

Podcast: Confessing the Faith

Episode 6: Calvinism: God's Sovereignty, and All Things for the Glory of God

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Q1: Why the delay? Why spend so much time laying foundations?

A1: Perhaps one of the reasons that people struggle to accept what the Bible has to say about salvation - how salvation works, from beginning to end - is because they, first of all, lack a fully developed biblical worldview.

A2: To say it another way, it is possible for a Christian to have developed over time a way of looking at the world that is, in fact, inconsistent with God's revealed truth. Their thinking concerning the big questions - questions like, who is God? who is man? what are we capable of? and what is the purpose of our existence?, for example - may be lacking, or flawed. I am not saying that their worldview is entirely non-Christian; but I am saying that it is possible for a Christian to hold to a worldview that might be less than fully developed.

A3: The Doctrines of Grace (Calvinism) have a way of exposing some of the most common flaws in the way that we view the world around us.

A4: The goal of this episode is to explore a couple of the major worldview issues which undergird our understanding of how God brings salvation to people.

Q2: What is meant by worldview?

A1: Everyone views the world in a particular way. We look at the world through particular lenses. Everyone has developed an opinion concerning questions like, *is there a God? If there is a God what is he like? What does he require of us? Who are we? Where did the world come from? What is the purpose or meaning of life? Is there life after death - a heaven and hell? What determines a person's eternal destiny?* Everyone had developed opinions concerning these things. Everyone has a worldview. And we make decisions - we live - based upon how we answer questions like these.

A2: The Christian is to labor to see the world in the way that God sees it. This is only possible through revelation. That is why we spent time asking the question in the previous episode, *what is our authority for truth?*

Q3: What are the worldview issues that you find Christians struggling with the most?

A1: I think we would all agree that a person must square with most of the major worldview questions before he or she can even begin to call themselves a follower of Christ.

"I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen." ~ Apostles Creed

A2: When I say that a Christian may lack a fully developed worldview I am obviously talking about things that are sub-categories to the main worldview questions like, *is there a God? And, if so, how are we to relate to him?*

A3: Once we confess that *there is a God and that we are to come to him through faith in Jesus Christ*, we must then ask questions like, *what is God like? What are his attributes? How does he relate to the world that he has created? And what were his purposes for creating as he did?* It is concerning questions like these that I find Christians lacking in a fully developed view of the world.

A4: Two things come immediately to mind as it pertains to our eventual conversation about salvation: One, *how are we to understand God's relation to his creation today? Is he hands on, or hands off when it comes to the things that happen in human history, and to what degree?* The second thing has to do with the question, *what is the purpose for all that we see around us? What is the meaning of it all?*

A5: Before we move on I should probably make three points.

- One, everyone has an opinion about these things.
- Two, these questions are not unimportant. The way we answer them has a dramatic impact upon the way that we live our life.
- Three, the Bible does speak to them.

Q4: So what are we to think concerning the question, how does God relate to the world that he has created? Is he hands on, or hands off?

A1: London Baptist Confession 5.1: "God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will..." (Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalms 135:6; Matthew 10:29-31; Ephesians 1:11)"

- He is God
- He is good
- He is creator of all things
- He is infinitely powerful
- He is infinitely wise
- He upholds - preserves
- Directs - causes
- Disposes - supports
- Governs - rules and controls
- All creatures and things
- From the greatest to the least
- By his most wise and holy *providence*
- To the end for the which they were created
- According unto his infallible foreknowledge
- And the free and immutable counsel of his own will (LBC 3:1: "God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass..."

A2: Some general observations

- God must be sovereign if he is God
- He must be sovereign over all thing is all things are being directed towards a determined end
- Think also of the fulfilment of prophecy

A3: Some Key Bible stories

- Job
- Joseph
- The Christ (when the fulness of time had come...)

A4: Some key Bible texts

- “remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.” (Isaiah 46:9–11, ESV)
- “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matthew 10:29–30, ESV)
- “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28, ESV)
- “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” (Hebrews 1:3, ESV)

A5: We are not deists.

A6: We are not “duelists”.

A7: We worship God Almighty! “When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty [El Shaddai]; walk before me, and be blameless...’” (Genesis 17:1, ESV)

Q5: What about the question, what is the meaning of it all? What is the purpose for which God created the world?

A1: London Baptist Confession 5.1: “God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will... to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy. (Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalms 135:6; Matthew 10:29-31; Ephesians 1:11)”

A2: Key Bible Texts

- “For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.” (Isaiah 48:11, ESV)
- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3–6, ESV)
- “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?” (Romans 9:22–24, ESV)

A3: Does this make God an egomaniac? By no means!

- Some things that are wrong for us are right for God!
- For God to give glory to another would be sin!
- His being glorified is our greatest good.

A4: Have you ever heard the expression “It’s not about me”? You have no idea how true that is!

Q6: So what difference does this make?

A1: Concerning the Christian life in general:

- Comfort
- Proper priorities and perspectives

A2: Concerning the Five Points of Calvinism

- How could not be in control of salvation?