

Shotgun Wedding

I really love weddings. **PHOTO 1** It never really dawned on me when I became a pastor that I would be invited to participate in them. They really are wonderful moments if they are centered on Christ. I only perform weddings between two believers who I know are fully committed to Christ.

I love that God came up with the idea of the Covenant of Marriage and used that image to describe our salvation. There is something holy about two people, a man and woman, locking eyes and declaring their love for each other and then together their love for Jesus.

They tell each other, I could have chosen anyone, but I choose you because God has chosen us. It is really a beautiful thing. Unless....

Well in Texas we have these things called Shotgun Weddings. **PHOTO 2** They are not about free will, they are about survival. Usually the Father of the Bride is the one packing heat and the Groom to be is the one feeling it and sweating.

The marriage vows are not really beautiful at all because everyone knows that boy had no choice. The audience knows it, the Father of the Bride knows it, the Groom knows it....and most sadly...the Bride knows it. Declaration of Love made under duress, without free will, is not love at all.

Throughout scripture, Jesus is illustrated for us as a Bridegroom coming for His Bride. This is no accident or coincidence. The ancient Jewish wedding is a beautiful and poignant picture for us of not only Jesus' love for us but His plan to return for us.

Matthew 9:15–16 (ESV) 15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Jesus said think of me as the Bridegroom....and my bride?

Revelation 19:7–9 (ESV) 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The Jewish marriage contract is a written document that defines the covenant between the bride and groom. It outlines the relationship. The Bible is our Marriage Contract with Jesus. It outlines what He will do for us and what He expects from us. In every wedding there are vows or promises.....The Bible is God's wedding vow to us.

Sovereign God sent us a letter of His love for us. It outlines our relationship with Him. It is a covenant document. We can, just like a bride, accept it or reject it.

But what if...what if...our wedding with Christ was a shotgun wedding?

What if...we really had no choice...and God forced us to marry Him spiritually?

Does that change things in your mind? Would it matter to you? You would still be married, still have the security of the covenant, still spend eternity with Jesus.....but would it matter to you?

How important is it to you that God not only chose you as His bride, but you also chose Him?

Is a shotgun covenant still a covenant? Can I force you to a commitment that you made under duress?

We have been learning that God is Sovereign.....He doesn't have to be fair...Can Sovereign God demand a shotgun wedding?

Let's recap what we have been learning in the last two weeks before we address God's Sovereignty and our Salvation. God is Sovereign. He has, always has, and always will have absolute control over everything. The only thing God can't do is to contradict Himself. He can't violate His essence. He can't be something that He is not.

We have spoken about God's Revelation of Himself to us in His Word. This is what we know.

The Characteristics of God

God is Before All Things. God created all things. God upholds all things. God is above all things. God knows all things. God can do all things. God will accomplish all things.

The Control of God

God Rules over all things. God is in control of all things. Earthly kings are under God's Control. Human events are under God's control. Good angels are under God's control. Evil angels demons are under God's control. Satan is under God's Control. Human decisions are under God's Control.

Human Decisions are under God's control. That is the sticky wicket. That is the place where well meaning Christians begin to divide. The Scriptures are crystal clear on this point.

Scriptures portray God as in sovereign control of everything we choose....including salvation.

Ephesians 1:11 (ESV) 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Romans 8:29–30 (ESV) 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

According to Paul....

Ephesians 1:4 (ESV) 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

According to Peter....

Acts 2:23 (ESV) 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

In fact, only those who are elect will believe.....

Acts 13:48 (ESV) 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

John 1:12–13 (ESV) 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Paul again...

Romans 9:15–16 (ESV) 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

If that is not clear enough Paul gets even stronger.

Romans 9:18 (ESV) 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

God's Sovereignty over human decisions includes both those who are for Him and those who are against Him.

Peter quoted Isaiah....

1 Peter 2:7–9 (ESV) 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Whatever else may be said, God's Sovereignty over the human will includes His initiating, pursuing, persuading and saving grace without which no one would be saved.

Romans 3:10–12 (ESV) 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

1 John 4:19 (ESV) 19 We love because he first loved us.

John 6:44 (ESV) 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

Every decision that you and I have ever made is under the sovereignty of God. If what you want to do cannot be used for God's purposes, you will not be able to do it. God has allowed every decision you have made....good, bad, or indifferent. And He allows it...even the dumb mistakes you and I make....because....

Romans 8:28 (ESV) 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

If what you and I decide to do fits within God's will...even our sins...then He allows it. He has allowed every horrible thing on earth....starvation, rape, the Holocaust, because He knew that He could use it for ultimate good.

Ok....so Why Blame Me? Do I have free will or not? Did God choose me....or did I choose Him? And....

If God is in control of everything, then why should we be blamed for anything? If an all knowing God knows exactly what we are going to do before we do it....and if He cannot be wrong....then it happens regardless of what we do....

If God is in control of all events, then how can we be responsible for anything that happens, even our evil actions? It seems that if He is Sovereign then what happens is His responsibility...not mine.

So when it comes to my salvation....did I really make a decision? It seems from the Scriptures presented that God chose me. That I could not save myself. That I could do nothing. That God in His Sovereignty decided who He would save....and thus who He would not save.

Is my relationship with Christ pre-destined....determined by God in advance....even before I was born...even before the world was made?

Did God decide that I would one of His elect? I mean if I am left to my own devices and no one seeks God....did I pursue God or did He pursue me? Did I even have the ability to choose God?

I have heard my entire life that I must make a decision to follow Jesus...I sang the song as a child...I have DECIDED to follow Jesus. Isn't the decision to follow Jesus the evidence of my faith? If God preselected me...and He is sovereign....then could I have said no? Did I make a decision at all?

If God has some people as His elect...those He predestined...then are others not His elect? Did He elect for them to reject Jesus? Could Judas have made a decision to not betray Jesus or was his fate sealed before he was born.

If I was chosen to reject God before my birth....how can I be held accountable for a decision that seems to have been God's? How can I be sent to Hell for eternal punishment for something that I didn't have any control over?

I know God doesn't have to be fair...we learned that last week....but sending people to hell for all of eternity because they rejected Jesus....because God didn't select them...isn't just unfair...it is unjust...and it is unloving.

If God created people who had no chance of salvation...No ability to seek Him, love Him or surrender to Him...How could a just God sentence them to Hell? He created rebellious robots pre-programmed to reject Him. They did exactly what God determined that they would do. Judas would be praised for fulfilling the purpose that God created for him. Yet Scriptures say it would have been better had he never been born.

If Judas never could have accepted Christ...and if he is destined to Hell before he is ever born...then it would have been better if God had not created Him.

If God knows that...how can He look at all of creation and say that it is very good? How can He say man is created in His image? He can't reject Himself.

If God is sovereign....and if God pre selected those He choose to save...then why even share the gospel? Everything has been predetermined.

And if everything is predetermined then I am either saved or not and it has nothing to do with me. Sovereign God doing what Sovereign God wants to do. So if I am predestined to be saved....I can't do anything wrong. My sins are forgiven and I can do anything I want to do. If I am predestined to go to Hell....this is the only good experience I will have and I need to pursue every impulse and desire that I have..no matter what..

If God pre selected some to be saved and everyone else to go to Hell, then Jesus really didn't die for everyone's sins....He didn't really love everyone....He didn't offer forgiveness to everyone...He just did those things for the people that God had predetermined would choose Him....Is that right?

If these verses about predetermination are all there is...then John 3:16 should say....

For God so loved some of the world...that He gave His only Son....That whosoever was pre chosen to believe in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

If that is true....the Jesus didn't defeat Satan on the cross....For the majority of people...Satan got what He wanted...lots of people separated from God...just like He is for all of eternity. Jesus only won a limited salvation in that it was truly offered to only a few.

Yet the Scriptures clearly say what they say.....

Welcome to the Dilemma **of Predestination vs Free Will**. Did God choose me or did I choose Him? Did I make a decision to follow Jesus or was I doing what I was preprogramed and pre-destined to do?

This question has been challenging theologians since the beginning of the early church. It is one of those mysteries of Scripture....mysteries of God...that perplexes people who truly love Jesus. Today we call it the battle between the **Calvinists and the Armenians**.

John Calvin lived from 1509 to 1564. He is credited with his views that we are all predestined. He taught 5...what he called...irrefutable truths...that were known by the acronym TULIP. His theology goes like this.

T- Total Depravity

Humans are incapable of any spiritual good. They are totally incapable of initiating, attaining, or even receiving the gift of salvation without the Grace of God.

U- Unconditional Election

There are no conditions for God electing some for salvation. He chooses. Period. Some get it. Some chosen not to.

L- Limited Atonement

Jesus didn't die for everyone...Only for the elect.

I- Irresistible Grace

Once God chooses you, you have no ability to resist.

P- Perseverance of the Saints.

Once you are saved, you are always saved. You were saved before your birth.

So Calvinists believe that we are all here on earth for God's purposes. Some are here to honor God and live lives thankful for His grace and salvation. Others are here waiting to go to Hell, serving God's purposes by being used as alternative negative examples.

They believe that there are no human decisions to follow God because we are so fallen that we don't seek Him, don't want Him and have no ability to recognize or desire Him.

God in His sovereignty has chosen His elect...In His Sovereignty He decides to reveal Himself....the elected person cannot resist...is saved... and can take no credit for any decision. Salvation is all God's. The prompting, the pursuing, the revelation, the response, the regeneration....all God's work in His select few. Believers didn't decide it, chose it or even desire it. It just happened to us because God said so. Jesus paid for the sins of the elect, not everyone.

Some are saved...others are used. All fulfill God's purposes and plan.

Famous Calvinists

Charles Spurgeon, John Newton, Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, Matthew Henry, George Whitefield, Mark Driscoll, John Piper,

Jacob Arminius also lived in the 16th Century and was a student of Calvin's work. He was 4 years old when Calvin Died.

Arminianism places the emphasis on man's responsibility and claims that he has a completely free will. He began to question his understanding of the doctrine of predestination, which led him to question his stances on the nature and character of God. He thought predestination was too harsh for a loving God. He began to promote a "conditional election" that allowed both man and God to take part in the salvation process.

Similar to the TULIP Concept. Arminius had 5 points as well.

Human Free Will

This is also referred to as Partial Depravity. This belief states that man is depraved due to the fall, but man is still able to come to God and accept salvation. Arminians claim that though people are fallen they are still able to make a spiritually good decision to follow Christ based on the grace that God bestows to all people.

Conditional Election

Conditional election states that God only "chooses" those whom He knows will choose to believe. This belief says that God looks down the long hallway of time into the future to see who is going to choose Him.

Universal Atonement

Also known as Unlimited Atonement. This statement says that Jesus died for everyone, even those who are not the elect. This belief says that Jesus's death on the cross was for all of humanity and that anyone can be saved simply by believing in Him. This belief states that Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved, but that it did not actually secure salvation for anyone.

Resistible Grace

This teaches that the grace of God can be resisted until it is quenched; that you can say no to the Holy Spirit when He calls you to salvation. This teaching says that God inwardly calls people who are also called outwardly, that God does all He can to bring a sinner to salvation – but man can thwart that calling and harden himself to God.

Fall From Grace

This is the Arminian teaching that claims that a person can become saved, and then lose his salvation. This happens when a person fails to keep up their faith or commits a grievous sin. But how many sins... or how many times we must fail to have perfect faith. It's all a bit cloudy. Arminians are not entirely agreed upon this doctrinal stance.

Scriptures that Support Free Will

Matthew 3:1–2 (ESV) 1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17 (ESV) 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Repent literally means to turn from what you are doing and to go the opposite direction. It involves a decision...a choice.

Acts 3:19–20 (ESV) 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

1 John 3:22–23 (ESV) 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

John 5:39–40 (ESV) 39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Romans 1:19–20 (ESV) 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

John 1:11–13 (ESV) 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:16 (ESV) 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:14–16 (ESV) 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 16:30–31 (ESV) 30 Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Romans 10:8–13 (ESV) 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:14–15 (ESV) 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Luke 7:29–30 (ESV) 29 (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, 30 but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves,

Revelation 22:17 (ESV) 17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

John 7:37–38 (ESV) 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' "

Matthew 23:37 (ESV) 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

1 Timothy 2:3–4 (ESV) 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Isaiah 45:22 (ESV) 22 "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

John 5:33–34 (ESV) 33 You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

2 Corinthians 5:19–20 (ESV) 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Hebrews 2:9 (ESV) 9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

2 Peter 3:9 (ESV) 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

John 16:8 (ESV) 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

Matthew 22:1–3 (ESV) 1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

Ezekiel 33:10–11 (ESV) 11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Isaiah 65:12 (ESV) 12 I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my eyes and chose what I did not delight in."

Jeremiah 18:7–8 (ESV) 7 If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, 8 and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

Joshua 24:15 (ESV) 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Luke 22:41–42 (ESV) 41 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." Jesus Himself made the free will decision to submit to the Father.

John 10:17–18 (ESV) 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Satan's Temptation of Jesus is only a real temptation if Jesus had the free will to choose.

Freewill is taught throughout the Bible

(1) God calls on people to obey, choose, and believe in him (Jn. 15:10; Josh. 24:15; Jn. 3:18).

These calls would be nonsense, if we are not free moral agents.

(2) The very fact that we can sin implies freedom of the will, unless we are claiming that God is the agent of sin.

(3) God judges us (1 Cor. 3:10-15; Rev. 20:11-15). Humans are rewarded and punished according to their actions. Judgment only makes sense, if we are free to choose and culpable for our choices.

(4) God tests his people, which implies our ability to pass or fail (Gen. 22:1; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 10:13).

(6) God pleads with sinners to repent, which would only make sense in light of free moral decision (Ezek. 18:23-32; 33:11).

(7) God desires all men to believe in him (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Jn. 12:32). Consider this. An omnipotent being "desires" something that clearly is not happening. Something must be stopping God from doing what he wants to do. Freewill is the most likely solution to this problem (Lk. 7:30; Acts 7:51; Mt. 23:3, 37; Mt. 6:10; Jn. 7:17).

Famous Arminians

John Wesley, A.W. Tozer, Andrew Murray, David Wilkerson, C.S. Lewis, Billy Graham.

I have reviewed with you a great number of Scriptures. I did so for a reason. All of the Scriptures that we have read are straight from God's Word. Whether they are Scriptures that clearly say God chose us or Scripturest that say we after being made aware of His truth, chose Him.

The critical thing to remember is that all of these Scriptures are true. It is not that one argument is true and the other is false. All of the Scriptures used by the Extreme Calvinists to make their point are true.

And All of the Scriptures used by the Arminians to make their point are true.

As with most things involving human thinking....it is at the extreme where we make our mistake. Obviously, God's word is clear that He chose us and It is clear that we in some manner had to respond to Him with free will.

At the extremes, Calvinists have a sovereign God and an inactive man. Extreme Arminians have a sovereign man and an inactive God.

It is impossible for us to fully understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will and responsibility. Only God truly knows how they work together in His plan of salvation. With this doctrine, probably more so than with any other, it is crucially important to admit our inability to fully grasp the nature of God and our relationship with Him. Going too far to either side results in a distorted understanding of salvation.

Yet the Extreme is exactly where many in the church are today. There are two very strong movements in the church today that I believe are false teaching. False doctrines and yes I believe are Heresy. Any theology that forces you to elevate some scriptures and discount others are false.

One is extreme Calvinism also called "Reformed Theology" And the other is Extreme Arminiansim called "New Theism"

Reformed Theology and New Theism. Do you notice something? They both promote a new revelation. A new way of seeing God, Salvation and the Bible. Funny that they originate from the 1500's and actually all the way back to the first century. But now they are new and improved.

Many are concerned that the Armenians have gone too far. They have placed too much emphasis on Man's Free Will Choice and not enough emphasis on the Sovereignty of God. I am one of those people. The threat to a true Armenian is that if you lean too far toward free choice...you become a humanist. You seek glory in man's decision making rather than God's Sovereignty. I am very concerned about this. In fact, the New Theism (New way of Understanding God) is in my view a humanist heresy of the Church. It goes like this....

When God gave us free will, He gave up some of His Sovereignty. He gave some of it to us when He gave us free choice. God does not know the future, He is waiting for us to make decisions of free will so that He can then react. They teach that God's does not know everything because He cannot know a choice we make until we make it.

The risk of this New Armenianism is that it places Human Free Will over God's Sovereignty.

New Armeniansism takes away God's Sovereignty. It is unbiblical because it takes away God's revelation of His character and control.

In addition, it is clear that the Calvinists have also gone too far. They have seen the Armenians dismiss the Bible, and swing toward human power. Their desire is to reestablish God's Sovereignty in the Church.

This new focus on extreme Calvinism has been sweeping through the church and is particularly embraced by the younger generation Christians.

Reformed Theology...the Calvinist extreme...makes man a pawn in God's game. It gives man no say in their relationship with Christ. A gift...perhaps offered by God to you...perhaps not. A gift you don't receive...it is forced upon you...you can't resist it. A gift not based on love but rather on Sovereignty. You don't receive salvation it is forced upon you whether you want it or not.

Reformed Theology New Calvinism takes away mans' Free Will. It is unbiblical because it takes away God's love for all people, free will in our decision to sin, and his just judgement and punishment for sin.

These are two modern day trending heresies in the church and both are equally dangerous.

By saying we don't have Free Will....The Calvinist removes human responsibility for sin. If man does not have free will, then where did sin come from?

One thing every theologian agrees on is that Sin cannot originate from God. He can't be the origin of that contradiction. Hebrews 6:18 tells us that God cannot sin. He cannot even look upon sin with approval. God can't tempt anyone. Opposites cannot be true at the same time. God cannot be good and not good. God cannot be for Himself and against Himself at the same time in the same sense.

So if God cannot create sin....where did it come from? We know from Scripture that sin came from an angel named Lucifer. He, in free will, chose his pride over God's sovereignty. God did not make the Devil. He did not make the Devil do it. Rather, God made a good angel called Lucifer, who became the devil by his own free will.

Scriptures tell us that God made only good creatures, that he gave free choice to some of His good creatures, and that free choice is the origin of evil. God wanted his good creatures to choose good, but in order to allow that He had to give them the free...will...to choose bad. Sin is a bad choice.

But Calvinists can't tell you where sin came from. They don't have an answer. They call it one of the mysteries of God that is part of His higher ways than ours.

They cannot attribute sin to God. They can't give free will to people to choose sin....so sin just showed up somehow. This to me is where extreme Calvinism falls apart.

If you can't explain the origin of sin, can't hold man accountable for sin, can't state that all humans are created in the image of God, can't explain how people who never chose to sin but were created to do nothing else can justly be sent to hell for all of eternity, and that God is love but only loves his elect....that Jesus died but only for the elect, then I would walk away from the faith. I couldn't be an extreme Calvinist and follow Jesus. Of course, Calvinists would tell me that I couldn't walk away if I wanted to... God reveals Himself as Just, Righteous, Loving, patient, kind, longsuffering. He tells us that man is created in His image and that when created all is very good. The God that I know wants all to be saved. The Christ that I know, died for everyone. He says that it is His desire that all men are saved.

So the Calvinist, at the extreme, is in my opinion heresy. The Arminian at the extreme is in my opinion heresy. We have been warned to be very careful here. I get emails from people who are checking out our church and they ask...Calvinist or Arminian? I tell them yes, we are Calvinimians. Did God choose us? Yes. Did we choose God? Yes.

And next week we will explore this middle ground. The balanced view of this debate. In my opinion, the Biblical View of this debate. The beauty of God's design where He chose us. Loving, Just, Righteous God chose us to be saved. And we, with the free will given to us by God and prompted by the Holy Spirit chose Him. .

Jesus described His relationship with us as a marriage. **PHOTO 3** A beautiful wonderful covenant between man and God based on our faith in Jesus.

Salvation is the wonderful moment in our lives where everything finally makes sense. It is a new covenant, a marriage vow, between Christ and Man.

Jesus in His overwhelming love floods us, drenches us, and tells us....I love you and I chose you.

And we...full of love For Him...a true love that is only available with free will...tell Him I love You and I choose You too.

For a covenant to be valid...both parties have to have the ability to choose...without free will...there can be no covenants. There are no shotgun weddings when it comes to Christ. He does not force anyone to choose Him. That is why the relationship we have with Him is so incredible.

Next week we close this series....looking at the beautiful, balanced, BIBLICAL view of the covenant of our salvation. Let's Pray.