

When Calvinism Goes Bad (Part 4)

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Well, as I said before, I want to pick up once again this series on hyper-Calvinism, which I could very well subtitle or might have rather even titled: A Fight for the Gospel. One brother, I don't remember who it was, but I do remember after one of the first three messages that I've done here on hyper-Calvinism, somebody came to me and they said, "Yeah, I don't even feel like..." since they came to the doctrines of grace, since they've become a Calvinist, not really feeling like they could wholeheartedly communicate the Gospel to people feeling that somehow it was not a sincere offer. Insincere. He felt a hesitation. He felt a reluctance to freely communicate the Gospel indiscriminately to all men.

You know what? We can have John going to Nicaragua, going to the Philippines, and we can feel like: Oh, well, we don't have any problem with hyper-Calvinism. But I'll tell you what, if behind the scenes we've got a bunch of young people and people that are coming to the doctrines of grace, and two-thirds of our church has some reluctance in communicating the Gospel, where do you think we're going to be in 10 years? Why would there be a reluctance? Why would there be a suspicion? Why would a young Calvinist come to the place where they're hesitant because they think that Gospel message - there's a lack of sincerity in it someplace. And I'll tell you this, the man or the woman who doubts Christ's sincerity and His desire to save the lost, they're going to make for poor evangelists. And what that's going to do is it will have its effects. If we really fall into that, it's going to lead us somewhere.

Who did I hear? It was John MacArthur. He said don't look at where somebody is. Look at where they're going. And he was talking about doctrine. He was talking about churches. He was talking about churches that go bad. Not where they are today. Where are they headed? You know, he's right on there. Because every church is headed somewhere. And you have to fight, like history tells us, we have to fight like crazy to stay balanced in the truth. And eventually, every single church loses it. Every one. Show me the 2,000 year old church. There isn't one. Where have they all gone? Eventually, bad.

And you know what? I don't want it to happen in our generation. And if it's not going to happen, we've got to fight for the Gospel like crazy. And the way you fight, I'll tell you one way you fight this battle, is you've got to get to the place where at times, and I'm not saying that God hasn't raised up teachers that can be very valuable, but you know what? Sometimes, you've got to put away the commentaries and you've got to put away the Bibles with the notes in the bottom, and you've got to read Scripture. You've got to sit down and read Scripture.

Sit down, like I was just able to do. Ruby and I were away. I got to read the Gospel of John from beginning to end four straight days. And that is the kind of thing that is going to keep us balanced. It's this book. Because this book is balanced. And I mean this book without John MacArthur's notes. Because as much as we might like him, he's not perfectly balanced. This book is. He is not. And neither am I. And unless we're Berean, we're not going to stay in the balance.

And sometimes we've got to put away the systematic theologies, we've got to put away the commentaries, and you've got to read your Bibles. And without all your presuppositions.

You've got to read and say, like I tried to do these four days - if I just was sitting down and I'd never read my Bible before, what would I get from John? What does it feel like it's saying? Not with all my presuppositions and all my system and all my Calvinism and all my whatever, because I do have systems. But sometimes just sitting down: what does it say? That's what's going to protect us. Scripture is going to protect us.

Look, what happens? Where do we go bad? Where do we go wrong? How do we get to the place where I feel reluctant to just freely proclaim that Jesus saves? Not only that He saves, but He's willing to save. And to be able to go across to anybody and indiscriminately tell them the Good News of the Gospel message, and not feeling like somehow it's this hollow or somewhat insincere. How do we even get there?

Well, we get there this way. And as I had somebody come up to me and say, well, the way they heard it, the way they had Calvinism explained to them is what? What happens? We get to this place where we begin to feel this way: Well, if God has predetermined - if we believe in double predestination, and if we really believe that there are vessels of wrath, and we believe that God has foreordained that somebody is going to go to hell, what good is it to offer them life in Christ? I mean, after all - so the thinking of the hyper-Calvinist goes - if you're not one of the elect, then Jesus didn't die for you. If you're not one of the elect, God doesn't love you. God hates you along with all the non-elect Esau's in the world. God certainly does not have any true desire for your salvation. How can He if He hasn't predetermined to save you? So offering the Gospel openly and freely to all mankind? It kind of feels pretty hollow. It feels insincere. Right? I mean, we go up to somebody - look, if Jesus Christ said, "few there by that find it," and He did, that means that few are actually elect. That means that as we broadcast the Gospel to this perishing world, the truth is the majority have not been chosen to life. And so we take those truths, we put them together, and we feel like, well, if I'm offering life to those that God never intends to give life to, I'm offering hope to those God is just indifferent to and doesn't have any desire to see come to Him, then it's a pretty hollow offer. And Christ didn't die for them. God doesn't love them. God has no sincere desire to have them saved. How can I really feel sincere in my desire to go try to preach the Gospel to them in hopes that they'll be saved? That's the thinking of hyper-Calvinism.

And you know what, if you've come to the doctrines of grace, you've undoubtedly wrestled with these things. But what we have to ask ourselves is okay, yes, Scripture teaches election. Scripture teaches vessels of mercy, vessels of wrath. We understand that. God has compassion upon whom He has compassion. But does Scripture ever in any way indicate to us this fatalistic idea - who knows what fatalism is? No hope. What's going to be is going to be no matter what you do. But that's not what Scripture teaches. Scripture never teaches that. Ever. That what's going to happen is going to happen no matter what you do. Scripture all over the place stresses that what you do matters for your own eternity.

What's the thinking of Scripture? I mean, let's think about Scripture. Again, this is one of the places where yeah, I could come into Scripture with all my systems, all my ducks in a row, but look, if you come in just like I did - read John through four times in a row without any of these preconceived ideas, do you get the feeling that it's all fatalistic? Do you get the feeling that Jesus had no sincere desire to see sinners saved? Do you get that idea when you go to Scripture? Or is that just carnal logic of hyper-Calvinism? Well, that's what it is.

I mean, let's start by thinking about God's love. If God has chosen an elect people to save, which He has - chosen before the foundations of the world, we know that there is an elect - if God has chosen a people, can He love all mankind? And that begins to create a tension in our minds? And it does! And it does mine. If God has an elect people, can it be said that God desires the salvation of all people? The flawed reasoning of hyper-Calvinism, it argues that God can honestly have no desire for the salvation of anyone other than the elect. No real love for anyone other than the elect. And you know what happens? You get young Calvinists and you know, they love the hatred texts. Right? God hated Esau. Psalm 5:5, very well known among young Calvinists very oftentimes. The hatred of God. The hatred of God. And you know, the basic hyper-Calvinistic mindset is this: that nobody has a right to trust in a loving God unless there's some indication he's one of the elect. That's the thinking. And so you need to look for some evidence that you're actually one of the elect before you would ever want to hope that God has any love towards you.

And look, isn't this something you see with young Calvinists? There seems to be this reluctance to want to say anything about God's love to the lost world. All of a sudden, it's become this incredible - sometimes this consuming idea about God's hatred seems to rule the day. It's like telling somebody that God loves them: We can't say that anymore! As Arminians we could say that, but we can't say that to anybody lest we should be deceiving them! Lest we be telling them something that isn't true. So we like to focus on Psalm 5 and on Romans 9 and this hyper-Calvinistic idea, insisting we cannot have anybody trusting in a loving God unless they're one of the elect, and we don't know who they are. All of a sudden, there's this reluctance. And as there's this reluctance, we're imagining God being reluctant to say these things; we become reluctant. And what's going to happen? Like I say, where is that headed ten years down the road? As this reluctance creeps in, we've got to figure out whether there's evidence that people are actually one of the chosen.

But look, open your Bibles to Romans 9. And yes, we don't want to deny what Scripture in fact does teach. And we know that there is a God Who is sovereign. And we know that there is a God Who is behind the scenes and He's in control and He overcomes the darkness that men are trapped in and He breaks them free. And we know that He is in control. And we know that salvation is of the Lord. And we get consumed with Romans 9 and vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. But you know, so often we can miss other things because of our system that are being said here.

You might just look at Romans 9 and look at the very beginning. I mean, look at the heart of Paul himself. Did he just cave in to hyper-Calvinism? I mean, he's going to deal with this text on the sovereignty of God in salvation, and he says in 9:3, "I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh." You see the yearning heart of Paul. If you go over to Romans 10, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved." He didn't just cave into this. He didn't grow cold towards souls.

Now look, this is Paul's heart being expressed. But Paul is under inspiration. But let's look at the very heart of God Himself. Go over to Romans 10:21. "But of Israel, He says, 'All day long, I've held My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'" Do you know what you find? You search out the Calvinists throughout history - those that have firmly held to the doctrines of

grace, those who have firmly held to the doctrine of election who also have been soul winners, and I'll tell you this, the evangelistic Calvinists have unashamedly and boldly declared that God does desire the salvation of all sinners. I mean, you tell me! You tell me based on this verse right here. Are you going to tell me that God doesn't desire it? Look at it. "All day long, I have held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." Held out His hands in what way? I mean, if you go right before this in v. 20, Isaiah's so bold as to say: I've been found by those who did not seek Me. I've shown Myself to those who did not ask for Me. He's talking about salvation. "All day long, I've held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." That's a holding them out in an offer of salvation. Come to Me. There's nothing here that says that this is insincere or that this is hollow.

You say, I don't know how to put that together. Listen, there are some things in Scripture, Scripture doesn't seek to explain for us, and if we're going to stay balanced, it doesn't mean it's always going to fit together logically in your mind. But I'll tell you this, we go wrong - we go majorly wrong if we are viewing God as anything but extending His hands.

Do you understand who He's extending them to? This isn't just the lost Gentile. This is being offered to those who are persisting in rejecting Him. If you want a picture in your mind, this is the picture He gives. Like this. This is it. Somebody that's down there drowning in the flood of their own guilt and wickedness, their own rebellion, and He's offering His hand. That is the imagery that God would portray for us in Scripture. And you can't argue that! If you've fallen into this hyper-Calvinistic thinking, whatever you want to do with election, predestination, reprobation, you've got to have a picture in your mind or you're perverting it. You're going off balance, out of kilter, if you do not see God extending His hand as it's extended here. "All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Look, we have to be convinced of this, that lost sinners who sit under the sound of the Gospel - a Gospel that you and I have a responsibility to take to them - they're never lost - the person out there in the world that hears the Gospel, they are never lost for any lack on God's part of the most affectionate invitations. That's just true. I mean, you don't know your Bibles if you're thinking that God is sitting there coldly, callously... that's not true. God's sincerity towards sinners is genuine, it is deep, and it is affectionate. And you can see that all over Scripture if you will not let your system bias you so that you can't see it.

I mean, think with me here, brethren. Turn to Romans 2. Many of you know this verse, but I want you just to let this soak in. The kindness of God is meant to do what? What is it? It's meant to lead us to repentance. The kindness of God is meant to lead us to repentance. Now look, bring that home in an evangelistic way. That means that when you see the lost guy across the street, for you to go over there and somehow communicate that God's hesitant to save them; that they're more willing to be saved than God is to save them, you are contradicting this verse. Do you see your responsibility in this verse? If you have a responsibility to take the message of the cross to this world, what is it that's going to bring them to repentance? Is it you harping forever and always on the hatred of God? Is that what's going to do it? You spitting out Psalm 5:5 to the lost guy till you're blue in the face? That's not what does it.

And let's look at the broader context here. Just take in a few verses with me. V. 3, "Do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself that you will escape the judgment of God?" Now this is a person who is in trouble. "Or do you

presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience?" Do you see? Paul is painting a picture of a God Who is kind to all men. Forbearing and patient. "...Not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."

Now you answer me this. Is it because of a lack of a sincere, genuine, deep, affectionate bidding on God's part? Or is it because of your hard and impenitent heart that the individual here misses Heaven? I mean, you tell me. Which is it? Is it because they're not elect? Is that the reasoning here? That's not the reasoning. I mean whose is the fault here? Is it because God didn't choose them? My hyper-Calvinistic friend, will you dare insist that God's kindness is not meant to lead sinners to repentance? That's what Scripture says it's meant to do. And if sinners are not melted by that kindness, it has to do with whose fault? The sinner's. "Because of your hard and impenitent heart." That's the problem. It's not a lack of an affectionate, genuine invitation on God's part. In fact, His invitations are lavished with kindness. Not telling you: Look, it's okay.

I mean, come on, what is the logic of this? What is the logic of God heaping kindness on the lost? What is that meant to communicate? Look how willing God is to lavish you with kindness. If He's so willing coupled with invitations to accept the work of Jesus Christ on your behalf, is He going to be reluctant to pour out mercy upon you? I mean, if while you're there impenitent, He's lavishing kindness on you, what is He communicating to you? A hesitancy to save you? I mean, come on, is that not the logic going on here? Am I making this up? Hyper-Calvinists, if you're there, am I making that up? Is that not the logic? Kindness. God is wanting to communicate kindness.

And you know, I saw this with my dad. My dad got cancer. My dad called me. He said, "Tim, I need help." My dad was the most wicked man that I knew. I saw my step-dad die three years before that. He was hard. He did not want to hear about Christ. He did not want to hear about sin. Now, my dad, my biological father, he had cancer. Just the opposite. He came to me and he said, "I need your help." And I thought. God used "The Gospel According to Jesus" by John MacArthur. So I sent my dad a copy of that. My dad read it and re-read it and re-read it. But you know what? I can remember one day, I can remember being in the bathroom on the phone. We lived out there at Thornwood. And I was saying, "Dad, you need to be calling on the Lord." He said, "I am calling on the Lord." He said, "But I don't think He wants to save me." He said, "I think I've done too much bad." My dad's not the only one that's experienced that.

If we're going to be evangelists to this world, are we going to come and tell them that God is hesitant to save them? That's exactly sometimes what they're struggling with. They're thinking God is hesitant to save them. And the devil will be right there to say, "You've been too bad. God isn't going to save you. God isn't that kind of God. He is angry with you. He is hesitant to save you."

And can you imagine? Here comes the often well-meaning hyper-Calvinist, puts his arm around him: "Have you never heard? God hates Esau. God hates sinners. God hates this. God hates that." Barely able to even talk about John 3:16. We can't hardly talk about the love of God. And here's somebody, the very thing they need is to be melted by the kindness of God. And yet the hyper-Calvinistic mentality is that God is slow to save. He's reluctant to save. He barely will

save. Isn't that true? If you've been around any kind of hyper-Calvinism, you know that's exactly right. It's presumption to run to God too quickly. God forbid lest you see that there's some kind of preparationism there, something's going on, something that gives you license to believe that He's actually showing you you're one of the elect. You would not want to presume. We would not want to in any way dare entice one of the non-elect to run to God! That's the hyper-Calvinistic thinking.

That is not what my dad needed. I said, "Dad, John MacArthur deals with the prodigal." I said, "Dad, which son was it? Which one was it that the father was waiting for?" Have you ever recognized? This is the picture that God wants us to have of Himself. This is the picture Jesus Christ painted. Of God what? Reluctant to save? Is that the picture? He paints a picture of a father who's watching. You could almost imagine it. He's outside the front door of his house and he's got his eyes down at the end of the road. And he's standing and he's watching. And the moment he sees the prodigal returning, he takes off. And he goes and he lavishes him with love and with sandals for his feet and a robe and kills the fatted calf. That's the picture that Christ paints for us. I said, "Dad, which son was it? Was it the one who always was there with the father? Or was it the one who was wicked and had run off?" It's like a light went on with my dad. I don't know if he was ever saved, but my brother told me right up to the end, he was calling on the Lord. He said he'd come in even after my dad couldn't talk, and he'd have his arms raised up and he was crying out.

I mean, look, if we're going to do anything as Christians, and we're going to spread this Gospel, this message of the cross throughout this world, God so loved the world He sent His Son into this world. He crushed His Son. What are we going to do? Are we going to come up and tell all these people who may very well be elect - my dad - they're already thinking that God is hesitant to save them - are we going to come along and assure them that that's true? God's very reluctant to save you. God's unapproachable. God's quick to show wrath. Brethren, this is no minor mistake. It's not. It creates a massive obstacle to sinners. Hyper-Calvinism believes that we are very willing to be saved, but God is not so willing to save us. And you know that's true! If you're going and you're thinking, man, I don't even hardly know that I can sincerely offer the Gospel - what's that coming from? That's coming from your own perception that God is hesitant. That is not what we want to be communicating to people. Not at all what we want to communicate. Jesus portrays the Father waiting, just waiting to run to the prodigal.

Brethren, we need to feel this! When you've got somebody that's under conviction, a load of sins on their back, it's the very love of God that is going to make God so beautiful and attractive to that hell-deserving sinner. That's the very thing that will win them! It is the kindness of God that is meant to lead men to repentance. Brethren, we know that God has a legitimate hatred for workers of iniquity. But is Scripture not full of God even extending His arms to those that are such hateful individuals to Him? That His very love is just that? It's to love those who are unlovable. It is to beckon to those who are not deserving, and even to lavish them with kindness just to show how willing He is, how affectionate He is, how sincere His call to sinners is.

Young Calvinists - I was talking to John about this just the other day. Isn't it amazing, young Calvinists, it's almost like they come to the doctrines of grace and they despise John 3:16. It's like John 3:16 goes off the radar. We don't even want to go there. We don't want to talk

to sinners about God's love anymore. What if they're not the elect? We can't hardly tell them about God's love.

Brethren, that's not what Jesus did. Jesus was talking to Nicodemus. Nicodemus didn't know up from down when it came to salvation at that point in John 3. And Jesus had no fear. Do you remember what He talked about in John? He talked about those who - He says how can you believe? They were all taken up with the glory of man. You don't think Nicodemus wasn't? Why in the world was he coming by night? Because he feared men at that point. And yet, Jesus doesn't have any problem talking to him about the love of God.

Brethren, have you ever thought about this? Again, I've just recently been in John a lot, but it had me thinking. In the beginning was what? The Word. Have you ever thought about why Jesus Christ is called the Word? Why? Why would He be called the Word? What do words do? They give expression. What does it say in John 1:18 that Jesus does? He declares the Father. You know what the word is in the Greek? It's the one from which we get exegete. Jesus exegetes the Father. He explains the Father. "Phillip, have I been with you so long...?" "If you've seen Me..." what? "You've seen the Father." He is the radiance of the glory of God. Here is God. He sends His Son into the world. And He says: This is what I'm like.

So let's look at Christ. What was He like? This will express to us the very heart of God. What do we find? We find in John 1:14, "the Word became flesh." He dwelt among us. And what was it that characterized Him? "We have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Full of what? [Grace and truth.] Amazing. It doesn't say that He's full of vengeance and wrath, but full of grace, full of kindness toward the undeserving. That's what grace is.

Do you hear how Jesus spoke to His rejecters? I'm amazed all the time when I read John 5. Why? Because here you have Jesus. He does a work. It's done on the Sabbath. He calls God His Father. And here come these Jews. They want to put Him to death. Why? Because He not only broke the Sabbath, what else was He doing? He was making Himself equal to God. He was calling God His Father. These people are against Him. Jesus talks to them. And He says, look, He said, it's not just Me that bears witness to Myself. He said there's Another that bears witness. He's talking about His Father. And He says, but let Me tell you about a different witness. He said John the Baptist. He came on the scene. You enjoyed his light for a season. And He said he bore witness. And He said, look, not that I need the witness of any man. These are His rejecters - the people that want to kill Him. He doesn't say: Well, you're just non-elect. God doesn't have any love for you. He says: I say these things so that you might be saved. He says I'm telling you about the different witnesses. I'm telling you Scripture bears witness to Me. I'm telling you Moses wrote of Me. I'm telling you My Father has borne witness to Me. The works I do, they bear witness to Me. I bear witness to Me. John the Baptist bears witness to Me. He said I don't even need the witness of John the Baptist. He said, but the reason I'm telling you this is because I'm telling you these things so that you might be saved. He wasn't some cold-hearted hyper-Calvinist. He was believing in the use of means. I'm trying to logically persuade you and give you truth and show you that I am the Christ that you might believe that you might have eternal life. It's a valid appeal. He's not some orthodox, cold hyper-Calvinist who just says, well, you're either one of the elect or you're not. Since you guys are all wanting to kill Me and after I've given you this much truth... He doesn't say that. He's making appeal. "I'm saying these things to you that you might be saved."

I mean, when we hear the voice of Christ, as I was going through John again and again, it's not the voice - I did not come to judge them - not this time. I came to save. I've come to save. I've come to say these things to you that you might believe. I'm seeing Christ. He says, that voice, it was for you. That you might believe. He calls out to the Father when He's there to raise Lazarus. And He says, I say these things for their benefit. Again, so that they might believe. He's saying these things. He's doing these things. He wants people to believe. The voice of Christ among men was the voice of grace and truth. That's what He was. That's what He came as. Kindness, salvation, love.

I mean, you tell me. Hyper-Calvinists, you tell me, what can you do with these words? Matthew 22:37, "Oh 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."

What do you do with that? Here is the very expression of God Himself. He looks: Jerusalem, I would have gathered you, but you would not. Was Jesus fatalistic? Oh, what will be will be! Jerusalem obviously is not the elect. There's no hesitancy with Christ. He's saying I would. What are you going to do? Are you going to call Him into question? Well, that's not really sincere. Can't be sincere, after all, election, you know.

Look, I'm just telling you this, if you can't make the two fit together, don't destroy the Savior that we have. And that's what hyper-Calvinism does. It destroys the Savior. It destroys the Gospel message. It destroys a willingness on God's part to save sinners, which isn't true. It's a perversion. You go there, what you're going to do is kill the Gospel. And you'll kill this church. You don't want to go down that road. Jesus was not cold, fatalistic, severe, fierce, fire-spitting, sinner-hating Savior. That's not what you see. What you see is there in Luke 19. He weeps over the city. He weeps over the city. Why? "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace." I mean, He says to them, "now they're hidden from your eyes."

Can you imagine? They're hidden. Elect or non-elect? Their eyes are closed now. Not elect. Jesus is weeping. I mean, what other conclusion are we going to come to? If their eyes have been closed and their doom is sealed? And yet, you see, we don't hardly know what to do with this? If He's weeping for them, and it's a violent weeping - if He's weeping for them, and yet, He's got the power to have overcome their darkness and save them, how can the weeping be valid? It stretches us. And it does. But in all your stretching, don't abandon the compassionate weeping, the desperate, heartfelt yearning in the heart of God. You say, well, that was Jesus, and that must have had to do with His humanity. Yeah, but have you forgotten Romans 10 already? He's extending His hand all day long to a people who are rejecting Him. Have you forgotten Ezekiel 11, 18, 32. There's various places. Have you forgotten what it says? What does it say? Does God take pleasure in the death of the wicked? We're told that He does not. He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked.

I mean, look, we need to be able to say: Sinner, Christ is willing to receive you. Christian, you need to be confident God is willing to save your family. God is willing to save your neighbors. God is willing to save the lost in this city. You say how does that work? I mean, is He really willing if they're non-elect? How does it work? How can that be a valid willingness?

And look, just as I told a group - a group came to me in Mexico. This is what they were asking. And I said I know that this isn't going to solve everything, but I said sometimes we don't

allow in God what we allow in ourselves. For instance, the picture that I painted was the person over working in Huntsville on Death Row. Not too long ago, we watched a film that was made on the first woman executed in Huntsville in 100 years, and she was supposedly saved. Have some of you seen that? Lethal injection. They have a nurse in there that has an IV and there's a valve. And what I said to these people is if that nurse turning that valve to unleash the poison had a tear running down her face, I said, you would not believe that that was a contradiction. You know if you said to her why are you weeping? Did you want to kill her? No, I didn't want to kill her. You're lying. You turned the valve. You see, that's not a contradiction to us.

And yet, it seems like we want to so ideally compartmentalize God. He's hatred or He's love or He's justice or He's wrath. And we've got our systematic theologies and so we tend to study them one attribute at a time. But God is a complex of attributes all at once. We were made in His image. And what we allow in ourselves as I've said, I've used this example before - if I ask one of you: Do you want to go to work tomorrow? You say, no, I don't want to go to work tomorrow. But then a week from now I ask you, did you go to work Monday? And you say, yeah, I went to work Monday. I said, you liar! You told me you didn't want to go to work. You see, that's not a contradiction in terms to us because we understand that there is a complexity of things going on in human beings all at once. And if with us, how much more with the Lord?

The sorrow that the Lord feels is not fake. It's not false. It's not just an apparition. It's not hollow. It's true and it's sincere. You can't read your Bibles without coming to any other conclusion than that. To think less of God is a perversion. To think less of Christ is a perversion. Brethren, as you read Scripture, He says I'm saying these things to you that you might believe. You can feel the heart of Christ that there's nothing that so delights Christ as to save sinners. I mean, you just feel it. If you don't have all these hyper-Calvinistic presuppositions, if you just open up and read the four Gospels and just ask yourself at the end - I mean read them enough so that you get to really feel it. And you ask: is this the heart of a Savior who came into the world to save sinners and who is really pleading with sinners and arguing with sinners and talking to sinners, speaking with sinners in a way that He's showing true desires. I mean, He's weeping. Man, look at His tears! If you want to come to some ideas that we have a Savior that's cold and hardhearted and callous, see Him weeping over Jerusalem. See Him. Open your eyes. So many people have this idea of a Christ Who is reluctant to save, cruel, unkind. I mean I can hear it in some things that people say. Like I say, there's this idea in hyper-Calvinism that we are willing to be saved, but God is grudging and slow.

Listen to Spurgeon. He said, "I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. Oh, I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him. But what a loving reception did I have when I went to Him. I thought He would smite me, but His hand was not clenched in anger but open wide in mercy. His eyes were full of tears. He fell on my neck and kissed me. I entreat you to stop and consider, do you know what it is you're rejecting this morning? You're rejecting Christ, your only Savior."

I mean, as I've been thinking, think of this. I mean, you think of this with me. Here's God commanding. Right? Acts 17. God commands all sinners, all men to do what? To repent. If you repent, will you perish? It's repent or perish. If you repent, you don't perish. If you repent and believe, you will have eternal life. God commands you to repent. Does He command all men? Does He? Is He willing that you should repent if He commands you to repent? God commands

you to repent. Do you understand? You do not have a right to go to hell. You don't. The only way anybody perishes and goes to hell is against God's revealed will. And that's just true. You have to trample the blood of Jesus Christ to go to hell. And you have no right to do it. God forbids you doing it. God commands you to repent that you might have life. You do not have a right to go to hell. Does that sound like a God Who's reluctant? When He's insisting?

Brethren, think with me here. I know somebody that I went to church with in the past, and I've just seen, he's fallen right into hyper-Calvinism. And I said to him, brother, how is it that Jesus Christ offered life to the rich, young ruler? It was not an empty offer. I mean, listen to it. I love Mark's rendition. Mark 10:17. "As He was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" He didn't say, oh, now I better be cautious here. This guy might not be elect. "Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness.'"

Again, if we go back to John 5, "I say these things so that you might be saved." You see that's what's going on here. He's saying these things that he might be saved. You don't tell somebody to keep the commandments because that's the legitimate way to get to Heaven. Obviously, that's a way to get there, but this man has perfectly failed. Christ is speaking to him the way He's speaking to him that he might be saved. Why do you call Me good? You see, He's wanting the man to think about: do you really know what good is? "No one's good except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother. And he said to Him, 'Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.'" And it's really interesting. I know there's a lot of people out there that love to use the law in evangelism. You know what's interesting? Jesus doesn't even insist on the law. He gives it. He says keep it. As soon as the man says I've kept it, He doesn't even call him into question. He says, okay. "Jesus looking at him loved him."

Arthur Pink definitely had hyper-Calvinistic tendencies and I do not recommend him to anybody. "The Sovereignty of God" has things in it blatantly hyper-Calvinistic. Pink insists this man had to be one of the elect. His thinking is this: God perfectly hates sinners who are in hell. The non-elect are headed to hell where they will be perfectly hated by God, and because God doesn't change, God could have no love for them now, so this man had to be one of the elect. That is just hyper-Calvinistic reasoning and thinking. The Scripture does not say he's one of the elect. In fact, all the Scripture leads us to believe is that he wasn't. Why? Because he walks away rejecting Christ. There's nothing you'll find anywhere in Scripture to give any hope to those who reject Christ.

He says, "Jesus looking at him loved him." He loved him. There's a sincerity. "You lack one thing. Go sell all that you have and give to the poor." And listen to the offer here. "You will have treasure in Heaven." You will. In other words, what's purchased by the atonement, what's to be had in the salvation that I have to offer, you'll have the fullness of it. It's not an empty offer. He's not having to check his words. "You will have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow Me. Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." There's no fatalism here. Fatalism: what's going to be is going to be. It's not fatalistic when you say: if you will go sell and come follow Me, you will have treasure. If you don't do that - come follow Me - you won't. That's not fatalism. That's putting it right on that man and on his decision. And if he

has a cold and impenitent heart and he turns and he walks away loving his riches more than Christ, it will be his own decision. That's not fatalism. Brethren, He loved him. And what's Arthur Pink going to say to those rejecters who he says their doom is sealed? If they'd only known the peace. But He says to the Jerusalem that He's weeping over, He says, "now they're hidden from your eyes." These are permanent rejecters. He's weeping over them. Again, this love that He has for sinners is just exploding out of Him. Jesus weiled.

In our theology class, this has come up. And look, I'm not necessarily asking you to agree, but to consider. 1 Timothy 2:3-4, "This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." He desires all people to be saved. And it's amazing how the hyper-Calvinists have just attacked and chopped and just whittled away at such a verse. But what I find interesting is, again, the evangelistic, soul winning Calvinists down through the ages, have typically taken texts like this to mean exactly what it sounds like it's saying.

Listen to Charles Spurgeon on the text. Just consider it if you have never considered this before. Listen. It says, "God our Savior Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Spurgeon says, "What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which is fairly bears? I think not. Most of you must be acquainted with the general method in which our older Calvinistic friends..." - and he's talking hyper-Calvinists - "...deal with this text. All men, they say - that is, some men. As if the Holy' Ghost could not have said 'some men' if He had meant to say 'some men.' All men, say they, that is, some of all sorts of men. As if the Lord could not have said 'all sorts of men' if He had meant that. The Holy Ghost by the Apostle has written 'all men,' and unquestionably he means all men."

Charles Simeon. He was an Anglican and a paedobaptist, but also one of the evangelistic Calvinists. Sent out many missionaries. Listen to what he says. "Some averse to the idea that God should express His good will to all sinners of mankind limit the word 'all' and make it signify nothing more than some of all descriptions and characters. It were well that instead of contending for human systems..." (like Calvinism or Arminianism), "...we were content to receive the Scriptures as little children. How delightful is the truth here intimated..." I love this: "How strange it is that instead of enjoying it and adoring God for it, men only tend to make it a ground for acrimonious contention." I mean, rather than being grateful that we might have a verse that just so freely shows us the heart of God...

Brethren, listen. We need to get to the place where we're pleading with sinners, not primarily to protect our Calvinism. And sometimes you get that feeling. I think that's why a lot of young Calvinists, they're scared to death of John 3:16. Why? Because you just listen to people. It's like they can't hardly talk about 1 Timothy 2:3-4 the way Simeon and Spurgeon talk about it. They have to explain it, whittle it like John Gill has done - the old hyper-Calvinist - and whittle it away till the meaning is opposite of what it actually sounds like it's saying. You get these young Calvinists, they can't hardly talk John 3:16. They have to give their "but's" and explanations and well, it can't mean this. And by the end, the sinner's sitting there scratching his head. You make it sound like God hardly wants to save anybody, let alone me! Brethren, look, when you see the sinner, you get the feeling, here's Jesus. He's weeping. He's wailing. He's saying, "I'm saying these things so that you might be saved." He's not sitting there thinking: Well, I'm really concerned about my Calvinism and I better protect election, so I better be really careful that I

not say something that would in any way sound like it was going to lure the non-elect to make some type of false profession. That's not it. Brethren, we have to argue with sinners as though they're sinners and they're perishing and we actually have some concern about them.

Many of you are familiar with this. Spurgeon's quote: "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. If they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for."

Brethren, we can get where we're so concerned that these verses not be misinterpreted. It's like there's so much hesitation and we're afraid to say what Scripture says! It's like we can't even hardly tell them that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God is extending His hand to you night and day, bidding you. God sends us to you: Be reconciled to God. We're pleading with you every way. We're seeking to compel them to come in. You get the idea from some people, it's like, you know, we've got to protect our five points. God forbid we should say anything that sounds universalistic here! God forbid that we should say anything that dares to maybe even get them to think that God might love them. I mean, brethren, have you not seen that to be true? I'm not making this up. Look, I came through this. I felt these things. I've been down this path.

Brethren, undoubtedly I've gone real long, but I would just end by saying this. We have to be away with our exceptions and our cautions that leave the lost believing God isn't really sincere about saving them. We have to put away these ideas. Whoa, man! Limited atonement! What that does in destruction to the Gospel! Well, you know, we don't know if Christ died for them. Listen, have you never heard? If you will go sell that idol and put it away and put it at the feet of the cross and follow Christ, you will have it. And if you don't, you won't. Have what? What Christ purchased in His death. Have you never read? All things are prepared. Come to the banquet. Away with your hesitations! Listen, whatever was procured there at the cross is for you and for that sinner if they will but come. And we need to persuade them: Come! Come! Come! We throw out so many if's, and's, or but's and explanations that in the end, the sinner's convinced that God really doesn't want to save anyone! Least of all himself.

Brethren, Spurgeon, he saw a man one day. This guy, he looked. He saw Jesus. He saw Him weeping over Jerusalem. He heard Him say, "I would have gathered you, but you would not." And he was thinking I don't know - how do I fit that with a God Who chooses and a God Who elects? Listen to what Spurgeon said. "We're often in the dark and puzzled about difficulties, but do you know half the difficulties in the Bible spring from a cold state of mind? But when the heart gets right, the head seems to get right too in great measure." He says, "I remember a person puzzling himself fearfully with the passage in Scripture about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. He went and he looked at Dr. Gill about it. He went to Thomas Scott about it. He went to Matthew Henry about it. And these good divines all puzzled him as much as they could. But they did not seem to clear up the matter. The good man could not understand how Jesus Christ could say as He did, 'how oft would I have gathered thee, but thou wouldest not.'" Listen to this: "One day, he received more grace and got a love for souls. And then that old skin of narrowmindedness which had been large enough for him before began to crack and break. And he went to the passage then and said I can understand it now. I do not know how it is consistent with such-and-such doctrine, but it's now very consistent with what I feel in my

heart." And Spurgeon says concerning himself, "And I feel just the same. I used to be puzzled by that passage where Paul says that he could wish himself accursed from God for his brethren's sake. Why I've often felt the same and now understand how a man can say in the exuberance of love to others that he would be willing to perish himself if he could save them. Of course it never could be done, but such is the extravagance of a holy love for souls that it breaks through reason and knows no bounds."

See, Spurgeon believed that when the Calvinist is more than just a little stretched with trying to explain things like how can Christ weep over His rejecters, when He in fact is in control and could give them life? How could God really love sinners and desire their salvation when it's in His power to save them? Spurgeon believed that the remedy for such tensions was not more study of theology, but greater communion with Christ, greater intimacy with Christ. Feeling - I mean, when you feel, when you see the perishing, and like Christ, He wailed. And you feel Paul. He says I could wish myself - I can envision myself standing on the edge of the lake of fire and could wish myself cast into it if I could but save my brethren in the flesh, if it were possible if I could do that. And Spurgeon saw, you could go study the divines and you could study the systematic theology and you could study the commentaries. You could study Gill. You could study these guys until you're blue in the face, but sometimes what relieves the tension - not totally removes them, but relieves them as much as anything is when your heart burns with a passion for the lost.

Did some of you read just recently where Rebecca Hamilton, she has this really difficult situation and there's this vying for this child and this mother who wants to get her back, and what her intentions are, they're probably not good, they're probably not pure. And she's just wailing and she's laying hold and she won't let go, and Rebecca just lays her arms around this lady and begins to kiss her. And it melted the lady. And you know, isn't that what God uses? Does God use the cold hyper-Calvinist that thinks he has his whole theology figured out, but now he's reluctant to actually take the Gospel to the guy that's walking on the other side of the street? Or this woman who will wrap her arms around you and just begin to weep and to kiss? Which one is going to win souls?

You tell me. Who is God raising up in this world? Listen, the sovereignty of God is precious to us because we know there's going to be a harvest. We know that our efforts are not in vain. We know that we don't go alone. We go with One Who is with us and One Who is going to gather in a harvest for us. We know it's not a fruitless venture. But I'll tell you, it's not the guy who can barely say John 3:16 to a sinner. It's not the guy who is so puzzled by these things and all he can talk to the lost about is the wrath of God and the hatred of God and the Esau's in Scripture. It's the one who can say: I'm saying these things to you - like Spurgeon - he preached on that text "compel them to come in," and he sought to use this argument and that argument, and to come and threaten them and entice them and come at every angle he possibly could to seek to win sinners to the Savior and to show them that He is willing to save them and He has a heart to save them. And He is extending His hand. And Christ Himself is painting a picture of the Father Who is there waiting for the prodigal, and when the prodigal shows his head over the horizon, He takes off running! Spurgeon said it himself: I thought Him to be cruel and unkind, but when I once went to Him thinking He was going to recoil back and just hammer me with His fist, He just fell on me, and did he not paint a picture just like Christ paints? Of the prodigal receiving

from the Father just the embraces and the hugs and the warm welcome? And celebrate! Celebrate with me! This, My son, he was lost. That's the picture that Christ paints of the Father. And the picture we have of the Son weeping over...

And look, as we go off into this world and we're seeking to win people by the kindness of God - the kindness of God. I mean, sometimes people wonder, why pay a lady's rent who comes in here out of the east side? Don't we have better things to do with our money than spend \$600 on this lady's rent? She's got kids from six different guys. But it was always this: you know what? If God once lays hold on her heart and the Spirit of God convicts her for her sin and righteousness and judgment, we want to pour the kindness of God out. We want her to know that there's a place that she can come running to. Isn't that what's going to win the world? That's what we see in Scripture. That's what it's been through the ages. It hasn't been the hyper-Calvinists that have been able to define election meticulously and seek to work all these strange and mystical things out in all the secrets of God. It's not that. It's been the people that have taken the sovereignty of God as that assurance that we're going to be fruitful in this and that He that goes with us is greater than he that's in the world. And He's powerful. He's strong. He's loving. And He would have us go beseech sinners to be reconciled to God and to call them and to lay down our lives. Don't you see in Christ what Spurgeon is saying? That willingness that if hell will be populated, we should go and throw down our lives! Isn't that what Christ did? He came in here and He threw down His life. Why? That sinners might be saved. That's it, brethren.

You know what? We can get to thinking that the truth guarantees our success. If we have the doctrines of grace, that's going to guarantee that we are going to be successful. Don't you believe that. It is not coldhearted hyper-Calvinism and having all the doctrines of grace that is going to win the world. Oh brethren, we need doctrine and we need truth. And we ought to be willing to die for the doctrines of grace. Why? Because they're truth and we can find them in Scripture. But I'll tell you what else we ought to be willing to die for is the representation of the Christ set forth in this Bible. And it's not One Who is cold and heartless toward sinners. It's One Who wept. He came and He took on our likeness. And He wept for men that rejected Him. He wept. How often He would have... That's the picture we have. And if you can't make it go together, that's okay. But that's still how He was and that's how He would have us be. And He calls us to follow Him. Brethren, we never want to become unbalanced here. Ever, ever, ever. We need to fight for this. We need to fight for this Savior and for this kind of Gospel. Remember, brethren. Remember. Let this be imprinted on your brain. It is the kindness of God that leads men to repentance.

Father, we want to accurately portray You. We pray for the grace of God, the power of God to sustain that among these brethren. Give us the heart of Christ. Help us to love sinners like Christ loved them. Help us to be what we can only be by the grace of God. Amen.