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**Ministers:**

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Matthew Martin, Associate  
Douglas Alvarenga, Hispanic

**VISIT US SOON!**

**Sunday:**

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.  
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

**Wednesday:**

Bible Study .....7:00 P.M.

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**THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Dave Miller

Calvinistic teaching claims that all humans have inherited a corrupt spiritual nature due to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Due to this marred and perverse nature, the human heart is desperately deceitful, and man's nature is evil. This doctrine generally is referred to as "total depravity." Calvinists insist that "[e]vil pervades every faculty of his [man's-DM] soul and every sphere of his life. He is unable to do a single thing that is good" (Palmer, 1972). He cannot do, understand, or desire the good: "[t]he corruption extends to **every part** of man, his body and soul" (Steele and Thomas, 1963, emp. in orig.).

Calvinism further maintains that, due to this inherited spiritual depravity, babies are born with a corrupt nature. Babies, therefore, are born depraved and by definition, are in a "lost" state. The only way for babies to be saved is for them to be one of **the elect**-a predetermined few whom God arbitrarily decided to save while condemning all others. Hence, free will does not enter into the question of salvation. The Calvinist maintains that people cannot **choose** to receive salvation from God. They are in a lost condition due to their corrupt spiritual nature, and do not have the ability even to **desire** salvation, let alone to attain it.

While several lines of argumentation from the Bible can be advanced to refute the Calvinist's viewpoint with regard to depravity, one in particular merits notice: the Bible's teaching regarding the spiritual condition of children. Long ago, the prophet Ezekiel, after contrasting the behavior of a father with his son, stated unequivocally: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son" (18:20; cf. vss. 2-19). Jesus, Himself, demonstrated the spiritually safe condition of children when He stated: "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3). Adults must become like children if they wish to be saved! Children hardly can be spiritually depraved! Christ followed up this declaration with a comparable observation: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 19:14).

Since all people are the "offspring of God" (Acts 17:29), they come into this world innocent of sin. That is why Paul, in pointing out that God preplanned to bring Christ into the world through Jacob rather than Esau, stated that the decision was made prior to the birth of the boys: "[F]or the children not yet being born, **nor having done any good or evil**" (Rom. 9:11-emp. added). Likewise, God declared that the King of Tyre, like everyone else had come into the world guiltless, but had become sinful due to his own choices: "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you" (Eze. 28:15). If, at conception, God "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zec. 12:1), why would anyone wish to insist that man's spirit is, nevertheless, corrupt?

Another interesting realization is gleaned from Paul's argumentation in Ro-  
(continued on page 2)

mans—a book unquestionably designed to expound the foundational premise of salvation available in Christ through the Gospel. In chapter seven, Paul contrasts the pre-Christian condition of the sinner with the post-cross availability of full forgiveness. The Law of Moses was, in fact, a **tremendous** law. It was authored by God Himself. It was specifically designed for the perpetual **good** of the people to whom it was addressed, i.e., the Israelites (Deu. 6:24; 10:13). Like all law from God, it enabled people to recognize sin as sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). In short, the law was “holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). However, law did/does not contain within itself the ability to absolve those who violate its precepts. An outside force, one that is above and beyond the law, is necessary to rectify the effects of law infractions (i.e., sin). The Bible refers to this force as “propitiation” (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10) or “atonement” (Rom. 5:11, KJV). Of course, this propitiation is the blood of Jesus.

As Paul expounded these spectacular spiritual realities, he imparted a significant truth regarding the innocence of children, i.e., their non-depraved status. Paul stated: “For apart from the law sin was dead” (Rom. 7:8). He meant that prior to his becoming subject to the law, he was not guilty of any sin. He continued: “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” (Rom. 7:9). When was Paul “alive once without the law”? The only time in a person’s life when he or she is spiritually **alive** in the **absence of law** is before he or she is a responsible, accountable adult. A person is not subject to the law of God until he or she is mature enough to understand and to be responsible for behavior. **Here is the “age of accountability”** to which so many have made reference over the years. Paul was saying that at the time he was a child he was “alive,” i.e., spiritually safe. But when he reached adulthood, and had to face the law’s assessment of his adult decision-making, sin “revived,” i.e., it sprang into existence in his life (see Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 53), “began to live and flourish” (Alford, 1852, 2:380), and he “died,” i.e., he became spiritually dead in sin. This “age of accountability” is not pinpointed in Scripture as a specific age—for obvious reasons: it naturally differs from person to person since it depends upon a variety of social and environmental factors. Children mature at different rates and ages as their spirits are fashioned, shaped, and molded by parents, teachers, and life’s experiences.

It is imperative that every person of an accountable mind and age realize the responsibility that exists. Current culture is characterized by a tendency

to evade responsibility for one’s action. Lawbreakers blame parents, genes, and society for their actions. But if the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that every single accountable human being will one day stand before God and give account for his or her **own** actions. “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” and “each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:10,12).

**REFERENCES**

Alford, Henry (1852), *Alford’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint).  
 Arndt, William and F.W. Gingrich (1957), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).  
 Palmer, Edwin (1972), *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).  
 Steele, David and Curtis Thomas (1963), *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).

*This article is reprinted from the Apologetics Press Website.*  
<http://www.apologeticspress.org/modules.php?name=Read&temid=2256&cat=7>

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 \* **FOREST HILL LADIES’ DAY** \*  
 \* **Saturday, November 4** \*  
 \* **Brunch & Registration begin at** \*  
 \* **8:15 a.m.** \*  
 \* **Theme: “That They May Teach the** \*  
 \* **Young Women...”** \*  
 \* **Titus 2:3-5** \*  
 \* **Speakers:** \*  
 \* **Dianne Callahan Carol Mangrum** \*  
 \* **Carolyn Hayes Deborah Watson** \*  
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**“WORDS FROM THE MASTER”**  
 Forest Hill Church of Christ  
 Wednesdays: 5:00-5:30 P.M.  
 Time Warner Cable - Channel 17

## AM I CONTENT, NO MATTER WHAT?

Matthew Martin

Everyone has a bad day now and then. Some people have so many, they walk around like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh: head hung low, always thinking about how bad things are, wondering how bad things are going to get.

Some people live in luscious mansions, drive sleek and fast cars, and wear expensive clothing --yet are miserable. Others can have nothing, and be miserable, then inherit a large sum of money, and still be miserable. What's the problem?

The problem is: Some people don't know how to be content.

Not that I speak in respect of want:  
for I have learned, in whatsoever state  
I am, therewith to be content (Phil.  
4:11).

Paul understood that in any situation, under any circumstance in which he found himself, how to be content with himself.

Content, meaning, he was **satisfied** with the circumstances in which he found himself. He was content, meaning, he did not complain, no matter what "cards" he was proverbially "dealt."

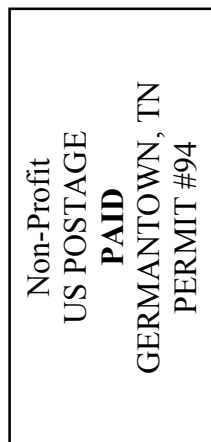
Remember, this is a man who: received 39 stripes from his Jewish brethren, three times was beaten with rods, stoned, and shipwrecked three times.

This is a man who said he faced perils of water, robbers, countrymen, heathens, cities, wilderness, sea, false brethren, pain, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, not to mention the dozens of little things that happened to him every day (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

After all that he endured, we are to believe that he was **content** in those hard times...that he was satisfied?

How can a person go through what he went through and come out saying: "That's okay by me." How can a person go through what he went through without a complaint, without a cross word to God, and without wallowing in self-pity?

What was it that Paul understood, that allowed him to be content in his circumstances?



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To be continued...