

Neo-Calvinism vs The Bible 019

Isaiah 55:8-9

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Kindly locate Isaiah 55:8-9. We are going to continue our series: "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible." We are looking at the Calvinistic acronym TULIP and running it through the grid of Scripture, which is really what you should do with anything you hear. So that is what we are doing with this subject of Calvinism. We have already dealt with Total Depravity: we are finished with Total Depravity; we are no longer totally depraved. That was the "T" in the Calvinistic system. Of course, the whole system rises or falls with the "T," because what they want you to believe is that man is like a rock, incapable of any spiritual decision. So God has to, on the front end, impart to him the gift of faith.

That leads to the "U" in the Calvinistic acronym:

V. Running TULIP through the Grid of Scripture

- A. Total Depravity
- B. **Unconditional Election**
- C. Limited Atonement
- D. Irresistible Grace
- E. Perseverance of the Saints

We are moving now into a different area. And you might ask yourself, "Well, who gets the gift of faith?" And the answer is, "The elect get the gift of faith." There is a small fraction of the human race, according to Calvinism, that is elected unto salvation, and if you happen to be fortunate enough to be in that group, then you get the gift of faith. By everyone that is not one of the elect, or the chosen, God's grace passes and leaves them in a rockish state and as inanimate objects, and they go into hell with no clear opportunity to make a decision concerning Jesus. And somehow God is glorified in that.

B. Unconditional Election

1. **Divine sovereignty vs. human freewill = a profound mystery**
2. Calvinism and double predestination
3. Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty

This is a difficult area. We are going to try to tackle this in three parts. Here is where we are going as we study the "U," Unconditional Election, and Calvinism: I want to first communicate the point that we are getting into an area of divine sovereignty versus human will. And I believe that such tension does exist in the Bible—I will explain why. But I will show you under number 2 that what Calvinism teaches is not just a tension between divine sovereignty and human will. It actually teaches a doctrine called "double predestination": there are some people that are elected unto heaven ahead of time

before they are even born. But most of the human race is elected unto damnation. So that is what is meant by "double predestination." Some are elected unto life. The rest are actually chosen by God to go into hell itself. When you talk like this, people say that they never said that or that they never meant that. So I will give you the quotes where they do say it.

And then from there we will move into number 3: how Calvinism's doctrine of double predestination overstates what the Bible teaches concerning this issue of divine sovereignty. We will start with number 1.

1. Divine sovereignty vs. human freewill = a profound mystery
 - a) Some passages indicate God chooses us
 - b) Other passages indicate that we choose God
 - c) Miscellaneous approaches: foreknowledge, group election, etc...
 - d) Live with the tension (Isa. 55:8-9)
 - e) Husband-wife analogy (Eph. 5:22-33)
 - f) The common mistake
 - g) God's business vs. man's business

I am giving you this to show my current belief on this whole election versus free will issue—do we choose God or does God choose us? I would say that the answer is "Yes." There are some passages, that I think are hard to escape, indicating that God chooses us for salvation. But I can also show you a lot of other passages which indicate that we choose God. You are reading your Bible and you are immediately locked into this tension: which is it? And people try to resolve the tension in different ways. What I have made a decision to do is to live with the tension.

I have felt for a long time that the mistake on this is that some people use the sovereignty passages to rewrite the free will passages, and other people use the free will passages to rewrite the sovereignty passages. It is something that used to frustrate me when I read the Bible; but to be frank with you, I am at a point now where I rejoice in it, because it shows me that the Bible came from a time dimension that is outside of my own, which makes me believe God wrote this book. So rather than getting frustrated about it because I cannot completely understand it, now I am to the point—praise the Lord!—where I worship the Lord all the more.

And one of the key verses that I rely on in that I plead mystery in this area is Isaiah 55:8-9, which I had you open to. There God says,

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord.
'For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.'"*

So for God to take some of these theological concepts and try to explain them to me, is like His standing in front of an anthill and trying to explain something to some ants. You

reach a point where God is not even able to do that. And I feel that way in this whole issue, this whole tension, of election versus free will. Do we choose God or does God choose us?

I go back a lot to Ephesians 5:22-33, where our relationship to the Lord is analogized with that of a bride and groom, later husband and wife, but they are bride and groom. Let me ask you a question. When you got married, did your wife—speaking to the men here—choose? Did you choose her or did she choose you? I hope the answer is "Yes. Both." Or you might need marriage counseling, right? So, since that is our relationship with the Lord I am not going to try to escape the fact that God chose me, but I am also not going to try to get out of the fact that, somehow, I chose God.

And what God does in this whole issue of divine sovereignty is—to be frank with you—really none of my business anyway. It is His business. There are enough places in the Bible where God is saying, "Now, here is your business: preach the gospel to every creature—that is your business. Let Me take care of this election verse versus free will."

I am the president of Chafer Theological Seminary. And here is the way our doctrinal statement reads on this subject of election:

"We believe Scripture reveals two clear and indisputable lines of evidence. One line shows God sovereignly choosing his own in Christ; the other shows man possessing the function of volition, able to receive or reject God's uniquely born Son (regarding sovereignty, see Job 42:2; Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 46:9-10; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:29-33; Galatians 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:20; 1 Peter 1:1-2; regarding human volition, see John 1:9-13; 3:16, 36; 6:47; 20:30-31; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:11-13; 1 John 5:9-13, as well as every command in the epistles)."

That is what I am faced with as a Bible teacher: whenever this subject comes up, people like to pit one doctrine against the other. Even though I do not fully understand it, I let both live in tension and I plead mystery. Not everybody that teaches against Calvinism does that: they use different approaches. I wanted to let you know where I am coming from and what my belief on it is.

In some sermons, you will hear me and you will say, "That guy sounds like a Calvinist." In other sermons, you will hear me and you will say, "That guy sounds like an Arminian." The reason you think that, rightfully so, is probably that it depends on the passage that we are in. If we are in a divine sovereignty passage, then obviously that is the emphasis of the sermon. If we are moving verse by verse and we are in a free will passage, then that becomes the emphasis of the sermon. So rather than pit one against the other and get into a snowball fight with people, where people grab their own favorite verse on this and throw it against the other side as if it is a snowball fight, the truth of the matter is that the Bible, as you go through it, teaches both of these realities.

I do not try to understand it—it is far above my pay grade. That is where I am on this. But what I just said is not what Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism are teaching. They are not just allowing election and free will to have their places. They are teaching something that is very, very aggressive on the side of divine sovereignty; and acting as if free will does not even exist. This is what is called the doctrine of double predestination.

B. Unconditional Election

1. Divine sovereignty vs. human freewill = a profound mystery
2. **Calvinism and double predestination**
3. Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty

Bob Kirkland, in his critique of Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism, defines their belief of the "U" in the Calvinistic acronym (Unconditional Election) as follows:

"'U' stands for 'Unconditional Election.' God determined before the foundation of the world whom He would save and whom He would send to Hell. Man would have no choice or free will to either accept or reject Christ as Savior" (Kirkland, "Calvinism: None Dare Call it Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin," 34).

So you are either in or out. And that decision has already been made before we were ever born—not just who is going to go to heaven, but actually who is going to go to hell, as well. You say, "Well, how come you are quoting Bob Kirkland, an anti Calvinist, to define what Calvinists mean?" Well, for clarity. But hear the words of John Calvin himself (these are all quotes that you can find in his key work that he wrote at the age of twenty-six, called "Institutes of the Christian Religion"). Here is what Calvin said:

"By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms,"—That goes right against your Bible, which says that God is not a respecter of persons.—"but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death" (Volume 3; Chapter 21, Section 5).

So to be a Calvinist in this sense of the word, you are not just someone that believes in divine sovereignty and free will having tension. You actually believe that about some, in fact most, a choice was made that they would go to hell forever. So that is why John Calvin says that all men are not created equal. Here is another quote from John Calvin in the "Institutes of the Christian Religion":

"We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those to whom, on the

other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction" (Volume 3; Chapter 23, Section 7).

So God is pleased to doom certain people to destruction by some elective decree before they had any choice in the matter whatsoever. It is not as if God, according to John Calvin, is looking through omniscience at who would reject Him. According to Calvin, He is saying, "I have already determined that that person is going to hell. I am controlling their will—they really have no will. I am going to leave them in their insensate state, and they are going to go into hell with no opportunity whatsoever." And as they are in that condition, and as the flames rise for all eternity, God is glorified.

Challenge Calvinists on that and they will say, "Who are you to talk back to God?" So obviously they are doing something here with sovereignty that is very, very aggressive. Here is another quote from John Calvin:

"I say with Augustine,"—

We talked about that. Calvin said, "I could wholly stitch together my theology from the writings of Augustine." (Calvin writing in the fifteenth century, Augustine writing in the fourth century—Calvin reaching back over a millennia and grabbing concepts from Augustine and bringing them into the new Protestant movement.) The early church (you might want to go back to some of those earlier lessons when we dealt with this) knew of no such doctrine. The church, for the first two centuries, never taught anything like this. It all comes to fruition with Augustine, who brought a large bag of bad teaching with him.

There are all kinds of other false doctrines. Augustine was wrapped up in Amillennialism, the Sinlessness of Mary, purgatory, all kinds of things. And so Calvin, in his writings, when he was twenty-five, twenty-six years old, keeps saying, "Augustine says." (In some cases Calvin calls Augustine "Saint Augustine.")

So this is where this whole aggressive double predestination concept really comes from. As much as they claim it comes from the Bible, I say it does not come from the Bible. I think it comes from a theologian, or a philosopher, who was, I believe, probably the most influential theologian in church history—not influential for good, but influential for bad. Many churches and people today are still living under Augustine's long, long shadow.

Calvin said,

"I say with Augustine, that the Lord has created those who, as he certainly foreknow, were to go to destruction, and he did so because he so willed."—

Why are some people just ordained to destruction? God willed it that way: divine sovereignty.

—"Why he willed it is not ours to ask,"—

So it is just something you have to accept, and we are not even allowed to ask questions about it.

–"as we cannot comprehend, nor can it become us even to raise a controversy as to the justice of the divine will. Whenever we speak of it, we are speaking of the supreme standard of justice" (Volume 3; Chapter 23, Section 5).

Some of these quotes are necessary because people say all the time, "Well, you are misrepresenting what Calvinists teach." I am not misrepresenting anything. I am going to their chief architect. Here is yet another quote also in the "Institutes of the Christian Religion":

"Now, since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God, since to him belongs the disposal of life and death, he arranges all things by his sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction" (Volume 3; Chapter 23, Section 6).

So, "doomed from the womb" is a teaching that John Calvin taught. And somehow this is glorifying to God. Generally when you deal with Calvinists today, they try to hide some of these truths and try to make it sound like a lighter version. But Calvin said what he said.

One of the persons the Calvinists claimed is Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a famous preacher in church history. He basically taught the same idea. Here is something Spurgeon said in one of his sermons:

"You have made heaven mourn; you have made earth sad; you have dug hell for yourself! Confess your iniquity with shame and with confusion of face! Bow down before the God of mercy, and acknowledge that if He spares you, it will be by His free mercy"—election—"that shall do it—but if He destroys you, you shall have not one word to say against the justice of the solemn sentence!" ("Christ's First and Last Subject").

What he is saying is, "Your hope for mercy is that you are one of the elect. But if you are not one of the elect, you can cry out to God for mercy all you want, and it is not going to change anything."

Bob Kirkland, critiquing Spurgeon's sermon, says,

"In other words, you can cry out to the Lord in humility and repentance and ask Him to save your soul, and He may or may not do it, and there is nothing you can do to gain salvation. Yet, the Bible is filled with verses declaring that God is a merciful God to those who call upon Him. God has ordained to show mercy on those who call upon His name" ("Calvinism:

None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin," 55).

Read the Bible, you see this with Cornelius in Acts 10-11. You see it with countless other people, including Zacchaeus in the tree (Luke 19) and the Ninevites that were marked for destruction by God (Jonah 1-4). You see people that actually move in the direction of God. God has moved heaven and earth to extend them grace. And Spurgeon is saying, "It does not matter. The only grace God extends to people is if they are one of the elect." So obviously something is happening here with their teaching of divine sovereignty that is out of proportion.

Here is one of their key documents, the "Westminster Confession." They write this:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished" (III, iii, iv).

So God made a decision: these folks over here go to hell; these folks over here, a smaller group, go to heaven. That decision has been made and the numbers between the two can neither be increased nor diminished. I think Charles Swindoll in one of his sermons said, "Theology is a great thing, but be careful of the extremes." I have always taken that to heart. Be careful about finding a theological tension in the Bible and just riding one extreme right into a ditch. And I feel that this is what has happened with Calvinism/Neo-Calvinism in this area of divine sovereignty: some are elected unto life, some are elected unto damnation.

Now, that is a very interesting academic discussion until you figure out that, "Oh my goodness, maybe my own spouse, maybe my own children, maybe my own grandchildren, maybe my parents, maybe my grandparents, maybe my friends, maybe my coworkers, maybe my classmates have been are doomed from the womb!" So that is how you have to start to think about this. This is not just ivory tower stuff, you know. Ideas have consequences. And if all of this is true, and some of your own fall outside the realm of the elect, where they're part of the other elect elected to damnation with no opportunity to believe whatsoever; then it gets personal and we are not dealing with academics anymore.

B. Unconditional Election

1. Divine sovereignty vs. human freewill = a profound mystery
2. Calvinism and double predestination
3. **Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty**

So what I have for you here in number 3 is "Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty." I have seven reasons for why I believe that Calvinists have dramatically overstated what the Bible actually teaches in the area of Divine Sovereignty.

3. Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty

- a) Omni-causality
- b) Salvation is available to all
- c) Election proof texts (John 6:44; 15:16; Rom. 8:29-30)
- d) Double predestination proof texts (Rom. 9)
- e) Loss of evangelism
- f) Loss of love for the lost (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11)
- g) Babies in hell? (2 Sam. 12:19-24)

Letter "a," they are confusing sovereignty with omni-causality: God is not just sovereign, but He also causes everything, including evil. Letter "b," the Bible teaches that salvation is available to all: there is no doctrine in the Bible that teaches that salvation is available only to some. Letter "c," a lot of the texts that they are using are completely and totally ripped out of context. You start to scrutinize those texts, and you see that in a lot of cases, God is talking about a national election, the election of Israel, rather than an individual election. And some of these election sovereignty texts that they are using are things where God elects people to certain realms of service. The context has nothing to do with salvation.

From there we will look at "d": what they are doing with Romans 9. They love Romans 9. I love Romans 9 too, but not the way they are interpreting it, and how God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and those kinds of issues. Then subletter "e": what does this do to the concept of evangelism? Would this belief system promote evangelism, or destroy it? I will show you very clearly that it almost derailed a young man named John Kerry, who became the "Father of Modern Day Missions." He was almost talked out of missionary activity by one of his Calvinistic professors.

And then (letter "f"), if God has ordained certain people unto damnation, then what does that do for your love for the lost? Why would you love somebody that is doomed from the womb? Actually, Calvin used that mentality to bring forth a lot of his human rights violations and abuses in Geneva that we have already talked about. Then letter "g," what do you do with a case like the case of David and Bathsheba? A child was born from that adulterous union and the child died. David made this statement that "The child will not come to me, but I will go to him." He made that statement to Bathsheba and she was comforted by it.

See what a Calvinist would do with that situation, whether it is an aborted child or a child that dies before having the opportunity to believe? You ask them, "Is that child in heaven or in hell?" And they will say, if they are honest, "It depends on whether that child was one of the elect. If that aborted child is one of the elect, then they are in heaven. If

they are not elect, then they are in hell." Now, can you see David saying something like that to Bathsheba and comforting her by that?

This gets into what you do in pastoral counseling where someone comes to you and they are upset—a child or a baby has died without having had the opportunity to believe. How do you handle that? One of my Calvinistic professors said, "Well, what I believe I would not tell that particular grieving mother." And I thought to myself, "So you are going to hide what you consider to be truth from the grieving." He was embarrassed by what he would have to say. He would have to tell that grieving mother that it depended on whether the child was one of the elect.

But that is not the way 2 Samuel 12:19-24 reads. It reads that Bathsheba was comforted when she heard David's words. She would not have been comforted had David turned around and taught Bathsheba Calvinistic doctrine. This whole thing gets into how you handle memorial services, funeral services, and biblical counseling. So there is a lot more here than just pie-in-the-sky academics.

Let's start here with the first one: the confusion that is happening as Calvinists are confusing divine sovereignty and omnipotence with something that I call omni-causality. They are not just saying that God is all-powerful, which I believe in; they are not just saying that God is sovereign over his Creation, which I believe in. They are saying that God causes everything, even evil itself. Once you move in that direction, I say, "No. I am a believer in sovereignty; I am a believer in omnipotence; but I am not a believer in omni-causality. I do not believe that God causes everything."

I will show you the verses supporting why I do not believe that. But let some of these Calvinists speak. Louis Berkhof in his "Systematic Theology" says,

"Reformed theology"—Calvinism—"stresses the sovereignty of God in virtue of which He has sovereignly determined from all eternity whatsoever will come to pass, and works His sovereign will in His entire creation, both natural and spiritual, according to His pre-determined plan" ("Systematic Theology: With a Complete Textual Index," 4th and rev. ed., 100).

So God determines everything that comes to pass: He causes everything that comes to pass. But wait a minute—my grandchild just got hit in the crosswalk by a drunk driver. Did God cause that? And they may try to beat around the bush, but they will say, "Yeah, God caused that for his own glory." Omni-causality. John Calvin himself said again in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion,"

"Nor ought it seem absurd when I say, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it" (Volume 3, Chapter 23, Section 7).

In other words, what happened in Genesis 3? Well, Genesis 3 is the Fall of man. It is why our world and our lives are in a state of trouble and turmoil. It is why we need a Savior, Jesus Christ. You ask yourself, "Well, what brought about Genesis 3? I read Genesis 3,

and I see one of God's creatures, the serpent, tempting another one of God's creatures, Eve. And I see Eve influencing her husband, Adam. I am seeing the fall brought about by God's creatures."

And the Calvinists are saying, "No, God actually arranged it, orchestrated it, and caused it," even though Genesis 3 does not say that. Here is a quote from Edwin Palmer in his book, "The Five Points of Calvinism":

"God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen . . . even sin . . . God ordained sin and unbelief" (102).

What if someone moves into sin? God caused that. What if someone is in unbelief? It does not have to do with volition or free will on the part of the creature; it has to do with God causing it—omni-causality. They do not like the word omni-causality. They will say that this is a belief in God's sovereignty and omnipotence. I say, "No, I think you pushed the envelope too far here. I do not think that we are into omnipotence and divine sovereignty anymore, because you are teaching that God causes evil—that is omni causality."

The son of R. C. Sproul, who is extremely popular amongst the Christian world (he passed away recently), said that God "desired that man would fall into sin . . . [God] created sin" (R. C. Sproul, Jr., "Almighty Over All," 53-54). According to him, "God created sin"—God caused sin—God caused the Fall—God caused Satan to rebel.

Arthur Pink is a very, very interesting person. When he was younger, he wrote some tremendous books. I quote him a lot in my book "The Coming Kingdom," but he had a theological U-turn. I do not know what you want to call it: mid-life crisis, or something happened to him so that he renounced a lot of the things that he had said in his younger years—renounced dispensational premillennialism—and moved into a very strong, aggressive, five-point Calvinism.

My understanding of Arthur Pink is that he died isolated from the body of Christ, a very angry person. You have to keep that in mind when you read his book, "The Sovereignty of God." This is what Arthur Pink says in "The Sovereignty of God":

"That God decreed sin should enter this world through the disobedience of our first parents was a secret hid in His own breast" (201).

In other words, God caused the Fall of man, Genesis 3. Well, why did God do that? You are not allowed to question that. He hid that secret in his own breast. Who are you to challenge God? "Can the clay talk back to the potter?" is the mindset. These people are packing out conferences all over the United States and the world as I am as I am teaching these things.

We came out of a church in the Dallas area at which everybody had his own John Piper Bible study on Sunday evening, and these cell groups. Here is something that John Piper says in his book, "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God," on page 42:

"God's having even brought about the Nazis' brutality at Birkenau and Auschwitz as well as the terrible killings of Dennis Rader and even the sexual abuse of a young child"

Auschwitz—God caused that? Nothing to do with Satan? Mass murderer—God caused that. Childhood rape—childhood molestation—God caused that too. That is what he is saying. And somehow when they teach this stuff, they claim that they are very faithful to what Scripture is saying, that they are very faithful to the character of God. Loraine Boettner, in his book "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination," says that God " . . . creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul" (32).

In other words, even the evil motives in the hearts of men and women, God himself created those—omni-causality.

Well, what saith the Scripture? What did Jesus say in Mark 7:20-23?

"And He was saying, 'That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts,'—

See how that is different from what Boettner says? Boettner says that God causes these evil thoughts. Jesus says that these evil thoughts happen in people, whether it is Auschwitz, the ambition to eradicate the Jews, or mass murder, or child molestation. These things come from the wicked heart of man. Loraine Boettner said just the opposite.

—"For from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

So the truth of the matter is that a creature, Satan, rebelled against God through his own free will. That caused a lot of problems. That was the first time sin entered the cosmos: with Satan's five "I will" statements in Isaiah 14:12-15, the final one being *"I will make myself like the Most High."* And that fallen creature, Satan, tempted Eve to do the same thing. "You will not die," he said. "God knows that in the day you eat from the forbidden tree of knowledge, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5). So Eve went and got her husband, who very sadly did not have to be tempted at all to eat with her. That is the origin of sin. It has got nothing to do with God causing these things. It has to do with the creature using his own free will to rebel against God.

You can read all these passages concerning the fall that happened in the angelic world and the Fall that happened in Genesis 3, and you will never see a single reference to God causing it. So since God did not cause it, I am a rejecter of the belief of omni-causality. Romans 8:19-22 says that our world is in a state of groaning. Why is it in the state of groaning that it is in? Romans 8:19 says,

"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."

In other words, the Creation cannot wait for the return of Jesus. who is going to repeal the curse on our cosmos. But why did the curse enter, causing this personification of the cosmos groaning?

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope" (Romans 8:20).

Now, the "Him" there is unfortunately capitalized in a lot of Bible versions, but the "him" there is actually Adam that did this. And it might be capitalized because Adam was given this position of authority along with his wife over Creation. But if you want to look for someone to blame, look for Adam, and also look for yourself, because of the doctrine of seminal headship, which basically teaches that when Adam sinned, we were all there in a latent sense, sinning as well. In other words, God could have put us into Eden one by one and we all would have done the same thing. His decision was my decision—that is what caused everything to go astray.

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (Romans 8:20-22).

Could God have caused sin? Could God have caused the Fall? The book of James says, "No." James 1:13 says,

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."

What does it mean to tempt? It means to set up somebody for destruction, to set up somebody by way of temptation, so that they fail. God does not do that, as we are told in James 1:13. Now, He tests us: He tries us for the purpose of bringing forth the gold, silver and costly stones in the midst of fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). He does that, but He does not set people up for destruction. He does not set people up for a temptation with the ambition that people will take the temptation and fail.

The Calvinist view of Genesis 3 is that God caused the whole thing. And yet James 1:13 clearly says that God does not do that. Now, Satan does that; fallen people will do that to you; but it is contrary to God's nature to act that way. How does God act? 1 John 1:5,

"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

God is clothed "in unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:16); His character is based on unapproachable light. If that is true, how can God cause sin? How can God cause evil thoughts? How can God cause Auschwitz?

Did God use Auschwitz? Of course He did. One of the ways He used Auschwitz was, as the saying goes, concerning the nation of Israel: World War I prepared the land for the people (legally); World War II prepared the people for the land. In other words, when we came out of World War I, we had what is called the San Remo Conference in San Remo, Italy, at which the World War I Allies all met and divided up the Middle East and gave a spot to the nation of Israel (which, by the way, was way bigger than what you see today in the news).

(So all this talk about how Israel is an illegal occupier is wrong. The San Remo conference gave Israel that land—and a much bigger portion, quite frankly.)

So World War I prepared the land for the people. The problem was that the people did not want to go back into the land. So World War II happened, and by the time the nation of Israel emerged from the Holocaust, there was a universal consensus, not just amongst the Jewish people, but amongst the whole world, that these people needed their own land—they are brutalized anywhere they go. So Auschwitz, as horrific as it is, is something that God used. Now, is that the same thing as God causing it? No.

God used it. God uses issues that come into our life. He does not cause them. You saw the quote from Piper saying that God caused the whole thing. So the first problem with what Calvinism is doing here with divine sovereignty, double predestination, is that they are confusing, in my opinion, sovereignty and omniscience; omnipotence with omni-causality.

The second major problem that they have, where some people are elected unto damnation with no choice of their own, is that the Bible over and over and over and over and over and over and over says that salvation is available to all people. All people, as I speak, are savable. Now, they are not saved until they place their personal faith in the provision of God (Jesus Christ), but they are savable. And the Bible says this over and over again.

b) Salvation is Available to All

- 1) Everyone is savable but not necessarily saved (2 Cor. 5:19-20)
- 2) God desires all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9)
- 3) Whosoever wills (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 1 John 5:1; Rev. 22:17)
- 4) God commands all to repent (Acts 17:30)
- 5) God's grace has appeared to all (Titus 2:11)
- 6) God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Ephes. 6:9; Col. 3:25)

So notice a few verses on this: notice 2 Corinthians 5:19-20.

"namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as

though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Notice in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 that because of what Christ has done, He has reconciled the world to Himself. The world is in a state of potential reconciliation to God because of the death of Christ. And so Paul says that because God has already done that for the world—not for the elect, for the world—our ministry is a ministry of reconciliation in which we are pleading with people: we are imploring people to trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ and receive the reconciliation unto God, which is now available at their fingertips.

Calvinism rejects that. It says that the world has not been reconciled to God: the elect have. But that is not what 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 says. Number 2, in "Salvation Is Available to All" (b), God desires all people to be saved. Does not the Bible say that crystal clear? First Timothy 2:3-4 says,

"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who desires"—

How many people? All men, not just the elect.

—"all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

God wants every single human being saved; and they are capable of salvation, because He has already reconciled the world to Himself: they are savable. Every person you run into is savable. I will show you a quote later from Jay Adams when we get to limited atonement in his seminal counseling book. He says that he does not tell people that he is counseling that Christ died for them, because he does not know if they are one of the elect or not. I find that very, very sad coming from a Christian leader. Every person I run into, I say, "I act as if today for them could be the day of salvation, because Jesus already paid the price for the whole world."

Second Peter 3:9 says,

"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Calvinists have a real difficult time explaining verses like this. Beyond that, as you get into Scripture, you will see these "whosoever wills" passages. Who can get saved? Whoever wants to be saved, as they come under God's conviction. The most famous is John 3:16, which most Christians have memorized by heart.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever"—

Who is the "whoever"? It is whoever.

—"believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

If you are a recovering Calvinist, as I was for a while, I will tell you that the book to read that will just purge your mind of all of these seeds of bad doctrine is John's Gospel.

John in his little epistle, 1 John, says (1 John 5:1),

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him."

So who can be saved? Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These are the whoever passages. One more is Revelation 22:17. This is how the Bible ends, and I think that here it is speaking to the unsaved. Revelation 22:17 says,

"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes ('thelo') take the water of life without cost."

Who can get this water of life without cost? Whoever wants it. It is theirs for the taking. I understand that some people do not want it, but God brings them to the point of decision. Whether they accept this Christ or not is their volitional call. But anybody who wants it can take it. And by the way, it is without cost.

Jesus does not say, "You had better renounce all your sins before you get it. You had better take up your cross and follow me before you get it." Now, renouncing your sins, taking up your cross, and following Jesus, those are things He deals with in your growth. But this is not dealing with growth. This is the criterion—singular—necessary for birth. You take what he offers by way of faith and it will not cost you anything. And the person that can have it is the person that wants it.

That Greek verb "thelo" (Revelation 22:17) is used for "want" or "wish." It is also used in 1 Corinthians 7:39, which says,

"A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead"—

(This is laying out the divorce and remarriage issue.)

—"she is free to be married to whom she wishes ('thelo'), only in the Lord."

So you are married to someone and your husband dies and you are the wife, Paul says, and you want to get remarried. Who should you remarry? Whoever you want to remarry (now you may not want to even remarry)—whoever you want. "Thelo": "wish," "desire,"—that is exactly the same verb that is used in Revelation 22:17. Who gets this water of life without cost? Whoever wants it. See that? So nowhere do we see this idea that some people, in fact most people, cannot have it because they do not have the ability to receive it, because they are not one of the elect.

So what you are seeing in Calvinism is a massive overstatement of what they are doing with double predestination. We will pick it up there with number 4 next time.