

What Love Is This? - Part 2

by Dave Hunt

Dave Hunt explores the complexities and historical implications of Calvinism, particularly its impact on religious tolerance and persecution of dissenters.

Duration: 9:50

Scripture: Romans 3:23, Ephesians 1:4

Topics: "Church History", "Reformation Theology"

Description

This sermon delves into the history of the Reformation beyond Calvinism, exploring the diverse groups like the Mennonites and Zwinglians. It highlights the enforcement of Reformation doctrine by state churches like the Westminster Assembly in England, showing the intolerance towards dissenting beliefs. The sermon discusses the Calvinist beliefs of total depravity, unconditional election, and limited atonement, emphasizing the theological differences within Christianity.

Transcript

John Calvin was eight years old when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Chapel. There's a lot more to the Reformation than Calvinists. There were the Mennonites, there were the Zwinglians, I mean there were a number of others.

And now to say that this is Reformation doctrine, this is it, they've hijacked the Reformation. Then again they will say, you're not a Calvinist, you reject the Great Reformation creeds. I don't know how many of you have heard that.

I've had that accusation many times. Oh, you reject the Great Reformation creeds. Reformation creeds? What do you mean Reformation creeds? What are the Great Reformation creeds? Oh well, they're talking about you British are responsible for part of it in the Westminster Assembly, the Westminster Confession of Faith right here in England, or the Synod of Dort in Dortmund, Holland.

Well, as a matter of fact this was a state church. And let me just quote some historians for you about this. In 1643, I'm quoting G.T. Bethany, in 1643 the Westminster Assembly of Divines was convened by Parliament to reform the Church of England.

Now we've got Parliament is in charge, and I don't know if you would want Parliament to be in charge of reforming your evangelical church today. They paid the salaries, they paid the expenses of these people.

And he goes on, he talks about ejections of Episcopalians from their livings, amounted to some thousands, so many vacancies were created they could not be filled.

He says the Presbyterians predominated in Parliament, and in 1648 showed their continued intolerance by enacting that all who denied God or the Trinity or the Atonement or the canonical books of scripture or the resurrection of the dead and a final judgment were to suffer the pains of death as in case of felony without benefit of clergy. A long catalog of heresies of the second class was specified to be punished by imprisonment. In other words, this was a state church and they were enforcing it on everyone.

And if you did not agree with them, you were thrown out, and in some cases killed, in many cases imprisoned. I'm quoting another historian who says, the Westminster Assembly was called and financed by Parliament and was controlled by Presbyterians. Baptists and Independents were excluded by design.

In fact, Baptists and Independents were regarded as, quote, mortal enemies of the state church, unquote. Tolerance for any religious belief other than Calvinism was denounced by leading members of the Assembly as, quote, the last and strongest hold of Satan. Wow.

The Assembly was determined to enforce its brand of religion upon the entire population. This happened here in England. Now you have a wonderful man, the letters of Samuel Rutherford, I'm sure many of you have read them.

I mean, so beautiful. And historians describe Rutherford as, quote, a gracious and godly man, unquote. Yet because of his Calvinist beliefs, he denied absolutely the moral principles underlying religious tolerance.

Sounding like the Popes and the Vatican he despised. He even went so far as to declare, quote, there is but one true church, and all who are outside of it are heretics who must be destroyed. Is that what Calvinism does to an otherwise very godly, loving, and gracious man? Roger Williams, one of the best known advocates of religious freedom in his day, published a protest titled, The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause and Conscience.

He fled England for America, where he was badly treated by the Puritans. In England, the Westminster Assembly had his book publicly burned. In 1648, the Presbyterians succeeded in enacting the gag law to punish the Baptists as blasphemers and heretics.

I find it rather ironic that many Baptists today are Calvinists. Under this infamous law, 400 Baptists were thrown into prison. In fact, dissenters had been suffering persecution and imprisonment for years.

Now you all know what happened under Bloody Mary and the persecution and burning at the stake of over 400 evangelicals for rejecting, you know, transubstantiation, but maybe most of you didn't know about this persecution by the Calvinists. Protestants suffering at the hands of fellow Protestants for not being Calvinists. Nearly 30 years before the following entreaty title, quote, a most humble supplication of many of the king's majesty's loyal subjects who are persecuted only for differing in religion, contrary to divine and human testimonies.

That's the title he gave his letter. It was smuggled out of prison. And listen to what he said.

Our miseries are long and lingering imprisonments for many years in diverse counties of England, in which many have died and left behind them widows and many small children, taking away our goods, not for any

disloyalty to your majesty, nor hurt to any mortal man, but only because we dare not assent unto and practice in the worship of God such things as we have not faith in, because it is a sin against the most high. It is not the Catholics who are persecuting them. This was Protestant England now, and they're being persecuted for not embracing Calvinism.

Well, you say they're not that way today, and I guess they're not because they don't have the power to do it, but I can tell you that, wow, this book, I could not imagine what a storm it has created on the internet, and Mark just told you, tear the cover off and send it in, and we'll send you a copy of a book promoting Calvinism. Well, what are they pushing, or what is the essence of Calvinism? Something called TULIP, T-U-L-I-P, an acronym that someone has said, a beautiful flower of a bad theology. Well, that depends upon your point of view, of course.

We may have some Calvinists in the audience today. Pages 89 and 90, I give you what they believe, and I quote from the Westminster Confession and the Canons of Dort and so forth to make sure that I'm not misrepresenting them, and as most of you know, the T stands for total depravity. Now, if you were asked, do you believe in total depravity, probably most Christians would say, yeah, but I have some little question about total.

What do you mean by total? But the Calvinist means, by total depravity, he means inability. A non-Christian, even those who have been elected and predestined to heaven by God from a past eternity, until they have been regenerated, every person on this earth by nature is unable to believe the gospel, unable to respond, unable to accept Christ, totally unable. By total depravity, they mean inability.

The U, of course, stands for unconditional election, that God decides on no basis within the person. It has nothing to do with whether they believe or not. He decides to save them.

Let me quote the Canons of Dort, that some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, by which decree he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. L stands for limited atonement. Christ did not die for everyone.

Calvinism is a bit difficult. In fact, I've been warned, I was warned by many, even friends, don't write a book about Calvinism, you don't understand it. I mean, this takes years of study.

But if it's the gospel, if it's the Bible,

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