

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

**Romans 8:28-29**  
**Lesson #6**  
**The right lens**  
**10/30/2022**

## The challenge of **DISSONANCE**

*Bereans can make sense of many conflicting teachings.*



1

**Divine sovereignty is well attested in Scripture.**

*Acts 2:23*

“this man, delivered over by the **predetermined plan and foreknowledge** of God”

*Romans 9*

“16 So then **it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.** ... 18 So then **He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.**”

2

“If one single molecule in the universe is outside God’s sovereign control, nothing can be assured.”

R.C. Sproul



3

Doesn’t a theology that attributes everything to God’s will and control, **make it difficult to see the difference between God and the devil?**

*Matthew 3:23*

“He is possessed by beelzebul”

*Matthew 7:16*

“You shall know them by their fruit”

4



The devil can be in the **BIG PICTURE** as well as the details.

*Matthew 6*

“22 The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But **if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.**”

5



The same image can be seen in different ways.

How we see the big picture will dictate the way we see the details.

Is this an eye or an ear?



How we see the **GREATER** Biblical narrative will dictate how we read specific texts.

6

In the Netherlands in the 17th cent. a theological controversy raged over certain aspects of the Theology of

**John Calvin**

**Jacobus Arminius**

was a Calvinist who modified some of Calvin's teachings.

**T - U - L - I - P**

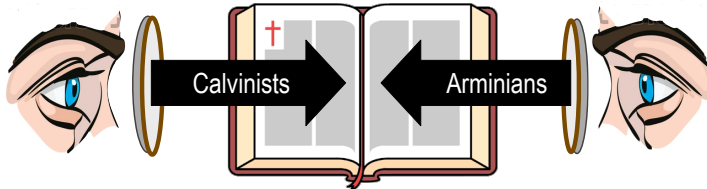
is an acrostic that sums up the five articles that were in dispute.

7

**Unconditional Decrees (Rigidity)**

vs.

**Conditional Dynamics (Relationship)**



God's grace, glory, and governance demand it.

God's goodness and integrity demand it.

The (big picture lens) shapes the way each read the specific texts.

8

**The basics of (High) Calvinism**



**T**otal Depravity  
**U**nconditional Election  
**L**imited Atonement  
**I**rrresistible Grace  
**P**reservation of the Saints

The root is the Sovereign Grace of God.

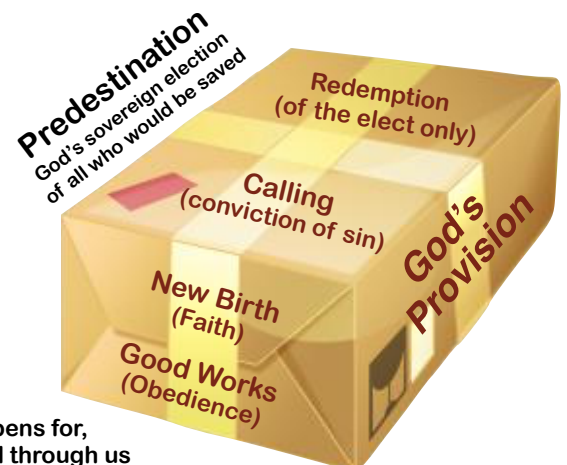
9

**The basics of (High) Calvinism**

- **T**otal depravity - we are incapable of responding to Christ without first being regenerated.
- **U**nconditional election - God chose individuals for salvation based on His sovereign will alone.
- **L**imited atonement - Christ's death effected the redemption of the elect only.
- **I**rrresistible grace - All whom God calls cannot but respond with faith and obedience.
- **P**reservation of the saints - All whom God calls will not fail to display faith and good works until the end.

10

**The High Calvinist Teaching is a package**

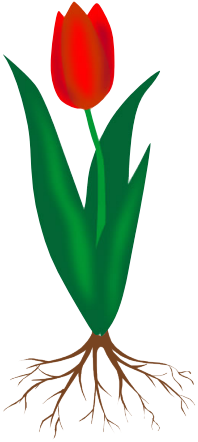


It happens for, to, and through us

but in **NO WAY** by us.

11

## TULIP's roots (presuppositions)



- **Inerrancy of Scripture** demands that we take the texts literally, at face value.
- **God's sovereignty** demands the **micromanagement** of all things.
- Human free choice is viewed as a **meritorious** act.
- All of Scripture must be understood so as to **conform** to the above convictions.

12

## Pruning TULIP (Arminian theology)

- **T**otal depravity - Affects every area of life but the "image of God" remains alive.
- **U**nconditional election - God elected Christ and all that He foresaw would respond to him in faith.
- **L**imited atonement - Christ's death paid the debt of all humanity but its benefits were realized only by those who received Christ by faith.
- **I**rresistible grace - We are free to receive or reject Christ.
- **P**erseverance of the saints - Salvation is secure for those who maintain their faith and hope in Christ.

13

## What should be the governing lens of God's glory, grace, and governance?

- **Jesus Christ** is the perfect image of God?
- Jesus' life models a **dynamic relationship** rather than a micromanaged world.
- "**Foreknowledge**" captures the heart of the lens through which we must read the texts.

### 1 Peter 1

"1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen (**elect**) 2 according to the foreknowledge (**prognosis**) of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood:"

14

## What should be the governing lens of God's glory, grace, and governance?

- **Jesus Christ** is the perfect image of God?
- Jesus' life models a **dynamic relationship** rather than a micromanaged world.
- "**Foreknowledge**" captures the heart of the lens through which we must read the texts.
- The **implications** of Calvinism (ie. A good God decreeing evil) is hard to escape and even harder to accept.
- The **texts** used to support the Calvinistic view deserve a careful look.

**Jn.6, Eph.1, Rom.9**

15

Calvinist proof text #1

## John (O.T. believers)

6:37 "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;"

- These texts refer to the **believing "remnant"** in Israel who were already justified by faith (like Abraham).
- They heard Jesus, **recognized him as the promised Messiah**, and followed him.

16

Calvinist proof text #2

## Ephesians 1 (Jesus is the elect)

"4 just as He **chose** us **in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love. 5 He **predestined** us to adoption as sons **through Jesus Christ** to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us **in the Beloved.**"

### 1 Peter 2:4 (Isa.42:1, Lk.9:35)

Jesus is "a living stone,...rejected by men, but **choice (elect)**...in the sight of God."

17

## The chosen (elect)

### Jesus Christ



Believers  
are chosen  
"in Christ",  
not **TO BE**  
"in Christ".

Faith

18

Calvinist proof text #3

## Romans 9

"6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all **Israel** who are descended from **Israel**; 7 neither are they all children because they are **Abraham's descendants**, but: "through **Isaac** your descendants will be named." 8 That is, it is not the **children of the flesh** who are children of God, but the **children of the promise** are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, 12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written, "**Jacob** I loved, but **Esau** I hated." 19

Calvinist proof text #3

## Jacob is Israel, Esau is Edom (gentiles)

### Malachi 1

"2 I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was **Esau** not **Jacob's** brother?" declares the Lord. "**Yet I have loved Jacob; 3 but I have hated Esau**, and I have made his mountains a desolation and given his inheritance to the jackals of the wilderness." 4 Though **Edom** says, "We have been beaten down, ... (and the Lord says) 5 your eyes will see this, and you will say, "The Lord be exalted beyond the border of **Israel!**"

See - Matthew 22:1-14 (Parable of the marriage feast) 20

Calvinist proof text #3

## Romans 9 (Corporate election)

"16 So then **it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy....** 30 What shall we say then? That **Gentiles**, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but **Israel**, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." 21

## Understanding Predestination in Romans 9

Instrumental  
in the drama  
of God's plan

Determinative  
in who is  
redeemed

Israel  
Christ

Individuals  
Christians

Redemptive  
plan

Redeemed  
people

22

## Pivotal issues that shape our interpretive lens.

1. Are the glory, grace, and governance of God defined more by **Messiah Jesus** or a micromanaging Lord?
2. Are we **created in God's image** or do we create God in our image?

### Romans 8

"28 For we know that God causes **all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that **He might be the first-born among many brethren;**" 23

23

# God made man in His Image.

## Man tends to return the favor.

Romans 1

“22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and **exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man ...**”

### Is our God

too small?

where  
sovereignty  
means



(!)

“MY MIND IS CLOSED.”

(.)

“I have some settled beliefs.”

(,)

“I have tentative insights.”

(?)

“I only have questions.”

1 Corinthians 13:12

“For now we see in a **mirror** dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but **then I shall know fully** just as I also have been fully known.”



We tend to see things, not as they are, so much as the way we are.

25

(!)

“MY MIND IS CLOSED.”

(.)

“I have some settled beliefs.”

(,)

“I have tentative insights.”

(?)

“I only have questions.”

Romans 11:33

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”



26

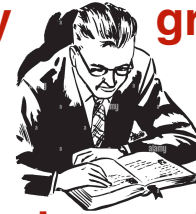
What is the take home of this lesson?

## Be a Berean

- *Seek wisdom from Scripture* - Approach apparent contradiction in the Bible **responsibly**.

Words find meaning in their context:

literary grammatical  
historical cultural  
communal pastoral  
theological prayerful



27

What is the take home of this lesson?

## Be a Berean

- *Seek wisdom from Scripture* - Approach apparent contradiction in the Bible **responsibly**.
- *Put on the right lens* - See **Jesus** as the example of the image of God's glory, grace, and governance.
- *Priorities* - Major on **majors**, **minor** on minors, and seek wisdom to know the difference.
- *Humility* - Seek a **Christ like** heart and mind in functioning as a part of the “Body of Christ”.

28

What is the take home of this lesson?

## Be a Berean

Calvinists point to the rigid decrees of God, while Arminians point to the relational dynamics of God.

Both are right in what they affirm but wrong in what they deny.

The Bible gives us a theology which is more human than Calvinism, and more divine than Arminianism, and more Christian than either of them.

Philip Schaff (paraphrase)

29

# A Berean's look at ...

