A Biblical Critique of Chuck Smith's Study: "Calvinism, Arminianism & The Word Of God"

In this article we will look at the unbiblical and incorrect statements of Mr. Chuck Smith of "Calvary Chapel" fame, with respect to his study on election and predestination. His study reflects not only his own personal views but that of the leadership of most, if not all Calvary Chapel churches. The "Calvary Chapel" collection of churches represent a sort of pseudo denomination that branched out from Mr. Smith's original mega church out in Costa Mesa California. These folks are correct about many spiritual issues but they are dead wrong about their views on Calvinism as I will point out in this study.

My comments are in bold print and the text of Mr. Smith's study is in unbolded print.

Please read this study carefully and completely. It is not meant as an exercise in speed reading. You are bound to miss some important points if you do not spend QUALITY TIME digesting this material.

Here is the original article on Calvinism from chuck Smith.

CALVINISM, ARMINIANISM & THE WORD OF GOD

A CALVARY CHAPEL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

What does it mean to be a part of the growing number of Calvary Chapel Fellowships? There are certain distinctions that cause us to stand out among other evangelical churches. We could point to our shared commitment to systematic Bible teaching or the emphasis upon love that transcends all cultural and ethnic barriers. Calvary Chapels have also been known for focus on worship, featuring contemporary music loyal to the Word of God and the desire of His people to praise their Lord. Without exception, Calvary Chapels have taken a strong stand for a pre-tribulational and pre-millennial view of the second coming of Jesus Christ. We have also expressed a steadfast love and support for the nation of Israel, its right to a historic homeland and its need for the Messiah. But most importantly, Calvary Chapel has been known for striking a balance between extremes on controversial theological issues that have often caused division rather than unity in the body of Christ.

Calvary Chapels have no desire to be divisive nor dogmatic in areas where Bible believers and teachers have disagreed.

Believers and teachers may disagree on what the Gospel is but church leaders still need to be dogmatic about what that Gospel is, as dogmatic as the apostle Paul and as dogmatic as the Psalmist:

Galatians 1:8 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Psalm 119:104 "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."

After all, there is only ONE true gospel, one narrow road:

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

However, it is important to state as clearly as possible the doctrinal basis of our fellowship and unity with one another, especially in the area of pastoral leadership and teaching. While we welcome believers who disagree with us to our fellowship, we do encourage a measure of doctrinal understanding and unity among our pastors who teach us the truths of God's Word.

Calvary Chapels try to avoid conclusions, terminology, and arguments which are not clearly presented in the Bible. In no area of controversy is this approach more essential than in the long simmering debate between Calvinists and Arminians.

It is quite true that there is a great deal of controversy in this area, but that does not give a Christian the option of not proving all things, testing the spirits and studying to show oneself approved, especially in such a crucial area of doctrine…

Jude 1:3 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

1Thes 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

1 John 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

In the midst of this heated argument it is easy to ignore or neglect the plain statements of the Bible, or to believe that we have the ability to fully understand the ways of God (Romans 11:33-36). But how tragic it is when we become more concerned with being "right" than being loving. When we discuss the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it is easy to disagree over terms such as "baptism" and "filling" and to miss the blessing and power of God's Spirit in our lives. The way we conduct our debates and express our opinions will sometimes "quench" as well as "grieve" the blessed Spirit who dwells within the believer. In the midst of our arguments over spiritual gifts, we can miss the Biblical admonition to love, which clearly is greater than all the gifts (I Corinthians 12:31 – 14:1) Our desire is to bring believers together in the love and unity of the Holy Spirit. Our focus is on our awesome God, not on ourselves. We are committed to glorifying our Lord in all we say and do.

Perhaps no issue is as important or as potentially divisive as the doctrine of salvation, reflected in the debate between followers of John Calvin (1509-1564) and those of Jacob Hermann (1560-1609), best known by the Latin form of his last name, Arminius. Since the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century, Christian churches and leaders have disagreed over such issues as depravity, God's sovereignty, human responsibility, election, predestination, eternal security and the nature and extent of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Disagreement on doctrine does not mean that both sides are wrong or that no one can know for sure about certain doctrines.

Although trained in the reformed tradition, Arminius had serious doubts about the doctrine of "sovereign grace" as taught by the followers of John Calvin. He was a pastor of the Reformed congregation in Amsterdam (1588), but during his fifteen years of ministry there, he began to question any of the conclusions of Calvinism.

Lots of people question Calvinism, including believers who are under the hearing and teaching of Arminian pastors. Also, lots of people are not saved and so they view many spiritual truths as absurd…

1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

To deny the BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES that Calvin systematized is to deny the Word of God.

Most people who take the side of Arminianism, do so because they do not understand the sovereignty of God and they do not understand all the Bible has to say about man's total depravity and God's elective plan of salvation.

He left the pastorate and became professor of theology at the University of Leyden. It was his series of lectures on election and predestination that led to a violent and tragic controversy. After his death in 1609, his followers developed the Remonstrance of 1610 which outlined the "Five Points of Arminianism." This document was a protest against the doctrines of the Calvinists, and was submitted to the State of Holland. In 1618, a National Synod of the Church was convened in Dort to examine the teachings or Arminius in the light of Scripture. After 154 sessions, lasting seven months, the Five Points of Arminianism were declared to be heretical. After the synod, many of the disciples of Arminius, such as Hugo Grotius, were imprisoned or banished. When John Wesley took up some of the teachings of Arminianism, the movement began to grow, and it affected the Methodist tradition as well as the beliefs of most Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.

This growth in the teachings of Arminianism is not a sign of discovered truth, but rather a sign of its popularity among men, men who want a salvation plan that gives them some element of control over their eternal destiny, control that God has not granted them. The control that Arminianism grants a subscriber to that doctrine, is that you can get saved any time you want merely by accepting Christ or saying a sinner's prayer of some sort. Such a gospel is a man-made gospel, no matter how many so-called Christian churches are preaching it.

1. Arminianism

The “Five Points of Arminianism” included the following:

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1. FREE WILL

Arminius believed that the fall of man was not total, maintaining that there was enough good left in man for him to will to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation.

This free-will belief promoted by Jacobus Arminius is in conflict with scripture’s description of man’s TOTAL depravity, total inability to turn to God, the real God, on His terms:

Romans 3:11 “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”

Romans 5:6 “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Romans 10:20 “But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I WAS FOUND OF THEM THAT SOUGHT ME NOT; I WAS MADE MANIFEST UNTO THEM THAT ASKED NOT AFTER ME.”

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2. CONDITIONAL ELECTION

Arminius believed that election was based on the foreknowledge of God as to who would believe. Man’s “act of faith” was seen as the “condition” or his being elected to eternal life, since God foresaw him exercising his “free will” in response to Jesus Christ.

The problem with this idea is that God FOREKNEW WHOM HE HAD ELECTED TO SAVE – HENCE THOSE WHOM CHRIST CAME TO DIE FOR, not those whom God foreknew would choose Christ. AS YOU CAN SEE, IF WE DON’T UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE OF CHRIST’S ATONEMENT THEN WE WON’T SEE PROBLEMS WITH THE FREE-WILL VIEW REGARDING GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE. Christ could not have possibly have died for EVERY SINGLE HUMAN BEING who ever lived or will live, because judicially, God cannot be a JUST God and punish the guilty in Hell if He has already punished His Son at Calvary for those same sinners and their sins!

Many Christians are told that God has looked into the future to see who would accept Christ and therefore those people are the ones whom God has predestined to be saved. Where is this idea stated in the

Bible? This idea is a false doctrine, perhaps based on a misunderstanding of scriptures like Romans 8:29 and Romans 11:2. After the fall of Adam, if God ever looked forward in time, the only thing He saw was this: