

Sin ... And the Views of John Calvin

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A careful critique of John Calvin's (1509-1564) theological views reveal that his theology was derived, in part, from Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (345-430), the systematic theologian of the Roman Catholic Church. Saint Augustine, as he was called by the Catholic church, was the first to speak of original sin, total depravity, predestination, limited atonement, the burning of heretics, allegorical interpretation of scripture, and the perseverance of the saints (the truly "saved" will persevere to the end, i.e., "once saved, always saved"), and so did John Calvin. Augustine is the formulator of Catholic dogma concerning Holy Scripture that is held in high esteem by Catholics.

I, along with many others, believe that Augustinian and Calvinistic doctrines are dangerous to the souls of men, especially the doctrine of "eternal security" -- the perseverance of the saints, or what is called, "once saved, always saved." It is time to stand firm, know, and understand the doctrines delivered to us by the early saints. We must not be deterred by critics who say, "Judge not lest you be judged" or by Pentecostals who say, "Touch not God's anointed," as a weak effort to stop anyone from correcting them in their error. A further concern of mine is that most of today's Study Bibles promote Calvinism. Be cautious as to what the Bible commentary notes say in these Bibles, as therein you shall find much error. Nobody is surprised when a Catholic, Presbyterian, or Baptist promotes Calvinism; however, some Study Bibles produced by "Spirit Filled" writers and preachers also contain hints of Calvinism. A defense on their behalf may be that some of the erudite "Spirit-Filled" writers do not, in fact, know the differences between Calvinism and Pentecostal Wesleyan Arminianism

Indeed, the writing, speaking abilities, and ministries of many dynamic Calvinists such as Charles Stanley, John MacArthur, Chuck Swindoll, Hal Lindsey, Charles Ryrie, James Kennedy, and others are impressive. Nevertheless, I must categorically say that I believe the Calvinist doctrine of "once saved, always saved" taught by all these men is dangerous to the souls of men.

In his book *Eternal Security-What Do We Have to Lose?*, Charles Stanley says "Eternal security is that work of God in which He guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is possessed forever and cannot be lost." If Stanley's views were challenged by the question, "Is it possible for a saved person to live for Christ for a few years and then walk away?" Stanley would say, "No, because he/she was never saved to begin with." Do not misunderstand me. I personally respect Pastor Charles Stanley. In fact, a picture of him, my wife, and myself taken in his church nearly twenty years ago, hangs on the wall in my office. But while much of Dr. Stanley's Biblical teaching is magnificent, I cannot endorse his theological views concerning "eternal security".

There are hundreds of arguments used by Calvinists to support their view of "eternal security". I will mention a few and provide my response:

CALVINISTIC ARGUMENT:

When a child is born to parents, he cannot become "unborn." Essentially the argument is, "Once a son, always a son."

MY RESPONSE:

While a son may always be a son in the natural sense and possess "sonship", this does not apply in a spiritual sense. Calvinists are fond of quoting the story of the prodigal (or "lost") son in Luke, chapter 15 as a proof-text for their view of "eternal security." First, a parable should never be used to prove doctrine; however, I will offer my rebuttal. Second, Calvinists ignore many other passages concerning "the prodigal son", which I shall highlight and explain.

- Calvinists claim you can only be saved once. According to Romans 11:23, we believe otherwise. In the story of the "Prodigal Son" the resistant young son left home, returned home, and was restored to his former place in the family. But this happened only after he openly said to the father, "I have sinned."
- When the younger son (prodigal) lived at his father's mansion, he was saved (Luke 15:11-12). Then, he made a decision one day to ask for his inheritance, go to a far country, and become a "party animal", wasting his money (vv.13-14) on loose living. The KJV says the young son was involved in "riotous living." Most modern versions read "wild living", and the NASB says "loose living." Most expositors and commentators

assume that the prodigal committed adultery while living “in the fast lane”, but this was an accusation made only by his elder brother upon his return to his father’s home. The older son never heard from the younger brother after he departed, so how did he know that he had squandered the money on harlots (prostitutes)? Wild or loose living does not necessarily convict him of adultery beyond a reasonable doubt.

- Upon the prodigal’s return he was greeted with a kiss by his father (v.20). The son responded, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.” (NIV-v.21). Upon confessing his sin, everything changed for the better. The Father decided to give a party for him, at which time rejoicing and celebration took place.
- Now, the father (a type of universal Father God) makes some interesting statements in verse 24. He says, “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” Then the Bible says, “So they began to celebrate.” When a sinner repents, heaven always rejoices. The Bible says, “repentance” always causes the angels in heaven to rejoice. Oddly, Calvinists do not see any sin or need for repentance in this story, but only a picture of a son who lost fellowship and was out of touch with his father for a period of time.

Indeed, it is true the younger son was always a son in a physical and ancestral sense. But was he *cut off* spiritually? Yes. The NIV accurately captures the true meaning. In verse 24, the father says, “My son was dead and is alive again.” If he wasn’t dead, how could he be alive again? The NIV rendering is saying that he was alive spiritually, but later died. There is no mention that the son was physically resurrected from a dead state. Therefore, the passage must refer to a spiritual death. So, how could he be dead, unless he was spiritually dead? Calvinists say, “The father did not know where the son was, so he assumed he was dead.” This is a weak argument, to say the least.

One of the greatest errors taught by Calvinism is that a professing Christian may become immoral, and still be saved. In other words, they insist that Christians may live in a continual state of sin, yet go to heaven. Calvinists believe that should one make a profession of faith in Christ, and later become immoral (a killer, thief, adulterer, homosexual, or other), he may lose some of his rewards in heaven, but never his salvation. They claim the man mentioned by Paul the Apostle in I Corinthians 5 was saved, although he was committing adultery with his father’s wife (the term, “his father’s wife” may mean a woman who was not his birth mother). Paul called this adulterer “wicked”, but Calvinists claim he was out of fellowship with God. Calvinistic views are inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible throughout, since both Paul and the Book of Revelation state that “the wicked and abominable will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

Some argue that King David did not lose his salvation when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. However, after covering it up for a while, he confessed his sin to Nathan when confronted. (2 Sam. 12:13). Later, however, when David penned Psalm 51, he said, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” This is a clear indication that David was still struggling with his sin issue, although forgiven by God. The question remains: “If a professing Christian becomes an adulterer or adulteress, how many adulterous acts may be committed before he or she becomes unsaved?” A close look at the Old Testament will give us the answer. Leviticus 20:10 states “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife – that is, the wife of his neighbor -- both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” In modern times, the dispensation of grace prevents a stoning for such people, but eternal death awaits those who commit such acts when there is no repentance.

In conclusion, it must be stated that I personally know many Calvinistic Christians who live a more righteous life than some “Sprit Filled” or “holiness” believers. However, this may be based more on personal choice, personality, or human nature than on any theological reasons. Nevertheless, my major concern is for those individuals who live a wicked and immoral life, yet because their church teaches “once saved, always saved” still believe they will go to heaven -- regardless of their lifestyle!

God Bless You! - Bro. Harbuck