

Living Your Election

The New Birth Part 2

1 Peter 1:1-2 (contd) 3-31-2012 & 4-1-2012

Summary: My definition of Calvinism: focus on sovereignty. Arminianism: focus on human free will. Both tend to be correct in what they affirm and incorrect in what they deny. It is not important to understand how they fit together - only that you think from the right perspective in the right contexts. Election is for the purpose of praise, pity, and passion, as we see in Jesus' example at the Triumphal Entry.

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1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the chosen strangers of dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, **2** according to (*κατὰ*) the foreknowledge of God the Father, through (*ἐν*) the sanctification of the Spirit, for (*εἰς*) obedience and sprinkling by the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. **3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Introduction: Palm Sunday and Election

Today is Palm Sunday - the day we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem several days before He was crucified. I am sure you have all heard many times about this event, when the whole city of Jerusalem came out and hailed Jesus as Messiah, and then a week later that very same crowd was screaming "Crucify Him!" Did that really happen? Did the people of Jerusalem really lay down palm branches and shout, "Hosanna," and, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," days before killing Him? No. It never happened.

And you may be surprised to discover what actually did happen. As he approaches Jerusalem, Jesus pauses before going in so He can change His mode of transportation.

Luke 19:29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples **30** "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.

In those days when a king wanted to extend terms of peace to an enemy, he would come to them riding a donkey. So Jesus is presenting Himself here as a conquering king who is offering terms of peace to Jerusalem.

36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

That spreading their cloaks on the road comes from 2 Kings 9:13, and it is a recognition that God has chosen Jesus as King of Israel.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

How do you picture Jesus responding to that? I did a Google image search on the Triumphal Entry and this picture came up:



Is that how you picture it - great big smile on Jesus' face? Take a look at verse 41.

Luke 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept...

Can you imagine? This crowd is singing praises to Him as their king, and Jesus is riding along on the donkey crying.

Why? If all Jerusalem is shouting His praises, why cry?

He is crying because the people of Jerusalem never did shout His praises - nor did they spread out their cloaks or lay down palm branches. There was a crowd that did all that, but it was not the city of Jerusalem. If you look carefully at the text you will see that the crowd that is praising Jesus is the crowd of disciples that was traveling with Him. You can see that in verse 37. The crowd is specifically identified as **the whole crowd of disciples**. And in verse 39, some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "**Teacher, rebuke your disciples!**" Jerusalem never embraced Jesus as Messiah - not even at the Triumphal Entry. And we see this in all four Gospels. In Matthew's account we find that the only response the residents of Jerusalem had was that they came out when they heard all the commotion, and asked, "Who is this?" (Mt.21:10).

Now, I do not mean to say that Jesus was not smiling when all the disciples were shouting praises. It is very likely He was smiling at that point. But as soon as He entered Jerusalem, and Jesus saw the people of that city, and He was reminded of the punishment they were going to receive from God the Father for rejecting Him, His compassion welled up and His smiles turned to weeping.

Fitting for Palm Sunday

Last Sunday we began our study of the book of 1 Peter, and it is actually very fitting that Palm Sunday would come up right after last week's sermon, because it is a profound picture of the truths we studied last week. The main point of verses 1-2 that we studied last week is that we are elect aliens. Dual status - rejected by the world and chosen by God. When we get to chapter 2 of 1 Peter we are going to see that the reason we have that dual status is because Jesus has that dual status and we are in Him.

1 Peter 2:6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone

We have chosen-alien status in this world because Jesus was a chosen alien - rejected by the world, but accepted by God, and God's acceptance of Jesus is expressed through the praises of the saints.

7 ... "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, " 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message ... 9 But you are a chosen people ... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

God expresses His acceptance of Jesus by creating a special people who will declare His praises at the same time the world is rejecting Him. So can you see why I say Palm Sunday is the perfect example of this? Jesus rides into Jerusalem to offer terms of peace, and the people reject him. But at the very same time the people as a whole are rejecting Jesus, the elect are declaring His praises which indicates that God has chosen Jesus.

And by praising Him instead of rejecting Him, those people join with Jesus in His status as chosen alien. They also become chosen by God and rejected by the world.

The “ism” Schism

Last week I did something in the sermon that I regret - I mentioned two “ism’s” – Calvinism and Arminianism. I regret that, and I normally do not use those terms if I can avoid it, because when I speak I try to use words that make things clear. And those two words are the opposite of clear. They are words that mean a dozen different things depending on who you are talking to, and so you never know what people think you are saying when you use those words.

For hundreds of years people have used the acronym TULIP to define what are known as the five points of Calvinism. They say a Calvinist is someone who believes five doctrines:

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

And if you hear all that and say, “Huh?” I say, “Exactly!” Those five phrases add no clarity at all. They just make the water even muddier because all five of those phrases are defined in countless different ways. None of those are biblical terms, so the definitions are up for grabs.

So let me just do this - let me tell you what I mean when I use the terms “Calvinism” and “Arminianism.”¹ What I mean by those terms is actually fairly simple. When I say the word “Calvinist,” all I mean is someone who tends to emphasize the sovereignty of God and His total control over all things. When I say “Arminian” I am referring to those who emphasize the free will of man. Calvinists are the people who say, “God decides what happens.” And Arminians are the people who say, “Man decides what happens.” That is all I mean by those terms.

Correct in What they Affirm and Incorrect in what they Deny

So who is right? When a Calvinist says, “God decides what happens,” is he right? Yes. When an Arminian says, “Man decides what happens in many cases,” is that correct? Yes, it is. Both sides tend to be just fine in what they affirm. Where they go off the rails is with what they deny.

There is a tendency on both sides to try to use human wisdom to reason beyond what Scripture says and declare the other side false. When a Calvinist says, “God decides everything that happens,” he is right on. But when he uses human wisdom and says, “Therefore it must be that there is no real human free will,” or, “God decides who will be saved, therefore the human component doesn’t really change anything, and so it doesn’t actually make any difference if we share the gospel with people or not.” That is where they go off the rails. They are correct in affirming the sovereign control of God, but if they use human reasoning to deny human free will, that is where they go off track.

And it is the same on the other side. When an Arminian says, “Scripture affirms human free will, and human decisions really do matter, and really do determine outcomes,” they are right on. That is exactly right. But then when they get caught up with human wisdom and start reasoning, “People are

¹ See the Appendix for a statement on who Calvin and Arminius were.

saved or lost based on what they decide, therefore it can't be God's decision who will be saved or lost," – that is where they go off the rails.

And the reason both sides are so prone to go off the rails is because these two doctrines (the free will of God and the free will of man) are a paradox. (When I say "paradox" I mean when two things seem like they contradict, but they really don't.) It seems like if God is in total control of all things, there could be no such thing as human free will. And if we really do have free will, and our decisions really do determine outcomes, it seems like that means God could not really be in control of those things that we decide. Those two doctrines seem to contradict, so both the Calvinists and the Arminians are tempted to come up with a system that eliminates that tension.

Now I imagine there may be some of you who hear all this and think, "That's a compromise." Maybe you are a Calvinist and you are uncomfortable with me talking about human free will. Or you are an Arminian and you do not agree with my absolute statements about God's sovereign control. You are one of the ones who denies the other side, but you don't think you have gone off the rails at all. So let me just very quickly show you the Biblical support on both sides.

God Decides what Happens

First, the Calvinist side - God decides everything that happens. If you doubt that - if you think God controls the weather and nature, but recuses Himself when it comes to human decision making, you need to take a serious look at passages like Acts 4:28.

Acts 4:28 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

The reason Herod and Pilate and the Jewish leaders crucified Jesus was because God decided beforehand that they would do what they did. People get so worked up wanting to establish that humans have free will - and we do. But do we ever stop to think about the fact that God also has free will? In fact, His will is even freer than ours because He was never in bondage to any kind of sin.

Psalm 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will

It is God who chose us, God who predestined us, God who planned, God who works everything out the way He wants, and He does it according to His purpose, His desire, and His will – and not just some things or most things, but all things. I don't know how Paul could have made it any more comprehensive.

Now, are the Calvinists right to make much of those passages? Yes! The Calvinists are right on when they talk about God's control over all things, because that is what the Bible teaches.

Man Decides what Happens

But what about the Arminians? Is there any biblical support for the idea that humans have free will, and that our salvation really does depend on what we decide? Is there biblical support for the idea that we are saved or lost as a result of what we decide? Absolutely.

Ezekiel 18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!

In that passage God tells the people to get a new heart and new spirit and rid themselves of their offences. Then He asks them, “**Why will you die?**” What is the answer to that question? Is the answer, “We are going to die because You failed to elect us. There is no other option for us. We are totally depraved so choosing salvation would be impossible”? Is that a correct answer to God’s question? If that were the answer then God would be disingenuous in verse 32 where He says, “I take no pleasure in the death of anyone.” When God says, “Why will you die? I take no pleasure in that” the implication is that their dying in their sin is unnecessary. They could repent and live, and their failure to do so is their doing, and it is not necessary. Another passage along this line is Ezekiel 24:13.

Ezekiel 24:13 Now your impurity is lewdness, because I cleansed you but you would not be cleansed from your impurity

God says, “I cleansed you, but you wouldn’t have it. I did all that was needed, but you ended up unclean because of your refusal.” Scripture is filled with passages that place the question of whether we will be saved or lost on our shoulders.

Luke 13:24 Make every effort to enter through the narrow door

The invitation to salvation is extended to every human being. Jesus said, many are invited, but few are chosen (Matt 22:14).

John 7:37 Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Revelation 22:17 ... whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Those are real, serious offers, and God extends them with the desire that the people will respond.

Let me ask you this - was the Apostle Paul a Calvinist? I have heard people say that Paul was the greatest Calvinist of all time. Obviously that is backwards - Calvin was a disciple of Paul, not the other way around. But if we just define “Calvinist” as someone who emphasizes the sovereignty of God, was Paul a Calvinist? He is the one who wrote Romans 9. You cannot get any more “Calvinistic” than Romans 9.

However, with all his emphasis on election and predestination, did Paul become a fatalist? (A fatalist is someone who says, “It’s all pre-determined anyway, so it doesn’t matter what we do.) No way! Paul was about as far from being a fatalist as you can get. He subjected himself to beatings, floggings, stoning, whippings, hunger, thirst, exposure, every kind of danger, prison, and death all so he could share the gospel with people. He did NOT have an attitude that said, “Oh, God will get them to heaven one way or another. It doesn’t depend on me.”

Sometimes you hear Calvinists say things like this: “You can’t argue someone into the kingdom.” They say, “Since salvation is a divine work, then persuasion isn’t really a factor.” Would Paul agree with that?

Acts 18:4. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, persuading Jews and Greeks.

2 Corinthians 5:11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we persuade men.

Paul’s mission in life was to persuade people to be saved, and he was tremendously successful. Is salvation of God? Of course, but He uses human means to get it done.

Free Will

And as for whether there is such a thing as human free will - we know there is because the Bible uses that exact phrase. One of the offerings in the Old Testament was the free will offering. Why would God call one of the offerings a free will offering if there were no such thing as free will? The fact is, there are hundreds of places where Scripture refers to outcomes being one way or the other based on what human beings decide.

So those are the kinds of passages I have in mind when I talk about the Arminian side - the passages that emphasize human free will. Now, are the Arminians right to make much of those passages? Of course - they are part of God's holy Word. Anyone who points to those passages and concludes that human free will is a reality and our eternal destiny depends in a very real way on what we decide is right on.

So that is what I mean by both sides being right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. The Calvinists are right to affirm God's sovereignty, but wrong if they try to deny human free will. And the Arminians are right to affirm human free will determining things, but wrong if they deny God's sovereignty.

How Do they Fit Together?

"But that's still not satisfying to me, because I still can't see how the two doctrines fit together! I can understand God being sovereign and determining all things. And I can understand human free will being a reality. But I can't see how they go together."

You do not know how they fit together because the Bible does not say how they fit together because it is not important for us to know how they fit together. The only thing that is important is that you think in terms of God's control in the kinds of contexts where the Bible teaches us to think that way, and that you think about human responsibility in the kinds of contexts where the Bible teaches us to think that way.

And that is not that hard. When people come to me with anxiety about this paradox, my question is this, "Is there some area in your life where you don't know what to do because you can't figure out this paradox?" And usually, unless they have gone off the deep end on one side or the other, most people know exactly how they should behave with respect to these doctrines of human free will and God's sovereign control. For example, it does not matter if I am talking to a Calvinist or an Arminian - if I say, "When your alarm clock goes off in the morning, should you say, 'God has already pre-determined whether I'm going to get up or stay in bed, so what I choose doesn't really matter, therefore I might as well just stay in bed, or should you say, 'It's my responsibility to get out of bed. I need to get up and go to work, and if I don't there will be bad consequences. So I'm going to get up in order to avoid those bad outcomes,' - if I ask that question both the Calvinist and the Arminian will give me the right answer. When it comes to areas of human responsibility, Scripture teaches us to look at the future as being undetermined and changeable and not set in stone.

But if I ask them this question - "What should you do about areas where you have no control? Should you worry and fret as though sinful human decision making has the final say? Or should you trust in God with rest and hope knowing that God's sovereign control supersedes human decision making?" Both sides know enough to say, "In a case like that I should trust the fact that God is in control."

If I ask both sides, "What should you do when someone is an unbeliever? Should you pray for the person and share the gospel and try to persuade them?" Both sides will say yes.

So, is it possible for the human mind to put this paradox together? No - it is like the Trinity. But that is fine, because there are no situations in life where we need to put the two sides together in order to know God's will for how we should live. So the fact that we cannot understand exactly how the two sides fit together is not a problem. All we have to do is follow the statements of Scripture, and don't worry about coming up with a system that is devoid of any tension.

There are some times when we need to think from the standpoint of God's total control over all things, and there are other times when we need to view things in the future as being undetermined and changeable depending on what we decide. And Scripture guides us on which times we should think the one way and which times we should think the other way.

Election

Three Views

OK, now with all that under our belt, let's get back to this question of election. Last week I told you there are three prevailing views on election. The worst of the three is known as conditional election - the idea that God looked into His crystal ball to find out whether we were already destined to believe, and He observed that we were, then He went along with it. I made a case last week that that view is nonsense, because before God created anything, nothing was already going to happen apart from God intending it.

A second view is known as the class election view. The idea there is God did not select any individual people - just a category. God said, "The category who I will forgive will be...believers." So all God did was select the category, and it is up to each person whether he meets that category or not. But that does not work, because the Bible talks about God selecting individuals, not just categories.

The third view is known as unconditional election. Before the foundation of the world, God decided which individuals would be saved based on nothing but His own plans and purposes.

That view is the best of the three, but it still has problems. It does not explain the passages that speak about a person going from non-elect to elect at the moment of conversion. Nor does it explain how salvation could be an issue of what we decide.

So last week I proposed a fourth view. My view is that sometimes God wants us to think about election from an eternal point of view and other times He wants us to think of it from the standpoint of time - in connection with our conversion. I gave a little bit of an argument for that view last week, but if you want a more detailed defense of it, I wrote a paper on it titled "Election," and it is available in the resource library of TreasuringGod.com in the Articles page.²

But I really don't want to spend time today defending that view, because defending one view over the others tends to miss the point of election. If you get some books on election, you might read one thousand pages and not read anything about the purpose of election. But the biggest emphasis in Scripture when it comes to election is the purpose - *why* God elected us. The term "elect" or "choose" in the Old Testament means "to choose for a specific use or purpose." And it also carries the idea of "to value highly as opposed to valuing lightly or not at all." So when it says that God chose you, it is saying God decided to delight in you, and picked you out for a specific purpose that He had in mind.

And what could be more important than discovering that purpose? Tracy and Faith were up in Vancouver visiting Carolyn-Nicole last week and they said they drove down one street that was the scariest thing they have ever seen. All the maps have warnings about this street. People are just littered up and down the street, shooting up heroin and everything else. Faith said, "I can't believe the effect drugs have on people. They looked like animals."

Imagine you are one of the people laying in the gutter in total desperation without any hope whatsoever. And one day a rich, glorious, generous king comes to that street and picks out a few people that he is going to adopt as his own children and brings them into his breathtaking, glorious mansion. And you watch him coming down the street. He only picks one out of one hundred. And when he gets to you, your heart skips a beat when He says, "That one...that one...that one..." then points right at you and says, "That one." His attendants put you in the limousine and bring you into the estate and get you all cleaned up and all the medical attention you need and beautiful clothes. And the whole time you are asking, "Why? He chose me for something I'm supposed to be doing - what is it?"

² http://foodforyoursoul.net/abc/?page_id=394

Living as Elect

And how do we put all this together - Calvinism, Arminianism, free will, sovereignty, and divine election? And what does it all have to do with Palm Sunday? Jesus, on Palm Sunday, is the supreme example of how to live out our election with the perfect balance of understanding both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. Let me quickly point out three things we can learn about how to live out our election from Jesus' example at the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday.

Praise

The most basic purpose of election is praise.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, (for what purpose?) that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The purpose of election is so God might have a people who will declare His praises. He chose us because we are the ones who would turn out to bring Him the greatest glory. Is that something for us to brag about? Hardly.

1 Timothy 1:15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience

Why was Paul chosen? Because he was so wicked. In that particular case, the thing that would bring God the greatest glory was to select a murderous, violent, arrogant, persecuting blasphemer.

James 2:5 Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

It is not exactly a badge of honor when you get picked for the team because the captain wants to prove that he is so good that he can still win even with you on his team. So why did God choose us? From the eternal point of view there is no way to answer that question. You cannot ask why God decided to do something in eternity past, because eternity past is as far back as you can go. God's decision is as far back as you can investigate something. Why did this happen? It was caused by that. Why did that happen? It was caused by the other thing. Why did the other thing happen? It was caused by something else. And on and on and on until you get back to God's eternal intention, and that is where it stops. So it is nonsense to even ask the question, "Why did God have an eternal intention for something?"

But what about from the temporal perspective? From the standpoint of time, why did God choose us? Because we were the ones who would bring Him the greatest glory for one reason or another.

Let's look at how Jesus behaves as the ultimate chosen alien. The first thing we see is that nothing is more important than praise.

Luke 19:37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

The most important thing in the universe is that the Lord Jesus Christ be praised. And if we do not do it, the rocks will cry out - because it absolutely must be done. But I love the line in that song, "Let the rocks be kept silent for one more day, let the whole world sing out, let the people say, 'Almighty, most holy God...'" We were chosen for the purpose of praise, that is our purpose, it is why we exist, it is our reason for being alive, so every time you see the word "elect" or "predestined" in the Bible,

instead of worrying about figuring out the eternal mind of God, let it redouble your desire to lift up joyful praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pity

So the first thing we learn about how to live as elect is praise. The second thing we learn from Jesus' example is in verse 41.

Luke 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes."

Jesus wept with compassion for the lost. When you find yourself in a position of being a chosen alien - chosen by God but rejected by the world (just like Jesus) - respond like Jesus did. Not with anger or retaliation against those who reject you, but with compassion and pity. Do not ever let your Calvinism push you off into cold, compassionless, detached arrogance that sheds no tears over the lost being en route to judgment. When we are rejected or ignored, we often shed tears, but they are generally selfish tears. We have pity on ourselves, rather than on the people who are rejecting us. Think about that. We are the chosen ones of God - selected to be picked up out of the gutter and brought into the king's family, and we are on our way to the palace, and on our way there we see these miserable, hopeless cases who are all invited to come along with us, but who will not respond to that invitation, and so they are going to suffering unimaginable punishment forever, and we feel sorry for...*ourselves*, because as we walk toward the palace they are not welcoming us into their gutter? How twisted is that?

If you study the doctrines of election and predestination and the sovereignty of God in salvation and it makes you arrogant and argumentative toward believers and cold and callous toward the lost, you need to re-study. Study Jesus, and learn a heart of compassion and pity for the lost.

Passion

So how do you live as elect? How do you respond to being chosen? First and foremost, praise - use your life to bring glory to God. Second, pity - compassion for those who are headed for the wrath that you were snatched away from by God's grace. And then third - passion. That is why Jesus was weeping at the Triumphal Entry.

Listen to the passion in Jesus' voice:

Luke 19:42 "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes."

By sovereign decree, it is hidden from them. But that breaks Jesus' heart and He wants it to become unhidden, and so He presents an argument to persuade them. In the verses that follow He describes the coming judgment. Jesus often warned the people about the judgment to come - never with detached indifference - but with a passionate effort to persuade.

48 ...all the people hung on his words.

If anyone would become a fatalist, you would think it would be Jesus. Of all people who have ever lived, Jesus had the greatest awareness of the divine, eternal plan of God because Jesus was God! It was His plan from eternity past. Jesus knew that everything He had decreed from eternity past would come about. And yet look how He lived. He was driven. He acted like His actions mattered. He was up before sunrise, traveling to go preach somewhere. He was up all night long in prayer agonizing over the decision of selection the Twelve. He behaved as though things would go one way if He acted and the other way if He didn't. And He dealt with people as though their decision determined whether they would be saved. Jesus is always the perfect balance of the two sides of divine sovereignty and human free will and responsibility. In fact, look at Matthew's account of His weeping over Jerusalem:

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... How often I wanted to gather your children together ... and you were unwilling.

He longed to, but it did not happen because they were unwilling. That is a pretty Arminian thing to say, isn't it? When it comes to our responsibility, Jesus teaches us to think in terms of human free will. They will be lost if they are not persuaded, but they need not be lost, so let's do everything possible to persuade them.

Benediction: Isaiah 43:1 this is what the LORD says-- he who created you ...: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior ... 4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you...7 who are called by my name, whom I created for my glory

Application Questions:

- 1) What is your natural reaction when you read in Scripture about election? And which of the three responses from the sermon (Praise, Pity, and Passion) do you feel is most lacking in your life? How could you change that?
- 2) Are there times when you think like an Arminian when you ought to be thinking like a Calvinist? (Tip - one way to know when you are doing that is when you are plagued with worry, anxiety, fretting, anger, etc.)
- 3) Are there times when you think like a Calvinist when you should be thinking like an Arminian? (Tip - one way to detect this is when you lack passion, drive, or compassion)

Appendix

Originally, Calvinism was a term designed to identify a person with the doctrine of John Calvin. Calvin lived about five hundred years ago, and he was known as one of the Reformers. Men like John Calvin and Martin Luther are known as Reformers because they were instrumental in what we call the great Reformation. During the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church had become very corrupt and had gotten WAY off track doctrinally. They were teaching that salvation came through good deeds and religious rituals rather than through faith alone. And the basis for all their false doctrines was church tradition. They elevated church tradition above the Bible, so that the Bible meant whatever the big shots in the Catholic Church said it meant - even if their interpretation contradicted the Words of the Bible. And so the Reformers stepped up and said, "This has to change. We have to get back to the Bible as our only authority, and we have to get back to salvation only by grace and only through faith - not good deeds and rituals." A large number of people in the Church heard that and said, "Yes! We agree!" and they followed Luther and Calvin. (And not just those two. Right around the time

Christopher Columbus sailed, you had men like Melancthon, Zwingli, Tyndale, getting the Reformation going. But things really came to a head with Martin Luther. His showdown with the big shots in the Catholic church in the early 1500's became very widely publicized in Germany.

About thirty years later John Calvin got it going in Switzerland. And thirty years after Calvin, John Knox got it rolling in Scotland. Luther's goal was not to split off from the Catholic church. With all his heart he wanted to stay in the Catholic church - he was just trying to reform it and get it back on track. But when the leadership of the church refused, the result was two separate religions - Roman Catholicism, and those who followed the Reformation. And those people who followed the Reformation eventually became known as "Protestants." That's us. That is our heritage. We are called Protestants because we agree with the protest against the errors of the Catholic Church.

So all that is just to let you know who Calvin was. He was just one of the Reformers, but he stood out among them. They were all great men - amazing men, but John Calvin was particularly remarkable. He was a brilliant theologian, brilliant scholar, and brilliant preacher and pastor. He wrote scholarly commentaries on forty-nine books of the Bible - commentaries so good they are still in print five hundred years later. His work, "The Institutes of Christian Religion" is a 1300 page theology that is still studied by scholars today. And he published it at age 26. That work contains 1755 quotations from the Old Testament and 3098 from the New Testament.

He was an amazing man. He preached the New Testament on Sunday morning, the Psalms on Sunday afternoon and the Old Testament weekday mornings at 6:00 (7:00 in the winter) every other week. He preached over 170 sermons a year, going verse-by-verse through the books of the Bible. He preached 159 sermons on the book of Job. His series on Isaiah went 353 sermons!

His commitment and faithfulness to systematic, expository preaching was amazing. In 1538, on Easter Sunday, he was banished from Geneva. His exile lasted three years. After three years the people in Geneva decided life without John Calvin wasn't as wonderful as they had hoped, and so they invited him back, and he accepted. In September of 1541 he went back to his pulpit and picked up on the very next verse from where he left off three years prior.

He was a scholar and a teacher and a writer, but he was also very much a pastor. From 1550-1560 he performed some fifty baptisms and 270 weddings - and he did the counseling for all of them.

Calvin had nine kids and he was a single dad. (Wife died in 1549.) On top of all that he visited the sick, did individual counseling ("private warning"), he ate one meal a day, had a stomach problem, severe hemorrhoids, and migraines, gout, kidney stones, fever, and asthma.

When someone asked him about the crazy schedule he kept and all the work he was doing he said, "I don't want the Lord to find me idle when He returns."

His preaching, lectures and writing dramatically influenced two continents. Christians from France would flee the persecution and go to Geneva, sit under Calvin's preaching, and become emboldened to return to France and preach the Word there. In France alone there were about one thousand churches planted under Calvin's influence!

And that was just France. Similar things happened in other countries. Many went to Scotland under the reign of Bloody Mary (one of whom was John Knox - he sat under Calvin, took notes with him back to Scotland and started the Scottish Reformation. And he started up a little group you may have heard of - the Presbyterians.). This is a man that the Lord chose to use in an astonishing way in His kingdom.

And the word "Arminian" means "follower of a guy by the name of James Arminius." [Note: It is Arminian not Armenian. An Armenian is someone from the country of Armenia in Eastern Europe. An Arminian is someone who is associated with the doctrines of James Arminius.]

About thirty years after Calvin's time, another Reformer by the name of James Arminius came along. Arminius considered himself a strict Calvinist, and he devoted a lot of time defending Calvinism against Calvin's opponents. But there were some other Calvinists who were claiming that Arminius wasn't getting it right, and that they were the true Calvinists. And so the year after Arminius died they had a council that came up with five points where they thought Arminius was off track.

Nowadays people remember those five points with the acronym TULIP, but honestly do not find those five points helpful, because they are defined so differently by so many different people. For example, the first one is total depravity. But if you talk to five different people you might get five different definitions of what total depravity means. And it is the same with most of those points. I think it usually does more harm than good to use phrases that are defined multiple different ways.