

## CALVINISM, ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

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Jean Calvin was born in France in 1509. Originally, he was a lawyer and a humanist. He broke away from the Catholic Church and set up his reformed theology although he maintained certain Catholic doctrines. He was not by any means a nice person and demanded the death of another theologian, a Spaniard called Michael Servetus who was burned at the stake for being a heretic in that he did not agree with Calvin's doctrines on election and predestination. While it is true that Servetus cast doubts upon the Trinity it was not for this that he was executed.

As I understand it, Calvinist teaching includes the doctrine of unconditional election.

This means that before God created the world, He chose who was to be elected, that is to say who was going to be saved, and, therefore, who were going to be lost.

This doctrine may have originated with Augustine of Hippo and was established in the Belgic Confession of 1561.

Election is an aspect of predestination by which it is claimed that God selects (elects) who is going to be saved and who is going to be condemned to hell. In other words, salvation has nothing to do with man, his choice or his freewill. In fact, Calvinism states that man has no freewill when it comes to salvation.

The alternative doctrine is called Arminianism, teaching made clear by Jacob Arminius (1560-1609).

Calvinists highlight certain verses of Scripture to advance their teaching.

John 15.16. The Lord said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen Me but I have chosen you", and this is amplified in John 17. 12 in another statement that the Lord made to His disciples pointing out that one who was chosen was the son of perdition. It seems obvious that these remarks were addressed to the twelve. This is also borne out by another message of the Lord in John 10.16, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold".

David J Ellis points out that the context of this passage is that the Lord Jesus chose these disciple to be friends.

Acts 13.45 refers to saved Gentiles whom God has appointed to enter life. But the saved will enter eternal life whether they be Jews or Gentiles. How does this endorse election?

E H Trenchard states that those who chose to reject Christ were unworthy of eternal life, whereas we cannot estimate the joy of Gentiles as they entered God's Kingdom through their faith in Christ.

Ephesians 1. 4ff He (God) chose us before the foundation of the world but this does not refer to salvation but to the Christian life which is to be holy, blameless and loving since we are predestined as the 'adopted' children according to what is His pleasure and to the praise of His glory since He has accepted us and redeemed us through His Blood. This is His desire, will and purpose having made known unto us the mystery of His Will. God's Will is that all believers are predestined or predetermined by God to be holy, blameless and loving. It does not say that before creation God selected who were to be saved and who were to be forever lost.

Ephesians 1. 11 says that Christians are predestined according to His purpose which purpose is that we be Christ-like, holy, blameless and loving. That is God's purpose, desire and will for believers. It

refers to the way we should live. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new (2 Corinthians 5. 17) and that refers to life style, a Christlikeness.

George Harpur makes the point that before creation, God predetermined that those who found faith in Christ must be sanctified and strive to become holy, blameless before Him and this is confirmed in Colossians 1. 22ff and 1 Thessalonians 3.13 and 5. 23

Romans 15. 16 God says, "I will have mercy and compassion on whom I chose". It does not say, "I will have mercy and compassion on those I chose to be saved before the foundation of the earth". There are thousands, millions, who have received the mercy and compassion of God without deserving it!

Romans 9. 22ff speaks of vessels of many prepared before to glory. This ties us with the quote in Ephesians that we are predestined by God to be blameless, holy and loving so that God may have the glory.

1 Thessalonians 1 4ff. He (God) has chosen you. Your 'election of God' is correctly translated, You belong to God.

2 Timothy 1. 9 We are saved according to His purposes and we have already repeatedly said what His purposes for believers are. The purpose for us before the world began was that we be holy and that this is not due to any works or deeds that we may have done but in fulfilment of His will and purpose that those who are in Christ be holy. Peter states that we are to be holy and without blame as does the Colossian epistle as well as the letter to the Ephesians.

We have not been saved to carry on as before and do what we like. Paul asks the rhetorical question, "Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" (Romans 6. 1).

Now I do not want to be called an Arminian since I became a Christian before I knew anything about Arminianism. I base my doctrine on what the Bible says.

Now, I see nowhere in Scripture about election to damnation. But if Calvinist teaching is true, then it must mean that God has chosen who to reject and therefore who will be consigned to the anguish and eternal torment of hell. That would make God a tyrant, a dictator, merciless and cruel. Ephesians 2. 4 states that God is rich in mercy. One translation says that His wealth is beyond comprehension as to His mercy.

To quote George Harpur again. Grace is bestowed upon those who accept it. It is a gift from God. Grace is bracketed with some of the characteristics of God, His love, mercy and forgiveness.

A gift has to be accepted. It is not thrust upon us. God offers us grace and we choose to accept it or reject it.

Grace is given as a free gift from God and we accept it by faith and yet faith does not mean we possess salvation meritoriously. Salvation is not of our doing since it relies upon what God has done in Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Scriptures we read that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall receive the remission of sins (for example Acts 10.43).

The word whosoever means anybody.

In Luke 12.8, the Lord Jesus says, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God".

1 John 5.1 reads, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... by this we know that we love God and we keep His commandments”.

In John 12.32, the Lord said, “And I, if I be lifted up (signifying the death He would die) will draw all men unto me”. This probably means that His ministry was somewhat restricted but that on His death, His saving grace would be known to all including the Greeks who were the present enquirers, and He would be known to all people, of every tribe and nation. The Lord wants to draw all to Himself not just the so-called elect.

Some Calvinists say that no human beings has freewill. Some add that they have no freewill as to salvation. Adam and Eve were told that there was one thing they must not do, but they exercised their freewill and chose to disobey God.

In the Old Testament there were freewill offering that individuals could bring as set out in Numbers 15.3, Deuteronomy 12. 6 etc. When Moses came down from the Mount and saw the sin of the people he said, “Who is on The Lord’s side?”. That also indicates freewill and personal choice.

When the children of Israel were undecided as to whether to take the way of the Lord or not, Joshua told them, “Chose this day whom ye will serve... whether it be the gods your father served before the flood or the gods of the Amorites in whose land we dwell; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord”. (Joshua 24. 15).

Clearly freewill and personal choice had to be made. And there is a warning in verse 20, “If ye forsake the Lord and serve other gods, then He will turn and do you hurt and consume you after He hath done you good”.

The Lord’s commission to His disciples was, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”.

A similar passage is in Deuteronomy 30.19.

The Gospel had, and has to be preached to all nations and, after conversion and baptism, the converts had to follow the lifestyle that becomes Christians.

We read in Mark 13.10 that the gospel must published throughout all nations. Matthew 24.14 endorses this and adds “then shall the end come”. Luke 24. 47 speaks of the repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations beginning in Jerusalem.

This endorses the New Testament teaching that salvation is possible to all.

Luke 3.9 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God (but that does not mean that they will all accept it)

Acts 2.21 And it shall come to pass that whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved.

Romans 10.13 For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.

Note whosoever (that is to say anybody) and note also the word shall. This is definite.

2 Peter 3.9 The Lord is long suffering not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Calvinists believe that they are pre-made for salvation which causes some to be proud and puffed out.

It must also mean that God pre-made some for hell. Does God pre-programme people? That people are pre-made by God brings no glory to God. God does not want robots or programmed people but people to be saved and become like Him and His moral image. He does not want elitism!

The real meaning is that God foresaw our choice before the foundation of the world (Romans 8.29).

There are some who say that Calvinists are the tares of Matthew 13. I cannot see this!

In order to be fair, there are many Calvinists who do believe in freewill!

But what must be made clear is what Calvin believed as shown in his own writings

He believed in infant baptism, that the sacraments are equal to the Word of God indicating his retention of Roman Catholicism. He believed in Amillennialism, predestination to hell, and in the violent persecution of those who disagreed with him. He consented to the murder of Michael Servetus because Servetus rejected Calvinist teaching on election and predestination.

I am aware that some Calvinists believe that they are to only people who will be saved!

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