



A grace worth saving: historic Christianity versus Calvinism

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The Historic Faith
Lecture 1

Our faith—once delivered to the saints

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into license for immorality and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)

Structure

I have ten sessions planned (two per day), scheduled as two 30-60 minute talks with a 10 minute break in the middle.

We're going to do a lot of biblical exegesis.

I'm going to give you the best references to read after our week is finished.

Tips for Bible school

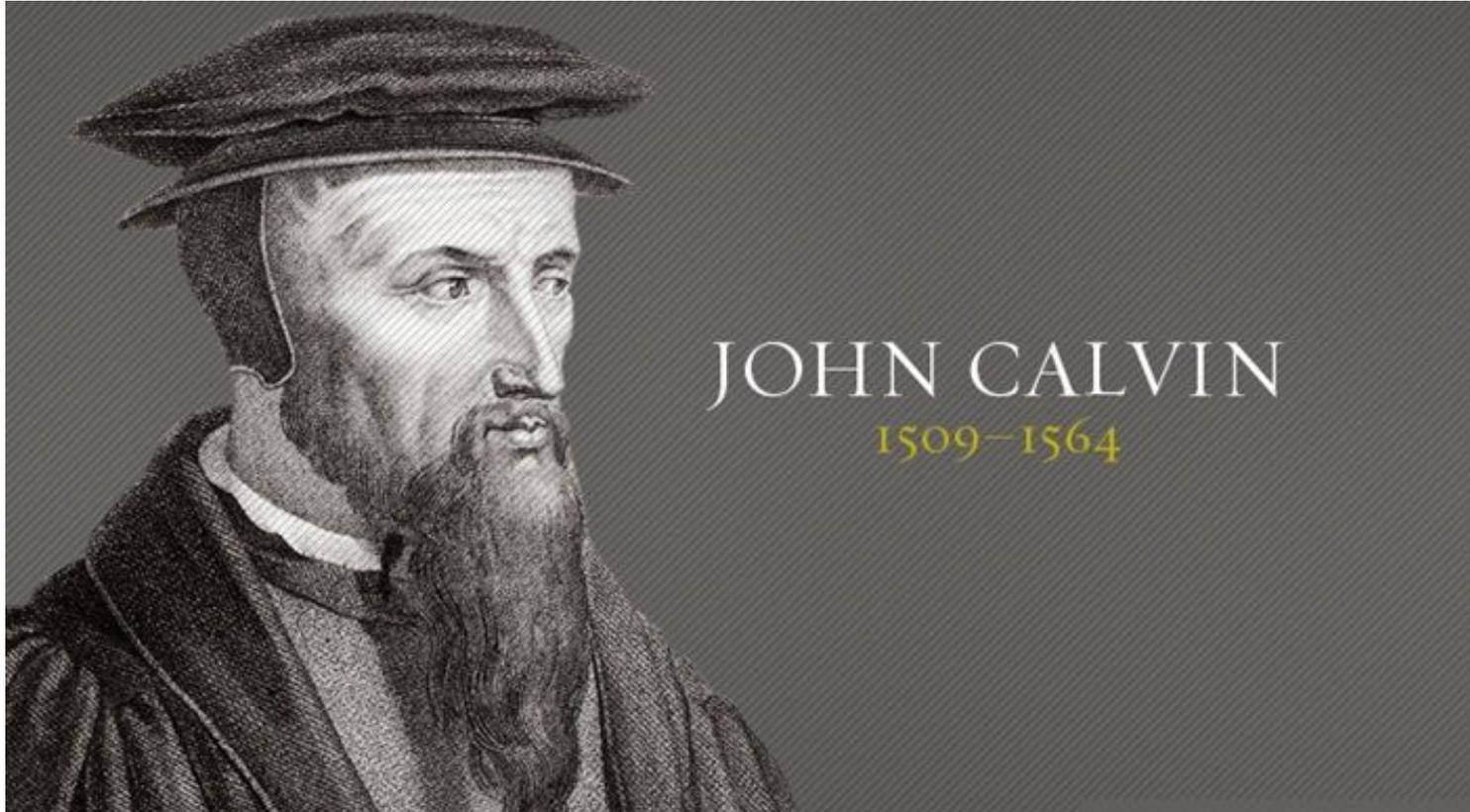
- Do get plenty of sleep!
- Don't neglect your daily time with God
- Do take good notes
- Do read the quotes on the screen with me
- Do your homework
- Do see this as a launchpad for future study after this week

What is Calvinism?

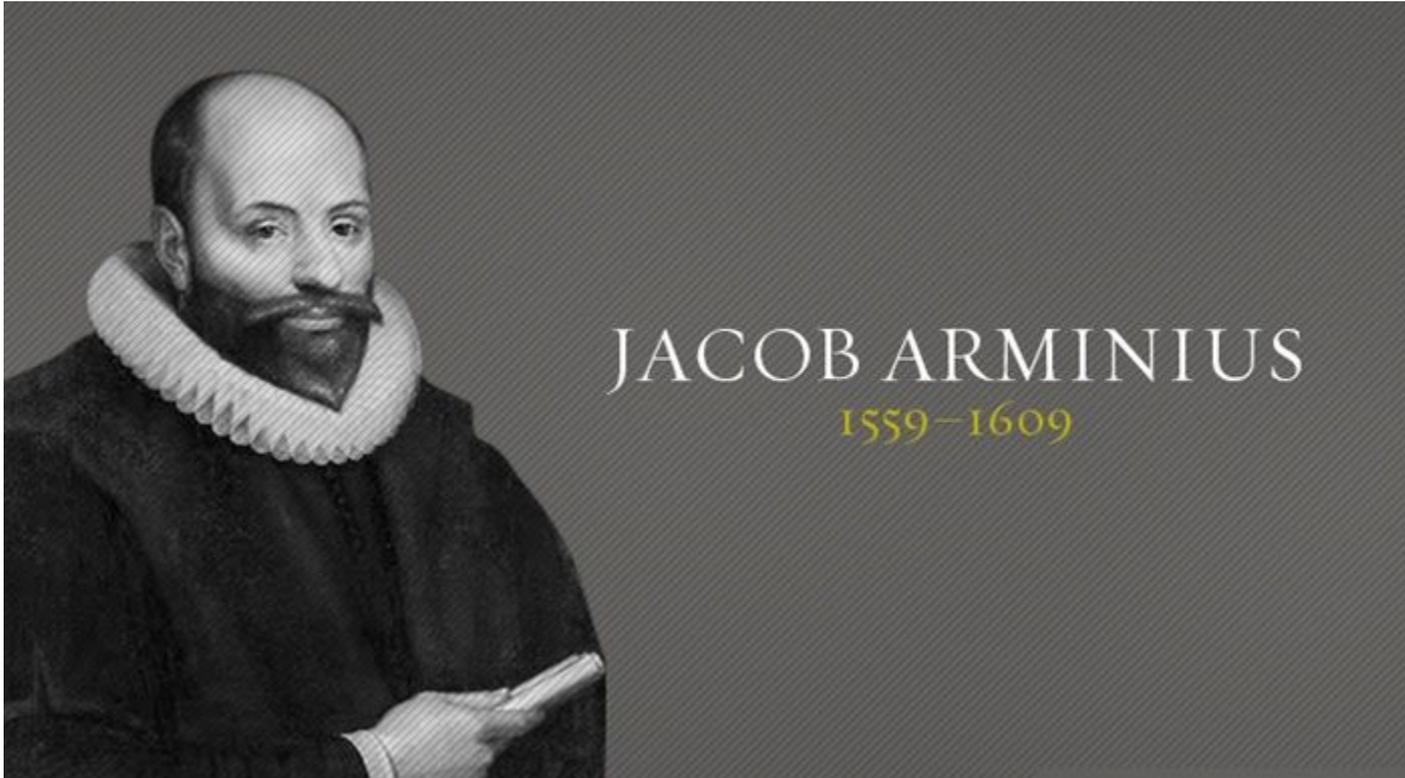
Calvinism is a broad system of thought that includes commitment to Scripture, a distinctive view of preaching, and a system of soteriology.

Soteriology is the study of how we are saved.

Understanding a little bit of the history goes a long way.







The Remonstrance and its response





Total Depravity / Total Inability

This does not mean that people are as bad as they can possibly be!

Calvin, “the whole [of every] man is overwhelmed—as by a deluge—from head to foot, so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin.”

You normally hear this described as being “dead.” Humans are by birth and by nature unresponsive to the gospel.

Unconditional election

Calvin, "God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plans those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction."

Again Calvin writes, "Therefore, those whom God passes over, he condemns; and this he does for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his own children."

RC Sproul, " [Calvinism] teaches that from all eternity God has chosen to intervene in the lives of some people and bring them to saving faith and has chosen not to do that for other people. From all eternity, without any prior view of our human behavior, God has chosen some to election and others unto reprobation... The basis for God's choice does not rest in man but solely in the good pleasure of the divine will."

A key idea

In Calvinism, God foreordains and “renders certain” absolutely everything.

Lorraine Boettner:

God “very obviously predetermined every event which would happen” so that “even the sinful acts of men are included in his plan”

“There is nothing causal nor contingent in this world” because “the world as whole and in all its parts and movements and changes was brought into a unity by the governing, all-pervading, all-harmonizing activity of the divine will, and its purpose was to manifest the divine glory.”

Calvinists tend to call this “God’s sovereignty.” Others call it “divine determinism.”

Limited atonement

“The doctrine of limited atonement—the L in TULIP—teaches that Christ effectively redeems from every people “only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation” (Canons of Dort, II.8)... Particular redemption is often considered a more favorable term, because the point of the doctrine is not to limit the mercy of God, but to make clear that Jesus did not die in the place of every sinner on the earth, but for his particular people.”

Irresistible grace

RC Sproul, "God unilaterally and monergistically does for us what we cannot do for ourselves."

Boettner, "The elect are so influenced by divine power that their coming is an act of voluntary chose."

The consequence of this is that regeneration precedes conversion and faith.

Perseverance of the saints

Let's not call this "once saved-always saved."

The doctrine simply teaches that God preserves the faith of the elect until the end. Thus, the saints persevere to the end.

Important Calvinists in history

- Theodore Beza
- John Knox
- George Whitefield
- Jonathan Edwards
- Puritans
- Charles Spurgeon

Historically Calvinist denominations

- Presbyterian
- Congregationalist
- Reformed Baptist
- Essentially all the denominations with the name “Reformed” in them

The transition to the New Calvinists

- In 2006, a conference called “Together for the Gospel” catalyzed the movement
- Also known as “Young, Restless, and Reformed”
- The New Calvinism is more missional and strategic

Influential Calvinists



A man is not saved because he believes in Christ, he believes in Christ because he is saved.

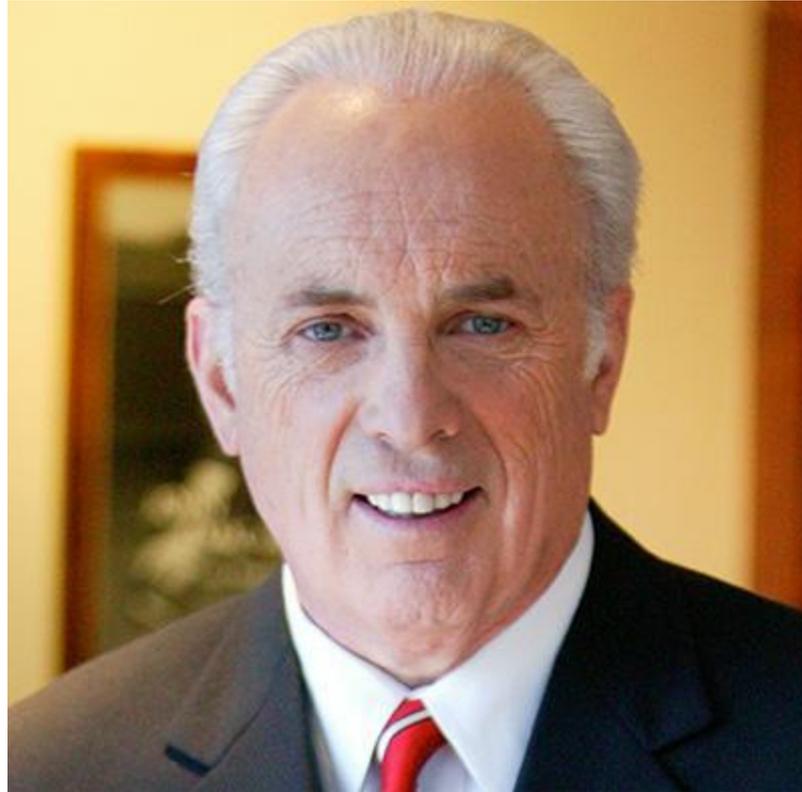
— *Lorraine Boettner* —

AZ QUOTES

Famous Calvinists



Famous Calvinists



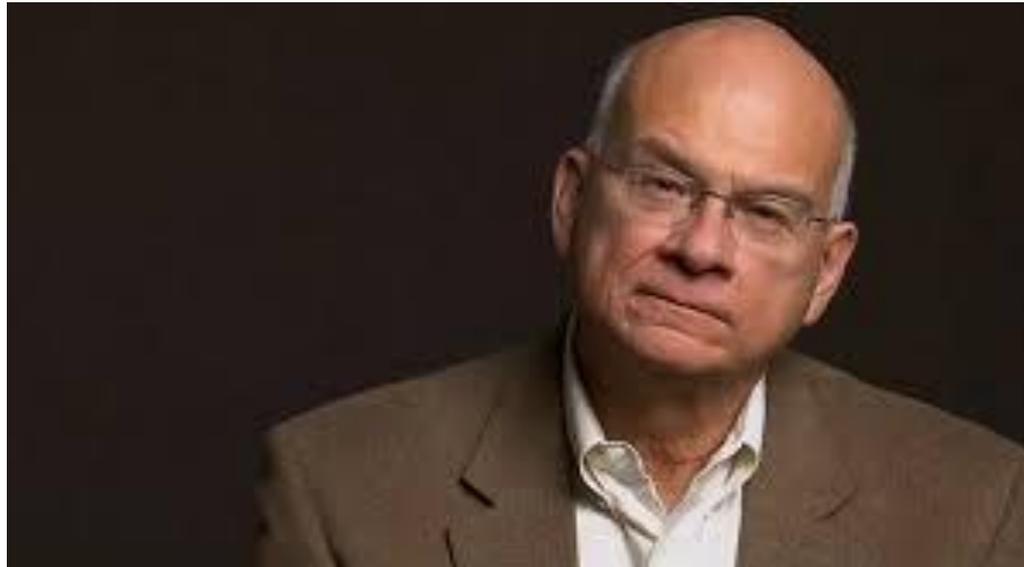
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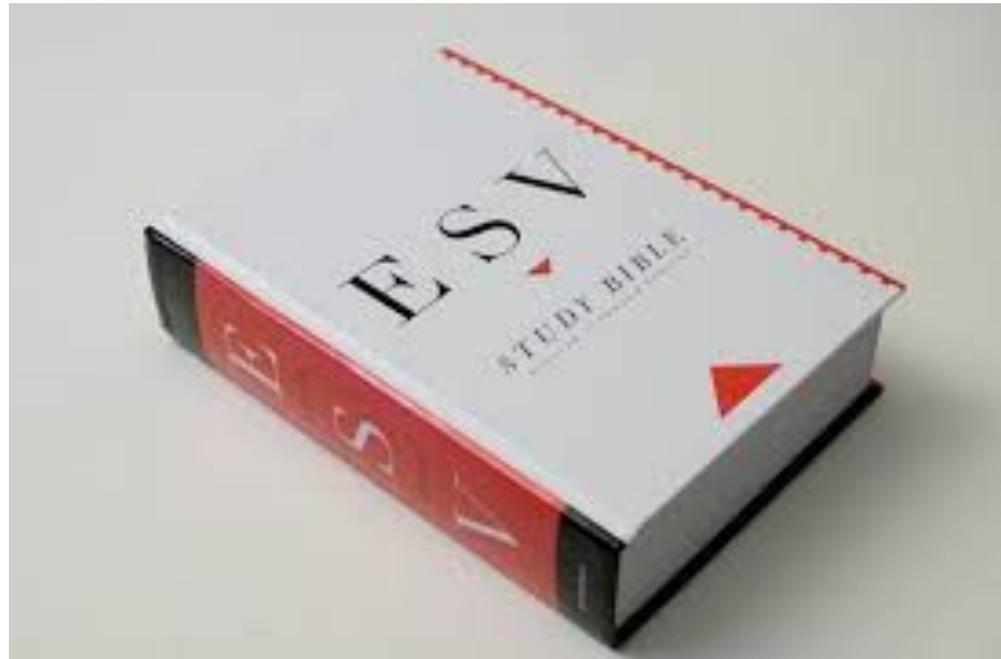


Famous Calvinists

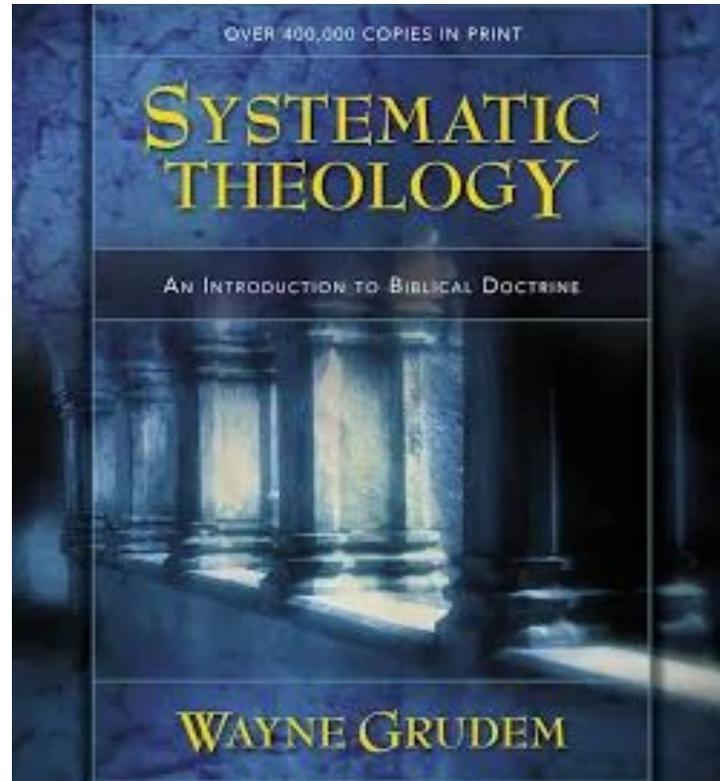


Famous Calvinists





What is the purpose of a tree bearing fruit?

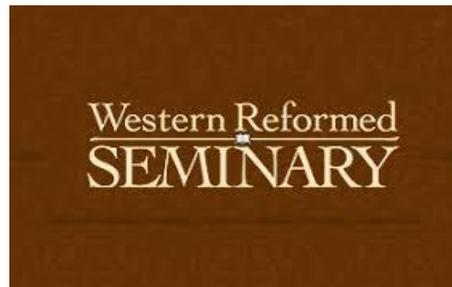




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The North American Reformed Seminary

Northwest Theological Seminary

Redeemer Theological Seminary

Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Whitefield Theological Seminary

(doesn't include the Reformed Baptist seminaries on this list)

Why the growth?

- The influence of a few talented, eloquent speakers and writers.
- They publish thousands of books and study Bibles.
- They dominate in the seminaries.
- They focus on cities.

These multiply adherents and the movement grows!

In contrast, in other settings, often:

The preaching is poor

There is little substance; more just watery, goopy Christianity

God has become “a self-esteem coach”

What I appreciate about the New Calvinists

They are not casual with their faith—they are intentional.

They apply themselves diligently.

They study and practice effective communication.

They are organized.

They are (somewhat) historically minded.

They are prolific.

They know who they are.

Why they are wrong

They defame God's glory.

They demean God's grace.

They spoil God's gospel.

They do not hold to the hard commands of the New Testament.

They teach what is historically novel.

Their systems are philosophically consistent but biblically deviant.

To make the system work, they redefine terms.

They cling to prooftexts.

They often grossly violate the meaning of the simplest texts.

Their understanding of salvation is fundamentally defective.

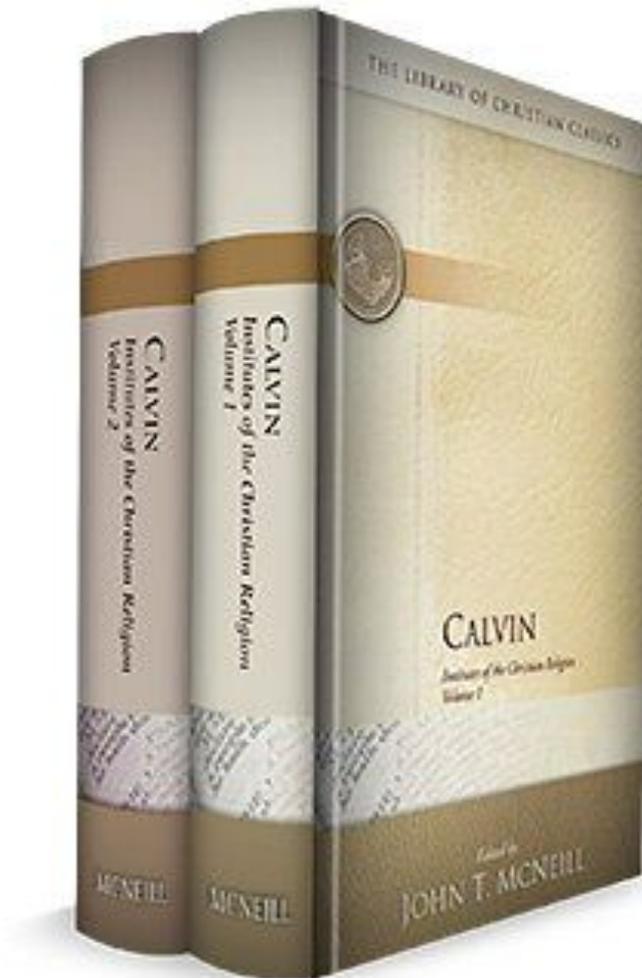
They rarely engage in honest discussion with the other side.

What kind of God?...

Arthur W. Pink: "When we say that God is sovereign in the exercise of His love, we mean that He loves whom he chooses. God does not love everybody."



A startling omission



Another perspective

"But I believe we best say yes to God's glory and sovereignty by saying no to Calvinism."

"And in what sense was God just if he had done something like punishing people eternally for sins he made certain they would commit? How are those in hell merely getting what they deserve when God ordained that they commit their sins? How can humans be held responsible for their sins when God is the ultimate cause of their sins? *Can I come up with a single analogy or illustration that makes the slightest sense of this?*"

"Love, justice, and goodness had been warped beyond recognition as they were sucked into the black hole of glory." (Austin Fischer)



Let's defend the honor of God

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit.” (Col. 2:8)

Calvinism is made-made human philosophy designed to blaspheme God, violate the Scriptures, and send many into eternal death.

As we begin our exegesis of Scripture in the next session, will you contend with us for the faith worth saving?