

The False Doctrine of Calvinism

There are not as many people in the religious world today who identify themselves as “Calvinists,” yet the system of theology formulated by John Calvin (and his followers) has permeated most Protestant denominations.

Although each of the five points which define Calvinism are clearly refuted in Scripture, most denominationalists accept one or more of the five. Let’s briefly examine these points in the light of Scripture.

For ease of memory and explanation Calvinism is referred to (even by its own proponents) as the *TULIP* Doctrine, from the acronym formed from the first letter of each of its five points:



John Calvin
1509-1564

TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY. *Definition:* Calvinism argues that as a result of Adam’s sin, man has inherited a sinful nature from birth. This nature is depraved to such a degree that man

can do nothing good unless God empowers him to do so. According to the Calvinist, man cannot choose good, cannot obey, cannot believe, but can only choose and do evil.

Bible Answers

The Bible teaches something quite different about human nature and the consequences of Adam's sin:

- ◆ Sin cannot be inherited (Ezekiel 18:20).
- ◆ Men die spiritually as Adam died because they imitate his example of disobedience (Romans 5:12).
- ◆ Adam's sin leads all men to physical death because it deprived all men after him of access to the tree of life (1 Corinthians 15:22, Genesis 3:22-24).
- ◆ Children possess a nature that exemplifies subjects of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14). And, finally...
- ◆ Jesus, although a descendent of Adam (according to the flesh) was free of sin (Luke 3:23-38; Hebrews 2:14; 4:15).

These things show that human beings do not inherit a nature that is sinful, nor do they inherit the guilt of Adam's sin.

**UNCONDITIONAL ELECT-
ION** *Definition:* According to Calvinism, since man is depraved the only way that anyone can do good, is if God elects some whom He chooses to save (and thus empower to do good). It is argued that this election is unconditional, in that it is not based upon anything that man does but purely upon God's choice. If God is the one who chooses those whom He will save, then (it is argued)



He is also the one who chooses those whom He will condemn. Man has no role in this election.

Bible Answers

Salvation is a matter of God's choice, but the Bible teaches that God has set terms and conditions by which God will choose:

- ◆ God accepts those who fear Him and work righteousness (Acts 10:34,35).
- ◆ God desires that all men to be saved and come to obedience (2 Peter 3:9).
- ◆ God has chosen to save all those who are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-6).
- ◆ Only those who choose to obey the gospel are in Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

LIMITED ATONEMENT *Definition:* Since salvation is based upon God's predetermined unconditional election, the Calvinist is forced to conclude that Christ's death was only for the elect. He did not die for all men (since some God predestined to condemn). Calvinism teaches that the atone-

ment of Christ was limited to the elect in both its purpose and potential.

Bible Answers

It is clear that not all men will be saved, but the Bible teaches that Christ's atonement was offered for all people.

- ◆ Christ tasted death for all men (Heb. 2:9).
- ◆ He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).
- ◆ Though not all will be saved, all could be saved if they would turn to Christ (Mark 16:15,16, Acts 17:30).

Jesus' atonement was not limited in that anyone and everyone who accepts it can benefit from its saving power.

I**RRRESISTIBLE GRACE** *Definition:*
If men can do good only because God makes them do good through the empowerment of His grace, Calvinism next argues that once this grace has been bestowed upon someone it cannot be resisted. Man cannot do evil to the point that he rejects the grace of God.

Bible Answers

Salvation is by the grace of God, but the Bible defines the nature of this grace.

- ◆ God's grace is something in which one must continue (Acts 13:43).
- ◆ God's grace can be received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).
- ◆ God's grace is something from which one may fall. (Galatians 5:9).
- ◆ God's grace is something in which one can choose to be strong (2 Timothy 2:1).

◆ God's grace empowers only in the sense that it teaches man how to live (Titus 2:11).

PERSEVERANCE AND PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

Definition: Since God has already unconditionally chosen all the elect whom He will save, and since the elect can in no way resist the influence of His empowering grace upon them, the Calvinist finally must argue that God will do whatever is necessary to preserve the elect unto the Day of Judgment.

Bible Answers

God can, and does help His people, but this does not mean they cannot fall away.

◆ Those who are in Christ can be lost (Acts 8:12-22; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

◆ One who stands in Christ can fall if they do not take heed (1 Corinthians 10:12).

◆ The elect will be saved if they hold fast the word of truth (1 Corinthians 15:1,2).

◆ God preserves through His word (Acts 20:32).

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