

5. Pauline Theology & Calvinism:

A Comparative Study

I . Introduction

1) Core of Pauline Theology:

The gospel of grace through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, justification by faith, and new life in the Holy Spirit.

2) Core of Calvinism:

The absolute sovereignty of God, double predestination, total depravity, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

II . Core Doctrinal Comparison

Topic	Pauline Theology	Calvinism
Soteriology	Salvation by grace through faith (Romans 3:28)	Only the elect are saved; double predestination
Free Will	Humanity is weak due to sin but capable of responding to the gospel	Total depravity – denies genuine free will
Predestination	Predestined "In Christ" (Ephesians 1:4); purpose-oriented	Unconditional election of individuals to salvation or reprobation
Atonement	Atonement for all (1 Timothy 2:6)	Limited atonement – for the elect only
Grace	Grace that can be accepted by faith	Irresistible grace – cannot be resisted
Perseverance	Emphasis on the responsibility to remain in faith (Romans 11:22)	Perseverance of the saints – salvation cannot be lost

III . Key Interpretive Differences

1) Election and Reprobation

- (1) Paul: Election is tied to vocation and purpose in Christ.
- (2) Calvin: Election determines eternal salvation or damnation of individuals.

2) Universality vs. Limitation of Salvation

- (1) Paul: The gospel is open to both Jews and Gentiles(Romans 1:16).
- (2) Calvin: Salvation is for the elect only.

3) Gospel Invitation and Human Response

- (1) Paul: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

- (2) Calvin: Only the elect can truly respond to the gospel.

IV. Theological Implications

1) Theodicy:

- (1) Calvinism emphasizes divine sovereignty but may lack an adequate explanation for human suffering and reprobation.
- (2) Pauline theology upholds both God's justice and mercy within the covenant.

2) Missional Passion and Gospel Proclamation

- (1) Paul: Emphasizes the universal mission of preaching the gospel to all humanity.
- (2) Calvinism: Emphasizes assurance for the elect but may weaken missionary motivation.

V. Conclusion

- 1) Pauline theology highlights a Christ-centered gospel, justification by faith, and a balance between divine grace and human responsibility.
- 2) Calvinism emphasizes God's sovereignty and assurance of salvation, but may undermine the universal call of the gospel and human response as seen in Paul's writings.