

Calvinism Part 1

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Date: 19 November 2024

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[0 : 00] So Calvinism has given us and continues to give us this raft of erroneous, that means in error, doctrines. And they're now worldwide. And the majority of churches today are Calvinist.

And so by adopting, firstly, by doing this study and then adopting the approach that I hope we will after we finish them, it puts us in the minority. And I don't mind being in the minority as long as we're true to God's word.

And Calvinism is not true to God's word for all sorts of reasons that you'll discover over the next few sessions. But before we go on, it's worth saying that we must treat our Calvinist brothers and sisters well.

For a start, you will never influence them away from Calvinism if you treat them harshly. But secondly, they are a strange mixed bag because most Calvinists are avid about evangelism and they're avid about preaching.

And they are good brothers and sisters in Christ. And among them, if you see right in the middle of the screen there, are really famous preachers like R.C. Sproul, Alistair Begg, D.A. Carson, Spurgeon, John MacArthur, John Piper, John Knox, A.W. Pink.

[1 : 17] And there's a load of others as well. And these are people who are considered to be giants in the world of scholarship. And it makes me feel, is it me that's wrong?

Because they are, they're up there. You wouldn't, you shouldn't disparage them. They teach on so many subjects so well and are so right about 90 plus percent of everything they speak about. It's only Calvinism that they've got wrong. In most cases, one or two of them, I've got a few other things wrong. But the majority of cases, Calvinism is their big, as the French would put it, *bete noire*.

It's, you know, their black beast. It's the thing that trips them up. And I'm left baffled because by the time we get to the end of these sessions, we'll be looking at it and saying, how come these men can't see this?

Because it's so obvious. It's not even buried deeply in scripture. It's on the surface. But they are definitely brothers and sisters in Christ.

[2 : 24] And it's their espousal of Calvin's doctrines that we take issue with. So we're going to not, today, we're not going to deal with Calvin's doctrines very much.

We'll mention one or two things, but we'll deal with the doctrines in depth in future sessions. And today we're going to look at the man. And that does involve looking at some of the things the man said.

So you can't completely avoid the doctrines. But we're not going to get into the acronym TULIP. Have you all heard of TULIP? Yeah. We're not going to get into that tonight other than to mention what it is.

So first of all, let's just, because the majority of this session is not going to contain scripture, but let's set it in scripture. In Matthew 7, 15 to 23.

While we find it, you know how sometimes a particular line of doctrine carries the name of its originator.

[3 : 24] So, you know, I'm just trying to think of an example now. I've said it. Calvinism is an example. Lutherism. You know, so the man Luther preached certain things, nailed his theses to the door of the cathedral in Wittenberg.

And so to this day, there are Lutheran churches which follow the doctrines of Luther. So Calvinism is another ism like that where people who claim to be Calvinists follow the doctrines and teachings of Calvin.

So Matthew 7 and verses 15 to 23. Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

And I do think ravenous wolf does describe this man. But you'll see why later. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

[4 : 43] So then you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does, the will of my Father who is in heaven, will enter.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles. And then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Now, if I was Calvin and I read that, I would be afraid because he did practice lawlessness in extremis.

But let's just take from this the fact that our only way of judging someone is by their fruit. You will know them by their fruit. Was he a true prophet or a false prophet?

Was he a true minister of God or a false minister of God? You will know them by their fruit. And as to his salvation, well, we'll deal with that further on. But there is no record of him having a salvation experience as such.

[5 : 44] He talks of a period of time when he kind of became emotional and his heart sang because he read something in scripture. But if you're supposed to know somebody by their fruit, you would expect to see the fruit of salvation.

And what we saw and what we will see is not that. And if we look at 1 John 2, and we don't have to look at all of these scriptures, but because they all make more or less the same point.

If we look at 1 John 2, 1 John 2 and verse 6. Which simply says this, the one who says he abides in him, Jesus, ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.

So there is an expectation, particularly of anybody that leads, but of all Christians, that if we claim the name of Christ, we walk like Christ walked to the extent that we're able to do so.

And although that will be different from person to person, and we can all have a bad day and we can all, you know, I was on the brink of road rage myself earlier this evening. But we can all have an off day.

[6 : 58] But when someone's lifestyle is viewed, you should generally see Christ-like behavior and Christ-like motivations. We're not going to see that, unfortunately.

These other verses, 1 Corinthians 11, verse 1, be imitators of me as I am of Christ. That was Paul saying that to the Corinthian church. You be like me and I'll be like Christ.

1 Peter 2, 21. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example that you might follow in his steps.

As I say, we don't, I mean, Ephesians 5 is a well-known one. Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. A fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

And we will turn to 1 Peter 5, verse 2, because it particularly relates to leaders, as I recall. Peter's writing to leaders.

[8 : 00] In fact, we'll start with verse 1. Therefore, I exalt the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness.

Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

So the Bible's exhortation to leaders is to not be overbearing, not be forceful, to be kind, to be loving, and to do everything with the right motives.

And so the question we need to ask at the end of this evening is, do we see that in Calvin? And if we don't see it, should we be embracing his doctrines?

[9 : 01] Now, one has to be careful with this approach, because I don't know if you've heard of the logical fallacy called ad hominem. Ad hominem means that you dismiss somebody's point of view because of what you know about them.

So somebody might express a point of view, and you happen to know they're a criminal. You say, well, you know, that's obviously rubbish. Don't you know he's a criminal? But actually, the fact that he's a criminal doesn't relate to his point of view.

He might be right, despite the fact that he's a criminal. And so Calvin could be right, despite the facts that we're going to reveal about him this evening.

He might still be right. He isn't, and we'll deal with that next week. But one has to be careful about an ad hominem approach, which is what we're doing here. We are looking at the character of the man and asking, how likely is it that good doctrine would come from that kind of character?

I've already said this talk is not full of scripture, but of history. Very unusual for me to deliver a talk that isn't full of scripture. Although I realized at the end there's more in it than I thought there would be.

[10:11] So just to lay a small foundation, you've already said you are familiar with the acronym TULIP. Could you explain that? Right.

So TULIP is an acronym. Each of the letters of the word TULIP stand for part of what Calvin teaches or taught. Now, the thing is, Calvin never, ever quoted this acronym.

He never said it. What happened was, about 50 years after he died, there was a church synod at Dort or Dortrecht. And that synod was trying to put together how churches should be conducted and the doctrines that they should follow.

And they did it from Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Faith. And Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Faith are, I think, I think originally there were seven volumes and there are five of them that are still extant.

You can still get five of them. But within the volumes, he wrote some fairly short books. So you've got book one, book two, book three, book four, book five.

[11:20] And I'm given to understand there were two other books, but they don't seem to be around anymore for people to read. But there's enough because Calvinism was based on book three, chapters 20 to 25.

So you can get the guts of what he founded his doctrine on. And you can download these off the Internet for free because they're so old now, they're not under any copyright.

So you can just download them. Or you can buy them from a bookshop. And so these five points are written on the board. The first point, the T, stands for total depravity.

Now, what you'll realize as we read through these things, at least some of them, is the subtlety of the semantic argument. Because when you read total depravity, you would think to yourself, well, I can go with that because we were, before we were saved, we were totally depraved.

And some of us were more depraved than others. But we all have the potential to be just as depraved as Hitler if it comes to it. If we realized our full potential to be depraved, we could be as bad as the worst person on Earth.

[12:32] So we kind of go with that, don't we, in our heads. And so people would say, well, yeah, I can go along with point one. But what they don't understand is Calvin's definition of total depravity.

Sometimes it's not called total depravity. Sometimes people register it as total inability. But Calvin's take on it wasn't what we would think. His interpretation is, you are dead in your trespasses and sins.

Therefore, spiritually speaking, you're a corpse. So you can't respond to God. You can't respond to anything. You can't say yes or no. You can't pass an opinion because you're a corpse.

Yeah, yeah, exactly. I can see the cogs going around. Much worse than going on then, really. No, but what this means, according to the Calvinists, what this means is that God has to touch you and regenerate you before you can have faith to turn to Christ.

So they've turned on its head the doctrine of salvation. When we read John chapter 3, verses 14 to about 18, what we read is, well, let's do it because if I quote it, I'll only get it wrong.

[13:49] John chapter 3, starting at verse 14. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, which is a sort of metaphor for the crucifixion, isn't it?

So that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. The belief comes first before eternal life. You have to believe. You give him the evidence.

You have to view the evidence. Decides to believe it to be saved. What the Calvinists say is you can't believe it because you're a corpse unless God gives you the ability to believe it.

So you need to be regenerated beforehand. So it completely turns on its head the normal run of what we would teach and what the Bible teaches about salvation. Then unconditional election. What that means is if you're part of the elect, it's absolutely unconditional. Doesn't matter what you say or do. You can't avoid. If God has elected you for salvation, then salvation you will have.

[14:54] Conversely, if God hasn't elected you for salvation, there's no way you can get saved. And their view is that this all took place before the foundation of the world, because there is a scripture that says that the talks of Christ slain before the foundation of the world, that they take the view that before the foundation of the world, God decided who would and would not be saved.

And I'll throw it in at this point, but it will come up again. Deciding who will and will not be saved. We have to accept that God foreknows everything. And therefore, he does know who will and won't be saved.

But to foreknow something is not the same as to forecause something. Right. God doesn't cause people to be saved in the sense of he doesn't make the decision for them.

It has to be an act of free will, because if it's not an act of free will, it is not a choice. And salvation has to be a choice. And we'll cover that in more depth as we go through.

So limited atonement is the one that most people struggle with immediately, because it says that God didn't die for the sins of the whole world. He only died for the sins of the elect. Right.

[16:07] And that is is an absolute confrontation with which Calvin was presented many times. And his answer was always, well, it's just a mystery. But he didn't say I'm wrong.

He said it's a mystery. Only God knows. And not only that, but you can't know it and you shouldn't try and find it out. And in his day, of course, you could get executed for owning a Bible.

So you weren't supposed to find things out about God. You were supposed to ask Mr. Calvin. It gets worse. So limited atonement, whereas the Bible teaches unlimited atonement.

Irresistible grace means that once God has extended his grace toward you, you can't possibly resist it. You're going to get saved. And yet the Bible teaches us that, as we've just been reading in John, if I be lifted up from the earth, well, we didn't read this passage, but he does say, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto myself.

Well, the Calvinists would say, yeah, but that all men doesn't mean all men. It means the elect. I will draw all of the elect to myself. You see where the doctrine, we haven't even got into it yet.

[17:19] The doctrine's all over the place. But he says he will draw all men unto himself. Now, we know that all men don't get saved. So the grace cannot be irresistible.

And if it was irresistible, instead of having a love relationship with Jesus, we would have a robotic relationship with Jesus. He could have created mankind to do his bidding.

But that would be completely free of emotion, completely free of real love, completely free of heartfelt obedience. It would just be an automatic response because that's what you were created to do.

So grace is not irresistible. And the last one, the P, is perseverance of the saints. And we would tend to think of that, that once you're saved, you can't get unsaved, that your salvation perseveres. You get saved and you stay saved. Now, Calvinists add a twist to that because what they say is that once you're saved, you should, for the whole of the rest of your life, be demonstrating your salvation by walking uprightly and righteously.

[18:26] And if you're not doing that, it probably means you were never saved. So that removes your assurance of salvation totally because you've only got to have a bad day.

And then you wonder, well, was I ever saved? So what you can see is that even at this early stage, all five points of Calvinism are not biblical.

And you'll come across people sometimes in writing, but you might come across them in conversation and say, well, I'm not a five-point Calvinist. I'm probably a four-point. And most of them leave out the limited atonement bit.

But even one of my favorite Bible teachers ever, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, claims to be a four-point Calvinist.

But what you'll find as we study it is they all cascade from one to the other. And if you've got one, you've got the lot. It's very difficult to take one out and live up to the rest.

[19:29] I'm not going to try and explain that now because I'll just get diverted. But all five points are not sound. Total depravity could be sound apart from they put a weird definition on it.

And it's like that with all of the five points, that each of them has a definition that when you look at it closely, you think, no, that's not right. Unfortunately, people that go to Calvinist churches often don't look beyond the surface.

The teacher that they've known all their lives, people like John Piper, John MacArthur, D.A. Carson, people who are famous and have got a lot of scholarly stuff to say, they don't think to question what they say.

And we must always remember that Bereans were told that they were doing well because they questioned the Apostle Paul. And if the Apostle Paul is happy to be questioned, so should D.A. Carson and any of the others.

You know, it's our job as Christians not to just swallow what we're given, but to critically appraise it. So we've already looked at the fact that sometimes the error is subtle because it gives you think, oh, I can go along with that.

[20 : 41] And then you look a bit deeper and you think, no, actually, that's not what I thought they meant. And if you take that time to go that bit deeper, you'll dig it up. These are just some useful, when you get the notes, these are some places you can get some good information.

The first one is Soteriology 101 website, a guy called Leighton Flowers. He used to be a Calvinist pastor. And after a few years, he realized he was wrong.

And he addressed his whole congregation and said, I'm really sorry, I've led you astray. And he spent, ever since, he spent undoing what he used to teach. And he teaches and debates against Calvinists.

And there is actually a good debate between him and a guy called James White, who is an avid Calvinist and a very clever debater.

But it's worth a listen to because I think, I don't think James White answers any of the questions. I think he uses clever debating tactics to avoid the questions.

[21 : 42] And Leighton Flowers gives a very good account of why Calvinism is wrong. There's another website called Beyond the Fundamentals. And there's a pastor on that called Kevin Thomas. And he deals with all of the scriptures that Calvinists use as proof texts.

So it's really, really useful. The only thing I will say is he does get a bit technical. This limited atonement, he decided to look at the word atonement. And he looked at every single occurrence of it throughout the scripture.

And that's on a video. Now, unless you're really in study mode, that will send you to sleep. But he's a very, very scholarly man. Then there's a large book. I don't know if you've got Lawrence Vance. Yeah.

We have as well. And it is a very large book. Yeah. And it is heavy going. It's a doorstop. And it's heavy going. But it is well written. It's very scholarly. And it really takes apart Calvinism.

If you want to read it, then I suggest you approach Linda or Adrian for a loan. And there's another book which I've got, and I'm sure others have too, What Love Is This by Dave Hunt.

[22 : 45] And that is a very, it's kind of good and bad in the same breath. It's good in that it covers everything. And it's very easy to read. It's very straightforward. It's written for the man in the street.

It's not highfalutin. But it is what they would call tautologist. In other words, it repeats itself a lot. And the good thing about that is wherever you dive in, if you go, what does he say about limited atonement?

Go to the section on limited atonement, and you'll get quite a lot from the other sections as well as limited atonement because he's repeated himself. So that's the good side of it. The bad side of it is if you pick it up and try to read it like a novel, you get a bit fed up of going over the same ground.

But he's written it very well. And then, of course, there's the published works of Calvin himself. And so you can have a look. And book three, chapters 23 to 25 are particularly relevant.

But if you read the whole lot, if you can stay awake whilst doing so, what you see is how he's formulated his views over the initial books and chapters.

[23 : 50] Then you see Calvinist doctrine come out. And then you see towards the end, I think, some attempts to answer questions or queries or to reinforce what he's already said. But the central bit, book three, chapters 23, 25 are particularly relevant.

Very few people have read Calvin's Institutes. And yet an awful lot of people are ready to pass an opinion on Calvinism. And I don't think one should until one has read his Institutes.

So Calvin, he was an Augustinian. He quoted Augustine about 400 times in his Institutes. So in order to get to the bottom of his doctrine, you need to work out who Augustine was, because so much of what Calvin said wasn't original.

It came from Augustine. And Augustine was a source of many, many errors that came into the early church. Augustine was around in the fifth century AD.

Calvin came on the scene in about, well, I think he was born in 1524. And so he was among the first and possibly the first to introduce the idea that you can interpret the Bible allegorically.

[25 : 04] And he particularly was referencing the creation account and basically saying, you don't need to take this literally. There are allegorical points to be made here.

Allegorical simply means symbolic, I think is the simplest way to put it. It's all a symbolism. And he did that with quite a lot of doctrines. And he wasn't totally, there was a bunch of people, one of which was Cyprian of Carthage, I think, was one of them, that were total allegorists.

The whole of scripture was just dismissed as all allegory. In fairness to Augustine, he wasn't a total allegorist, but he picked large chunks out and decided to interpret them allegorically rather than face the questions and the difficulties.

And that could have been to avoid persecution because it involved upsetting Rome to be really strident about the fact that the Bible was literally God's word. And so he was one of the earliest Roman Catholics.

He believed in purgatory. And by the way, as we go through this list, Calvin alludes to all of these things in his institutes. He believed in purgatory. He believed that Mary was divine and sinless.

[26 : 22] He believed that church tradition was on a par with scripture. And so, you know, it's absolutely typical Roman Catholicism. And in fact, Anglicanism, because the Anglicans would also believe that church tradition is on a par with scripture.

And along with the Pharisees, you're right. He wasn't a millennialist. That was one of the things he said was allegorical. There is not, according to Augustine and Calvin, there is not going to be a thousand year reign of Christ on the earth.

At the end of the tribulation. That. They believed they were a millennialists who believe there isn't going to be a literal millennium. They actually believe we're in the millennium now.

And they somehow convinced themselves that because we're in the millennium now, Satan is bound. Now, most Calvinists are a millennialist, not all.

John MacArthur, for example, is not an a millennialist. He's a free tripper. But the majority of Calvinist teachers are a millennialists.

[27 : 26] And so they they dismiss everything to do with the thousand year reign of Christ as just being it's a symbolic thing. And we're already in it. And it's not a literal thousand years and so on.

So Calvin is taking his lead from this man who believes all this. And when you read his institute, you'll find that he believes all this, too. Oh, he also believed the Apocrypha to be inspired.

And, you know, if you've ever been to a Roman Catholic church or if you go to one today and pick up one of their Bibles, it will have the Apocrypha in it, which is sometimes it's called the Pseudepigrapher.

And it's I quite prefer that because it sounds like pig. But it's a load of useful books. I think about 17 in total, if you get one of the older because they've reduced the number of books over years.

But if you get one of the early editions, it's about 17 books that the Catholics say are equal with Scripture and are anointed. But when you read them, they contradict Scripture.

[28 : 32] And they can't. There are some very funny stories. There are. And also they have good historical fact in them. So, for instance, the books of Maccabees will tell you a lot about that Jewish revolt, the Maccabean revolt under, was it Bar Kokhba?

Bar Kokhba. Yeah, Rabbi Bar Kokhba. And where they went and slaughtered a pig in the temple. And that caused a Jewish uprising, which got back the temple.

And that's another story which would take too long for me to tell. But they believed the Apocrypha to be inspired. And the true church never, ever did.

They were never accepted as anointed books. But Augustine was one of the ones who suggested that they were, despite the fact that they contradict Scriptures. And they do things like, it's from the Apocrypha that doctrines like buying your indulgences.

You know, you can buy your way out of sin, buy your way out of hell. Doctrines of purgatory, that comes from the Apocrypha. Praying to saints comes from Apocrypha. Praying to Mary comes from

the Apocrypha.

[29 : 45] So he included all those in the Bible and said they were anointed books. It's also worth mentioning that many people who they claim to Calvinism, they don't really understand what it means.

They'll be going to a church that's a Calvinist church. And when asked, they'll say, well, yes, I'm a Calvinist. And if you say to them, do you realize, for example, that that means that you believe that God's atonement was only for a certain number of people?

It wasn't for the whole world. They'll probably quite often go, well, no, I don't believe that. Well, then you're not a Calvinist. But they've become Calvinists kind of vicariously by going along to a church who happens to have their favorite minister.

And quite often, these favorite ministers are very good teachers. So they're quite magnetic and they draw people. Calvin espoused all the teachings of Augustine.

And anyone who disagreed with one thing Augustine had in common with Calvin and also with Luther is that to anybody that disagreed with them, stood against them, wanted to debate with them, they were brutal.

[30 : 59] And I mean, really brutal. Hitler-esque, absolutely awful. And people who asked questions or said, well, I can't see how that can be true.

At the lower end, they could be slung out of the city, divested of all their property, have all their property confiscated. And just sent out with nothing to fend for themselves, complete with their families.

At the other end, they could be executed, including being birthed at the stake, just for disagreeing or having the temerity to ask a question. You know, how did you arrive at that doctrine?

You know, I've read it and I can't see it. How did you get there? What? Prison. Yeah. Now, Calvin and Luther and Augustine all had this really harsh approach to anybody who just had the nerve to ask for an explanation.

And of course, people had no, they weren't allowed to own Bibles. They could be executed if they found, if they were found with a Bible. So they couldn't read it for themselves. They had to ask questions.

[32 : 11] And if they asked questions, they got flung and clink or worse. Calvin was someone who said that only scholarly people should read the Bible.

And mostly what he meant was, I'm the only one who should read the Bible. In the city of Geneva, which is where he was, he looked upon himself. And one or two of his toadies, he had a select few who he would permit to read the Bible.

And he wouldn't let anybody else preach for quite a while. And then he started to let one or two others preach. But you couldn't go into Geneva, set up your charismatic church and preach.

That was just, you know, you'd have them all executed for doing that. And so this view that this was not for the common man, this was for those who were qualified to read it.

And of course, to get your qualification, you had to go through him. He had this tight control. There's an absolute control freak. But yes, quite a lot of Calvinists don't understand the terminology.

[33 : 16] So you might, for example, you might say that Calvinists believe in predestination. You might say to a Calvinist, so if you're a Calvinist, you believe in predestination.

And they might say, well, no, I don't. Well, then you're not a Calvinist. You've got to understand what Calvinist means by predestination, because the Bible teaches predestination. What you don't get from Calvinism is who exactly is predestined to what.

Because they always talk about predestination to salvation. And predestination is not to salvation. Predestination is for those who are saved to the benefits that God placed there for saved people to enjoy.

So if you're saved, you're also predestined. But predestination has got nothing to do with salvation. And we look at that more deeply as we go through. Right.

Yeah. Calvinism as the wrong people predestined to the wrong thing. I've covered about being Berean. Oh, another thing Augustine believed, and so did Calvin, was in apostolic succession from Peter, which, of course, we covered in church Sunday before last, didn't we?

[34 : 33] Petros versus Petra. He believed that Peter was the rock upon which the church was founded. And all the doctrines that came from that, things like celibacy when Peter was actually married, and we read about his mother-in-law's house.

But he believed in this apostolic succession, and so the popes had succeeded after Peter, and there was a provable chain from Peter all the way through to the modern popes.

Peter would turn in his grave if he knew. I've already said there's no specific record of his own experience of salvation. This is Calvin. And all three, I've already said, persecuted anybody who offered a contrary opinion to theirs.

And they enforced their doctrine over the general populace with threats of violence, torture, or even execution. So one of the things Calvin made church attendance mandatory for everyone in Geneva, whether they were believers or not.

You had to go to church if you wanted to keep your family, keep your goods, keep your head. But church attendance in the whole of Geneva was mandatory. I could think of nothing worse, can you, than having a group of people whose hearts are not in it.

[35 : 59] All three of them, Calvin in particular, regularly misquote the Bible or take it out of context. And we'll look at more of that as we go through. But the sort of man he was, on one occasion, two men had a fight.

They got drunk and they had a fight in the street. And Calvin found out about it and he had the two of them executed for having a punch-up when drunk in the street.

Now, we shouldn't get drunk. We shouldn't have punch-ups in the street. But execution is a bit of a heavy penalty. The thing is, what we would say, yeah, they're idiots, they shouldn't have done it.

But whose business was it? It was their business. You know, it's not something you'd encourage, but you wouldn't put people to death for it. The other thing he would do all the time is he would just randomly inspect houses.

So if you were living in Geneva in his time, there'd be a knock on the door and it would be him or his henchmen. And they'd come in and carry out a house inspection. And it wasn't just a question.

[37 : 05] I mean, it was a question of looking around. You'd have a look in your food cupboard, see what sort of thing you were eating, because he used to impose dietary restrictions on everybody. You weren't allowed to eat too much because that was sinful.

That was gluttony. You weren't allowed to have too many meals in a day. He himself was obsessed with not eating. He used to eat one meal a day.

And if you ever see photos or pictures of him, not photos because they didn't have cameras back in the 1500s, but if you see portraits of him, he is incredibly gaunt and skinny. And he used to eat one very, very meager meal every day.

And that probably contributed to his early death because he died in his mid-50s. He would also take the children away and question them about how often the parents had family prayer meetings and whether they had family Bible readings.

Now, he was obsessed with the scriptures. And so his sort of little handle of righteousness on all of this was he was insisting that people followed God.

[38 : 11] So he insisted that they read the word. He insisted that they prayed. Whether they believed or not didn't come into it. He also believed, and it's on a later slide, but he believed in baptismal regeneration.

And that means baptism saves. If you're not baptized, you're not saved. But that brought about infant baptism. Because if you had a child, according to Calvin and Augustine, you could protect that child eternally by getting them baptized as young as possible.

So if they died because of a childhood illness or accident or whatever, or even if they went off the rails later in life, if you had them baptized when they were a child, you were told that child's salvation was secure.

Apparently that made them one of the elect. And if you're elect, you get saved regardless of your conduct. So it was, you can't look for logic in these doctrines because they are the ramblings of a madman in my view.

And yet, so much of the church has become convinced that he was right. And instead of having talks like this, they sanitize his history and they put him up on a pedestal.

[39 : 27] My son is a Calvinist. And you go to their house and their family Bible studies and they'll often read quotes from Calvin. And, you know, this amazing man, Calvin, whom we've got so much to thank for, is what they talk about.

Which, and I've said to him, you know, this man was heinous. And no, he wasn't. And I told him one of the accounts that we're going to look at tonight, if we're still going by the time we get to that.

And he went away. And the next time he met me, he said, well, that man that he had put to death was just an idiot because he returned to Geneva. And, you know, and I said, but that's not an excuse for unchristlike behavior.

You don't kill people just because they return to their hometown. You have a doctrinal disagreement with them. So anyway, he would do this and he had absolute control.

And if he came into your house, carried out an inspection and wasn't happy with the result, you would be punished in some way, extremely punished in some way.

[40 : 36] So it was utter tyranny. Yeah. So remember 1 John 2 verse 6 that we read earlier. We would expect ministers to be Christlike. He was not. We've covered the next bit.

He believed that only the elites should read the Bible. How did he get around that? They all had to have a prayer time and Bible meetings at home. I don't know.

That's a good point because he does, because it's, it might well have been prescribed. I must admit, I don't know. They might well have done. I must admit, I missed that point as I went through.

And over time, people would confront him with unanswerable questions. Because when your doctrine is skew and if people do get access to a Bible, they will say, well, I've used this as an example.

You say that Jesus did not die for the sins of the whole world, which of course is what he does say, only for the elect. And people might say to him, the Bible says that's wrong.

[41 : 34] So there's an unanswerable question. And his answer would always be, well, it's a mystery and we can't know it and you shouldn't try to find it out. And another phrase he used was that when people said, why has, why has Jesus consigned people?

And it would have to be the majority of people because the majority of people worldwide are not saved. Why has he consigned the majority of people to hell before the foundation of the world?

And his answer would be because it was his pleasure to do it. For those of us who know the Bible, if you read Ezekiel 18, God says, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Peter says that it's that God wants all men to be saved. So this is in direct contradiction to the scriptures, but he wouldn't go, oh, I must be wrong then.

He would always defend his wicked by using this magical mystery. You know, it's a mystery and we can't know that. And nobody seems to have said, so if we can't know that, how come you know it?

[42 : 47] So under his teaching, he taught that only the elect were saved. We'll deal with election as we go through.

But for this point, at this point, I'll just say election is nothing to do with being chosen for salvation. Election, it transpires, was to do with the Jews being chosen to carry the oracles of God.

That was election. And there are lots of contentious scriptures we can talk about if you want to. So instead of being born into this world, a sinner and coming across the gospel and being presented with the facts.

And deciding that these facts add up and therefore, yes, Lord, please save me. Instead of that, you came into this world and you had no say whatsoever because he dismisses free will completely.

You don't have the ability to exercise free will to say, yes, please, Lord. He would also say that that corresponded to a salvation by works.

[43 : 55] When you said yes to Jesus, that was considered a work. And it isn't a work. Strangely, one of the men who put this into context for me is a Calvinist friend of mine.

And he said, it's a bit like you're riding your motorbike down the lane and you have an accident and you finish up in the ditch with broken legs. And you're laying in the ditch and you can't move.

And you've got a motorbike on top of you and you've got broken legs. And somebody comes past and looks in and you say, can you help get me out of this ditch, please? Now, shouting, can you get me out of this ditch, please?

Is not a work. But that's what it is when you discover that you're not saved and you need to be saved. And we're hoping this is what people do on Sunday. Can you help get me out of this ditch, please?

But according to Calvin, you were chosen for either heaven or hell before the foundation of the world. There's no personal choice involved. And you can't choose because you're dead and corpses can't choose.

[44 : 57] This leads to a belief called, you may hear this phrase, double predestination. So double predestination simply means you're predestined to either heaven or hell.

When you're born, you're already predestined either to heaven or to hell. That's double predestination. If you hear that phrase, that's what it means. And this same Calvinist friend of mine said, I know that double predestination doesn't really add up, but I just believe it. But as we've already read, you have to be born again. You have to believe before you can be born again. And that's what Jesus said to Nicodemus.

Unless you be born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. What Calvinists say is you can't believe unless you're born again. So they put this regeneration before salvation rather than as a result of faith.

Is this all useful so far? So can you go back to that one again? You have to be born again to believe, not believe and be born again.

[46 : 11] Now that's the Calvinist view. You've got to be born again first in order to believe. So what they say is you go through your life and God reaches out and touches you and you're born again.

And that enables you to develop faith and to walk into salvation, which is back to front. It's back to front. In other words, you don't have any, you don't have actually any say in it.

Correct. And you can't have an opinion because you're dead. Which is a complete misrepresentation of what happened at the fall.

Because in Christianity, those who are saved are referred to as sleeping. Those who are unsaved are referred to as dead when they die.

Adam, when Adam fell and he said, you shall, and God said to him, you shall surely die. Adam was still walking about. And he was still able to respond to God, though he wasn't saved and needed the vicarious death of Messiah to save him in the end.

[47 : 22] You know what I mean? I mean, it came many years later, but he was saved the same way the rest of us are saved by belief in Christ. Belief in the one to come in his instant. It renders preaching completely unnecessary.

And yet Calvinists are avid preachers. And I've never been able to get my head around that. Why? Why? You don't need the Bible.

You don't need anything. No. Because if you're elect, you can't fail to get saved. It's nonsense. So in that case, Jesus didn't need to come either. Well, yeah.

So Christ went through that brutal death for absolutely nothing. It's mad. But it has another, I think, more sinister. This doctrine makes God the author of all things.

Right? Before the foundation of the world, he said, you could be saved and you can't. So God is the author of that man's salvation and that man's demise. Now, what causes a man not to be saved?

[48 : 29] Sin. Sin. So this makes God the author of sin. How can a righteous God be the author of sin? Yeah, but if they're going to go to hell anyway, then surely sin doesn't count any more than...

Well, except that God is portrayed as a God of justice. Yes. And so there has to be a reason to send someone to hell. So they have to do something that warrants justice being exercised against them.

But it gets so wrapped up. And this is one of the problems with Calvinism. They've created this enigma, this...

No, it's not an enigma, a paradox. They've created a paradox that they spend the rest of their lives trying to answer. And there isn't an answer other than the whole doctrine is wrong.

It's very sad that it's got such a firm hold on Christendom. And the other thing is, they don't know if they're elect. Exactly. Well, yes, exactly.

[49 : 35] I think it was... You can have false salvations without it, isn't it? Yeah. And I think it was... Like how he's wrong. Yeah. It's a good example.

He actually said not long before he died, actually. He didn't know whether he was a member of the elect. Yeah. And yet... And we were going to come to this, but we might as well do it now.

If you go to 2 Peter 4... No, not 2 Peter. 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy 4, verse 6.

This is Paul facing death. He is about to be beheaded in the next few days. And he says, Paul knew where he was going.

He had absolute assurance of where he was going. And not only that, he said that everybody else who loves the Lord's appearing can have that same confidence. So this whole idea of, you know, you don't actually know whether you're elect until the day you die.

[50 : 56] And even then, you're not sure. You could be on your deathbed, drawing your last breath. You still don't know. That gives no assurance of salvation at all. But R.C. Sproul said that. And there

was also another...

I can't remember who it was, but it was Sproul who spoke about him as he came up to the day of his death. And he said to everybody, there were something like 800 people in the congregation, and he said to them all, pray that he dies in the faith.

Now, this is a man who'd served God all his life. All his adult life, he'd been a minister. He'd served God, and yet he's dying. And people in the church are praying that he will die in the faith.

It's absolutely mad. Absolutely bonkers. In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 11... Let's turn there. So this is Paul talking to Christians in the Corinthian church, and he says, Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God, and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

We are not, again, commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.

[52 : 11] So Paul was saying here, our job is to persuade men. Why would you put that job upon a church if there's no point in trying to persuade men, because the decision's already been made?

It does not add up. In Calvin's world, persuasion is unnecessary. In the Apostle Paul's word, persuading men is what we should do.

Jude also said about apostate churches, If it be possible, save some. Go in there and persuade them. What was he asking them to persuade them of?

The faith handed down by the apostles. The faith that was handed down. And Psalm 119, verse 105, very famous verse, God's word is a lamp unto our feet.

Now, Keith Green's song, isn't it? And a chorus. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

[53 : 15] Sorry, Joe, when you come to edit this. If God's word is a lamp unto our feet, it means that all of us have somewhere to go following that light. Don't we?

But 2 Peter 3.16, I think, is a good. So this is talking about Paul. Probably best start at verse 14. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by him in peace, spotless and blameless.

And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. Just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of Scripture to their own destruction.

So it's a point. The point is that those who distort Scripture do so to their own destruction. And I think we're going to conclude by the end of these sessions that that's exactly what Calvin did. He distorted Scripture to his own destruction. And I find myself wondering, although you can't apply this principle universally, but he died prematurely.

[54 : 34] And you do wonder if that was an indication that he had done what he'd done to his own destruction. Unfortunately, Arminius also died prematurely, and you wouldn't say the same of him. So it's not always the case that people who die prematurely have upset the Lord.

But it is the case that that does sometimes happen. There's an inscription about those that you're halfway to hell, you're leaving the rest to hell. Yeah. So we've looked at Jude.

Augustinian doctrine, which is the same as Calvinist doctrine, was absent from the preaching of the earliest church fathers, such as Justin Martyr. You will find no reference to any of the doctrines that he espoused in the really early church fathers.

Who was the other one? It was Justin Martyr and there was Polycarp, who I think were both apostles of John. John the Baptist. Yeah. Because Polycarp was with John.

And then Justin Martyr was with Polycarp. And at least one of them also had teaching from the early church fathers. It was taught by Paul, too.

[55 : 46] But it wasn't until the late 4th and the early 5th centuries that these doctrines crept in. Oddly, you'd be so surprised, there was a big surge at the time of Emperor Constantine, who supposedly had this wonderful vision and started the Roman Catholic Church.

And the Roman Catholic Church, overnight, all the old pagan priests became Roman Catholic priests, which is why you see so much paganism in Roman Catholic doctrine. But, you know, we are not supposed to live by bread alone, but by God's word, by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

His word is supposed to nourish us, not the traditions of a corrupt church, and certainly not the traditions of a corrupt man. Yes, Acts 10.42, there's a sermon there that Peter was preaching. And he invites all present to believe. If Calvinism was true, he wouldn't. He would have said, which are you of the elect? But he invites all to believe.

And we're all able to believe when somebody gives us the evidence, which is the gospel. You receive the gospel. You have enough evidence to choose to believe or not. And Romans 1 majors on this.

[57 : 00] Because of his creation, you are without excuse. So Calvin's view is evidence doesn't matter. It was all decided before the foundation of the world. I've said it already.

Predestination is not to do with salvation. Believing is not a work. Calvinism teaches that it is. So it's salvation by works if you're able to say, please get me out of this ditch.

It reinterprets many common phrases and words. We've already seen some of that. And all the references where the Bible says all or everyone or the whole world or all men, they must all be interpreted as the elect.

And when you say why, they can't tell you. Because I've done it many times. And they kind of go, well, what it comes to is this. It's circular logic. It must mean the elect.

Otherwise, Calvin's doctrines are wrong. You see? Circular logic. And we've already said to foreknow is not to forecause something.

[58 : 05] I'm not going to look at it now. But in Romans 8, what we read about God's foreknowledge is that God has set aside a range of benefits for those who are saved. And we look at that more closely because that's a statement that needs to be justified.

But if I start justifying it now, we'll be here for another hour. An analogy that I use, though, for predestination is workplace benefits. Well, there are two analogies I use.

One is workplace benefits and the other is football highlights. Workplace benefits. When I was working for McCarthy and Stone as a director, I was an employer. And I used to interview and employ people.

Now, anybody that said yes to I made them an offer, just like God has made us all an offer of salvation. I don't think the two are at all parallel, but you know what I mean. If they said yes, they wanted to come to work for me.

They were predestined. As soon as they said yes, they were predestined to get the company car, a decent salary, a pension scheme, a company sickness benefit scheme, a certain amount of holiday.

[59 : 12] They were predestined to get those benefits once they'd said yes. And predestination is very similar in the kingdom of God, that once you've said yes to Jesus, he has a range of benefits that you immediately walk into as a result of being saved.

So you're predestined to get those if you're saved. You're not going to get them if you're not saved. The other useful analogy, I think, is that I inadvertently, because you know how much I love football, I inadvertently watched a football match once upon a time with my father-in-law.

And there was an amazing goal. And even me, who has got no interest whatsoever in football, thought, wow, that was amazing. And then at some later point, I saw highlights where this goal was replayed.

And before the ball was struck, I could have said, that ball's going to go in the top right-hand corner of the net. And whoever I said that to, I said, how did you know?

Did you make that happen? Well, no, I didn't cause it. I just had foreknowledge of it because I'd seen the match. And God has foreknowledge of everything.

[60 : 27] He sees it all before it happens, but he doesn't cause it to happen. He deals with the consequences of it happening. And he uses all things, works all things together for good to those that love him. But foreknowledge does not mean to cause.

So whether you're in or out remains a matter of free will. And believe it or not, the simple concept of free will is a really contentious subject, particularly with Calvinists, because what they say is, if you're exercising your free will against the will of God, then it gives you more power than God.

So you can't possibly have free will. Now, that's nonsense. And it's nonsense because God gives free will so that we have a choice, because we need a choice to have a love relationship.

You know, if I proposed to Sharon 47 years ago, I think, if I proposed to her all that time ago and she had to say yes, it would be a meaningless marriage.

Certainly there would be no love in the marriage. She had to decide to say yes. And here we are. And we've covered this last bit.

[61 : 44] Calvin states that he sends people to hell because it's his pleasure to do so. So if you could look at those scripture references. But do turn to 1 Timothy 4 verse 10. I just want to get to Calvin's complete debacle before we finish.

1 Timothy 4 verse 10 says this, And it kind of marries up with that scripture in 1 John that says he died for the sins of the whole world.

Let's suppose I had not turned to Christ. He still died for my sins. I just chose not to take advantage of that. I chose to go my own way to try and get myself saved.

But especially those who believe. Right. So we're going to finish with this. Calvin's most famous crime.

And this is by no means his only crime. And I could have picked others. And you may find out about others as we go through. But the sort of man he was, he once wrote a letter about Anabaptists.

[63 : 11] Now, Anabaptists were people who what they did was they realized, particularly as a result of Luther. They realized that they'd not been adhering to solely the scripture.

And the scripture said you should be baptized. And so the Anabaptists wanted to be baptized. Well, to the likes of Calvin, this was heresy because you were being baptized again and your infant baptism was sufficient.

And the penalty for that was often death. That if you, I mean, he would either have them beheaded or he would baptize them under the ice of Lake Geneva and they would drown.

And it was brutal. And that was common. Or they could be burned at the stake. But the most famous of his victims was a man called Michael Servetus.

And Michael Servetus was someone whose doctrine was skewed. He was actually, in many ways, a far more godly man than Calvin. But he believed that the doctrine of the Trinity was error.

[64 : 14] And he wanted to debate Calvin on this matter. He, if you read the third line, when he was dealing with Anabaptists, one of the letters that he wrote to a colleague suggested that it wasn't sufficient for them to suffer death.

They should be burned cruelly. In other words, over a slow fire so that it took them a long time to die. And that's the kind of, I mean, this man was a sadist, a complete sadist.

So anyway, when it came to Michael Servetus, he wanted to debate Calvin. And Calvin said that he should have his gut torn from his live body.

That was his response to a request for a debate. That this man, being in error, he should have his gut torn from his live body. And he said that if Servetus ever returned to Geneva, he would never allow him to leave alive.

Now, the thing was, when he did return to Geneva, and he returned to Geneva and he went to church because you did and because actually Servetus was a believer, he was arrested.

[65 : 26] And according to Geneva law, what should have happened to him is he should have been sent out of the city. But Calvin wasn't going to let him go. And Calvin had written laws that gave him the authority to arrest and put him to trial.

And if found guilty, put him to death. The thing was, the trial was rigged because the judge at the trial was Calvin and the main witness at the trial was Calvin. So it was a complete setup.

And he put this man in front of his own court and found him guilty and wanted to have him beheaded because if he was beheaded, and this is so, the scheming in this man was unbelievable.

If he was beheaded, beheading was for criminal offenses. And so it would be a criminal matter. He would be written down as a criminal and he'd been beheaded for crimes and it wouldn't fall to him as a religious leader to carry the bloody sword, if you like, for this death.

But the authorities wouldn't hear of it. And so they said, no, no, no, this is a religious offense. And so he must be burnt at the stake. And so Calvin had him burnt at the stake.

[66 : 43] But prior to this, for many days, I can't remember how long. I think it was a matter of weeks. He was imprisoned, starved, not allowed to wash, not allowed any clean clothes.

When it came to the day of his execution, he was stinking, covered in his own excrement, and he was dragged through the streets and he was burnt at the stake. And apparently, and I'm not trying to give you nightmares, but apparently he screamed for hours when he was being burnt at the stake because it was a slow fire.

And what was even more telling, because you'd think when you talk to people about it, my son being one of them, they say, well, you know, he was a victim of his times. That's what they did in those days. And he kind of, in order to maintain his position, he had to do this. But even if you accept that, and I don't, I don't think any of Christ's men should do this kind of thing.

They should say, sorry, I'm not going to do it. And if you want to put me to death for not doing it, then that's fine, but I'm not going to do it. But it happened in 1553, this execution.

[67 : 58] In 1561, Calvin was still bragging about it. There was not the slightest hint of repentance. And subsequently, Calvin died a premature death, I think in about 1564 or 1565 or something like that.

I could be wrong about that date. But he died in his mid-50s. Servetus, on the other hand, whilst going through this agonizing pain, whilst being burnt, was crying out to God to forgive him. And to forgive his tormentors. So Servetus was a much more godly man than Calvin was. Because he didn't rail against Calvin, even though he was in the flames, he asked God to forgive Calvin. Which is an astonishing thing. So next time we look at the doctrines that the man came up with, but I think we probably agree that this is not the sort of guy you want to follow.