

PICKING TULIPS

A close-up photograph of several pink tulips in a field. The tulips are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a large field of flowers. The lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the texture of the petals.

Is Calvinism the Gospel?

Annual Special Issue

TIME

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10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now

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WHAT'S NEXT 2009

The New Calvinism

By David Van Biema | Thursday, Mar. 12, 2009

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VIEW ALL

If you really want to follow the development of conservative Christianity, track its musical hits. In the early 1900s you might have heard "The Old Rugged Cross," a celebration of the atonement. By the 1980s you could have shared the Jesus-is-my-buddy intimacy of "Shine, Jesus, Shine." And today, more and more top songs feature a God who is very big, while we are...well, hark the David Crowder Band: "I am full of earth/ You are heaven's worth/ I am stained with dirt/ Prone to depravity."



Illustration by Lorenzo Petrantoni for TIME. Calvin: Popperfoto / Getty

Calvinism is back, and not just musically. John Calvin's 16th century reply to medieval Catholicism's buy-your-way-out-of-purgatory excesses is Evangelicalism's latest success story, complete with an utterly sovereign and micromanaging deity, sinful and puny humanity, and the combination's logical consequence, predestination: the belief that before time's dawn, God decided whom he would save (or not),

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1884779_1884782_1884760,00.html Accessed 9/9/21.

WHAT IS CALVINISM?



John Calvin (1509-1564)

T

Total Depravity

U

Unconditional Election

L

Limited Atonement

I

Irresistible Grace

P

Perseverance of the Saints

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The Teaching



“Because of the Fall, ***man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel.*** The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God...His will is not free; it is in bondage to his evil nature.

Therefore, he will not – indeed, he cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm...***Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God’s gift of salvation.***” (p. 5-6)

“The sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that ***he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation***...they do not have the ability to choose spiritual good over evil...Man’s will, as the result of inherited depravity, is in bondage to his sinful nature.” (p. 19)

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The Texts



Psalm 51:5

- Literal? (see verse 4)
- Compare Psalm 22:9-10

Romans 5:12

- Adam's role – introduction of sin
- Our role – imitation of sin

Genesis 4:6-7

- Cain's choice – “you must master it”
- Our choice

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The Teaching



“God’s choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world ***rested solely in his own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc.*** ...Thus, God’s choice of the sinner, not the sinner’s choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.” (p. 6)

“Faith and good works are the result, not the cause, of God’s choice.” (p. 31) ... Election was based on the sovereign, distinguishing mercy of almighty God. ***It was not man’s will, but God’s will, that determined which sinners would be shown mercy and saved.***” (p. 35)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The Texts



Ephesians 1:4-5

- Election – YES. Unconditional – NO.
- Chosen “in Christ”
- Doesn’t exclude free response – v. 13
- Doesn’t give man credit – v. 6, 2:8-9

Romans 9:14-18

- Not salvation but utilization – v. 10-13
- Those who continue in faith will remain – 11:22-23

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The Questions



How do you know for sure you're one of the elect?

What does this imply about the character of God?

“If there is such a thing as predestination at all, and if that predestination does not include all people, then ***we must not shrink from the necessary inference that there are two sides to predestination.***” (p. 141)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The Questions



How do you know for sure you're one of the elect?

What does this imply about the character of God?

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and *others foreordained to everlasting death.*”

CALVINISM

Fundamental Flaw



God's Self-Disclosed Character

- Delights not in the destruction of the wicked – Ezekiel 18:32
- Desires all people's salvation – 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9
- Loved the sinful world and gave Jesus – John 3:16

How is Calvinism's version of the gospel consistent with God's universal love for sinful humanity and desire to save all?