



## The President's Perspective



### Freedom of Choice

Since returning home from England, three weeks ago, I have been unable to dismiss from my mind two observations. One is from the British public in general. The other is from the community of believers in Christ.

First, I will never forget the constant mention of the "EU" (European Union). Ten years ago (the last time I was in England) I recall only casual mention of that entity, if it was mentioned at all. Now, it is the norm to hear it with almost every financial transaction, as well as in normal conversation. Nationalism and patriotism are discouraged, and globalism is encouraged. Some of the same voices are being heard in America today.

Second, one cannot help but notice the prominent place that an un-healthy, overemphasis on Calvinism now has even among American missionaries in England. This is not at all the case with my dear friend and co-laborer in ministry, Larry Curtis. He has a great heart for evangelism and outreach. His church in Birmingham reflects his passionate heart for others. However, some, I fear, have become enamored with that doctrine to the point of becoming obsessed with it. While good men differ on this subject, I fear that the undue, imbalanced emphasis on God's sovereignty, which was the death knell to evangelism in England, is once again taking root in this country. Recently, while doing a web search, I stumbled on some disturbing comments made on a web blog. The comments were made by several pastors who were in deep discussion about evangelism in the 21st century. Their negative attitudes toward evangelism and evangelists were rooted in this unhealthy Calvinistic preoccupation. For the sake of the blessed gospel, and the cause of world evangelism, I pray that my generation of preachers (and those who will follow us) recognize the inherent danger that exists in becoming enamored with this teaching and its proponents.

Romans 10:20 says, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." This is one of the key passages for the Calvinist. He emphasizes that it was God who sought, not the sinner who did so, and the sinner has no real say so in the matter at all. Obviously, God initiates and consummates our salvation. Salvation is of the Lord. Only a fool would deny this truth. It is a Bible reality. But, we do irreparable damage to the cause of Christ if we fail to see the very next verse. Romans 10:21 states, "But...all day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." God calls, man has the capability of accepting or refusing. We are anything but "uninvolved spectators" in this glorious salvation. Years ago, an American missionary frankly stated to me, "Preacher, you

wasted your time tonight in preaching on hell." When I asked why that was the case, he stated, in no uncertain terms, that my preaching on hell was unnecessary because, "if they are going to get saved, they are going to, and if not, then they will not. You, preacher, have nothing to do with it!" It is fascinating to me that Romans 10:20-21, follows Romans 10:14-15, which says, "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Permit a simple, somewhat "syrupy" illustration. Our home is now the residence of a second furry feline named Zeus. When Rachael first saw him, he was one of three kittens born under a construction trailer in Cleveland, Ohio. It was love at first sight for Rachael. She stooped down, looked under the construction trailer and CALLED. Called to all three of them, not just to Zeus (who, of course, was unnamed at the time). The only one that responded was the cuddly, orange tabby now named Zeus (note: initially, Rachael thought "he" was a "she" and wanted to name him/her Cleopatra. I'm so thankful that she is in music, rather than veterinary medicine.) In the same way, God extends the opportunity of salvation to ALL, not just to the "elect." Just as two kittens CHOSE to ignore Rachael's call that day and have missed the warmth of a loving home (choosing rather to exist in the cold, cruel world that is Cleveland, Ohio), so man can ignore God's call and suffer the resulting punishment of eternal separation from Him in hell. Sinful man makes that choice of his own free will. God does not make that for Him. What kind of love would it be for Rachael, the perpetual animal lover, to call only one kitten and sentence the others, by her choice alone, to a slow death via Cleveland's harsh winter. So, God would be no loving God, at all, if He, as some seem to believe, did the same thing. Had all three kittens responded, then we would have a menagerie of furry friends rather than just two.

My God help us to focus on that which is crystal clear in the Scriptures, the evangelization of the world, especially at this season of the year. May we, also, resist the subtle allure of prideful "intellectualism" which drives so much of the Calvinistic mindset and teaching.

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