

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” - Psalm 119:105

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Calvinism’s “Thorns in the Flesh”

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Calvinism is a doctrine espoused by most “Protestant” denominations to one degree or another. It takes its name from John Calvin who arranged its points into a somewhat orderly, theological creed. At Calvinism’s heart is its idea of the sovereignty of God. This view of God’s sovereignty sees Him as ruler from the standpoint that everything that has or ever will happen happens because it has been predetermined by God’s counsel and is brought about by His absolute control.

Yet, for Calvinists this view of God’s sovereignty is no small “thorn in the flesh” in the area of sin. For, if God has predetermined all things that have and will come to pass, how do we account for man’s sin?

Sovereignty and Sin

The subject of whether God is responsible for sin has brought no small problem to Calvinists. For, if Calvinists are correct in stating that “God controls all things and nothing happens that He has not ordained,” we must ask from whence came sin? In a discussion with a Calvinistic preacher, I asked this very question. His reply was that “...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.” So, there you have it. At one point Calvinists say that God has ordained and controls all things. Yet, when it comes to man’s sin, they have man doing what man wants instead of what God wants! You simply cannot have it both ways.

Sovereignty, Foreknowledge, and Sin

To the Calvinist, the sovereignty of God and the question of God's foreknowledge are inseparably linked. Calvinists cannot perceive of God "foreknowing" anything without Him first "foreordaining" it. In other words, if God knows something beforehand, it is because in His sovereignty He has predetermined that it will happen and "controls all things" so that it will happen. This, however, is another serious "thorn in the flesh" for the Calvinist when it comes to sin. Why? Because God "foreknew" that sin would be in the world and made a plan "before the foundation of the world" to deal with that sin (Eph. 1:3-12; 2 Tim. 1:9). So, if God "foreknew" that sin would exist, it must logically follow in Calvinistic thinking that God predetermined sin would happen and controlled all things so that sin would happen. Thus, God is the author of sin!

But, for Calvin and his followers it was easier to accept another blatant contradiction than to accept the consequences of their doctrine. Take, for example, the man I mentioned above. After stating that "...nothing happens that [God] has not ordained," he defends God by arguing that "...God acts in a way that keeps man accountable for his behavior" and that "man has his own will." This is nothing but verbal "smog!" If God foreordains and controls everything, how can God so act as to "keep man accountable for his behavior"? For Calvinists, man simply does what God has "foreordained" that he do. Thus, man is nothing more than a "robot." And, robots aren't accountable for their actions. So, again, Calvinism finds their doctrine placing the responsibility of sin squarely in the lap of God.

Conclusion

With these serious contradictions in mind, Calvinism must be rejected. For, although God is truly sovereign, His sovereignty is manifested in His desire and eternal purpose to present the gospel message to all sinners that they might choose salvation from their sin through faith and obedience (see John 3:16; Rom. 11:32; Titus 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

In Acts 10:33 Cornelius told Peter, "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." We have asked Rodney Pitts to come to Lakeview to share with us the things commanded by God, and he has now come. Are we all present? We need to be. They asked Peter "to stay a few days (:48)," and we have asked Rodney to do the same. He will be with us all week. Will you? Will you set aside worldly matters to come and focus on heavenly matters? I'm sure they had to make some adjustments to their schedules to listen to Peter for a few days, and you may need to do the same. Being here will be worth any sacrifices you need to make. — TN

"I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high."—Psalm 69:29

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24).