

Tolerant Calvinism

We live in a time of great darkness. Religion is, as it always has been, very popular. For all of the proliferation of religion, even "Bible-believing" religion, love for the truth is as scarce as hen's teeth.

In the trendy, polished world of contemporary "Reformed" Christianity, the lie of the false gospel has been all but conceded as a legitimate and proper expression of the faith, rough edges notwithstanding. "Reformed" is most commonly used today to refer to one preference of Christian faith among others, like a choice at an ecclesiastical and theological salad bar.

False doctrine is worse when it goes under the cover of the truth, when it quotes Scripture, and sings "Amazing Grace". Satan is always at his best in opposing the truth when he does it in the name of Christ. A qualified affirmation of truth is a thousand times worse than an outright rejection of truth. A lie under the cover of truth is greater poison than a shameless lie.

There has never been a more subtle expression of false doctrine than that which affirms all the "truths" of the Christian faith on the basis of human effort, merit of works, foreseen faith, or "free will." To affirm grace on the condition of works is the ultimate perversion. It is The Lie.

And much of the "Reformed" establishment has made peace with it. Apologists for the truth of the "Reformed Faith" have become apologists for Arminianism, defending the false gospel as a less consistent version of the same gospel as that of the Apostle Paul, of Calvin, Knox, Turretin, and Owen. We defend what we believe ourselves.

In reading classical Reformed writers (for example, John Owen in his "Display of Arminianism"), one is not left with the impression that they saw the distinction between themselves and those who intentionally qualified and "interpreted" the grace of God as allowing for human participation and merit as a difference between those who are "more consistent" and those who are "less consistent." To reduce the issue of God's grace in the gospel to a gentlemanly discussion about who has the greater degree of ability to put puzzle pieces together to make a consistent whole is to miss the point of the gospel? Which is not about being smart, but being forgiven on account of the blood and imputed righteousness of Christ.

The confession of the gospel has profound moral implications. To see the grace of God (as the false gospel of "Evangelical Arminianism" does) as conditioned on something in the sinner is evil, and it is not something that calls for a condescending pat on the head by those who consider themselves of more refined theological taste, as if the distinction between "The Reformed Faith" and the "Evangelical Arminian" gospel were nothing more than intellectual development and a few good books.

Should we not seek the repentance of those who say something evil about God's grace? Is it harsh or proud to do so, as we have been accused repeatedly by many in the "Reformed" establishment? Indeed, if the charge of spiritual pride has warrant, it is justified by those who tolerate the "Evangelical Arminian" lie about Christ and His Cross as though it were nothing more than a benign case of theological miss-punctuation.

Consider how "Tolerant Calvinism" manifests outstanding spiritual pride:

By speaking peace to those who espouse many different and contradictory "versions" of the grace of God in the gospel, the "Tolerant Calvinist" assumes that such tolerance is reasonable and legitimate due to the supposed fact that the truth of God's grace is "not easy" to understand? As if it were not wholly impossible to understand apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. God is almighty, He loves His dear Son supremely, and He gave the life of His Son to gain the salvation of His elect people. He brings them, by the power of His mighty arm, to confess the truth of His forgiveness and grace with the simple yet supernatural acknowledgment that He alone saves. This confession is a miracle, a gift to those who heretofore have known only the language of a foreign god. The gift of God is a good and perfect gift. To slight God's grace, and to qualify grace by asserting oneself as the reason for His forgiveness, is the supreme insult

one can pay to Him who did not spare His own Son because righteousness could not be secured by other than the shedding of His blood.

Those who advocate tolerance of confessions which thus insult God's grace may encourage us to be patient and affirming with persons who "don't see it just the way we do", with the idea that they have not read as much in

"Reformed Theology" or learned to see the "full orb'd consistency" of the biblical teaching about the gospel. "Patience" with others "who don't see grace just the way we do" can indeed be a subtle form of pride, like the

pride of an expert rifle marksman who assures one of his students, "To even touch the paper at 100 yards is a great achievement."

If one seeks to avoid the paternalistic attitude I just mentioned by pointing out that "God does not reveal His grace to all with equal clarity," he cannot avoid an even worse self-indicting pride. Why? He blames God for granting a false confession. He blames God for revealing an "unclear" apprehension of His grace (i.e., a sinful understanding—which conditions grace on something in the sinner). It takes great pride and arrogance to say something like this about God. We should rather see our own sin in a false confession than teach that God has done such a poor job in communicating His truth that a false confession should be extended tolerant absolution.

No one would dispute the fact that Christians grow to understand the grace of God more and more for their entire Christian lives. Nevertheless, the grace we understand more deeply and thoroughly is the same grace. An understanding of "grace" that changes from "grace" as requiring some human work or goodness as the reason for it, to "grace" wholly free of the merit of human righteousness or work, does not speak of the same "grace," but two entirely different things. For "grace" that depends on man is not "grace" at all, but payment in consideration of some achievement. Payment is getting something you deserve. The grace of God is wholly undeserved.

When a "tolerant Calvinist" says, "God does not reveal His grace to all with equal clarity," and means that people who qualify "grace" by pointing to their "foreseen faith" or their "free will" actually believe the same "grace" but with not as much "clarity" as others, he lies about God's grace, which, though a lifetime and an eternity will be spent growing in its implications, is nevertheless the same substantial reality for a baby Christian as for a seasoned saint of many years.

God does not "modify" Himself according to the personal preferences, sincerity, or native intelligence of the one to whom He chooses to reveal Himself. He does not first reveal Himself to the sinner as an "Arminian" god (a god who depends on us to give his "grace") and later helps the sinner to see He is a "Calvinistic" God (a God on whom we are utterly dependent for grace).

By suggesting that the "Arminian" version of grace, which conditions grace on human effort and merit, as a legitimate, though "less clear" version of grace, it is inferred that God cannot guard His own grace in the lives of His people to exclude confessions which actually deny it. For example, to say I believe in Jesus because of some inclination, some free will, or some "foreseen faith" is to say that grace is a response to something in me, which makes it a payment. This is a denial of true, biblical grace. The Bible clearly teaches that God is the Author of a person's faith and is the One by whom a true confession is made.

Is God pleased with a confession of His "grace" that conditions His grace on human effort or human will? Does He depend on us for a confession that He, for all His mighty power, is unable to bring about in a way other than what amounts to a slighting disrespect for the accomplishment of His Son? Many who call themselves "Reformed" or "Calvinists" would have us believe that God would do this. The fact is He would not, and could not, for God cannot deny Himself.

Consider that the "tolerant Calvinist" cannot avoid espousing a view of God which is entirely contrary to the Scriptures: In advocating tolerant acceptance (rather than repentance) of the "Evangelical Arminian"

confession, the "tolerant Calvinist" implicates God either as a weak god (unable to prevent a confession which denigrates his glory and happy for whatever acknowledgment he receives) or as a god who actively promotes and solicits falsehood about the administration and essential character of his saving work. It is difficult to imagine the magnitude of the pride which would believe that God is either unable or unwilling to do for others what he has done for you in giving you a "more clear" or "more consistent" understanding of grace. The Pharisees had nothing on this refinement. Korah's sanctimonious egalitarianism appears tame by comparison.

The blood of Christ was shed to secure the glory of God in His salvation of sinners. God is glorified in a confession (given by His Spirit through the gospel) which ascribes all praise and honor to Him alone for a work which depends on nothing in the sinner for its accomplishment.

By not actively seeking repentance from those who believe the lie of "Evangelical Arminianism" but rather tolerating their "less consistent" confession as a biblically legitimate expression of true faith, "tolerant Calvinists" evidently regard the blood of Christ as a common thing, and insult the Spirit of grace. If you are a "tolerant Calvinist" and are reading this, you should fall on your face before God and cry to him for mercy, holding on to the righteousness of Christ alone, and hating every bit of your former life of spiritual pride and indifference to the grace of God.

If you fear God and love His truth, you know why words like those above will only incite the anger of the "tolerant Calvinist" who continues in his unrepentant denial of the power of the gospel. I once had the experience of speaking to a well-known tolerant Calvinist about the spiritual pride here discussed. His response was to utter a vulgarity. He was incensed that I would suggest he, a great "Reformed" theologian, was expressing spiritual pride in his condescending acceptance of "Evangelical Arminianism".

His anger confirmed the very pride he so vehemently denied, and belied the "humility" he wore so well.

In this day of great darkness, may God humble us indeed before Him, and bring us to love, honor, and defend the truth of His grace, even if all men hate us for it.

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http://www.sgc-gettysburg.org/writings/tolerant_calvinism.asp