

Calvary Chapel and Their View of Calvinism < ([Back to Articles](#))

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Before reading further, it is absolutely necessary that you prepare yourself with these opening questions and/or comments. If you skip them and come to erroneous conclusions of our stance on any of the following points it will not be because you weren't given fair warning. Without answering the following questions and internalizing the comments intently, one might only see a divisive or critical assessment of this fast-growing movement. This is not our intent whatsoever. So please take note of the following.

(1) The purpose of this paper is to note differences with what we believe to be crucial matters of Doctrine between our statements of faith (beliefs) and that of the overall Calvary Chapel (CC) movement. And this is not to be divisive so much as it is to inform those who would like to know what there might be in the way of difference. You should know what a church's stance is on these matters if you are considering attending. Ours or theirs.

(2) Are you prepared to let Scripture be the final authority of your conclusions in these matters? This will be very important as some if not all of these differences hinge directly on Scripture and its proper interpretation.

(3) Will we agree at the conclusion of this discourse not to be critical for its own sake and seek open communication and understanding with those who might differ in opinion? Again this is for either side of the discussion. We must be light seekers and not fight seekers. It should be understood that in a community like ours that some of our dear brothers and sisters in the Lord and even blood relatives could end up in both places of worship and we dare not take more license than Scripture allows in discussing our differences. However, we do feel it necessary as a matter of conscience to bring to light serious matters that deserve our attention.

(4) The matters brought forth in the following are not petty and should not be overlooked or treated as trivial. If the reader thinks himself (herself) above these matters, or that they do not deserve attention, it may be best to stop here and either return later, or discontinue altogether. Great people of God have literally shed their blood and given their lives for matters such as these and we ought not think because we live in the time that we do that we are exempt from treating the subject matter and all involved with high dignity.

(5) Please read these statements carefully now and again at the conclusion. We cannot be cautious enough with our handling of these matters nor our own hearts. We are sinners trying to be faithful to a Holy God and should be mindful of this lest we become arrogant in our positions.

(6) We must not let our desire for unity and fellowship outweigh our requirement to be faithful to the Scripture. Like Jude, we would love to discuss our common Salvation and most certainly will in other forums, but we are compelled by Scripture to contend earnestly for the faith. It is not our judgment at this time that Calvary Chapel is trying to deceive anyone, or that they are improperly motivated. All external evidence points to the contrary. However, we do feel it necessary and helpful to make those distinctions between us clear so as to be helpful in our understanding and decisions where and how to worship. This is after all exactly what George Bryson (of Calvary Chapel) is attempting in his book we will be quoting. We are doing the same here for our church and our community.

(7) Please make a concerted effort to look up the corresponding verses listed for both positions. Scripture and not logic are to determine where we stand.

Admonition:

We urgently ask that both church bodies pray that we would honor God through our discussion and respect each other insofar as we both attempt to adhere to the Scripture. It can be considered nothing less than failure if we abandon Scripture for opinion.

Introduction

This paper is in no way intended to be exhaustive, nor is it intended to discuss differences we may have in what might be called non-essential matters. Things such as Eschatology, Style of worship, etc will not be mentioned at all. We will focus most, if not all of our attention on Soteriology, or the Doctrine of Salvation. Here at the outset we think the reader will agree that this matter should be understood if any should. And as far as we the sinners are concerned, we would be well served to commit to understanding the beliefs of the church we will attend. To make sure that no slander or scoffing takes place we will try and represent as fairly as possible the views of Calvary Chapel by using a book from a prominent Pastor in that denomination (for lack of a better phrase – apologies if it isn't fitting). The book is entitled [The Five Points of Calvinism: Weighed and Found Wanting by George Bryson](#). It is part of the organization's library and was given to a former member of our church (SGBC) in an attempt at showing him the errors of his belief (Calvinistic) and bringing him to an understanding of theirs. This book is available for free online in its entirety for anyone who would like to double-check our references.

I will say as a matter of personal observation that the book does not offer alternatives, even verses, to the Calvinistic view. For example, the Doctrine of Total Depravity is *refuted* and there is nothing but a void left in its place. I make this observation because I find it suspect that you would say man is *not* totally unable to choose God and then not clearly define what the extent of the fall was. For it is the extent of the fall that Total Depravity addresses. Should we not understand how sinful we are if we're to comprehend our need for a Savior? Furthermore, and this is where I (Pastor Johnnie) will reach my critical limit hopefully, it appears that the motivation is to point to errors, and show that man has the final say in Salvation is the subtext of the argument. It proves for very circular rhetoric. Chocolate is bad. A lot of people don't eat chocolate.

Therefore chocolate is bad. This is logical reasoning in its purest sense, but it isn't completely truthful. Starting opposed to a system and then supporting your opposition is not *critiquing* it is criticizing.

Logic is used tremendously in this little book. In the refutation of Total Depravity there are many verses pertaining to rebirth (and we believe most not to be exegeted correctly), but he does not quote a single verse that pertains to the sinfulness of man as it is believed by CC. The only one verse (2 Thess 2:10) dealing with sin is used in a *logical* illustration on how Calvinism is missing the boat. There isn't a view on fallen man in this book. I make these points to show that the discussion will not be a point by point refutation of the book, because the book doesn't offer points. So we will just make brief statements regarding the doctrines themselves. We at SGBC believe that when Scripture speaks so frequently on a subject we dare not overlook it for something of preference. We also do not desire to refute the views of others without offering what we believe to be the Bible's teaching on that subject. If I point out error and do not teach truth I am a critic and nothing more.

In an attempt to keep this simple, we will have an easy-to-follow format. Each subject (one of the five points of Calvinism – or that particular point's Doctrine) will be handled like this:

Doctrine/Point Defined – For Example: The Doctrine of Total Depravity states...

Calvary Chapel's (CC) Position – Man is... Scriptural Support (or Bryson's teaching)

SGBC's Position – Man is... Scriptural Support (or Calvinistic teaching)

It should be noted that in all of these points we (SGBC) are almost in text-book fashion Calvinistic. So, you might want to be aware of that as you follow along. We are conservative Five Point Calvinists and make no apologies for it. Also, we will handle the points in the order of the book with the acronym TULIP.

I. Total Depravity

The Doctrine of Total Depravity states that man's entire being (will included) has been corrupted by the fall of Adam. At the heart of this doctrine are the questions: How fallen is man? Is man apart from supernatural rebirth (regeneration) able to choose God? What has sin done to humanity with regard to his relationship to God?

CC's Position – Man has free-will in the common use of that term – meaning he can choose good or evil. CC believes that if God requires men to repent, then men must necessarily have the ability to do so. In this view it follows that if man can choose God, then faith precedes or comes before new birth. Man without God has the ability to exercise faith. Bryson states,

“... our Lord told Nicodemus [that what] *must* happen, He was also saying that it *ought* to happen; and what ought to happen *can* happen. Thus, rebirth is not only *caused* by God it is *commanded* by God. God causes it to happen when we meet the God ordained condition for it to happen. That is, when we believe in or receive Jesus Christ.

The main verses used for this point in the book are John 1:12,13

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And John 3:7

7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

SGBC's Position – Bryson completely neglects the exegesis of verse 13 of John 1 and places all of his emphasis for obvious reasons on 'received' and 'born... of God'. Time will not permit a pointing out of the hermeneutical problem with this, but one can sufficiently see in verse 13 that it is not 'by the *will of man*.' That someone is reborn. Also, making the stretch from 'must' to 'ought' is far from a safe interpretation of verse 7 of chapter 3. I feel obligated to point out the author almost directly quotes the heretic Pelagius by saying that "what ought to happen, can happen." This is crass logic, but it is not Biblical. The Bible says we're to be perfect (Matt 5:48) and it also says a Christian does not sin (1 John 3:6). Both of these verses have contexts and meaningful interpretations. But when the above logic is used, you get the perfectionism of Methodism from these verses. This isn't sound exposition of Scripture. The Bible is crystal clear on the sinfulness of man and the extent of the fall: **Gen.2:16-17, Rom.5:12, Eph.2:1-3, Col.2:13, Gen.6:5, Gen.8:21, Ecc.9:3, Jer.17:9, Mark.7:21-23, John.8:44, Eph.2:1-2, 2Tim.2:25-26, 1John.3:10, 1 John.5:19, Rom.6:20, Titus.3:3**

The Bible is also clear on the Total Inability of man to come to God in his corrupt state. Because of the significance we will here list the verses with the references:

John.6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. [Note: The word here translated *draws* is translated as *drags* in other passages, such as John 21:11, Acts 21:30, and Acts 16:19.]

John.6:65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Rom.3:9-12 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

Rom.8:7-8 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

1Cor.2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

We believe that sin has put the whole of man under the curse – 'you (the whole man including his will) shall surely die'. Rebirth is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3,8) and it precedes faith. Because one cannot see the kingdom without rebirth, it must follow that we must be quickened (made alive) first, then we can see and then repentance and faith Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Finally we must ask the question: what is at stake in a correct view of the sinfulness of man? The Calvinistic view leaves no ability in man and therefore God is the initiator of Salvation. He then does not share His glory with man, but deserves all credit for saving. Calvary Chapel seems to be fighting for the autonomy of man and his will. Man's decision is sovereign vs. Gods Regeneration through the Holy Spirit. To this we take great exception.

II. Unconditional Election

The Doctrine of Unconditional Election states that God chooses some people for salvation according to the good pleasure of His will and not in response to a foreseen act of faith on man's part. At the heart of this doctrine are the questions: Does God choose some for Salvation, or do some choose Him? Does He elect some to salvation based on their choice or His will? Is there a requirement on the part of sinful man that makes him *electable*?

CC's Position – Personal note; I find Bryson's cavalier comments, "as silly as this sounds it is exactly what Calvinistic Election leads to" very disconcerting. One must take seriously the claims of a given position if he is to cogently refute it. The CC position is that God desires all men (interpreted to mean every single person) to come to faith. The only verse used in a formative sense for showing that salvation is available for all men is, "Come unto Me **all** you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". (Matthew 11:27-30). The book makes no more assertions except to show that Calvinists aren't correct in their interpretations of 1 Tim 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, and John 3:16. As far as those who perish he asserts that they are not *willing* to come (Matt 22) which Calvinists don't argue. Bryson's position is:

While Calvinism is in search of the elect few who will come to Christ regardless of any effort to reach them, our Lord appealed to the troubled many (all sinners) and asked them to *make a decision*, or as Billy Graham might say, "take a step of faith" (i.e., come to Me).

SGBC's Position – The biggest problem with this one is that the Calvinist – and I go further and say, the Biblical interpretation of the above mentioned verses is not even stated. He does not say what the Calvinist view or interpretation of these verses is except for disagreeing with R.C. Sproul's conclusion that the 'any' in 2 Peter 3:9 refers to the 'us' just a few words before it. Although it is easy to see the context of 2 Peter 3 is to the 'beloved' vs. 1 & 8, it is strange that Bryson (as well as most who hold his position) doesn't offer a sufficient alternative to our (and Sproul's) conclusion. There is an irony that the flood is mentioned here and the question must be raised; how can God be unwilling that *any* should perish (v. 9), but that the "world that then existed *perished*" (v. 6). Forgive the already criticized logic, but what conclusion do you come to when you say that people who perish are not *willing* to come to God and just sentences later say that God is not *willing* that any should perish and mean not any single person? Moreover the question must arise, if God desires every person to repent what can be stronger than the desire of the Omnipotent that could keep Him from obtaining what He desires? There is but one answer to both questions in the CC view: Man's will is stronger than God's. We cannot hold this view. Nor do we see it in the Bible.

2 Peter 3:9 is simple to interpret. To the beloved Peter says, God will keep His promise to us and not let us perish... He is a longsuffering God. This is altogether consistent with the rest of Scripture and makes the most sense of the context. That this is teaching Universal Salvation is erroneous to be sure.

These two passages from Ephesians 1 are glaring examples of our view on election:

Eph.1:4-5 just as *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph.1:11 *In Him* also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things *according to the counsel of His will*

Note that it is in Christ we are chosen. This is very significant because the CC (and others) view of election is that God elects based on seeing our choosing Him. The problem here is becomes apparent. Paul says we are chosen "in Him." How can this be if we haven't chosen to be "in Him" yet? Asked another way, are we or are we not "in Him" at the time of our choosing? Also it must be mentioned that again we here see the phrase according to the counsel of *His will*. There is no

mention, nor an inference at all that this adoption in vs. 11 is in any way connected to a choice of man's. There are many verses to the contrary: **Rom 9:16, Rom 9:11, 2 Tim 1:9**

We believe that God predestines His chosen people (His Church), "before the foundation of the worlds" and that this choice is "not of Him who wills... but of God who shows mercy." (Rom 9:16). So then our 'step of faith' is not the reason for our being born again, or elected, it is the fruit of having been chosen before the foundations of the world (Eph 1) and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 3). There are no conditions we meet prior to God electing us.

III. Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)

Limited Atonement states that Christ's Atonement (Payment for sin or redeeming the lost) was for the elect only and not for every person. At the heart of this doctrine are the questions: For whom did Christ die? What does the death of Christ mean to the lost? Was redemption provided for all, or procured for the elect?

CC's Position - CC believes that Christ died for everyone. By this they mean that His death is a provision for every single person in the world. This is usually referred to as Universal Atonement. Bryson:

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...

I take this to mean that if you are a sinner, He came to save you.

If Christ did not die for everyone, why would the writer to the Hebrews say of Christ that He "suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for **everyone**"?(Hebrews 2:10)

Should this read "taste death for everyone *who is Elect*"?

Drawing his listener's attention to the person of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

A Calvinist reading of this verse could be "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin **of the elect** of the world."

So, it is clear then, that CC holds to Universal Redemption. Christ death was for every person. This is consistent with the free-will theology above. Christ died for all, all men can choose and so be saved according to their own will.

SGBC Position – It should be pointed out here that all Christians limit the Atonement. It is simply a matter of who does the limiting. CC puts this ability to limit the atonement in the hands (will) of man. In other words, we ask the question: When someone rejects Christ and dies in their sin, was the atonement for them? Answers vary here. Some say 'no' it was not for those who reject it. Then it follows that these lost limit the atonement to people other than themselves. However, others would say that Christ did in fact die for those who would reject Him. We Calvinists ask if He died for them what does their rejection say about the effectiveness of His death? We are now venturing into logic and we needn't do this. One final note on CC (and all non-Calvinist) positions. The verses we are about to look at are in the same Bible as those used for the other positions. Often those who take the same view as CC say, 'these verses are obvious.' We say we must 'divide' the Word and 'study' to show ourselves approved. It is careless to hold a view that is 'obvious' and neglect the deep study of it from Scripture. Especially when the Church historically holds a view other than your own.

It is now that we define the Calvinistic (SGBC) position from Scripture. The last quote from Bryson above was riddled with logic and we dare not use our reason in these matters. Scripture should be the final authority and it speaks volumes on this subject. From the following verses ask the question: for whom did Christ die? And, was His death for *everyone*? Following this, it will be pointed out that Jesus 'actually saves'. This is important because this means He doesn't provide Salvation in a buffet style for anyone who would or would not like. However, it means Salvation is 'invitation only' and He actually saves the elect of God. This makes His death 100% effective. We do say that His death *could* have saved everyone, but it *actually* saves some.

Christ died for...

Matthew 20:28 (for many), **Matthew 26:28** (many), **John 10:11** (His Sheep), **John 11,50-53** (children of God), **Ephesians 5:25-27** (His Church), **Hebrews 9:15** (the called)

Christ did not die for...

John 10:26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep,"

John 8:43-44 "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. "

Rom 9:13-16

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but *Esau I have hated*."14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Jesus actually saves. (These verses talk about an *actual* Salvation, not a *potential* salvation)
Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; Acts 5:31; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 5:8-9; Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:3-4; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:3-4; Ephesians 2:15-16; Ephesians 5:25-26; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:13-14; Colossians 1:21-22; 1 Timothy 1:15; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:5-6; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:7

We believe that Christ gave Himself for *His Church*. His Sheep (who are obviously not every person) follow Him. We find the doctrine of Universal Atonement unbiblical. It is an affront to God to say Christ died for someone who would reject Him. If I may be logical (this is admittedly my opinion), it is possible in the Universal scheme that no one would choose Christ. It is possible that God would not elect (as they see it) anyone based on their free-will because they could have all not chosen Him. If this is so, then it is hypothetically possible (though not probable) that Christ died for nothing. It's as though with a sigh of relief that we say, "Whew! I'm sure glad someone chose Christ. Otherwise He would have died for nothing." Is this a trite statement? Follow the reason through. This is very inconsistent with the Bible. Christ was the Lamb slain when? (Revelation 13:8). We were chosen when? (Ephesians 1:4). He chose a flock and He saves that flock. And this before the foundation of the world and apart from any choice on our behalf. To His glory.

IV. Irresistible Grace

The doctrine of Irresistible Grace states that the general call to repentance which is external can and is often or usually rejected. However, it teaches also that there is an inward effective call to the elect of God which cannot be rejected. This Effectual Call is the work of the Holy Spirit and as such is invincible. It is this grace that never fails. It cannot be hindered by man. It is Sovereign Grace.

CC's Position – Believing that the final decision of whether or not we choose Christ belongs to man, it is the natural progression to believe he has the power to resist God. He can choose or not choose. Again read the words and specifically the *logic* of Bryson:

Can Grace Be Resisted?

The question before us however, is this: can grace be resisted and is grace ever resisted insofar as salvation is concerned? The only scriptural answer is **yes**. And just as a gift voluntarily received is no less a gift, so a gift "willfully refused" is no less a gift. The nature of the offer (i.e., free) is not affected by the intended recipient's response.

We have already read where Paul said that certain people perish because they **refuse** to love the Truth.

If we are to *take Calvinism seriously*, we must conclude that this is an "involuntary refusal." Can there be such a thing? Some Calvinists would contend that the unregenerate can choose evil, but evil only. But this is like saying the blind man can only choose not to see. Some choice. In fact, the blind do not choose not to see, they have no choice in the matter. So the unregenerate according to Calvinism does not really choose to refuse, he simply does the only thing he can - **refuse**.

The belief simply stated is that refusal or acceptance is up to man. Bryson:

The difference between the saved and the lost is the difference between Faith and Unbelief. The difference between those merely convicted by the Holy Spirit, and those who yield to the Spirit when they are drawn, is the difference between the willing and the unwilling. Thus, the 4th point of Calvinism misses the whole point.

SGBC Position – We do not agree that man can choose either good or evil in His unregenerate state. In the excerpt above, Bryson uses *logic* to come to the conclusion that a physically blind man cannot choose to see (and we agree). We may even make the same analogy to point out how depraved a man is. However, what would happen if this logic is carried out? Did Jesus not heal the blind by His own choice for the glory of the Father? Could those whom Jesus healed decide to be or stay blind? I do not pose this as a question for answer; I pose it to note that Bryson's analogy is a poor one for this discussion and is inconsistent with the whole of his book. Earlier in his book he states that we should be careful to use the physical things like death to conclude things regarding the spiritual realm. He says,

"Although there is a valid analogy between spiritual birth and between spiritual death and physical death, the Calvinist goes too far in comparing them."

Yet, here he does just that to prove his own point. In other words when logic can be used to prove his point, he uses it liberally, but Calvinists carry things too far when they use it.

We wholeheartedly agree that man perishes because he is unwilling to believe. We also agree that it is his decision to remain in darkness. But where we most certainly disagree is that he in this state is not neutral, but dead. And that when the Holy Spirit makes him alive, that is not his choice, but God's alone.

There is a simple question here that goes beyond man's free-will. How strong is omnipotent? When the Holy Spirit (God) works, who can stop Him? I will grant to all non-Calvinists that this Doctrine is necessary if you believe the others. It is precisely this that makes our system cohesive. For one cannot at the same time say that a person is drawn and say he chooses entirely of his own volition. Bryson tries to undo this by exegesis of the word *draw* vs. *drag* being taken from the original language. I contend that the interpretation of the word he comes up with (which we don't agree is the correct one) is inconsistent with his free-will teaching. Either God is free, omnipotent, chooses and draws (drags), or man is free, autonomous and chooses of his own will without intervention or regeneration. I find it very disturbing that the whole of the argument by non-Calvinists is a defense of the will of man over and against the call and regeneration of God. There is a shout of "Man can refuse" and a whisper of "the Holy Spirit helps in drawing men." This should be a warning sign, but apparently it is not.

But enough logic, what saith the Scriptures? And as before, ask the question if the Spirit of God *does* something as an act of omnipotence, who can challenge Him? Can we undo what He does?

The Spirit Saves

Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Peter 1:1-2.

The Spirit Gives New Birth

Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 1:12-13; John 3:3-8; John 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:5; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:4.

The Spirit Reveals the Secrets of God (vs. us seeking them)

Matthew 11:25-27; Matthew 13:10-11; Matthew 13:16; Matthew 16:15-17; Luke 8:10; Luke 10:21; John 6:37; John 6:44-45; John 6:64-65; John 10:3-6; John 10:16; John 10:26-29; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:17-18.

The Spirit Gives Faith and Repentance

Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:48; Acts 16:14; Acts 18:27; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:25-26.

The Spirit Effectually Calls

Romans 1:6-7; Romans 8:30; Romans 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23-31; Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 4:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 9:15; Jude 1:1; 1 Peter 1:15; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:3; Revelation 17:14.

Salvation Given by a Sovereign God

Isaiah 55:11; John 3:27; John 17:2; Romans 9:16; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 2:12-13; James 1:18; 1 John 5:20.

We believe that when the Holy Spirit draws, the lost sheep (of Christ, in Him before the foundations of the world) come to Him. And that if the Father, through the work of the Spirit draws, our mere will is not enough to stop Him. Forgive the rare show of emotion, but *who do we think we are?*

V. Perseverance of the Saints

This Doctrine states that the elect are not only saved by God, but kept by Him. Although many hold this view Calvinism doesn't hold it in the simplistic "once saved always saved sense," But that the whole scope of Salvation from beginning to end is wrought by God. And as such there is assurance found in Him and obedience to His word and not in a *decision* on the part of the believer. Believers who are chosen, called, born again, saved, sanctified by the Spirit are ultimately glorified.

CC's Position – Calvary Chapel does not deny Eternal Security. Meaning they believe that once a believer is saved that are always saved. However in the CC position this is not a result of the work of the Spirit it is a result of our decision. Bryson:

We Ought to Persevere

Perhaps by defining perseverance - at least as it is worked out behaviorally - as faithfully following Christ, or being obedient to God's Word, or walking in the *light*, we can see that Perseverance is what *ought* to be true for every Christian. This is what believers are encouraged to do - and warned about failing to do - precisely because we have a tendency or inclination to not do it.

Obviously, the things they are told to add, including perseverance, are not necessarily added to the life of the true believer.

To say that perseverance is what *we will* do because we are true believers is to radically redefine the

meaning of perseverance. Instead we need to see perseverance as what we **ought to do** because we are true believers.

Again as before we see this word *ought*. It's the belief of CC that what we ought to do we can. In another place Bryson says the believer without exhortation is not inclined to persevere. As with the other Doctrines it is not a matter of Him who saves or keeps but of him who wills. We do not agree.

SGBC Position – First it should be noted that Bryson Argues against the Arminian view (Salvation can be lost) view as well as the Calvinistic view on this point. There is one shining inconsistency that must be pointed out here before we go further. There is no answer offered in his book to the dilemma of what happens when someone does not persevere in his view. There is refutation of the Calvinist answer – They were not ever saved, but never an alternative left in its place. It is plain that what is being attempted is a union of Scripture on the subject of perseverance and man's choice to persevere or do what he "ought"

Bryson again uses logic to point that if Scripture admonishes man to persevere, then he must necessarily be able to do it. He further makes the argument that perseverance, is something **you** add to **your** faith (2 Peter 1:4-8). This seems inconsistent with the whole idea of submitting to the Spirit of God and letting Him have His way with us (Walking in the Spirit and bearing fruit – Galatians). It is us piling on the faith we produced to be saved other virtues of our own in order to grow in maturity and consequently persevere. He says the Calvinistic view is reduced to "inevitability" and therefore offers no assurance.

This is going to be a quite condemning statement, so I am saying before it that it deserves careful attention and should be looked into further by the reader so as not to hear/read my comments as critical, but as an accurate representation of Bryson and his book. In the section labeled as a refutation of the Calvinistic view of Perseverance, Bryson does not make one single comment regarding the work of God in perseverance. There isn't one thing in the whole section to which God can be given credit and subsequently glorified. Perseverance in this little book rests solely on man's willingness to submit to the exhortation from Scripture to do so.

I welcome a rebuttal here and will quickly delete these comments from this paper if I'm shown to be mistaken. But I have read this section and come to the conclusion that Bryson teaches that 'truly saved' people persevere because they *want* to and that nothing Bryson has written would lend to any help from above in the matter.

Why does Scripture exhort us to persevere if it is "inevitable" for us not to? Maybe some rhetorical questions would point to the fallacy in this line of thinking. Why did God not just teleport His people out of Egypt to their Land? Why doesn't He take us directly to Heaven upon our being saved? Why does He allow temptation instead of making us impervious to it? How can He say in His word that He writes to us that "we not sin" and in the same book say "but if we sin"? We are to be holy as He is holy and yet we are sinners. The exhortations are not so that we can persevere, but because without God we cannot. In these admonitions we see our condition and that we must rely on Him to finish the work which He started to make us fit for His kingdom. We add nothing to that equation.

So what then is perseverance from the Calvinistic perspective? As the Westminster Confession states:

They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. (XVII.1)

It is through faith that the believer perseveres (Heb 3:6, 6:11, 10:35-39). The keeping power of God in contradistinction to the will-power of man and/or his ability to heed the exhortations of Scripture is the object of this faith. It is the believer's hope in the promise of God that is the means of his perseverance. It is not a relaxed or hapless floating that causes us to persevere. It is not a confidence in our 'decision' or 'profession' in which we rest. Otherwise the oft stated criticism against this view would be valid. Namely that we can live how we desire because we made some idle profession and were sincere. This would be Decisional Regeneration in a pure sense and we reject this notion as unbiblical. Perseverance on our part is the supernatural effect of preservation on His part. Jay Wetger puts it this way:

The majesty and immutability of God's promises secure the believer's perseverance and everything necessary for eternal life. These magnificent promises of God nourish our faith, affection, love and trust in Christ. Everything that is necessary for godliness and salvation is reckoned to be included among the supernatural gifts of God.

We agree with CC in the sense that all men who are saved will not lose that salvation. We do however ask the reader to read the following Scriptures for themselves. We believe the 'P' in TULIP hinges on the other four points. When God does His work of salvation, gives us assurance, grants us faith... the final and total consummation of redemption is the result. The product of God's work is a saint who by faith works out his gift of salvation, by becoming holy, producing fruit, with fear and trembling. We thank the Father that He answers the Son's following prayer:

"Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (John 17:11-12)

Isaiah 43:1-3; Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 32:40; Matthew 18:12-14; John 3:16; John 3:36; John 5:24; John 6:35-40; John 6:47; John 10:27-30; John 17:11-12; John 17:15; Romans 5:8-10; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 1:7-9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:14; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:4; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 John 5:20; Jude 1:1; Jude 1:24-25.

Conclusion

I'll make a judgment here, but it is not intended in a derogatory sense. It is intended to bring clarity to this discussion. The judgment is this: Although Bryson as a representative of Calvary Chapel claims no allegiance to the teachings of Arminianism, he consistently draws conclusions in his book that put him directly in that camp. I am not saying this to vilify him or CC in any way. I say it to point out where we stand in the debate.

If I say man is unable to choose God apart from supernatural rebirth, God chooses man solely according to His good pleasure and on no basis of any foreseen event, that Christ died for a certain chosen number of people, that when the Holy Spirit regenerates someone – they come to faith, and that God who starts the process completes it in perseverance (Calvinism) then whether I'm fond of being labeled a Calvinist or not, I am one. Likewise, this book (Bryson's) is as Arminian as any work with that label. There's a tendency to think that when a label is given that we can no longer call ourselves 'Biblical'. I appreciate not wanting to be attached or deemed a follower of men. We Calvinists feel much the same way. We often qualify this by saying we follow Calvin inasmuch as he follows Scripture. We do not however deny our roots in history as though we've somehow come to a brighter understanding of truth than the great godly men of old.

Bryson makes statements in his book that suggest him as a scoffer of Calvinism and not a serious student of it. Statements like "*if we are to take Calvinism seriously*" and "*As silly as this sounds it is exactly what Calvinistic Election leads to*" seem to suggest he is not searching for truth, but rather looking for answers to the question 'how does this prove Calvinism wrong?' He will take a quote, for example from Spurgeon (who was very much a Calvinist), and try to construe it to undermine Calvinism. Spurgeon as well as any Calvinist who has done diligence has viable answers to the questions raised in the book. But the tone of it is not such that the author wants to hear those answers. I have no doubt if George Bryson is like the numerous other CC Pastors I've met, that he would be pleasant and have a demeanor very becoming of a faithful minister. I have had this experience with every CC minister I've ever met. I would even go further to say that we could have a very courteous discussion on these matters.

The challenge as I have learned is that in writing things take a different tone. The tone of this book is that of someone having come to conclusions and without entertaining the possibility of personal error, attempting to refute a centuries old system of Doctrine. Doctrine that can more than adequately be drawn from the Bible if there is a desire to hear it and not undo it. And by way of conjecture a Doctrine that had the author of the book in question been born a few hundred years earlier would have likely held as his own.

Please review the opening statements / questions for the sake of a clear conscience. Pray with me that we grow in grace and in *knowledge* together. Forgive any malicious undertones, for I assure the reader to the best this sinner is able, I am simply attempting to "hold fast" (2 Tim 1:13) to the words of the Bible.

We believe that all of Salvation is of the Lord and without cooperation on our part. We are dead and unable, He makes us alive and willing. In our sin we have nothing to offer (not even faith), He chooses us for no reason other than His will and pleasure. We are not able to limit the Atonement of Christ by our choices, He applies an actual redemption to those He chose from the foundation of the world. Though we are dead and unable to reach to God, He works invincibly to change our hearts and make us new creatures. Though our sin would put us in the pit, He keeps by His power those whom He's chosen. And for this He gets all Praise, Honor and Glory. He needn't share an ounce with man because of some intrinsic ability that may have somehow been missed by the curse of sin.

Calvinists do not argue some mechanistic humanity. Adam had free-will and he sinned. We are all cursed because of that and not in need of reformation from within ourselves, but regeneration from the Holy Spirit. And only He can take a heart of Stone and make it flesh.

Philippians 2:13

"for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." - Amen