

## Ask Jeff - Calvinism

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For those of you who have never been here on Wednesday night, I know there are some of you here tonight for the very first time, I want to welcome you to the Wednesday night Bible study at Greenwell Springs, otherwise known as Ask Jeff. Everything that happens tonight is because of you. In this box before me are a, I guess, a plethora for lack of better terms, of questions that have been submitted by email, they have been submitted by Facebook, they have been submitted by text, they have been submitted by people just writing them on a piece of paper and putting them in.

Now, let me share with you a couple of things you need to be aware of. There are some of you and I will not call you by name, who write on pieces of paper and you fold them in creative ways and write things like "Pick me first" and place it in there. We take that and we have it typed out just like all of the rest so origami does not help your cause, okay? Just letting you know. The other thing I want to address is that I have some folks lately who come to me privately, which is fine, and say, "You know, I've got a question that I really want to ask on Wednesday night but I'm just embarrassed or I feel like it's a dumb question." The last time I checked I have never heard a dumb question in this environment yet. In fact, every question that has been asked whether publicly or privately is a wonderful question so I just want to put you at ease that if it is something that you're not familiar with or you're ignorant to or you just want to know more about, it's not just that you need to ask it but I promise you there is somebody who also needs to hear the answer because maybe they are struggling with the same issue.

Now, you know, that person may not even be in this room. I want to share with you an email that we received today here at the church and if you can't see the hand of God all over this, your wood is wet, as they say. Now, we're going to put it on the screen because I want to read for you this email word for word. We have left off the name of the person. It says, this is just word for word, it says, "I have an interesting story for you. I know you're a busy man so I'll try to make it brief. I was staying in St. Francis Ville a few weeks ago. I had an overwhelming sensation that the room I was staying in was haunted. I won't go into all the details but I've only had that feeling another time and I'm confident that's what it was. I woke up from a nightmare around 4 or 5 in the morning and I turned on the TV. I flipped it up one channel and you were preaching so I thought I should probably leave it on this channel. It wasn't just any sermon, you were talking about demons." Do you remember a few weeks ago when we addressed that subject matter? It

was the program that we have on Wednesday night that we put on TV and how Jesus cast them into the swine and they ran into the lake and drowned.

"First, I want to thank you for your service to Christ, you being on TV. Preaching that sermon was a comfort and I took it as a sign from God. You probably don't even realize how many people you touch or comfort through the word but I was one of them on that day. Anyway, I just moved into a new townhouse. Last night my girlfriend was visiting and said she felt that there was a spirit or an unwanted presence in the house. I kind of felt a cold chill in a specific room too. I can't be sure if that's what I thought or just my mind playing tricks on me. I'm a religious man and I know the Holy Spirit is more powerful than anything else but when it comes to these 'spirits' or 'hauntings' I'm at a loss for how to deal with it. I say the Lord's prayer out loud but if there's anything you recommend of how to clear a house of any unwanted spirits, please let me know, or if there's any specific Scripture etc. you can refer me to that would be great. Referring to your sermon again, I've never heard anyone else speak so openly and confidently about these kinds of things so I thought I would reach out to you."

Now, here's why I wanted to share that with you: a couple Wednesday nights ago, I didn't come in here and say, "Hey, let's talk about demons." I didn't come in here and say, "Hey, let's talk about a house that some people may perceive as haunted." The only reason that issue came up is because at some point someone out here submitted a question that was about that topic and you needed information and you wanted information but do you see how perfect God's timing was what that? It helped somebody who was struggling who doesn't even live here, who was visiting in a hotel and happened to turn on our program at 5 to 5:30 in the morning. So for those of you who thought that was a bad time to be on TV, it's the perfect time to be on TV. But I wanted that to be an encouragement to you that even if you don't feel that somebody in this room is benefited from your curiosity, it may be somebody visiting in a hotel room that is benefiting from your curiosity so do not be bashful or shy. Don't be embarrassed or don't feel as if you're ignorant because we all have questions.

So, that was my big introduction. I wanted to share that with y'all just to encourage you to continue. Why are you shaking your head, sir? Is this not adequate? I have the box police sitting down here who don't think I mix them properly. Nonetheless, it will never be good enough for you, I know.

Okay, this is a question. The question that is in here is one that we've been dealt with at some level before. We'll deal with it again briefly and then if you want to explore more we will. The question is: have you seen or read anywhere where they are already rebuilding the temple? This is the temple that is referred to on the Temple Mount there in Jerusalem in Israel. Just a little historical catch up: understand that there have already been 2 temples on that site that we know as the Holy Mount in Jerusalem. There was one that Solomon built. Remember, David wanted to but was not allowed by God. Solomon built the temple. That was destroyed in 586 when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came through when they razed and removed all the materials there. Then a few hundred years later back in the mid-400s, the temple was rebuilt again. Remember, that was

Nehemiah and Ezra and that crew that came back in. That temple was built in about 445 to 444 BC. It was destroyed in 70 A.D. by what we know as the Romans. For almost 2000 years there has not been a "Jewish Temple" on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, however, when you read the book of Revelation describing the events of the future what we know as the tribulational time, it says that there is a temple on that site. Now, to address the specific question is there anybody already rebuilding it? There is no rebuilding that is occurring at this moment but there are various groups that have compiled plans and materials who are ready for the opportunity to do so.

So that being said, it's not occurring right now. I know you hear all kinds of things if you're a Facebook person. There are all kinds of posts that come through about it. There is some truth to that, not all the truth to that, but there are various groups such as the Temple Institute and others that are vigorously desiring the opportunity to do so. I know I have addressed this in the past but let me say it just in passing: the big question about the temple is not that if it will be built because it will be. It's not where it will be built because the Temple Mount is its only location. It is the specific place on that mount in which it will be built. Why? Because the traditional site for that temple is where there is currently a Muslim mosque known as the Dome of the Rock. However, as they are doing research, there is questions of whether that is the actual site of the original temple or not. It is traditionally the original site but if you've ever been to Israel, most of the sites that you go to we traditionally thought were authentic until we discovered later that they were not and it was someplace else. So the big question is going to become: when they through archaeological excavating, when they find what we would call the cornerstone of that building and then they measure up and they discover where it should or should not be, that's going to be interesting not only politically, it's going to be interesting theologically and all kinds of things are going to occur there.

So it's not currently in the process. Materials have been collected by various groups and the big question is: where on that mount will the actual location be? So that's a quick summary. I know we have addressed it at some level but we can go as deep or detailed as you want. So any questions on the temple? Thoughts about that? We've got it? Everybody's got the temple? Everybody is comfortable? All right, I want you all to mark that was the fastest that we've ever answered a question on Wednesday night. I just want to go on the record that was the fastest. It's because I shook up the questions properly, sir. That's what happened there.

Here we go. That's going to be our last question for the night. The question on the card was: can you please explain what Calvinism is? We've been discussing this for 400 years. We're going to get it done tonight. All right, the question asked and it's literally what the card says. I threw the card just because, well, I couldn't believe the question was on there. Can you explain what Calvinism is? Let me give you some terminology, some background and some ideology of what we're dealing with here tonight.

The terminology known as Calvinism is a systematic theology set of doctrines. Sometimes in the 21st century we call it, people call it the doctrines of grace. The ideology is actually comprised out of a systemized theology that comes from the early

1600s, hence named after what we know as John Calvin. Now, I'm going to go over the premise of what this systematic theology is and then I'm going to respond to it from various angles and if I know humanity and if I know churches like I know them, y'all are going to have to get a race to get your hands in the air in just a moment, okay? Let me share with you this, that what I'm about to share with you as far as what we know as the 5 doctrines or the 5 points of Calvinism, comes out of what we call the Synod of Dort that happened in the early 1600s. Here is the system as laid out that is collectively referred to as Calvinism. These are the 5 points of "Calvinism." The first one is what is called, by the way, the acronym is TULIP. That's the acronym. It's an easy word to remember and each one of those letters stands for a phrase or an expression of theological belief.

The first one stands for total depravity. The second one is unconditional election. The third one is limited atonement. Now we have irresistible grace. And the preservation of the saints. Now, one of the things that you will hear in reference to the terminology known as Calvinism is you will have people say that So-and-so or they and somebody is what they call a five-point Calvinist. A five-point Calvinist is someone who subscribes to this theological set of doctrines in its entirety so allow me to just as simply and casually as I can explain within the system of Calvinism what these 5 points are and what they mean.

The first point, total depravity, simply means that humanity is of such a sinful nature that there is nothing that is good in them. There is nothing that can ever be good in them. And they are totally depraved, i.e. from what we know as sin. That there is absolutely nothing that anybody can do to merit salvation. Now, let me share with you what that means. I know what some of you are thinking. Some of you are thinking, "Well, I believe in depravity. Yeah, humanity, they are sinful at best. If you don't believe it, just watch the news." Understand, within the context of what we know as historical Calvinism, when one says that they are totally depraved, there is nothing you can do to be saved, not even pray a prayer to be saved. You cannot "pray a prayer" to ask to be saved because you would be doing something and because we are totally depraved, anything you do would be sinful and therefore wouldn't count. Does that communicate? So understand and this system of belief, the very first point is that you and I as humans are so depraved that nothing can be done in order to bridge the gap for salvation, not even requesting of the Lord the opportunity to be saved.

Point number 2 is unconditional election. What that simply means is that in this system of belief that God has elected some to salvation and some to damnation but that only God determines who that is and whom that will be and it is unconditional in the sense that there is nothing that you or I or anybody else can do to position themselves so as to guarantee or hope that we are part of that elect or those who will ultimately "go to heaven." It is unconditional. It is God alone who determines it. There is nothing anybody can do to alter it or change it. It is simply up to his decision and his decision alone.

Limited atonement which is the third point. Limited atonement states that because of unconditional election, that the atonement or the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed on Calvary and verified 3 days later with the empty tomb was not done on

behalf of all of humanity but was done on behalf of only the ones whom which God has unconditionally elected. Are you all following me here, where we're going with this?

Let me review these 3 and then we'll get to the final 2. So man is totally depraved, nothing he can do to be saved, not even to request it, pray for it or desire it. God has decided according to his will and way who will or who will not be saved. It is up to him and nothing can alter that decision. Because of that, the atonement was limited in that it was only done for those who were already foreknown to be elected, which leads to the fourth point known as irresistible grace that once one discovers or is enlightened or figures out or perceives that they are a part of the elect and that God has made atonement for them, when God calls them to be saved, they cannot resist it. They cannot turn it down. They cannot say no at all to God in that process.

Finally, there is the "P" which is the preservation of the saints. In the Baptist world, we would call this the security of the believer. That an individual who finds themselves unconditionally elected by God, the atonement has been offered, the grace has been offered and they cannot resist it, that they are saved for all of eternity. There is nothing that can be done to alter that. That it is locked and loaded for all eternity.

That in a nutshell is the systematic doctrine of Calvinism. Now, there are some words that are used in reference to this systematic belief that are not found in this acronym and the word that is most often used is the word "predestination." In just a moment, we're going to go to 3 passages in the New Testament and we're going to see what the Bible says about these passages that use that famous word. But before we do so, I want to share an analogy with you that I think is very critical at this moment because what I have just shared with you, this doctrine known as Calvinism formulated in the early 1600s, is propagated, it is taught, it is communicated, is advocated as a stand alone system of belief. In other words, it's independent of anything else. But one thing I think we need to understand tonight that is critical to where I'm going to share with you what I believe is the historical misrepresentation of these 5 point, is that you cannot have an answer to a question that is removed to the question.

Let me give you an example. Y'all know the show I have alluded to it before, the show Jeopardy, right? You know the show Jeopardy. There are answers that come up on the screen and every answer that comes in a certain category, you have to give a question in response to the answer that is given. Let me give you some biblical examples. In Acts 16:31, the Bible says, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That's a statement, right? But did you know that there was a question that was asked the verse before? The question, remember Paul is in the jail and the doors had been opened and yet he has not escaped and the Roman jailer comes in and he throws himself at his feet and he says, "Oh, have mercy on me. Have mercy and will God have mercy on me," and in verse 30 of Acts 16, this Roman jailer asks this question, "What must I do to be saved?" And the response was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Even though I agree completely with Acts 16:31 as a true statement, I cannot separate it from the question that was initially asked. Correct? You can't do that because then what you end up doing is you're taking a statement, you're removing it from its

context and allowing it to become independent when it was never independent to begin with. It was dependent on another statement and/or question.

Some of you are thinking, "Jeff, why are you going to extremes on this?" Because when a group of people gathered there in the early 1600s and they formulated what we know as the TULIP system of doctrine, they did not create an independent thought. In fact, this was actually a response to what is known historically as the Arminian Remonstrance. I'll abbreviate there, which was a system of beliefs and doctrines that was formulated by the followers of Jacobus Arminius. Now, why is this critical? For the sake of time, we won't go into graphic detail on all the points and the subpoints of the subpoints of the subpoints but you need to understand that in essence what the Arminian Remonstrance said was the exact opposite of what these 5 statements say. In other words, the Arminian Remonstrance said that man is not totally depraved. In fact, at his heart man is essentially good. Now, is that biblical? Is man good? The last I checked since Genesis 3, we've been messed up, right?

Now, the second thing they said was that basically that one's determination of an eternity in a place called heaven is determined on basically what they choose or decide to do. Now, that's not completely accurate as well because you can't decide how you're going to go to heaven, can you? Can you just decide, "Well, I think everybody who owns a Corvette gets to go to heaven"? No, that's not true. At the same time, this group of people in the late 1500s also said that eventually because everybody is good and everybody wants to go to heaven, ultimately everybody will end up in heaven. Then the fourth thing they said was, well, because man's will is so strong, they get to determine when and what God does and basically they said that we are the tail that gets to wag the dog which is God. Finally, you can be saved tomorrow, lost the next day, saved the next day and you can go back and forth, in and out of the family of God.

Why did I go through those as I did? Because these 5 points were not formulated as an independent doctrine, they were established as a response to something that was not necessarily biblically accurate. So allow me to walk you through these 5 statements, not as an independent thought but as a response to possible erroneous thought, okay? So allow me to walk you through this.

Man is essentially good and in his soul desires to do things that are good and godly. No, man is not good. Man is totally depraved. Man can decide how, when, what or where he wants to go and spend his eternity; he can determine that on his own. No, only God can determine the means of salvation; it is his decision to make. Eventually everybody is going to end up in heaven because everybody is good and they want to be there ultimately. No, it's going to be limited because the Bible states that not everybody is going to "make it." Do you know what? You can pretty much tell God what you want him to do because you're in charge. No, it's irresistible. You see, ultimately God is in charge of everything and what he desires ultimately comes to pass. Finally, well, you can be saved today, lost tomorrow, save today, lost tomorrow. No, the Bible says that nobody or nothing can pluck us out of his hands.

What I just shared with you I would believe that 99.9% of you would agree with everything that's on this board as a response to something that was written a couple of years earlier, but once you void it or remove it as from a response to an independent thought, then it has been particularly in the last, I guess 300 to 400 years, it has allowed itself to create a life of its own that allows, for lack of better terms, to declare, that simply put, that whomever God desires to be saved will be saved, whomever he desires to be damned will be damned and there is nothing that you or I or anybody else can do about it. That in a nutshell is the system known as Calvinism.

Now, let us go to the word of God to 3 passages that are most apropos for this thought process. We need to go to Romans 8, Ephesians 1 and 1 Peter 1. Let's begin in Romans 8 and I want us to read these passages that are, for lack of better terms, the most famous ones utilized to advocate and/or defend these 5 statements known as Calvinism as an independent thought, okay? Romans 8, you're going to know these verses very well, beginning in verse 28. It says, "For 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." And so in that passage of Scripture in Romans 8, there is a sequence of words that is utilized that God foreknew whom would be predestinated unto the image of his Son and those whom he did predestinate, those he called, those he justified, those he glorified.

So that is the first passage, Romans 8:28-29. You may want to mark it there, put a pencil there, put your hand there, whatever it may be. I want to read all of these passages in totality and then come back. The next one, we'll go over to Ephesians 1 just a few pages to the right. Ephesians 1, beginning in verse 3. It says, "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, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Third and final, we go over to the book of 1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 1. It says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 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. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And it goes on to describe what our salvation is realized as.

So, several things that I want you to note about these passages and then we will begin what should be a pretty fruitful discussion here this evening. The first thing I want you to notice is that in all of the passages that we read that involved the word what we know as "predestination" which by simple definition means "that which is ordained in advance and must come to completion as ordained," then in all the passages that we read, notice there was a word that always preceded it, "foreknowledge." You cannot remove foreknowledge as that which according to Scripture preceded the term known as predestination. Before God predestined, it said that he foreknew. The predestination did not determine the knowledge of, the knowledge of determined the predestination. That's the first thing I want you to notice.

The second thing I want you to notice and it's really a question: are these passages telling us who will be saved or is it telling us how we are saved? Because in that passage we read in Ephesians 1, it says he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the earth. It wasn't telling us necessarily who was chosen but how we are chosen. We are in him.

And so the third thing I want to ask is this: in the passages we read, is it telling us the people who would be saved or is it telling us the plan of God's salvation?

Now, before we get into a discussion, we've been debating this for 400 years. Do not expect us to solve this in 40 minutes. Does that make sense? The question was asked: what is Calvinism? The answer to that question is that in simplistic terms it is a system of doctrines that we call TULIP that in a nutshell or summary declares that the concept of predestination is determined upon one's soul without their choosing, without their decision and prior oftentimes and it depends on who you are talking to, sometimes even believed upon at their conception.

Now, I'm going to give you some words tonight that I promise if you ever play Scrabble will get you more points than any other word you'll ever use. Are you already? Supralapsarianism. Have y'all got that? English please. How about I just spell it out? This is kind of fun. Supralapsarianism. Somebody go and play Scrabble and tell me how many points that is. That's got to be a bunch. Supralapsarianism is the belief tangent to what was discussed tonight that one's eternal destination is determined upon their conception. That the moment that a child is formed in the womb before they breathe a breath, before they learn a step, their eternity has already been determined. That is a true actual theological term that is used in this discussion. I just thought I'd have fun and show you a word that we can hardly spell but it's worth a lot of Scrabble points. I don't even know if the board of Scrabble will hold a word that long but that's actually a real word that means what I shared with you what it means.

Again, the question was: what is Calvinism? Calvinism is this system of doctrines, a system of beliefs, that declares that one's eternity, one's final destination for all of eternity, is determined by God alone without any decision or input by you or any other human being and that wherever one spends eternity, it is for his glory because he determined where we would be.



All right, questions? Comments? Here we go. Yes Sir. We're going to race? So you really don't have a question, you just want to be the first one to put your hand up? Can you tell he's a chaplain at the dragstrip? "I'm going to win a race." Yes Sir. You were trying to race him for the first? Do you see what I put up with on a regular basis here? Okay. It just solved it, right? There you go. It's all good. Yes Sir.

That's a really good question. The question is: where is Jesus in all of this? Allow me, for the discussion tonight because the question was asked, what is it? In the system known as Calvinism or the belief known as Calvinism that remember, it is atonement. Remember in that third phrase, limited atonement, that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that allows for the unconditional election and all this to take place. That if it were not for the blood of Jesus, none of this would take place. In the system that is his place. Does that make sense?

Okay, you're shaking your head. I wasn't saying I was agreeing with it, I was just telling you that's how he is a part because you asked where is Jesus in the system known as Calvinism. In the system, he is the one who on the cross made the atonement, blood was shed, that allows for those whom God predestinated to be saved and inherit eternity in a place called heaven. You're looking at me strangely, Sir. You normally look at me strangely but you're really looking at me strangely tonight. I'm just telling you.

Yes ma'am. The statement that was made here is that according to the system that I have shared with you, that you can concur correctly that Jesus did not go to the cross for the entirety of humanity, nor did he go to the cross for the world at large, but that he only went to provide a means of salvation for those who were already preordained to be saved. I'm just telling you what that system says and I'm not trying to be crass here because I've had debates on this subject matter with lots of people and rather than, "For God so loved the world," it's, "For God so loved the elect. God so loved those who were already decided."

I told y'all it was going to be a race and I didn't mean you, sir. Here then here. Yes ma'am.

The question, you know, this is really funny, I'm having to defend something I actually don't believe in. This is fun. It was just the question put in the box.

So the question she asked which is a really good question is: then in that system, what is the purpose of witnessing because it doesn't really matter anyway. They are either going to be saved or they're not going to be saved. Well, there was a very famous preacher/theologian 150 years ago by the name of Charles Spurgeon. Charles Spurgeon is known as the Prince of Preachers. Probably the greatest Baptist orator we've ever had in our history. He was over in England. I mean, he had a church in his early 20s in London, England, in his early 20s, his church ran like 5000 or 6000 and this was in the 1800s. You look up Charles Spurgeon and they call him the Prince of Preachers. He's one of the greatest we've ever had. He was by definition, he was a Calvinist. He was and his response to your question would be, he would say, "The Lord has not revealed to him who is or who is not but that does not negate his responsibility to the great commission to

go into all the world because it's not for him to determine who is, it's for God." So he determined as do many people who subscribe to this, that you cannot void out evangelism per se because you still have to share with people their need to know that they are elect.

Again, to your point, sir, it doesn't matter if they know it or not because if they are elected, what does it matter? To which my Calvinist friends would respond to you...I feel like I'm in debate class right now and you know how they say take the position and take the opposite position? They, those who subscribe to Calvinist theology would state that our salvation is not just for heaven, it's also for now and therefore we need to know if we are the elect as soon as possible so that we can live our lives to the glory of God for as long as possible.

I'm just telling you. Yes ma'am and then him and I had a hand over here.

No, no, no, in Calvinism they know. Remember the "P" preservation of the saints. There is not a Calvinist in the world who questions where they're going.

How do they know they are the elect? That's a very good question. In essence, how do I, okay, let me pull out of the debate for a moment and become Jeff for a second. How do I know that I'm saved? I know I have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in my life, according to Galatians 5:22 and 23. I have the fruits of the Spirit that hopefully come out in my life. The fruit reveals the root, okay? I have an active relationship with the Lord where we communicate. I'm usually wrong and he's always right. I mean, we've got this, right? That is evidence that I know that I'm saved. They would claim that the same evidence would be in their life, that because they bear the fruit of the Spirit, because they have the Holy Spirit in them and they communicate with God, therefore that is the evidence that the fruit reveals the root that they would be a part of the elect. But they would state that they're not saved because they asked to be, prayed to be or called out to be but it was predestined to be and at some point they realized that it was.

No. The question was: do they pray to be saved? Because they're totally depraved and praying to be saved cannot save you because you're totally depraved. You realize at one point, it's almost as if the term would be theological illumination, that they would say they realize that they are the elect, they were predestined and they are a child of God who should act like it.

I agree but, okay, she said: but acting like it's not going to get you to heaven. Understand, every single Calvinist I've ever met, every single one, they believe Jesus was born of a virgin. They believe he lived a sinless life. They believe he died on Calvary. They believe he rose from the dead. They believe the Holy Spirit came just as prophesied in Acts 2. And they believe he's coming again. So they do believe but the difference is...here's the difference. Okay, let me draw a line in the sand here.

Okay, I heard you. Don't worry. I've got you. Here we go. Here's the question: in Calvinism and I'm just going to put non-Calvinism here, okay? I'm not going to put any more labels. In Calvinism, regeneration takes place, to be born again, regeneration takes

place, then one realizes they have been regenerated because it's predestined. God has ordained it. He has saved you and then you realize you were saved. In non-Calvinism, one realizes their need to be saved and then becomes regenerated. There is a big difference. There is a fundamental difference there. Are you already saved and then realize it or do you realize you need to be saved and are saved? I'm just laying out the debate.

Yes Sir. I've heard 3 point Calvinist, 2 point Calvinist, .5 Calvinist, I believe in half of all the points. Yeah, I've heard it all.

Whoa, now you've done gone off another theological cliff because he used the term hyper Calvinist. A hyper Calvinist is one who would determine that it's not just one's eternity that is predestined but that every single action, thought and idea is predetermined and that the idea of a decision or choice is nonexistent in any aspect of your life. We call it hyper because it's even beyond the doctrine itself. Does that make sense?

The question was asked: a 3 point Calvinist, which points do they subscribe to? It depends which one you talk to. Now, let me begin just because of time here, let me kind of focus us in here. Do you all remember that this whole issue came up 400 years ago because there was a group of people known as the Arminians, remember that? And they were responded to by a group known as the Calvinists. We live in a world where people say you're either a Calvinist or you're an Arminian. Can I tell you what most people are? They're Calvinian. What I mean by that is most people are right here in the middle. It's not either/or, it's both/and. In other words, Arminians champion free will. The Bible defends free will. In fact, in Ezra 7:16 they were asked to bring a free will offering unto the Lord. The book of Exodus, I believe it's 25, they were asked to bring a free will offering to the Lord. You get to the Bible, the New Testament, it's whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. However, if you want to slide over to this side, basically there is verse after verse after verse that says that God is God, he does what he wants to do and nobody can change his mind. So you have both/and that are happening here, not necessarily either/or.

So to your point, sir, I think the struggle there is when we start saying, "I am this or I'm that," rather than, "I am what this says." Does that make sense? And the question I have to ask and the passages that we read: is it telling us who is going to be saved or how we're going to be saved? I will tell you I believe in predestination. I believe that God predestined before the foundation of the earth that Jesus Christ would come and shed his blood for the sins of humanity. That was predestined. There is nothing you can do to change it. There is no other way. It's unconditional. God determined it. God set up the system of salvation. You don't have the right to change it. I don't have the right to change it. And he determined how we would be saved before any of us breathed an ounce of air on this planet. So the question there becomes the plan versus the persons. Does that make sense?

Now, so he just made the statement: God wouldn't be God if he didn't know who was and who wasn't so the Bible says in John 1:12 that whoever believes on Jesus shall have the

opportunity or the privilege to be called the sons of God. There are illustrations all throughout the Bible, it's a parental illustration of salvation that we are his children and he is our heavenly Father, correct? It's an analogy all throughout. Romans 8 even says that we are the heirs of God through Christ. So, I go into my backyard tomorrow afternoon when I get home in the afternoon and I begin to see an event taking place in my backyard where one of my children, now this is a hypothetical. It would never happen. One of my children begins to act inappropriately toward another one of my children to the point where whatever athletic ball he was playing with, he is beginning to take it from him. That would never happen in my backyard but we're going to pretend it would. I can sit on my back porch knowing who they are and knowing everything and say, "He is about to whip his tail." I didn't make it happen. I knew it was going to happen. You see, the word "predestination" infers that it has been determined in advance, not merely known in advance. So foreknowledge means I know it will but does not determine its fruition.

Yes ma'am. The question she asked is: if they believe you have to be a part of the elect to go to heaven, so who isn't, is that...okay, who do they say is not? This is where, well, I'm just going to say what I want to say. I have had this discussion with so many people, you have no idea. Privately, publicly, academically. You know, I've had all kinds of discussions on this. Let me tell you the statements that I have said to people over and over and over and over again. People don't like what I'm about to say but I'm going to say it anyway: I'll become a Calvinist when I find a Calvinist who tells me their children are going to hell. Think about that. Think about that for a moment. I'll believe that we are predestined and there is nothing we can do about it when I find somebody who says they are and that one of their own flesh and blood is going to hell and there is nothing that can be done about it. I have yet to find anybody who believes this wholeheartedly that says their child is not good because I can tell you as a parent of 3 boys, I have sweated this one out because I know they are sinful. I have seen it and yours are too. Don't get pious on me. And you were too. And if you don't believe it, work in the nursery this week. That will prove it. But I have seen them in a sinful state, I have seen them come to the knowledge of the things of God. I have seen them learn the things of God. I have seen them struggle with believing in Jesus as their Savior. Now, I'm grateful as a parent that all 3 have but I'm telling you, Tracy, have we sweated it out? Do you know how much easier it would have been to say, "Boy, they're good. I've seen them do some good stuff. We're good to go." But I've never met anybody personally who completely subscribes to this who, they'll tell me emphatically that their child is going to hell. They have an easy time saying, "Well, there are those out there who are going to hell." It's easy to talk about people you've never seen or met, it's hard to talk people in your house.

Yes Sir, in the back row. In John 3? Hey, I'm on your side, brother. I promise. I'm just answering the question but what you are saying you said more eloquently than I did and thank you, was it was the place and the plan that was predetermined, not the person and their residency, so to speak. And I'll be honest with you, let's make this and I know when you get somebody who is very saturated in the system of theology, I know what I'm about to say and the argument I'm about to use, they don't like it and they get upset with me and they say I'm misrepresenting them so I'm qualifying what I'm about to say but I'm going

to use an example for you. I have used this before. She has heard it before so don't go running off to my wife and tell her this, okay? This is a hypothetical. It hasn't happened. It's not going to happen. And I'm not considering it happening, okay? Let's just say, brother, since you said what you said, let's just say that tonight, we're in separate cars and let's just say that tonight, this is hypothetical and she gathers the boys up and they go in the van and I get in my truck. Let's just decide that rather than going straight home, I decide to go for some extracurricular activity and I'm not talking about playing golf. Do you understand what I'm saying, sir? Do we understand what I'm communicating? And I get home and she says, "What have you been doing?" I say, "Well, on the way home I decided to have some extracurricular activity." How do you think she's going to respond? She is a girl that grew up in Texas. I can tell you how she's going to respond. Does she what?

She doesn't need a skillet when you've got a trigger, brother. I'm just saying. But I respond back as she is going for the holster, "Honey, you can't get upset. You understand that before the foundation of the world all things have been predestined. What do you mean it doesn't work? Why not? If God has foreordained and predestined all things before the foundation of the earth, then, honey, I'm sorry you don't like what I did but you've got a problem with God not with me." About 48 hours later you would all be standing over my casket and saying, "That's the biggest fool we've ever met in our life."

I used that analogy, it's a dramatic analogy and it probably in a formal debate session is probably an unfair analogy to use. However, I think it dramatically portrays the real life consequences of what we're talking about. You know, when you look down, if you were to look down at the earth from God's perspective, you see, one of the statements and it's a great statement to use that those who advocate this position, they talk about things being for the glory of God. That even those who are predestined for hell, that in their residency of hell, they give glory to God because it was God that ordained it and anything God ordained gives him glory. I'm not making that up. That's just part of the process. So as you look down from God's perspective and you realize that every 30 seconds on planet earth a young person is sold into sexual slavery, you tell me how that glorifies God. You look down and you see a group of ISIS militant Islamic extremists take 21 Coptic Egyptian Christians and cut their heads off and say that gives glory to God. I struggle with that. I struggle with this concept that all is predetermined by the hand of God because last time I checked, without God giving me any input at all, I've made some pretty heinous decisions in my life on my own and I think I need to take responsibility for that.

I know we're on the same page of the book, sir. I'm just giving color commentary to what you've already thrown out there. Hold on. You've already asked one. You ma'am.

What about the master plan? He knows every hair on my head. That's an illustration. Do not get me in trouble. Goodness. I knew I shouldn't have used the illustration but that's okay. Y'all want proof that that has never happened? I'm alive, I just want you to know. Go ahead.

He does know, yes ma'am. The question isn't does he know, the question is does he make it happen.

Whoa, whoa, whoa. You used the word "allows." Let me go back to my illustration in my backyard. One boy hypothetically would never happen, takes a ball from another boy. Me sitting on the back porch, I allow it to happen but I don't make it happen.

The question, yes, she is saying that God would not make us sin. In fact, you go to James 1, beginning in verse 13, it says that God tempts no man. You cannot chalk up sin to God. However, because the question was asked about what is Calvinism, understand the "T" of total depravity is that man is of such a sinful nature that that is what man does predetermined because of the sin that is in them. Now, I will would say we're born in a sinful nature but I would also say that whoever calls on the name of the Lord would be saved. That's Romans 10:13, by the way.

I saw a hand way in the back over here. Yes. Yes ma'am.

Say that one more time, that last statement. I'm going to concur with you. If you couldn't hear, she was talking about the idea of free will and the decisions we make. I will tell you that, let me do my math here, it was about 34 years ago that I realized I was lost. I realized I was sinful and I realized I deserved to go to hell. And what I did was what the Bible says, I called on Jesus to save me, is what I did. And so I would advocate what you just said, ma'am, I exercised my free will to desire to be saved because he told me whoever calls on him would be saved and so I said, "Yes Sir, please save me. I don't deserve it but you offered it. I'm taking you up on it." That's what you're saying, correct? Okay. We're all on the same page.

Now, are you just racing to something or do you have a legitimate question? Ladies go first to your left first, then I'll come back to you. Yes ma'am.

Back to the witnessing. That's a really good question. Oh, there's a second part. I'm sorry. Let me answer these in order. The first question was: so if predestination, if what we've discussed is locked and loaded and there's nothing you can do about it and then the question is, did you say why would one witness? Or do they have to be witnessed to? No. Understand that their eternal destination in heaven if they were predestined to salvation is going to occur whether they were witnessed to or not, even recognized the things of God or not. The purpose of witnessing in "Calvinism" is not so that someone might be saved but that they would fulfill obedience to what Jesus asked them to do. He said go into all the world so they are being obedient to their Savior even though it won't make a difference. It's about obedience.

Sir.

The question he's asking and I know it probably was hard to hear on the other side was: if God knows we're all of creation or humanity, let's just say real simply, he knows this side is going to be in heaven. Okay, go ahead.

The old Galatians 4. Yes.

Let's just presume as an analogy we've got 2 groups of people. We've got the group that he knows are going to be saved and the group that he knows will not and so the question becomes: how does he view that, so to speak? The only way I can answer that is he said, "I gave my Son for all of you. I gave you the opportunity. I have witnessed to you. I have given you knowledge. I have given you the ability." I mean, I've said this about my own children, I don't know what more I can do for them. I have given them everything I can do and they decided they didn't want to do it. I can't make them do it. Does that make sense? What do we say out in Texas? You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink.

Would it be difficult to know that? Oh absolutely.

Now, let me go over. We had 1 Peter open so let's flip over a few pages to the right, 1 and 2 Peter. In 2 Peter 3:9 says, "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." Now, y'all know what the word "all" means, right? It means all.

I'm not going to disagree with you, sir.

I agree with you. I want to put a big, I was asked to explain what something was. I didn't say I agreed with it, I just said I was asked to explain what was and hopefully I have been fair to what it is, if that makes sense.

Yes ma'am. You would have been fun in doctoral seminars. There is much debate whether y'all know it or not, at least in theological circles, this is one of the most heated discussions that is happening right now.

A closing sales pitch. Okay, there is a salesman in the house.

I'm on your side. We'll forgive them for being Italian. That's okay. Although we enjoyed the spaghetti tonight. Thank you to your heritage.

The question isn't whether he did that, the question based on what was asked tonight originally was: who did he do it for?

I'm not disagreeing. Yes Sir.

Okay, that's in Matthew 7. It's at the end of the Sermon on the Mount and to which Jesus states that not all who say "Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And he says, "And on that day many of you will say unto me we cast out devils in your name, we did mighty works in your name, we did this in your name." He says, "Depart from me, you adulterous people, I never knew you."

Calling on the name of the Lord to be saved and acting like you're saved are 2 different things. I mean, think about it. I mean, I can go and I can dress up the part of a baseball player, that doesn't mean I am one. Does that make sense?

Yes Sir. Any time the question begins with um. If someone is, okay.

Say that again.

Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether it be the God's on the other side of the floods, the God of the Amorites or the one true God.

Again, I agree with you, sir. I think the issue we're dealing with here is, I believe that the Bible says, "Choose you this day whom you will serve," but also it says that the Lord says, "I am God and I change not." In other words, I believe God is sovereign and I believe that man has will and so I'm right there and probably you are too. It's not either/or but it's both. God is sovereign and yet man does have will. You say how does that work out, he's God and we're not?

Hold on, yes ma'am, and then in the back.

Not that Bible study this morning. Oh okay. Yes ma'am. That was yesterday's reading. Was it today? Okay, I'm a little bit ahead. I apologize. I thought today was 29 through 31 of 1 Samuel. Well, I'm ahead of schedule. I apologize. I got ahead. I'm ahead. I apologize. The witch of Endor. I cannot answer that in 5 minutes but if you'll hold it over until next week we'll go for it. Can you wait that long? That isn't acting very confident. Lord willing. Maybe it's predestined, you've got to be. There's nothing I can do about it. I don't know.

Yes ma'am. Back row.

I took you to those 3 passages, obviously I did an adequate job, to hopefully show you that the passages that those who subscribe to Calvinism would declare that it is true that I don't believe those passages are addressing what they're saying they're addressing. They are not addressing who will be saved but as he said, the plan that God has ordained for salvation.

I'm just telling you what they believe.

Oh yes, the Scriptures I read to you are the Scriptures that they use to back it up.

I don't mean to be disparaging, most people I have discussed this with didn't even know those were the answers to a question. If we were in an academic environment, if we were and I know we're not but let's just pretend for a moment, let's just pretend, then what I would do is...if you came to me just hypothetical and you were advocating Calvinism, you subscribed to what we put up here earlier. I do not obviously, if you could not tell,



hopefully I made that clear. And we were in an academic environment, before we even discussed it, I would ask and I would say, "Stop, ma'am. Have you even read John Calvin's 2 volumes known as the Institutes?" If you say no, I say, "Then we can't even have this discussion because you're talking about something subscribed to a man whose writings you haven't even read." I have read both volumes. I have them marked. I can tell you how my Institutes look. When I read through both volumes of John Calvin's Institute, on the top I dog eared a page if it said he believed in predestination and on the bottom I marked if he believed in free will. He didn't even know what he thought but yet we have created a doctrine subscribed to his name of which came after he was even deceased. His followers, for lack of better terms, formulated this doctrine as a response to something but in our modern world has been taken as an independent thought of which they will take Scriptures such as we read to advocate their position. I believe that their position is not advocated by those Scriptures. It's not talking about the people who will be saved but as he wisely said, the plan that God put into place for our salvation. Is that anymore clear? Probably not. It has been 400 years we have been discussing this.

I've never met a Calvinist who did not think they were a Christian, you're absolutely correct.

Is it a cult? No, it's not a cult. There are different titles that are given to this. Now, let me give you some of the terms. We've got to pray and eventually, okay? But one of the things that you will see, if you see the term reformed, that is another word for this systematized belief. If someone says they come from the reformed tradition, that's what they are describing. Does that make sense? Understand, this is a view, I'm being as nice as I can. This is a view of what some people believe the Bible states in regard to salvation. I believe it's erroneous. I believe they've got realization and regeneration backwards. I do. And I believe that salvation that Jesus offered on Calvary, I am not willing based on what I've read in the Bible, I'm not willing to say that anybody is left out of that possibility just by God's declaration. I believe that everybody has the availability for salvation by God's declaration and that you and I, even though we are sinful, have an opportunity to make that decision of whether we're going to be a part of God's plan or not part of God's plan. Does that help out at all?

And therein is where the tension is created because we struggle with the difference of knowledge versus making. How many of y'all, okay, some of you are business guys and such, how many times have you said, "Well, I'm going to call that client. I know what their answer is going to be but I've got to call them anyway"? You call them, your call did not make them make that decision. You knew what it was in advance but they still had the opportunity to respond the way they did. You did not make them do it so the concept of foreknowledge, that's where it gets rough. Can I be honest with you? It gets rough. It's tough, okay, because God foreknew years and years and years ago that I would be saved but I'm going to tell you something, the way I read the Bible, God didn't twist my arm to be saved. He didn't say, "You're going to be." I believe he said, "You have the opportunity to be." Does that make sense? That's how I see things.

Okay, we've got 13 minutes and we need to pray and thank you for the lively discussion. Hopefully there is no confusion where I am, hopefully. We're on the same page? We're good? Okay, just checking. I was asked to explain something so I was trying to explain it.

What? Do you have a question or a prayer? You might be in trouble. I can do my best Paul Green possible.

If what now? He said if he has to understand all this to get into heaven, you're in trouble. I've got good news for you, in 2 Corinthians 11:3, the Apostle Paul tells the church at Corinth, he said, "I am bothered and upset by y'all because y'all have left the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus." I think one of the problems is when we try to make it complicated. It's very simple, so simple even you can get it.