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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: **What did John Calvin get wrong?**

John Calvin was a very influential religious leader who lived from 1509 to 1564. He started his life in the Catholic Church, but became a Protestant Reformer. A protestant means someone who protests against the corrupt and anti-Biblical teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. On this point John Calvin "got it right." It was the right thing to do when he protested against the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. But Calvin himself developed a doctrinal system which was anti-Biblical and dangerous. This short study will first explain what Calvin taught that was wrong and then we will notice why his doctrine is dangerous.

John Calvin's unscriptural doctrinal system has five points:

## **1) Total depravity.**

This doctrine says babies are born sinners because they inherit Adam's sin. This means the baby is lost in sin and, presumably, if the baby dies it will go to hell because it's a sinner, unless something changes the status quo. Total depravity also means no one has the ability to obey any of God's commands. This doctrine is simply wrong.

### **Matthew 18:3**

<sup>3</sup> [Jesus] said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

This passage alone destroys the doctrine of total depravity.

## **2) Unconditional election.**

This doctrine says God chooses (elects) who will be saved and who will be lost and His choice is not based on people meeting any conditions. In other words, God chooses arbitrarily. The saved are just lucky and the lost are just unlucky. This doctrine is simply wrong.

### **Revelation 22:17**

<sup>17</sup> And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires**, let him take the water of life freely.

### **3) Limited atonement.**

This doctrine says Jesus died and shed His blood only for those arbitrarily chosen (elected) by God, for it would be a waste for Jesus to die for people whom God would never chose. This is by far the most egregious and offensive part of Calvin's doctrine. This doctrine is simply wrong.

### **1 John 2:2 (NIV)**

<sup>2</sup> [Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also **for the sins of the whole world.**

### **4) Irresistible grace.**

This doctrine says God's Holy Spirit operates directly upon the hearts of the special, chosen, elect, lucky ones who will be saved and the Spirit changes the hearts and minds of these people so that they think and act like Christians. This is called "irresistible grace" because the converting power of the Holy Spirit supposedly cannot be resisted. This is simply wrong.

### **Acts 7:51**

<sup>51</sup> "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! **You always resist the Holy Spirit;** as your fathers did, so do you.

### **5) Perseverance of the saints.**

This doctrine says that those lucky ones, who were arbitrarily chosen by God to be saved, will persevere to the end and will never be lost. In other words, once they are saved, they cannot lose their salvation. Like the other four doctrines Calvin taught, this too is simply wrong.

### **Hebrews 3:12**

<sup>12</sup> Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**

## What's the Danger?

We have noticed the five points of John Calvin's false doctrines. We have seen how each point is in direct contradiction to plain, obvious Bible passages. Now we ask the simple question: ***What's the danger in believing these doctrines of John Calvin?***

The danger is: **These doctrines take away all motivation to obey God**. If a person truly believes what Calvin taught, he has no motivation whatsoever to do anything in obedience to God – for he will simply wait for the irresistible moving of the Holy Spirit ... if that ever happens.

This, in turn, causes one to trust, not in Jesus nor His revealed word, but rather a sinner is now trusting in his feelings. Do I feel the moving of the Spirit in my hear or not? What does the feeling feel like?

Finally, if a person trusts in his feelings enough to conclude he is one of the lucky few to be chosen by God without any obedience on his part, now there is no motivation to continue in obedience to God's commands, because ... "once saved, always saved." John Calvin's doctrine removes all motivation to obey God. What does the Bible say about this?

### **Hebrews 5:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> though [Jesus] was a Son, yet **He learned obedience** by the things which He suffered.

<sup>9</sup> And having been perfected, **He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.**

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