



The Bulletin

A Publication of the church of Christ at Colonial Heights

“Seeking Bible
authority for
all things.”

Volume 7, Number 1

June 1, 2014

CALVINISM’S THORN IN THE FLESH

By Rodney Pitts

Calvinism is a doctrine espoused by most Protestant denominations to one degree or another. It takes its name from John Calvin, who arranged its various points into a systematic theological creed. At the heart of Calvinism is its doctrine of the *sovereignty of God*. This doctrine claims to glorify God by acknowledging His position as *total sovereign* over this world. In other words, Calvinism teaches that God *rules supreme over all things in every way*.

Of course, when you hear it presented this way, you might wonder why anyone would disagree. Yet, there is more to be considered. For, this doctrine presents God as the sovereign ruler of this world to the point of claiming that *everything* that has happened or ever will happen does so because it has been *predetermined* by God’s eternal counsel. In other words, everything that happens does so because God said it would before time began. This, of course, becomes a serious “thorn in the flesh” for Calvinists when applied the question of the origin of man’s sin. For, if God has predetermined all things, God has to be the cause of man’s sin. Yet, how can this be when God is said to be completely separate from sin and tempts no one to sin (1 John 1:5; Jas. 1:13-14)? This is no small problem for Calvinists.

Sovereignty and Sin

Despite the seriousness of this flaw in their doctrine, Calvinists are quick to brush off this problem as one of the great “mysteries of God.” For example, in a written discussion I had with a Calvinist concerning God’s sovereignty, he wrote, “Scripture teaches that God does control all things and that nothing happens that He has not or-

dained.” He then went on to say that in the area of sin “...clearly there are those God passes over, Rom. 9:22. Yet these people **do** exactly **what they want**. **They refuse** to have God in their knowledge” (Eph. mine, rp). Did you get that? Calvinists say that nothing happens that God has not ordained; yet somehow man, when it comes to sin, “does exactly what he wants!” People, you simply cannot have it both ways. If God has ordained everything that happens on this earth, then God ordained that man would sin and man has no choice in the matter! You cannot say God “controls all things” and then say that men can “refuse to have God in their knowledge.” Of course, because this man knew the heat that such a contradictory position would bring, he was quick to say, “If this is difficult to understand, may I suggest it is because we do not fully understand the mind of God...” In other words, this doctrine is so contradictory to the plain teaching of Scripture that we are supposed to accept it without any reasonable proof whatsoever!

Sovereignty, Foreknowledge, and Sin

To the Calvinist, the sovereignty of God and the question of God’s foreknowledge are inseparably linked. In other words, Calvinists cannot perceive of God foreknowing anything without Him first foreordaining, or predetermining, it to happen. So, if God knows beforehand that something is going to happen, it is because, and only because, God has predetermined that it will happen. Again, this may sound acceptable; but it is another serious “thorn in the flesh” for the Calvinist when it

(Continued on page 2)

comes to the question of sin. Why? Because if God foreknew that sin would be in the world and made a plan “before the foundation of the world” to deal with that sin (1 Pet. 1:18-20), He has to be the cause, or author, of that sin by His sovereign decree.

This approach toward God’s foreknowledge again places Calvinists in a position of serious contradiction. Take, for example, the Calvinism discussion mentioned above. After saying that “God controls all things and that nothing happens that He has not ordained,” this Calvinist then tried to defend God by arguing that “...God acts in a way that keeps man accountable for his behavior” and that “God is not the author of sin, that man has a will, and that he does, in a secondary way, cause things to happen.” This is nothing but verbal “smog!” For, if God has foreordained all things that happen, how can man “have a will” and God act so as to “keep man accountable for his behavior”? Calvinism makes people into little more than “robots” acting out what God has “programmed before the foundation of the world” for them to do. And, robots aren’t accountable for their actions. So, again, Calvinism places the responsibility for sin squarely in God’s lap.

Conclusion

With these contradictions in mind, we must reject the doctrine of Calvinism because it is contrary to the word of God. For, although God is truly sovereign, His sovereignty exists within the framework of creating man as a free-willed being able to accept or reject God’s eternal plan of salvation through Christ that has been preached to the world that all might be saved (Titus 2:11-12; Col. 1:23; Matt. 23:37; John 5:29-40). ■

Remember

“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” (Titus 3:8)

The Bulletin...Reloaded

I have been asked from time to time to restart publication of **The Bulletin** for the church here at Colonial Heights. After thinking about this request long and hard, I believe it is a good time to restart publication in hopes of providing encouraging and helpful articles not only for the congregation here, but for anyone who might visit our new website.

In order to accomplish this goal, well written and timely articles will be needed. I will do my best to write and present what I can. Also, I sincerely ask that if you come across an article that you believe would be beneficial, please feel free to submit it to me. You can either email it or send me a link to the article. Or, you can give me a hard copy. Also, if you would like to try your hand at writing an article, feel free to do that as well. Such submissions will make my job much easier and be a special form of encouragement for the congregation here. I will do my best to include them when I can.

Another purpose of **The Bulletin** is to present articles that would be helpful on the evangelistic front. With this in mind I encourage you to send it to friends, family, co-workers, etc. You can send the PDF file to them by downloading it from the church website and attaching it to an email or by sending them a hard copy through the good ol’ USPS. If you want to do the latter, you can either print it up yourself or let me know and I will print extras. Receiving a bulletin in this fashion, especially with a personal note attached, helps to make a good impression for Christ.

I hope both today’s issue of **The Bulletin** and those in the future will be helpful and encouraging for your and others’ spiritual growth and evangelistic efforts. May God bless our efforts to serve Him. ■

Small Group Studies

A new small group study will begin in July. This is a great opportunity for you to take part in an uplifting spiritual work that gives you the chance to invite friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc., to study the saving gospel of Christ in a small group setting!

To be a part of this good work of the Lord, check the bulletin board in the foyer and see what slots are open for you to host a study or to help someone else who is hosting a study. Remember, you do not have to teach the study to host or to attend in support of the hosting family. A teacher can be arranged.

Be a part of the work. Sign up today!