



The Church – February 5, 2020
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Verses Covered This Week

Romans 1:18

Romans 8:3 – 4

John 6:44

1 John 2:2

John 3:16

2 Peter 3:9

1 Timothy 1:15

Matthew 23:37

Well, ladies, good evening. It's really impressive how many people came here with our Texas cold front. No, our tick. Is that what the weatherman's calling it? Our tick front? Which means it's 44, it's not even freezing, but we're all told we're supposed to be in a panic, maybe food stocking and stuff like that. It might snow. But the low's 35 so I don't know about that. I'm glad that y'all are all here tonight. So thanks for coming. Thanks for braving the cold weather. I don't know how anybody didn't show up in their full sweat suit, right.

Well to our great surprise when we volunteered to teach this class, we came up with a list of the things that we needed to teach. And one of the trickiest, hardest, sort of controversial topics, Chris had not taught you yet. I mean, he left it for us. So we were thrilled beyond belief to find out that we get to teach Calvinism. People have only been debating this since the 1700's and still don't really have a very good solution to the debate. But today we're not going to try to convince you either way. Our job today is to kind of like break Calvinism down, give you a better knowledge of it, and help you know how our church stands with and against them on certain topics. So just basically, we are not a Calvinist church. And we're just going to talk about that today. About how some of the things that we are in agreement with Calvinism and some of them that we are not. And we've got all the Bible verses to back it up. And at the end, I'm quite sure there's going to be some questions because people just love to nitpick this topic apart. Like I said, they've been debating it forever. But let's just do our best to be of one mind, that tonight we're here to gain a greater understanding of where our church stands on Calvinism and what exactly Calvinism is.

So this whole big debate about Calvinism really swirls around a couple of main topics. It includes your salvation and it includes free will. Calvinism, they're not a cult like we've talked about in some of the other parts of this class. It's not something you have to staunchly avoid or be afraid of. When it comes to your salvation, when it comes to free will, it's really important for you to understand what it is that they believe and what it is that we believe here at Central. Chris has kind of admitted that the fight, he says, from Calvinists has kind of died down. But if you go to Passion, they have a great speaker there, John Piper, and he's a very strong Calvinist. So there's lots of Calvinists out there still. They're just a little bit more friendly than they used to be. They're kind of like, "Well you be Baptist and you be Calvinist and we can all get along together." Regardless, this is really important information for you to understand.

So, Central, at its core is not a Calvinist church. We're just going to take some baby steps, break this all down. We're going to talk about some of the churches who do call themselves Calvinists. Maybe you grew up in some of these churches. Maybe you've heard of them. They call themselves, most typically, primitive Baptists, reformed Baptist churches, Presbyterian churches, the reformed Protestant church, the united church of Christ. That's just a group of churches that we can say fall into the Calvinism category. So that's baby step one. We know if you look at the sign, you know where they fall. Central, again, we are not a Calvinist church. We're going to move on to baby step two.

So we've got John Calvin here, super attractive guy. He started this whole deal way back in the 1500's. And really, when he started this, his theology kind of swayed a bit. So early on they were preaching more to whoever they were talking to. You know, if they were talking to the king, they kind of made it fit him. If he was talking to the regular people, he kind of made it fit him. So for the longest time, for almost more than his whole lifetime, nobody really knows exactly where they stand. So this is just the idea of Calvinism floats around really for about 300 years until the early 1800's. And it gets nailed down to kind of one belief system with this whole T. U. L. I. P. thing that we're going to get into in a little bit and has a very fancy name. This publication that kind of nailed this all down is called the Synod of Dort, 1600, 1618, 1619, that's where we are. So anyway this is kind of their core doctrine of Calvinism. It's hard to say, but it's spelled Synod. I'm saying Synod because I don't know how else to say that. Dort. Synod Dort. So if you see that, that's their doctrine. Again, the number one difference between our beliefs and Calvinism is the fact that humans are pre-destined for heaven or for hell. That's the argument. That's the key word in this debate. The key word is pre-destination. Meaning you would not have a choice whether or not you get into heaven.

Have you noticed lately how much people love using little acronyms? Like the FLC is actually the Family Life Center. And if you come out here Sunday nights, you get SNAC, but you really don't get food as much as you get Sunday school. So that's kind of what they were doing back then too. They thought, we're going to come up with this phrase called T.U.L.I.P. Well T.U.L.I.P. really breaks down to mean a bunch of different things. And the funny thing is, I have not seen one flower in any of this. But this is what they've decided is their name. I don't even know where they came up with this. But we're going to start breaking this down in pieces. I'm going to put it up on the board, but also wrote it here just so you could see it both ways. Because some of the text gets a little small. So here is their T.U.L.I.P. theory all broken down.

We're going to start with the **T** which is Total Depravity. They have **U** – Unconditional Election. **I** is Irresistible Grace. **P** – Perseverance of the Saints. So we're going to go through this step-by-step starting with the letter T.

You can look with me over at the book of Romans chapter 1. This is actually, the **T** is something that our church agrees with Calvinism on. So it's nice to start off in a place where we have equal footing. We understand what they're saying and we are in agreement with them. So we're at Romans 1:18.

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

So we see here that God does have judgement over the world. And humans will have unrighteousness. As sinners, we face the righteousness of God. Let's go a little deeper. If you stay in Romans, but go over to chapter 8, we're going to go down the 8:3. God really wants to remove sin and restore the sinner. In Romans 8:3 it says:

³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

So you're going to sin. You can't stop it. You're going to face the judgement of God. I think we're all pretty good with this so far. But what happens next? If you are indeed a sinner, our church and the Calvinist go now to John 6:44. And in John 6:44 it says:

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

So they're saying that this is total depravity, **T**, we're in that. And we are depraved in the sense if you're a sinner and you can't get to God unless He pulls you to Him. Unless the Holy Spirit convicts you, or as this verse says, draws you, you can't be saved. Now the issues really start to arise here when you get to the Calvinists unconditional election, the **U**. That's the **U** in our T.U.L.I.P. So we're going to start here in **U**. Remember that the Calvinists believe the you have no say in your salvation. Only God has the choice of salvation. As a matter of fact, the Calvinists say, "You're chosen for salvation before you are born." And I think when the Calvinists kind of come up with these little acronyms, maybe it causes a little bit more room for Christians to argue over words. Because, for instance, the Bible told us that Jacob was hand-picked over Esau. He was picked over him to be who the Messiah would come through. God chose us before we were born. This is unconditional election, but our church believes that the Bible is true and the story of Jacob and Esau is true. But the term, unconditional election, here does not apply to Jacob and Esau's salvation. That's the way that unconditional election in the Calvinist statement applies to your salvation. Does that make sense? So God can choose you for something before you're born. But in our church, we do not believe that He is choosing you for your salvation before you're born. Yes, we are unconditionally elected by God to receive Him. Chris believes, he leads our church with the theory that God draws everyone to Himself. The choice of acceptance is really up to you. If you believe Calvinism at its core, you're going to

have to be OK with the fact that God is creating people who are destined to go to Hell. He's creating them for no time in heaven.

Let's move on to the next pretty petal on this T.U.L.I.P. We're moving on to **L** which is the Limited Atonement. So we've gone through **T**. We've gone through **U**. Now we're down here on **L**. This is where the much bigger gap starts to show itself in these verses with the Calvinists. Limited Atonement means Jesus' blood is limited. And if you sat in this church for any amount of time, you're already going, "Wait a minute. What is going on here?" Because the Calvinists believe that Jesus' blood is limited. It is only good for the people who God elected to go to Heaven. Let's go to 1 John 2:2. Let's give some Biblical legs to this. Here in John is one of the places that Central thinks that the Bible disagrees with the Calvinist's limited atonement. So I'm picking up at 1 John 2:2.

²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

What has he just said about atonement? The sins of the whole world are covered. Thank You, Jesus. It's not limited. It's for everyone. You probably know this by heart and you've heard it plenty of times, but we're reinforcing this thought with John 3:16. It's simple. But it is the truth. Our God straight forward. For God so loved the world. He so loved this world that He gave us His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Whoever believes in Him should not perish. Whoever. So let's go over to 2 Peter 3:9. Now this may not be as familiar to you, 2 Peter, but it is just as powerful. So here we are in 2 Peter. Follow along.

⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

So what are the key words here, ladies? All should reach. I mean, what stands out in support of Jesus' blood being for all? He's saying, no one, not wishing that any one should perish. Everyone should reach repentance. Let's go down to 1 Timothy 1:15. We see here again some of the same all-inclusive phrasing when it comes to our salvation. So I'm in 1 Timothy 1:15.

¹⁵The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Notice he doesn't say that he came here to save some sinners, right. He says, save sinners. And we already know we all are. He doesn't say that the blood is only for sinners. It just says, sinners. The Bible says that atonement is not limited. Central feels like the Bible is clear on atonement and that it is for everyone.

OK. Let's go on to another petal. So we're down to **I** which is Irresistible Grace. Irresistible grace means that you cannot say "No" to God. Irresistible grace in the Calvinistic term means you cannot say "No" to God. Now if that was true, why would he state to us what he just stated in Peter, that He's patient towards us, that He wishes no one would perish. Calvinists are saying that the grace of God is irresistible; that you cannot say "No" to the Holy Spirit. Which means that if God speaks to you, His grace is irresistible, and you would follow exactly what He said

every time, all the time. You would have no ability to say any different. You would have no ability to say “No” or to make a mistake. They’re saying you just cannot stop yourself. God is irresistible. So we’re going to hang around in Matthew for a little bit if you want to flip over to Matthew. We talked a little bit about God being irresistible or resistible and what the Bible says about that. I’m headed over to Matthew 23:37. This is a really good place to start to just back up what we believe. What we believe at Central, God’s grace is resistible. Matthew 23:37.

37“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Now does that sound like he caused it or they caused it? Sounds like they caused it. He said, “You were not willing.” It might be helpful if I put that up there for you. I’m down here in 37. You were not willing. Y’all are so patient. You can tell me if I’m behind. He’s putting the fault on the city here. He’s saying it’s your fault. I did everything I could for you and you would not permit me. If they could say “No” this verse wouldn’t be in the Bible. Clearly they said, “No.” They used their free will and said, “No.” They said “No” to God. We’re going to stay in Matthew, but we’re going to flip over to chapter 26:24. Here we are at the Lord’s Supper. We’ve stopped at this verse a lot of times. We have Jesus resting on Judas and this conversation picks up. Matthew 26:24.

²⁴The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

Judas chose to say “No” to Jesus. Judas wasn’t forced by God to betray Jesus. Look at Matthew 13:19. In 13:19 it says:

¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

The way that you really hear the word is if the Holy Spirit convicts you. You don’t understand its importance and if you reject that conviction, satan would come, take what the Holy Spirit has done, and remove it from your life. So God is not irresistible.

OK. One last one. We’re down here in **P** which is Perseverance of the Saints. This is one that we are in agreement on. Yay. Once legitimately saved, always saved. That’s pretty easy. The Calvinist point of view is pretty tough for people. I mean, just consider if you have kids. So if they’re believing that God’s chosen you before birth to go to Heaven, and you decide to have children, you do not know that your children would join you in Heaven from their Calvinistic perspective. Nobody would have a say in it. There’s just no special way to guarantee Heaven. It’s totally up to the whim of God. I just, I think it sounds terrible. I think it undermines the trust that God asks us to have in Him that we’ve looked at throughout these courses. And, of course, as Chris points out, which you know, he always has to throw in some humor. But he says, “When’s the last time you met a Calvinist who told you they’re not going to Heaven?” Well,

each one you speak to feels like he's chose, but he just knows that not everybody else is chosen. And it's true. I mean, I've never met one that's like, "Yeah, I'm actually here but I'm going to hell." They do have a theory for the unsaved, or the people who are going to hell, Calvinists believe that a person's life on earth, that they were created for a reason, even if it is to end up in hell, they feel like their purpose on earth here is to really contrast the righteousness of God. So I think this theory raises a lot of questions. I mean, it's complicated. And then they're also really passionate about outreach. And you're like, "Well if you can't." I mean in our church, our outreach would be to find someone who doesn't know Jesus to give him the opportunity to accept the blood and have an opportunity to go to heaven, right. So why if Calvinists don't believe that you've going to heaven, why would they even do outreach? But they say that this is something the God has told us to do and they are going out in obedience. So they're merely spreading the word because it says in several verses in the Bible, you know, to go out and spread the word, go spread it amongst the nations. So that's their defense for that. They would just say that they are being obedient to the Lord. That's really that stuff in a nutshell. They really feel like if you are alive on earth, you're just your sinful life is supposed to show as a great contrast to the beautiful righteousness of God. And that would show us how holy God is because of how sinful we are on earth. So now that you've kind of got this in a nutshell, I know that there are some questions. There often are. What comes to your mind first that you want to talk about?

Questions

- Q.** So do they just, these different sects, or whatever you want to call them, do they just ignore the things that don't, or do they just interpret them differently?
- A.** I would say, it really does come down to interpretation. And they would explain some of the things that we read differently.
- Q.** But how much clearer can John 3:16 be?
- A.** Right, so when we go back to John 3:16, we can look at every word together. He's saying that He loves the world. And He does love the world. So the Calvinists are like, "Yes, He loves the world. He did give His Son." But they're saying here kind of, whoever believes, that describes the people who are already chosen. So they're reading this from a different mindset than the way that we would be reading it.
- Q.** I mean, some verses sometimes especially when we're like in Revelation or something, there are some words in there that you're like, "Yeah, really?" But that and some of the other ones that you put up tonight are like, even out of context, they seem kind of clear. But then again, I'm not a Calvinist.
- A.** And I'm sure that an expert in there could break it down for us. I'm sure that they have their own teacher. But, again, it doesn't mean that everything that the Calvinists are teaching are wrong. So remember that we definitely have things that we have in common with them. So it doesn't mean, like, "Oh, my gosh, John Piper's on the radio, turn him off!" But listen to him wisely and pay attention to the parts that you know that we stand for here in our church. There are no Calvinists on staff. That's part of how our church runs as well. Chris talks about that's one of the things that he talks to them in interviews.

And I know, I see the question, “Chris isn’t here anymore. Now what’s going to happen?” I don’t know what the new preacher is going to be like. But I know that the values of our church are going to remain the same.

Q. A lot of them aren’t who they say they are. They’re not wearing a shirt that says, “I’m a Calvinist.”

A. And I do think their position is a little difficult to defend. Especially when you have the knowledge that you have, with the verses lined up that Chris lays out for us. Like if a general person sat down, I think they can make Calvinism seem very appealing. But when you sit down with the knowledge that we have of who Jesus is and who God says Jesus is and what our salvation really is, I think a conversation with us looks very, very different.

Q. What would be the appeal to Calvinism?

A. That’s an interesting question.

A. And I do think that there’s an ego base in it too. Because people are really proud to be chosen, to be the chosen, who they would think the few chosen from God. So I think the appeal might also be an egotistical appeal. She’s saying that goes directly against Scripture which is to be humble. You’re perfectly right.

Q. So what sets them apart? If they’re claiming to be chosen, not everyone that’s chosen. That goes against everything that Jesus even came for.

A. You know, Chris, I was listening to his sermons, he’s done this in times in a 30-minute segment, he’s done it in 4 segments. And each of those was really important for him to say, “This is not a cult.” He believes that we can co-exist in some ways with Calvinists. And I think it’s because of the few things that we have in common out of the Bible. But I hear what you’re saying and I don’t have much more to go with it. I was actually going to encourage you tonight, if you leave with more questions than you came in with, those sermons online are really helpful. Because there’s a time he taught it in four segments, four Wednesday night segments, on just Calvinism. So there’s so much more meat on the subject. But tonight our job is to really get an overview. We’re going to kind of fly over Calvinism and understand how we are not Calvinists and why we are not. And there’s a lot more resources for you to get a deeper knowledge about that online.