

When Calvinism Goes Bad (Part 3)

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Well, I want to deal with Hyper-Calvinism once again. Third message in an ongoing series that I've entitled, "When Calvinism Goes Bad." And as I've said before, I'm not crazy about using that term. In fact, for the most part of our 12 years as a church I, from the pulpit, have not very likely used the term Calvinism. And the reason that I don't like to use it is because it tends to put in some people's minds, if they don't know otherwise, that it's man made system, it's a system that has to do with John Calvin and that it means that you believe everything that John Calvin believes. Historically, Calvinism is simply a title that has come to mean that you believe what the Bible teaches at five points. That's what it is. And it is what the Bible teaches.

It teaches that man is totally depraved, not as bad as he can be, but he's bad through and through. His conscience is bad, his will is bad, his intentions are bad, his desires are bad, his heart is bad. He is bad. And he's bad to the point that he can never do good. Even in his good, he is bad. It's tainted with sin, it's tainted with selfishness, it's tainted with an absence of a love of God. He's depraved.

We believe that God unconditionally chooses sinners to be saved. Based on nothing. Before they have done good or bad, that the purposes of God according to election might stand. God picks a Jacob over an Esau.

We believe in an atonement that God designed for the elect. We believe that God isn't trying to figure this whole plan out as He is going along. He had an end in mind. That end was to save a certain people and He provided an atonement to do that.

We believe in irresistible grace. In other words, we believe that when God calls, people come. When God speaks... When Jesus Christ says, "Lazarus come forth!" he does! We believe that! We believe that God is all powerful, we don't believe that the human will is all powerful. We believe that God can trump the human will whenever He wants to. Man has his plans and he designs them but ultimately we know that the heart of the king is in the hand of God. It is like a river and He directs it wherever He wills. He causes men to will and to do for His good pleasure, Scripture says so. We believe that.

We believe in perseverance of the saints. But why? Because Jesus said that He gives eternal life and if it's lost it's not eternal life. Eternal life is eternal! John 3:16! We know it! The Gospel in little summary form. If you believe you don't perish. Why? Because you have eternal life and if you can ever take it away, if you can lose it it is not eternal.

These are simply five truths that are found in Scripture. That because of different historical doings have been called Calvinism. Because there's other systems that have opposed these. We don't need to get into all the history of that right now. But, there is an error. Hyper-Calvinism. I need to explain Calvinism because I want to deal with the error, Hyper-Calvinism. What is that? That is taking the fact that God tells

us man can't come unless the Father draws him because he is that depraved. Man is bad, man is dead in trespasses and sins. There are those that have taken these doctrines of the sovereignty of God, the fact that there is an elect, the fact that God has a design in who He would save, the fact of irresistible grace, there are those who have taken that and they have used their rationale and their logic and they've come to a point where you no longer have a Gospel. They don't have the biblical Gospel. And you can see how that can be, right?

Okay, you have a sinner. That sinner does no good. How can he do good? If God by His irresistible grace penetrates into that man's life, gives him desire, opens his eyes. He's the God who says, "let there be light," he opens the sinners eyes so that they behold some beauty in Christ. Well, he won't come unless he's drawn, he won't come unless God says, "let there be light." That's true! But the Hyper Calvinist then says, "well, because he can't do anything until God does something, then we better not press him to do anything. What we need to do is we need to tell the guy that there is nothing that He can do and he needs to sit there, park himself, and wait for God to regenerate him, for God to open his eyes, for God to say 'let there be light,' for God to do this." And so to press men and women with a duty to believe and repent would be pressing them to do what they cannot do and so we don't want to do that. Or, we don't want to press them to believe and repent immediately as they tend to say, "well, I'm trying and I can't" or "that's too difficult" or whatever.

Hyper-Calvinism says this, it looks and it says, well, if God designed to save the elect and if the atonement is the purpose of it. I mean, God effectually purposed to redeem this people. Well then, God hates workers of iniquity and so He must hate all of the reprobate people in the world and God has no love for the non-elect at all. That's where this thinking goes.

It also says this, if God is in control of who gets saved and who doesn't, the need for evangelism is radically reduced. I mean, why do we need to go tell the world to come? If the elect out there are elect, God is going to save them. God is going to see to it that they are born again. What do we need to be praying and spending a week in prayer and fasting for if God is in control of it all anyway? I mean, why the Great Commission? Why get so bent out of shape to make all sorts of sacrifices and do crazy things like Hudson Taylor did and William Carey did? Why? When after all, if God is going to save the heathen, He is going to do it! You see, that is where the thinking goes.

Many of you know who Phil Johnson is. He is a co-elder with John MacArthur, he has a blog. Listen to this, he wrote a page on Hyper-Calvinism. Listen to him. He says this, he is very in tune with the way doctrine is going in the United States today, "I am concerned about some subtle trends that seem to signal a rising tide of Hyper Calvinism. Especially within the ranks of young Calvinists. And the newly reformed. I've seen these trends in numerous reformed theological forums on the internet, including: mailing lists, websites, usenet forums. History teaches us that Hyper Calvinism is as much a threat to true Calvinism as Arminianism is."

What is Arminianism? Arminianism denies unconditional election. It says that it is conditional. That it basically rests with man. God has stepped back, He has made it possible for all men to be saved. He stepped back, He doesn't interfere with man's free will. He leaves it up to every one of us to believe if

we so choose, if we are wise enough, if we are moved on by the preacher enough to do it and God doesn't override that. He has looked ahead of time, He sees who is going to believe. They don't believe that man is totally depraved, that man does have some ability to do good to choose God when Scripture says that there is none that seeks after Him, at least on their own. Unless God interferes. Anyway, this is what he sees, he sees Hyper Calvinism as much a threat to true Calvinism as Arminianism is. "Virtually every revival of true Calvinism since the Puritan era has been hijacked" (listen to the words that he used) "hijacked, crippled, or ultimately killed by Hyper Calvinistic influences. Modern Calvinists would do well to be on guard against the influence of these deadly trends." Listen, the week before I went to North Carolina I brought a version of my last message to the church in Austin. There is a man who has just come out of a Pentecostal background there and he has come over to reformed thinking. I'm preaching along and he just raises his hand. Because he has totally bought into the Hyper Calvinistic thinking. You can see it in the questions that he is asking. That pendulum has swung so far over the other way. You know, in the first two messages that I have preached on this here, I have had people come up to me saying, "Brother Tim, I'm a Hyper Calvinist." It's here! It's in the thinking. There are those that I am seeing here that are not able to take man's responsibility and God's sovereignty and to come to proper conclusions. And if you don't come to a proper conclusion I'll tell you what the danger is and I'll tell you what is at stake. The Gospel is at stake. This is huge! Phil Johnson sees the resurgence.

Listen to Iain Murray, author-historian. He makes this observation: "in many churches there has been a real increase in knowledge and a resurgence of Calvinistic belief that has occurred across the world." He sees that as a good thing. This honors God when we are teaching that God is responsible, that God is the author of salvation, that God is to be depended on, He is to be looked at, He is to be trusted. God is in control, God is sovereign, God is king! We heard it there in Psalm 29. I mean, we are little before this God up on this throne and He rules and He does according to His will in Heaven and Earth. I mean, we are as nothing. The nations are a drop in a bucket before this God. Calvinism exalts the glory of God. It's good! It's great! And Murray is saying that it is coming from the pulpits around this world now. There has actually been a resurgence. But he also makes this observation, "that this revival of doctrine has scarcely been matched by a revival of evangelism." That's what I'm seeing. That's not good. When doctrine revives, but a passion for the lost doesn't. What is that!? Is that Jesus weeping over cities? If anybody knew about the sovereignty of God, Jesus Christ did.

You know what, there was a day when Arminianism was through the land but wherever Calvinism makes a resurgence, Hyper-Calvinism dogs its heels. As one of the puritans said, "the devil does not allow the wind of error to blow along in the same direction." Okay, let there be a resurgence of Calvinism but push that pendulum out to the other extreme to where none of them have the Gospel anymore. And that's what is happening. I told you before my fear for our day is churches and individuals who believe that God is sovereign, they believe man is depraved, they believe Christ died for a particular people, who no longer have a message for sinners. You've lost it! Or you just become plain passive or not interested in evangelistic strategies. You hear Brandon get up and you're saying, well God has got an elect, why do we have to get so stirred up about the fact that there are pimps and prostitutes over here on Martin St and Frio? I mean,

if they are the elect, after all, and if God designed the atonement so that it would effectually accomplish redemption for a certain people. Well, if they are one of them, they are going to get in on it. God is going to see to it. But, God is a God of means and what does He use? He uses the prayers, He uses the powerful proclamation, a pure proclamation. Throughout history, men and women are saved where the Gospel is purely preached. And don't think that God is going to bypass those means. He does not. Where the Gospel has been lost, people stop getting saved and churches dry up. That's just historically right.

I'm seeing it. Reformed churches that do not take prayer meetings seriously. More and more reformed churches that are trying to explain why the Great Commission isn't for us. Explaining away that responsibility. I mean, Iain Murray is right! The biblical truths of Calvinism, man's total depravity, God's unconditional election, all that, they are being proclaimed from more and more pulpits throughout our land. But just at the same time, the church of God arise! Protect that Gospel! We need to protect it against all of these influences. We cannot fall into the carnal logic of Hyper Calvinism. Preservation of the Gospel. That is indeed what is at stake. We must not do what men in other centuries have done. What Phil Johnson thinks is even on the horizons, now we are already here. We must not let the sovereignty of God in salvation lead us to unbiblical conclusions about what the Gospel is and how it is to be preached. The responsibility of all men and women to repent and to believe immediately. That is the responsibility of the church. To proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation and to press sinners this way.

Andrew Fuller, he was one that fought this. Listen to what he says, "the effect of Hyper Calvinism is that the churches were lifeless and the denomination of the particular baptist was dying." Fuller was immersed in this Hyper-Calvinistic teaching early on, and he said that during his early years he dear not invite the unconverted to come to Jesus. Why? Why!? Those Particular Baptists were scared to death of what? They were scared to death of over-inviting the non-elect lest some non-elect person would make a false profession. But what they did is they stopped preaching the Gospel to where the elect couldn't be saved. You say, what's that? How can that happen? Well, God just won't use them. He'll use somebody else. But He is not going to use them. That's why there churches dried up. They went somewhere else. Spurgeon came on the land and people went over there! You have to set forth enough Gospel to convert the elect. Fuller also said that in his estimation, there was scarcely a preacher amongst the Particular Baptists of his day whose preaching was not more or less influenced by the lethargic, Hyper-Calvinism of his day. And the price was huge. In the 40 years after 1789, the Particular Baptists declined from 220 to 150. Spurgeon saw the same thing in his day.

I mean, look. Phil Johnson, Iain Murray, Charles Spurgeon, Andrew Fuller, they see Hyper-Calvinism... they use terms like hijack, cripple, kill the truth. They see evangelism dying by its influences, they associate this system with lethargy and decrease. Why? For one simple reason, Hyper-Calvinism tears the very Gospel right out of the church in a disturbingly, subtle way. Because what is that way? It's done in the name of the glory of God. It's done in the name of the sovereignty of God. It seems like we are trying to exalt God and debase man by telling man, he is so bad that he can't come. But, I'll tell you it doesn't do that. It dishonors God and it actually pumps up the pride of men. It appears to be one thing, it appears to be humble, it appears to be glorifying God, but it's not that. And I'll show you what I mean by that.

Now, after I got done last time. I mean, I can tell, we've got young Calvinists here that do not have this figured out. And so, I want us to think again. And I want us to go back to the text we went to last time. Briefly.

John 6:44 Just look at this verse and then we are going to jump to another text. John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." That's the truth. And we stand by that truth. That is true. And that should humble men. We are not ultimately in control. We are desperately needy of this God. We are bankrupt folks. This is a statement of human bankruptcy. When you get a lost man and you come to him, young Calvinist, you take this verse and you come to an unconverted individual and you in any way make them feel like it is valid for them to be unrepentant. You console them as though it is outside of their power, all that you are doing is encouraging them in a deception. You tell them, well, sit under preaching, pray, ask God for a new heart, ask God to make you repentant, ask God to give you faith, wait on the Lord. But you know what you have just done? You haven't humbled him, you haven't debased him, you haven't honored God. What you've done is you've actually appealed to his self-righteousness. Because, do you know what he is thinking now? He is thinking that he would gladly be converted, he has actually persuaded himself of that, "Oh, I would be converted, I would be a real Christian, if it were in my power to become one!" That's exactly what they think. They imagine themselves to be waiting for God to do something and believe themselves to be doing all that a dead sinner should do.

Now, look with me at Luke 14 because I want you to see something. Okay, doesn't scripture teach that men are dead in trespasses and sins. Certainly it does! Men cannot come to Christ. But we need to understand. And I know that we dealt with some of this if you were here 3 weeks ago. But, I just felt like we need to go back and spend a little bit more time here because I saw a level of confusion that made me feel like, "wow!" If I heard it from that many people, undoubtedly there were other people that did not say anything that are just scratching their heads. No man can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. But, let's look at the nature of his inability. Look with me at Luke 14 beginning in verse 16. This is a parable. This represents the calling of sinners with the Gospel to come to Christ, to come to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many" So you see the invitation. This is the Gospel invitation being pictured here. "And at the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come! everything is now ready!'" Isn't that what we tell sinners? Come! Everything is ready! Everything that was necessary for your salvation is done. Look, even Mr. Hart in the hymn we sang... Does Scripture say that all that He requires of you is that you feel your need of Him? I'll tell you what Scripture says, "Come! everything is ready." Because as soon as you say, "oh! I have to feel my need of Him." Do you know where you are looking now? How much do I feel? You are not bid to come because you feel anything.

Now look, Scripture talks to those who feel certain ways. If you desire, if you are thirsty, if you are burdened or heavy-laden. It speaks to them to encourage them to come. But that is not the basis on which you come. Scripture commands you to come. That is the basis, that is the warrant to come. Because you have been commanded, all men everywhere have been commanded to repent! Come! Everything is now ready. Nothing here about looking at yourself. Trying to figure out whether you have this or whether you

have that. It doesn't depend on what you have! It's ready! Come. But they all alike begin to make excuses. Jesus is perfectly portraying the sinner who rejects the Gospel.

They began to make excuses, the first said to him, "I've bought a field. I must go out and see it. Please have me excused." And do you know what? If you are here and you are not converted yet you can stop playing the game because this is the game you are playing. You don't intend to go to Hell, you intend to get it right some time. But right now, you've got a field to concern yourself with. Later, a lot of young people think that way. Well, I'm going to live it up now, I'll get right with God later. "Another said, I bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. Another said, I have married a wife (now watch these words) and therefore I cannot come." Did you notice? Cannot. Did you notice you cannot come to Christ unless the Father draws? Did you notice that this man says, "I cannot"? Do you see what kind of "cannot" it is? It's a cannot because I love other things more than I love Christ and more than I desire the salvation that He offers. I love my sin. I don't want to go to Hell. This is one of the problems that we are dealing with all of the time. We get people who don't want to go to Hell and then they are doing all the acrobatics and they're weeping the tears and all this and then they are frustrated. Well, of course they are frustrated because they want to go to Heaven without forsaking their sin. These people were making excuses. Do you know why you can't come? Because you love your wife more than Christ. That's what Jesus said to those pharisees. You cannot come, you cannot believe, because you desire the glory that comes from one another. You see, when you desire something more than salvation, something more than Him, you cannot come. Why? Because you won't! Do you see the kind of cannot that it is? Verse 20 "another said that I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." If you are a parent... you know, my son has an aversion to broccoli. Broccoli is good for you. My wife will put cheese on it to try to get him to eat it. But if I say to my son, "Joshua, eat your broccoli." He says, "I can't." He doesn't mean that he doesn't have arms. He doesn't mean that he doesn't have teeth in his mouth to chew it up with. He means something akin to this. I can't because I have an aversion to it. That's the cannot that we have in Scripture. I'm wanting to focus on this because, my brothers and sisters, when we are dealing with the lost, you don't give them any hiding place but Christ. At all. You see their excuses for what they are. You see their inability for what it is. It's a hatred for Christ and an aversion to God. That's what it is. It is a lack of willingness to surrender. Keep reading, "So the servant came and reported these things to his master." Now watch this. "The master of the house became angry. Do you see why He would be angry? Everything is ready. The sacrifice has been made. The merit is secured. For the propitiation, the putting away of the wrath of God for your sins. Here is the wedding meal. I'm not requiring anything of you but to come! You just come! They said we can't. Why? Love of field, love of ox, love of wife. Please have me excused. That's going to make somebody angry. That's going to make God angry. And righteously angry, justly angry. "He said to his servant, go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring the poor, and cripple, and blind, and lame. And the servant said, sir, what you have commanded has been done and still there is room. And the master said to the servant, go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in." That's what our calling is. You get somebody and they are reluctant, you compel them to come in. With all their excuses you compel them to come in. That's what we're called to do. "That my house may be filled." "For

I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.” Do you see the danger? You need to tell people, when they say, “I can’t come,” or they are giving whatever excuse they give when you are pressing them to turn from their sin, forsake their sin, and fall into the merciful hands of Christ. When you press them to do that and they in any way turn the other way, walk away, give their excuse, say they can’t, come up with this or that other reason, where they are saying that it is difficult, they can’t understand it. There is a place that they need to understand what we are saying. They need to understand the Gospel, they need to understand who this Christ is who is to be believed in. I grant you that. And we need to be proclaiming the excellencies of Christ. That’s what our preaching is all about. That is what we are called to do. But I’ll tell you this, when they come up with those excuses, and it is just simply because they love their sin. Look... John 5:40, Jesus says that “you refuse to come to me.” You refuse to come. That’s what it is all about, coming. Come! Everything is prepared. If they don’t come it is because they refuse. You refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Hyper-Calvinism sees men and women as having a valid excuse for not coming to Christ. It sides with the sinner! And makes it God’s fault that the sinner is not saved. But Scripture never supports that idea...ever! Not ever. When we fail to press men to repent and believe immediately we compromise the Gospel. And I’ll tell you this, Scripture everywhere affirms that there is one reason as to why a man will not immediately surrender Himself at the foot of the Cross. Why? It’s because he is wickedly married to his own lust. That is what that parable is clearly teaching us. Please have me excused. Why? I have oxen. I have land. I have a wife. And if you, in this room, have not yet come to Christ, you have your ox, you have your land, you have your wife. Whatever it may be. And that is the only reason. Don’t you dare blame God! God is angry with you that you have not come. That you have rejected His invitations. And I’ll tell you, there comes a time when He says that person that I have invited, he is not going to get an invitation anymore, he’s not going to come, he’s not welcome anymore. You better believe Scripture teaches that truth. There is a time when you reject those invitations to where God says that is it. That is it! Those invitations are valid, they are real, they are to the sinner and they are beckoning you to come because everything, everything that is needful for your salvation has been accomplished! That’s precisely why the master of the house is angry! The people who won’t come are wickedly wedded to their idols, and that is the only reason that sinners won’t come to Christ. That’s the only one. There is no other reason. No other.

And do you know what? If you tell people the Gospel and they won’t come. We have no other good news for sinners. None other! Except they find the whole foundation of their hope in Jesus Christ! They must immediately relinquish every false ground of hope and come to Christ as a perishing sinner and rely on Him alone for salvation.

Listen, if you tell a sinner... By the way, parents, this applies to you in the way you raise your children. You tell the sinner to ask God for a new heart, that is to miss the mark. Let me ask you this question... think, let your minds go back and forth through Scripture. Where do you ever find, ever find, Jesus Christ or His apostles exhorting men to do things that if a man or woman complies with they still go to Hell? Did you catch what I just said? If we exhort men and women, “pray to God for a new heart.” You are going to find that a lot of those people are just deceived and they go to Hell. Where does Jesus Christ or

His apostles ever, ever exhort and press and plead with men to do anything that falls short of salvation? Never. You don't see them telling sinners to just wait in their unrepentant state until God does something. You never see them press men to do anything but that which leads immediately to eternal life. Listen, John 8:51 "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." Do you see what He is saying? Everything that I have said to you is that you might be saved. Everything, I have never pressed you to do anything that will lead you short of salvation. Do you hear what I am saying? We are the lights of the world now! We are the ones who have been handed the baton. This is our day. To take the Gospel to our generation. Are we, unlike Jesus and His apostles, to be pressing men and women to do that which will fall short of Heaven when they never did? Which is what you are going to accomplish if you are pressing men to do anything that comes shy of immediate faith and repentance. Right? Do you see that? Do you understand what I am saying? Take that reality when you train your children. Take that reality when you are evangelizing the lost, when visitors come in here that you know are outside the Lord. We need to be pressing them. Pressing them, come, come. There's no hope, there is no safety except you come. None! You don't want to stay over there. Don't be pressing sinners to do that... "Go read the book of John." That's great but that falls short. We need to be pressing them to do what, if they comply with, is in fact going to lead to eternal life.

And look, the thing is, if you are dealing with a sinner, and the Gospel itself, and the blessings, the promised blessings are not good enough news, don't compromise the Gospel, don't try to come up with something else. If there is nothing in Christ, if there is nothing in grace, if there is nothing in the Gospel or eternal life that suits the tastes of an unrepentant sinner don't coddle them with a hope that more prayer, or more asking God for a new heart, or more asking God to give him repentance, or more asking God to give him faith, is somehow going to be a hopeful path for him. Do you understand? Neither Jesus nor His apostles ever pressed men to use means to repentance and faith. They used means to produce repentance and faith. They preached the Word! They proclaimed Christ! They used means to bring about repentance and faith in the people they preached to. But they never preached to people to do things to bring about repentance and faith. They commanded them to repent and believe immediately! Do you hear what I am saying? You do not let the sinner stand secure in coming short of repentance and faith by saying to him. "well, since you are not ready to repent and believe right now, or you can't, or for whatever reason it seems impossible right now." You don't simply side with him and say, "after all you can't and so you're excused." Remember, he cannot come because he's got a wife that is more important to him. Or fill in the blank. Whatever it is. He's got an ox, he's got a field, and he cannot come. And Jesus says you will not come. It's because he does not like the broccoli. And the master of the house is angry. And you want to press him, press him.

Repentance was the message of the early church. I mean, John the Baptist comes along. Did he say, "pray that God would make you repentant"? He busted out on the scene and he says, "Repent." He said, that ax is laid to the root. You better repent right now and believe! Jesus Christ comes out on the scene, saying the same thing, "repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." That's what they preached. Here, Pentecost, the Spirit of God falls on that early church and Peter goes to preaching, what does he say? "Re-

pent and be baptized, every one of you!” Not somehow seek some means to come into a repentant and a better frame of mind. None of that! It is, quit your rebellion right now! And surrender to God. Submit yourself to His mercy. That’s what it is all about. Paul, “the times of ignorance God overlooked but now He commands all people everywhere to repent.” To repent! To actually do it. Not to go skirt the issue by claiming, well, I need to seek some means to make me in more of a favorable frame. Never that!

Listen, if a king offers you pardon... I mean, think about it... We are in a land, you are all rebels, you have all rebelled against this king. He appoints me as an ambassador and I come here and I stand before you by his authority. By the king’s authority here I am! I come to you and in his name I offer you pardon because he offers you pardon. I bring that message. I’m offering pardon to his subjects who have gone rebel. And I am here to give you that message as his ambassador. I’m offering you pardon, I’m offering you the mercy of this king. But it is based on the condition. It is based on the condition that the rebels lay down their arms and surrender and give up their rebellion. Now, what am I going to do? I’m going to come to you. I can talk to you. I can tell you what his pardon is. I can tell you that it is very merciful. I can tell you that he has a kindly heart towards you. I can tell you the authority by which I’ve come. I can plead with you, I can implore you, I can tell you, I can command you, I can warn you, I can threaten you. I can do all of those things. But I dare not depart from the message insisting that you be reconciled to your king. Lay down your arms and submit to that mercy! To this, church, we have to hold fast and never depart. Offer men and women no vestige of hope while they continue enemies of Christ. None at all! That is what is happening in Hyper-Calvinism. That is what has happened. And we see it. And I am seeing it in young Calvinists here.

There is nothing but wickedness that makes repentance difficult. For a sinner to say that he cannot repent or is unable to repent is for them to insist that they have to continue in their rebellion. I mean, what is that? What is it? You love your sin so much that you can’t be sorry for it. You love your sin so much that you can’t come to Christ and say, Lord I am in bondage to this, would you take me out of this and deliver me? Would you help me? You are so in bondage to sin that you can’t just cry out for His help to rescue. Come a bankrupt, penniless, sinner to Him. You are so determined to continue in your rebellion, you love your sin so much, you can’t just ask the Lord to save you from it. Are you so much an enemy of God, that you can’t confess that sin and apologize to Him and ask Him to help you?

Brethren, nothing but wickedness makes repentance difficult. Nothing but loving wife, and land, and oxen more makes repentance difficult. Our message has to be singular. We must press the sinner just as they are. Get away from looking at yourself for feelings or feeling anything! You have a mandate from God to come to Him! Why? Because He says come, that is why! You don’t have to look to find anything suitable in yourself, any preparation in yourself, anything that God is doing. You don’t have to see if He is regenerating you. That is not the basis on which you are called. You are called because God says, “Come!” You say, “can I be saved?” He says, “come,” and if you don’t it is rebellion and He’ll be angry. And He is angry already. He bids you come. Come! By His grace alone to be saved by Christ, alone. We need to press the filthy sinner, come with all your filth. Don’t try to clean it up. Come to Christ, fall upon Him, His blood washes clean. Sinner, go to Christ just as you are to be washed, to be robed in righteousness by Him.

To be helped by Him, to be sheltered by the fierceness of God's wrath, finding protection in Him, from the curse of God's law. From the thunderings of God's law. Go find shelter there. That all-sufficient, blood-spilling atonement that was accomplished there on the Cross. Brethren, we have got to be pressing people into the Ark. The waters of judgment are coming! Get in, get in, get in! If they are going to stand there and argue, stand there and resist, they are going to perish! Those cities of refuge were pictures of Christ, they were set up to show that if you were guilty of some crime, and as long as you were not inside of that city, it was lawful of the family members of the one that you accidentally killed to come and take your head. But we are guilty on purpose. And I'll tell you what the threatenings of the law are just and wrath is coming and it is coming for you on purpose, with a purpose and justly so. And it is breathing down your neck and we have got to press men into the city of refuge. That is Christ. In there now, in there now! Cry out to Him! Lord help me! Lord secure me! Lord protect me! Lord save me! We have got to be like Peter in those waves. We are sinking, our eyes have to be on Him. If you get our eyes off of Him, on the waves, on the wind, you go down! You go down to Hell! We've got to press men, we've got to be like the prodigal. We've got to press men. You in all your penniless-ness and beggarliness and rags and destitution and bankruptcy to Christ immediately! There is a Father who is there and ready to receive you and put the robe on you and kill the fatted calf. Everything is made ready. He waits for you! The picture of the prodigal son is not this Hyper-Calvinistic picture of this God who goes around and hates the whole world. Have we not read? God so loved the world. And He waits, and sinners that come... you see the picture that Jesus is creating of the very heart of God! He comes running to the sinner. Embraces Him! Sweeps him up in His arms. We need to be pressing men into the Father's house. Come home, go where it is safe. Go upon that ark into the city of refuge.

Jesus doesn't want anything from us. Nothing! Nothing whatsoever. He did it all. It is finished. And all is ready. That is what we are told. Come! All is ready. Guilty, vile, undone, bankrupt sinner that we are. Come, come. He demands no right feelings. He gives everything. He doesn't demand you to clean anything up. Isn't that amazing? We actually have to surrender to mercy. Men, women, are their own worst enemies. Surrender to mercy.

Press them, brethren, press them! Lost, forsaken, destitute, desolate, with no good feelings, no good hopes. Give them no good hope except one. "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." That's it.

And listen, I am going to finish with this. But young Calvinists you need to get this. The Gospel is not that God has an elect people and damns the rest. That is not the Gospel. The Gospel is not that God is sovereign. I'm not saying that there isn't any semblance of truth in these things. There are a lot of truths that are not good news. I'm talking about good news to the vilest, filthiest, sinners. The Gospel is not that there are vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. The Gospel is not that God hated Esau. How many young Calvinists want to talk to sinners about election before they implore sinners to be reconciled to God. The Gospel is the good news that He who knew no sin, became sin that we who are just totally desperate sinners and knew nothing but sin might be made into the righteousness of God by trusting in Christ.

More and more, young Calvinists seem to be lacking a good, solid, biblical, Gospel message. They want to talk to sinners about God's decrees and God's sovereignty and man's total depravity and man's hatred for sinners. Listen to Phil Johnson, he said, "one young Hyper-Calvinist he was dealing with told him, 'the message of the Gospel is that God saves those who are His own and damns those who are not.'" You can tell, Phil Johnson said this in a way that He did not believe that that is the Gospel. So what happens? The good news about Christ's sin-atonement death and victorious resurrection gets replaced. By what? By a message about election, reprobation, depravity, that God hates workers of iniquity and hates those that He has chosen to damn. There is nothing whatsoever that they can do about it. It is fatalistic. Hyper-Calvinism is very fatalistic. And I think I might have mentioned this before, but I read where John Calvin became so convicted and convinced that we need to avoid talking to the lost about the secret decrees of God and election and reprobation and take them to the doctrine of justification first. In other words, being declared righteous on the merits of Christ by faith in Him. We need that first before election! That in the later editions of Calvin's "Institutes", he moved justification ahead of election because of this very thing. Have you ever noticed how the evangelistic teaching of the apostolic preachers in the Book of Acts never ever mention election once. And yet, the epistles, which are written to God's people, rarely of devoid of it. Have you ever noticed that?

Calvin recognized that Scripture generally introduces the doctrine of election to show Believers the security and certainty of their salvation and to humble Christians by showing them who makes them to differ from others. That is true. But when election is constantly introduced to the lost it inevitably proves to be an obstruction in the minds of lost men and women. I guarantee you the devil would use it that way. John Bradford, who is often quoted by Whitfield, said these words, "Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance before he goes to the University of election and predestination." Iain Murray says of Spurgeon, "He loved both sovereignty and responsibility and wanted to see both upheld. But when it came to Gospel preaching, he believed that there needed to be a greater concentration on responsibility. The tendency of Hyper-Calvinism is to make sinners understand deep theology before simply pressing them to flee to Christ for refuge."

Church, this is a real problem. And I know that we get introduced to the sovereignty of God and it excited us. But if you truly want to be soul winners, heed these men from the past who were soul winners. Heed Bradford, heed Spurgeon, heed Calvin. They knew... it becomes a stumbling block when you begin to deal with the lost about the secret decrees and predestination and reprobation and election and total depravity. These things with sinners is just a stumbling block. Press them with their responsibility. It is true in Scripture that very often you go to what was written to people who were already Christians and the doctrine of election gives security, it humbles us. It is valuable then. But we can just make it a stumbling block. Make sure that you are preaching the Gospel to sinners and you are not just introducing them to the deep theology. Which you may feel like is all glorious and indeed these doctrines are. But if you truly have a love for souls you are going to not bring to lost people what is going to be a stumbling block. Do you know... just because something is truth doesn't mean you have to share it with everybody. Jesus Himself said that, "I have many things to say to you, you are not able to receive them yet." We have

to deal with people where they are.

Brethren, I'll just end with this. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them." Here is Gospel! God reconciling the world, not counting their trespasses against them "and entrusting to us [we are the us!] the message of reconciliation, therefore we are ambassadors of Christ. God making His appeal through us." God is the King, we are the ambassadors. What is His appeal to this world? Be reconciled. We implore you on behalf of Christ. Be reconciled to God. "For our sake, God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God." That is good news.

Brethren, please, hear these words, think on these things. Talk among yourselves about them. Think what the Bible says is the Gospel. This Hyper-Calvinism destroys churches. It destroys. We want to keep ourselves pure from this, we want to keep ourselves balanced. Brethren, I want this church to be a light but if we lose the Gospel we will be darkness.

Father, I pray, help us, help us, helps us, Lord! By the grace of God we implore you, Father, we would pray to you, please. The Church, the ground, the Bulwark, the Pillar of Truth. Help us, Lord, to secure that deposit of truth. The faith that once committed to the saints, to the church of God. Lord, may we be faithful stewards of it. May we not go wrong on this Gospel. Preserve us from error, Lord. In Christ's name I pray.