end of his ministry, as he prepared to go into imprisonment in Jerusalem for the sake of the gospel, he could declare, "*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*" (**Acts 20:26-27**)



Paul refers to the offense of the gospel, and Peter speaks of the offense of Christ. (**Galatians 5:11, 1 Peter 2:8**) What were they speaking about? What offense is there to what passes as gospel preaching today? What offense is there to the Arminian gospel? The Arminian gospel proclaims that God loves you, and wants to save you, and will you please allow him to by letting Jesus into your heart, or by making a decision for Christ. There is little offense to that! A more extreme version declares, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,” and invites you to give God’s plan a chance. What offense is there in that?

The real gospel starts of with the bad news. It informs sinners that God is “*angry with the wicked every day,*” that he “*hates all the workers of iniquity.*” It warns them that God indeed has a plan for them if they persevere in their wickedness and in their rebellion against him, and it is an eternity under his wrath in the lake of fire. It calls them to turn from their wicked ways, to repent of their sins, and to flee to Jesus Christ as the only refuge from the wrath of God to come. It tells them that even what they consider their best works are an abomination in the sight of a thrice holy God of purer eyes than to behold evil, and to trust in them is folly of the highest degree. It bluntly informs them that there is nothing they can do to save themselves, except to cast themselves on God’s mercy in Jesus Christ who has provided everything necessary for the salvation of sinners.

Now let us apply all this to the Arminian-Calvinist controversy. Let us examine how their different views of man’s salvation would influence the manner in which they present the gospel. First of all, let us examine the tendency of each system. Arminians believe that evangelism is an exercise in influencing the free wills of unregenerate men. They are seeking to persuade such men to make a decision for Christ. They are therefore tempted to minimize the offense of the gospel. Why turn people off, they think. They are prone to present the gospel as positively as possible and sometimes shorn of its harsher realities. They are prone to speak too much of God’s love and too little of his wrath. They are prone to minimize the bad news of man’s guilt and awful state before God and of his wrath on sinners and the realities of his eternal punishment. They are prone to minimize the presentation of man’s sinfulness, of how a holy God views him, and that they are an abomination in his sight. That, however it may work out in individual cases, is the tendency of the system.

Now let us examine the tendencies of the Calvinist system. The Calvinist believes that he is preaching the gospel as a duty. He believes that nothing that he says can really save a man. He believes that God must regenerate a man, and take away his heart of stone before he can respond. He believes that the faithful preaching of God’s word is the God appointed means of calling out God’s elect. So the entire tendency of the system is to proclaim the gospel, as Paul did. To proclaim it in all its power, with all its offence, and accompanied by all the bad news that makes the gospel the good news. The question that we need to ask is, “Are we salesmen trying to make a sales pitch to men? Or are we ambassadors of Christ, bearing his message to those who are in rebellion against him?” The tendency of the Calvinist system of salvation is to make men outspoken preachers of the gospel, trusting that God will use that testimony according to his will, to call out his elect. That was certainly the case during the Great Awakening, which was an exercise in Calvinist evangelism.

Now we have to be fair. We are speaking here of the tendencies of each system. There are undoubtedly many Arminian churches that resist these tendencies and try to preach the gospel as faithfully as they can. However, even when they do so, the gospel they are preaching is already shorn of much of its offence. And there are also, undoubtedly, some Calvinist churches that fall to the temptation to minimize the harshness of the bad news and make the gospel a little more palatable to unregenerate men. However, the tendencies of the two systems are remarkably different, and are very powerful. And as we shall see, have had a marked impact on the history of the church.

Much of the damage to the Church of Jesus Christ in North America, if not elsewhere in the world, can be attributed to the effects of mass Arminian evangelism. One can go all the way back to the labors of Charles Finney to see the destructiveness of this type of evangelism. Finney was not just an Arminian, a semi-Pelagian. He was a full-blown Pelagian. He believed in perfectionism. He believed

that men could, by the exercise of their “free-wills,” lead perfect and sinless lives. Although he was a “Presbyterian,” he rejected the doctrines of Presbyterianism, especially its soteriology. He invented many of the techniques of modern mass evangelism. The idea that one can come to Christ by walking an aisle or lifting up one’s hand rather than by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God probably originates with Finney. These physical acts were to Finney signs that a man had made a decision, a decision for Christ, that his will had been affected. The fact that legions of such conversions turned out to be spurious did not deter Finney in the least. He continued with his “new measures.” The areas, especially Western New York, where his labors were concentrated, were later called the burned over districts. In these areas Biblical religion had nigh-well disappeared, men’s hearts were hardened against the gospel, and irreligion and cults were rampant. Mormonism had its beginnings in Western New York, and Joseph Smith got many of his religious ideas from the cults he was exposed to there. Later, Finney’s ideological heirs invented the doctrine of the “carnal Christian” to justify the lack of grace in their alleged converts.

That was all in the nineteenth century. It only got worse in the twentieth century, as Finney’s “new measures” were refined, honed, and expanded. I remember the case of one Arminian evangelist who was explaining his “soul winning” techniques. He said that one reason many persons were not being converted when they were brought to an evangelistic meeting was because they knew what was coming. As the service was obviously drawing to a close they knew the invitation was coming. They knew that influence and pressure would be brought to bear to get them to “make a decision for Christ,” so they steeled themselves against it, and prepared to resist. This evangelist said that what was needed was to bring the service to a climax quickly and unexpectedly. What had to be done was to surprise the person with the invitation before he was expecting it. He thought that many more souls could be won that way. This is of course the epitome of Arminian evangelism. It is an exercise in men seeking to persuade men. It degenerates into an effort by men to influence the wills of men. Where in all this is there place for the indispensable work of God’s Spirit? There is no place for the work of God in these games. It is human efforts seeking to influence human wills. God is on the sidelines until a decision is made. Then God is expected to respond and reward the decision for Christ with regenerating grace by his Spirit. What a travesty of the Biblical way of salvation.

Another example is the case of Hyles-Anderson College. Jack Hyles was the Arminian pastor of a fundamentalist Baptist mega-church. The college was founded in the early seventies as I recollect and was located in Hammond, Indiana, a suburb of the city of Gary. The college was placing large full-page ads in *The Sword of the Lord*, a popular fundamentalist religious newspaper. The college bragged in these ads that at Hyles-Anderson College soul winning was not an option...it was a requirement. The students would be bussed into the city of Gary to conduct street evangelism. To graduate, a student had to chalk up a specific number of “decisions for Christ.” He or she had to “save” their quota of souls to obtain the mandatory credit in “soul winning” to graduate. Here again, there was no dependence on the power and the Spirit of God. It was presumed that sufficient human efforts will bring the desired results. Noah, whom the Scriptures call a preacher of righteousness, would have flunked out of this college. Jeremiah would have fared no better. They were faithful preachers of God’s word, but God chose to make their preaching “*a savour of death unto death.*” It is God who is sovereign. It is God who saves...not man.

And what does this type of street evangelism consist of? In the Scriptures objects of evangelism are taught the faith by sound preaching, and when they are converted to Christ by God’s power, they are baptized, and added to the church. A reasonable understanding of the gospel, of who Christ is and what he has done, and a credible profession of faith in him, are required. They then come under the regular preaching of God’s word and under the discipline of his church. In this type of Arminian street evangelism people are asked if they want to go to heaven, if they want to be saved. They are told it is extremely easy. They are told that all they have to do is “accept Christ as their Savior.” Any explanation of the gospel and who Christ is, is minimal, and has to take place in a minute or two. If the

victim of this deceptive practice assents, he or she is led to repeat a simple prayer, confessing their sin and asking Jesus to come into their heart. They are then pronounced saved. And typical four point Arminians will then counsel them that they are permanently saved no matter what happens in the future. After all, *“Once saved...Always saved.”* These persons can continue in their normal sinful lives, can never darken the door of a church, or crack open a Bible, and yet are deluded that they are assured of their salvation. I have observed, and witnessed to, the victims of this type of evangelism. They are extremely hard to reach with the gospel. They believe that their spiritual needs are all taken care of. They see no need to change their lives or do anything else. They have been immunized against true evangelism. While there undoubtedly are exceptions, and some actually come to church, hear the word of God, and are actually converted, that cannot justify such unscriptural practices in light of the thousands of deluded souls that are deceived about their true spiritual state. Yet all this is the logical fruit of Arminian principles applied to evangelism.

Finally, let us examine the ministry of the greatest evangelist of the twentieth century, Billy Graham. Graham is an Arminian, so his ministry is the best example there is of mass Arminian evangelism. Now the Bible is not only a book of theology, but of anthropology. It teaches us not only knowledge of the true God, of his character, attributes, and works, but it teaches us about man. It gives us God’s view of man, of fallen man, and the picture is not very pretty. Billy Graham teaches little about either. He is extremely careful to avoid offending his audience. He studiously avoids the offense of man’s sinfulness, the offense of what God really thinks of sinful man. And while he is careful to spare his listeners any offense, God declares, *“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isaiah 58:1)* And because he avoids the offense of the gospel he is therefore very well thought of by the world. Most unbelievers in America have a favorable opinion of Billy Graham, as does the mass media. Christ had a word about those whom the world speaks well of, *“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets”.* (Luke 6:26)

The essence of Billy Graham’s evangelistic ministry is ecumenism. It is mandatory, if he is to conduct a crusade in any city, that the local organizing committee include Roman Catholics, theological liberals, and Charismatics. This is mandatory. He demands it. This of course ensures broad acceptance of his ministry and great crowds. He may feel that this is justified because it brings many Roman Catholics and adherents of liberal churches under his preaching. However, there is a steep price to pay for this policy. The messages that he preaches must be tailored to offend none of these constituencies. And then it only gets worse. The counselors, who minister to those who respond to his call to accept Christ, are also selected from these constituencies. And to ensure that none of these constituencies suffer any harm or offense the “converts” who come forward are asked about their church back ground. It is mandated that Catholics are sent to a Catholic counselor, to a priest or a nun. Similarly, those with a background in a liberal church, where the gospel is never preached, are sent to a counselor from such a church. This way each constituency is ensured they will not lose members to another. It also ensures that very few Catholics are delivered from the heresies and idolatries of the church of Rome and very few victims of theological liberalism are delivered from those apostate churches and come under the true preaching of his word.

Billy Graham is popular. The world loves him. He has been the friend and confidant of every President since Eisenhower. He has blessed their administrations and supported them in spite of their worldliness and corruption, and the fact that many of their policies could not stand the test of the word of God. When Elvis, a notorious adulterer, died of drugs and alcohol, Graham stated he was in heaven singing for God. This is what the world loves to hear. There is none of the offense of the gospel. There is none of the sting of God’s law. There is not an iota of Elijah or John the Baptist in Graham. So the world loves him. He was a frequent speaker at the World Council of Churches, where he embraced those apostates, those blasphemers, and those Christ deniers as brethren. Yes, the world loves him.

The mystery is, why did Christians support him? The answer is, because it was all in the name of evangelism. He was saving souls...who could oppose that? He was achieving decisions for Christ in unprecedented numbers...who could not support that? Well Calvinists couldn't. They provided most of the opposition to Graham. A few separatist, fundamental, Arminian churches opposed him, but they were a miniscule minority. The vast majority of Arminian evangelicals supported Graham. They loved him. All his compromises were accepted...because he was saving souls. But was he? Many Calvinists didn't think so. They didn't see the work of God in this travesty of evangelism. They saw the epitome, the logical end point, of Arminian evangelism, of appealing to men's free will and avoiding any offense. Fifty years of this type of evangelism, and millions of "decisions for Christ" later, America is more wicked and corrupt than ever. Legions of alleged converts later, American society and culture are more immoral than ever. Fifty years of this type of ministry and American evangelicalism is more compromised, worldly, shallow, and emasculated of any true zeal for the truth, than ever. Is there not something wrong with this picture?

Now Billy Graham may profess Arminianism, but considering that the fruit of his ministry has mainly been spurious conversions, alliances with unbelievers, and subversion of the churches by the doctrine of Balaam, we must entertain serious reservations about his spiritual state. As the words of Christ, quoted above, suggest, he may even be a false prophet. We do not know...the Lord knows. But whatever he is, the fact is inescapable that he could never have accomplished the spiritual destruction he has wrought for over half a century without the support of the Arminian evangelical churches. And why did they support him? They supported Graham because the tendency of the Arminian scheme of salvation is to support that type of evangelism. That has been the consistent historic record, from Charles Finney through Billy Graham. Therefore they must bear much of the responsibility for the consequences of Graham's ministry. That the barriers between the Lord's people and the Church of Rome, between them and liberal apostates, and between them and Charismatics, the barriers protecting and defending them from these errors, have been broken down, is largely due to their support of Graham's ministry.

Arminians complain that the Calvinist understanding of God's way of salvation undermines zeal for evangelism. This is not supported by the historic record. Many of the great missionary pioneers were Calvinists. When the Great Commission was beginning to be really implemented in the nineteenth century as the gospel went out into the third world, it was spearheaded by Calvinists. Calvinists have a much greater right to complain about what Arminianism has done to evangelism. It has destroyed it until it is dominated by the ministry of such as Billy Graham. It has corrupted it into a vast system for generating spurious conversions apart from the power of God unto salvation, and become the soul destroying, church corrupting travesty that Graham and his kind have made it. When it comes to evangelism and the historic record, Calvinists have much less to apologize for. Arminians, in their glass houses, should not be throwing stones at them.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### SOLI DEO GLORIA

What was the purpose of the original creation? What was Satan's purpose in corrupting that creation? Why did God purpose to redeem the creation? What is the connection between the work of creation and the work of redemption? Which view of God's salvation gives God all the glory? And which view of salvation dishonors God and robs him of his glory in the great work of salvation? These are the questions we will deal with in this chapter.

What was the purpose of the original creation? It was to reflect and show the glory of God. It was to demonstrate his greatness and goodness, his almighty power, and to bring glory to his name. As the psalmist stated it...

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. **Psalm 19:1**

Even the sin-cursed remnant of God's original creation, that we now inhabit, has such a powerful testimony to God's power, greatness, and goodness, that it will be sufficient to convict men on judgment day. As Paul puts it...

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: **Romans 1:20**

And especially man, as the apex of God's earthly creation, created in his image, was to glorify him. And the Scriptures incessantly proclaim man's duty to glorify his Creator.

I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. **Psalm 145:5**

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. **Revelation 4:11**

The Westminster standards address this issue in the very first question and answer of the Shorter Catechism. It teaches...

**Q. 1 : What is the chief end of man ?**

**A.** Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And is supported by such Scripture proofs as...

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. **1 Corinthians 10:31**

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. **Psalm 29:2**

It is hard for us to imagine today what the creation could have been and should have been. Myriads of angels, and supernatural beings, that we can scarcely imagine, cherubim and seraphim, continually praising God in his presence in the heavens of heavens. And on earth a glorious and perfect creation glorifying the Creator. This entire creation, animate and inanimate, is reflecting and demonstrating the glory of God. Imagine a creation filled with an unfallen humanity, with all the holiness and righteousness of our first parents in the state in which they were created. And this glorious humanity is living and laboring for the honor and glory of God, praising him in all its ways, and doing all things according to his holy will and to his honor and glory. It is a glorious and blessed creation that transcends what we can even imagine. This was the original purpose of God. This is why he created all things. This is why we were created. O how have we fallen! And how far short we have come.

And why did we fall? Why did Satan rebel and seek to corrupt God's original creation? And why did he tempt our first parents, Adam and Eve, to obey him and join him in his rebellion against God? Satan was one of the most marvelous creatures that God had created. He was the apex of the

supernatural beings that inhabit the heavens of heavens, in the very presence of God. He was one of, and possibly the highest of, the archangels. But he aspired to be more. He aspired to be God. Specifically, he desired to be the object of the praise that the entire creation was directing to God. The entire creation was created for, and had one purpose, to glorify God. Satan conspired and rebelled that that entire creation might instead glorify and worship him.

This is manifest from Satan's confrontation with Christ in the wilderness. Satan tempted Christ. He offered him another way than the way of the cross. He offered to give him all the kingdoms of the world, without having to redeem them by his blood. He offered to give him all the kingdoms of the world that were in rebellion against the true God and his son Jesus Christ. He offered to give him all the kingdoms of the world that "*lie in the hands of the wicked one,*" that worship and serve Satan rather than God. And what did Satan want in return? All he wanted is that Christ bow down and worship him. If Christ receives the allegiance, obedience, and worship of all the nations as Satan's viceroy, and then worships Satan, then Satan has accomplished his objective. Then he is receiving the worship and allegiance of the entire world.

Satan has already accomplished much of his objective. Paul says...

But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. **1 Corinthians 10:20**

According to Paul, all the pagan religions, with their sacrifices and their religious feasts, are serving and worshipping demons. Demons are fallen angels in the service of Satan. This worship, of the entire non-Christian, pagan world, is directed through these demons to their overlord, Satan.

The Apostle John teaches the same truth when he states...

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: **Revelation 9:20**

The wicked according to John are worshipping devils. And he relates this to the worship of "*idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone.*" The inference is, as taught elsewhere in Scripture, that the worship of these idols ultimately devolves on demons, and thus through them to Satan.

Satan's rebellion against God, and his motives, are dealt with in two passages of Scripture. The passages are prophecies or "*woes*" against the kings of Tyre and Babylon. However, it is clear from the context that it is not against these pagan kings but against Satan their overlord that they are really directed.

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God...Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee...I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. **Ezekiel 28:12-17**

This passage is clearly speaking of Satan. It is Satan who was "*in Eden the garden of God.*" It is Satan who was perfect until he fell into sin and rebelled against God. And tellingly, it is Satan whose heart was lifted up with pride. Proud of his own beauty and perfections he aspired to be the object of the praise and adoration of the entire creation that was being directed to God.

That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say...Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover

thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. **Isaiah 14:4, 11-15**

This passage of Scripture reinforces the earlier one about Satan's fall and the cause thereof. It refers to his *pomp*, indicative of his pride. And in his pride he aspired to greater things than his already exalted position in the order of God's creation. He aspired to the very throne of God. He aspired to be like the Most High. In his limitless pride he aspired to be the object of the praise of the entire creation.

The futility of Satan's conspiracy to subvert the creation from its original purpose is evident from a remark made by our Lord Jesus Christ. At the triumphal entry, when he was being lauded as the Son of David, the Messiah, the religious leaders, the Sadducees and Pharisees, bade him to silence the multitude. They, rejecting his deity, considered the honors being accorded him as blasphemous. As Christ had previously told them, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*" They were serving Satan and were infuriated that Christ was receiving the adoration of the multitude. Christ responded, saying...

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. **Luke 19:40**

The inference here is that the purpose of God's creation cannot be frustrated. If man will not praise God, then God will raise up praises to himself even from the inanimate parts of his creation, and the very stones will burst out in praise to God, to the Creator. God will be praised, and as Scripture says, his glory he will not give to another.

There is a real connection between the work of creation and the work of redemption. The latter could be described as the work of re-creation. The Bible says that "*God so loved the world...*," the *cosmos*, the creation, that he gave his only begotten son to die for it. The divine work of redemption will culminate in a new creation. It will produce the new heavens and the new earth, populated by a new humanity, redeemed, sanctified, and glorified. And all this will be accomplished by the work of God's Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ's atoning work. The purpose of this new creation is to fulfill that which the original creation failed to do. It will glorify God for a future eternity, as the original creation was intended to do. The following scriptures set forth the purpose of the original creation, a purpose that we are still to seek to fulfill today:

Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. **Isaiah 44:23**

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved...That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ...Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. **Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14**

Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul. **Psalms 103:22**

And these Scriptures set forth the purpose of the new creation that will come to pass in the eschatological future:

Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. **Isaiah 60:21**

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. **Revelation 4:11**

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. **Revelation 14:7**

Especially the following passages speaking of the new heavens, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem, show how the glory of God will be magnified therein:

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind...I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. **Isaiah 65:17; 66:18-19**

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. **Revelation 21:22-26**

The purpose of the new creation, as that of the old, is to glorify the Creator.

The Scriptures are filled with repeated references, dozens of them, to that fact that the Lord is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This is repeatedly how God identifies himself to the men that he is addressing. This is his testimony to his power and greatness and to his rights over them.

For all the gods of the people *are* idols: but the LORD made the heavens. **1 Chronicles 16:26**

Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. **Nehemiah 9:6**

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. **Job 38:4**

Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. **Psalms 148:5**

The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. **Proverbs 16:4**

This last verse is especially telling. As the Scriptures say, “*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*” (**Psalms 76:10**) God has made all things for himself, for his own pleasure, and preeminently for his own glory. Even the wrath, the worst works of wicked men, will but advance the working out of God’s glorious plan and will abound to his glory. Satan’s enmity, Judas’ betrayal, the hatred of the Jewish leaders, all contributed to the fulfillment of God’s purpose and to accomplishing that redemption for which we will praise him for all eternity. God has made all things, even the wicked for himself, for his own glory. Even the existence of hell, where his holy judgments on the wicked are carried out, where the eternal punishment of his enemies is exacted, abounds to his honor, majesty, and might, and to the praise of his glorious justice. And most of all his glory will be magnificently manifested in the new creation. There God will be forever glorified as never before. There the glory of God will be openly manifested as it never was in the old creation. O may the Lord hasten that day.

Now, if all this is for God’s glory, how does this relate to the issue before us, the Calvinist-Arminian controversy? If God does all things for his own glory, which system, which plan of salvation brings the greatest honor to God? And which one brings dishonor to his great and glorious name? Examined strictly on the merits of their respective theologies there is a vast difference between the God of the Arminians and the God of the Calvinists. Thankfully, in practice, this is not so and they can



worship together as brethren, glorifying the same God. Yet, let us examine the view of God that each side to this controversy holds according to their doctrine.

The God of the Calvinist is great, and glorious, and triumphant. He is omnipotent, accomplishing all his holy will and good pleasure. He triumphs over all his enemies and laughs at them. The conspiracies of Satan, the rebellion of man are as nothing to him. He is in absolute control of history. He is sovereign over all that takes place in his creation. Not a hair can fall from our heads unless it be his holy and most perfect will. He is the potter and we are the clay. His eternal decrees stand and no one can challenge him or frustrate his plans. Nothing is contingent to him, not even the salvation of any of his creatures. Man's will is no impediment to his will. He doesn't merely hope for man's salvation. He doesn't merely make their salvation possible. He actually redeems them. He does it all by his power, through the work of his Son, and by his Spirit, all to the praise of his glorious grace. This is a God that is worthy to be adored and worshipped for all eternity. He truly is the Lord. And salvation truly is of him, and of him alone.

And let us take a hard, logical look at the God of the Arminians. His will, his purpose, is to save all of humanity. He sent his son to die for them all. However, because of the slothfulness of his servants, multitudes that he desires to save never even hear of his offer of salvation. Multitudes more, that do hear it, scornfully reject it. The grace he offers is constantly spurned and rejected. He is very much hostage to the will of his creatures. He has done all he could. He has even offered up his only begotten and beloved son. And now he can do no more except to wait and see what his creatures will do. Will it all be worth while? He sits and waits. He stands at the door and knocks. But he is impotent to do anything more. This God can not come crashing into your life, as he did to the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road and dictate that he, Paul, was a chosen vessel to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, and to convert Paul in spite of himself and his enmity to the Christian faith. No, this is only a weak caricature of the mighty God that reveals himself in the Scriptures.

Thankfully, many, if not most, of modern Arminians do not believe in such a God. Thankfully, there is a happy inconsistency in their thinking. There is a disconnect between their mind and their heart. Yet, the logical implications of their theology bring up a view of God that is very dishonoring and that robs God of his glory.

Arminianism is essentially humanist, it is man centered. It is mainly concerned with man's needs of salvation. It has great concerns about being "fair" to sinful men. Calvinism is God centered. It is chiefly concerned, not with man's needs, but with God's glory. If God has really done all things for his own glory, if the work of redemption, of the new creation, is really to magnify the glory of God, then God has saved man according to the Calvinist model. Anything less is dishonoring to God and robs him of that glory that he is worthy of, and which the great work of salvation is designed to restore.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### MORAL ABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Arminians have long argued against the Calvinist doctrine of Total Depravity on the basis that it is contrary to any “just and fair” concept of moral accountability. They argue that moral accountability has to be limited by moral ability. They believe that God cannot require of man anything that man is unable to perform. Therefore man is not accountable to keep God’s law or obey his commandments unless he has the ability to do so. Since the Bible commands men to repent, therefore men must have the moral ability to repent. Similarly, since the Bible commands men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore men must have the ability to believe. They must be able, by their own powers, to have faith in Christ. Therefore men must be capable of responding to the gospel and turning to God while yet in their natural or unregenerate state.

However, as we have already noted, the logical conclusions of Arminian thought can be disastrous. In this particular case it has led to such heresies as Finney’s perfectionism. It was a perfectly logical development and a smooth transition from the one to the other. Earlier, the Wesleyans had developed their own doctrine of perfectionism. They had taught that God had graciously relaxed the requirements of his law to accommodate the capacities of sinful men. They held that God no longer required full “legal obedience” to his law, but that he would accept an “evangelical obedience” that was sincerely rendered as the best that man could do. Finney, and the other Oberlin men, scorned to take such a position, but arrived at the very same end point nonetheless. They argued that God had not relaxed his standards at all. However, God’s law only requires men to do what they have the moral ability to do. From that position, a position held by many modern Arminians, it was a straight shot to perfectionism. If man’s accountability is limited by his moral ability, then all he needs to do to be sinless is to cease from those particular sins that he has the power and ability to overcome. To be sinless no longer requires a perfect and full obedience to all of God’s precepts. It only requires him to do all that he is capable of doing in conforming to them. And if he does that, then he is sinless, then he is perfect. Perfection becomes not only attainable by man’s own efforts, it clearly becomes a realistic duty to attain unto it.

That perfectionism is entirely unscriptural is evidenced by such Biblical statements as the following one by David. *"I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad."* (**Psalm 119:96**) David is saying that there is no sinless perfection in this life. He is stating that God’s commandments are so comprehensive, covering all aspects of our lives, that it is impossible for men to satisfy the law and fulfill all its obligations. Only one man in history has been able to do so and that was Jesus Christ, the second Adam, whose human nature was filled with the Holy Spirit beyond measure so that he could not, and did not, sin.

Warfield in his excellent book on the subject, *Perfectionism*, reviews and analyzes this doctrine, succinctly and accurately. His comments are extremely insightful.

“To be perfect, he does not require to love as God loves—in whose love all righteousness is embraced—or as the angels love, or as Adam loved, or even as any better man than he loves. He only requires to love as he himself, being what he is, and in the condition in which he finds himself, can love. If he loves all he can love in his present condition he is perfect. No matter how he came into his present condition; suppose if you will that he came into it by a long course of vice, or by some supreme act of vice, it makes no difference. His obligation is limited by his ability; we cannot say, he ought to do more than he can do; if he does all he can do, he has no further obligation, he is perfect. The moral idiot—Finney does not hesitate to say it—is as perfect as God is: being a moral idiot, he has no moral obligation; when he has done nothing at all he has done all that he ought to do: he is perfect. God Himself cannot do more than all He ought to do; and when He has done all He ought to do, He is no more perfect than the moral idiot

is—although what He has done is to fulfil all that is ideally righteous and the moral idiot has done nothing.

“In this conception the law of God, complete obedience to which is perfection, is made a sliding scale...Obligation here is interpreted in terms of ability with the result that each man becomes a law to himself, creating his own law; while the objective law of God, the standard of holiness in all, is annulled, and there are as many laws, as many standards of holiness, as there are moral beings...not content with this general adjustment of the requirements of the law to the moral capacity of sinful men, he pushes the principle to such an extreme as to adjust them in detail to the moral capacity of each individual sinner, all the way down to moral idiocy; with the effect of making our sin the excuse for our sin, until we may cease to be sinners altogether by simply becoming sinful enough...the acquisition of unconquerable habits of evil, by progressively destroying obligation, renders perfection ever easier of acquisition by constantly reducing the content of the perfection to be acquired; and that one of the surest roads to salvation is therefore to become incurably wicked.”<sup>6</sup>

“To these propositions little more than hinted at by Cowles, Finney gives the definiteness of dogmatic statement. When he comes, in his ‘Views of Sanctification,’ to the point where he discusses the attainableness of ‘entire sanctification,’ he lays down the fundamental proposition ‘that entire and permanent sanctification is attainable in this life.’ This he at once pronounces ‘self-evident’—on the grounds of ‘natural ability,’ ‘To deny this,’ he affirms, ‘is to deny that a man is able to do as well as he can.’ And, he declares, ‘the very language of the law’ bears out the assertion, because, in requiring us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and the rest it levels ‘its claims to the capacity of the subject, however great or small.’ If there were a moral pigmy, he would be required to love God up to his pigmy strength. If we morally mutilate ourselves, we may no doubt be answerable for doing it; but having thus reduced our powers, we would have lessened our responsibility to the law and could be entirely sanctified on this lower ground. ‘An angel is bound to exercise an angel's strength; a man, the strength of a man; and a child, the strength of a child.’ ‘Now,” he sums up, ‘as entire sanctification consists in perfect obedience to the law of God and as the law requires nothing more than the right use of whatever strength we have; it is of course forever settled that a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable in this life on the ground of natural ability.’ This he says is New School doctrine and necessary New School doctrine. Ability limits obligation, hence there is no obligation where there is no ability—hence (it is but an identical proposition) it is possible for every man to do all that is required of him (not all that may be required of another man); and that is to be perfect.”<sup>7</sup>

The Arminian argument is that God cannot require anything that man has no natural ability to perform. Yet, as we can clearly see from all the above, that lays a solid and logical foundation for the heresy of perfectionism. Grant the former, and logically, it will be hard to refrain from granting the latter. That most modern Arminians do not hold to perfectionism is again due to a happy inconsistency, a lack of rigorous application of their principles. That Arminians, for the most part, are far better than the tendencies of their theology, does not diminish the dangers inherent in their errors.

For by their theory, that moral ability limits accountability, the drunkard, before he was a drunkard had a moral obligation to control his drinking. However, now that he is a drunkard, now that he is addicted, now that he cannot control himself, he has no obligation to stop being a drunkard. His sin has become the excuse for his sin. His wickedness and corruption have now excused him from the obligation to cease therefrom. The same would hold true for a drug addict, or even a serial adulterer or fornicator. Their addiction to sin becomes the excuse for their sin. This is the doctrine of the world, of unbelieving men. But is it the doctrine of Scripture? I think not!

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<sup>6</sup> B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974, pp. 68-71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 77-78.

The Scriptures repeatedly condemn both drunkenness and drug usage. In the book of Revelation there are a number of references to *sorceries*. The Greek work is *pharmakeia*, from which we obtain our modern English words pharmacy, pharmaceuticals, etc. The Greek word is basically referring to drug usage. Young translates it as “*enchantment with drugs.*”

Now how does God treat drunkenness, how does he react to such violations of his law? Does God allow for men’s moral incapacities as he deals with this particular sin? The testimony of Scripture is clear that he uncompromisingly condemns it. He declares through his High Priest, “...*How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. (1 Samuel 1:14)* He commands that it be punished by death under the Old Covenant, commanding, “*And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. (Deuteronomy 21:20-21)* He requires believers to separate from a professing believer who is a drunkard, commanding through his apostle, “*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. (1 Corinthians 5:11)* And God makes it clear that such that are drunkards will be finally and eternally rejected by him, saying, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)* There is certainly no hint here that God accommodates his judgments on such addicting vices according to the moral abilities of the sinner.

And sorcery, or drug usage, fares little better. As God rains down his plagues on those who commit such sins it is plain that he expects them, without exception, to repent, as he complains, “*Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*” (**Revelation 9:21**) He intends to exclude all such from the Kingdom of God, from the New Jerusalem, saying, “*For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie,*” (**Revelation 22:15**) and to cast them into the lake of fire, as he threatens, saying, “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*” (**Revelation 21:8**) In none of these passages is there any hint that God judges sinners on a sliding scale and calibrates his judgments according to their moral abilities.

When they are not logically defending their theology Arminians recognize the truth of all this. When they confront drunkards and drug addicts, who are hopelessly enslaved to their vices, they tell them that they need to repent and reform, and that only the power of God can deliver them. Even Finney in his writings makes statements to that effect. However, that becomes inconsistent nonsense. Having made it a cardinal point of doctrine that man has the natural ability to do all that God requires of him, it is fatuous window dressing to then sanctimoniously prate on about the necessity of divine grace and the power of the Spirit in overcoming sin. After all, by his definition, if it can’t be overcome by one’s own natural ability, it isn’t sin.

Finney presses his case for perfectionism and his definition of man’s accountability even further. Again as Warfield sums it up...

“Finney tells us that “entire sanctification does not imply the same degree of faith” in everybody. It does not, for example, imply the same degree of faith in us, sinners, “that might have been exercised but for our ignorance and past sin.” It requires a lower degree of faith to make a sinner perfectly holy than is required to make a saint perfectly holy: and the worse sinners we are the lower is the degree of faith that is required to make us perfectly holy. It does not resolve this paradox to observe that Finney is obviously confusing here the degree of faith exercised, and the amount of knowledge which is possessed of the object on which faith rests.

What he really means to say, however, is that the less knowledge we have of God and divine things, the less faith is required of us that we may be perfect. The proposition on which he relies for support runs: "We cannot believe any thing about God of which we have no evidence or knowledge," and therefore, "entire sanctification implies . . . nothing more than the heart's faith or confidence in all the truth that is perceived by the intellect." The deflecting influence here is derived from his doctrine that as obligation is limited by ability, he who does all he can (being what he is) is as perfect as God Himself. On this ground he declares that: "Perfection in a heathen would imply much less faith than in a Christian. Perfection in an adult would imply much more and greater faith than in an infant. And perfection in an angel would imply much greater faith than in a man, just in proportion as he knows more of God than man." Our attention is attracted for the moment by the suggestion that perfection is conceivable in a heathen. This is not a slip. Finney fully means it. "The heathen," he explains, "are not under obligation to believe in Christ, and thousands of other things of which they have no knowledge." Not being under obligation to believe in Christ, of course they can be perfect, without believing in Him. If they have "heart's faith or confidence in all the truth that is perceived by their intellect," they will not be kept from being perfect by lack of faith in Christ of whom they have no knowledge. Perfection clearly is not conceived as the product of Christ in the heart and life of him who believes in Him. It is not Christ but faith that makes us perfect, and it apparently does not much matter what the object is on which the faith rests. The faith of a fetich-worshipper (provided it embraces all he knows) is as efficacious to produce perfection in him as the faith of a John or a Paul."<sup>8</sup>

Here Finney goes on to state not only that accountability is limited by ability, but that ability is limited by knowledge. Hence, of course, one's moral accountability is limited by one's knowledge. This establishes that which modern jurisprudence has never allowed, that ignorance of the law is an excuse. This is also contravened by the clear teaching of Scripture. The Scriptures teach that there are varying degrees of sin.<sup>9</sup> In the first degree of sin, sins are characterized as sins of ignorance. Sins of ignorance are sins that are committed inadvertently. They are thus distinguished from sins that are committed deliberately. The latter are committed willfully and knowingly. The former are committed because the person didn't know any better. David speaks of this in his prayers to the Lord when he seeks to be kept from sin.

*"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psalm 19:12-13).*

David acknowledges the deceitfulness of sin. He admits that he does not know his sins; he does not understand them. He prays to be cleansed of his secret faults; to be forgiven of those things he has done in sinful ignorance. The word for *secret* in the Hebrew is "*cathar*" with a root meaning of "to hide" or "to cover." David seeks pardon of those sins that he has committed which are hidden from him, those sins of which he has no knowledge. David confesses his sins of ignorance; he confesses that this is a universal problem and that no man can know all his sins; and David beseeches the Lord to cleanse him from the guilt of those things he neither knows nor understands. What a lesson for those who bask in their own self-righteousness and imagine that they have pleased God in all their ways. And what a rebuke to those who imagine that their secret sins, their sins of ignorance, are no sins at all.

David was but echoing Moses who taught in the law...

*And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance...then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned...and the priest shall burn it*

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp. 86-87.

<sup>9</sup> See the author's unpublished manuscript, *The Slide to Perdition, A Study in the Biblical Degrees of Sin*, available from the American Presbyterian Press.

*upon the altar for a sweet savour unto the LORD; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him" (Leviticus 27-31)*

It is clear from all this that sins of ignorance are still sins, and that God holds men accountable for them. God required a typical sacrifice for them, he required an atonement before they could be forgiven. Yet the whole thrust of limiting moral accountability by moral ability is that God cannot hold men accountable for things that they do not even know he is requiring of them. That position is a fallacy, a pipe dream of sinful men. God's ways are not our ways. And God holds men accountable for full and complete conformity to his holy law. That is why the Apostle John taught, "*sin is the transgression of the law.*" The Apostle introduces no qualifiers for this statement. We are accountable for keeping God's law in its entirety for our entire lives. If we have not done so, and who has, our only hope is the righteousness of another, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by faith alone.

Paul was at one time a great persecutor of the church. He later states that he did it in "*ignorance and unbelief.*" Yet he never hints that it was not sin, and that God would not hold him accountable for it just because he sincerely thought he was doing right.. Repeatedly, in the Scriptures he confesses it as a great fault, and states that he was not worthy to be an Apostle on that account. He says he "*obtained mercy,*" yet if it was not sin, then no mercy would have been required. Paul did not submit any excuses, nor judge himself by a sliding scale. He held himself strictly to the requirements of God's law and rejoiced in God's mercy, not in legal loopholes.

Consider the case of Pharaoh discussed in Chapter 8. Clearly Pharaoh did not have the ability to do anything but reject God's commands and oppose Moses. All God had to do was to keep confronting Pharaoh with his truth, with his commands, and the results were entirely predictable. Pharaoh would harden his heart, lift himself up with pride, and scorn to obey Jahweh. God was in control, and unless he gave Pharaoh a new heart, unless he granted him repentance, the issue was never in doubt. God chose to withhold his mercy and to let Pharaoh be Pharaoh, and the results were a foregone conclusion. Therefore Paul could say that God was the potter and Pharaoh the clay, clay that was being molded into a vessel of dishonor. And although Pharaoh, without God's grace, could be nothing but Pharaoh, yet God holds him accountable. Time, and time again, Pharaoh and his nation are punished for his rebellion against the commands of Jahweh. Plague after plague is rained upon Egypt and finally God slays Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. Pharaoh was definitely held accountable for his sin. Yet it is just as plain, as he stubbornly persisted in his rebellion against God, through plague after plague, until Egypt was destroyed, that the only thing that could stop him was God's slaying him at the Red Sea, and that he could do nothing himself to stop his sinful rebellion against God, unless God granted him grace and repentance. Pharaoh's inability did not result in his sin being excused. Instead, it resulted in a display of God's wrath on sin such as the world has rarely seen, a testimony to the ancient world of the power and holiness of the God of Israel, that is still marveled at today by all who read the Scriptural account.

Let us examine the issue of whether God can command that which sinful men cannot perform by their own natural ability. The Bible commands men to circumcise their hearts. Jeremiah says, "*Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*" He is echoing Moses who taught, "*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*" Circumcision of the heart means regeneration...it means to have a new heart, to be born again. Can men really do this? Does man have the power to regenerate himself? Billy Graham may think so. He wrote a book, "*How to be Born Again.*" But it is obviously impossible for men to regenerate themselves. That is why Arminians insist that regeneration must come after faith and repentance. If it comes before, as a prerequisite to faith and repentance, then Calvinist soteriology is established, because only God can regenerate men. Only God can take away our hearts of stone and give us a new heart. Yet in this passage we clearly see that God commands men

to have new hearts. God commands that which men cannot perform. If we cannot accept that then we are challenging God. We are rejecting his ways and seeking to impose our ways on the Almighty.

In Christ's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 there is no hint that this is a do-it-yourself project. If it were so Christ surely would have exhorted Nicodemus to do what needed to be done. He may even have given him instructions in how to be born again. Instead we note something entirely different. Instead he states...

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. **John 3:6-8**

Jesus is teaching that the flesh cannot produce new spiritual life, it can only produce the things of the flesh. He is teaching that only the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, can produce the things of the spirit such as new spiritual life. He is teaching that in this whole process man can do nothing, and can contribute nothing. For he states that man cannot even observe the process. He teaches that the Spirit of God is like the wind, that man cannot see. Only the effects of the wind are discernable. We can see the fruit of the Spirit's work in men's lives, but the entire work of the Spirit, including the work of regeneration, is invisible to us and remains a great mystery.

Yet God commands men to be in a regenerate state. He commands them to have new hearts. He holds men accountable for their sinful and corrupt natures. God does not excuse our sin and our sinfulness based on the moral limitations of our old natures. He made us perfect. We have corrupted ourselves. And he bids us be what he created us to be, perfect, and in his image in all holiness and righteousness. If we fall short he will hold us to account. And that is really the whole issue in this question of man's accountability. It is our fault that we are what we are. As Solomon put it, "*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*" Man's sinful and depraved nature, that can no longer obey and please God, is the results of man's own wicked rebellion against God. It does not provide him with an excuse to be held to a lower standard of moral accountability.

Another command of Scripture that men obviously cannot perform is the following command of our Lord Jesus Christ, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" (**Matthew 5:48**) To believe that men can fulfill this commandment one would have to believe in the perfectionism of Finney and more. One would have to believe not only that perfection was attainable, but that men can attain unto it from infancy, indeed while they are yet in the womb. (It is interesting to note that neither Finney himself, nor the other Oberlin perfectionists, ever claimed that they had attained unto a state of perfection. They merely taught that it was doable, but never professed to have personally done it.) And for men, born in sin and conceived in iniquity, to claim that they can be as perfect as God in heaven seems not only preposterous, but almost blasphemous. Yet, this is a command of Scripture. Yet, this is a requirement that God will hold men to at the last judgment. It is a command that no mere man has ever fulfilled. It is a command that mere men have no ability to perform.

Again, what saith the Scriptures? Do men have the ability to keep God's law? Can we even keep God's law by any standard by which it is interpreted or applied? Jeremiah says we cannot. He says, "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*" (**Jeremiah 13:23**) This is echoed by the Apostle Paul, who confesses that he does not have the ability to keep God's law. He confesses, "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*" **Romans 7:18-19** Paul confesses that he is entirely unable to keep God's law. He wants to, but he cannot. He lacks the ability, even though he is regenerated and the Spirit of God dwells within him. As he states elsewhere, there is a war in his members, a spiritual struggle, and there are both victories and losses in this warfare. Paul

grieves over this. He doesn't take refuge in legal loopholes and theories of limited accountability. Instead he exclaims, "*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*" He does not rejoice and say that God is accepting a lower standard and that he is fine. Instead, he rests on the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and looks forward to that point in time when "*this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption,*" when we shall be "*the souls of just men made perfect.*" It is important to note that these passages of Scripture destroy not only the concept of perfectionism, but also the Arminian theory that God cannot require anything of man that he does not have the natural ability to perform.

Does God adapt our accountability to the state of our moral ability? Again, the Scriptures give no indication that this is so. When God entered into covenant with Abraham he did not accept a sliding scale standard of obedience. Instead, God, who cannot fellowship with iniquity, told Abraham, "*walk thou before me and be thou perfect.*" God required a perfection that Abraham did not have, and that was provided him when he was justified by faith and clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Moses told Israel, after giving them God's law, "*This do and thou shalt live.*" This echoes the unchanging requirements of the Covenant of Works that required perfection of our first parents. The sanctions of the Sinaitic Covenant for those who broke any of its terms and violated God's law were strict and severe. As Paul put it, "*He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.*" (**Hebrews 10:28**) This does not sound like God is cutting sinful men a lot of slack because of their inability to conform to his will and keep his commandments. When Uzzah touched the Ark of the Covenant, to steady it when the oxen shook it, God struck him dead. It is clear from the context that the spiritual state of Israel at the time was such that they were quite ignorant of how the ark was to be handled. Yet God exacted the full penalty for Uzzah's sin although it can hardly be described as willful and deliberate, the only category of sin that perfectionists, and some Arminians, recognize.

The whole thrust of these errors is to minimize the importance of the finished work of Christ for our redemption and maximize man's abilities to please God in the flesh. Finney may say he is speaking of sanctification, but when he teaches that natural man has the moral ability to keep God's law he is undermining the necessity of the work of Christ for our justification. And that of course is only part of the great inconsistency in all of this. They are speaking of sanctification, of the believer's growth in grace and holiness. Yet they do not speak of grace, of the power of God, and of the indwelling of the Spirit. They speak only of the natural moral powers of unregenerate man. And if natural man really possessed such powers why does Paul argue in Romans that, "*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" (**Romans 3:10-12**) Surely, if man had such powers someone would have exercised them, someone would have achieved success. Paul, and David whom he is quoting, say that no one ever has.

Now all this was debated out at the time of the Reformation. Particularly in the debate between the humanist Erasmus, a liberal Roman Catholic, and Martin Luther. Luther's response was given in his famous work, "*The Bondage of the Will.*" Erasmus had fallen into the same humanist trap as Finney and the Oberlin perfectionists did centuries later. He assumed that moral responsibility to obey God's commands requires moral ability—or else God is unjust. Erasmus argued that the very fact that God issues the imperatives of his law assumes that human beings have the ability to obey. Erasmus went on to argue, "What was the point of God's giving men the law if man couldn't keep it anyways?" Luther responded, as only Luther could, emphatically and forcefully. Here's part of his response, based on Rom 3:19-20

"And here is the solution of the question which the Diatribe repeats so often all through the book: 'if we can do nothing, what is the purpose of all the laws, precepts, threats and promises?' Paul here gives the answer: 'by the law is the knowledge of sin.' His answer to the question is far



different from the ideas of man, or of 'free-will'<sup>10</sup>. He does not say that 'free-will' is proved by the law, nor that it co-operates unto righteousness; for by the law comes, not righteousness, but knowledge of sin. This is the fruit, the work, the office of the law; it is a light to the ignorant and blind, but one that displays disease, sin, evil, death, hell and the wrath of God. It does not help nor set them free from these things; it is content merely to point them out. When a man discovers the sickness of sin, he is cast down and afflicted; nay, he despairs. The law does not help him; much less can he heal himself. Another light is needed to reveal a remedy. This is the voice of the gospel, which displays Christ as the Deliverer from all these evil things. But neither reason nor 'free-will' points to Him; how could reason point to Him, when it is itself darkness and needs the light of the law to show it its own sickness, which by its own light it fails to see, and thinks is sound health?"<sup>11</sup>

Erasmus, the works oriented Roman Catholic, the humanist with faith in man's potential, thinks the law is given so that we can keep it. Luther disabuses him of that idea swiftly. Man has no ability to keep God's law. The purpose of the law, Luther states, is to inform man of his sinful condition so that he will see his need of Christ, who has kept the law for him. As Paul states it, "*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*" (**Galatians 3:24**) According to Luther and Paul, the solution to man's inability to keep the law is the gospel, not human theories about limited accountability.

Ultimately, this is the same problem as we have noted elsewhere in Arminian thought, particularly in Arminian objections to Calvinist soteriology. Arminians take a human notion of what is fair and apply it to God. They are holding God to account. They are holding God to a human standard of "fairness." And from that they reason that man can not be held accountable to perform spiritual good beyond his capacity, beyond his moral ability. They have forgotten the exhortation of the Apostle Paul who is shocked at the very concept of questioning God and of judging him by our standards, and exclaims, "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*" God is the standard. Whatever he does is right by definition. We are to conform to his standards, and not expect him to conform to ours.

The problem is that there is not a hint in all of Scripture that God's law is applied according to a sliding scale and is calibrated according to the moral capabilities of sinners. God has made us rational creatures. That is part of the image of God in man. God reasons. He says through Isaiah to Israel, "*Come let us reason together...*" However, men need to reason from the Scriptures. That is the fount, the only fount we have, of spiritual truth. Arminians did not go to the Bible to determine whether men had the natural ability to believe and repent, they reasoned it out from their own human concept of what is "fair." When men, even good men, reason in the things of God apart from the Scriptures, they are soon in great difficulties. The source of this idea that man is not accountable beyond his moral abilities is in human thought, and to reason from it is to generate serious errors.

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<sup>10</sup> By "free will" in this context Luther does not mean what Calvinists mean by it, that is a will that is free from external coercion. Luther means a will that is free to make any choice possible, a will that is not in bondage to man's sinful lusts and desires, a will that has the natural ability to consistently choose to keep all of God's law.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Luther (translated by J. I. Packer & O. R. Johnston), *The Bondage of the Will* (Revell: Grand Rapids, 1996), p. 287

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### CONCLUSION

This has been a polemical work. In it Arminianism has been debated and confronted. I wish it were not so, that that necessity was not thrust upon me. But this controversy has been around so long, and both sides are so set in their thinking, that that has been unavoidable. At this point in time in the debate it will take strong polemics and an abundance of Scriptural proof to move either side from their position. I have sought to provide both. And ultimately we need to be faithful to the truth. And God's sovereignty and glory need to be maintained against the pretensions and imaginations of mere men.

Yet, Calvinists respect Arminians and love them as brethren in the Lord. What especially makes this possible, and facilitates such sentiments, is that Arminians frequently sound like Calvinists. When they are speaking from the heart, when they are speaking about their salvation, they sound different than when they are defending their theology. They speak of God saving them. They speak of God finding them and changing them. They give all the glory to God. Never have I heard an Arminian brother in the faith say that he saved himself. Never have I heard an Arminian express the view that he was better than his unbelieving neighbors. They confess that they are sinners saved by grace and attribute their salvation to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Arminians, in short, are better than their systematic theologies. There is, it seems, a disconnect between their heart and their heads. And it is this happy inconsistency that endears Arminians to their Calvinist brethren and makes them brothers in Christ.

Some Calvinists have expressed the opinion that a logically rigorous Arminian is not a Christian. They are probably correct in that understanding. A logically consistent Arminian could boast, as the Pharisee of Christ's parable did, that he is better than other men. He could claim that while these other miserable sinners have hardened their hearts against the gospel and resisted the grace of God he did not. Why, he has turned to God in faith. He has repented of his sins. He is a good man and God has rewarded him for his goodness and saved him. Most Calvinists would deny that such a person is in a state of grace. They would feel that he would come under Christ's rebuke even as the Pharisee of the parable. The parallel is too clear and too unavoidable.

There is a logically rigorous form of Arminianism around today. It is called Open Theism. Open Theism has taken Arminian principles and logically extrapolated them. It is a good example of what can happen when Arminians start really following their systematic theologies rather than their hearts. Open Theists have rigorously and logically developed the Arminian belief in the free will of man. Let us carefully examine their beliefs and how they are rooted in the logical implications of Arminian thought.

First of all let us examine the Calvinist position as it is summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith. There we are taught...

*God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.* **WCOF, Chapter 3, Section I**

*God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, and is alone in and unto himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made...In his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain.* **WCOF, Chapter 2, Section II**<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Actually, as R. C. Sproul has pointed out, this section of the confession should be held by both sides. It separates not Calvinists from Arminians, but theists from atheists. For if God is not the God that is thus described in the Confession, then he is no longer God at all. Then God has been dethroned and whatever has dethroned him and imposed another will over his has become god.

Both sides agree that Calvinism is a consistent and logical system of thought. What they disagree on is whether it is Biblical. But the above doctrine is clear. God is in control of history. Not only does he know everything that will come to pass, but he has ordained that it should be so. Yet in all this he is not the author of sin. God never compels or forces anyone to sin. When men sin they do so of their own free will. Yet God has preordained their actions and worked it all into the grand mosaic of his eternal plan for his creation that by his good and holy providence is unfolding in time. As a result nothing is contingent for God. He is never waiting or wondering what the creature will do and adjusting his plans accordingly. As we saw in the case of Pharaoh, God worked his will and pleasure, for his own glory, in the destruction of Egypt and the liberation of his people from slavery. Yet Pharaoh, as he was fulfilling God's decrees by his sinful and rebellious actions, was freely choosing to do so. God was in control, yet no violence was done to Pharaoh's will, and his sin proceeded solely from his own wicked heart. Such is the doctrine of Calvinism. Such is the doctrine of the Scriptures.

Modern Arminians are less consistent and more Biblical than the implications of their theology would support. They believe in man's free will. They define that as more than mere freedom from external coercion, so that a man chooses according to the desires of his heart. They define that to mean that man is free to make any choice for good or for evil. They define that to mean that man's will is not enslaved to his sinful passions and desires. They are fond of expressing the view that as free moral creatures God would never violate our free wills. They include in that a rejection of irresistible grace, of God drawing, that is compelling, men to come to him by his Spirit, as we saw in John 6:44. Yet they also believe that God is sovereign over history. That he is able to fulfill all his promises and bring all prophecy to pass in spite of the will of his creatures. They believe that God knows everything that will come to pass and therefore, as the Confession says, to him nothing is contingent.

Now the Open Theists are more rigorous in their application of implications of Arminian beliefs. If man's will is really free, they logically argue, then to God everything must be contingent. If man can make any choice that is logically possible under the circumstances that he is in, then God cannot be in complete control. God has some control. He can strike a man dead to prevent his committing some action. But he cannot interfere with man's free will. He cannot turn the king's heart "*withersoever he wills*" as Solomon taught. He is not the sovereign potter molding men according to his will as if they were clay. As a result Open Theists conclude that the future is open. That is, the future has not yet been determined. It is contingent upon the free will choices of millions of God's creatures, both men and angels<sup>13</sup>. Since it is open, therefore not only has God not decreed it, he does not even know what the future will bring. They admit that God's ability to fulfill prophecy is somewhat tenuous. But they insist that God still has enough means and power that he can kind of muddle through, in spite of what his creatures choose to do, and generally fulfill what he has prophesied through his spokesmen.

Since God is not in complete control and since events are contingent on what his creatures do, God is in a reactive mode. He is constantly adjusting his plans, and attempting, by what means he has at his disposal, to keep history on track. God is frequently frustrated, disappointed, and expressing regret at how events have developed. His purposes are very much subject to the will of his creatures. The God of the Open Theists is constantly changing his mind, reviewing his plans and modifying his purposes within the scope of what the free will decisions of his creatures makes possible. When his actions have disappointing results, because of the unanticipated actions of his creatures, he repents of what he has done. According to the Open Theists, God is learning. As he reacts and adjusts, he learns how to overcome the difficulties his creatures present for him, and to overcome them with what means he still has to influence events and control history. Such is the God of the Open Theists. They have seen that there are only two logical choices. They have correctly concluded that either man is sovereign or God, but both cannot be. They have opted for the sovereignty of man's will and the subjection of God to the

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<sup>13</sup> Demons are angels, they are fallen angels, who joined Satan in his great rebellion. Satan himself is an angel, a fallen archangel.

choices of that will. They have lamely concluded that God in his sovereignty has decided not to be sovereign but to enthrone man's free will.

Such sentiments make it clear that they are worshipping another god, not the glorious and sovereign God of the Bible who is in control of history. Such sentiments place them outside the pale of orthodox Christianity. They are not Christians. And their path into heresy was a result of a rigorous development of Arminian thought. Their rejection of the God of the Scriptures, who reveals himself as all powerful, sovereign, and in control of his creation, is a result of subjecting themselves to the logical ramifications of an Arminian principle. Any truth followed to its logical conclusion will bring men to Christ. Conversely, any error followed to its logical conclusion leads to heresy and unbelief. Be careful what you believe!

Arminians are saved from all this again by a happy inconsistency. On the one hand they express their belief in a totally sovereign God who is in control of history, absolutely able to fulfill all his prophecies, and working his holy will by his almighty power and omniscient wisdom. On the other hand they place man's free will beyond the power and control of God. God can influence it, but he cannot determine its choices. They appear to believe in both the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of man's free will. This is of course a logical impossibility. However, it is far better to be inconsistent than to let one's logic drive one to the soul destroying heresies of the Open Theists.

We rejoice that most Arminians have their hearts right with the Lord. We are thankful that we can consider them brothers in Christ. Yet we have a deep concern. There are dangers in Arminian theology. We have just seen what it can lead to. It can logically develop into the heresy of Open Theism. And there are additional dangers lurking in the logical conclusions of Arminian principles. At the time of the genesis of this controversy, back in the seventeenth century, Arminians were much more logical and more consistent in their beliefs. They rejected all five points of what became later the five points of Calvinism. They rejected the teaching of the perseverance of the saints, robbing the saints of any security in Christ regarding their salvation. With Rome and the Council of Trent they declared that no man can be assured of his salvation. After all, if man can be saved by his free will choice to accept Christ, then, since God cannot and will not interfere with man's free will, man can subsequently condemn himself by a free will decision to reject Christ. And their rigorous adherence to their principles led them into more errors. As we have already noted, historic Arminians rejected the substitutionary nature of the atonement. They saw this as incompatible and inconsistent with the fact that many of those for whom Christ was a penal substitute were in hell expiating their own sins. And we noted how this led to a total denial that Christ made any atonement for sin, as expressed in the Governmental Theory of the Atonement. These are serious errors. These are soul destroying heresies. These are the potential fruit of a logically rigorous Arminianism.

And there is more. Some historic Arminians in the seventeenth century, as do some Arminians today, questioned the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. They believed in free will and saw this as incompatible with the notion that God could so control the writers of Scripture that they were preserved from all error and only wrote the words his Spirit gave them to write. Some of them, upon questioning Scripture, proceeded to become Socinians, denying the deity of Christ. Indeed as one studies church history and the slide of sound churches into heresy, the declension into apostasy has generally had a certain pattern. Men start off as Calvinists, fall into Arminianism, and proceed to theological liberalism, and eventually Unitarianism. That has been the logical and the historic path of regression from the truth.

As American evangelicalism, overwhelmingly Arminian in its sentiments, continues to decline, the bitter fruit of its Arminian principles continues to manifest itself. After the recent disastrous hurricane season of 2005, culminating in hurricane Katrina that devastated the city of New Orleans, a major poll asked the American people the following question, "*Are the recent hurricanes a deliberate act of God?*" Note the precise nature of the question. The poll does not ask if these recent hurricanes are judgments of God or if they indicate in any way God's displeasure with the nation. They simply ask if

they were deliberate, that is conscious, acts of God. Two thirds of the nation think not. That is, two thirds of the nation reject the Biblical testimony of God's sovereign control over his creation, and have accepted the Deist position, that the creation is on auto-pilot, and if there is a God, he may occasionally intervene, but does not actively superintend and consciously control daily events in this world. While the Scriptures say, "*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*" (Matthew 10:29-30), "*shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*" (Amos 3:6), and "*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things*" (Isaiah 45:7), Americans think differently. (Note: The word *evil* in these texts refers to evils such as war, famine, and pestilence, etc., not to moral evil in the sense of sin.)

While polls consistently demonstrate that a majority of the American people, as opposed to the populations of Western Europe, still believe in "God," this demonstrates the kind of god that they have accepted. It is definitely not the God who reveals himself in the Bible, it is not the almighty and sovereign God of the Calvinists. And shockingly, the statistics for evangelical Protestants were not much better. Over sixty per cent hold the same Deist position. They have been so indoctrinated in a false caricature of the God of the Bible, that they cannot imagine a holy and a just God visiting such devastation on his rebellious creation. Having long given up any notion of the sovereignty of God over the process of the salvation of his elect, they have correspondingly given up any notion of God's sovereignty over his creation. They may not be Open Theists, yet, but the tendency of the system in that direction is ominously clear.

Now we are not accusing all our Arminian brethren of being incipient Open Theists. We are thankful that many still believe in the God who reveals himself in the Scriptures, a great and a glorious God, who knows the end from the beginning, and can do all his holy will. We are merely pointing out where a rigorous extension of some Arminian principles has led others to make shipwreck of their faith. This is not as far fetched as it may seem. I recall a conversation I had with the assistant pastor of a large Pentecostal church in California. He was Arminian and made some statement that I took issue with. As I rigorously pressed him with Scripture and logic he dug in his heels. He kept taking a more radical position as he was flushed out of his more moderate positions. Finally, even his wife was becoming appalled as he was accusing God of being unfair. He wound up taking the position that God owed it to everybody that they hear the gospel. When Arminians don't think, they are far more Calvinist than they may realize. However, when logically pressed in debate, if they follow their theology, and not the instincts of their heart, they can quickly get into serious trouble.

This is not to say that Calvinism has not, or cannot, be distorted and corrupted into serious errors. But generally it is considered a logical and consistent system and has survived as such since the Reformation restored the true gospel. By contrast the historic Arminianism of the seventeenth century has had to be considerably toned down and modified by modern Arminians in order to avoid some of the logical ramifications of the system.

Finally, while the above concerns may constitute a warning, they can never be determinative of the issue we are dealing with. Ultimately, only the Scriptures can settle which side speaks truth, and which side speaks man's thoughts. Logic may have its place, but it is subservient to Scripture. We reason from the Scriptures, not apart from them. Reason alone can never bring man to the truth. Only Scripture can. But we need to reason from the Scriptures. That is how we develop our doctrines and apply them to the issues of life. I have sought to set forth the countless Scriptures that expound the gospel, God's plan of salvation. And I have found that they support and teach the Calvinist view of that plan. I have reasoned from those Scriptures as logically as I could to demonstrate that they do not teach the doctrines of Arminianism. I pray that it will be effective, that it will strengthen and confirm my fellow Calvinists in their faith. And that it will give my Arminian brethren some cause for serious reflection.

As I study the Scriptures I see Calvinism springing from its pages wherever I read. I am relentlessly confronted with a God who is in absolute control of his creation and who glories in his greatness, power, and sovereignty over his creatures. I am constantly amazed that my Arminian brethren can read the same Bible and not see it. I cannot understand that, although they love God's word, read it faithfully, and take it seriously, they have come to such opposite viewpoints about such a central issue, how God saves his people. It must have been so in Paul's day as he faced the same objections to the gospel he preached as Calvinists are confronted with today. And that may be why he wrote that "*we see through a glass darkly.*" Let us look forward to that day when we shall see face to face. When we shall have perfect understanding of the mysteries of God's way of salvation. Then we will all praise him for a future eternity for his great salvation. We will all confess that salvation is of the Lord, of the Lord alone. Amen!