

A Summary

If one does not accept Calvinism, what is the alternative? A summary of the Bible teaching on the nature of man in relation to God and salvation is here provided.

God created man good and upright, beginning with Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:31; Ecclesiastes 7:29). Adam and Eve sinned, ushering sin into the world (Genesis 3:1-13), bringing a physical curse upon the race (Genesis 3:16-24), separating themselves from God by sin (Genesis 3:16-24), and altering their character such that they became knowledgeable of both good and evil (Genesis 3:22). Although Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God, they did not immediately become depraved, but were knowledgeable of both good and evil (Genesis 3:22). All children begin life as fresh and innocent as Adam and Eve (compare Deuteronomy 1:39 with Genesis 3:22). They begin life in an innocent, pure, and humble state, which God fellowships (Matthew 18:1-5; 19:14).

Given enough time, all men reach a time of accountability and eventually sin (Romans 7:9-11; Romans 3:23). Death and sin spread through the world, not because Adam sinned, but "because all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Like Adam and Eve, their sins separate them from God (Isaiah 59:2). Similarly, they do not immediately become depraved, but become subject to the gradual depravity, which God inflicts as a consequence of continually rejecting Him (Romans 1:18-32). Once a person rejects truth and providence long enough, which are the works of the Holy Spirit and the calling mechanisms of God (II Thessalonians 2:13-14; James 1:18; I Peter 5:10; John 16:7-15; and Psalm 119:67, 71), then man's conscience becomes seared, and he becomes utterly depraved and ceases to be reachable and repentable (Mark 3:28-30; Romans 1:21, 28; Ephesians 4:17-19; I Timothy 4:1-2). However, this is only accomplished through great stubbornness, resisting unavoidable pleas to repentance (Acts 9:5; Romans 2:4-10; II Peter 3:9).

If any time during this rebellion, man responds to the gospel (Romans 1:16), repents and is baptized (Acts 2:38), then God add him to the church (Acts 2:38), draws closer to him (James 4:6-8) and helps him continue to grow closer to Him through His Word (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Corinthians 3:18; James 1:21-25). If the Christian remains faithful to God and His Word, then he will ultimately be saved and reconciled to God (I Corinthians 15:1-2; Hebrews 10:35-39); however, if he again turns to evil, rebuilding the old prison of sin, then he will be lost (Galatians 2:17-18; I Corinthians 9:26-27; 10:12; Galatians 5:4; II Peter 2:20-22).

Why do people sin? We sin because we are drawn away by the lusts (I John 2:15-17), which are part of our natural body (Romans 8:20-21), and transgress God's commandments (James 1:14-15). Why does God save? God saves because He loves the whole world and does not want any one to be lost and destroyed (John 3:16; II Peter 3:9) - a far nobler goal than just to heap up His own glory. Why do men choose to be saved? Men sin, which separates them from God, but because of their Godlike nature (Genesis 1:26), they regret in their conscience and seek something better, maybe not knowing what or where, to which God responds in mercy (Romans 1:16; Matthew 21:28-31; II Corinthians 7:9-11; James 4:6-10; Acts 17:26-31). What is the basis of our salvation? How are we justified? It is certainly not by being wicked (Exodus 23:7; Proverbs 17:15), or by justifying ourselves over God (Job 32:2; 40:8; Luke 7:29). But, we are justified first and foremost by accessing through baptism God's gracious gift of His Son's blood shed on the cross, which provides forgiveness of sins (Isaiah 53:11; Romans 3:24; 5:9). When we humbly submit to God's Will through obedient faith in baptism (Luke 18:14; James 4:5-10; Acts 2:38), our sins are forgiven (Acts 15:38-39; 2:38), and our faith is substituted for the meritorious works which we should have accomplished (Romans 3:28; 4:2-5). This faith is evidenced, judged, and perfected through obedience to God's will (James 2:14-26; Matthew 12:37). Ultimately, it requires God working *and* man working (Philippians 2:12-13). Eliminating either is an unbiblical extreme. It is not that God could not have done it another way, but this is the way He revealed to us; therefore, it is the way that He chose and we must accept it, if we want to be saved ...