

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

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Calvinism and The Parable of the Sower

by Frank Himmel

Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8) was intended to be a lesson on listening, not a rebuttal of false doctrine. Nevertheless, it does expose several errors of Calvinism.

Hereditary Depravity

Calvinists believe that we are born with the guilt of Adam's sin and a depraved nature. We are incapable of doing good or even accepting the gospel. Yet Jesus spoke of an "honest and good heart." In the parable, this heart is not different from the others because of some direct operation of the Holy Spirit. What sets it apart is an individual's own receptiveness to truth. One Calvinistic author rebutted that this heart is really bad too; it is only good in comparison to the other three! But how can that be if we are "wholly inclined to all evil," as the Westminster Confession expresses it?

Unconditional Election

Calvinism says God eternally decreed whatsoever comes to pass. That includes choosing what individuals will and will not be saved, choices made without regard to anything we do or fail to do. Then why did Jesus challenge His audience to listen? Why close with, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear?" If being a

wayside, rocky, or thorny heart is all a matter of God's doing, what responsibility did these listeners have?

Irresistible Grace

This tenet says that if you are among the elect, God irresistibly imposes His favor on you, putting faith into your heart and making you a believer. But Jesus said the seed, the word of God, is the instrument by which faith comes (cf. Romans 10:17). The sower sows the word of God. Why, if faith is directly implanted? In three of the four soils [hearts] the word was believed. The only one in which it was not was when "the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:11-12). How can what the devil does to the word prevent faith if faith does not come through the word? If God directly implants faith into men's hearts, nothing the devil does to the word can affect it.

Perseverance of the Saints

The doctrine of perseverance of the saints is that once one becomes a believer, once he is saved, he can never



Calvinism's "Tulip"

Total hereditary depravity
Unconditional election
Limited atonement
Irresistible grace
Perseverance of the saints

Wake Up!

by Frank Himmel

“For this reason it says,
 ‘Awake sleeper,
 And arise from the dead,
 And Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:14).



Some think Paul is freely adapting Isaiah 60:1 in this verse; others, that he is quoting an early hymn. Regardless, his point is that those who are spiritually asleep need to wake up and let the Son shine on them. Toward that end, he is encouraging Christians to live in such a way as to be lights, exposing wrong by both our instruction and our example.

“For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light” (v. 8)

Sometimes, Christians themselves need to wake up. Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome:

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day... (13:11-13a).

Similarly, Jesus said to some Christians at Sardis, “Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God” (Revelation 3:2). Those of us who are still clinging to old sinful attitudes or behaviors need to wake up! So do those who are sleepwalking—just going through the motions of Christianity, with little zeal or enthusiasm doing only the least we can get by with.

“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments...” (Revelation 16:15). ■

Calvinism... - continued from p. 1

become an unbeliever or be lost. This story teaches the opposite. The rocky soil is those who “believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). Calvinists assert that they never really believed. They point out that the word *believe* is sometimes used of those whose faith is not saving faith. That is true (John 12:42; James 2:19). But not so here. In verse 12, the belief under consideration is unmistakably saving faith: “believe and be saved.” There is no reason to make it anything else in verse 13, where some “believe for a while, and fall away.” These who fall away are in contrast to those who hold fast (v. 15).

In this parable, Jesus presents three categories of people: those who never believe, those who believe for a while but fall away (either because of adversity or pursuit of other things), and those who hold fast and bear fruit with perseverance. Which are you? ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Mark Clifton	Chris Brooks
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	Sam Walters
OPENING PRAYER	Howard Moore	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Bruce Hollander	
CUP	John Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Adam Gibson	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Singing
CLOSING PRAYER	Albert Harrison Sr	TBD