

## JOHN CALVIN'S CALVINISM (1509–1564) – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

Most theologians see Christians as either Arian or Calvinists. The main difference is Arians believe one can lose salvation. Calvinists: if one truly repents of their sins and accepts Jesus as God come in the flesh (thus, Lord & Savior) the Creator will legally and righteously retain them – as Christ *already* paid the price their sins incurred. Later sins cause loss of eternal rewards. Calvinist denominations are the Presbyterian (largely 5 Point) and Baptist, which are well over 97% intensely *not* 5 Point.

Briefly, 5 Point “Tulip” or Hyper-Calvinism imagines God decided to not grant man “free will” and, as a consequence of the Fall, man is *incapable* of responding to the gospel: that in eternity past and before they were even born, God *predestined* some to eternal Hell and others to eternal life (“the elect”).

Calvin's own beliefs below are similar but far from being the same as 5 point or Hyper-Calvinism.

1. God is absolute sovereign over His creation.
2. God as sovereign both foreordains and foreknows all things, including each man's destiny.
3. Originally man was pure and made in the image of God but has fallen from this state through his own voluntary act (*voluntary*: then man has a freewill – FNJ).
4. Man can be saved only through the unmerited grace of God, as mediated to him through Christ. Fallen man can do nothing to promote his own salvation, and no amount of good works or keeping God's laws can further it.
5. Those predestinated to salvation will be saved.

God's meaning of “predestination” is clearly set forth at Romans 8:29-30. It is that God's predestined plan for mankind is that the “foreknown” would be conformed into the image of Christ Jesus. This would be accomplished by God's taking the initiative and (1) calling them. Those giving a positive response to this call (i.e., repenting of their sins and receiving Messiah Jesus as Lord & Savior) would then be (2) justified (i.e., the judge made a way to *justly* declare them righteous and free the guilty) and finally (3) be glorified (receive glorified bodies that, like Christ's, shine/glow – Daniel 12:2-3).

This plan is again spoken of in Ephesians 1:3-14. Here our Lord adds more light to His Romans eight predestined plan by first revealing that He formed it before the foundation of the world. Further, the redeemed were chosen in and by Christ to be adopted as His children – not because we deserved or earned this blessing, but just because it pleased Him to so do (vv. 1:4-5; Luk. 1:32). Ephesians goes on to explain the Savior did not accomplish such by un-righteously overlooking our sins.

Instead, undeserved favor was extended toward man (i.e., grace) & we were made acceptable, at the predestined time, by gathering as one all mankind into their Creator and thereby putting their sinful life to death with and in Him by the shedding of His sacred blood on the Cross. Thus having “died” in Christ and, from God's viewpoint, descending into Hell 3 days & 3 nights “in Him”, God made a way to righteously redeem & forgive our sins by paying the sin debt we had incurred and have us “participate” in so doing – a glorious plan! (Theologically called “substitution”, along with “identification”)

Ephesians 1:13-14 concludes the predestined plan by enumerating its order from a different perspective than Romans 8: (1) *after* we hear the gospel, (2) we believe, *after* which (3) we are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit who then becomes the earnest of our inheritance until the day of redemption of the “purchased possession” (4:30) – which is the newly reborn child. Beloved, if that is not security, it will hold and keep us until we get it!

Hyper-Calvinists stress God's sovereignty but at the cost of not placing enough emphasis on His love. They tend to set God's sovereignty at odds with the clear biblical call to mankind's responsibility for their actions. They insist that to tell people to turn from their sin and repent is to command them to do something they are absolutely unable to do, unless preordained from eternity past to so do.

However, Scripture declares Jesus to be the propitiation for the sins of *the whole world* (1 John 2:1-2). Hence we learn that although most of mankind has refused to submit, the Creator has no problem for man to have free will operating within His Sovereign domain – only 5 Point Calvinist so have. Lesson: Don't fret over how a black or red chicken can lay a white egg – just eat the egg.