

Good evening - this evening we continue with our study WE ARE PROTESTANT

This evening I want to finish up this series with a brief teaching on two men and the impact that they have had on the church and the world.

The first man's life and legacy that I want to share with you is John Calvin and the other is Jacobus Arminius.

In our series WE ARE PROTESTANT, I have previously shared with you a brief history describing Augustine and Pelagius and Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus.

In comparing and contrasting these men as well as our subjects today Calvin and Arminius - we see two opposing views or understanding of salvation -

One is **monergistic** - that salvation is the work of one - that is God alone that was John Calvin's view and

One is **synergistic** - that is that salvation is a cooperative work of God and man - that was the view of Jacobus Arminius.

Let's look at the life and legacy of John Calvin.

Calvin was born in Noyon, France on July 10, 1509 - when he was born the great reformer Martin Luther was 26 years old and was teaching at the University of Wittenberg.

It would be 8 years later that Luther would post his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.

Jean Cauvin's parents Gerard and Jeanne Cauvin lived in the farm country of Noyon France, which is 60 miles Northeast of Paris.

Gerard - Calvin's father was the financial administrator for the Catholic bishop of the Noyon diocese.

Gerard would later use his influence to gain young John then 11 a chaplaincy at the Noyon cathedral.

At the age of 14 John entered the University of Paris to formally study theology to become a priest.

He left the University having attained a Master of Arts degree at the age of 17.

His formal education grounded him in the basics of a classical education where he excelled in Latin, logic and philosophy.

After two failed attempts to gain appointment to the Catholic Church by his father, John was sent to study law at the University of Orléans in 1528.

Steve Lawson describes his study of the law in this way:

"During his time there, and later at the University of Bourges, Calvin learned Greek, the powers of analytical thinking, and persuasive argument, skills later to be used in his Genevan pulpit. Armed with such abilities, Calvin would later be nicknamed "the accusative case" for his penchant to argue his point convincingly."

When John was 21 his Father Gerard died and John returned to Paris to pursue his love of literature, especially the study of the classics and among other disciplines the study of Hebrew.

He did later return to law school and received his Doctorate in Law in 1532.

His doctoral thesis titled "De Clementia" translated (On Mercy), was a commentary on the stoic philosopher Seneca.

Calvin's desire was to continue into the world of humanist studies and that he would lead a quiet, academic life.

But thankfully the Lord had other plans.

On Nov 1, 1533 Nicolas Cop, the rector of the University of Paris, one of Calvin's friends, preached a sermon on the opening of the winter session calling for a reformation based upon the scriptural principles after the likes of Luther.

A near riot broke out, an arrest order was issued for Cop and he was replaced.

It would later be suggested that it was Calvin who had authored the sermon.

Calvin himself had also disappeared from Paris, escaping from a bedroom window using bed sheets and disguising himself as a vinedresser.

He spent late 1533 and early 1534 in the south of France under the pseudonym Charles d'Espeville.

He also spent some time in Orléans where he wrote Psychopaanychia, a book that was an attack on soul sleep and the state of the soul after death.

In May of 1534 Calvin returned to the vicinity of Paris and preached and celebrated the Lord's supper.

On October 17 & 18 of 1534 the **affaire de placards** took place. French Protestants posted placards or posters in the major towns of France in defiance of the Catholic mass. (In boldness one was even posted on the King's bedroom door.)

The king ordered the arrest of several hundred of the supporters of what he called "the cursed Lutheran sect." Now, remember France was a Roman Catholic country.

Calvin took this opportunity to leave France (via Strasbourg) and settled in Basel in January 1535.

There he took another pseudonym Martianus Lucianus. In this German speaking city he spent his time among the French exiles.

Calvin's time in Basel would prove fruitful.

On June 4, 1535 the French translation of the Bible by Olivetanus was published. Calvin wrote the Latin foreword.

He also wrote a forward to an edition of John Chrysostom's sermons.

After 14 months of arriving in Basel Calvin published his magnum opus: the first edition of the **Institutes of the Christian Religion**

It was a pocket-sized, 516 pages that expounded the law, the Apostles Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the sacraments, and Christian liberty. He wrote this with the goal of helping the increasing number of French Protestants.

After a brief return to Paris Calvin had planned to set off to Strasbourg, accompanied by his brother Antoine and his sister Marie.

However, on his journey to Strasbourg he was prevented from taking the direct route because of a local war that broke out between the forces of the King of France - Francis I and Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor.

The detour required that he spend a night in Geneva.

Upon his arrival he was recognized and taken to meet Guillaume Farel.

Farel had spent the last 10 years leading the reformation Protestants excited in the city of Geneva.

The story is that Farel, a man of fiery temperament, threatened Calvin and told him that if he didn't stay and join him in Geneva that God would curse him.

Apart from a brief excise from 1538 until 1541 John Calvin remained in Geneva until his death almost 30 years later.

Now, I want to remind you that the cities and towns of Europe had a blending of both civil and church government.

Geneva at the time had a population of approximately 10,000.

The church met daily for the singing of Psalms and to hear the exposition of God's Word.

John Knox of Scotland, would say after his visit to Geneva, that this city was the closest thing to heaven that he had seen.

Under the leadership of Farel and Calvin the reformation Doctrines spread from Geneva to the utter most parts of the earth even as far as Brazil.

Although Geneva made great progress there were some hiccups between Calvin and the Civil authorities who came under the influence of high-society Genevans (Libertines) who looked down on the Frenchman Calvin who they felt thought a little too highly of himself.

Another incident occurred in 1553 that unfortunately has often been misrepresented and has been used to cast aspersions against Calvin.

This was the execution of Michael Servetus, a friend of Calvin, who was tried and executed for the heresy of anti-Trinitarianism and of being a disturber of the peace.

Servetus had been warned not to enter Geneva because he was under indictment for spreading false doctrine.

The truth is that no matter what Roman Catholic city he would have entered his fate would have been the same.

His execution was not an example of intolerant Calvinism but was the common procedure of 16th century jurisprudence.

The laws of the cities of Central Europe had little patience for those with humanistic secular views and lifestyles.

Servetus had been found guilty by a civil court of 25 men.

Calvin spent hours with Servetus begging him to recant and repent to avoid his inevitable execution.

Calvin even requested that Servetus be given a less painful execution but he was refused and Servetus was burned. FYI - other Reformers such as Martin Bucer and Philip Melancthon fully approved of his death.

In 1537 Farel and Calvin brought to the city council of Geneva their Articles on the Organization of the Church and its Worship.

It was somewhat received except for their request for the monthly celebration the Lord's table. Relationships were strained and by Easter of the next year the ministers were asked to leave Geneva due to a quarrel over the use of unleavened bread at the Lord's Supper.

Farel went to Basel and Calvin to Strasbourg. These were very productive years for Calvin as he ministered amongst the French exiles.

He wrote a French Psalter, published a valuable treatise on the Lord's Supper and put out a newly revised and enlarged edition of the Institutes.

He wrote his commentaries on John's Gospel, 1 Corinthians and Romans.

And he found a wife!!!! Idelette de Burre. She was the widow of an Anabaptist who had joined Calvin's congregation. She a widow with 2 children arrived Calvin and they lived happily for 9 years until her death in 1549.

She and Calvin had one son Jacques who died shortly after his birth.

There is so much I have to tell of this man's life - that I cannot possibly do justice to it this evening.

Let me close out Calvin's story by telling you that several years after evicting Farel and Calvin the authorities of Geneva petitioned Strasbourg to send Calvin back.

Calvin balked at the idea and was not eager to return. Calvin wrote Farel in Basel and informed him that he was cool to the idea of a return, but he added, "because I am not my own master, I offer my heart as a true sacrifice to the Lord."

And what I love about his return is that he reentered the city on Tuesday, September 13, 1541, that Lord's day he stepped into the pulpit opened his Bible and began preaching from the very point where he had left off 3-1/2 years earlier.

He stated, "by which I indicated that I had interrupted my office of preaching for a time rather than I had give. It up entirely."

After many years of faithful ministry with many great achievements John Calvin died May 27th 1564 and was buried the following day at 2 pm.

He was wrapped in a shroud and placed in a plain wooden coffin and without pomp or elaborate ceremony he was placed in a grave marked only by a simple mound in accordance with his wishes.

John Calvin's life was a life of great achievement for the church of Jesus Christ - today we benefit from hundreds of his sermons, commentaries of almost the entire Bible, his Institutes that still remains one of the most profound texts of theology, countless tracts, letters and treatises.

But most of all was his example of Coram Deo - his living his life in the face of God.

I encourage you to find a biography of this great man of God and read it.

Let me encourage you to always be reading biographies of the great saints that have gone before us.

NOW, Let's move on to a much shorter biography on the man - Jacobus Arminius

Jacobus Arminius is the Latinized name - his Dutch name was Jakob Hermanszoon.

He was born in October 10, 1560 in Oudewater, Utrecht, Holland.

The decade of the 1560's in the Netherlands saw dramatic developments - the Belgic Confession was published, the battle of iconoclasm broke out that destroyed many of the statues and images in Roman Catholic Churches throughout the provinces.

There was civil unrest and in the early 1750s civil war broke out in Spain. This revolt was called the Eighty Years War.

Growing up in the midst of civil war in both state and church, Arminius experienced the bitterness of war. In 1575 his mother as well as other members of his family died at the hands of Spanish troops in the massacre of Oudewater.

In October of 1575 Arminius was the 12th student to enroll in the newly founded University of Leiden.

He was a gifted student and like many others of his day went on to study in Geneva and Basel.

While studying in Geneva Arminius seemed to have philosophical differences with Theodore Beza who was Calvin's successor.

We don't know much of what his theological positions were at this time but when Arminius was called back to serve as a pastor to the Netherlands in 1586 he was given a very good letter of recommendation by Beza to the Dutch Reformed Church.

On his way back to Amsterdam Arminius took a sight seeing trip to Italy of which later when his true Theology was revealed some would accuse him of having Roman Catholic sympathies.

Once in Amsterdam he joined the pastoral staff and in 1590 he married Lijsbet Reale who was a daughter of one of Holland's most influential men.

As a result of this marriage He accepted a position to write up a church order in which the church was given a position clearly subordinate to and dependent upon the state. The Reformed Church of that day agreed with Calvin's conviction that the church is to be independent from the state, especially in matters of church discipline.

During the years of Arminius' pastorate 1587-1603 things were peaceful.

However, when he preached through the Book of Romans some of his sermons began to raise a few eyebrows.

In 1591 he preached on Romans 7:14 and following- the standard Reformed position was that Paul was speaking as a regenerate Christian.

Romans 7 presents the Christian's continuing struggle against sin in his life.

In Contrast, Arminius taught that Paul was reflecting back to his previous unregenerate state. Arminius taught that Romans 7 is a struggle before a man is converted.

The Calvinists strongly objected and asked how an unregenerate man can delight in the law in the inner man (Romans 7:22)

In his interpretation of Romans 9 his messages on Predestination and Election fell short of the expectations of many of the Dutch Calvinists.

Even with these objections Arminius was appointed as a professor at the University of Leiden.

It didn't take long until once again controversy and suspicions began to surface.

Some pushed for a national synod to examine his beliefs but the government was unwilling to call for such a synod.

Finally with tension surmounting the government launched an investigation in 1608.

Arminius wrote a summary of his beliefs entitled "Declarations of Sentiments".

On October 19, 1609 with no resolution to the matter Arminius became ill and died. He died a minister in good standing in the Dutch Reformed Church.

After his death his students and those who followed his teachings, in 1610 - 42 ministers signed a petition or Remonstrance to the government asking for protection because of their Arminian views.

This controversy raged, even threatening civil war until 1618 when a national synod was called to meet in Dordrecht. We know this as the Synod of Dort.

The document that was issued after 6 months of deliberation we call the Canons of Dort.

This response to the five points of Remonstrance has been commonly summarized as the 5 Points of Calvinism or The Doctrines of Grace.

It has become commonly known you see the acronym of TULIP.

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints

In our study over the last weeks we have sought to teach each of these 5 points. If you haven't heard them they are available on Sermon Audio or through the church's website.

We have sought to present the Biblical teaching on the Reformation doctrine of saving faith. In doing so we have presented both the Monergistic and the Synergistic distinctions.

Which leads us to a good question. Do the differences between the Arminians and the Calvinists really matter today?

After all that was over 400+ years ago. Are the views and the differences that important?

As emphatically as I can respond- the Elders of Harvest agree together unanimously and say - YES

We understand that the most overwhelming view of the evangelical church in America today is Arminianism or a Synergistic view of salvation.

There are some churches that try to walk the tightrope of doctrine by saying that both views are acceptable.

But the Theology of salvation is not like ice cream where you like chocolate and I like vanilla.

No - when it comes to the theology of salvation- one of these positions is Biblical and God honoring and the other is not.

I'm often asked - "Ron, can a person hold Arminian doctrine and still be saved?"

Here is my response:

I believe a person is saved by God. By the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit. As the Gospel is preached there is a "general" call of the Gospel and then there is the irresistible "efficacious" call of the Holy Spirit that regenerates, makes alive a cold, dead, sinner, an enemy of God who hates God and has no desire for the things of God nor God Himself.

Now, how much does one have to understand theologically to be saved, that is a question that's answer is beyond me. In that this is a sovereign work of God I leave that to Him.

I do believe Arminian doctrine is error. I believe that the Reformed/Calvinistic doctrines are the most accurate expression of Biblical truth. I labor in my life and ministry to preach and teach Biblical truth, but I also know that as a man who still has not escaped this sin cursed world that everything I do is tainted by sin and that my only righteousness is that foreign, alien righteousness that the Lord Himself imputed to me based upon the merits of Christ. I endeavor to preach the Gospel as Scriptures teach, as a monergistic work of God alone and teach against synergism and the subtle works of the flesh.

I have met very few reformed folks who came to faith in or through reformed teaching and preaching initially. Most have begun as Arminians and didn't know they were Arminians until the Lord in His grace sent someone into their lives to show them the more excellent way as was done for Apollos.

So, yes I do believe a person can be saved by a sovereign act of God even under a deficient system of doctrine - because it is God alone who saves.

But, I also believe that this same gracious God will bring them to a church where the ordinary means of grace are alive and active.

I believe that the Lord, the great Shepherd will bring His sheep to sit under faithful under Shepherds who will feed and care for His sheep.

Why take the time to bring out our position?

Your theology of Salvation or Soteriology - determines every aspect of your Christian walk.

It determines how you understand and preach the Gospel.

It determines how you conduct your church services.

It determines the Missionaries you support and send out.

It determines how you pray.

It determines how you die.

Your theology determines your world view and your understanding of whether God is sovereign and in control over all things or whether God is subject to the will of His creatures.

Your theology is important and nothing is more important than glorify God and enjoying Him forever.

Any system of theology that takes from the glory of God and gives it to the creature robs God and hurts man!

Good theology honors God and helps people.

Bad theology dishonors God and hurts people.

Our desire is to get it right!

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. - John 14:6

We want to know the truth - Amen?