



# The Five Points of Calvinism

---

An examination and critique of T.U.L.I.P theology  
according to the Holy Scriptures

By: Joshua Koura

11/11/2014

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM:  
EXAMINED AND CRITIQUED

By  
Joshua Koura

Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements  
For the course English Composition II – Thesis  
Lecturer: Pastor Sam Joukhadar  
Sydney Bible Baptist College  
November 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
The Great Controversy	
The Life of John Calvin	
The Origin of Calvinism	
The T.U.L.I.P Acrostic	
1. <b>T</b> OTAL DEPRAVITY	
ACCORDING TO CALVINISM .....	12
TOTAL DEPRAVITY – REBUTTAL .....	19
2. <b>U</b> NCONDITONAL ELECTION	
ACCORDING TO CALVINISM .....	23
UNCONDITONAL ELECTION – REBUTTAL .....	27
3. <b>L</b> IMITED ATONEMENT	
ACCORDING TO CALVINISM .....	38
LIMITED ATONEMENT – REBUTTAL .....	43
4. <b>I</b> RRESISTIBLE GRACE	
ACCORDING TO CALVINISM .....	50
IRRESISITBLE GRACE – REBUTTAL .....	55
5. <b>P</b> ERSEVERENCE OF THE SAINTS	
ACCORDING TO CALVINISM .....	59
PERSEVERENCE OF THE SAINTS – REBUTTAL .....	63
6. FINAL REMARKS .....	66
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	69

## INTRODUCTION

The theological debate of Calvinism has been controversial to Christianity as a whole. The influential persuasions of Calvinism come knocking at every minister's door. Its influence is immense, vast, and powerful, causing the heart of man to reconsider the fundamental truths of God. Consider the statement of a Calvinist, who paid tribute to Calvin's influential system of theology, he said:

*In modern times no system has had a more potent practical influence than Calvinism... The men who held it felt as if they had their feet upon the last and highest reality, not simply a way of salvation, or a path of peace in death, but a system of absolute truth; and a faith so strong and comprehensive made strong and commanding men...*<sup>1</sup>

The system of Calvinism is a theology that every church around the world must confront as a reality; it cannot be avoided, but must be confronted with a zeal for truth and accurate exegesis. The doctrines of Calvinism have not been buried in the past, rather they have been making a controversial comeback in the twenty-first Century; note the words of the late Dave Hunt in the year 2002:

*I had scarcely given Calvinism a thought for years. Then suddenly - or so it seemed to me - In the past two years Calvinism began emerging as an issue everywhere... it seems to me that this peculiar doctrine is being promoted far more widely and aggressively now than I was ever aware in the past.*<sup>2</sup>

Churches and Bible Colleges around the world are experiencing tremors, splits and schisms concerning the devastations of Calvinism. Whether a pastor, a missionary, a Bible College student, a child, father or a mother, every bible-believing Christian must know where and why they stand in relation to the doctrines of Calvinism. The re-awakening of such controversy has brought the world of believers to the point of decision where they must

---

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Wiles, "Instruction In Christianity: A Summary of Calvin's Institutes" (Here after referred to as "Calvin's Institutes"), Sovereign Grace Union, 1966, 5

<sup>2</sup> Jerry L. Walls & Joseph R. Dongell, "Why I am Not a Calvinist," Intervarsity Press, 2004, 13-14

answer the question: What shall we do with Calvinism? To this question there are only two answers; either submit to its system, or reject its theological stance. Yet this decision should only be made in light of two key Scriptural commands: “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (2 Timothy 2:15). And “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

## ***THE GREAT CONTROVERSY***

The doctrines of Calvinism were clearly laid out in *Calvin's Institutes of Religion* and were presented to King Francis I, the “Most Christian King of the French,” as titled by John Calvin. The intents of such institutions were explained by Calvin himself:

*I merely intended to issue an elementary treatise for the godly edification of those who have some care for religion; and my labours were designed more especially for the benefit of my fellow-countrymen the French... I thought it worth while to use my work as a confession of our faith... that you might know what the doctrine is against which they rage so fiercely.*<sup>3</sup>

Calvin also believed that the doctrines he held to were the doctrines of God: “*We indeed are miserable sinners before God, and despised of men; but our doctrine will stand, exalted above all the glory of the world and unconquered by all its power; for it is not ours, but that of the living God and of His Christ.*”<sup>4</sup> Calvin started writing his *Institutes* in 1536, and they expanded until 1559 where they became, “*...eighty chapters and half a million words, almost as long as the entire Bible.*”<sup>5</sup> It was a catechism for Christian religion, a text book of dogmatic theology dealing with the theory and practice of Christianity, and although it was accepted by the majority of Christian religions, several years later a great controversy began to emerge on the religious scene.

---

<sup>3</sup>Wiles, “Calvin's Institutes,” 9

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 2

By the early 1600s, in Holland, the great controversy sparked between Arminianism and Calvinism. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), the founder of the Arminian party, came to reject certain of Calvin's teachings. The controversy had spread throughout Holland and the Arminians gathered a significant following. This led to the Arminians drawing up their creed in five articles which were presented to the Dutch Reformed church, and later to the Synod of Dort. Nevertheless, the Synod of Dort, holding fast to their Calvinistic persuasions, rejected Arminian theology. Beside the multitude of differences between both theological positions, the outstanding point of disputation laid in the comprehension of the sovereignty of God vs. the free will of man. Arminians held to the autonomy of man's free will in salvation, whereas the Calvinist believed in the election of the sovereign God. Despite these differences, Arminians continued to spread their teachings, yet the strength of Calvinism persevered throughout church history continually accommodating the prominent position. However, although a minority, Arminians still perpetuated and are still in existence today.

The controversy of Calvinism has forced Christians throughout the centuries to be categorized into two main theological banners: Calvinism and Arminianism. These two theological positions are diametrically opposed one to another, and it is rather absurd to suggest that every Christian must view the Scriptures through the eyeglasses of either. Does not every Bible-believing Christian have the right to view the Scriptures as they choose<sup>6</sup>? Must the Christian be labelled under a theological banner to be accepted? More importantly, what if the Scriptures disagree with both classic theological positions which have been determined by fallible man? The Holy Spirit is to be our guide into all truth, "*...when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...*" (John 16:13). This superfluous mould has become part of the normal Calvinistic linguistic to which every Christian must

---

<sup>6</sup> Note: Although every Christian has the right to view the Scriptures as they choose, this doesn't make their position correct or put them in a place where they cannot be corrected. This rhetorical question is to combat the Dark Ages closed minded philosophy where rethinking positions was considered evil.

“fit.” For example, a Calvinist will most probably ask “Are you a Calvinist or Arminian?”

They would ask this question as if to say that there is no other option, yet this is a theological trap to which we need not be snared in. David W. Cloud wisely wrote: *“If men were left simply to believe the Bible’s own statements on these matters and if men were not forced to decide between the man-made theologies called ‘Calvinism’ and Arminianism,’ the Christian world would be much better off...<sup>7</sup>”* So then, will a theological system be the guide, or the Word of God under the illuminating power of the Holy Ghost? Additionally, clarification regarding both theological positions must be made. It cannot be honestly denied that there are several biblical truths to be discovered within both Calvinism and Arminianism which are acceptable and based in the Holy Scriptures. However, much of the reasoning and conclusions of both theological systems are most definitely unscriptural. Both positions lack correct biblical exegesis and are thus non-agreeable to the entire tenor of Scripture.

### ***THE LIFE OF JOHN CALVIN***

John Calvin was a Frenchman who was born into a Roman Catholic family on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1509 in Picardy at Noyon, France. He was born into a family of nine of which there were five sons and two daughters. His father Gerald Calvin managed the business affairs of the local Roman Catholic Church, and consequently John Calvin was deeply involved in Catholicism. At fourteen years of age, John Calvin was sent to Paris to study for the priesthood at the College De La Marche, according to his father’s wishes. There he studied logic, philosophy, and Latin. He was a very intellectual student who exceeded in his classes, yet Calvin was quiet timid and never shared in the amusements of his peers, reprimanding their disorders<sup>8</sup>. Calvin’s father Gerald, due to financial issues, had a falling out with the cathedral chapter

---

<sup>7</sup>David W. Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” (Here after referred to as “The Calvinism Debate”), Way of Life Literature, 2006, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Laurence M. Vance, “The Other Side of Calvinism,” (Here after referred to as “The Other Side of Calvinism,” Vance Publications, 1991, 31

and thus influenced his son to become a lawyer instead of pursuing the cleric and priesthood. Calvin moved to Orleans to commence his study in Law and was considered a teacher, rather than a pupil, as he was "...conducting classes when the professor was absent." Being such a clever student, Calvin graduated and earned a doctorate in Law. Calvin pursued even further education under the famed jurist Andrea Alciati. To add to his linguistic stature, Calvin also studied Hebrew and Greek. Calvin wrote many works during his life. For example, he wrote commentaries on nearly all the books of the Bible<sup>9</sup>; some of his works received recognition while others failed to capture the attention of his peers. Little is known concerning Calvin's conversion to Christ, as he only made a few references to it in his writings<sup>10</sup>. He was impacted by two major influences; one was the witnessing of the burning of a Protestant martyr, and the other was the witness of his cousin, Robert Olivetan<sup>11</sup>. Calvin's cousin Robert was a Waldensian Pastor who had translated the Scriptures into French. He often discussed the Scriptures with Calvin and explained the difference between Salvation by grace and salvation by human merit. Calvin soon came to understand the errors of Catholicism, and repenting from his ways he turned from the Roman Catholic Church and became a Christian. Calvin briefly describes this reform: *"At first, although I was so obstinately given to the superstitions of the Papacy, that it was extremely difficult to drag me from the depths of the mire, yet by a sudden conversion he tamed my heart and made it teachable."*<sup>12</sup> Calvin refers to his conversion as sudden, and of this it has been said that *"Calvin understood his life story as analogous to that of the Apostle Paul, who on his way to Damascus suddenly turned from the sin of opposing Christ to unconditionally serving Christ."*<sup>13</sup> Calvin (soon after his conversion) fled to Paris for fear of persecution by the Roman Catholic Church. He wondered

---

<sup>9</sup> Loraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, (Here after referred to as "Doctrine of Predestination"), EERDMANS, 1932, 406

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 31

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 32

<sup>13</sup> Donald K. McKim, The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin, Cambridge Uni. Press, 2004, 9



as a fugitive evangelist for three years until he reached Geneva in 1536. There in Geneva, Calvin helped the zealous William Farel with the reformation against Rome. He also lectured on the New Testament and acquired the office of a Pastor. In 1538 both Calvin and Farel were banished out of the city of Geneva by the Libertines, who opposed them strongly for their enforcing of a severe system of discipline in Geneva. Calvin then moved to Strassburg, Germany, where he spent three years pastoring a French refugee church serving as a professor of theology and continuing his writing ministry. It was here in Germany where Calvin was married by Farel and had three children who all died at infancy. His wife only eight years after their marriage died also due to health complications. In 1541, Calvin was invited back to Geneva where he reassumed the pulpit that he left in 1538. His first sermon was an exposition from the same place that he left off when he was banished from Geneva. Although Calvin seemed to love the word of God, his interpretation many a times were inaccurate to the plain teachings of Scripture. Calvin was in error in regards to some very cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures; he believed in Amillenialism, church-state government, infant baptism, and was in no way a dispensationalist. John Calvin was known to be aggressive in his treatment of others. Due to his influence in the State, Calvin was often consulted about how to handle State affairs. He based this “theocracy” on the Scriptures to which he applied Old Testament passages to the New Testament economy. The results of this were: three men were imprisoned for three days for laughing during the sermon, a girl was beheaded for striking her parents, and some were burned for witchcraft. Even a man by the name of Michael Servetus was burned at the stake for his publishing of heretical doctrines and blasphemy of God. Michael Servetus was a Pre-millennial, who rejected Roman Catholicism and infant baptism<sup>14</sup>. Although he held a strange view concerning the Trinity, this was no reason for immense contribution to his death sentence. However, it is commonly

---

<sup>14</sup> Vance, “The Other Side of Calvinism,” 38

believed by Calvinists, that John Calvin “visited Servetus in jail and earnestly sought to persuade him of his errors...<sup>15</sup>” and that he also “requested that the Genevan city government grant Servetus a more humane death...<sup>16</sup>” but Calvin’s request was denied. Even a year later Calvin wrote: “I was even willing to risk my life to win him to our Lord, if possible.<sup>17</sup>” Although Calvin’s contribution to the death of Servetus has been questioned and moderated, a letter written by Calvin to the Marquis Paet, high chamberlain to the King of Navarre in 1561, is enough to suffice his participation:

*Honour, glory, and riches shall be the rewards of your pains; but above all, do not fail to rid the country of those scoundrels, who stir up the people to revolt against us. Such monsters should be exterminated, as I have exterminated Michael Servetus the Spaniard.<sup>18</sup>*

Calvin was in no way blameless in regards to his treatment of others, including Christians. He hated the Anabaptists and referred to them as being the “henchmen of Satan.” Four men who disputed with Calvin regarding who should be allowed to partake in the Lord’s Supper were beheaded, quartered and hung in locations throughout Geneva as a warning to others<sup>19</sup>. In spite of all the wicked decisions made in his life and ministry, Calvin preached his last sermon on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1564, and died in May at an early age of fifty-five. His life sadly failing to set forth a godly role model and Christ like example for Christians. On a brighter note, Calvin desired to be buried “as Moses” and instead of having a pomp funeral he wanted to go unnoticed so he “required that no monument should mark his grave.<sup>20</sup>” And some have regarded this desire as consistent with his theology, which humbles man and exalts God.

---

<sup>15</sup> Christian History, Volume V, No. 4, Publisher: A.K. Curtis, Ph. D., Christian History Institute, 1986, 29

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> David Benedict, A General History of the Baptist Denomination (Gallatin: Church History Research & Archives, 1985), Vol. 1:186

<sup>19</sup> Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” 12

<sup>20</sup> Boettner, “Doctrine of Predestination,” 411

## ***THE ORIGIN OF CALVINISM***

The Origins of Calvinism stem back further than Calvin himself and are to be found in the philosophy of the early church father, Augustine of Hippo. Although the names for the select doctrines of Calvinism are attributed to Calvin's name, he was only the propagator and officiator of many of Augustine's teachings. Calvinism's thoughts on predestination are the product of Augustinian influence. Loraine Boettner recognizes that the doctrines of predestination were not just that of Calvin's but also Augustine<sup>21</sup>. C.H. Spurgeon said, "*Calvin got his Calvinism from Augustine.*"<sup>22</sup> Even Calvin himself stated in his institutes that "*the doctrine which I deliver is not new, but the doctrine which of old Augustine delivered...*"<sup>23</sup> Although he made this statement in his section on Total Depravity, it is evident that he relied heavily upon Augustine in his writings quoting him over one hundred and fifty times. Augustine was born on November 13, 354 A.D, at Tagaste in North Africa. Augustine's father was a pagan but his mother was a professing Christian woman. He was converted in 386 A.D. at Milan, and in 391 A.D. he was ordained a minister at Hippo. In 396 A.D., he became the bishop of Hippo which became his office until he died on August 28, 430 A.D. Augustine enjoyed writing, especially in disputes with the Manichaeans, Donatists and Pelagians and entered into controversies concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and Baptism. However, it is voluntarily accepted that Augustine was nothing more than a Roman Catholic. Catholicism reveres Augustine as one of their greatest church fathers and is known for having helped lay the foundation for the formation of the Catholic Church. Augustine instigated persecutions against bible-believing Donatists, who were striving to maintain biblical churches, and requiring evidence of genuine repentance in the lives of their church members. Augustine was also one of the fathers of A-millennialism and confused the church

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 2

<sup>22</sup> Vance, "The Other Side of Calvinism," 17

<sup>23</sup> John Calvin, Institutes of The Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge, ESQ., Edinburgh, 1:254

with Israel, which is also very common among many Calvinists. The foundations of A-millennialism are based upon an unbiblical method of bible interpretation, being the non-literal method. James J. O'Donnell marks this in a biography he wrote on the life of Augustine: *"What sets him [Augustine] apart clearly from moderns is his preference for the non-literal sense of Scripture as the truest sense."*<sup>24</sup> Augustine also taught that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were necessary for salvation which would place his own conversion on very doubtful grounds. He unnecessarily revered Mary by believing she played a vital role in salvation. He believed the false doctrine of purgatory and accepted the doctrine of priestly celibacy. He interpreted the early chapters of Genesis as figurative and believed that the church had greater authority than that of the Scriptures and thus he relied heavily on the ruling of Church Councils as a measuring rod for truth. Finally, he taught the heresy of apostolic succession from Peter. John Paul II quoted Augustine saying: *"I should not believe in the gospel unless I were moved to do so by the authority of the Catholic Church."*<sup>25</sup> Such dependence upon the "woman that rides the beast" only disgraces his reliability as a source from which truth flows. Before his conversion, Augustine was influenced by Neo-Platonic philosophy and it wasn't long after his conversion that Augustine became a *"great admirer of Plato and made every attempt to reconcile philosophy with Christianity."*<sup>26</sup> Such philosophising is seen clearly within the reasoning of Calvinism which in large disregards the plain teachings of Scripture. In regards to his influence on Calvinism, Augustine's main doctrine that persuaded Calvin was that of predestination. Calvin in his *Institutes*, quoting Augustine writes: *"The Lord has created those whom he unquestionably foreknew would go to destruction. This has happened because he has so willed it."*<sup>27</sup> It is clear that Calvinism is soaked in Augustinianism and repackaged for a more modern generation. Calvin did not deny

---

<sup>24</sup>James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: New Biography*, Harper Collins Publishers, 2005, 133-134

<sup>25</sup>AugustineumHyponensem, Apostolic Letter, Aug. 28, 1986, [www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html](http://www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html)

<sup>26</sup> Vance, "The Other Side of Calvinism" 19

<sup>27</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Eerdmans, 1979, 1:952

this and it would be foolish to do the same. Whilst viewing only a brief synopsis of the doctrines of Augustine, it is logical to conclude that it is absurd to retrieve sound doctrine from such a man as Augustine. Yet if Calvin was deeply influenced by such a philosopher, what then shall we conclude concerning Calvin's doctrines? Can one retrieve clean water from a dirty stream? Can another find clean food in a rotting pit? Or as Job said to God: "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.*" (Job 14:4). This is not to say that we cannot find glimpses of truth in texts written by men of different persuasions, however to depend heavily on their teachings is to be questioned. Nevertheless, the roots of Calvinism dig deeper into history finding them imbedded in Augustine's garden of error.

### ***THE T.U.L.I.P ACROSTIC***

It is important to understand that Calvinism is not confined to its designation of T.U.L.I.P.; however, T.U.L.I.P is the most commonly attributed acrostic in comparison to several others, for example: R O S E S, G O S P E L (which makes six points) etc. John Piper states: "*I make no claim that these five points exhaust the riches of Reformed theology.*<sup>28</sup>" To this statement I agree as it is applicable to any acrostic abbreviation. No acrostic by the mere letters attributed to it can explain the reasoning and extent of each point. T.U.L.I.P serves as an outline for the main doctrines of Reformed Theology and sets forth like a springboard into the deeper waters of Calvinism. As for T.U.L.I.P's origin it is unknown, however what is known is that it is used to better reflect the Canons of Dort and its earliest appearance was seen in 1905 by Cleland Boyd McAfee. T.U.L.I.P theology is at the heart of Calvinism and each letter represents the core foundations upon which Calvinism stand:

---

<sup>28</sup> John Piper, "Five Points: Towards a Deeper Experience of God's Grace," (Here after referred to as "Five Points"), Christian Focus, 2013, 13

- **Total Depravity**
- **Unconditional Election**
- **Limited Atonement**
- **Irresistible Grace**
- **Perseverance of the Saints**

The aim of this study is to examine and critique Calvinism's T.U.L.I.P theology according to the Holy Scriptures, revealing its inadequacies, faults and flaws. Each point will be defined by and explained according to Calvinism and thus refuted with clear Scriptural references. Problem passages will seek to be straightened with sound Biblical interpretation and a balanced comprehensive viewpoint presented at the conclusion of each point.

# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

## ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Total Depravity is the first point of debate concerning Calvinism and is perhaps most foundational. When a Calvinist refers to Total Depravity he is not referring to mankind always practicing evil acts toward one another. Total Depravity does not mean that everyone is utterly depraved in total and in complete corruption to the extent that they have no regard for civil virtue. Calvinists understand that mankind isn't continually performing unrestrained evil. R. C. Sproul explains:

*The doctrine of total depravity, however, does not teach that man is as wicked as he could possibly be. For example, Adolf Hitler, who often serves as a paradigm of human evil, surely had some behavioural patterns that were not utterly base. Perhaps Hitler loved his mother and at times was even kind to her...*<sup>29</sup>

John Piper also reaffirms this by stating that, *"The totality of that depravity is clearly not that man does as much evil as he could do."*<sup>30</sup> However, he proceeds to express another valid point: *"But if he is restrained from performing more evil acts by motives that are not owing to his glad submission to God, then even his 'virtue' is evil in the sight of God."*<sup>31</sup> Total Depravity, according to Calvinists, is the teaching that sin affects every aspect of our being: our mind, will and emotions and thereby our total person is corrupted by sin. The root of our being, as well as our heart is tainted by sin and from the core of our being advances all kinds of moral evil. The word *total* implies entirety of being, that is the whole of man's being has been affected by sin<sup>32</sup>. Every thought, choice and affection of the unregenerate man stems from a wicked and corrupt core and therefore is displeasing to God. The thought processes of

---

<sup>29</sup>R. C. Sproul, "What is Reformed Theology?" (Hereafter referred to as "Reformed Theology?"), Baker Books, 2005, 117

<sup>30</sup> Piper, "Five Points," 17

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas & S. Lance Quinn, "The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented, (Here after referred to as "Five Points of Calvinism"), R&R Publishing, 1963, 18

man, the choices of man, the affections of man and even the motivations of man are always bent toward his inherent wickedness and evil. This is seen in God's view of man in Genesis 6:5: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**"* This deformity came about because of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden and placed man in a position of enmity against God.

The original sin committed by Adam caused the condition of Total Depravity among all men (Romans 5:12). All mankind has been affected by the fall to the extent that they are estranged from God and separated by sin. John Calvin defines original sin this way:

*"Original sin, then, is the hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, extending to all parts of the soul, which in the first place makes us deserving of the wrath of God, and in the next place produces in us those works which the Scripture calls the works of the flesh.*

*(Galatians 5:19.)*<sup>33</sup>" Romans 3:9-18 reaffirms man's sinful condition that resulted in the fall and starts by stating that *"...both Jews and Gentiles...they are all under sin. (v9)."* Original sin moved mankind to a position of slavery to the perverseness of our sinful nature. This enslaving encompasses the entirety of man and is a bondage that cannot be broken but by the grace of God. In John 8:31, 32 Jesus said, in response to those Jews who believed on Him, that they have been set free. However, they responded that they had never been in bondage because they were of Abraham's seed (v33). Therefore Jesus responded thus in verse thirty-four: *"...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the **servant of sin.**"* Jesus essentially said that they were in bondage to sin because they were practicing sin, therefore they were the servants of sin. Also in John 8:44 Jesus also said to unbelievers that *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father **ye will do**..."* Romans 6:20 states it this way, *"For when **ye were the servants of sin,** ye were free from righteousness."* Servants are

---

<sup>33</sup> J. P. Wiles, "Calvin's Institutes," 77



bound by a master and all unregenerate mankind is bound to their master called Sin. This enslaving is total, involving the mind, will and affections of man. Sin's servant's mind is continually selfish and seeking its own good even in his attempts to practice "righteousness". His affections always desire that which is corrupt and displeasing to the Lord; and his will is always choosing that which is wrong. Although he may seem to outwardly conform to that which is morally pure, seeking to obey the law written upon his heart, he does so with an unsatisfactory motivation to God. As Romans 8:8 states: *"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."* Even the "righteous" works they perform according to Isaiah 64:6 *"...are as filthy rags..."* Thus all mankind is nothing more than an "unclean thing."

John Calvin comments in his Institutes concerning the will: *"When the will is enchained as a slave of sin, it cannot make a movement towards goodness, far less steadily pursue it."* However, man isn't externally forced nor is he unwilling to sin, but rather he sins by necessity. His choice is always to choose between the greater or lesser evil and therefore cannot choose good. His will is in a sense free in that it is not restricted by an external force; however he is unable because he always will choose wrong. He is therefore a voluntary slave to sin who will not choose to please God. The idea is that we choose according to our strongest inclination at our moment of decision and for the unbeliever, that strongest inclination is always evil; Jeremiah 13:23: *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."* Also Paul in Romans 7:15-19 explains the spiritual battle and how that the good that he wills to do he does not do; this is the struggle between the Spirit and flesh which is unknown to the unregenerate because he has not the Spirit of Christ. If the believer experiences such a pull toward evil, how much more then shall the unbeliever obey sin? There is no battle within him to choose right, thus only a full surrender to his fleshly lusts. Therefore the unsaved person's will is enslaved to sin and cannot choose that which is good neither can he even discern that which

is right; 1 Corinthians 2:14, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* And therefore because this is the condition of mankind after the fall, he is rendered “dead”.

The unregenerate man, according to the Scriptures, is dead in his sins: Ephesians 2:1, *“...dead in trespasses and sins.”* Colossians 2:13, *“And you, being dead in your sins...”* This deadness was a fulfilment of the commandment of God given in the Garden of Eden; Genesis 2:16-17, *“And the LORD God commanded the man saying... the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die.**”* This death as mentioned earlier has passed upon all men, for all have sinned (Rom. 3:23); It is a spiritual deadness. John Gill comments concerning man’s deadness according to Ephesians 2:1, *“...such are dead as to their understandings, wills, and affections, with respect to spiritual things, and as to their capacity to do any thing that is spiritually good...”*<sup>34</sup> Albert Barnes explains the concept of a dead corpse, and applies it spiritually, *“A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not...so with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world. He sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour...”*<sup>35</sup> Such deadness places the sinner in a position where he is unable to make himself alive, and therefore he cannot respond in a way appropriate to obtain salvation. Therefore this man is now rendered “unable”.

According to Calvinists, this Spiritual deadness, moral decay and corruption of the will of man render him unable. Hence the title *Total Depravity* has been coined by many as *Total Inability*. Here lies the punch-line conclusion of man’s depravity. Man’s necessity to

---

<sup>34</sup>Dr. John Gill, John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, (Here after referred to as “Entire Bible”), Ephesians 2:1

<sup>35</sup> Albert Barnes, Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament, (Hereafter referred to as “New Testament Notes”), Kregel Publications, 1962, 977

and bend toward sin, his inability to please God, his spiritual blindness, deadness and corrupt mind will and emotion all place him in a position of *Inability*. Boettner illustrates it this way, “*As the bird with a broken wing is ‘free’ to fly but not able, so the natural man is free to come to God but not able.*”<sup>36</sup> In essence, man can choose God but he won’t under any circumstance because he is depraved; therefore he is technically unable to exercise his will toward God. In the Westminster Confession the doctrine of Total Inability, is stated as follows: - “*Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.*”<sup>37</sup> The curse of sin is upon him and he can in no wise free himself, neither does he have the ability to seek God to be freed from such a state of sinfulness, Romans 3:11: - “*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*” John Piper states concerning the matter of seeking God, “*It is a myth that man in his natural state is genuinely seeking God. Men do seek God. But they do not seek him for who he is.*”<sup>38</sup> He then concludes, “*Any seeking of God that honours God is a gift of God.*”<sup>39</sup> According to Calvinism, men are unable to repent and unable to believe the gospel and therefore need to experience the pre-birth and be given the gifts of both repentance and faith by God.

Due to the extent of man’s inability, salvation becomes the entire responsibility of God. Man is so dead in trespasses and sin that he cannot choose God or even desire God. Therefore, “*The unregenerate person must be regenerated before he has any desire for God.*”<sup>40</sup> He must be quickened before he can even see, hear, or desire anything that has to do with God. Colossians 2:13 says, “*And you, being dead in your sins... hath he [God]*

---

<sup>36</sup>Boettner, “Doctrine of Predestination,” 62

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. pp. 61

<sup>38</sup> Piper, “Five Points,” 19

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Sproul, “Reformed Theology?” 136

*quickened together with him...*” God must do the work of quickening in the heart of man before man can even desire the things of God. He must take the heart of stone out of the unregenerate and give him a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). This work is done by the sovereign selection of God and it not influenced by the will of man. After this work of regeneration takes place, God bestows the gift of faith upon the person so that they can ask Jesus to save them. Therefore the new birth precedes faith, “...*once he is born again, he can for the first time turn to Jesus, expressing sorrow for his sins and asking Jesus to save him.*”<sup>41</sup> John 1:12, 13 explains the link between man’s depravity, God’s will in his salvation, and man’s reception of Christ: “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” Those who were born according to the will of God were given the authority to become the children of God and therefore could receive and believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore they were regenerated by the will of God prior to receiving the gift of faith. The concept of the gift of faith is drawn from Ephesians 2:8-9 “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” This gift is by God’s grace and is only given to the elect. According to the Scriptures, **faith** is a requirement for salvation and according to Calvinism; it is the gift from God. Therefore all that is required for salvation is completed in the elect through the workings of God. As the Lord Jesus said in John 6:65, “...*no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*”

Total depravity expresses the depth of mankind’s sinful condition. Man is enslaved by sin and sins by necessity. His entire being: mind, will and emotions are bound by sin and therefore cannot desire nor will to do anything that would please God. He is dead in trespasses and sins and therefore cannot respond to the gospel neither can he desire, hear, or

---

<sup>41</sup> Edwin H. Palmer, The Five Points of Calvinism, (Here after referred to as “Calvinism”), Baker Book House, 1982, 19

believe in God. This condition concludes man unable to play any part in his salvation, and therefore he will not – indeed, he cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Thus God, in His sovereignty, according to His will, regenerates the elect bestowing upon them the gift of faith. Faith therefore is “...God’s gift to the sinner, not the sinner’s gift to God.”<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Steele, “Five Points of Calvinism,” 15

## TOTAL DEPRAVITY – REBUTTAL

At first glance, the Calvinists perception of Total Depravity seems quite biblical. However, there is no doubt that the conclusions of this first point are contrary to the plain teachings of Scripture. The title Total Depravity accurately describes the condition of the heart of man which no doubt is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). However, the title Total Inability is the Calvinists description of the conclusion of this doctrine. A simple study of the Scriptures proves the errors of Calvinism's conclusions concerning Total Depravity.

First it must be noted that if the depravity of man results in an inability to respond to the gospel, then God is to be blamed for man's destiny. Nevertheless, it is absurd to believe that God is "*...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9) and then to suggest that man is unable to respond to the gospel in order to be saved. If salvation entirely depends upon God who is not willing that any should perish and man has no responsibility in salvation whatsoever, then why are people going to hell? Why isn't all mankind born again? As the Bible teaches, it is because they reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not by necessity, not by default, but by deliberate choice; a deliberate exercising of the will rejecting the only means by which they may be saved. This is demonstrated in Jesus' cry to Israel, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, **and ye would not!***" (Matthew 23:37) Although man may not directly seek God or may for selfish reasons, it does not change that fact that he can "...believe the gospel when it is offered to him in the context of God's enlightenment (Jn. 1:9), conviction (Jn. 16:8), and drawing (Jn. 12:32)." However, Calvinism reads into the Scriptures its philosophies and conclusions. Nowhere in the Scriptures does it clearly teach

that the unregenerate man is unable to believe or respond to the gospel. However, there are overabundances of Scriptures that clearly teach man's responsibility in responding to the Gospel. Here are a few:

- Hebrews 7:25: "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost **that come unto God by him**, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*".
- Revelation 22:17: "*And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come**. And let him that heareth say, **Come**. And **let him that is athirst come**. And **whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely***".
- John 3:37: "*..If any man thirst, **let him come unto me, and drink***".
- Acts 16:31: "***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved***".
- Romans 6:17: "***But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you***".

Is God sadistic to the point that He would deliberately command men to respond to the gospel whilst leaving them in a state of inability? God forbid!

It is to be understood that man's will is bent toward sin and that mankind is dead in trespasses and sin, but to take it to the extent that Calvinists do, is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture. Ephesians 2:1-3 says nothing about the sinner's inability to respond to the gospel. The analogy of a "dead man" is not to be taken out of proportion, but rather to be interpreted within the boundaries of God's Word. If the "dead man" analogy is to be taken literally there are certain flaws that must be noted. David Cloud says, "*...if we are going to take the "dead man" analogy literally, a dead man...cannot reject the gospel any more than he can accept the gospel, but the Calvinist claims that the dead sinner CAN reject the gospel but he cannot accept it.*<sup>43</sup>" Also, if the unregenerate is so dead that he cannot even take one step toward God, then neither should the Christian be able to take one step toward sin, because according to Romans 6:2, 7, 11 he is "dead to sin." The Scriptures speaks of the analogy of death as separation; James 2:26 "*For as the body without the spirit is dead...*" it is an alienation of body from spirit. Therefore, Ephesians 2:1-3 describes how we were dead in

---

<sup>43</sup> Cloud, "The Calvinism Debate," 92

trespasses and sins, in essence alienated/separated from God in sin, walking after the lusts of the flesh. To add more to this analogy in order to support a certain philosophy is a complete disregard to proper scriptural exegesis. Dave Hunt wisely said, *“Take a human understanding of “dead,” mix it together with the young John Calvin’s immature understanding of God’s Word, tainted by Augustinian philosophy, stir it all up, and out comes the theory of Total Depravity.”*<sup>44</sup>

Another fallacy to which Calvinism holds is the concept of faith being a gift. Faith is not something given to man from God in order for man to obtain salvation. Rather faith is something that man has and ought to exercise in God. According to Hebrews 11:1 *“...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* It is something that people exercise each day. By faith the unregenerate turn the key in the ignition believing their car will start. By faith they believe in false gods, idols, philosophies, and in themselves. The issue is not that they don’t have faith; it is rather the object of their faith. Calvinists proof text that faith is a gift is found in Ephesians 2:8-9. However according to sound grammatical interpretation it is impossible to conclude that faith is “the gift of God” mentioned in Ephesians 2:8-9. It is impossible because the words *grace* and *faith* are both naturally ascribed to the feminine gender and the pronoun *that* is given the neuter. If they were the “gift” they would have a matching gender. So then, what is the “gift of God” referring to? Let’s look at the verse: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God...”* What is the phrase *“and that not of yourselves”* referring to? Is it faith, grace or salvation? The word rendered *“that”* is the Greek word *touto* and is in the neuter gender, and as noted earlier both *grace* and *faith* is in the feminine gender. The context and grammatical structure can only leave us with one sound conclusion and that is that the gift of God is *salvation*. Concerning faith being the gift, Calvinist Albert Barnes honestly declares

---

<sup>44</sup>Dave Hunt, “What love is this?” (Here after referred to as “What love is this?”), The Berean Call, 2006, 151



“As a matter of grammar this opinion is certainly doubtful, if not untenable.<sup>45</sup>” Unfortunately men like John Gill who believe that this passage teaches that *“faith is **not** the produce of man's free will and power, but it is the free gift of God<sup>46</sup>”* wrest with the scriptures to their own destruction. John Calvin himself would even correct such men for their loose interpretation: *“But they commonly misinterpret this text, and restrict the word ‘gift’ to faith alone. But Paul...does not mean that faith is the gift of God, but that salvation is given to us by God....<sup>47</sup>”* Furthermore, faith is not implanted unconditionally and sovereignly by Almighty God; rather, it is developed through the hearing of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). When an unbeliever is willing to be shown the word of God and attentively hears the “word of faith” with an open heart, he will find that these words are true and self-validating. If he then will yield himself to the word of God in repentance and faith, he will be saved. This is an act of his free will, not an imposed gift from God. Faith means trust, and trust is an act of man’s free will. Therefore in agreement, the apostle Paul preached *“...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Acts 20:21). Repentance and faith are man’s responsibility; he is to repent towards God and put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Total Depravity is a doctrine clearly taught in the Scriptures; however, Calvinism’s conclusions concerning the depravity of man, place him in a state of inability to respond to God’s Word. This conclusion clearly violates the plain teachings of Scripture which reinforces man’s responsibility to accept or reject the gospel. Due to false conclusions concerning the depravity of man, Calvinists seek to reconcile this teaching by exaggerating the analogy of a “dead man”. Calvinists also continue to misinterpret Ephesians 2:8, by trying to assert that faith is a gift from God bestowed upon the elect.

---

<sup>45</sup> Barnes, “New Testament Notes” 979

<sup>46</sup> Gill, “Entire Bible,” Ephesians 2:8

<sup>47</sup> Hunt, “What Love is This?” 453

# UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

## ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

If Total Depravity is the foundation of Calvinism, then Unconditional Election is the heart of Calvinism. Total Depravity sets forth the reasoning for Unconditional Election. For if man is totally depraved and unable to turn to God apart from God's gracious gift of faith, this then leaves God to choose certain men to bestow this gift upon. As a result, this gives birth to the doctrine of Unconditional Election. Concerning this doctrine, article six and seven of the Canons of Dort read<sup>48</sup>:

*Article 6: That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18, A.V.). "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). According to which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while He leaves the non-elect in his just judgement to their own wickedness and obduracy.*

*Article 7: Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault... a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ... This elect number... God had decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification...*

This election is based on the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God may be defined as "the exercise of his supremacy..."<sup>49</sup> God (as the Sovereign One) is not only to be seen as the Creator of the universe but also the Governor. As Creator and Owner of all God has absolute right to rule over all. The Scriptures clearly teach the sovereignty of God in the universe: "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom..." (1 Chron. 29:11); "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

---

<sup>48</sup> R. C. Sproul Jr., "After Darkness, Light: Distinctives of Reformed Theology," R&R Publishing, 2003, 59-61

<sup>49</sup> Arthur W. Pink, "The Attributes of God," Baker Books, 2006, 40

(Ps. 115:3); *“Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, Whatmakest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?”* (Isa. 45:9); *“Behold, all souls are mine...”* (Ezek. 18:4); and *“Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?”* (Matt. 20:15)<sup>50</sup>. As Lord over all, God has the sovereign reign over salvation doing whatsoever He will within hearts. Therefore, this sovereign reign gives God the right to election. The verb *elect* means to “select, or choose out.” In salvation it is believed that “...God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ...”<sup>51</sup> This divine choice is unconditional in that it is not based upon the performance of man, or the bias of God. It is solely based in the grace of God. All mankind is deserving of hell, so for the unelect, this is not an act of injustice; but for the elect this is a token of the sovereign grace of God on whom they will bestow endless praise. Acts 13:48 *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”*

God’s election was in eternity past and is evidenced by the order of salvation found in Romans 8:29-30: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* These five steps of God’s working of salvation in the heart of man are known as the ‘Golden Chain of Salvation’<sup>52</sup>. The first of these is none other than the foreknowledge of God: *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before the world began**...”* (2 Timothy 1:9); *“But we are bound to give*

---

<sup>50</sup> Henry Clarence Thiessen, “Lectures in Systematic Theology,” (Here after referred to as “Systematic Theology”), Eerdmans, 2006, 119

<sup>51</sup> J.I Packer, “Concise Theology: A guide to historic Christian Beliefs,” Intervarsity Press, 1993, 149

<sup>52</sup> Sproul, “Reformed Theology?” 146

*thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath **from the beginning** chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth...*” (2 Thessalonians 2:13); *“According as he hath chosen us in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”* (Ephesians 1:4). Calvinists understand that God in his foreknowledge of all things chose us in Christ Jesus unto eternal life. His foreknowledge was not of “our choice” as a condition of His election, but rather his foreknowledge was an “actively looking with favour upon some and then electing them to salvation.<sup>53</sup>” This understanding of the foreknowledge of God is seen in the word *know* as being more than just a thought, or knowledge of. The word *know* in the Scriptures often refers to an intimate type of knowledge, a knowing with an appreciation and love, *“You only have I known of all the families of the earth...”* (Amos 3:2). God’s election is not only complete in his foreknowledge of love for us but secondly this love also involves *Predestination*. Predestination is part of foreordination. So to understand predestination, foreordination must first be understood. A simple definition is that, “foreordination refers to God’s plans for everything that ever happens...<sup>54</sup>” Although not all Calvinists believe this, however numerous believe that God, according to Ephesians 1:11, has foreordained everything according to His will, “...the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist – even sin.<sup>55</sup>” In relation to foreordination, predestination is the part of foreordination that refers to man’s predetermined destiny – heaven or hell. John Calvin defined predestination as *“...the decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny: but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others.<sup>56</sup>”* Further proof is found in Jude 4, *“For there are certain men*

---

<sup>53</sup> Thiessen, “Systematic Theology,” 262

<sup>54</sup> Palmer, “Calvinism,” 25

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book III, Chapter 21

*crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation...*” and Ephesians 1:5, *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...”* This predetermination chosen by the sovereign will of God is not influenced by anything man can do, but it is simply a token of God’s mercy; Romans 9:13-15 *“As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated...Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid... For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”* Thirdly, there is a calling. This calling of God is Irresistible and effectual in the lives of the elect and will be explained later in more detail. Fourthly, there is justification which is a direct result and inevitable outcome of the effectual call of God. Lastly is Glorification; this is the promise of God whereby he preserves those who are justified until they are completely saved and changed in heaven into their prepared glorified bodies. This order of salvation describes the beauty and design of God’s unconditional election.

The doctrine of Unconditional Election, based on the sovereignty of God, places salvation solely in God’s hands. Man who is totally depraved cannot respond to God, nor choose God. Therefore, according to unconditional election, God mercifully selects some granting them the gift of faith. Those whom God’s chooses are called the elect and they are chosen unconditionally before the foundation of the world. They are chosen according to His foreknowledge (love) of them, and they are predestined to heaven as God fulfils his plan to call, justify and glorify them.

## UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION – REBUTTAL

The doctrine of Unconditional Election distorts the sovereign nature of God. In Calvinism's attempt to exalt God as the Sovereign One over all things, they have incriminated Him as the author of sin and the partial God of the "elect." Calvinism's Unconditional Election stems back to an extreme view of the sovereignty of God and a misunderstanding of the freewill of man. Therefore, a proper understanding of the elect, foreknowledge, and predestination must be developed to adequately address this misconception.

The word *elect* appears sixteen times in the New Testament and is referred to several different people or groups: Israel, a lady, Christ, a church and angels. However, not once is the word *elect* used to refer to a select group of people who have been predestined to salvation, *"Never, however, is this word used to indicate that there is a select group who alone have been predestined to be saved. Never."*<sup>57</sup> This is because the election of God is not an act of predestination, but rather a decision based upon God's foreknowledge. God has chosen people, nations, churches and angels according to his foreknowledge. It wasn't a predetermined decision that had no connection to the subject's choices! However, if this was a predetermined decision, the Scriptures would be contradicting themselves by failing to maintain the freewill of man and the sovereign election of God. God in His foreknowledge foresaw those who would respond to his offer of salvation and, on that basis, He elected them to salvation<sup>58</sup>. The Bible teaches this in 1 Peter 1:2: *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."* and also in Romans 8:29, *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..."* God's election is according to His foreknowledge. Foreknowledge has no concept of altering a decision, but rather embraces the knowledge of a decision. The word "foreknowledge" in the Scriptures is translated from

---

<sup>57</sup> Hunt, "What love is This?" 245

<sup>58</sup> Thiessen, "Systematic Theology," 258

the Greek word *προγινώσκω* which simply means “to know beforehand, that is, foresee.”

There is no inference in the definition of foreknowledge that indicates a connection with predestination. The word predestination is the Greek word *προορίζω* which means “to predetermine, decide beforehand.” To confuse with or to equate foreknowledge to predestination is illogical; yet this is how Calvinists often view these passages. In 1 Peter 1:2 there is a visible harmony between the foreknowledge of God and His election. The Greek preposition *κατά* is the word translated “according to,” and when this word is in the accusative case, is either translated “along” or “according to.” Therefore God’s election is in harmony or along with something, and that is His foreknowledge. Thus His foreknowledge is influencing His election, in that what He foresees is determining His selection. Although the bible does not mention what is in the foreknowledge of God that influences His decision, it can only logically be referring to His foreknowing of a repentant sinner who believes in the gospel of truth. This is based upon the repeated teachings of Scripture, which call for a man’s decision to accept or reject salvation upon hearing the gospel. There is no other scriptural approach to coincide the sovereignty of God and the free will of man, but by a biblical understanding of God’s foreknowledge. God’s foreknowledge, being separate to His decrees, allows scope for man’s freewill to respond to the precious and glorious Gospel. Yet the concept of election needs to be understood also from the perspective of what one is being elected to. Note some key misinterpreted passages used by Calvinists:

- Ephesians 1:4-5 – “*According as he hath **chosen us** in him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*”.

This passage at first glance seems to appear that we have been predestined to salvation; however this is a misinterpretation. The first part teaches that God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. There is no reference here to a sovereign election apart

from human responsibility, nor is there any reference to foreknowledge as the basis of His election. Therefore, to use this scripture as support for either is unsatisfactory. Yet according to the plain teachings of 1 Peter 1:2 and Romans 8:29, it is consistent with Scripture to understand all election to salvation as being based upon the foreknowledge of God. The emphasis in Ephesians 1:4, 5 is not **how** we are elected in Him, but rather **why** we were elected in Christ, and that is to be “holy and without blame before him in love.” Christians have been selected by God to be holy and without blame; God has called us to a characteristic trait that is to be found in every believer. Furthermore, the latter verse says that we have been predestined to the adoption of children. This is not referring to unbelievers being bound to heaven by the selection of God. Rather it is saying that God has predetermined that those who are Christians would be adopted children of God. This passage is not teaching that it is God’s good pleasure to elect some and not others. Rather, “the good pleasure of God’s will refers to what God has determined for the believer, which is adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”<sup>59</sup>

Another verse which should be considered is:

- Acts 13:48 – *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”.*

This verse seems at first glance that God foreordained some of these Gentiles to eternal life. However, this is contrary to sound Bible interpretation. The word *ordained* is the Greek word τεταγμενοι which comes from the base word τάσσω which means “to put in order, assign or (middle voice) to appoint mutually, i.e. agree upon.”<sup>60</sup> It is used eight times in the New Testament and is translated: “appointed” (Matt. 28:16, Acts 22:10; 28:23), “set” (Luke 7:8), “ordained” (Acts 13:48, Romans 13:1), “determined” (Acts 15:2), and “addicted” (1 Cor. 16:15). None of these passages hint even the slightest “divine decree *causing* human

---

<sup>59</sup> Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” 97

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, “Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,” Edinburgh, 1914, 615



action.<sup>61</sup> Even so it is with this passage of Scripture, otherwise God would've used the word translated "predestined" or an equivalent. Nevertheless, τεταγμενοι is in the perfect, passive/middle voice, participle. This indicates that there was a present influence upon the Gentiles appointing them to eternal life by believing the Gospel, which was undoubtedly the Holy Spirit<sup>62</sup>. Therefore it can accurately read, "*...as many as were being appointed toward eternal life believed.*" They were presently being appointed by the apostle's preaching (outward) and the working of the Holy Spirit (inward) to eternal life which they obtained by believing, not by an eternal decree. In essence, they were giving the opposite response to what the Jews were giving in Acts 13:46, "*...seeing ye put it from you, and judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*" And we know that when the Gentiles heard the gospel "*...they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord...*" and because of that they had disposed, appointed, ordained themselves worthy of eternal life by their belief in the Gospel. They mutually agreed upon the gospel that was being preached and responded in faith. Another key passage used to imply election is:

- 2 Thessalonians 2:13 - "*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, **because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth***"

This passage clearly teaches that God has chosen us from the beginning to salvation. To this we should all be able to say, "Amen!" For God desires that all men be saved as this is His will, 1 Timothy 2:4: "*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" Yet why aren't all men saved? Being "*chosen...to salvation*" does not mean that one has been predestined to heaven<sup>63</sup>. The verse teaches that a belief of the truth must precede salvation. Repentance and faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ are the pre-requisites through which we are chosen. Upon God's foreknowledge of our belief in the

---

<sup>61</sup> Hunt, "What love is This?" 265

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 264

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 289

truth, we have been from the beginning chosen to salvation. Just as according to Ephesians 2:8 we are saved by grace through faith, concluding that without faith we cannot be saved. So likewise in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, we are chosen to salvation through our belief in the truth. It is by God's grace that we are chosen which is through belief in the truth of the gospel. This passage does not teach Unconditional Election; rather it teaches that the condition of our election is based upon God's foreseeing of our belief of the truth. Finally, Romans 9:13-24 is another key passage that is misunderstood by Calvinists and used to press their pernicious doctrine of Unconditional Election:

- Romans 9:13-24 - *(13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. (19) Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? (20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (22) What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: (23) And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, (24) Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

There are several key verses in this passage that seem to support the Calvinistic position of Unconditional Election. They are commonly used to teach the foreordination to damnation and also to glory. Although it is true, that this portion of Scripture, like none other, exalts the sovereignty of God, careful consideration must be taken to the contextual interpretation, the audience involved and the type of election that is being mentioned. The first verse that will be dealt with is verse thirteen; *"As it is written, Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated."* It is important to understand that the apostle Paul is quoting Malachi 1:2, 3: *"I have loved you,*

*saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau...*” Malachi has in view Jacob and Esau as nations, Jacob representing the nation of Israel, from which the Messiah would descend, and Esau referring to Edom for they were from Esau’s seed. There is no reference to individual salvation here. If it were, you would have to believe that all of Israel was saved because of their election, and all of Edom or essentially non-Israel is lost. This is clearly not even a matter of question. Romans 9:12 reaffirms contextually that this is not in reference to salvation, “...*The elder shall serve the younger.*” Also Genesis 25:23 proves that this is a national election, not a personal predestined salvation or reprobation; “*Two nations are in thy womb...and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.*” The prophecy of the elder serving the younger was never fulfilled in the personal lives of Esau and Jacob, however it was perfectly fulfilled in the nations of Israel and Edom<sup>64</sup>. Calvinists often refer to verse eleven to prove that this election is concerning salvation: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” This however is just further proof that God elects according to His foreknowledge. God foreknew that Esau would sell his birthright and Jacob would turn to Him; it was upon that basis He hated Esau and loved Jacob, even before they were born. He chose Jacob not to salvation but to service as a nation in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Additionally, God hated Esau not as an individual but rather as a nation which turned their back upon God.

Furthermore, it is also significant to understand that the statement “*Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated*” is a common Hebrew idiom (also used in Deuteronomy 21:15-16), “*It was common among the Hebrews to use the terms “love” and “hatred” in this comparative*

---

<sup>64</sup> Hunt, “What love is This?” 329

sense, where the former implied strong positive attachment, and the latter, not positive hatred, but merely a less love, or the withholding of the expressions of affection...<sup>65</sup>” This withholding of blessings is further noted in Malachi 1:3, 4. It is similar to Christ’s words in Luke 14:26 where He says, *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”* This is obviously not talking about a literal hate but rather in a comparative sense of preferring Jesus Christ over all other relationships. If it were literal it would be ridiculous that the same God would command husbands to *“...love your wives...”* (Eph. 5:25); and also plainly state *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”* Therefore it can accurately be interpreted as *“Jacob have I preferred but Esau have I not favoured”* in which this preference was entirely based upon the foreknowledge of God.

Secondly, Romans 9:17, 18 is used as a proof text to teach that God before the foundations of the world chose Pharaoh to damnation by hardening his heart unconditionally. This passage of Scripture does not teach sovereign reprobation, but rather God giving him over to his own wicked ways (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Pharaoh had a free will and could’ve obeyed God but rather chose to harden his own heart, *“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.”* (Ex. 8:15). God foreknew that Pharaoh would harden his heart and upon this basis *“...he was raised up...”* so that God would show his power over the gods of Egypt. All God did is that he “simply allowed Pharaoh’s evil to run its course, even strengthening Pharaoh’s evil resolve to the extent to which it fulfilled God’s own purpose.”<sup>66</sup> When God hardens a person’s heart, He essentially removes His mercy from them, to which they can no longer reach His mercy. Subsequently, their hearts are left to themselves having no other choice but

---

<sup>65</sup> Barnes, “New Testament Notes,” 615

<sup>66</sup> Ibid pp. 332

to become harder and bitter towards God. Pharaoh was not foreordained to condemnation and hardness of heart but rather he, because of his own wickedness, became a vessel unto dishonour fitted for destruction. Second Thessalonians 2:10-12 show a similar process of the results of rejecting the grace and mercy of God:

*And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Regarding Pharaoh it has been well concluded that *“God did make an example of Pharaoh, but to go beyond what the Bible says and to claim that God chose to create Pharaoh for the purpose of reprobating him is a great error and is to malign the name of the loving God.”*<sup>67</sup>

Thirdly, Calvinists take out of context the wonderful picture of our Sovereign God seen in the illustration of the potter and the clay. The illustration of Romans 9:20-22 is to remind us that God is Sovereign and has the authority and right to do whatsoever He wills. The potter and the clay is a common Old Testament illustration (Is. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer. 18:1-6) and “never is it a reference to anyone’s salvation.”<sup>68</sup> It is also important to understand that the “clay is formed, not created.”<sup>69</sup> When Paul writes that the potter has power over the clay *“to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour”* he uses the Greek word ποιέω which means to “construct, form, or fashion.” The potter doesn’t make the clay, but rather moulds the clay. So likewise God moulds vessels unto honour and dishonour. However, in the context of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and the “hating” of Esau, we see that the moulding of the clay involves cooperation. As God forms the clay (man), He works with the clay to bring about its valued end. The moulding of Pharaoh unto dishonour involved the decisions of Pharaoh; also the moulding of Esau was done so according to the

---

<sup>67</sup> Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” 102

<sup>68</sup> Vance, “The Other Side of Calvinism,” 171

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

foreknowledge of God concerning his birthright. As Calvinists over emphasize particular points of the illustration of the “dead man” (Eph. 2:1), so likewise they do with this thought. The verse is not saying that God purposed to create some vessels that will go to hell and others that will go to heaven. All this illustration is teaching is that God has the authority to do with men as He pleases and that He endures with much patience those vessels that are fitted to destruction. Furthermore, the word *fitted* in verse twenty-two is further proof that God is not purposing to make these vessels unto destruction. Note what the PC study Bible states, “*it can be both the passive and middle voice in Greek; middle means to fit oneself. In the middle voice the subject acts in relation to him/herself.*”<sup>70</sup>” Also Vincent Word Studies affirms; “*Not fitted by God for destruction, but in an adjectival sense, ready, ripe for destruction...*”<sup>71</sup>”

Finally, Romans 9:23 seems to suppose that the vessels of mercy were foreordained to glory (heaven), “*And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had **afore prepared** unto glory,*” The word afore prepared is different to the word foreordained. The words afore prepared is given a general sense, whereas foreordained is more specific. The word afore prepared is also used in Ephesians 2:10, “*For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” Just as God has afore prepared that all believers who were created should perform good works, so likewise all those who fitted themselves as vessels of mercy through belief in the truth, were afore prepared to inherit heaven. This is God’s afore prepared plan. Consequently it is to be observed, from these several key passages put forward by Calvinists, that election must be viewed accurately within its proper context as it could refer to being chosen for a certain service, task, responsibility, or characteristic. It is clear that

---

<sup>70</sup> Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” 103

<sup>71</sup> Vincent Word Studies, Romans 9:22

it is not an unconditional election to heavens glory being bestowed by God upon certain individuals of His choosing. This would not only be a flawed interpretation of Scripture but it also would incriminate and misrepresent the God of the Bible.

The way Calvinism portrays God is brutal. How can a supposed sacred doctrine portray the Sinless Holy God of heaven who “...*canst not look on iniquity...*” as the author of sin (Habakkuk 1:13)? How can a “sound” system of theology portray God who commands “*all men every where to repent*” as a God who only grants repentance and faith to some? How can God “...*who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work...*” (1 Peter 1:17) choose some men to go to heaven and others to hell with no consideration to their decisions or actions? The God who “*tasted death for every man*” (Heb. 2:9); “...*who gave himself a ransom for all*” (1 Tim. 2:6); who “...*so loved the whole world that he gave his only begotten son...*” (John 3:16); who is “...*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9) this very God who is the pinnacle of justice, how could He predetermine by the counsel of His own will that certain souls be damned and others to be delivered? The God who is love (1 John 4:8), who does not allow equal possibilities for His beloved creation to have a relationship with Him? One who is truly honest with his conscience and the Scriptures must question: What justice is this? What love is this?

- Isaiah 55:7 – “*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”
- Jeremiah 29:13 – “*Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*”
- Matthew 7:24 – “*Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.*”
- Matthew 11:28 – “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”
- John 7:37 – “...*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*”
- Revelation 22:17 – “*And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*”

Dave Hunt wisely summarizes the errors of Unconditional Election<sup>72</sup>:

*Each of the above Scriptures very clearly includes two facts that refute Unconditional Election:*

*1) **The command and invitation are given to all, not just to a select group.** The words “wicked” and “unrighteous” and “whosoever” and “all” clearly mean what they say and cannot be turned into “elect.”*

*2) **There are conditions that must be met. There is both a command and an invitation to meet certain requirements:** to “forsake” one’s sin, to seek God with the whole heart, to “hear and do” what Christ commands, to “come” to Him, and to “take and drink” the water of life that Christ gives.”*

It is rather evident that election is not what Calvinists make it out to be. It is first and foremost according to the foreknowledge of God. Secondly, it is conditioned upon a sinner’s decision to repent and believe the Gospel. Calvinism in its attempt to exalt God as the Sovereign One over all instead insults Him by incriminating his love, justice and character. This extreme view of Calvinism tears apart the Word of God by the reinterpreting and twisting of the plain teachings of Scripture.

---

<sup>72</sup> Hunt, “What love is This?” 250



# LIMITED ATONEMENT

## ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Limited Atonement relates to Unconditional Election in that it explains that Jesus Christ's death on the cross was only for the elect. R.C. Sproul said that *"I prefer the term definite atonement... definite atonement focuses on the question of the design of Christ's atonement."*<sup>73</sup> Others have preferred the title Particular Redemption. Nevertheless, according to Calvinists, the design of Christ's atonement on the cross was to secure a certain salvation for all the elect, as opposed to just making salvation possible for all. Note a summary of Limited Atonement as given by Loraine Boettner:

*Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.*<sup>74</sup>

The doctrine of Limited Atonement therefore seeks to answer the question: For whom did Christ die? Arthur Pink replies, *"We answer, Christ died for God's Elect."*<sup>75</sup>

Limited Atonement stems back to Unconditional Election in that it teaches that Jesus Christ died for all those who were unconditionally elected by God. Therefore, when Christ died according to the will of God, it was to redeem God's very elect. However the unconditional election of God for salvation is incomplete without a Redeemer. Thus, Christ came into the world and took upon Himself a human nature and died that he might secure the elect's redemption<sup>76</sup>. Now the elect are saved, not because of what they have done, but their

---

<sup>73</sup> R. C. Sproul, "Essential Truths of the Christian Faith," Tyndale Publishers, 1992, 175

<sup>74</sup>Boettner, "Doctrine of Predestination," (Summary of TULIP page)

<sup>75</sup> Arthur W. Pink, "The Sovereignty of God in Salvation," (Here after referred to as "Sovereignty of God"), Bible Truth Depot, 1930, 72

<sup>76</sup>Steele, "Five Points of Calvinism,"

salvation is entirely based on Christ's redeeming sacrifice. Jesus Christ's sacrifice was more than just provision for an opportunity to be saved; it was designed to safeguard salvation for certain sinners. In reality, those who believe that Jesus Christ's death only provides an opportunity, are the ones limiting the atonement. You cannot have it both ways, either you limit the *effectiveness* of the atonement or you limit the *extent* of the atonement. If you believe that Jesus Christ died for all mankind, than you are limiting the effectiveness of His death. Or if you believe that Jesus died for the elect, than you are agreeing that His death was effective in bringing sinners to salvation, but you're limiting the extent to the very elect. Boettner illustrates by observing that for the Calvinist, the atonement *"is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge that goes only half-way across."*<sup>77</sup> R. C. Sproul asks this question: *"Is Christ a real Saviour or merely a "potential" Saviour?"*<sup>78</sup> To believe that Christ's death on the cross didn't actually atone for anyone's sin is to attribute cruelty to the Father. For it is saying that God made Christ a suffering substitute, bearing the sin of humanity on the cross, even the sins of those whom God knew would not be saved. James White asks some significant questions, "Does God the Father actually place the sins of those He knows will spend eternity in hell upon His Son? Does He punish in Christ the sins of all of His enemies, knowing that He will punish them for the same sins for eternity?"<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the Scriptures declare the intended effectiveness of Christ's atonement:

- 1 Timothy 1:15 – *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners**; of whom I am chief".*
- Titus 2:14 – *"Who gave himself for us, **that he might redeem us from all iniquity** ... "*
- Romans 5:10 – *"For if, when we were enemies, **we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life".*

---

<sup>77</sup>Boettner, "Doctrine of Predestination," 153

<sup>78</sup>Sproul, "Reformed Theology?" 164

<sup>79</sup>Dave Hunt & James White, "Debating Calvinism," Multnomah Publishers, 2004, 171

- Colossians 1:21-22 – “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death...*”
- 1 Peter 2:24 – “*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*”.

Christ’s death was to save, redeem, reconcile, and heal us; it was not a provision for these things, but rather an actual effective accomplishment of these things. John Piper summarizes the effectiveness of the death of Christ, the blood of the covenant;

*The blood of the covenant - Christ’s blood – purchases and guarantees the new heart of faith and repentance. God did not do this for everyone. He did it for a “definite” or a “particular” group, owing to nothing in themselves.<sup>80</sup> Finally, consider the words of John Calvin, “When it appears that when the doctrine of salvation is offered to all for their effectual benefit, it is a corrupt prostitution of that which is declared to be reserved particularly for the children of the church.”<sup>81</sup>*

With this understanding established, the question must be asked again: For whom did Christ die? If His death was effective in that it accomplished reconciliation, redemption and salvation, for whom did He die? You cannot believe that Christ died for all mankind and also believe that His death accomplished salvation, for it is obvious that all men aren’t saved. Therefore Christ’s death must have only been for the elect. You may dispute: Doesn’t the Bible teach that Jesus Christ died for the whole world? Doesn’t *all* just mean *all*? A brief word study on the word *all* would inform us otherwise. In Mark 1:5 the Bible reads, “*And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.*” Is this passage saying that every man, woman, and child from all the land of Judaea were baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan? A. W. Pink replies, “*Surely not. Luke 7:30 distinctly says ‘But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God... being not baptized of him*<sup>82</sup>” So then what does “all baptized of him” mean in Mark 1:5? Well obviously not all without exception but rather all

---

<sup>80</sup> Piper, “Five Points,” 45

<sup>81</sup>John Calvin’s Institutes, Book III, Chapter 22.(Cited in “The Calvinism Debate,” Cloud.)

<sup>82</sup>Pink, “Sovereignty of God,” 84

without distinction, that is, all classes and conditions of men<sup>83</sup>. Note also Acts 22:15, “*For thou (Paul) shalt be His witness **unto all men** of what thou hast seen and heard.*” Is Ananias lying to Paul about what God really said? Was Paul actually going to be a witness to every member of the human race? Or is he implying “all men” in the sense of differing types of people: Jews, Gentiles, poor, rich, kings, princes etc.? The answer is obvious.

Now note John 10:15 where Jesus says, “*...I lay down my life for the sheep.*”

Calvinists here claim that Jesus died for His sheep, which are the elect, thus making Christ’s death a particular atonement. The sheep here are particularly mentioned as believers, for in verse twenty-six, Christ says to certain Jews, “*But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep...*” John Piper states that “*being a sheep enables you to believe, not vice versa... The sheep do not first make themselves sheep by believing; they are able to believe because they are sheep.*”<sup>84</sup> Stating this he further seeks to prove that Christ died for the elect, and because they are elect they are able to believe. Note another example from John 11:50-52:

*Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that **Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.***

This passage of Scripture shows the people for whom Christ died. He did not only die for the nation of Israel, but also for the “children of God that were scattered abroad.” These children of God are the sheep, the ones the Father has given to the Son. Jesus Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. According to Calvinists interpretation of this verse, Jesus Christ not only died for the “elect” or “children of God” but also died to gather them together, thus making His death effective. John Piper says, “*Christ did not die just to make this possible, but to make this happen.*”<sup>85</sup> Finally another important

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Piper, “Five Points,” 46

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 47

example of the Limited Atonement is found in Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...**” This shows that Christ has a particular love for His bride, the ones for whom He died. This doesn’t exempt God from a universal love for the world, but it proves that He has a special love for His bride. Jesus Christ loved the church, his bride, so much that he died for them. It was a purposeful and particular to lay down of His life for her, and he died to obtain her.

In conclusion, the doctrine of Limited Atonement doesn’t limit the effectiveness of the atonement but rather the sphere of the atonement’s effectiveness. Christ’s death on the cross was not provisional but rather actual, accomplishing salvation. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of Christ’s saving work in general terms using the words *all* or *every*, it is referring to Christ dying for all men without distinction (Jew, Gentile etc.) and not without exception. Consequently, Calvinists believe that Christ died for all His elect, all of His sheep, all of His church and for His bride; He died for all the “*children of God that were scattered abroad.*”

## LIMITED ATONEMENT- REBUTTAL

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is the most disputed of the “five points,” among Calvinists. Some claim they hold to a “four point” position of Calvinism and others even to a “three point.” However, no man can honestly accept the full implications of any of the points of Calvinism, with its conclusions, at the rejection of the others. Dave Hunt said, *“While some who call themselves Calvinists reject Limited Atonement, it is irrational to do so while accepting the other four points.”*<sup>86</sup> Calvinism is a theological system that is entirely interwoven, that is being held together by philosophical glue. Edwin H. Palmer said, *“The Five Points of Calvinism all depend on each other... They all hang or fall together.”*<sup>87</sup> If man is Totally Depraved that he cannot choose God, then God must choose him (Unconditional Election). If God sovereignly elects some and not others, then it is only logical that Christ would die for those who God elected (Limited Atonement). These philosophical thought processes is what holds the “five points” together, and to identify with any of these is to agree with the rational progression of Calvinism, but doctrine should not be agreed upon or established except by the plain teachings of the Word of God. Limited Atonement is one of these doctrines, and shockingly it is foundational to the whole purpose and structure of T.U.L.I.P theology. Should we not therefore take heed to the words of the apostle, *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy... after the tradition of men... and not after Christ?”* (Colossians 2:8). Shouldn’t bible-believing Christians remember the warning of Scripture which teaches, *“But I fear...as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*? Brethren, God forbid that we would ever substitute the plain teaching of Scripture for a systematic philosophy.

---

<sup>86</sup> Hunt, “What Love is This?” 298

<sup>87</sup> Palmer, “Calvinism,” 60

In the sphere of Limited Atonement, there is not one verse used by Calvinists that support their ideas. Although, they use verses that zoom in on certain aspects of the scope of Christ's atonement e.g. John 10:11 – "The Sheep"; Acts 20:28 – "Church of God", there is no verse in the entire Scriptures that even implies that Christ died ONLY for the elect. Their basis of argument is God's Unconditional Election and also in the "effectiveness" of Christ's death. Calvinists believe that the title Limited Atonement should be applied to those who hold that Christ died for all; they say, *"If you believe that Christ died for all, making provision for all, than you are limiting the power/effectiveness of the atonement."* They also say, *"Yes, we may believe that the Atonement is limited in scope, but you believe that it is Limited in power."* This is based on the idea that Jesus' death on the cross actually secured and accomplished salvation for the elect, in that Christ's death purchased the elect of God. Therefore salvation is completely of God, brought through the work of Jesus Christ into the lives of the elect. However this reasoning has loopholes.

It is an error to judge that those who believe Christ died for all are limiting the effectiveness of the atonement, for Christ's atonement is not limited by a sinner's rejecting of the gospel. Hunt illustrates it this way; *"The inheritance left by the deceased is not reduced in value because some heirs refuse their share."*<sup>88</sup> So likewise Christ's work on the cross is not ineffective because it is rejected. It is also wrong to say that Christ's death was inefficient because He died for those who believed not. Note another illustration, *"The Calvinist complaint is like saying that the \$1 million, which a father deposits in a bank in his estranged son's name, is of no value unless the son accepts it."*<sup>89</sup> The value, power, and effectiveness of that money is not lost because it is not received; so the precious blood of Christ, it is still precious, powerful, and effective, but it must be received to be valuable to an individual. Redemption, justification, salvation, and reconciliation are made available to all through the

---

<sup>88</sup> Hunt, "What love is This?" 294

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 297

work of Jesus Christ. Yet only to those who will repent of their sins and believe the Gospel do these become effective. The Bible teaches, *“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe”* (1 Timothy 4:10). Therefore, Christ’s death although offered to “all men” is only efficacious to “those that believe.” Henry Clarence Thiessen wrote, *“...the atonement is unlimited in the sense that it is available for all; it is limited in that it is effective only for those who believe.”*<sup>90</sup> Allowing man to make a decision is not placing him above the power of God. Rather the opposite is true. God is the one who offers salvation and then sets it on His terms. This is a manifestation of His power and therefore exalts the power of God. When Adam and Eve sinned they were not “in charge”; when Satan sinned, he was not “in charge.” Their rebellion in no way gave more power to themselves and neither did it take away from the power of God. Therefore the power in the blood of Christ is not impacted by man’s responses; it stands because it is precious; it stands because it alone has the power to save. Consider the beautiful illustration of the Passover lamb sacrificed in the book of Exodus chapter twelve. The Israelites, in order to keep their firstborn sons alive, were commanded by God to take a lamb, and kill it (Exodus 12:6, 21). The LORD then emphasized that the blood is what was counted as effective to the saving of their firstborns; he said *“...when I see the blood, I will pass over you...”* (Ex. 12:13, 22). Yet the killing of the Lamb alone could not suffice for their salvation, the blood had to be taken and APPLIED to lintel and the door posts (Ex. 12:23). Then and only then, would the LORD pass over. This striking Old Testament truth is a type of our Lord Jesus who is *“...our Passover [who] is sacrificed for us...”* (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus Christ has shed his blood on Calvary for our sins; but beloved, the blood must be applied! The blood only becomes efficacious through meeting the requirements of God which are repentance and faith in the blood of our Passover Lamb.

---

<sup>90</sup> Thiessen, “Systematic Theology,” 242



The extent of the atonement is simply outlined in the Holy Scriptures. The simplicity of John 3:16 proves this, “*For God so loved the **world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” Moreover, Calvinism distorts this by redefining the plain teachings of Scriptures to fit their unsound conclusions. They redefine words like:” all”, “the world”, “all men”, “every man” and “whosoever” and replace them for the words: “elect”, “chosen ones”, “sheep”, “the church” and the” children of God”. Since when did God ever grant any of His children such authority? To redefine the inspired words of God to fit any theological conclusions is absolutely abominable. Calvinists do this by taking several examples, which have no regard to salvation, and redefine what the “all” in those passages is referring to. They then set up a redefinition stating that the word all can mean without *distinction* and relate it to mean all differing people groups (rich, poor, Gentile, Jew etc.). So then when the Scriptures read that, “...*one died for all,*” (2 Corinthians 5:14) they insert the comment, “all *without distinction.*” This they do, not only to one or two Scriptures, but to practically every verse that teaches the universal offer of salvation to all men. For the Bible student who desires to take God at His Word and believe the plain teachings of Scripture, this is unnecessary and misleading. If a car salesman put up a sign at the front of his dealership saying “All cars half price,” what would this mean? Customers would come from all over expecting that every car in the dealership was selling for half their original price. Now if the customer arrives and finds that there are only a few cars for half price, how do you think he would feel? Yet the salesman would explain, all cars were half price; not all in number, but rather some of all the different brands of cars that were for sale. Not all without exception, but all without distinction. I would submit to you that this would be misleading, dishonest and a deceptive advertisement. However, this is exactly what Calvinists do with the “*whosoever will*” offer of God’s

salvation. The Calvinist needs to get back to the Bible and take note of the numerous verses which clearly define the extent of the atonement. Here are a few:

- Isaiah 53:6—“**All** we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us **all**”.
- John 1:29—“...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the **world**.”
- 1 Timothy 2:6 - Who gave himself a ransom for **all**, to be testified in due time”.
- 1 Timothy 4:10—“...we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of **all men**, specially of those that believe”.
- John 3:14-17—“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the **world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the **world**; but that the **world** through him might be saved”.
- John 7:37—“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If **any man** thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”.
- Romans 1:16—“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation **to every one** that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”.
- Romans 5:6—“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the **ungodly**”. (Is only the elect ungodly? Obviously not.)
- 1 Timothy 1:15—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners**; of whom I am chief”. (Romans 3:23 – Aren’t we all sinners?)
- Hebrews 2:9—“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for **every man**”.
- 2 Peter 3:9—“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance”.
- 1 John 2:1-2—“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if **any man** sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the **whole world**”.
- 1 John 4:14—“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the **world**”.
- Revelation 22:17 – “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever** will, let him take the water of life freely”.
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15—“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for **all**, then were all dead: And that he died for **all**...”

- Acts 17:30–“*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth **all men** every where to repent.*”

These passages are only a handful of many clear Scriptures teaching that the scope of the atonement of Christ is for all. The references that are used by Calvinists to teach that Christ died only for the elect are often written to churches. It did not mean that the apostles who wrote this were explaining to them the scope of the atonement, but rather they were reminding them of the personal element of Christ’s death, that it was for them. Consider the words of the apostle Paul, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for **me**.*” Is the apostle Paul, in this verse, limiting the atonement for himself only? What about David when he said in Psalm 23:1, “*The LORD is **my** Shepherd...*” Did this mean God only cared for David? Consider also Isaiah 43:3, “*For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, **thy Saviour**...*” Was God a Saviour only for the Israelites or did other nations also experience God as their Saviour (Jonah 3:10; 4:11)? The scope of the atonement should not be limited by a redefining and twisting of Scripture to make it seem feasible. No sound Bible interpreter should jump through hoops and climb up mountains to grasp the concepts of God’s Word. Sadly, this is what Calvinism does to the sacred Word of God. Instead of accepting what the Word of God states, Calvinists must make the Word of God fit their theological system.

It is no wonder that many Calvinists have sought to drop this point out of their theological system. The doctrine of Limited Atonement has no basis in Scripture, it is dependent upon the redefining of words, and it is contrary to the nature of God. God’s Word clearly teaches that salvation has been made available to the entire human race through the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is effective, yet it must be applied. It is powerful, but it

must be received. They also deny that the extent of the atonement was for all, which simply ignores numerous Bible passages. Albert Barnes said,

*“The friends of the doctrine of general atonement do not desire any other than Scripture language in which to express their belief. It expresses it exactly - without any need of modification or explanation. The advocates of the doctrine of limited atonement cannot thus use Scripture language to express their belief. They cannot incorporate it with their creeds that the Lord Jesus “tasted death for every man. They are compelled to modify it, to limit it, to explain it, in order to prevent error and misconception. But that system cannot be true which requires people to shape and modify the plain language of the Bible in order to keep people from error!”<sup>91</sup>”*

It is to this very test that the doctrine of Limited Atonement fails.

---

<sup>91</sup> Barnes, “New Testament Notes,” 1237- 1238

# IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

## ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Irresistible Grace is also known as the Efficacious Call of the Spirit and it is expressed by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* thus:

*All those whom God has predestined unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.<sup>92</sup>*

This Irresistible Grace is bestowed upon the elect by the Father who accomplishes the work through the medium of the Holy Spirit. Although there is an outward general call to salvation, which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel, this call is internal. The Holy Spirit “...extends to the elect a special inward call that **inevitably** brings them to salvation.<sup>93</sup>” The internal call cannot be rejected and it always results in conversion. For the elect, (sinners who are called), the Holy Spirit irresistibly draws them to Christ. The drawing is effectual and is not dependent upon man’s cooperation for success. The Spirit rather, “*graciously causes the elect sinner, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ.*<sup>94</sup>” This working of God’s grace is unstoppable and cannot be resisted; therefore, it must always result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

The doctrine of Irresistible Grace doesn’t teach that we are bound to obey every grace bestowed upon us by the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. Rather it means, “...that the Holy Spirit, whenever he chooses, can overcome all resistance and make his influence irresistible.” If the former were true then that would clearly contradict several Scriptures;

---

<sup>92</sup> Sproul, “Reformed Theology?” 189

<sup>93</sup> Boettner, “Doctrine of Predestination,” (Summary of TULIP page)

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

(Acts 7:51; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). However, it should be understood that this kind of resistance does not limit the sovereignty of God. Yet God is not limited, and can conquer all resistance whensoever He chooses as he is the God who “...*hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*” (Ps. 115:3); the one to whom “...*none can stay his hand...*” (Dan. 4:35) and the God “*who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*” (Eph. 1:11). If God has sovereignly elected us and we are totally depraved and unable to submit to God because of our rebellion, then God must somehow overcome our rebellious heart and give us a new heart. Therefore, when God determines to save a soul from hell, He cannot be stopped in accomplishing salvation in that sinner. It is a complete act of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and thus not requiring the assistance or the acceptance of the elected one. It has also been labelled as *Monergistic Regeneration*. Monergistic comes from the two Greek words *mono* meaning “single or one” and *erg* which means “to work.” Therefore Monergistic Regeneration teaches that the regenerating work of salvation is performed by one worker that acts alone as the sole active party in regeneration at the exclusion of all others. R. C. Sproul explains Monergistic Regeneration as “...*an action by which God the Holy Spirit works on a human being without this person’s assistance or cooperation.*”<sup>95</sup> There are several Bible illustrations that show God working in this very way. Firstly note Lazarus in the Gospel of John chapter eleven. Lazarus had died and was in the grave four days before Jesus arrived on the scene. Yet Christ asked that the stone be rolled away; and in John 11:43 Jesus cried, “Lazarus, Come forth.” The very next verse reads, “And he that was dead came forth...” Lazarus was dead, but at the call of the Saviour he was made alive. In equal manner also we who were dead couldn’t (as Lazarus), will or cooperate to be made alive; yet at the effectual call of Jesus we were raised from our deadness by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. Lazarus could not say “No!” He was dead and the grace extended by Jesus Christ was irresistible to the

---

<sup>95</sup> Sproul, “Reformed Theology?” 184

resurrecting of his body. Secondly, the irresistible working of God's grace is seen in the New Birth. The physical birth is a picture of the new birth in Christ Jesus. Yet one application of this illustration is usually neglected, and it is that nobody ever chose to be born. Edwin H. Palmer affirms, *"People have no choice about being born. It is entirely out of their hands. A person... cannot refuse to be conceived and born. Likewise, it is ridiculous to speak of anyone resisting spiritual birth. 'The wind blows wherever it pleases... So it is with everyone born of the Spirit' (John 3:8)<sup>96</sup>"* Lastly, consider the illustration of creation. The Bible teaches; *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature..."* (2 Cor. 5:17). Salvation is a spiritual creation; the old man is made a new man and simply a new creation. At the beginning of time, God chose to create the heavens and earth and all that in them is. None of His creation could have refused to be created; they had no choice in the matter, so likewise God spiritually re-creates whom He will. Therefore, God's work in salvation is monogistic; it is performed by the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit alone and it results in the salvation of the elect.

The irresistible working of the Holy Spirit is accomplished through the preaching of the Gospel. The preaching of the Gospel *"...extends a call to salvation to everyone who hears its message. It invites all men without distinction...It promises salvation to all who repent and believe. But this outward general call, extended to the elect and nonelect alike, will not bring sinners to Christ."<sup>97</sup>* As mentioned in the above paragraph, there needs to be the effectual inner working or call of the Holy Spirit in order to bring salvation. And although the outward general call of the gospel can be rejected, the inner supernatural call of the Spirit cannot be resisted. It is the Spirit of God that brings salvation to the heart of the elect; *"The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."* (2 Cor. 3:6); *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the*

---

<sup>96</sup> Palmer, "Calvinism," 63

<sup>97</sup> Steele, "Five Points of Calvinism,"

*Holy Ghost...*”(Titus 3:5). Furthermore the words of Jesus Christ give further affirmation to the irresistible work of the Spirit: “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**: and I will raise him up at the last day.*” (John 6:44). Also note John 6:65, “*And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were **given** unto him of my Father.*” This drawing work of the Father and the giving of the ability to come to Jesus is the effectual inner calling of the Holy Spirit.

The opponents of Calvinism accuse the doctrine of Irresistible Grace, claiming that it “drags” or “draws” unwilling souls into the kingdom. Nothing is further from the truth. God doesn’t have to force anyone against their will; all He has to do is change their will. John Piper agrees that Irresistible Grace is never against our will and says that, “*It doesn’t drag the unwilling into the kingdom, it makes the unwilling willing.*”<sup>98</sup> Edwin H. Palmer also said, “*By irresistible grace God does not leave the heart unchanged and thus drag man into heaven against his will. No, God regenerates the man, changes his nature, and radically alters his character so that man now is truly sorry for his sin and loves God.*”<sup>99</sup> This is the deeper work that Holy Spirit does within the hearts of the unsaved elect to open their hearts as He did with Lydia the seller of purple; “*...whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul*” (Acts 16:14) and therein He shines “*...the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” (2 Cor. 4:6)

Irresistible Grace is the inner effectual call of the Holy Spirit, who alone can complete the drawing work of the Father in bringing the elect to salvation. Just as Jesus raised Lazarus, God created all things and the new birth were all accomplished apart from the subjects will, so likewise God is not subject to the will of men in desiring to carry out his work of salvation. In His sovereign power he changes the hearts of the rebellious, making them willing and thus

---

<sup>98</sup> Piper, “Five Points,” 30

<sup>99</sup> Palmer, “Calvinism,” 58



draws them unto Himself. This invincible gracious power is manifest through the medium of the Holy Spirit.

## IRRESISTIBLE GRACE – REBUTTAL

The doctrine of Irresistible Grace attempts to explain the Holy Spirit's part in salvation. It is closely linked with the doctrine of Total Depravity as it explains the alternative for mankind who is unable to respond to the Gospel. By attributing an unbalanced view of the sovereignty of God, Calvinists fail to consider what they are actually suggesting. Yes, it is true that the Father draws all that will come to the Son. Yes, it is true that the Holy Spirit is powerful and able to work upon the heart of man. But to suggest that the working of the Holy Spirit is irresistible and that none can reject His effectual call to salvation is absurd!

Based on the conclusions of Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace sets out to answer the question: How can man be saved if he is dead and unable to even hear, desire, or respond to the Gospel? It answers this question in a very unscriptural manner. Calvinists know that the Gospel is necessary for salvation and that it must be preached to all; but, their faulty theology advocates otherwise. They claim that the Gospel has a general invitation and call to all men, but it is not effectual. My question then is: What are these sinners who receive the general call being invited to? Why would God invite people to come unto Him, and not suffer the Holy Spirit to do His work in their lives? Why would He call them and not draw them? In essence the Calvinist just made the general Gospel call of none effect. However, the apostle Paul said, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...”* The Gospel is the message that has the power to bring salvation. Therefore, when the general call of the Gospel goes forth, why do Calvinists seem to imply that it has lost its power? Furthermore, Calvinists contradict themselves by saying that salvation is God's sovereign choice in eternity past and therefore the power lies in the choice of God and no longer in the message of the Gospel. Regeneration then becomes a predetermined work of God and no longer depends upon the response to the preaching of the

Gospel. In fact, the reason why Calvinists believe the general call is not efficacious is because of the audience of that call. Whether the elect or non-elect hear the gospel, they cannot respond to it because they are dead in trespasses and sins. Only when the Holy Spirit regenerates the elect can he then understand the Gospel and respond to it. If this is true, how then is the Gospel the power of God unto salvation? How does the Gospel save if you need to be born again before you can even respond to it? The Calvinist, contradicting himself, would reply, *"No man can be saved without the Gospel."* However, if he cannot believe the Gospel until he is saved (regenerated), this becomes impossible. Vance concludes summarising the error, *"...Irresistible Grace is what actually saves a man, believing on Christ is only the result of this grace."* How twisted and contrary this is to the Word of God!

Irresistible Grace also robs its subjects of free will. The overpowering work of the Holy Spirit that saves the individual apart from their cooperation is unscriptural. As noticed previously, the Bible clearly teaches the responsibility of man in salvation (John 1:12; Romans 10:13).

Calvinists teach that man's will is in bondage to sin and therefore not free, and at the time of the Holy Spirit's effectual call, this exact reversal takes place. The sinner who is part of the elect cannot say no, neither can he resist the working of the Spirit. Yet why is it that throughout the Scriptures we see people rejecting God, the All-powerful One whose desire is for all to be saved: Cain (Gen. 4:6-7); the people of Noah's day (Gen. 6); Israel resisted (Rom. 10:21); the Jews of Paul's day (Acts 13:46)? Many have rejected the call of God and millions still are today. This does not make God less powerful; neither does it make Him unsovereign. Dave Hunt says, *"God's grace throughout the Scriptures has always been given freely and received willingly."<sup>100</sup>* His grace has never been imposed upon anybody. The title 'Irresistible Grace' is even in itself contradictory. How can grace, which is free, be irresistibly imposed upon someone? Calvinists would respond to that by saying, "God doesn't drag them into the

---

<sup>100</sup> Hunt, "What Love is This?" 372

kingdom, He changes their will to want to be saved.”Firstly, this is wrong as it would imply regeneration before salvation. The Calvinist insists upon this due to their understanding of man’s total depravity, hence their inability to choose God. Secondly, it is wrong to say that God changes their will so that they will desire to be saved, because that is just a repetition of the same problem being addressed. If this is true, it would mean that God imposes them to change their will against their will.

The drawing work of the Father in John 6:44, 65 is to no way imply an irresistible grace performed by the Holy Spirit. It simply teaches that the Holy Spirit influences and presses upon the hearts of all men who are drawn to the Saviour; “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*”. (John 12:32). All men are drawn through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). The work of the Holy Spirit is not efficacious unless there is a proper response of repentance and faith in the Gospel. Although John 6:44 does teach that “*...men cannot be saved apart from a divine drawing.*”<sup>101</sup> yet there is no indication that this drawing is irresistible. The “I will raise him up at the last day,” is in reference to those who come to Jesus, not those who are drawn by the Father. Coming to Jesus secures a resurrection (John 11:25), the drawing of the Father assists coming to Jesus. Therefore there is a simple three-fold problem with interpreting this passage as an irresistible drawing: “(1) Christ said he would draw all men to Himself (John 12:32; 1:9). (2) The Bible says God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9)... (3) God draws men through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), and the gospel is to be preached to every man (Mark 16:15).”<sup>102</sup>

The teaching of Irresistible Grace has no grounding in any passage of Scripture. Its foundations are set in the presumptions of Total Depravity and it fails the test of truth. The

---

<sup>101</sup> Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” 118

<sup>102</sup> David W. Cloud, “Things Hard to be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties,” Way of Life Literature, 2014, 244, 245

fallacy of Irresistible Grace contradicts itself in name and in application, for it restricts the free will of man and distorts the Gospel's power in salvation.

# PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

## ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

The final point in T.U.L.I.P is the Perseverance of the Saints. The Perseverance of the Saints has also been coined by several different terms: the Preservation of the Saints, the Perseverance of God with His Saints, Indefectible Grace, and Lasting Grace. Nevertheless, this doctrine is essential to the entirety of Calvinism, and as Edwin H. Palmer said, “*All the Five Points of Calvinism hang or fall together.*”<sup>103</sup> The Perseverance of the Saints, as all the other points, naturally connects together. Palmer continues to express the reality of this by showing the close link between Unconditional Election and Perseverance of the Saints: “*If the doctrine of election is false, then this doctrine is false, too; but if the doctrine of election is true, then this doctrine necessarily follows.*”<sup>104</sup> Therefore a study concerning the essentials of this doctrine is vital.

The doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints is defined by Loraine Boettner as, “*All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.*”<sup>105</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith also defines it this way: “*They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.*”<sup>106</sup> This doctrine essentially involves two elements: firstly, the eternal security of the elect, and secondly, the assurance of the believer. The eternal security of the elect is the confidence that the “person who sincerely puts his trust in Christ as his Saviour is safe in the arms of Jesus. He is secure...He will go to

---

<sup>103</sup> Palmer, “Calvinism,” 69

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> Boettner, “Doctrine of Predestination,” (Summary of TULIP page)

<sup>106</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. XVII, sect. 1.

heaven.<sup>107</sup>” This confidence is to be founded in the elect who, as stated by Boettner, are “...chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit...”<sup>108</sup> These then are they who are “...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5). They have been promised eternal life and security; John 10:28 “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” And they are of those whom the Father has given to the Son, and promised a resurrection, “And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39). The Father who has sovereignly elected them, the Son who particularly died for them and the Spirit who effectually called them, is the Triune Godhead who promises to secure them for all eternity. And for this very reason, the doctrine has been sometimes considered as the Preservation of the Saints. What a wonderful truth that should bring comfort to the elect, as Thiessen prudently penned, “If properly understood, this is a very comforting doctrine...”<sup>109</sup>”

Secondly, the assurance of the believer is to be considered. R. C. Sproul wrote, “The doctrine of the assurance of salvation differs from the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but it is closely related... but they can never be separated.”<sup>110</sup> Although closely linked they must separately be considered. Assurance of salvation answers the question: How can I be sure that I am saved? Now in regard to assurance of salvation, note how Perseverance of the Saints relates:

- **Matthew 24:13:** “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”
- **1 Corinthians 15:1, 2:** “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which

---

<sup>107</sup> Palmer, “Calvinism,” 69

<sup>108</sup>Boettner, “Doctrine of Predestination,” (Summary of TULIP page)

<sup>109</sup> Thiessen, “Systematic Theology,” 294

<sup>110</sup> Sproul, “Reformed Theology?” 199

*also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”*

- **Colossians 1:21-23:** *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...”*
- **Revelation 2:7:** *“...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*
- **Revelation 2:10:** *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*

Although children of God go through seasons of doubts and struggles, these verses teach that their faith will persevere to the end. R. C. Sproul said concerning Matthew 24:13,

*“Endurance in faith is a condition for future salvation.”<sup>111</sup>* Also John Piper said,

*“Obedience, evidencing inner renewal from God, is necessary for final salvation.”<sup>112</sup>*

Therefore, the fruit of salvation in the life of the elect is persevering faith. John Piper refers to this also as “...a fight of faith to be fought. The elect will fight that fight.”<sup>113</sup> However, the fight is not fought alone, but rather through the grace and power of God. Although assurance of salvation may not be a reality for some, it doesn’t take away from the fact that they might still obtain saving faith. Saving faith is complete at the point of the effectual call of the Holy Spirit, but this “faith” given perseveres to the end. Genuine saving faith will persevere and give evidence by one’s “election”. Nevertheless, “...assurance of salvation is an enormous benefit to the Christian...it is also to be pursued as a duty.”<sup>114</sup> Assurance of salvation will help the elect persevere in their faith and to also assist them in sanctification. Nevertheless, perseverance in faith and obedience for final salvation doesn’t mean that we receive adoption,

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 198

<sup>112</sup> Piper, “Five Points,” 67

<sup>113</sup> Ibid pp. 63, 64

<sup>114</sup> Sproul, “Reformed Theology?” 203



justification, redemption and acceptance at the end of our lives<sup>115</sup>. It is rather an assurance whereby we can make our "...calling and election sure..." (2 Peter 1:10).

The Perseverance of the Saints is a cardinal doctrine that completes Calvinism's T.U.L.I.P theology. Its main two components are the eternal security of the elect, and the assurance of salvation. The eternal security aspect is founded upon the preserving power of God, whereas the assurance of Salvation element is based upon ones persevering in the faith. Ultimately this doctrine affirms that the elect can never "...totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace." And therefore it ought to bring great comfort to them who have been called of God.

---

<sup>115</sup> Piper, "Five Points," 71

## PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS – REBUTTAL

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is perhaps the closest to Biblical truth in comparison to all the Five Points. Many claim they are one-point Calvinists based on this point alone; however this cannot be Biblically accepted. Although the doctrine upholds much truth concerning eternal security, it has several fundamental pitfalls. These blunders found within the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, should render it unsatisfactory as all other Five Points. In actual fact, this doctrine is perhaps to be considered as one of the most damaging.

The first error concerning the Perseverance of the Saints is to be found in its emphasis. In order to provide assurance of salvation, Calvinism seeks to apply the concept of perseverance in the faith. Although continuing in the faith and having a fruitful Christian life are biblical evidences of salvation, it is not the only means of assurance. The Bible is filled with evidences of salvation. Consider the book of 1 John which gives several main assurances of salvation:

*(A) Do I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...' (B) Am I sensitive to sin? 1 John 1:6, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.' (C) Do I keep God's commandments? 1 John 2:3, 'And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' (D) Do I reject this evil world? 1 John 2:15, 'Love not the world... if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' (E) Do I love believers? 1 John 3:14, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...' (F) Do I experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit? 1 John 4:13, 'Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.' (G) Am I experiencing spiritual victory? 1 John 5:4, 'For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'*<sup>116</sup>

Calvinism's neglect to address these key evidences of salvation is a failure to teach God's people the entire counsel of God. Therefore, they have a misplaced emphasis upon faithful good works as the only significant proof of genuine salvation. However one would wish that

---

<sup>116</sup> Christian Mentoring from A to Z, Lesson A - Assurance of Salvation: Knowing I Am Saved, pp. 6-9

it could end there, but sadly there are severe consequences because of this misplaced emphasis.

The second problem with Perseverance of the Saints is a consequence of the misplaced emphasis mentioned above. When a believer constantly looks to his performance as the evidence of salvation it can be quite dissatisfying. The first danger that this poses is religiosity. If the believer constantly focuses upon his performance and not Jesus Christ he will become cold hearted and deceived. He will be no different to them of Galatia to whom Paul wrote, “*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” Yes, he may have been saved by faith, but has now so desired to be “perfect” by the works of the law. This is undoubtedly dangerous and displeasing to the Lord. Secondly, if a believer constantly focuses upon his continued performance as the only assurance of salvation, he will never be sure of his salvation. The Calvinist’s proof of genuine election is their continuance in the faith, and upon this basis they can never be certain until the end. Consequently, this leaves an open door for a flood of doubts to consume them, if they fall into sin or face certain struggles. Dave Hunt asks and answers an important question concerning this: “How does the Calvinist know he is one of the elect who have been predestined? His performance plays a large part in helping him to know whether or not he is among that select group.<sup>117</sup>” If this is true, he is burdened with unnecessary pressure and is stuck on the milk of the Word being unable to leave “*the principles of the doctrine of Christ, [and] ... go on unto perfection...*” (Hebrews 6:1). Even John Calvin knew the effects of this doctrine:

*For there is scarcely a mind in which the thought does not sometimes rise, Whence your salvation but from the election of God? But what proof have you of your election? When once this thought has taken possession of any individual, it keeps him perpetually miserable,*

---

<sup>117</sup> Hunt, “What Love is This?” 481

*subjects him to dire torment, or throws him into a state of complete stupor.... Therefore, as we dread shipwreck, we must avoid this rock, which is fatal to every one who strikes upon it...*<sup>118</sup>

Avoiding what Calvin calls “this rock,” is foolishness and nothing more than a cowardly act of ignoring an ever important truth.

The last error within Perseverance of the Saints is simply its associations. Due to the fact that all the points of Calvinism interrelate, why should any of them be acceptable? The T.U.L.I.P system of theology is linked to each other. Several of the points in Calvinism are even based on the previous point. Calvinism is a seemingly logical progression which requires all five points to stand. The Perseverance of the saints has its grounds in two of the five points of Calvinism, ‘Unconditional Election’ and ‘Limited Atonement’. In Unconditional Election, because it relates to His sovereign election, by which the totally depraved are elected and sovereignly kept unto glorification (Romans 8:29-30). And in Limited Atonement, as it assures the elect that Christ died to effectually secure them from hell fire without any of their responsibility necessary. As a result, they will continue in the faith until they reach heaven. Due to Perseverance of the Saints being supported by the other heretical points of Calvinism, it should not be accepted.

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is a teaching that causes much chaos and uncertainty in the lives of believers. This doctrine by-passes all the plain teachings concerning assurance of salvation and misplaces its emphasis on performance. This emphasis results in religiosity and uncertainty, which will, and no doubt has been certainly the demise of many soundly, converted Christians. Nevertheless, the solidity of such doctrine depends upon and stems back to the other erroneous points of Calvinism. Therefore, it is to be concluded that, the Perseverance of the Saints is unscriptural and dangerous.

---

<sup>118</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiv, 4.

## FINAL REMARKS

Every point of Calvinism has been critiqued and examined. Therefore, what shall we then say to these things? Is not Calvinism found wanting? Does it not lack Scriptural exegesis and sound doctrine? Do the fruits of Calvinism taste sweet in the mouth of the Almighty? I dare not say! For perhaps, *“The fruit of the flower is appealing; [nevertheless] the fruit of the theology is appalling.”*<sup>119</sup> The attractiveness of this “intellectual, philosophical” argument has caused many Christians, pastors, and families to let the Trojan horse of Calvinism into their lives and ministries. At first, the prize possession seems as if it were an enlightenment, but the ends there of are reproachful.

Calvinism misrepresents the nature of God by taking the characteristic of His sovereignty to the extreme. God’s sovereignty is complete in the affairs of His creation. God has full control and power over all that He has created. However, this does not conclude that God is predetermining and instigating every action, word, and sin that man commits. Rather it is teaching that God is sovereign over all, but at the same, allowing man to go his own way, as the Judges repeatedly states, *“...every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* (Judges 17:6). Man’s free will is not at the expense of the sovereignty of God; rather it is complementary to the sovereignty of God. God in His sovereignty has given man free will. Man’s free will enables us to accept or reject the love of God demonstrated through the death of Jesus Christ, His Son. To deny that man has a free will, is to simply conclude that man is robotic. Could a person sit in a chair all His life and be all that God intended Him to be? According to Calvinism, why not! Yet the Bible teaches contrary; it teaches that necessity is laid upon mankind to accept or reject the Gospel: *“And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed he shook his raiment, and said unto them, **Your blood be upon your own heads;***

---

<sup>119</sup> Philip F. Congdon, “Soteriological Implications of Five-Point Calvinism,” Adelaide College of Ministries, Inc. SA

***I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles...And Crispus...believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed...***”(Acts 18: 6, 8). God’s sovereignty insists upon man’s responsibility. Just as a sovereign nation has control over its entire people yet still requires that the people exercise their right to free will, so God in His sovereignty. God desires that His people willingly and freely love Him, glorifying His name. If our salvation and love for God was a predetermined, robotic response to God’s will, then what love is this? Would God really be glorified by our love for Him when it is really not an act of our own will? This way of thinking has led the demise of many active soul winning programs and caused unfruitful miserable Christians. Although many Calvinists have not been affected in this manner, the fruit of Calvinism has still lead many souls astray, by such unbiblical conclusions.

Calvinism also turns theology into outright philosophy. This should not be a surprise to anyone, as John Calvin was a trained philosopher. Yet such philosophic tendency has led to false conclusions. Philosophy in relation to the Scripture can be defined accordingly; *“Philosophy is to use the human intellect and logic in an attempt to come to the truth apart from divine revelation.”*<sup>120</sup> This is true of all the five points of Calvinism. Calvinists go beyond the plain teaching of the word of God to infuse their philosophical persuasions. As noted earlier, even several points of Calvinism are built upon other points. Yet shouldn’t biblical doctrine be based upon and drawn out of the plain Scriptural teachings? Calvinism proves that it turns theology into philosophy by its reinterpretation of plain verses and words, but also by creating a philosophic mould into which they press the Word of God. Yet beloved of God, let us allow the Scriptures to mould our thinking and theology, for we are not above the Scriptures and the *“...word of God is not bound”* (2 Timothy 2:9). Let us not be guilty of adding or taking from the word of God to suite our

---

<sup>120</sup> Cloud, “The Calvinism Debate,” 14

philosophical persuasions, for *“who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?”* (Isaiah 40:13). Nevertheless, we are warned as Bible-believing Christians to *“beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”* (Colossians 2:8). Churches, people and pastors have been spoiled by such philosophy because *“It is the practice of many Calvinists to press their views relentlessly upon others, even if it leads to church division. This theological system becomes the main emphasis of their conversation, their preaching, their prayers, and their ministries.”*<sup>121</sup> “Would to God that people would see Calvinism as it really is, as “philosophy and vain deceit.”

The fruits of Calvinism have left people perplexed, pastors confused, and sheep scattered. These are not fruits of the Word of God, but rather philosophy. God has not ordained that we should be an Arminian or a Calvinist, but rather has called us to be Biblicists. The roots of Calvinism testify against itself, in that it is Catholic. The fruits of Calvinism protest against itself, in that they are poisonous. And the conclusions of Calvinism affirm its absurdity in that it irrationalises

---

<sup>121</sup> Quote by William McDonald, cited: <http://www.ambassadors.edu/resources-files/Resources/ChancellorDesk/Fruits-of-Calvinism.pdf>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnes, Albert. Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, Kregel Publications, 1962.

Benedict, David. A General History of the Baptist Denomination (Gallatin: Church History Research & Archives, 1985).

Boettner, Loraine, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, EERDMANS, 1932.

Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxiv.

Calvin, Jean. Institutes of the Christian Religion, Eerdmans, 1979.

Calvin, John. Institutes of The Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge, ESQ., Edinburgh.

Christian Mentoring from A to Z, Lesson A - Assurance of Salvation: Knowing I Am Saved.

Cloud, David W. The Calvinism Debate, Way of Life Literature, 2006.

Cloud, David W. Things Hard to be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties, Way of Life Literature, 2014.

Congdon, Philip F. Soteriological Implications of Five-Point Calvinism, Adelaide College of Ministries, Inc. SA

Curtis, A.K. Christian History, Volume V, No. 4, Christian History Institute, 1986.

Gill, John Dr. John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible,

Hunt, Dave & White, James. Debating Calvinism, Multnomah Publishers, 2004.

Hunt, Dave. What love is this?: Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God, The Berean Call, 2006.

Hyponensem, Augustineum. Apostolic Letter, Aug. 28, 1986,  
[www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html](http://www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html)

McDonald, William, cited: <http://www.ambassadors.edu/resources/files/Resources/ChancellorDesk/Fruits-of-Calvinism.pdf>



- Mckim, Donald K. The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin, Cambridge Uni. Press, 2004.
- O'Donnell, James. Augustine: New Biography, Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.
- Packer, J.I. Concise Theology: A guide to historic Christian Beliefs, Intervarsity Press, 1993.
- Palmer, Edwin H., The Five Points of Calvinism, Baker Book House, 1982.
- Pink, Arthur W. The Attributes of God, Baker Books, 2006.
- Pink, Arthur W. The Sovereignty of God in Salvation, Bible Truth Depot, 1930.
- Piper, John. Five Points: Towards a Deeper Experience of God's Grace, Christian Focus, 2013.
- Sproul, R. C. What is Reformed Theology?, Baker Books, 2005.
- Sproul, R.C. Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, Tyndale Publishers, 1992.
- Sproul, R.C. Jr., After Darkness, Light: Distinctives of Reformed Theology, R&R Publishing, 2003.
- Steele, David N.; Thomas, Curtis C. & Quinn, S. Lance. The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented, R&R Publishing, 1963.
- Thayer, Joseph Henry, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Edinburgh, 1914.
- Thiessen, Henry Clarence. Lectures in Systematic Theology, Eerdmans, 2006.
- Vance, Laurence M. The Other Side of Calvinism, Vance Publications, 1991.
- Walls, Jerry L. & Dongell, Joseph R. Why I am Not a Calvinist, Intervarsity Press, 2004, 13-14
- Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. XVII, sect. 1.
- Wiles, J. P. Instruction In Christianity: A Summary of Calvin's Institutes, Sovereign Grace Union, 1966.