

## CALVINISM FACT SHEET

**FACT:** According to Calvinism, God ordained (intended) evil to exist. He decrees every sinful deed and action, and wills them to happen.

**FACT:** Calvinism claims that sin, death, and suffering are all intentionally designed to bring glory to God's name. Instead of viewing these elements as a result of human failure that providentially serve to glorify God and demonstrate His loving character, Calvinism views them as the objects of His divine purpose.

**FACT:** Calvinism makes God out to be a cruel and egotistical god who cares more about his glory than about the salvation of human souls. Roger E. Olson has this to say about it:

*“If Calvinism is true, then God is monstrous and barely distinguishable from the devil. The only difference in character is that the devil wants everyone to go to hell and God only wants some, many, to go to hell.”*

But unlike Calvinism, the Scriptures teach that God is a God of love. In fact, He is Love (1 John 4:8). He is also a God of mercy and would have none perish, but all repent and receive eternal life:

*For God **so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **\*whosoever\*** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*

*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all people** to myself (John 12:32).*

*Who will have **all men** to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. Who gave himself a ransom **for all**, to be testified in due time (1 Tim 2:4-6).*

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that **\*any\*** should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9).*

Note: The above verses clearly defeat the third point of Calvinism's five point system, namely, "limited atonement". Limited atonement promotes the idea that God has only provided salvation for the elect, and has not extended salvation to everyone. Christ died,

say Calvinists, not for the whole world, but only for those who would ultimately accept His sacrificial payment.

**FACT:** According to Calvinism, man has no freewill of his own. God controls all of his actions and thoughts, including those that are wicked. Even so, God finds fault with man and maintains justice by arbitrarily forgiving some people while condemning others to hell. But if this is true then we would have to concede that God is truly evil. Yet the Bible proves otherwise. It shows that God consistently pleads with man to repent from his sinful ways and to choose good rather than evil. Man's choices, therefore, result in negative consequences that God had no desire to see come about. This very concept (freewill and the negative consequences of man's choices—not God's) is evident throughout Scripture:

*The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? **If you do well, will you not be accepted?** And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it (Gen 4:6-7).*

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. **Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,** loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them (Deut 30:19-20) .*

*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, **choose this day whom you will serve,** whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh 24:15).*

*But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord God. **He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse,** for they are a rebellious house (Ezek 3:27).*

*Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. **Repent and turn from all your transgressions,** lest iniquity be your ruin. **Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will***

**you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live** (Ezek 18:30-32).

**Ah, stubborn children, declares the Lord, who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin** (Isa 30:1-3).

**Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon** (Isa 55:6-7).

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!** (Luk 13:34)

**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If \*anyone\* hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me** (Rev 3:20).

**FACT:** Calvinism claims that since God is absolutely sovereign, He *must* control everything man does. Yet we read in Scripture that while God is perfectly sovereign, He uses His sovereignty to allow man to make his own choices. If we cannot accept this fundamental truth, then we are forced to believe that God is engaged in a cruel game of charades when “pretending” that man has choice while they really don’t.

**FACT:** Calvinists claim that God can save whoever He wants; therefore God saves whom He wants on an entirely unconditional basis. Arminians, however, believe that God desires ALL to be saved, but will only save people on the condition that they use their freewill to cooperate with His salvific program. Although completely sovereign, God refuses to save men unconditionally and has empowered them with the ability to choose Him over everything else. His expectations, then, are fair, and His punishment for disobedience just.

**FACT:** Calvinism’s belief in the “perseverance of the Saints” promotes the idea that **Christ only died for the elect** (true Christians) and that **the elect can never lose**

**their salvation.** One must only look at the following passages to see that this claim is false and unsupported by Scripture:

**(1) *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that BOUGHT them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their DAMNATION slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*** (2 Pet 2:1-4).

Peter warns the Church about the false teachers that would soon appear. He does not pretend as though they were never “saved” to begin with. Because according to his own testimony they had disowned the “**Lord who bought them**”. Now we know that only Believers are redeemed and blood purchased by Jesus, though He has died for all: ***For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*** (1 Cor 6:20). So those whom Jesus redeemed are His **purchased possession** and also God’s Children (Eph 1:14). The unregenerate are not Christ’s “purchased possession”. So if these false teachers were once bought by Christ, yet now disown Him, they would have still been considered “saved”. However, in verse 4 we discover that they are doomed to hell as a result of their negative choices.

**(2) *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*** (Jude 1:12-13).

Before conversion, the Believers described in the above verses were dead in their trespasses (Eph 2:1). After conversion they received spiritual life through faith. But while their faith was firmly rooted (Mat 13:3), they once **AGAIN** became dead on account of sin (**twice dead**). **Consequently, they will be plucked by the roots and cast into hell fire** (v. 13).

## CALVINISM PROOF TEXTS EXPLAINED

Like Calvinists, Arminians also believe in predestination and election. Yet the difference between them is in the way they interpret these two divine principles. Arminians believe that God's unmerited grace exists throughout the world so that even the vilest sinner is **enabled** to choose God and **respond** to the universal influence of His Spirit. **While man can do nothing apart from God**, God has already provided the means necessary for man to forsake evil and choose what is right. Election and predestination, therefore, are governed by **man's response** to the grace and spiritual influence present. If man **yields** to the work of the Holy Spirit and **avails** himself of God's grace, he voluntarily enters into a relationship with God and becomes part of God's global plan. If not, God has no choice but to reject him from His plan. Predestination, according to Arminians, has been decided for all individuals based on God's foreknowledge of their choices and actions long before they complete their lifetime.

**Also, the Arminian paradigm never at all credits man with the ability to do good apart from the sovereign work of God. Nor does it credit man with being intrinsically good or Godward inclined. Yet it affords man choice/freewill and allows God to use these attributes to either redeem or reject him based on his own choosing, not God's.**

Calvinism, on the other hand, denies this, and claims that God operates according to an arbitrary model. And that He predestines some people to salvation and others to hell, not based on any merit of their own or any actions they may have taken for the good or bad, but rather out of sovereign design. **Man, therefore, is imprisoned by God's sovereignty and enslaved to God's control.**

As we examine the following Calvinist proof texts it may become easily apparent which paradigm they appear to favor in light of the explanation offered thus far. Notice:

*The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble (Prov 16:4).*

**Comments:** This verse simply means that God permits wicked people to exist in order to serve their purpose in God's overall program. It does not imply that God intended people to be wicked or wills them that way, but rather that He will use them to serve His intention.

*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil (Jer 13:23).*

**Comments:** Here is a verse that must be interpreted according to the whole revelation of Scripture. Can man change for the good apart from God? No! The scriptures tells us that we must avail ourselves of God's power in order to effect change (John 15:5; Phip 4:13).

*I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things (Isa 45:7).*

**Comments:** God brings calamity upon rebellious sinners. He judges them by allowing Satan to afflict them with evil.

*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).*

*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44).*

**Comments:** Man's spiritual regeneration is provided and sustained through God's will, not his own. Yet man can respond to God's work and choose to embrace Him.

*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16).*

**Comments:** Man's ignorance would not permit him to recognize Jesus as Savior. Neither was he able to choose the one he did not know. Consequently, Jesus chose to reveal Himself to His disciples and many others, thereby choosing *them*. His disciples

were then commissioned to evangelize the world with the Gospel in order that all who were willing could partake of God's redemptive salvation.

*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).*

**Comments:** The divine principles of election and predestination are clearly expressed in this verse. Yet this does not necessitate that we filter them through the arbitrary standards promulgated by Calvinism. Rather we should view this verse as another example where the individuals described were predestined to be part of God's Elect because they responded to the Holy Spirit's influence and availed themselves of God's grace. Hence, God predestined them to comprise His chosen Elect.

*Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, The older will serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory (Rom 9:11-23).*

**Comments:** One of the most often used Calvinist proof texts is Romans 9. Based on a rudimentary examination of the text, it appears to throw Arminian theology flat on its face. And as a result, it also seems to conflict with the whole thrust of Scripture in respect to man's cooperation and participation within God's salvific program.

Thankfully, the passages in Romans 9 correspond well with passages in Jeremiah 18, where we find similar language used with a clear explanation [offered by God Himself] on how He sovereignly provides salvation for mankind. Notice:

*The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, **O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.** <-I am God and have power to do as I wish with my creation, and here is how I choose to deal with man -> At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good (Jer 18:1-11).*

From reading the preceding verses, we see that God clearly describes the process by which He saves people. **IF** (denotes a condition), says God, I proclaim judgment against a nation and they do not repent, I will carry out my judgment against them. But if they turn and repent, I will “change my mind” about the intended judgment. And **IF** I proclaim blessings over a nation and they become evil, then I will “change my mind” and revoke the blessings. So how can Calvinists possibly deny the clear language in these passages? They point directly to man’s cooperation in God’s salvific program!!

So by viewing Romans 9 from the position expressed in Jeremiah 18, we must conclude that Esau, Pharaoh, and numerous other individuals were “fashioned for God’s wrath” and used as “vessels of destruction” simply because God knew all along that they would

never cooperate with His wishes (even though they had the power to). Therefore He decided to further bolster their hardened hearts and utilize their rebellion for His predetermined constructs.

*He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Eph 1:5).*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-9).*

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved (Eph 2:1-5).*

**Comments:** Arminians, like Calvinists, do not detract from the importance of God's saving grace. However, we also understand the aspect of faith, as demonstrated in the preceding verses. And realize that God's part is providing grace to mankind, while man's part is exercising faith in God's redemption. It is not God who must use faith on our behalf, but rather we who are called to place **our** faith in Him.

*Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done (Rev 22:11-12).*

**Comments:** These verses seem to indicate that God forces evil men to exist within a perpetual cycle of doing evil. However, that is not the intended meaning of these verses. What God is saying here is simple. Those who refuse to turn away from their evil deeds will not be forced to change, but rather God will permit them to continue in their stubborn ways until they themselves decide otherwise.

In Christ alone,  
John A.