
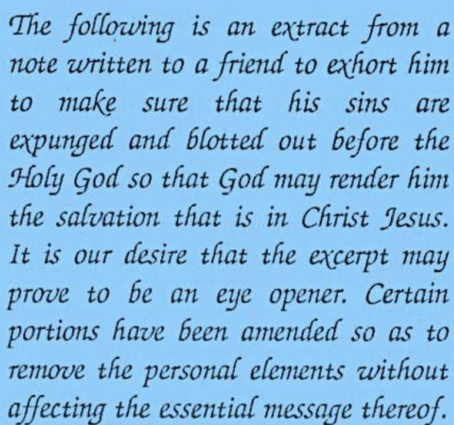






# Calvinism & Salvation



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*The following is an extract from a note written to a friend to exhort him to make sure that his sins are expunged and blotted out before the Holy God so that God may render him the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. It is our desire that the excerpt may prove to be an eye opener. Certain portions have been amended so as to remove the personal elements without affecting the essential message thereof.*



I think, to a certain measure, we can both rejoice in the fact that our quest for the truth that leads to eternal life has somewhat culminated in knowing and espousing historic Christianity, also known as Reformed Faith. More appropriately, it is the school of biblical interpretation that had been adopted by Reformers such as John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Luther; it was also embraced by the Puritans, the Covenanters, the Dutch Reformers, the Pilgrim Fathers and the 18th Century revivalists such as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Though commonly known as Calvinism, an honour justly conferred to the Genevan reformer for being its most skillful and staunchest champion, it was also adhered to and practised by people like Augustine way back in the post-Apostolic period. But we are not surprised that this theology should be upheld at so early a period because this is the same doctrine that was actually preached by the Apostolic church. We have come to realize that the old paths<sup>1</sup> is the only way wherein rest and life is found. Hence, it is imperative that we be intimately acquainted with the knowledge bequeathed to us by godly men who were proponents of Calvinism. In this respect, it is necessary that we should be cognizant of and drilled in the creeds, confessions and catechisms that express the Reformed Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Shorter and Larger Catechisms, the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism and The Belgic Confession are glowing and remarkable examples of constitutions that

reflect the sublime spiritual wisdom, perception, insight and comprehensiveness possessed by those that were responsible for their formulation. It is doubtless that the hand of God was strongly behind them. There are those who cast skepticism about the exactitude, ability and depth of the early Reformers and Puritans; those that do so only betray their own naiveness and obtuseness.

Howbeit it is one thing to embrace the reformed doctrine, it is altogether another thing to work it out practically in one's life. For this is the crux of Calvinism: "It is God Who saves". God must both actuate it and accomplish it. In fact, it is all of grace, free grace. Mercy, mercy, all mercy all the way. How very vital it is then to seek mercy from Christ Jesus, the spotless paschal Lamb, Who does not delight in the death of the wicked. But our joy and contentment can only come when we know that indeed we too have a personal interest in Immanuel's blood. Everything else in this life pales into utter insignificance in the face of this very fundamental issue: of knowing for certain that Christ Jesus has become our Saviour too.

O dearly beloved friend, I beseech you, let nothing distract you, let nothing disrupt you and let none beguile you from the pursuit of the assurance of your eternal destiny. Death marks the end and the brevity of life, which is as the dew; beyond death is an awful grave that gapes deep and wide, where the eternal wrath of God will be revealed consummately. Woe betide us if we be found still outside Christ when death overtakes us. Our knowledge of Calvinism cannot save us, for only

Christ can save us. We must cross the Jasper Sea with Christ alone, then only eternity would be blissful. A Christ that is detached from the doctrines of grace surely cannot save; for as the inspired Apostle says there are those that preach another Jesus<sup>2</sup> and other gospels<sup>3</sup>. We must verify that the Christ we seek is the Christ of the Scriptures. And then we must by all means find and embrace this Christ personally. Our comfort is that we now know for sure that Calvinism helps us to keep away from errors and presumption and to seek the Lord Jesus Christ in a right and acceptable way<sup>4</sup>.

But I have prayed for you that the Lord God would show mercy to you; O that He may effectually apply the merits of His Son's atoning death even upon you. This alone is wondrous, when the Holy Spirit would set us free from sin's foul bondage. Let this quest for salvation be a consuming passion; and in the process of doing so, avoid mere forms of godliness<sup>5</sup> and the seductive spells of feigned and ostentatious religion. Seek if you can for a place where the voice of God is heard and wherein the ministers are unto God a sweet savour of Christ<sup>6</sup>. Seek to repent until you have, by God's grace, attained unto godly sorrow<sup>7</sup>. Confirm this by identifying whether you have yielded the fruits of evangelical repentance<sup>8</sup> in your own life. Endeavour to establish that you are indeed a partaker of the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant.

The Holy Scripture is the only absolutely authentic and reliable source that God has deposited in mankind's repository. But how do we

know this? For although there are many objective evidences to verify this, yet as Calvin asserted, we must come to realize this by the inward witness of the Spirit of God. It is not through flesh and blood but by the illumination of the Spirit<sup>9</sup> that we must come to affirm that the Scripture is a sure, sufficient and final guide to all things in life and faith. Therein, by the enlightenment of the Spirit, we must perceive Christ in all His ineffable effulgence<sup>10</sup>. It is by the Spirit's animating power that the Scripture is able to "make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"<sup>11</sup>. Therein are also the promises that are provisions for consolation and encouragement as we wait earnestly upon the Sovereign God. The promises bring so much solace basically because we know that God Himself is the Author of the Scriptures.

But we can render further thanks to God for bequeathing also to us a godly heritage in the written works of faithful and prudent men; which, if you would apply unto them assiduously, will cast great light in the right understanding of the Scriptures. In this respect, it is doubtless that the writings and discourses of Reformers like John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Knox and the Puritans (men like John Bunyan, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Matthew Henry, Jeremiah Burroughs and Jonathan Edwards) are classics we cannot afford to do without. Be very cautious to be discerning in your reading habits. Needless to say the works of Arminians, Dispensationalists and Charismatics wield a fatal influence. But our need of prudence is still more acute when we realize that

careful selection is to be made from so massive a repository. Indeed the evangelical library is a vast ocean and amidst the pressing demands of life, we painfully realize that we have but a limited time for reading. May God help us in this vital matter. But more important, every apprehension of the knowledge of God should further fortify and enhance our diligence in seeking God. Be earnest in your endeavour and constant in your application in searching for God. And yet do not put your trust in your efforts; rather hope in God's mercies, the least of which we are not worthy.

The Apostle Paul, writing his swan-song missive to his much loved disciple Timothy, speaks of the doctrine of election: "The Lord knoweth them that are His"<sup>12</sup>. And yet obversely, the apostle adds: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity"<sup>13</sup>. Indeed let everyone who claims election prove it by bearing fruits of evangelical repentance. This enjoining brings both a measure of the fear of God and a measure of comfort. Let us endeavour with our utmost to purge ourselves that we may be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work"<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 6:16

<sup>2</sup> II Corinthians 11:4

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1:6-7

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:15,16; 10:19-21

<sup>5</sup> II Timothy 3:5a

<sup>6</sup> II Corinthians 2:15

<sup>7</sup> II Corinthians 7:10

<sup>8</sup> II Corinthians 7:11

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 16:17

<sup>10</sup> John 5:39

<sup>11</sup> II Timothy 3:15

<sup>12</sup> II Timothy 2:19b

<sup>13</sup> II Timothy 2:19c

<sup>14</sup> II Timothy 2:21b