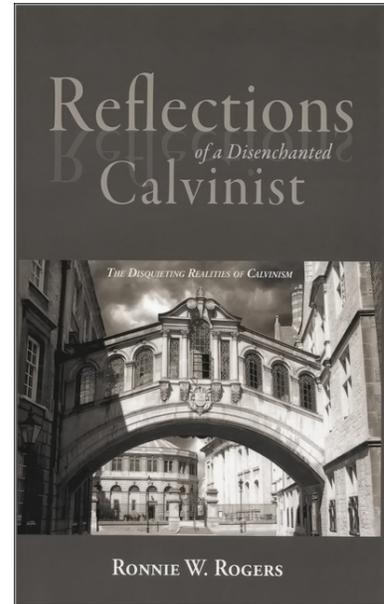


1. I affirm that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16) means peoples of the world and people in the world and not merely "people groups or nations." Further, there are different kinds or expressions of love, e.g. love for spouse versus love for other people or children. Moreover, a loving God loves the lost individual and would honestly tell him about his lost condition and offer him redemption only if it was possible for him to be redeemed (Matthew 5-7, 7:10-11; Mark 10:21). Finally, God's love did in fact make it possible for the people of this world to be delivered from their path to eternal hell by grace enablement (John 1:12-13; Acts 17:30; 1 John 2:2; Titus 2:11).



The means of this grace enablement include but are not limited to: Gods' salvific love for all (John 3:16), God's manifestation of His power so that all may know He is the Sovereign (Isaiah 45:21-22) and Creator (Romans 1:18-20), which assures that everyone has opportunity to know about Him. Christ paying for all sins (John 1:29), conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11), working of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:1-6), enlightening, of the Son (John 1:9), God's teaching (John 6:45), God opening hearts (Acts 16:14), and the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16), without such redemptive grace, no one seeks or comes to God (Romans 3:11). Further, I believe that man, because of these gracious provisions and workings of God, can choose to seek and find God (Jeremiah 29:13; Acts 17:11-12). Moreover, no one can come to God without God drawing (John 6:44), and that God is drawing all men, individuals (John 12:32). The same Greek word for draw, *helkō*, is used in both verses." About 115 passages condition salvation on believing alone, and about 35 simply on faith."⁴⁷ Other grace enablements may include providential workings in and through other people, situations, and timing or circumstances that are a part of grace to provide an opportunity for every individual to choose to follow Christ.

Calvinists seek to draw upon Matthew 11:20-24 in order to prove that God does not desire the salvation of everyone; however the passage actually further highlights the dilemma of Calvinism. Matthew said,

"Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in *the* day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom

which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in *the* day of judgment, than for you" (Matthew 11:20-24).

In this passage, Jesus excoriated the cities where he performed miracles for not repenting. Two issues arise out of this pericope that are relevant to whether God selectively regenerates some unto salvation and leaves the rest damned in their sins, or whether He offers a *real* chance to repent or not repent; to wit, those who repent could have not repented, and those who did not repent could have repented. Here are the issues. First, Jesus denounced the cities for not repenting. Second, Jesus said if He had done the same miracles in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented,⁴⁸ and Sodom would have remained to this day.

Regarding the first, Jesus explicitly excoriates Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum for not repenting in light of the miracles they were graced to witness. The denunciation makes perfect sense if they could have actually repented; for He not only gave them an opportunity to repent, but a far grander opportunity than the vast majority of people who ever lived before or after. However, if Calvinism is true and man cannot repent until monergistically regenerated, and those that God regenerates will most certainly repent, then the denunciation seems at best torturously disingenuous. I would even say it is a sort of spiritual Machiavellianism.

That is to say, the truth of Calvinism is that even if Christ had performed all the miracles in time and eternity before Tyre and Sidon, it would not have done one whit to bring about repentance. Because according to Calvinism, their lack of repentance is proof positive that they were not elect since repentance and faith are the product of selective monergistic regeneration *alone*; for the elect, miracles may be a part of a process, but even if no miracles were performed the elect will, must, believe but only after forced regeneration. To wit, if no miracles, testimonies, words, or signs were done, and they were the elect of Calvinism, they would repent. Therefore, Jesus' statement would be untrue if Calvinism was true; since it is not, Jesus did speak the truth, a disquieting reality.

Calvinism makes Jesus appear to offer a real chance to repent, but actually, He knows they cannot because they were not elected to be given the opportunity to repent. To say, as some Calvinists do, that Jesus gave a "good faith offer" because He, as the man Jesus, did not know everything and therefore He did not know they were not elect is to miss the point. First, He did know in eternity past as God (Hebrews 1:8), and it seems like a blind leap into the eternal sea of credulity to believe that now He really wants them to repent and actually believes they can, which is the antithesis of the eternal plan developed by the Father, Holy Spirit and Jesus. Second, the Father and the Holy Spirit did know who the elect were at the time that Jesus was speaking, and Jesus was guided by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16, 4:1); He lived only to speak, do, and think the will of His heavenly Father (John 4:34, 5:30, 36, 6:38, 12:49). Therefore, He was speaking the words

of the Father, doing the will of the Father, and no amount of relying upon a "good faith offer" can exonerate the Father from leading Christ to say such things if they were not true, a disquieting reality.

Second, Calvinists sometimes say that if God really wanted everyone saved, He would have done these same miracles in Tyre, Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah. Because according to Jesus' words, they would have repented had they seen what the ones to whom Jesus spoke saw. Thus, Calvinists argue, since He did not perform the miracles in those cities that would have resulted in their repentance, it is apparent that He did not want them to be saved. Worth noting is the truth that, quite contrary to the explicit statements of Scripture, once again it is demonstrated that God, according to Calvinism, does not *really* desire all to repent (2 Peter 3:9). This is a disquieting reality.

My response is this: desiring the salvation of everyone only requires that everyone be given an opportunity to *actually* repent and be saved, which is precisely what Calvinism denies; the desire does not require that everyone get *exactly* the *same* chance or *equal* time or evidence.⁴⁹ For that is a true impossibility. For Tyre and Sidon to have seen the miracles that Chorazin and Bethsaida saw would mean that Jesus would have had to be born, live and die at a different time. If He had, and Tyre and Sidon or Sodom and Gomorrah had repented, then it is most probable that other places that saw less would not have repented, and I am sure that Calvinists would have then pointed to those cities to demonstrate God's lack of love. I can fully trust that God has indeed ordered the times and circumstances to afford the greatest number of people the greatest opportunity possible to repent. Why do I have such confidence? Because God is love (1 John 4:8, 16).

God knows everything. He possesses infinite conditional knowledge,⁵⁰ which means He knows everything that would have happened had the conditions been different. When He chose to order this world, He knew how many in every other possible world would come to Christ, and I am confident based upon Scripture that He chose the one where the most people would experience the fullness of His love and grace (John 3:16). In contrast, according to Calvinism, Christ would have to be mistaken because the number, quality or person performing the miracles adds not one whit to whether someone repents or not; monergistic regeneration is the sole and sufficient act for that.

2. I disaffirm that God would ever offer, or give the appearance of offering, help to the needy when He had already predetermined to make it absolutely unavailable to them. Further, I disaffirm that the differences between various kinds of love, e.g. love for a spouse, child, or friend, etc., adequately explain the Calvinist's position that God loves everyone, but does not *actually* offer salvation to everyone. For example, while I may love my wife differently than another woman, I would not sit passively by while a woman other than my wife

perished in a burning building if I could indeed deliver her;⁵¹ and according to Calvinism, God can most assuredly deliver, and does so for some.

David Allen contrasts five-point Calvinists with moderate Calvinists and non-Calvinists in the following way. "With respect to the intent and extent of the atonement, high-Calvinists [his term for five point] believe the following. God loves all people (but not equally), God desires the salvation of all people, but Jesus only satisfied the sins of the elect and none others. Moderate Calvinists and all non-Calvinists believe the following: God loves all people, God desires the salvation of all people, and Christ died for all people, in the sense that His death satisfied for the sins of all people."⁵² However, I would caution that any Calvinist or moderate Calvinist who believes in unconditional election and irresistible, selective regeneration preceding faith *cannot* consistently believe that God truly desires everyone to be saved. Further, Allen notes that the ones whom he calls "high Calvinists" believe that "God desires the salvation of all people but Jesus only satisfied the sins of the elect and none others." This is an example of Calvinism's double-talk; for if, according to Calvinism, God truly did desire the "salvation of all people", all would be saved.

Consistent with Allen's distinctions, some Calvinists contend that it is consistent with Calvinism to tell the non-elect that God loves them, and if you will believe you can be saved. Of course, the question for the lost to then ask the Calvinist is, "Does God love me enough to have paid the penalty for my sin through the death of Christ on the cross and offer me a *real* chance to be saved like He does with others?" Invariably, the answer must be a soul shattering NO! This is a disquieting reality.

While some Calvinists feel free to say that God loves everyone, the undisclosed reality is that He does not love everyone enough to provide a *real* chance to receive forgiveness. In other words, while some Calvinists feel free to say to an individual "God loves you," they can never say "Christ died for your sins and desires to heal you." In the end, this is like a physician who beckons you into his hospital in order to treat your gunshot wound and grants you a bed to rest on; followed by a very accurate diagnosis of your problem, which is followed by standing idly by while you bleed to death. Eternally speaking, being tended to by this physician is little different from being watched over and unattended to by the one who shot you. Similarly, according to Calvinism, the deliverance from hell is by an unsolicited, selective, and irresistible regeneration that the individual could do nothing to prepare for, be prepared for, desire, stop, or change, and it always results in faith and therefore salvation. Therefore, God's love, according to Calvinism, which could indeed deliver everyone, sits either actively or passively by while people perish in an eternal fire. To wit, God loves some to sure salvation, and others He loves to inescapable damnation. This is a disquieting reality.

That those perishing do not merit deliverance and even justly deserve judgment is not the issue. The issue is whether love that allows one to perish in the burning building—even if it is a jail cell—

when that love could have rescued him and did in fact so deliver other equally condemned prisoners from the burning prison, is in any appreciable or demonstrable way distinguishable from heartlessness or hate to those who perish. Those perishing would have been forever grateful and praising their deliverer for that act of love had they received what the delivered prisoners received; moreover, in contrast to the Calvinist description of God's heartless love for those perishing, the Scripture ubiquitously portrays it as unfathomably redemptive, a disquieting reality.

Additionally, a Calvinist may say God's wondrous love for the lost is seen in that God allowed them to live their lives and enjoy His creation even though they deserved hell. Again, that everyone deserves hell is not the issue, for that speaks to the justice of God rather than the love of God. To say that it is love to allow sinners to live their lives on His earth before they perish in hell, is in time and eternity comparable to Tom holding his friend over a cliff for a nanosecond so his friend may view the awe-inspiring vista of the Rocky mountains before Tom releases him to plunge headlong to a gory death; when Tom could have actually saved his friend to enjoy an eternity of felicities. That kind of love is not characteristic of the God of Scripture (John 3:16), a disquieting reality.

The Calvinist R.C. Sproul states the quandary of reconciling God as love with the Calvinist view of unconditional predestination and election when he says, "It was certainly loving of God to predestine the salvation of His people, those the Bible calls the 'elect or chosen ones.' *It is the non-elect that are the problem. If some people are not elected unto salvation then it would seem that God is not all that loving toward them. For them it seems that it would have been more loving of God not to have allowed them to be born. That may indeed be the case.*"⁵³ (italics added) This is a disquieting reality.

Explaining how Calvinism's love is truly love by noting distinctions between different kinds of love actually serves to further obfuscate rather than illuminate because we know of no love in Scripture or experience like the love assigned to God through Calvinism. While it is absolutely true that God is just if He chose not to offer salvation to anyone, it is painfully difficult to see how being just elucidates how He can be perfect mercy, compassion, love, and grace and not act accordingly. If God were unjust once, He would be forever unjust and in like manner, if unloving for one instance He would simply be unloving. This is a disquieting reality.

In Calvinism, according to the doctrine of selective regeneration, God monergistically regenerates the elect prior to their ability to exercise faith, and once regenerated, they will believe. Those whom God does not regenerate cannot exercise faith, and for that reason, they cannot be saved. Therefore, according to Calvinism, God is the sole determiner that certain lost people *cannot* be saved and therefore must perish in hell. This is a disquieting reality. I do not believe any amount of reasoning or interpretive skills, without first donning the Calvinistic spectacles, can reconcile that picture of God with the God who loved us hell bound, worthless, hopeless, undeserving,

rebellious sinful scum so much that He freely gave His only Son to pay our penalty and call us to Himself through the glorious gospel of love and forgiveness (John 1:12, 3:10).

Here is the quandary of Calvinism. Calvinism states that God is perfect holiness and therefore cannot ever act in an unholy or unjust manner or else He would cease to be holy—God. Therefore, God is just to send everyone to hell because everyone has sinned, and God would be unjust if He failed to punish even one sinner. Additionally, God would be unjust to permit even one unredeemed sinner to receive salvation, i.e. live in heaven forever. I absolutely agree with these truths. However, it seems incoherent to maintain the undeniableness of these claims while maintaining that God is perfect love if He ever acted out of anything but perfect love.

In other words, it is true that on Judgment Day, all, including the damned, will see that God is just in sending sinners to hell. However, it is impossibly difficult to see how all, including the damned, will see that God, according to Calvinism, is perfect love since He did not love the sinners in hell enough to even grant them the remotest opportunity to escape eternal torment. To wit, the Calvinist must explain how they maintain that God would be unholy if He ever acted unholy while simultaneously maintaining that He can be perfect love and act unloving; I maintain it is impossible to satisfactorily define love to mean "loving some into hell" or defend such a concept from Scripture. This is a disquieting reality.

In stark contrast to Calvinism's love is the more biblical picture wherein all, including the damned, will not only know He is just, and they deserved to spend eternity in hell; they will also know that "God is love", and the ultimate reason they are in hell is because they willfully rejected God's loving grace provisions to be saved, which they could have accepted. This is the harmonious message of the Scripture, which eliminates a need to retreat to "it's a mystery." Calvinists say that God loves the elect differently than the non-elect, which is obvious in His selection to regenerate the elect and deny the same to the non-elect. They maintain that God does not have to love everyone all of the time; for example, He is all-powerful, but He does not fully exercise His power all of the time or toward each individual. Therefore, God is still perfect love even though He does not love the non-elect enough to give them an opportunity to experience salvation.

In response, God's attribute of love, omnibenevolence, is disanalogous to His attribute of power. Love, justice, and holiness are moral attributes whereas power is a non-moral attribute of ability. While He can exercise or limit His power and still be God that is not true with love, justice, or holiness. If God were unjust once, He would not be God, and the same is true if He were unloving once. While I do believe that God loves the elect specially and differently than the non-elect (John 10:11; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 1:4, 5:25), His love for the lost would be different had they become the elect through faith, which they in fact could have done. Further, it is a logical fallacy and an unbiblical deduction to conclude that the Bible's affirmation of God's love for the elect means that He does not love all of the lost enough to provide for a *real* opportunity to be saved.

This view of God's love is dramatically different than Calvinism's love for the lost, which does not allow them a chance to be saved, even though there seems to be an offer placed before them.

It is rather perplexing to see how a Calvinist can sign the Baptist Faith and Message because it says of God, "He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men."⁵⁴ Since Calvinism teaches that God actively elected to withhold salvation from most of the lost people of the world, it seems fair to ask in what way is that fatherly. In other words, He chose to pass them by, thereby predestining them irrevocably to eternal torment, which action, according to Calvinism, pleased Him. To say they deserve it, or that God is just, misses the point. For the dilemma is not regarding their just due, but rather what kind of *father* is God, knowing that He could have exercised selective regeneration through irresistible grace and delivered them from such fate. This indisputably transmogrifies the affectionate and endearing word "fatherly" into something that is horrifyingly dreadful.

NOTES

⁴⁷ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. VII, 273-274.

⁴⁸ Craig Blomberg argues that, "As with 'this generation' (v. 16), the judgment of 'cities' reflects God's response to a general rejection of Jesus, not an absolute condemnation of every individual (as was true also with Sodom; cf. v. 24 and recall 10:15)." Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 22, Matthew, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 191. Blomberg's suggestion is derived from Calvinism rather than the text itself, because the text is spoken to people about people, and postulating that it is a generalization does not improve the Calvinist position. That is to say, the particular individuals Jesus denounced for not repenting are the same individuals He called on to repent, and the ones who would have repented having seen the same miracles are the same ones who perished. That any of the elect would have perished or the unelected could have repented is in absolute contradiction to the teaching of Calvinism.

⁴⁹ An example would be if a company runs an employment advertisement in the newspaper for two days in one city and for four days in another city, and a person in each city sees the ad, each person has a real chance to apply for

the job.

⁵⁰ Also referred to as "counterfactual knowledge." William Lane Craig says "If something *were* the case (which in fact it is not), then something else *would* be the case. Philosophers call such statements *counterfactual* statements." William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*, (Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 70 .

⁵¹ I believe I first saw this type of example, although maybe not in this exact form, in the writings of Norman Geisler.

⁵² Allen and Lemke, *Whosoever Will*, 91, in the chapter entitled "The Atonement Limited or Universal."

⁵³ R.O Sproul, *Chosen by God*, 51, as quoted in George L. Bryson, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Weighed And Found Wanting*, (Costa Mesa, CA.: The Word for Today, 2002), 44.

⁵⁴ [The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000, II, A](#), accessed 10/11/2025.