

Arminianism-Calvinism debate.

A 'Different Gospel'?

The following is a facsimile received in September 2005 from an Australian Independent Baptist pastor and author.

Previously the writer had sent two 'personal' letters, the second to which Mike Claydon replied. We received no answer. We then received a phone call in which we were accused of not evangelising, being 'heretics' and other more personal character judgments. The fax and the phone call did not address any of the points or questions raised in Mike's letter of reply. We have contacted the writer since then, informing him that we wished to publish his name in full but we have received no reply. Because of the persistent charges laid, we feel a defence is warranted. (Underlining is in the original facsimile)

'Here are...errors that you are propagating:

1) *You are preaching a false and different Gospel to 1Corinthians 15:1-4 that 'Christ died for our sins, was buried, raised again the third day...' because by believing Limited Atonement and Unconditional Election, you will not know if a lost person you are speaking to is elect or not. Therefore you can never say with certainty that Christ died for his sins ['our' = yours and mine]. If you don't tell him this you are not preaching the gospel that Paul preached.*

How do you know if a lost person is elect or not? You don't.

2) *You discourage Christians from sharing the gospel because by inescapable logic, if the elect are guaranteed to be saved and the non elect can never be saved, then absolutely nothing you do or don't do can change their eternal destiny. You may not like to admit this logic, but this is the case. So many people see this.*

3) *You are blaspheming Jesus Christ by making him a liar and false advertiser when he offers salvation to 'whosoever will may come' when you claim that he already knows that the non elect cannot come to Christ for salvation. This is giving Christ the attribute of the devil as a liar and a deceiver...*

Note: To simplify and clarify point 1)

A) *You believe that Christ died only for the elect (Limited) + only elect can be saved (Unconditional Election)*

B) *You don't know if the lost person you are speaking to is elect or not (true?).*

C) *Therefore you can never tell a lost person that Christ died for his sins, as Paul could when he told the Corinthians in their unsaved days that Christ died for our sins (our = His and the lost Corinthians sins) in 1Cor.15:1-4.*

D) *If you don't tell a lost person this, you are not preaching the gospel.*

Regards, K.P., [Cherrybrook, Sydney]

Editors' Comments as per points above:

1) You say we 'are preaching a false and a different Gospel to 1Corinthians 15:1-4...'

As mentioned to you before and explained clearly in our Article - A Truth Maligned,** we do not teach the atonement as 'limited', in that the blood of Christ is *sufficient* for *all* human sin. But it *will* in the end be *effective* for only some, considering 'few' will *ultimately* be saved, (Jn.10:11-15; Heb.10:14; Matt.20:28; 1Cor.15:22; Matt.1:21; Rev.5:9,10). Can anyone deny this fact? We simply do not teach that Christ's death and shed blood is not *sufficient* for the whole world!

We do not know, and are not meant to know, if 'a lost person we are speaking to is 'elect' or not'. We are to present the Gospel to everyone! It is God who 'draws'.

The 'our' in 1Cor.15:1-4 you refer to is *not* referring to the unsaved! The passage reads: '...BRETHREN, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...Christ died for our sins...'

You say: '*How do you know if a lost person is elect or not? You don't*'.

You have answered this correctly. That's why we preach to 'every creature'! Why are you questioning us about knowing who the 'elect' are when you have previously stated you don't believe in this Biblical doctrine for individuals anyway?

In response to your further 'clarifications' on Point 1)

A) You say we 'believe that Christ died only for the elect (Limited)'. No, we say He died for the sins of the whole world.

You say we teach 'only the elect can be saved (Unconditional Election)'. The Bible calls saints the 'elect'; they are the saved ones. If one is not elected how can one be saved? Are you suggesting salvation is 'conditional'? Conditional on what? The books of Romans and Ephesians dispels 'conditions'.

B) You say 'you don't know if the lost person you are speaking to is elect or not...'. Absolutely true. That's why we preach to all, and leave the opening of hearts to receive the message - to God alone!

C) You say 'Therefore you can never tell a lost person that Christ died for his sins'. Yes, we can. His shed blood is sufficient for the sins of the whole world. We must show the person he has broken God's holy law, that he is totally lost. That God has provided a way for salvation and that person must ask for mercy and forgiveness, and turn from his ways. What happens after that is entirely up to God. Have you never had someone do all these things and yet remain unsaved? We know of persons you have had pray 'the sinners prayer' and 'make a decision' - to then be told they are 'saved eternally', who have never shown evidence of genuine regeneration, yet continue to feel falsely secure. Remember, we can 'believe in vain', (1Cor.15:2; Jn.2:23,24).

Again, you say the 'our' in 1Cor.15 refers to the Corinthians in their *unsaved* state. This is a novel and false interpretation we have never heard of before! Paul was here speaking to his saved 'BRETHREN'! Elsewhere in Corinthians (more than 23 times) he repeatedly refers to them as 'brethren'!

D) You say 'If you don't tell a lost person this, you are not preaching the gospel'. When the true Gospel is preached a person is being told that Christ died as a substitute to save those who believe - that His sacrifice was sufficient for the sins of the world (although 'few' will be saved). This sacrifice satisfied God's wrath and justice, who then raised Jesus from the dead. The Gospel is Jesus dying in our place, His death, burial and resurrection, affording us the imputation of His righteousness. Nothing makes a person seek God more fervently than when they have their heart opened to receive this Biblical Gospel! *It is the same Gospel that has been taught by the great evangelists down through the running centuries!*

2) You say we 'discourage Christians from sharing the gospel ...' Funny, several of our issues of 'Diakrisis' have offered (free of charge) the *Eternal Questions* booklets for readers to give to the *unsaved*. There has been a big response to this book and fruit as well. *Please show us on which page of that book a false gospel is presented.*

The people involved in this ministry will testify to the extent of our evangelism both in the ministry and at home. We are primarily and unashamedly a *teaching ministry* rather than an evangelistic one.

You say 'if the elect are guaranteed to be saved and the non elect can never be saved, then absolutely nothing you do or don't do can change their eternal destiny'. At the end of the day that is *hypothetically* correct. But sadly, you are applying fallen human extended logic to the Sovereign Grace of God in the election of the Saints. This ends up in the heresy of 'hyper-Calvinism'. God has allowed the saints to be partakers in the reward for saving souls by the command to preach the Gospel. It is God who opens hearts: Acts 13:48 '*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*'. The 'ordained' here is Greek Perfect Passive. It is an act by God *done to man* (passive voice) and at a prior time with consequences to the present (perfect tense). No amount of mental gymnastics or selected commentaries can change the obvious meaning of this verse! Only by the drawing of the Holy Spirit will the 'all' that the father has given, come, (Jn.6:37).

3) You say we are 'blaspheming Jesus Christ by making him a liar and false advertiser... when he offers salvation to whosoever will may come'.

This phrase 'whosoever will may come' is simply not in the Bible! The closest is Rev.22:17 - referring to the New Jerusalem and to God's 'servants' (vs.6) taking 'the waters of life freely'.

You say we 'claim that He already knows that the non elect cannot come to Christ for salvation'. It's not a matter of 'cannot' - they WILL NOT! Man is unable to come to God in and of himself for salvation unless the Holy Spirit draws him first! Rom.8:7: '*the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, NEITHER INDEED CAN BE*'. Rom.3:11: '*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God*'. (See also Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7). Jn.6:44,65 '*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day...65 ...Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father*'.

Romans 9 has a solemn warning to those who would disbelieve and contradict God's choosing, election and predestination. Rom.9:15-20 '*...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy...18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?'*

You say: '*This is giving Christ the attribute of the devil as a liar and a deceiver*'. The Gospel we preach is the Gospel that saved us. We will continue to preach '*Christ crucified*'. In your phone call you made a (negative) statement that England is what it is today because of the likes of Spurgeon and his/our '*false gospel*'. We have never before heard such statements about the 'prince of preachers', one of the greatest *evangelists* in history.

We will continue to preach exactly the same Gospel as that of Hugh Latimer, John Owen, John Bunyan, William Carey, George Whitefield, John Newton, Jonathon Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, David Brainerd, John Eliot, John Paton, Martyn Lloyd Jones, Tyndale...the list is long and distinguished. The great historic confessions also give clear evidence pertaining to the 'doctrines of grace'. The *London Baptist Confession of Faith* of 1689 (you are a Baptist pastor after all) states just such a 'Gospel'. Were all these great divines 'blaspheming Jesus Christ by making him a liar and false advertiser... '?

To summarise what we believe and what the historic church has taught from century to century:

1. God chooses man in salvation. Man does not choose God (Eph.1:4,5; Jn.15:16; Rom.3:11).

2. Man is unable to come to God of himself for salvation unless the Holy Spirit draws him first (Rom.8:6,7; Rom.3:10-11; Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7).

Only by the drawing of the Holy Spirit will the 'all' that the father has given, come (Jn.6:37).

3. God elects, chooses His people of His own determination (Eph.1:5,9,11; 1Thess.1:4; 1Pet.1:2,10; Tit.1:1; Rom.8:33; 11:5,7; Col.3:12; Rom.9:15-18; Gal.1:15,16; Jn.6:37; 5:21...etc).

4. The blood of Jesus is sufficient for *all* to be saved. But it *will* in the end be effective for only some, considering 'few' will *ultimately* be saved, (Jn.10:11-15; Heb.10:14; Matt.20:28; 1Cor.15:22; Matt.1:21; Rev.5:9,10).

Praise God for Jesus who died for our sins! The sovereignty of God in the election, predestination, justification and glorification of His saints - we confess to having limited understanding of. But this we believe!: '*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*', (Rom.8:29-34).

Terry Arnold & Mike Claydon

**** Our Article on A Truth Maligned, can be seen on our website at http://taministries.net/?page_id=510**