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## SESSION 7: The True Calvinist<sup>1</sup>

### I. INTRO

*Can you be a four-point Calvinist?*

“The doctrines of grace stand or fall together, and together they point to one central truth: salvation is all of grace because it is all of God; and because it is all of God, it is all for his glory.”<sup>2</sup>

The “five points” of Calvinism are faithful to Scripture, theologically cohesive, and logically consistent.

“The starting point for any system of doctrine ought to be the greater glory of God. This is why, in and of themselves, the Five Points are not the heart of Calvinism; they simply serve to explain the distinctive aspects of Reformed soteriology (i.e., the theology of salvation).”<sup>3</sup>

### II. THE TRUE CALVINIST

“The goal of theology is the worship of God. The posture of theology is on one’s knees. The mode of theology is repentance.”<sup>4</sup>

We are called to rigorous study with attention to scriptural exegesis and theological formulation *and* a “warm Christian piety,” which leads to affectionate devotion to the Savior and a commitment to obedience in every realm of life. For the True Calvinist, there is no dichotomy between thinking and feeling, between theology and doxology.

“The doctrines of grace help to preserve all that is right and good in the Christian life: humility, holiness, and thankfulness, with a passion for prayer and evangelism. The true Calvinist ought to be the most outstanding Christian—not narrow and unkind but grounded in God’s grace and therefore generous of spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This outline is adapted from portions of chapters 8 & 9 of *The Doctrines of Grace*, by James Montgomery Boice and Philip Graham Ryken. See also *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Loraine Boettner, chapter 27.

<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice and Philip Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, quoted by Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 179.

<sup>5</sup> Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 180.

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### III. A GOD-CENTERED MIND

It has been said, “beholding is becoming.”

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* (Rom 12:2, ESV)

*“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,”* (Phil 2:5, ESV)

*“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”* (2 Cor 3:18, ESV)

How does this God-centered mindset come about?

*“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”* (Col 3:1–4, ESV)

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”* (Rom 8:5, ESV)

*“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* (Rom 12:1–2, ESV)

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”* (Phil 4:8, ESV)

#### **How our thinking changes:**

- a. Total depravity teaches us that we’ve sinned *against God*.
  - b. Unconditional election reminds us that we’ve been chosen *by God the Father*.
  - c. Definite atonement means that our salvation has been secured *by God through Jesus Christ*.
  - d. Irresistible grace tells us that spiritual life *from God by the Holy Spirit*.
  - e. Persevering grace urges us to persevere in the Christian life because we are preserved *by God and for God*.
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### CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:

- What do you think about most? Where do your thoughts run when you have a free moment?
- How does the gospel change our thinking (Col. 3:1-4)? How does it change our living (Col 3:5-17)?

## IV. A PENITENT SPIRIT

The doctrines of grace lead sinners to a thorough repentance.

*“and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15, ESV)*

*“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Rom 2:4, ESV)*

“This is what always happens when we see God on his throne: by seeing him as *he* really is, we see ourselves as we really are. We stop comparing ourselves to others and start comparing ourselves to God. Thus a true vision of God’s sovereign majesty always includes a painful awareness of our own radical depravity. The more we see of God’s glory, the more we recognize our need for his grace.”<sup>6</sup>

*“For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Cor 15:9, ESV)*

*“But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” (1 Tim 1:15–16, ESV)*

“It is a system of great practical truths which are designed and adapted, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to mould the affections of the heart and to give right direction to the conduct.”<sup>7</sup>

### CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:

- Ask others for their assessment: am I humble? Where do you see pride in my life?

## V. A GRATEFUL HEART

“It does not require much imagination to see how all of this points to the grace that God has given us in Jesus Christ... The only proper response to such amazing

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<sup>6</sup> Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 185.

<sup>7</sup> Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 327.

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grace is profound gratitude.”<sup>8</sup>

“This great subject... builds us up soundly in the faith, trains us to humility, and lifts us up into an admiration of the unbounded goodness of God towards us, while it elevates us to praise this goodness in our highest strains.”<sup>9</sup>

*“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Rom 7:24–25, ESV)

### **Lessons from Deuteronomy 8: “Remember...”**

- a. Consider what you have
- b. Discern from whence it comes
- c. Remember the giver of the gifts

### **CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:**

- Are you grateful? What are you grateful for?
- How often does your prayer do you express your thanksgiving to God? Consider Paul’s example in Colossians 1. How does God want you to imitate his example?

## **VI. A SUBMISSIVE WILL**

*“Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matt 6:9–10, ESV)

“The Calvinist is the Christian who confesses before men in his theology just what he believes in his heart before God when he prays.”<sup>10</sup>

*“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Phil 1:6, ESV)

*“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”* (1 Thess 5:23–24, ESV)

### **CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:**

- Where do you need prayer most right now? Have you made those requests known to God?

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<sup>8</sup> James Montgomery Boice and Philip Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 187.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, quoted by Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 327.

<sup>10</sup> J. I. Packer, quoted in Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 191.

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## VII. A HOLY LIFE

*“but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet 1:15–16, ESV)*

- a. Radical depravity exposes our lack of holiness

*“as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’” (Rom 3:10–12, ESV)*

- b. Unconditional election is for the purpose of our holiness

*“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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.” (Eph 1:3–4, ESV)*

- c. Definite atonement was necessary to secure our holiness before God

*“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor 5:21, ESV)*

- d. Irresistible grace brings about progressive holiness in Christians

*“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...” (1 Cor 1:2, ESV)*

- e. Perseverance is how Christians lead a holy and productive life.

*“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil 1:6, ESV)*

### CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:

- Are there aspects of your life that are not “set apart” for holiness? What steps does God want you to take to change?
- How does knowing that you have Christ’s holiness (justification) help you to grow in personal holiness (sanctification)?

## VIII. A GLORIOUS PURPOSE

*“When a person sees himself as one of the Lord’s chosen and knows that every one of his acts has an eternal significance, he realizes more clearly how serious life is,*

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and he is fired with a new determination to make his life count for great things.”<sup>11</sup>

*“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.”* (Phil 3:12–16, ESV)

### **CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:**

- What are you living for? Where do you find meaning and purpose in life?

“May God’s Son Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the mouths of those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of his Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all they say may be to the glory of God and the building up of their hearers. Amen.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 328.

<sup>12</sup> The Canons of Dort, Conclusion, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions*.

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