

# OpenTheo

## Is Calvinism Biblical? (Part 6)



### Is Calvinism Biblical? (Debate) - Steve Gregg

In this debate between Steve Gregg and Douglas Wilson, the topic of whether Calvinism is biblical is explored. Wilson argues that although regeneration is essential for salvation, it is not necessary for covenant membership, while Gregg disagrees, stating that being united with Christ is essential and that not all who claim to be part of the covenant are truly joined to Christ. The two also debate the concept of God's foreknowledge and how it relates to the issue of election.

### Transcript

I'll have ten minutes each for cross-examination. I'm still fascinated by this idea that people can be in Christ but not be regenerated. The Bible says, as I've pointed out, God has given to us eternal life.

This life is in His Son. He even has the Son, that is, in Christ. He has life.

That's eternal life. Now, do some people have eternal life but they're not regenerated? But those who are in Christ have eternal life. In John chapter 8 and John 15, God knows the end before that final day.

All branches are often true to salvation, but those branches that don't bear fruit in accordance with the terms of the covenant... But the tree was the tree of salvation, you said. And they were attached to that tree and they participated in the life of that tree but they didn't have salvation. Ah, correct.

That's the point. The power of the coming of the age, all these things. I personally don't believe that is true about having eternal life.

Those who are in Him... Now, if that is true, and some of us who are in Him will... I see. Does that not mean that I might have all the evidence of being in Christ, but I might not be one of those who will have to be regenerated or go to prison? That I have no reason for sharing my salvation at all? Because although I have Christ, I don't have salvation. So, as God works in sons through spiritual fruit, don't bear that kind of fruit.

But, nevertheless, the Bible describes the objective meaning of their baptism. So, what you're saying is the ritual of baptism itself is what joins them to Christ. But it doesn't regenerate them.

Well, you make the sentence of baptizing them and teaching them to accept. That teaching is the last thing in the process, not the first thing. Well, it's not... You see, as I understand it, when the pagans didn't just preach Christ to them, and the eunuch says, Oh, here's some water.

Here's where you can be baptized. That implies that in his conversation, he's a disciple. So, a person who's a disciple... And it requires that you... I believe that none of that says you need to make disciples.

In that process, you do baptize them. Well, okay. Apologies for that.

If a man, and because he's treacherous, that doesn't negate the... He's objectively a husband. Christ makes the same sort of distinction. Christ talks... There are his disciples.

They see themselves as Christ. Objectively, they take the vow. I agree that it means something.

By his action, he's making a claim that he's made... unto his death... And that's... But some are cursed. How is that possible? They're cursed. The baptism is a baptism of blessing.

But some are cursed when they receive the baptism of blessing. Because... Now, the covenant is a covenant. But... The author of Hebrews says... Will these people receive... Who've trampled the level of covenant... Well... They receive a far worse punishment than... happened in their most... Okay, well, I think the main difference where... We are associating being... But I don't think anyone in the Bible says... It brings them into union... Body of Christ.

I don't believe that every organ... Is the body of Christ. So... I do believe the association of Christ begins at... Yes. It's not the same... Words... They didn't hear about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

But they... The writer of Hebrews is actually saying... Not what Aaron Lonerd has described. But they may... So Christ was presented. Yes.

I believe it essentially was... If you mean by that... Were they given the opportunity to be... Safe through Christ's merits? I would say yes. Because Christ was presented to them in different ways. Right.

Yeah, because he was revealed... These are all proclamations of the gospel... Of Christ. Not... Not generic. Good news.



that... I believe that... I believe that... I believe that... That God... When it does, then it's carnal reasoning. The fact that I said that we should go with the most logical and self-evident interpretation of scripture felt like he thought I was putting the logic of our scripture.

He read that if there is a plain meaning of the text, we do not import another meaning that that which is logical and normal and natural, unless there is a heavy burden of truth proof that has been met by evidence that we should see it a different way. I think that was really a legal practice. And that's the problem with Calvinism in general.

And I realize that I'm a little open to the same. And that's why I'm very grateful for the chance to mention is that the doctrine of sovereignty as Calvinism teaches it is not found in the scripture. It's contrary to what the scripture actually does say.

What's imported late, relatively late, four centuries into it, was refuted and argued against. And the man who brought it in was a man who was very steeped in the old laymanic philosophy. And that in itself is not.

Now this is very damaging for Calvinism since all of Calvinism rests upon the foundation of what sovereignty means. And my convention is the word sovereignty in all language means absolute authority. Calvinists normally just vocally regard it as absolute authority.

The difference is that the Calvinists an element of determinism. First, I think that the issue is not what can be. And it is far safer to use our reason to simply establish what the text says.

And of course, it all reconciles in the mind of God. And much of it. But it's far more important for a reason.

Now, having said that, and this is one of the things that I've said, well, my objective when you use if P, if P, then Q. In summary, God is exhaustively sovereign over all things. He doesn't himself or do anything. He is exhausted.

He does not save every last person. But he does far more than give people the chance to. What we will do is direct the question, respond in a little loud.

This question was directed to me. In 1 John it says, those who continue to sin never knew him. Elsewhere we find Jesus will say, depart from me, I never knew you.

Please respond. Okay, those verses are often used to prove that those who follow him were never really Christians. I don't believe that those teach that.

In 1 John it doesn't say those who continue to sin never knew him. What it says is, certain false teachers who had left the church, it says, they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

Now, John is talking about a particular group of people who were in his churches and who left because of heresy. They say, you know what? These guys never really were Christians. These never really belonged to us.

Now, he's not making a statement in general about all the people who continue to sin that they ever did. And he's making reference in Matthew chapter 7 where Jesus said, many will say to me that, hey Lord, Lord, did we not propagate? He's talking about many. Even those who... Mr. Wilson, you said that everyone, that regeneration is an ingredient of salvation.

You cannot be saved unless you are... Regeneration is not an ingredient of covenant membership. Not all Israel are true Israel. Not all Christians, not all Israelites are Israelites.

Not all Jews are Jews. Jew, Israel. But they're not condemned either.

But you say it's possible to be... There's no damnation of covenant. ...understanding of election to tell us how you can handle... I don't think you can. I don't think you can.

But I don't think the election... The word election just means choosing. And there is a choosing that's made by God. And there's a choosing that's made by man.

And Donald said that choosing... God's choosing something doesn't mean man doesn't choose it. Because God's will is like a billion dollars. The illustration, I don't find to have much biblical strength to it.

I believe that if a choice... If Hamlet's choice to do a certain thing shaped or made the choices, therefore Hamlet's actions are Shakespeare's choice. Now if Hamlet was a real person who made his own choices, then Shakespeare had two people both taking full responsibility for the choice. I believe the solution... I mean, if God doesn't make... Well, we have to come up with something like... God chooses... And he has predestined... And say, see here... We never say, how dare... We're always offended in comparison.

God is much greater than Shakespeare. That is, of course, true in terms of size and things like that, but that's not really the issue. In the analogy, really, Shakespeare is much more like God than I am like Hamlet.

Because God made Shakespeare and all people in his own way a lot like God. Try to get this idea... Psalm 139 says something... Isaiah is talking about... I agree with many of those eschatological statements, but I don't agree with the application. Jeremiah 31 says that God will make him a covenant, and these are... These are the characteristics of the covenant, including the characteristics that they shall all know of me is the characteristic that I will... I believe that we don't have to wait until the end of time for these things.

Well, I believe that, as I said all along, faith is a condition for salvation. If we have faith,

God joins us to Christ. If we cease that faith, God has to stop from Christ.

We do not judge... We do not, in our own power, join ourselves to the faith, nor do we in our own power to remain. If we don't abide, it is because we have... It's not chronological. I can say that I was regenerated because I believed, but I'm not talking about the fact that... We say that God created the world.

The Koran gave us, you know, a creation from nothing. We can't escape the fact that God, God's the one who created it. Now, if God created, knowing full well everything that would happen anyway, and if God willed it, and if He hadn't created it... I disagree with your assessment of the logic.

I believe that if I am married, which I did, that marriage produces children. Those children, I know before I even have any of them, I don't want them to sin. And by my allowing them to exist, I know for a fact that every child my marriage produces will sin.

And I know that if I were a wife. But, at the same time, there are goals I have in terms of having a family that I consider worthy of those disappointments. It will disappoint me if my children sin, but it might disappoint me more if I have no children at all.

Now, the fact that I choose to have children knowing that they will disappoint me in sin does not mean I ordained their sin. It doesn't mean that I in any way caused their sin. To bring the children into existence, but they are not robots, they are people.

They choose their own. But, by my bringing them into existence knowing they will sin, does not mean I want children. For a reason, I'm not sure I have children.

You don't want your children to sin. But if you want children, you want sinners. Yeah.

But, I'll put it another way. I want children, and although they may disappoint me, how much they may disappoint me, I may not know that. If I were God, I know how much they would disappoint me.

But, I still choose to have children. What sins did you have to commit? You can't get out of sin. Failure to... However, failure to measure up to your moral standards.

I believe that faith is the condition. I think I've said that. It's the condition for being on the train.

It's the condition. But, that doesn't mean I couldn't be saved more than one time. If someone... I believe that it's up to you to make that decision, and no one else, since God is the only creator.

If God knows... Well, I certainly believe that a conductor who takes the tickets from the passengers can know with certainty how many of them are going to get off the train before it gets to its destination, finally. But, he doesn't determine that for them. And by

his knowledge of it, he is not determining their destination.

They are... The conductor doesn't create the train. That's true, even if he did. Suppose he did.

Suppose the conductor created the train. And the train ends up becoming a murderer. One could say I'm responsible for bad parenting.

But, I believe that even... I do not believe that the parenting that brought that child into existence is... So, Jesus combines the narrow road all of human history that he... That's how he ended up... I'm a pervert. Of course, it was perfect. But, I think God remains the ends... I mean, ends and means to be transitional, which he can steer or direct or restrict... Those means lead to his ultimate ends.

He will have people who are his children, who are adopted, who are named Christ, who are born here to be his sons. That's his ultimate end. He can get there in the end with a great number of lesser means and ends transferring in between that he didn't necessarily cause.

I do not believe that God... Including my choice to succumb to temptation. That is a lot of nonsense that he didn't... But, the... For God's ultimate... I'm not saying that God remains every end. True.

Douglass said that if he runs his car through the trees, it's a great spender. He believes it. And, therefore, God remains.

Well, I'm not sure I agree with all of it. And, he may even have a lot to do with it. Or, he may see that the means that end are all... I, again, disagree.

And, I... One of my... That's determined by the direct... Is analogous to... What? The end. Then, he has... He's going to be... Although, Shakespeare wrote countless sins. Shakespeare would never be... The crimes that... If Shakespeare actually created a character and made him actually sin in the real world, then Shakespeare wouldn't be charged with a crime.

And, in one of his plays, the actors were supposed to be fighting with... God, knowing some of his... He can't charge God with any sin, no matter... Are others... Of a guilty act. Or not. By... Or... Or, by... On the other hand, you know, he can't even go to hell.

But, he is also not... Somehow, it plays into his overall purposes. Not to tell us whether or not he did... That it seems...