

The Love of God: A Conundrum for Calvinists

Christians typically want to affirm all of the following 4 points. But for Calvinists, this is not possible since by definition God does not love **the non-elect**.

1. God is **love** and truly loves all people with selfless agape love.
2. To love someone with selfless agape love is to **desire** their true well-being and **act** to promote their true well-being and flourishing as much as you properly can.
3. The true well-being and flourishing of all people can only be found in **a personal relationship with God**, the Supreme Good, in whose image they have been created.
4. All people are not **saved**; some **perish** and eternally do not flourish.¹

Problem: How can people whom God loves perish eternally?

Arminian solution: Humans have free will as part of the image of God and can resist and reject God's love and their own flourishing. God cannot properly force anyone to love him since forced love is a contradiction.

Calvinist solution: Humans do not have free will, i.e., they cannot resist or reject God's love if he chooses to love them and save them. **Therefore God does not love all people with selfless agape love.** Rather he creates some people for hell and rejects them on purpose so they will eternally not flourish.

¹Points 1-4 are based on Jerry L. Walls, *Does God Love Everyone? The Heart of What is Wrong with Calvinism* (Cascade Books, 2016), p. 30.

Calvinists typically respond to such clear arguments with word games instead of logic. For example:

1. On the contrary! God is love and loves everyone. He just doesn't love everyone equally, but he does love them all. He loves the non-elect (even though he has destined them for hell) while they are alive on earth. He temporarily loves them by gifting them with existence and with the sunshine and rain of common grace.

Answer: We are talking *eternity* here! And we are talking about true agape love and true flourishing, not just a few fleeting days of sunshine and rain. In the balance of eternity those trivial, temporary things don't register on the scale. Such "love" for people whom God has deliberately and irreversibly destined for hell is a travesty of agape love and a denial of God's essence and nature.

2. God does not reject anyone! That would not be good or just. God does not actively reject the non-elect. He just doesn't choose them. He merely passes them over and leaves them to the horrible fate that he decreed for them.

Answer: To irreversibly decree *before someone is born* that he will go to hell is not good or just or loving toward that person. And to not choose someone *is* to reject him. This is purely a matter of definition. Imagine 100 drowning people. And you have the resources to *easily* save all 100. But instead of saving all 100 you choose only 20 and let the rest drown. Of course in doing this you rejected the 80! That is why they are dead. They are dead for no other reason than that *you* wanted them dead. (And that isn't loving.)

For these and other reasons most Christians believe that Calvinism presents us with a God whose love, goodness, and justice fall short of what Scripture describes and demands.²

²By "most Christians" is meant 95-99% of all Christians world-wide since Calvinists, common as they may be in evangelical circles, comprise only 1-5% of the total number of Christians. The "Arminian solution" given above thus isn't so much the solution of *Arminians* as it is the solution of *Christendom*.