



Essay: Survivin' Ivan; Hermeneutics: Calvin & Bèza: Hyper-Calvinism's Five Points & the Presbyterian Church of America

SURVIVIN' IVAN

I've been through several hurricanes over the years. All were between 50 and 125 miles inland. I don't remember them all by name but the ones that stand out are the two whose eyes came right over the house. The first was in Alabama but that was 125 miles inland. The one that hit Houston came right up the Ship Channel, turned north up Post Oak Road, and then took a left hand turn at Westheimer Road and went due west. It was probably a category three or four. When it went over the house the trees leaned west almost 45 degrees with their limbs flailing about like the fluff of pom-poms. Then, when the eye moved over the wind stopped, the sun came out, and the birds sang—for twenty minutes. We used the time to try and get a limb off the roof but to no avail. Then the second blow came, this time pushing the trees in the same fashion as before but this time they leaned to the east. When it was over there was again peace and quiet but mass destruction was done to Houston. For us, the storm's encore blew the limb off the roof and other than that we suffered no damage.

These experiences were vectored into my conscious mind when the slow but relentless progress of Hurricane Ivan revealed that it was headed right toward Mobile Bay as a category 5 monster. I knew what the last category 5 had done to the Southeast. Camille came in at Pass Christian, Mississippi, back in the mid '70s and its power when it hit my hometown of Troy, Alabama, was tremendous. My parents lost 17 pine trees on that occasion, one onto the house which crushed the gable over what was previously my room.

Category 5s are to be taken not only seriously but soberly. To prepare you must be aware of every possible circumstance the storm could create and prepare accordingly. This is easy to do if you are in good health and have your five senses up and running. Not possible when you are recovering from pneumonia at age 86 and blind from macular degeneration at age 87. Such was the circumstance for my step-mother, Virginia, and my dad, Douglass Griffin. I knew they could not even prepare for the storm, let alone ride it out, without assistance. So on Monday, September 16, Jo Henra, Shane, and I headed out for Alabama.

Our daughter Shannon, son-in-law Chris, and grandchildren, Ryan and Andie, live in Trussville, a suburb of Birmingham. The plan was to base there until Wednesday. Since the excitement alone would be stress enough I decided that I would go to Troy and leave the rest in Birmingham to ride out the storm there which was expected to be nothing more than rain once its remnants arrive that far north.

I can tell you that the best time to travel is toward an approaching hurricane. When I left Wednesday morning headed south on I-65, 95 percent of the traffic was headed north away from Ivan. A 135-mile trip that usually takes two and one half hours got done in two hours flat. It was just me and a few others who for whatever reason were riding into the mouth of the beast.

I arrived in Troy about noon and after having lunch I began to inspect the premises for missiles. A missile is something that to the casual eye is nonthreatening but before 100-mile-per-hour winds becomes airborne, achieves velocity, and crashes into things such as large picture windows, a feature that occupies several rooms at Pap and Virginia's house. Pot plants were placed behind the patio wall. Bird feeders which dangled innocently outside one of the picture windows was removed, much to the consternation of Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal who glared into the den when they came and found it missing.

Lawn furniture once on the move skids and crashes into anything in its path including the cars parked next to them on the terrace. They had to be secured. Even the dog's food and water bowls had to go. All curtains were pulled. All inside doors were closed. Once a room is penetrated the prevailing wind tears up its interior in a matter of minutes and then begins to gnaw its way through the house. Closing doors helps isolate it to the point of entry, if you're lucky.



Next comes the logistical preparation. You assume you will lose power so you have flashlights, batteries, and candles ready for the moment. Since the oven and microwave are electric there must be nonperishable food available: canned goods, fruit, soup, matches and charcoal for the grill, and plenty of bottled water if the water supply becomes contaminated. The food in the freezer and refrigerator will last from 12 to 24 hours but you never know how long the power will be out.

By nightfall all was done that could be done so we sat down and watched the Weather Channel. As the storm inched toward Mobile it remained a category 5 with 155 mile-per-hour winds. There seemed to be no prospect of it weakening. The cyclone's right side is the most devastating once it moves inland. This threatened all beachfront structures from Panama City to Pensacola. Virginia's beach house at Panama City Beach was washed away by a dead hit from Hurricane Opal in 1995. Built back in accordance with new beachfront building codes the hope was that it would withstand what its predecessor could not.

At about nine o'clock Wednesday night, September 15th I received a telephone call from an old friend in Houston. Mike Kelly is also from Troy and we both moved to Houston to attend Berachah Church in 1976. He knew what was coming because he had the same experiences with hurricanes as we. We joked around and then he asked me if there was anything he could do for us. I said, "Yeah, pray that the weather angels could weaken this storm in some way." He said he'd do the best he could.

I returned to the vigil of watching the storm's progress on television. About an hour later the update revealed an interesting turn of events. The reporter pointed out a development occurring in the western Gulf, a squall line moving east from Texas causing the left side of the cyclone to compress on the eye and slowing its winds down to a category 4. This was some good news but nothing to get too excited about.

Then as the system moved ever closer to the Alabama coast the next update noted yet another answer to prayer. As it moved north the eastern coast of Louisiana created pressure on the western side of the cyclone that began to tear into the left side of the eye. By the time it hit Orange Beach, Alabama, early Thursday morning it had diminished down to a category 3—a real good blow but far less than a 5 would have been. It took a course north, northeast up Interstate 65 passing some 50 miles to the west of Troy. The destruction along its path was severe but its power had subsided enough so that its impact on Troy was tolerable. However, we did not know its path when we went to bed around 11 o'clock Wednesday night.

I insisted that we sleep in the basement where we were more protected from the coming winds. Virginia's recovery from pneumonia was dependent upon her breathing pure oxygen as she sleeps. This device pulls oxygen out of the air and pumps it into a hose so it can then be inhaled.

This equipment had to be moved from the master bedroom to a downstairs guest bedroom. Flashlights were placed in key positions and we turned in ready to face the arrival of Ivan. I slept on a rollaway right beside a window facing the back yard.

The house is set in a small forest of oaks, pines, and maple trees. None have been planted recently. Most are over 100 feet tall with long imposing limbs that loom precariously over the house. The winds picked up not long after midnight and began to snap the weaker limbs in two and hurl them about. All night long I was awakened from a very light sleep by the noise of falling limbs, especially those that banged onto the roof. The rain was intense and a downspout outside the window roared throughout the night.

We all got up around six o'clock, ate breakfast, and then settled in to observe the continued onslaught. As is the case with hurricanes, wind is a constant companion punctuated by incessant gusts. Ivan's caused monster pines to lean under their power and then sway in an attempt to return to their upright positions. Their back-and-forth maneuver of their efforts appeared as giant metronomes trying to keep time for one of Dmitry Shostakovich's symphonies. I wondered each time whether with the next gust one would not make its way back but become uprooted, leaving a hole in the woods that it had filled for probably a century.

The huge system continued without pause until late afternoon. I never heard any official reports but I'd estimate that the gusts were of hurricane strength. The sustained winds were probably of strong gale force which is around 50 miles per hour, possibly stronger. Whatever their force they were enough to set off an adventure that lasted for the next three days.



The power went off around eleven o'clock Thursday morning. Its prospect of coming on anytime soon was smashed by two falling oaks that couldn't stand up to the pressure, one across the street from the house fell directly into the front yard, blocking the street, and pulling power and telephone lines down on its way. We were as prepared as we could be as far as food and water were concerned but Virginia's oxygen machine was apparently useless for as much as two weeks if Opal's aftermath was used as a measure.

The winds subsided by late Friday afternoon and I began to use the amount of daylight left to begin the cleanup. The issue that most concerned me was the downed telephone line. The prospect of a repairman coming before I would leave for St. Louis was remote. I did not think I could leave Pap and Virginia in that house under the circumstances with no way of communicating with the outside world.

I decided I'd take a look at the downed lines and discovered that although the power lines were trapped underneath the tree, the telephone line had snapped and I was able to pull both ends out through the limbs. Once untangled, there was enough slack for me to pull both ends together. Now if I could only figure out a way to splice the line and pray that there was still a connection with the telephone company. The first miracle to occur was my effort at being a telephone repair man.

As you all know I am no Mr. Fix It. I am authorized to operate only regular and Phillips head screw drivers. But on this occasion I took on the challenge of wire clippers, a pocket knife, and a pair of needle nose pliers. I sat in the front yard on a lawn chair and began the task of intertwining each of four color-coded wires together and securing the splices with electrical tape. Once done I went inside and picked up the phone. Dial tone! We were connected, at least for the moment. I was very proud of my success in the field of electronic technology. My dad was shocked. It was a task that if my dad still had his sight he could have knocked out in minutes. But the prospect of me accomplishing this task were slim and none. The secret to such an assignment is to give it to someone who is accident prone such as myself. Then, by accident, he will stumble into a successful effort as if my magic or miracle. I assumed the latter.

Now my attention turned to restoration of power. How long would it be out? How long would the food hold out? How long could I stay? About then a neighbor showed up. Barrett Foster lived on the corner. He had spoken with his father who lived in a part of town that had not suffered a power outage and who had a generator he was not using. Barrett had gone to get it for Pap and Virginia. It was a Troy Built 5550 and we had it hooked up in minutes. We quickly stretched extension cords throughout the house and soon we had the oxygen machine and a lamp turned on in Virginia's bedroom. Another line fired up the freezer in the basement. Then we plugged in the refrigerator, microwave, and lamp in the kitchen. And finally, a lamp and the television in the den.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the generator will run eight hours on a tank full of gas which is five gallons. This meant I had to make a run to the service station for a refill so we could reload Friday morning. I made this circuit six times. I filled up at 7 A.M., 3 P. M., and 11 P.M. and refueled on each occasion before power was restored.

With no wind, limbs, or rushing water to bombard the night, exhausted, we all slept well. The next day we would begin the clean up. If you've ever picked up a limb on your lawn and carried it to the street it's a chore that is done almost without thinking. Do that a thousand times and you start thinking—"I'm tired. I want some water. I'd like to sit down. Whaaa!" No time for these things. There was a hundred foot tree to move, those thousand limbs, and a million leaves.

Then more grace appeared. Mike Kelly's brother, Mark, showed up with his son, Nathan, and a chain saw. He dismembered the top of the tree as Nathan and I carried the pieces to the street. We got the tree trimmed down to a size that the city maintenance crew would eventually take over and finish but it was impossible to know when. Then came the task of cleaning up the yard. Pap and I worked on the front yard, driveway, and terrace until lunch with the big job of cleaning up the back yard and its huge collection of limbs assigned for the afternoon.



Before getting back to work I began to have concern about the power. I realized that it was not a problem for me to drive several blocks to fill up the gas can; it was simple to pour it into the generator, and a no-brainer to pull the crank. But a blind man can't do these things. How long would this generator be the lone source of energy for the house and its equipment? I decided I had to talk to a city father. I drove downtown to the utilities department and ran into the man who knew my old friend Bo Gaylard. I told him my dilemma and explained that I was not trying to hurry anything along but in order to arrange my schedule I needed to get an idea of when power might be restored to Hillcrest Boulevard. He didn't know but he hollered for another man across the way. He turned out to be a honcho with the city power department. Once I filled him in he got on the project and told me he'd call me with an answer in a couple hours.

For some reason I believed him. Hopeful, I headed back home and on the way saw a telephone truck parked in front of a house about three blocks from Pap and Virginia's. I got out and found the phone man and told him the situation. I didn't know how long my miraculous splice would last and he said he'd turn my name into the repair crew. For some reason I believed him also.

Result? This was Friday afternoon. The new power lines were up and power back on by 6 o'clock Saturday afternoon. The telephone man arrived at 10 o'clock Sunday morning. By then Pap and I had cleaned up the back yard of all its debris, topping off a pile of logs, limbs, and leaves that stretched some 40 feet along the curb.

Pap and I made a trip to the grocery store for food and supplies before I left for Trussville Sunday afternoon. The crew up there had only to endure an extended downpour of rain with little wind and no damage.

Monday, Jo Henra, Shane and I returned to Troy to make sure all was in order and have a short time to visit which up until then had been impossible. Shane and I helped Pap with some final details in the yard and took care of Virginia's request to rehang the bird feeder. With order restored to the house, Pap and Virginia back in pre-storm status quo, and Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal well fed, we made our way back to Trussville.

And regarding the beach house: The man who built it called with a report Saturday morning. The storm surge wiped out the sand dunes in front of the house and set off the burglar alarm. That's it. Retrospectively, it was safer on Panama City Beach than in Troy, Alabama. But when it comes to class 3 hurricanes, you'll take your chances 125 miles inland every time.

On Tuesday, Shannon, Ryan, and Andie accompanied us on a twelve-hour, two-car pilgrimage to St. Louis where we woke up Wednesday to clear skies, mild temperatures, and not a sign of Ivan anywhere to be seen.

We appreciate the many prayers and inquiries about our efforts to survive Ivan. The prayers were answered in abundance. All is well for Pap and Virginia. We are so appreciative of the gracious provisions provided to us by neighbors and friends in Troy. And we are glad to be back in St. Louis and the opportunity to resume our advance in the plan of God whose grace to us was unmeasured and for which we are grateful.

37. Cyril was successful in selling his duplicitous version of what Nestorius taught. This same tactic was used by Lucifer a thousand years later against John Calvin.
38. Like Nestorius, Calvin's theology was distorted by another so that a grossly heretical doctrine emerged that carried his name: five-point Calvinism.
39. This branch of "Calvinism" is famous for its assertion that salvation is provided only to a predetermined few and is expressed in the extremely controversial doctrine of "limited atonement."



39. Although Calvin taught “unlimited atonement,” his doctrine was distorted by his successor at Geneva, Theodore Bèza.
40. Nestorius’s doctrine of the hypostatic union was correct but distorted by Cyril. Likewise, Calvin’s view of unlimited atonement was correct but distorted by Bèza.
41. In order to illustrate the satanic tactics used from generation to generation to distort Scripture and in so doing confuse its clear message from God to man, we took up a study of the difference between Calvin and Bèza’s doctrines of atonement.

Calvin & Bèza

1. Several Protestant denominations adopted the concept of limited atonement from the University of Geneva which was founded in 1559 by John Calvin (1509-1564). Its first rector was Theodore Bèza (1519-1605), a French Humanist who became Calvin’s successor and principal leader of Reformed Protestantism.
2. Today certain Reformed churches subscribe to what is described as five-point Calvinism. These five paragraphs are (1) total depravity, (2) unconditional election, (3) limited atonement, (4) irresistible grace, and (5) perseverance of the saints.
3. These five points, *as defined by Reformed theology*, are in opposition to biblical testimony. Our study emphasized number three: limited atonement.
4. It is this paragraph that has brought much tension among members of the body of Christ with reference to the assurance of the believer.
5. Bèza developed this doctrine after Calvin died but it acquired Calvin’s name and became part of what is known as Calvinism.
6. However, Calvin did not teach limited atonement. He alluded to it in his earlier work called *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, writings on the doctrines of the Bible that were first published in 1536, just four years after his conversion from Humanism to Christianity.
7. Therefore, Reformed theology was developed first of all by Calvin, then Bèza, both of whom were humanists. Of Calvin’s 52 years only twenty were spent as a believer.
8. Calvin did get squared away on the doctrine of atonement; his *Commentaries* reveal his understanding of unlimited atonement.
9. Confirmation of Calvin’s final position on the issue of atonement is provided by Dr. R. T. Kendall in his book, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. His conclusions are validated by the research of Dr. M. Charles Bell in his book, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance*.
10. Regardless of these findings, Bèza’s doctrine of limited atonement found its way into England and Scotland and eventually to the United States.
11. It is quite popular today especially in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). On its Web site’s page regarding the denomination’s history we find the following paragraph:



The doctrines of grace, which depict what God has done for mankind's salvation: (1) *Total depravity of man*. Man is completely incapable within himself to reach out towards God. Man is totally at enmity with God, cf. Romans 3:10-23. (2) *Unconditional election by the grace of God*. There is absolutely no condition in any person for which God would save him. As a matter of fact, long before man was created, God chose or predestined some to everlasting life. He did this out of His mere good pleasure, cf. Ephesians 1:4 and 5. (3) **Particular atonement**. God in His infinite mercy, in order to accomplish the planned redemption, sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die as a substitute for the sins of a large but specific number of people, cf. Romans 8:29 and 30. (4) *The irresistible grace of God*. This is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit moving upon a particular person whom He has called, applying the work of redemption, cf. John 3:5 and 6. (5) *The perseverance of the saints*. This is that gracious work of God's sanctification whereby He enables a saved person to persevere to the end. Even though the process of sanctification is not complete in this life, from God's perspective it is as good as accomplished, cf. Romans 8:30, 38, and 39, and Philippians 1:6.
<http://www.pcanet.org/general/history.htm>