

---

**Mission 119 Ministries**

**DECONSTRUCTING CALVINISM  
EPISODE 1: INTRODUCTORY  
MATTERS**

---

**Hutson Smelley**

**[www.sermonaudio.com/forestbranch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/forestbranch)**

---

# **SERIES GOALS**

- **Short, focused lessons**
  - **Explain Calvinism**
  - **Address claims of Calvinism**
    - **Exegetically**
    - **Historical**
    - **Philosophically**
-

---

# EXEGETICAL APPROACH

- **Overwhelmed by the proof texts? Take one at a time.**
  - **Twin purposes**
    - **Measure the proof texts against each truth proposition Calvinists put forward to determine whether the proof texts support none, some or all of the truth proposition**
    - **Consider whether the truth propositions Calvinists put forward, or their necessary implications, are contrary to clear scriptures**
  - **Special focus on “pillar” passages like Ephesians 1:4**
-

---

# EXEGETICAL APPROACH

- **Measuring proof texts against the truth proposition they are offered to prove**
  - **“Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*)**
    - **1. “act of God before creation”**
    - **2. God “chooses some people to be saved”**
    - **3. God’s choice of who to save “not on account of any foreseen merit”**
    - **4. God’s choice of who to save “only because of his sovereign good pleasure”**
-

---

# EXEGETICAL APPROACH

- **Measuring proof texts against the truth proposition they are offered to prove**
  - **For each “unconditional election” proof text, which of the four aspects (if any) of Grudem’s definition is shown?**
  - **Focus on context, flow of argument, structure**
  - **Properly define key words (don’t assume)**
  - **What should we make of proof texts that fall flat and have no colorable basis for being offered as a proof text?**
  - **The problem of willful bias**
-

---

# EXEGETICAL APPROACH

- **Are there clear verses that are inconsistent with the truth propositions of Calvinism?**
  - **Example: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. (Matthew 11:21-24)**
-

---

# HISTORICAL APPROACH

- **How did Calvinism historically develop?**
  - **Whether good exegesis establishes Calvinism is always the central question**
  - **But history provides significant data for our analysis**
  - **The evidence will show that Augustine developed Calvinism in connection with his infant baptism theology**
  - **Calvinism is a blend of Augustine's stoicism and Gnostic Manichaeism**
  - **Does it matter if at the end of the day the NT boils down to pagan philosophies draped in Christian lingo?**
-

---

# PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

- **What are the implications of Calvinism?**
  - **Can I consistently and rationally live out the implications of Calvinism for my life?**
  - **Why can't God just say it plainly?**
  - **How does Calvinism expand or diminish the attributes of God?**
  - **Does it make God "more" sovereign or "less"?**
  - **Is it appropriate to hide the implications of Calvinism from the people in the pews?**
-