



A grace worth saving: Rightly interpreting favorite Calvinist passages

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The Historic Faith
Lecture 7

Prevenient grace has many dimensions

- God sending Jesus
- God sending an evangelist
- That individual (parent, preacher) being kind and loving toward you
- The word of God itself
- The Lord opening your heart to pay attention. “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” (Acts 16:14)
- The Holy Spirit convicting you and helping you to understand. “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8)

These are all gifts from God—we should be bursting with joy and gratitude for His grace!

The most important passages for Calvinists are:

- Romans 9-11
- Ephesians 1
- John 6 and 10

Ephesians 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even 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 for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

How do we understand John 6 and John 10?

Reading John 6 and 10 in context

It's the last gospel account to be written; the church has become more Gentile. Tensions are growing between Jew & Gentile.

Much of John is concerned with why the Jews don't believe

The book has long confrontations between Jesus and Jewish groups (John 5, 6, 8, and 10)

John 3:20-21 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. (John 3:20-21)

There is an overall point that spans several chapters: if you know the Father, you will accept Jesus!

John 7:17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."

Ben Henshaw: "Here we see this principle being plainly described by Christ. The one who truly wishes to do the will of the Father (i.e. truly knows the Father and thereby "practices truth") will immediately recognize that Jesus is speaking the words of the Father. Such people will be given, by the Father, to the Shepherd as His sheep. They recognize His voice, listen to Him and follow Him, just as they followed the Father."

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.

That verse clause is prevenient grace.

Ben Crenshaw: “The secondary application is simply that those who are willing to hear from the Father (however He may teach them) will be drawn by the Father to Christ. In our situation, this happens by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel. The principle is similar, but it is a different time and a different situation. We come to the Father through the Son, while in a very real sense the Jews of Jesus’ time came to the Son through the Father and were then able to take part in the new dispensation when only those joined to the Son can remain in right relationship with the Father. “

John 8:47-55

He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." 48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

52 Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' 53 Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"

54 Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. 55 Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.

These concepts are repeated again and again

Ben Crenshaw:

“Not of God” [in John 8] simply means that these Jews were not in right covenant relationship with the Father when they encountered Christ and His claims. Since they didn’t know the Father they naturally would not recognize the perfect expression of the Father in the Son, nor would they recognize the Father’s teaching in the Son’s words (John 8:19, 20, 42, 54, 55, cf. John 5:37-40; 7:16, 17 12:44, 45). As long as they reject the Father and refuse His teaching, they will reject the Son and His teaching (which is also the Father’s teaching, John 12:49, 50) and will not be given to the Son (John 6:37, 44, 45).

None of these passages say anything about an unconditional eternal election being behind the description of these Jews as “not of God.” Such an idea is only read into these passages by Calvinists.... Second, as mentioned above, their inability to hear was not because God wasn’t working, but because they were resisting that working. Clearly, Jesus is still trying to reach them (8:27-31, 36, cf. John 5:44; 10:37, 38), which would be senseless if He viewed them as hopeless reprobates.

John 10:22-30

22 Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. 24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father are one."