

The Christian Worldview Transcript

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Guest: Joel Beeke

Topic: Calvinism: What Is It? What Isn't It?

DAVID WHEATON: Calvinism: What is it? What isn't it? That is the topic for hour one here on The Christian Worldview where the mission is to think biblically about all matters of life and faith so that we can then live accordingly. And to share the Good News that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, the Way, the Truth and the Life and that His Word is both relevant and our basis for living in this modern world. I am David Wheaton, the host of The Christian Worldview. Our official website is TheChristianWorldview.com.

We are supported by three national sponsors; Summit Ministries, The S. Lewis Johnson Institute and the Masters College. We are broadcasting to you live from Minneapolis, our home station AM 980 KKMS this morning on 165 Christian radio stations and affiliates across the country.

The first hour, Calvinism: What is it? What isn't it? Dr. Joel Beeke, the President of Puritan Reform Theological Seminary. He is the pastor of Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation and the author and editor of over 50 books including our new book club selection, *Living For God's Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism*. Dr. Beeke thanks so much for coming on the Christian Worldview this morning.

DR. JOEL BEEKE: It is great to be here David. Thank you very much.

DAVID: It is great to have you back. I have really enjoyed reading your book. We are really looking forward to reading this over January, February and March here on the program. I am going to read something to you from the back cover of the book. I just want to imagine, if you were on the game show jeopardy and someone who is listening today could pick the theology category and the answer was this; biblical, God-centered, heartfelt, winsome and practical. I rather doubt that with the perception that Calvinism has in today's culture that a contestant on the show would say, "what is Calvinism?"

Calvinism has been caricatured and misrepresented in so many ways. People call it legalistic, fear-based, apathetic towards your fellow man, it is dead, orthodoxy, it is fatalistic. How exactly has it become so caricatured and misrepresented Dr. Beeke?

DR. BEEKE: Well I think it comes from two ends. From one end there is a group of people called hyper-Calvinists that actually do foster some of those caricatures. Probably 75% of the caricatures have come from a position from a liberal end; people that are very hostile to wanting to look at all of life through the lens of scripture. When you look at all of life through the lens of scripture, and you don't believe in scripture, you naturally going to think that some people are legalistic because they want to live according to the principles of scripture.

Already in the 16th century, when John Calvin lived, especially the latter part of his life and shortly after he died, there were some very vitriolic biographies written about him with a lot of falsehood. They were proven falsehoods, but a lot of those falsehoods stuck about his own life and his theology. Then they got picked up again in the 19th century through things like *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and so on. Gradually some of these caricatures held in the minds of people, so we entered the 20th century that way.

Since mid-20th century, there has been so much scholarship and so many articles and books written to correct those caricatures that those who really know Calvinism fairly well realize the caricatures for what they are. The common person in America today often is not familiar with all of this literature, so still imbibing these early 20th century caricatures.

DAVID: Dr. Joe Beeke is the guest this morning here on The Christian Worldview. We are talking about Calvinism: What is it? What isn't it? We will be taking your calls half way through the program today so ready with your questions or comments for Dr. Beeke.

Dr. Beeke do you call yourself a Calvinist because that word gets bantered around? It is a loaded term to many people today. Do you call yourself a Calvinist?

DR. BEEKE: I do David. I believe that Calvinism and looking at worldviews through calvinistic theology, which I think is biblical theology, is the best way to approach life. I tend to use the word reformed rather than calvinistic in some circles in which the term is very loaded. I think rather than run away from the term, we need to explain it and need to understand it for what it is. That is the purpose of my book, to show that Calvinism is a very warm and a very, very God-centered view of life. It is heartfelt and it is practical. It is comprehensive in all areas of life. Basically it teaches how to be really God-centered husbands, God-centered wives, God-centered children and God-centered in the work place; God-centered everywhere. That is what I try to do in the book. I look at 28 different aspects of Calvinism showing that it applies to every area of life.

DAVID: The book is *Living For God's Glory* and it is our new book club selection here on The Christian Worldview. I think it is going to give people a much different, more biblically accurate version of Calvinism than a lot of the caricature out there today.

When you call yourself a Calvinist, just for the purposes of the show today, you are linking the systemized theology of John Calvin over the years saying that this is biblical theology. It is nothing more than a systemized theology that can be applied to many areas of life, way beyond the typical T.U.L.I.P., which has to do with justification and salvation. Is that what you are saying Dr. Beeke?

DR. BEEKE: That is correct. The T.U.L.I.P. doctrines like total depravity, unconditional election, limited, or I prefer, definite atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints. These doctrines deal with the whole area of our personal salvation, so we call that soteriology. That is a very important part of Calvinism for that particular area of theology, but there are many other areas of theology. Beyond that, Calvinism has, because of its comprehensive theology, a comprehensive, practical world-life view. It impacts what you do and how you think at the workplace. It impacts your view of politics and everything. When I say I am a Calvinist, I am saying first and foremost that I aim for a thoroughly God-centered, biblical view of every area of life.

DAVID: I am going to read a quote from chapter 1 of *Living for God's Glory*, our book club selection here on The Christian Worldview, it is by Charles Miller. You quoted him early on here, "the spread of Calvinism was unusual in contrast to Catholicism which had been maintained by civil and military force and Lutheranism which survived in becoming a religion of politics. Calvinism had for the most part, only its consistent logic and its fidelity to the scriptures. Within a generation, it spread across Europe."

My question for you, Dr. Beeke, is why did this come out of the reformation period, in the 1500s and 1600s? What took so long for this to develop if it is based on scripture? Why did it take so long for it to get systemized? Why wasn't this percolating up right away in the first and second centuries?

DR. BEEKE: Well in many senses it was percolating in the first and second centuries. John Calvin was an astute student of the ancient church fathers. Of course, movements grow over a period of time and just like any other field of human endeavor, it is like asking the question, why wasn't penicillin discovered 1900 years ago? The medical science has built over a period of time. It is in theology as well. Over the centuries, the Holy Spirit has led the church into a deeper grasp of theology. Calvin not only built on Paul and his theology which I think Calvinists pre-eminently lean, but he built on the ancient fathers of the church as well.

DAVID: You say on page 39 of *Living for God's Glory*, "What is at the heart of the Calvinistic system? Over the centuries, many scholars have sought to identify a single concept that governs Calvinism. Herman Bakke, a German Calvinist, lists at least 20 interpretations of the basic principles of Calvinism. Some of these include, pre-destination, the covenant and the sovereignty of God."

We have a couple of minutes before our first break Dr Beeke. Why don't you pick one of those as you try to pick out and define what you call the marrow of Calvinism?

DR. BEEKE: Let me say it this way David, that all three of these are not in themselves the central principal of Calvinism. What I am saying is people have said that they are, but I think that is what happening is that Calvin

is such a rich, biblical theologian and since the Bible itself doesn't bring all of truth under one overarching principle, Calvin doesn't either.

All of these things are very important in Calvin's thinking, but ultimately if you forced me into a corner and made me chose, I would say that if there was anything that dominates Calvinism, it is not just sovereignty which can sound fatalistic, but fatherly sovereignty. It is really the heart of God. It is the idea of God. If a Calvinist is anything he is just God-obsessed. He wants to worship God, adore God; he wants to be like God, he wants to think God's thoughts after Him. That is true Calvinism, to be ultimately, radically God-centered in every area of life.

DAVID: What I would like to do Dr. Beeke and Dr. Beeke is the President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, I want to talk about what you mention as the soteriology, the salvation part of Calvinism. Then I would like to get into the other points. You say it speaks to the Christian walk far beyond the salvation aspect of it. I want to get into the five points of Calvinism. That is what most of our listeners will know about, the T.U.L.I.P. theology. We are going to into those five points. I am going to give you the opposing view to the theology of Calvinism on page 49 of your book. I want you to refute, from a biblical standpoint, why these contrary points, more the Arminian side, are not biblically correct.

(break)

DAVID: Before the break, Dr. Beeke, we talked about the fact that the most well known aspect of Calvinism as it pertains to salvation is T.U.L.I.P., the five points of Calvinism. Here on page 49 of *Living for God's Glory*, you offer the other view, the Armenian side, which is from James Arminius. He offered a different view on how man is justified or saved. I think this is very important and this is the central point why Calvinism gets misrepresented so much. People don't like or agree with Calvin's points on salvation.

I am going to read the five points here, one by one. I want you to say why this Arminian point is unbiblical and what is the point that Calvin made as to what the correct biblical understanding of salvation is. You say the Arminians presented five theological challenges to the reformed faith stating their belief in. Here is number one, conditional election. Election, the Arminians said, is based on foreseen faith meaning that God saw ahead of time, which sinners would believe in His Son and elected them on that basis. Strictly speaking, election is neither sovereign nor unmerited.

Dr. Beeke, why isn't conditional election biblical?

DR. BEEKE: I think for three reasons, David. First, it fails to recognize the primacy of God in saving sinners. Sinners are totally depraved. Romans 3 is very plain in that everyone comes short of the glory of God and everyone needs God's grace to intervene. When Arminianism says we believe in election, they really mean that they believe that people save themselves by believing; by an act of their own will. Essentially it is people saving themselves; therefore there is a difference between them and other people. By the act of their own will, they then get saved and God happens to foresee ahead of time that they are going to believe.

That is not really a very sovereign, gracious election. It is something that combines God's grace with their own action perhaps at best. Ultimately they are involved as being contributory to their own salvation.

DAVID: Here is my big question in response to that. It seems like a logical contradiction. God is the One who pre-destines and chooses who is going to be saved. That can be fully backed up by the Scripture. Many places talks about God's election, we are dead in our trespasses in sins and so forth. It is all of God. Also, the Scriptures seem to teach that man will be responsible for rejecting God if he doesn't come to repentance and faith. We are called to repent and exercise faith. There seems to be a tension between God's election and His sovereign grace and choosing sinners to save, but also man's responsibility as well. I have heard people like John MacArthur say it is both. How can it be both? They seem logically contradictory.

DR. BEEKE: There are mysteries in Scripture that we are never able to fully solve in this life. Charles Spurgin put it this way, he said, the train of salvation runs on the two tracks of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. If you are sitting in the conductor's seat and you look out the front engine and look down the track no matter how far you travel, you can't see those two rails coming together. If you look far off in the distance, it appears that they come together. In eternity they will come together. We will fully grasp it.

I like to look at it this way. Spurgin elsewhere said sovereignty and responsibility are not enemies, they are actually friends. Friends don't need reconciliation. By that I think Spurgin meant this. Because we are depraved, we are not able to believe, we are not able to repent in our own strength. It is not our nature to do that. By nature we are self-justifying and we believe in ourselves, not in God. What happens is that God elects people and He then works in their lives. He makes them willing so we actually do repent and we do believe. These two things actually work together in tandem.

DAVID: I want to get on to another point from these five, comparing and contrasting Arminianism to Calvinism. The third one you have down here is partial depravity. You talk about the total depravity of man, the "T" in T.U.L.I.P. Man is seriously but not totally depraved, Arminians say. With God's enabling grace, he has the free will and ability to choose salvation in Christ. Everyone chooses either to cooperate or not cooperate with the Gospel call to faith and repentance. Sinners are born again by the Holy Spirit only when they believe of their own choice. That is what Arminians believe.

It seems to me that man is certainly dead in trespasses and sins, but couldn't we be more depraved than we actually are? Isn't it more of an inability to save ourselves rather than a total depravity Dr. Beeke?

DR. BEEKE: Well some people misunderstand total depravity. By total depravity, we don't mean that we are always acting as badly by nature as we possibly could. Then we would be murdering each other, robbing banks all the time, etc., etc. Total depravity means that when God looks at us, every part of us, our wills, our minds, our affections, our heart, etc. there is not a single part of us that is left unstained by sin. Of course, unless we are perfect, we cannot please God because God is only pleased with perfection. That is why we need a savior to have His perfection take our place.

DAVID: Let's do one more point and then I want to open up the phone lines to make sure our listeners have a chance to give you their questions or comments.

Another one from the five points of Calvinism in comparing and contrasting the Arminian view of salvation with the Calvinistic view is universal atonement. This would be the "L" which is called limited atonement in Calvinism. The Arminian view says Christ's merits are universal. That is Christ earned salvation for everyone equally but only believers obtain its efficacy. The atoning work of Christ makes it possible for everyone to be saved though it does not actually secure the salvation of anyone. That is the Arminian view. Why don't you tell us why you feel this is biblically incorrect according to the Calvinistic view.

DR. BEEKE: First of all, Jesus would never say, I don't pray for the world, I only pray for those thou hast given me and then a few days die for every single person in the world. There would be a disjuncture in Jesus Himself between who He is praying for and who He is dying for.

Secondly there is a dysfunction here in the Arminian view within the Trinity itself. What they are actually doing is saying Jesus somehow looks more generous than God the Father or the Holy Spirit because if He died for everyone and the Father doesn't save everyone then something is wrong with the Father or something is more generous with the Son. I think there is a logical problem with the Arminian view. There is a disjuncture in the Godhead itself.

Thirdly, there is a problem with dating their universal view because if Jesus died for everyone and not everyone is saved, then His blood is proven not to be powerful enough over against the power of the natural man. We are left with an impotent God who really can't save people if they don't want to be saved. So the end result of that is, grace is not irresistible, which is actually another point of Calvinism, and therefore, man is strong enough to resist grace. If that is true, then we have a real problem on our hands because Romans 3 says no one seeks after God, no one wants God. We are all depraved, we are all resisters and ultimately no one would be saved.

The Calvinist looks at this whole package of five points and says it all depends upon whether you really believe that man is depraved or not. If you really believe that man is depraved, election is our only hope and it is good and solid hope because that is what gives us our encouragement. It gives us our encouragement in evangelism. We go out and evangelize people knowing God will save them because He has elected sinners.

DAVID: I want to get into that point of evangelism in the next segment but first I want to open the phone lines and start making it available for our listeners to call in and challenge you or give their comments or questions with anything to do with our topic today, Calvinism: What is it? What isn't it?

Here is the question. What is it about Calvinism that you've heard in the past or have been taught or perhaps experienced in your own life that you find is unbiblical? Or what is it about that has been very positive in your life as well? Or anything that Dr. Beeke has said that you want to challenge or comment or question further.

(break)

DAVID: We are speaking today with Dr. Joel Beeke who is the President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and the author and editor of over 50 books including the one we are reading to day, *Living for God's Glory*. This is our new book club selection. Go to heritagebooks.org to get yourself a copy. We will be reading this through March. It is a fairly lengthy book, let's say in the 400- page realm, but as I have been reading it, it speaks beyond the salvation parts of Calvinism and gives the compare and contrast as we have been going over with Arminianism. I think this is important and praiseworthy to say here is what the other side believes and here is what Calvinistic theology believes. That is helpful to be able to compare and contrast, but it goes into lots of other things.

Before we get to our first caller, Dr. Beeke, I want you to finish up with the evangelistic piece of those who believe in calviinistic or reformed or the doctrines of grace theology. The rap is that is you are Calvinistic you believe that God elects and chooses people and pre-destines them; what is the point in evangelizing. How do you answer that very common criticism?

DR. BEEKE: Well you answer this way David, you say, the very definition of any Calvinist of predestination or election is that God also elects the means by which the sinner is saved. God works through means and therefore if people never hear the gospel, they will not get saved. Election makes it all the more compelling that you bring them the gospel evangelistically or in mission fields or whatever. Once it is brought to them, you see God works through that means to save those who must believe and therefore you can go with assurance because we know His promise is His Word never returns to Him vain or void.

DAVID: I was at the Expositor's Conference and hearing your stories about evangelism I know that this is a very central role in your own personal life and your church and you are talking to people on airplanes and so forth. You are a very strong Calvinist so that really destroys the myth that just in your everyday conversation I am hearing you talk to people and I know you have that evangelistic heart.

As you can probably imagine, Dr. Beeke, we have a very, very full call screening board today. A lot of people have questions for you so we are going to try and ask the callers to get right to your point.

Let's go first to Baker City, Oregon. Chris, welcome to The Christian Worldview. What is your question or comment for Dr. Joel Beeke on Calvinism?

CHRIS: I would just say that pertaining to the total depravity of man, that we are so depraved that we cannot come to God despite the fact that Jesus is the light of the world and that the grace of God that brings salvation has been appointed unto all men. All these different factors of God's love and His mercy to draw men to Himself, yet, if we take the concept that we are so depraved that we can't respond to His grace that brings salvation. We can't respond to the light that He brings into the world, then I would say we have to go to the far extreme as far as Christians when the Bible says that we were dead before we came to Christ and then we were quickened or made alive unto Christ. At that point, then we should be able to say that we are unable to be tempted, we are unable to sin, we are unable to go against what God teaches in His Word because we are alive in Christ, we are no longer dead to sin. That is not true. Experientially as Christians, we know we are tempted. We know we can sin. I believe the same can be said of those that are dead in Christ. Because God has given his grace to bring salvation to all men. That is what I am saying. We can respond to all these different things God's love for the world. The other point I would make is the Bible says Peter said that Jesus died to be propitiation not just for us but for the whole world. His death was for everyone.

DAVID: Chris, you said a lot there. Let me let Dr. Beeke respond to those particular comments.

DR. BEEKE: If the offer of grace does come to the entire world, everyone is invited to come. When we don't come, it is our fault and not God's fault because He offers grace to all men; brings them under the gospel and offers grace to them. I agree with him in that sense.

In another sense, you see, Paul said we are dead in trespasses and sins and if we have faith in Jesus Christ that faith is a gift of God. It is not of ourselves. It is pure grace that enables us to believe. That is actually good news not bad news because in Arminianism and other systems when it is man's ability to believe and man has this good in him to respond to God, then when he does sin and does fall, it is convoluted. When a Christian falls and sins, he returns to Jesus Christ by the grace of God. The same grace that saved him, holds him and he returns to Christ, repents afresh by that same grace and so is maintained in the life of gracious salvation. So it is all of grace to get saved and it is all of grace to remain saved.

DAVID: Here is a question from our next caller from Chesterfield, Virginia, Debbie. It is about when Calvinism goes wrong. How does it go wrong, where is the extreme. Debbie, welcome to The Christian Worldview. What is your question on hyper-Calvinism for Dr. Beeke?

DEBBIE: I attended a church and ended up having to leave. It seems it went in the direction of hyper-Calvinism. I actually posed this question to the pastor. If you have a large family, is it possible that some of the children could not be saved; that they were not elected or pre-destined? Some would be destined to hell and some elected. I just found that very, very difficult to deal with when I was told that could be possible. To look at those children and see that some were pre-destined to hell and some would be elected. Do you have some comments on that?

DAVID: Debbie thanks so much for your call. Dr. Beeke how would you answer that particular question that God elects some for salvation and seemingly allows others, even within the same family, to go the natural route of their sinfulness. I will read 1Pete 2:6-8, *Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed. This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

It almost seems in that sense, Dr. Beeke, our previous caller asking about within a family, God may choose some and not others. Is that actually true and are they actually appointed to that doom as 1 Peter 2:8 has to say?

DR. BEEKE: Well yes they are David, but it is not as simplistic as it sounds. This is a very sensitive question. I don't like to look at my children and think that maybe God is just randomly determining some of the will go to Hell. I don't think God randomly determines that way. God is not a robot. He is a personal, fatherly loving God but, that doesn't take away from the fact that there are families and Romans 9 is a clear example; Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated. God chose Jacob. God did not choose Esau. Now the problem here is that people often just look at God's choice and the forget about the fact that any one who ever comes to Hell will realize they fully deserve to be there. So God doesn't just reprobate sinners randomly as a robot, but sinners actually deserve it. In fact, every sinner deserves it.

The wonder isn't that God rejects anyone; the wonder is that God saves people because we all deserve to go lost. That is where people get mixed up. Calvin put it this way, he said, election is always sovereign and gracious. Election means choosing sinners to salvation. It is always gracious. No one will be able to raise their hand in Heaven and say, Lord I deserve to be here. It is pure grace. It is a wonder that you are saved by grace alone.

In Hell, no one will be able to raise their hand and say I don't deserve to be here. The means of rejection is not only God's decree, it is also the fact that people live out that reprobate life all the way to the end as Esau did.

DAVID: Will anyone in Hell be able to say God you just never gave me a chance? You disappointed me here. I never even had a chance to hear about your gospel. I just was born to be damned to Hell. Will anyone be able to say that in Hell?

DR. BEEKE: Well they won't be able to say I was just born to be damned to Hell, because they will deserve to be there. There will be people under God's inscrutable sovereignty who never had a chance to hear the gospel. That is why when we have a chance to hear the gospel that is an incredible privilege that we shouldn't trample underfoot.

DAVID: I think what is helpful for me to understand this is that we are all born sinners. We are all on a track, on a treadmill so to speak, that leads directly to Hell because of our sin, because we have broken God's commandments and we deserve just punishment. We are all heading there. God sovereignly and graciously just select some off that treadmill. Not for anything that we have done or any merit within us, but just for His own purposes and His own glory. So we all deserve to go and we are all heading there, but He just selects some. So if He doesn't choose some, it is not because He is ungracious or anything like that. It is that He is gracious for choosing any of us at all.

DR. BEEKE: I compare it to this. Let's say there are 10,000 people on death row and I come along and I say I am going to rehabilitate and regenerate and redeem and save 7,000 of you and leave the other 3,000 there. Am I cruel for not rehabilitating the other 3,000? No.

(break)

DAVID: Dr. Beeke, before we get back to some of our callers who want to ask more about the salvation side of Calvinism, which is very typical. That is the area where there is always the most contention with our minds trying to piece together what it means for God's election and man's will. We will get to more of those questions in a second but I want to make sure because *Living for God's Glory* goes so much beyond just the salvation parts, the T.U.L.I.P. parts of it. It gets into politics and family and marriage and sanctification.

I want to quickly ask you a couple of questions. Describe how Calvinism has been the primary influencer of life and politics and every aspect of America. Can you tell us a couple of the key and significant ways in which Calvinism has affected this country outside the religious realm so to speak?

DR. BEEKE: Certainly. Our whole educational system, our capitalistic government, our view on ethics, our American conscience was all rooted in Calvinistic principles. I think Calvin's goal you see was to go beyond Martin Luther. Luther mainly asked how does a man get saved? Calvin's biggest question was once a man is saved, how does he live most for the glory of God in every single area of life? Particularly, Calvin was interested in worship. How do you worship completely to the glory of God? Whereas Luther would say, well if worship is not contradicted in the Scriptures, then it is acceptable. You can keep the way you worship. Calvin, from being strictly scriptural, was saying, we can only worship the way that Scripture says.

So Calvin took this grid of being strictly scriptural and he applied it to every area of life and would say, what does God want us to do in this particular area of life? What does the Bible say how I should be a Christian husband? I want to think God-centeredly about marriage so he would apply that to every area of life.

DAVID: What about politics? In chapter 26 of *Living for God's Glory* you talk about how Calvin pictured or framed the Christian's role or citizenship as far as politics. How did he do that?

DR. BEEKE: Calvin believed that every single politician was put into office by God and therefore he as to be a political minister of God and for God and to rule in accord with God's Word. A politician shouldn't ask first of all what do I want or shouldn't be concerned about his own re-election. He should ask how can I rule in such a way that every spear of life is given its just due. Yes, Calvin believed in some separation of church and state in a certain sense. The politicians are not to interfere with church work, but they were to make sure that the church prospered. They were to make sure that the church had its freedom to expound the Word of God and to carry on its full ministry.

The politician was to make sure that society would continue in a moral, decent way. That the Ten Commandments would be upheld and so on. It was a very God-centered view.

DAVID: We are not exactly seeing that today in America. Let's go next to Thoms River, New Jersey and Armon welcome to The Christian Worldview. You are on with Dr. Joel Beeke.

ARMON: Here is the thing. We are comparing Calvinism with Mormonism with Catholics, what the others do wrong and what they do right. Here is the thing. I think we should take the Calvinism and compare it with Scripture. Here is the interesting thing. One thing that is important in Christianity is not to forget that Christianity is about choices. It is about freedom of choice. God gives us freedom from day one when He gave freedom to Adam. Do you think God didn't know that Adam would fail? He knew. If He wanted, He could take off that tree in the Garden of Eden and finish it all, but He gave him a choice knowing Adam would fail; knowing that in the future He was going to pick His Son to die on the cross to wash that sin.

DAVID: This is a good question, Dr. Beeke. This always comes up from the standpoint of does man have free will? How much free will to make choices and so forth, if God is sovereign?

DR. BEEKE: Two quick things here. First of all, Adam did have a free choice before he fell and he chose evil. Romans 5 makes it abundantly clear, by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. Now we enter into the world as sinners. Yes, we still have a free will in one sense of the word; our will is still free to choose things. I choose to come over to my study today to talk to you, but our nature when we are not regenerate is only to choose evil. So we might choose A, we might choose C, we might choose D, but it is always stained with sin. We won't truly choose God until grace penetrates our lives and makes us willing to choose God. Then we give all the credit and glory to God. We can't do that of our own. We need God's grace to do that. We are too depraved or too sinful to choose God apart from His grace. That is what Ephesians 2 is all about and really what all of Scripture is all about. By the way when the listener said we have to compare Calvinism to Scripture, I couldn't agree with him more there. That is why Calvinism historically has been so famous and so widely accepted and so challenged because it does claim in every single step to be thoroughly scriptural. I know of no theologian of the thousands of theologians I have studied in my life, who is so scriptural as John Calvin.

DAVID: Dr. Beeke I want to thank you for coming on the program this morning. It is a challenging topic from a standpoint that you can say things one way and have biblical basis for it, but it can be heard a different way. I think a lot of times our human mind can't piece these things together. We need wrestle with these things as we walk in our Christian life and go down this process of sanctification and try to understand these things of God. I appreciate all you do at the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Dr. Beeke. All of God's best to you and your family. Thanks for coming on The Christian Worldview.

We do live in a changing and challenging world but there is one thing you can count on and hope in, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

