

25. These “good works” prove to the person that he is sanctified and that Jesus Christ indwells him. Consequently, faith in one’s “good works” is the proof that one’s faith in Christ was efficacious.
26. It is important that we discredit this immediately. The word “faith” is the translation of the Greek noun, **πίστις, (pístis)**. The verb form, **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**, is translated “believe.” The definitions of these two words are obviously synonymous:

πιστεύω, (pisteúō) 1. To believe in something; to be convinced of something. The person to whom one gives credence: Jesus and God whom one believes, in that he accepts their disclosures without doubt or contradiction. (pp. 660-61)

2. Faith in the Divinity that lays special emphasis on trust in his power and his nearness to help, in addition to being convinced that he exists and that his revelations or disclosures are true, In our literature, God and Christ are objects of this faith. (p. 661)

πίστις (pístis) 2. Trust and confidence directed toward God and Christ, their revelations, teachings, promises, and their power and readiness to aid.² (p. 662)

27. Both the noun and the verb are transitive. The merit is found in the object not the subject. The person who believes places his confidence for salvation in an object that he is certain is qualified to accomplish the desired effect: salvation and eternal life.
28. Jesus Christ is the only person qualified to accomplish this desired effect and this is stated repeatedly in Scripture.
29. Bèza was unable to find confidence in his salvation before placing confidence in his “good works.” In effect, he places his faith in his works to verify his faith in Christ.
30. However, faith by its definition asserts that the one possessing it is absolutely convinced that the Word of God is true regarding Christ as Savior. Further, one is also convinced that by believing in the Person and work of Christ, he is indeed saved, among the elect, and with eternal life.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 660–61, 662.

31. The definitions of **πίστις** (*pístis*) and **πιστεύω** (*pisteúō*) unite the concepts of faith and assurance: if you believe in Christ for salvation then you believe in the promises that are attached to salvation: deliverance from the lake of fire, forgiveness of presalvation sins, and the imputation of eternal life.
32. Reformed theology that emerged from Bèza's distortions of Calvin's writings is regarded by some as hyper-Calvinism. This branch of denominational Christianity subscribes to the supralapsarian order of the elective decree.
33. Those who reject this statement by Reformed theology are classified as "moderate Calvinists" although the term "Biblicist" would be better.
34. Biblicists subscribe to The Infralapsarian Order of the Elective Decree:
 - 1- The decree to create mankind.
PRINCIPLE: You cannot elect what does not exist. For God to elect anyone, they must first of all be created.
 - 2- The decree to permit the Fall.
PRINCIPLE: Condemnation must precede salvation. If man is in need of salvation then he is obviously in a fallen condition.
 - 3- The decree to provide salvation for all mankind.
PRINCIPLE: The doctrine of unlimited atonement, the principle that Christ died as a substitute for the sins of all mankind, not just a predetermined few.
 - 4- The decree to elect those who believe in Christ and to leave in just condemnation all who do not believe.
PRINCIPLE: God provides all men free will to accept or reject His grace offer of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone.
 - 5- The decree to apply salvation to those who believe in Christ.
PRINCIPLE: Each individual must first choose God's plan of salvation, after which, God decrees to save that person's soul and impute eternal life to his human spirit.

35. The infralapsarian order of the elective decree lines up with the doctrine that emerges from Scripture, not the specious writings of a French theologian.
36. Those who subscribe to the infralapsarian order also believe in these principles:
- Salvation is given by grace to *anyone* who responds to the gospel through faith alone in Christ alone.
- One's assurance of salvation is found in the promises given to the sinner who believes in Christ.
- One's "good works" are indeed commanded but *only the believer can produce them* and then only through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit with pertinent application of resident doctrine in the soul.
37. Those who subscribe to the supralapsarian order have been taught instead that:
- Salvation is predestined for the *elect only* and is appropriated by means of the "gift of grace" which empowers the elect to believe in Christ.
- One's assurance of salvation is found in lifelong *perseverance* in the production of "fruits" or "good works."
- The *absence* of such perseverance indicates such a person is not among the elect and therefore reprobate, predestined forever to the lake of fire.
38. The latter approach to salvation finds its origin in the angelic conflict and the brainchild of Lucifer himself. Works replace grace and human viewpoint trumps the gospel of salvation.
39. One of the reasons is a misunderstanding of the doctrine of election, the assumption that God selected the elect in eternity past and doing so before man was even created.
40. Supralapsarianism's approach to the elective decree is also known as hyper-Calvinism which only varies in nuance but not in substance from the Catholic view.
41. The impact of hyper-Calvinism in America was amplified in a speech delivered by Dr. Zane C. Hodges at Trinity Divinity School in 1989.

42. In his address, Dr. Hodges quoted liberally the writings of Dr. R. T. Kendall and Dr. M. Charles Bell, both of whom wrote on English and Scottish Calvinism.
43. In Hodges's closing remarks, his references to Bell lead to several principles that demonstrate the impact of hyper-Calvinism on Protestant Christianity:

Bell argues that the Federal theologians [in Scotland] got away from John Calvin's doctrine of faith and assurance just as assuredly as the [William] Perkins tradition did in England. The result was that they landed themselves in a quagmire when they came to assurance and salvation and they created for themselves all kinds of pastoral problems for which they had no solution.

Both Kendall and Bell are coming out of a different strand of evangelical thought than I do. Their background, and in some respects their theology, diverges from my own. And yet in this very crucial area we are agreed. And we are agreed that the theology we propound is fundamentally the theology of John Calvin, however much of that theology may have been lost and distorted in subsequent centuries.³

44. The following is what Dr. Bell wrote in his book:

... the federalist scheme ("limited atonement" and supralapsarianism) means that one cannot proclaim the love of God in Christ for all, but rather must first preach law in order to convince an individual of his sin and to bring him to repentance and belief in Christ.⁴

45. Bell's dissertation may be summarized as follows:

If only a predetermined elect are saved, then pastors cannot honestly proclaim that the love of God through Christ is available to all men.

Yet, in order to "call out" the elect the pastor must first preach that all have sinned.

Having done this some may be convicted of their sin and seek salvation in Christ.

But of those who believe in Christ, only the predetermined elect may be saved.

³ Zane. C. Hodges, *Lordship Salvation*, audiotope of lecture presented at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., 1989.

⁴ M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985), 200.

The federalist's usual approach for bringing sinners to repentance is to impose the fear of judgment.

46. This point is addressed next by Bell:

Fear of hell and judgment of God is used to bring the sinner to faith. Yet such an "order" is a repudiation of the way of Christ, who sought to urge sinners to faith with the good news that God loves the world and, because of this love, he sent his only Son so that whoever believes in him shall have eternal life.

Whenever God's love and forgiveness are made conditional upon one's repentance, a host of pastoral problems are sure to arise. Perhaps the most serious problem is the pastor's own attitudes. It is not uncommon for pastors to withhold not only God's love and forgiveness, but their own acceptance and approval until they are convinced of a person's sincere and sorrowful repentance.⁵

47. The highlighted sentence brings the issue of "limited atonement" to critical point. The entire thesis breaks down when God's love and forgiveness are withheld contingent upon repentance rather than simple faith in Christ. Here are some of the problems:

When a pastor teaches "limited atonement" he may never assume a member of his flock is truly saved until that member continuously produces the alleged fruits of that conversion.

Both the sinner and the pastor have to find some reason within the life of the individual which indicates that person is among the elect.

Because of this approach, the emphasis is taken off the work of Christ and the grace of God, and instead placed on the works of the believer beginning with public repentance.

Salvation and assurance are therefore not determined through the individual's faith in Christ but in whether he and/or his pastor feel his fruits are sufficient to warrant that conclusion.

Since the elect are the only ones who can be saved then only the elect can do good works and this breeds legalism.

Further, everyone must also be wary of the danger of "temporary faith," the idea that even a non-elect person may for a time produce fruits indistinguishable from those of an elect person.

⁵ Ibid.

Consequently, the assumption is reached that if a person does not constantly demonstrate a repentant attitude accompanied by a consistent lifestyle of good works, then he is not elect but instead reprobate.

This results in variations on the theme taken up by legalistic fundamentalists who say, “He had a *head* belief and not a *heart* belief.”

Another tragic consequence is the plaintive assumption, “I will never be good enough to be saved.”

These false conclusions are conceived right out of the heart of hell and although honestly believed they are wrong and produce self-imposed and self-induced misery.

This blasphemy withholds the love and forgiveness of God through faith in Christ and prevents large numbers of people from entering into the royal family although they are members of local churches.

Just as tragic are those who are saved, but waste a lifetime of energy desperately trying to prove they are.

We are driven to the same conclusion reached by our Lord in His assessment of the hyper-Calvinists’ first-century counterparts, recorded in:

Matthew 23:13 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (NASB)

48. Dr. Hodges’s summarized with this final quote from Bell:

Yet to make love and forgiveness conditional is not only a violation of Scripture, but also of common sense. An individual will always respond more positively to the one who offers unconditional acceptance. Indeed, such acceptance fosters repentance.

On the other hand, if one requires proof of repentance before fully accepting an individual, one usually produces not repentance, but a hardened heart!⁶

49. Hodges concluded his remarks with this final observation:

⁶ Ibid.