

...The nasty problem for the Calvinist is seen in the relationship of options three and four. If God can and does choose to ensure the salvation of some, why then does he not insure the salvation of all?

Before I try to answer that question, let me first point out that this is not just a Calvinist problem. Every Christian must feel the weight of this problem. We first face the question, "Does God have the power to insure the salvation of everyone?" Certainly, it is within God's power to change the heart of every impenitent sinner and bring that sinner to himself. If he lacks such power, then he is not sovereign. If he has that power, why doesn't he use it for everyone?

The non-Reformed thinker usually responds by saying that for God to impose his power on unwilling people is to violate man's freedom. To violate man's freedom is sin. Since God cannot sin, he cannot unilaterally impose his saving grace on unwilling sinners, to force the sinner to be willing when the sinner is not willing is to violate the sinner. The idea is that by offering the grace of the gospel God does everything he can to help the sinner get saved. He has the raw power to coerce men but the use of such power would be foreign to God's righteousness.

That does not bring much comfort to the sinner in hell. The sinner in hell must be asking, "God, if you really loved me, why didn't you coerce me to believe? I would rather have had my free will violated than to be here in this eternal place of torment." Still, the pleas of the damned would not determine God's righteousness if in fact it would be wrong of God to impose himself on the will of men. The question the Calvinist asks is, "What is wrong with God creating faith in the heart of the sinner?"

God is not required to seek the sinner's permission for doing with the sinner what he pleases. The sinner didn't ask to be born in the country of his birth, to his parents, or even to be born at all. Nor did the sinner ask to be born with a fallen nature. All these things were determined by God's sovereign decision. If God does all this that affects the sinner's eternal destiny, what could possibly be wrong for him to go one more step to insure his salvation? What did Jeremiah mean when he cried, "O Lord, You have overwhelmed me and I am overwhelmed" (Jer. 20:7)? Jeremiah certainly did not invite God to overwhelm him.

The question remains. Why does God only save some? If we grant that God can save men by violating their wills, why then does he not violate everybody's will and bring them all to salvation? (I am using the word *violate* here not because I really think there is any wrongful violation but because the non-Calvinist insists on the term.)

The only answer I can give to this question is that I don't know. I have no idea why God saves some but not all. I don't doubt for a moment that God has the power to save all but I know that he does not choose to save all I don't know why.

One thing I do know. If it pleases God to save some and not all there is nothing wrong with that. God is not under obligation to save anybody. If he chooses to save some, that in no way obligates him to save the rest. Again, the Bible insists that it is God's divine prerogative to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

The hue and cry the Calvinist usually hears at this point is "That's not fair!" But what is meant by fairness here? If by fair, we mean equal then of course the protest is accurate. God does not treat all men equally. Nothing could be dearer from the Bible than that. God appeared to Moses in a way that he did not appear to Hammurabi. God gave blessings to Israel that he did not give to Persia. Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus in a way he did not manifest himself to Pilate. God simply has not treated every human being in history in exactly the same manner. That much is obvious.

Probably what is meant by "fair" in the protest is "just." It does not seem just for God to choose some to receive his mercy while others do not receive the benefit of it. To deal with this problem we must do some dose but very important thinking. Let us assume that all men are guilty of sin in the sight of God. From that mass of guilty humanity God sovereignly decides to give mercy to some of them. What do the rest get? They get justice....