

Bible churches usually have men trained at Dallas Theological Seminary, Talbot...and they are solid. For many years I was a 4 pt Calvinist, which is what a Bible church generally is—rejecting the 5th point of limited atonement; however, I no longer believe in the system as defined by Calvinist. I emphatically reject the concept that God causes some to be regenerated, which is against their will since they are His enemies, and that regeneration causes them to be born again and then they exercise faith. This not only limits God's genuine offer of salvation only to some, contra the 100 plus scriptures that say salvation is for the world if they will believe, but it also has God making someone new against their will.

In addition, If God guarantees salvation of some, by regeneration whereby they **will** believe, and He could regenerate everyone and thereby guarantee everyone's salvation then, that seems to undermine God's mercy. He is just to send everyone to hell because they sinned and deserve it, but is it infinite mercy to send some to hell when He could have easily saved them? On the other hand, it is mercy to offer a fallen sinful man a chance to have a *real choice* to believe or not believe.

I am neither a Calvinist—although I am Calvinistic—nor am I an Arminian. Generally, Calvinist label everyone who is not a Calvinist an Arminian, and Arminian's label everyone who is not with them a Calvinist, which is misleading and overly simplistic, without biblical warrant, unnecessarily reductionistic, and based on faulty logic. Although, like most Baptist, I am Calvinistic in my theology, the best way to describe my position is that I am a Biblicist. Here's the way that plays out.

Adam had a *real choice* of whether to sin or not—he did not have to sin.

Adam chose to sin; thus, he and his offspring are hopelessly doomed being bound in sin and an enemy of God—humans cannot extricate themselves.

God loved man and intervened on his behalf

The world is damned by sin Romans 3:23—hence all need help. Did God choose to help some or the same world who needed help?

God loves the *World* John 3:16

Sent His son to die for the sins of the *world* 1John 2:2—among a hundred more scriptures

Sent the church to tell the *world* Matthew 28:18-20

Sent the Holy Spirit to convict the *world* John 18:11—this supernatural conviction is what man needs to be able to make a *real choice*.

Calls the *world* to repent Acts 17:30—if they can't, and God is not going to give them a chance, this seems disingenuous.

I think that the conviction of the Holy Spirit is what enables men to be able to make a real choice like Adam had; thus, man is wholly incapable on his own, but God out of infinite mercy provides everything he needs to have a real choice like Adam. The offer and provision is not based on any thing in man but God's nature of infinite holiness, love, mercy....Consequently, everyone who goes to hell, does so because they freely chose to.

Since this is a deep and complex subject, the best thing is to download my messages on this subject. I preached for about 12 weeks on the subject, and tried to deal with the most salient passages, along with the ones they use to support their position. The website is <http://www.trinitynorman.org>, click resources, then go to sermon website, click Sunday morning, and then search for Preservation of the Saints in the fire.

Bible churches are great churches, much like Trinity. If I were not in a Baptist church, I would probably attend one; however, I would not be able to sign the statement of faith. Many believe e.g. Dr Paige Patterson, President of Southwestern Theological Seminary, that regeneration prior to faith is simply not supported by the New Testament, and I agree. When you read the New Testament you simply find, salvation by repentance and faith—150 times. Regeneration is required, but comes after the Holy Spirit convicts, and a sinner like a beggar, receives God's love. Remember that faith is not works regardless how many times someone says it is: Romans 3:28, 4:5, 9:32, Galatians 2:16, 3:2—note how works and faith are juxtaposed.

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