

A Historical and Biblical Examination of the

# T.U.L.I.P. of Calvinism

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## Introduction

The story is told of a group of theologians who were discussing the points of predestination and free will. After time, the debate became so heated that the theologians split into two groups hostile toward one another. One man, who could not decide which group was correct, quietly joined the predestination crowd. The members of the predestination persuasion sought the reason he was there. The man replied, "I came of my own free will."

This outraged the theologians of the predestination schism. They retorted, "Free will! You do not belong here!" and thrust him out.

After retreating to the free-will group of theologians, he was asked why he switched camps. The undecided man replied, "I was sent here."

Enraged, they forced him into exile as they screamed, "Get out! You cannot join us unless you come of your own free will." The man was left out in the cold with nowhere to go.<sup>1</sup>

There *is* a place for this man - the Biblical position! Yet, many do not recognize any position on the doctrines of election other than Calvinism and Arminianism. That is absurd, considering that neither one of these theological labels existed until the sixteenth century. Even Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers, replied in answer to those who insist that truth lies between Calvinism and Arminianism, "It does not; there is nothing

between them but a barren wilderness.”<sup>2</sup> He also stated, “...Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.”<sup>3</sup> Calvinist Loraine Boettner wrote,

*There are in reality only two types of religious thought. There is the religion of faith, and there is the religion of works. We believe that what has been known in Church history as Calvinism is the purest and most consistent embodiment of the religion of Faith, while that which has been known as Arminianism has been diluted to a dangerous degree by the religion of works.*<sup>4</sup>

Baptist churches and denominations have experienced much division the last few centuries over the debate of Calvinism and Arminianism.

Disagreements in the nineteenth century among English Baptists resulted in a split into Particular (Calvinistic) and General (Arminian) Baptists.

However, Thomas Crosby (1685-1752), an English Baptist historian, wrote in *The History of the English Baptists* that many Baptists did not fit neatly into two “packages” of doctrine.

*And I know that there are several churches, ministers, and many particular persons, among the English Baptists, who desire not to go under the name either of Generals or Particulars, nor indeed can justly be ranked under either of these heads; because they receive what they think to be truth, without regarding with what human*

*schemes it agrees or disagrees with .5*

This debate that divides Christendom actually predates John Calvin and James Arminius. In the fifth century, Augustine and Pelagius debated the issues of predestination and free will. Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus countered one another in a series of writings during the Protestant Reformation. In more recent history, George Whitefield (a Calvinist) and John Wesley (a self-proclaimed Arminian) sharply expressed disagreement with one another both in writing and in pulpits across America and England.

Why so much division, debate, and disagreement regarding this doctrine? What are the areas of disagreement between Arminianism and Calvinism? The followers of Arminius, known now as Arminians, emphasized man's response to God's grace, or man's free will. Calvinists, as a reaction to Arminian theology, placed the emphasis on God's grace, election, sovereignty, predestination, and foreknowledge.

Many Christians and churches have been led to believe that because Calvinism has a systematic arrangement of its teaching, it must be a purely Biblical system of doctrine. However, when one honestly and without preconceived ideas begins to compare Scripture with Scripture, he would have to conclude otherwise. Consider: even the cults have systematized their doctrines.

The doctrine of election is a Bible doctrine. If the Bible teaches a truth, it cannot be ignored simply because it tends to be a controversial subject. Even the humanity and the deity of Christ have generated controversy in Christendom, and few would say that those doctrines are not worth contending for earnestly. It should be understood that the disagreement does not originate in the Bible's teaching, but in man's interpretation of Scripture. Peter very clearly tells us "that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation."<sup>6</sup> In other words, the teaching (prophecy) of Scripture is not to be based on one man's personal (private) interpretation. As will be seen from history, one man, "Saint" Augustine, is primarily responsible for the doctrines of Calvinism.

It should be understood that this examination into the life of John Calvin and his teaching in no way is an implication that those who claim to be Calvinists (or Arminians for that matter) are not saved. As one who sat under the teaching of Calvinistic Baptists in the college classroom, there was no reason to doubt the salvation of these professors. However, thirty years in an association of Baptist churches heavily influenced by Calvinistic creeds has resulted in a burning desire to examine the historical man John Calvin and his doctrine. This is done in the spirit of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to confirm what they were being taught was

indeed true.<sup>7</sup>

While understanding that a work of this nature will never put to rest the debate and controversy, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine election and the doctrines of Calvinism that divide Baptists both historically and Biblically. The history of the controversy will be considered from the perspective of Augustine and Pelagius, Luther and Erasmus, Calvin and Arminius, and Whitefield and Wesley. Doctrines of Calvinism as expressed by the acrostic T.U.L.I.P. will be examined from the Scriptures.

T - Total Depravity

U - Unconditional Election

L - Limited Atonement

I - Irresistible Grace

P - Perseverance of the Saints

Then, after careful examination, it will become easier for fundamental Baptists to see that these doctrines that led Calvinists to burn and excommunicate people, if truly understood and consistently applied to life, will adversely affect prayer, the preaching of God's Word, personal evangelism, and practical Christian living.

## Historical Background

Most do not realize that the Calvinism and Arminianism debate

actually began in the earlier centuries of Christendom. It is helpful to consider the conflict from a historical perspective, thus exposing the unbiblical origins of the system now known as Calvinism.

### Augustine vs. Pelagius

Except for the Apostle Paul, Augustine (A.D. 354 - 430) of Hippo, North Africa, probably has had more influence on theology than any other church “father.” *Christian History* in 1986 exalted Augustine as a member of a “trinity” with Jesus and Paul.<sup>8</sup> Augustine was featured in an issue of *Time* magazine as “the second founder of the faith.”<sup>9</sup> John Calvin appealed to his writings hundreds of times as the source for his doctrine, about as much as Scripture. However, as Augustine’s doctrine is evaluated, fundamental Baptists would honestly have to ascribe to him the title “Father of Corrupt Theology.”<sup>10</sup>

History indicates that his mother was a devoted Christian, but Augustine rejected this influence and did not follow the example of Timothy.<sup>11</sup> He, for many years, lived a wicked life of unrestrained immorality. This reprobate lifestyle resulted in a life of bondage and guilt.

Later in life, he began a search for truth. His quest led him to erroneous systems of doctrine, including Manicheanism and Greek philosophy. Manicheanism is the false dualistic religion founded by the

third century Persian “prophet” Manes who combined Gnosticism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism is a Persian religion founded in 600 B.C., emphasizing a conflict in the spirit world of good and evil, light and darkness.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the Manicheans had a minority group called the Elect, one of the terms often used by Calvinists. Augustine was finally “converted” to Christianity by “Saint” Ambrose in A.D. 386, and was ordained a priest in 391.

As the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa from A.D. 396 on, he bitterly opposed the Donatists, an earlier group of Anabaptists, for their view of believer’s baptism and local church autonomy. They were threatened with violence if they did not cease to assemble together without the authorization of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Augustine’s writings directed toward these “heretics” provided justification for the Crusades and the Inquisitions of the Catholic Church in the centuries to follow. Hundreds of bishops and thousands of other religious leaders were forcefully removed from their churches and banished to remote islands. The members of their congregations had the rights of citizenship taken from them and were refused freedom of religious worship.

Augustine interpreted Scripture from a philosophical perspective. While he says he believed in the authority of God’s Word, it was not his

only authority for faith and practice. The authority and tradition of the Roman Church was just as authoritative in his view. He believed that the apocryphal books were to be included in the completed canon of the Bible, even though he knew that Jewish leaders rejected them as inspired. Augustine held that the Greek Septuagint translation was inspired by God, and he even suggested that “Saint” Jerome use this corrupted text instead of Hebrew manuscripts for his Latin Vulgate translation of the Old Testament. Salvation through grace to him meant through the sacraments the Roman Church had to offer, not by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ alone. Baptism was considered to be the source of salvation from God, including the removal of original sin. He taught the practice of infant baptism: “Let there be then no eternal salvation promised to infants, out of our own opinion, without Christ’s baptism.”<sup>13</sup> Augustine is a primary source of the “Mary, the Mother of God” false doctrine, leading to her exaltation as the “Queen of Heaven” in later generations when the worship of pagan goddesses was assimilated into the Roman Church.<sup>14</sup> The foundation for the devilish doctrine of purgatory was laid through his writings. Polygamy was permissible over monogamy for the purpose of propagation, even though he practiced celibacy, which Paul called a doctrine of devils.<sup>15</sup>

The most famous of Augustine's writings were his *Confessions* (an autobiography) and *City of God*. *City of God* greatly influenced the a-millennial and post-millennial interpretations of eschatology. He believed that it was the Church's task to preach the Gospel with the goal of ushering in Christ's kingdom.

*Now already the Kingdom in the form of the Church is a reality.*

*Now already Christ and the saints rule, for the Kingdom is ruled by Christ through the heads of the hierarchical Church. Resurrection is now taking place, for new life is taking place through the Gospel, now Satan is bound.<sup>16</sup>*

By the time of Catholic Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, a declaration was made that a literal millennium was nothing more superstitious error.

Related to the Calvinism debate, Augustine was the originator of a "double predestination" teaching that both the elect and those who are reprobate (unsaved) are decreed by God. With this he also taught irresistible grace, believing God's sovereignty leads Him to predestinate those who will be saved against their will. In *On Rebuke and Grace*, he states that the number of "those who are predestined to the kingdom of God...is so certain that one can neither be added to them nor taken from them."<sup>17</sup> Thus, mankind has no freedom of the will to choose salvation. Of course, this

salvation was only available through the sacraments of the Church of Rome.

Augustine was fifty-seven years old when Pelagius began promoting his theological position. Pelagius was a British monk who arrived in Rome about A.D. 409 after being expelled from Wales. Historians describe him as being “a mild, quiet man, of clear intellect, learned, and of spotless character.”<sup>18</sup> One of his students carried the doctrines of his teacher to their logical conclusions, now known in theological circles as Pelagianism. However, it should be understood that most of what we know about Pelagius is from the writings of Augustine and Calvinists, and the two men never met personally.

Pelagianism teaches that because God gave commands in Scripture, man then must have the ability to obey those commands. “Whatever I ought to do, I can do.”<sup>19</sup> Carried to its logical conclusions, Pelagianism says a man could be saved without the need of the Gospel if he simply chooses obedience to God. Both God’s Law and the Gospel lead to salvation. The struggle of the Apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans is not adequately considered. Ultimately, Pelagianism raises the question, “If people are not able to freely choose obedience, how can God hold them accountable for sins committed?”

Pelagianism taught that Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden did not

affect all of mankind. Rather, it only injured him, contrary to Romans 5:12. Children are now born “neutral” with the ability to choose between good and evil.

The disagreement between Pelagius and Augustine was so great that several Catholic councils and synods condemned Pelagianism beginning in A.D. 412. A compromise reaction now known as Semi-Pelagianism was formulated and adopted by two councils (A.D. 472-475). Thus, what had been considered heresy was then partially accepted by the Roman Church.

Before leaving the subject of Augustine, it must be remembered that he was first and foremost a Roman Catholic. He is now known as one of the original “doctors” of the Roman Church with Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great.<sup>20</sup> There is a Catholic feast held in his honor on August 28, the day of his death. The bones of Augustine are worshiped as one of many Catholic relics.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”<sup>21</sup> Even in modern Christianity, the writings of Augustine have been

drawing “disciples” into doctrinal error, including fundamental Baptists.

### Luther vs. Erasmus

Martin Luther is probably the best known of all the Protestant Reformers because of his ninety-five theses boldly nailed to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Many church historians consider this date in October of 1517 to be the “spark” that set Reformation fires ablaze.

Luther was ordained as an Augustinian monk in the Catholic Church. In his own admission, he almost killed himself with the practice of his religion. It was while studying through the book of Romans that he understood justification by faith apart from works. Thus, he assumed a position contrary to Augustine himself. As Vance points out, “Augustine did *not* hold the same view of justification as the Reformers.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, historian Philip Schaff states, “Pelagius understands in the Protestant sense of *declaring* righteousness, and not (like Augustine) in the Catholic sense of *making righteous*.”<sup>23</sup> *Martin Luther himself wrote,*

*Augustine got nearer to the meaning of Paul than all the Schoolmen, but he did not reach Paul. In the beginning I devoured Augustine, but when the door into Paul swung open and I knew what justification by faith really was, then it was out with him.*<sup>24</sup>

Yet, some Calvinists make the claim that Augustine, though a Roman

Catholic, was actually the one who gave Europe the Reformation.

Concerning the doctrines of Calvinism, it should be kept in mind that Luther was twenty-five years old when John Calvin was born. Luther wrote more about predestination than Calvin. The view of predestination that Calvin taught was first in Martin Luther's writings, and before that in the works of Augustine. With that, we see the tie back to the corrupt theology of Augustine.

Erasmus of Rotterdam was a Dutch humanist who is best known for publishing a Greek New Testament. His manuscripts provided the text for Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament into German. Their cooperative effort was what led to the Reformation in Germany and throughout Europe. "Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it."<sup>25</sup>

Erasmus strongly opposed Augustinian theology relating to predestination. Martin Luther taught a double predestination similar to Augustine. In *Diatribes Concerning Free Will*, Erasmus presented logical and Biblical arguments supporting man's free will in redemption. The controversy between Pelagius and Augustine erupted once again with Luther denouncing Erasmus' views in *The Bondage of the Will*. A friendship between these two men was irreparably hurt by the debate.

Calvin vs. Arminius

John Calvin was born in France in 1509. His family, like many of his day, was Roman Catholic. When John was twelve years old, he was placed on the payroll of a chaplaincy at a Catholic cathedral, a common practice in the sixteenth century. This paid for his education at the University of Paris to prepare for the priesthood. After earning a masters degree, he transferred to the University of Orleans to earn a degree in law at his father's bidding. John's father had changed his mind about his son pursuing a career in theology after noticing that practicing law proved lucrative.

The Catholic practice of excommunication closely affected Calvin's family. His father, Gerald, was excommunicated after a financial embarrassment related to his role as a notary for the local bishop. The same year his father died (1531), his older brother Charles was also excommunicated for heresy. Of course, anyone who disagreed with the position of the Catholic hierarchy was considered to be a heretic. Many "Baptist" groups like the Montanists, Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Albigenses, Waldenses, and Anabaptists also found themselves persecuted for the same reason.

Very little is known about Calvin's conversion since he only mentions it once in all of his writings. This experience was referred to briefly in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms. Several contributing factors have

been suggested. Calvin had witnessed the public burning of a Protestant martyr. His cousin, Pierre Robert (1506-1538), a Waldensian pastor, was also witnessing to him at this same time. Robert had translated the Bible into French and had often discussed Bible doctrines with John. He read the writings of Luther as he was questioning the domination and corruption of the Roman papacy.

Shortly after his conversion, Calvin was forced to flee from Paris when charged with heresy. He wandered throughout Europe for three years. In July of 1536, he passed through Geneva, Switzerland, intending to only stay for a short time. However, Reformer William Farel (1489-1565) strongly urged him to remain in Geneva to assist with the Reformation cause. After a time as a reader of Scripture, Calvin was appointed as pastor of the Reformed Church. However, he and Farel were banished from Geneva for three years when a change in government took place.

Before and after his banishment, Calvin established by law a confession of faith and many regulations on worship. His *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* were submitted to the city council. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was even protected by order of the city council, who declared that no one should speak against the book or its doctrine. Geneva came to be known as the Rome of Protestants. If any citizen did not agree

doctrinally, banishment was the consequence. One Calvinist claims, “There is one thing all history testifies to, namely, that what the world calls Calvinism is the only doctrine that produces civil and religious liberty...”<sup>26</sup> An honest look at the history of Geneva, Switzerland, proves otherwise. They had freedom of their religion, not freedom of religion. French skeptic Voltaire (1694-1778) said of Calvin, “The famous Calvin, whom we regard as the Apostle of Geneva, raised himself up to the rank of Pope of the Protestants.”<sup>27</sup> Protestants became just as intolerant as the Roman Catholic Church, “the mother of harlots.”<sup>28</sup> It was an inconsistency in the Protestant leaders to consider the yoke of the pope to be oppressive, and then subject their followers to the same type of oppression. Roman popery was merely replaced by a Protestant popery. The legislation of Geneva was based more on the Levitical code of the Old Testament than on the gospel of Christ. Historians state that discipline in the city was often petty and unnecessarily severe. From 1542 to 1546, many “heretics” were executed or exiled from Geneva. Torture was allowable to extract confessions from those accused. This is the true John Calvin of history.

The Calvinistic belief system has been cited by his followers as the source of capitalism, the Protestant work ethic, and all intellectual and scientific pursuits. It has even been suggested that Calvinism was

responsible for the American Revolution and the Constitution. Calvinists apparently try to rewrite early American history. While Colonial New England was under the control of Calvinistic Puritans, the people had a united Church and State, an oppressive theocracy, and persecution of any dissenters, including Baptists. They were merely following the lead of Calvin himself, who advised Edward VI of England that “Anabaptists and reactionists should be alike put to death.”<sup>29</sup> Because of the strength of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland, Farel urged Calvin in 1544 to write against them. He wrote in *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*,

*To write against all the false opinions and errors of the Anabaptists would involve me in too long a matter and would result in an abyss from which I would never come out. For these vermin differ from all other heretical sects in that they not only err in certain points, but they give rise to a whole sea of insane views. So much so that one will scarcely find an Anabaptist who is not tainted with fantasy. Therefore, to examine minutely, or even recount, all the corrupt doctrines of the sect could never be done.<sup>30</sup>*

Baptist history reveals that many of these “vermin” held “insane views” like believer’s baptism, individual soul liberty, and the sole authority of the

Scriptures. Calvin definitely was not a friend of Baptists.

The most famous of Calvin's conflicts was with Michael Servetus (1511-1553). Servetus was a Spanish physician who arrived in Geneva as a fugitive from Catholic authorities. Years before he had written tracts denying the Trinity and infant baptism. He had also corresponded some with Calvin, asking him many questions. In reply, stating that he did not have time to answer him, Calvin sent Servetus a copy of his *Institutes*. Shortly after receiving it, Servetus returned it to Geneva with many critical marginal notes.

On August 13, 1553, Servetus attended a church service in Geneva and was promptly arrested. A letter written years prior to this exposes Calvin's true thoughts about Servetus. Writing to Farel, Calvin stated that if he had any authority in the matter, he would not permit Servetus to leave Geneva alive.<sup>31</sup> Calvin himself listed almost forty accusations in the two-month trial that followed. Only five days after the start of the trial, Calvin again wrote to Farel, "I hope that sentence of death will at least be passed upon him,"<sup>32</sup> based on Leviticus 24:16.<sup>33</sup> Servetus was finally condemned as a heretic and burnt at the stake on October 27, 1553.

*The burning of Servetus - let it be said with utmost clarity - was a deed for which Calvin must be held largely responsible. It was not*

*done in spite of Calvin, as some over-ardent admirers of his are wont to say. He planned it beforehand and maneuvered it from start to finish. It occurred because of him and not in spite of him. After it had taken place Calvin defended it, with every possible and impossible argument.*<sup>34</sup>

Ironically, the one who suffered the pain of religious oppression did not believe in the doctrine of religious liberty. “If Calvin ever wrote anything in favor of religious liberty, it was a typographical error.”<sup>35</sup>

It must be remembered that the Reformers did not want to separate from the corrupt Roman Church; they simply wanted to reform it. The Protestant Reformation only sought to reform Catholicism with the Bible, not replace it with the Bible. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin were baptized, confirmed, and educated by the Roman Catholic Church. They never doubted the validity of Catholic sacraments and absolutely rejected the Anabaptist idea of rebaptism of believers by immersion.

Calvin established an academy in 1559. By the time of his death in 1564, well over one thousand students had come from all over Europe. This reveals why he had such power and influence in the Protestant Reformation. One of the students to enroll at the academy in 1582 was James Arminius.

James was born on October 10, 1560, making him only four years old

when John Calvin died. It is often assumed that Calvin and Arminius debated with one another, but obviously this is a false assumption.

At the time of his birth, Catholicism still held a stranglehold on his homeland. Thousands of Spanish troops were present to suppress the Reformation there. One historian described this time by writing,

*The gallows, the wheel, stakes, trees along the highways, were laden with carcasses or limbs of those who had been hanged, beheaded, or roasted; so that the air which God made for the respiration of the living, was now become the common grave or habitation of the dead.*<sup>36</sup>

In 1575, while James was studying at the University of Marburg in Germany, his hometown of Oudewater was massacred by invading Spanish Catholic troops, killing his family.

Arminius was considered by many to be an intelligent man of blameless character. Fellow students went to him first whenever they had an essay to compose or a speech to give. Regarding his character, even many Calvinists admit that he was above reproach, well-mannered, and refined in his ways. It is interesting to note that even though many negative things have been written about him, no significant charge of misconduct has ever been brought against him.

In 1588, Arminius was ordained as the first native pastor from Holland in the Reformed church of Amsterdam. After fifteen years of ministry there, he assumed the position of Professor of Divinity at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, the school where he received much of his training. Upon his appointment, he received a Doctor of Theology degree.

Doctrinally, it should be noted that Arminius was just as orthodox as any Calvinist, as will be noted later. He held a high view regarding the Scriptures, considering the Bible to be inspired, authoritative, and infallible. James always carried a New Testament with him. From his own writings published after his death, it can be shown that he believed in the Trinity; creation of everything from nothing; the deity of Christ; a literal death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit.

He suffered many personal attacks in the later years of his life as a result of his theological debates over Catholicism and Calvinism. Arminius was very outspokenly anti-Catholic, calling the Pope “the adulterer and pimp of the Church, the false prophet, the destroyer and subverted of the Church, the enemy of God and the Antichrist.”<sup>37</sup>

*I openly declare, that I do not own the Roman Pontiff to be a member*

*of Christ's body; but I account him to be an enemy, a traitor, a sacrilegious and blasphemous man, a tyrant, and a violent usurper of most unjust domination over the Church, the man of sin, that most notorious outlaw.*<sup>38</sup>

In comparison with Calvinistic doctrines, he said that salvation was through Christ alone because of man's lost condition. Regarding the supposed doctrine that believers can be lost, often attributed to Arminius, he clearly stated that at no time had he asserted that true believers could decline or fall away from salvation. Just like the followers of Calvin, he did hold to the practice of sprinkling infants and opposed rebaptism of the Anabaptists.

Contrary to John Calvin, James Arminius was tolerant of those who held a different position. There is no historical record of him persecuting "heretics." Lawyer Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) said of him, "Condemned by others, he condemned none."<sup>39</sup>

He had great respect for John Calvin's *Institutes*, even encouraging people to read them. In spite of that, disagreement over the doctrines of predestination and free will led to charges of holding to Roman Catholicism, Socinianism, and Pelagianism: Catholicism, because they opposed the Reformed doctrine of predestination; Socinianism, a Unitarian belief system established by Laelius Socinus (1525-1562), who rejected the Trinity and

predestination; and Pelagianism, considered earlier in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius.

### Whitefield vs. Wesley

John Wesley and George Whitefield were students together at Oxford University and were members of a group called “The Holy Club.” This group formed the beginning of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Without a doubt, the early days of the New England colonies were strongly influenced by Calvinism. The practices and doctrines of John Calvin truly did come to America in the Mayflower. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Universities were strongly Calvinistic. Calvinists like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield played a key role in the First Great Awakening, a series of revivals in New England from 1725 to 1770.

During this same period, Whitefield also played an important role in uniting the American colonies just prior the American Revolution through his seven preaching tours. Thousands would travel long distances to hear him, and he has been termed the “Forgotten Founding Father.”<sup>40</sup>

John Wesley was outspokenly Arminian in his theology. In 1778, he started *The Arminian Magazine*. Wesley considered Calvinism to be an antidote of Methodism and wrote several works against its teaching.

His friendship with Whitefield was broken over the issue and

Methodism was divided. The two men corresponded often but could not reconcile until later in life. Their followers chose sides, resulting in several denominations today claiming to be Arminian in theology, including Wesleyan churches, Holiness churches, and the Church of the Nazarene. Interestingly, Arminian Free Will Baptists in America can be traced back to Benjamin Randall (1749-1808), a convert of Calvinist George Whitefield posthumously.

The Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, had very little good to say about John Wesley. He called Wesley “the modern prince of Arminians.”<sup>41</sup> It was Spurgeon’s belief that to ultra-Calvinists, Wesley’s name was as abhorrent as the Pope to a Protestant, even considering him an arch-heretic.<sup>42</sup> In his defense, Spurgeon admitted that John Wesley did preach justification by faith, the total ruin of mankind, and the inability of the creature as any Calvinist would.

## Doctrinal Positions

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I

now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.<sup>43</sup> Strong words of condemnation toward those who would pervert the simplicity of the gospel! As an examination of Calvinism and Arminianism is done in the light of Scripture, *neither* system is entirely accurate concerning salvation and eternal security. This is *not* to suggest, however, that no Calvinist or Arminian can be saved, as was stated in the introduction.

### Calvinism

Calvinism was established more as the creed of a church-controlled state than a statement of Biblical faith and doctrine. As has already been examined, the government of Geneva, Switzerland, enforced the creed much in the same way that Romanism did its doctrines and church traditions. Additionally, what is now known as the basic points of Calvinism was a reaction against the Arminian work entitled the Remonstrance, considered in the section on Arminianism to follow.

The primary source of Calvinistic doctrines is Calvin's *Christianae Religionis Institutio* (Institutes of the Christian Religion). The first edition was published in 1536 with six chapters and was continually edited and

expanded until the final edition of 1559 with eighty chapters. One Calvinist admits that “sometimes, for the sake of logical coherence or out of attachment to pre-established dogmatic positions, he also did violence to the Biblical texts. His principle of Scriptural authority then led him to search the Scriptures for illusory support, by means of purely arbitrary interpretations.”<sup>44</sup> It is from his *Institutes* that it can be demonstrated that John Calvin held to many unbiblical doctrines like sacramentalism, a-millennialism, infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, a state-church, an “invisible church” consisting of all the elect, and Covenant Theology.

It was at the Synod of Dort, Holland, in 1618-1619, that the Calvinistic system became official doctrine of the Reformed Churches. The city of Dort in the southern part of Holland was a Calvinistic stronghold. John Wesley stated that the Synod of Dort was as impartial as the Catholic Council of Trent (Austria) in 1545-1563 which condemned the Protestant Reformation. The state called, supervised, and paid for all expenses of the six-month synod, including those incurred by foreign delegates. Almost two hundred sessions were held. It was not until the twenty-second session that the Remonstrants (Arminians) were allowed to defend their position. Shortly thereafter, they were angrily dismissed from the proceedings. More than two hundred Arminian pastors had their ministries forcefully taken

from them. Additional business decided at Dort included a new Dutch translation of the Bible, completed in 1637.

Many theologians speak highly of the Synod of Dort. Dutch Reformed theologians believe that the Canons of Dort can be traced back to the theology of Saint Augustine who lived almost a millennium before Calvin. Baptist Kenneth Good, in his book *Are Baptists Calvinists?* said that “Dort rendered a great service to Baptists...Baptists can nevertheless subscribe to the Canons of Dort without compromise.”<sup>45</sup>

With that said, following is a shortened summary of the main points of the Calvinistic Counter-Remonstrance drawn from this assembly.

1. *Because the whole race has fallen in Adam and become corrupt and powerless to believe, God draws out of condemnation those whom he has chosen unto salvation, passing by the others.*
2. *The children of believers, as long as they do not manifest the contrary, are to be reckoned among God's elect.*
3. *God has decreed to bestow faith and perseverance and thus save those whom he has chosen to salvation.*
4. *God delivered up his Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to save only the elect.*
5. *The Holy Spirit, externally through the preaching of the*

*Gospel, works a special grace internally in the hearts of the elect, giving them power to believe.*

6. *Those whom God has decreed to save are supported and preserved by the Holy Spirit so that they cannot finally lose their true faith.*

7. *True believers do not carelessly pursue the lusts of the flesh, but work out their own salvation in the fear of God.<sup>46</sup>*

These articles from the Dort synod influenced several doctrinal creeds:

1. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1649), established by an act of the English Parliament
2. The London Confession of Faith (1689), which leaned heavily on the Westminster Confession for Calvinistic sections, issued by Particular (Calvinistic) Baptists
3. The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742), first printed by Benjamin Franklin

Many Baptist leaders of recent Christian history have claimed to be Calvinists. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) and George Whitfield (1714-1770) have already been mentioned. Others include John Bunyan (1628-1688), Isaac Backus (1724-1806), William Carey (1761-1834), Luther

Rice (1783-1836), Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), A.H. Strong (1836-1921), and Arthur Pink (1886-1952).

Baptist leaders assuming Calvinism does not change the fact that the TULIP doctrine is *Reformed* theology. Even Calvinists have acknowledged that Baptists can only be inconsistently a Calvinists.

### Arminianism

Much of the theological system now known as Arminianism actually in truth did not originate with the man for whom it is named. Shortly after his death, followers of James Arminius systematized the teachings of their leader in a work known as the Remonstrance. This document protested some of the teaching of Calvinism. The five points of the Remonstrance can be summarized as follows:

1. *God has decreed to save those who shall believe on Jesus Christ and persevere in faith; leaving the unbelieving in sin to be condemned.*
2. *Jesus Christ died for all men, providing redemption if a man believe on him.*
3. *Man is in a state of sin, unable to of himself do anything truly good, but needs to be born again.*
4. *Man cannot without the grace of God accomplish any good*

*deeds or movements, but this grace can be resisted.*

5. *Believers have power to persevere, but as to whether they can fall away, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures.*<sup>47</sup>

Several Christian leaders claimed to be or were labeled as Arminian in theology. Besides John Wesley (1703-1791) already discussed, revivalists Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), D.L. Moody (1837-1899), and Billy Sunday (1862-1935) are a few that can be mentioned.

## Biblical Examination of Calvinism

Fundamentalists have four main duties as seen in Scripture. They are listed as follows:

1. Correctly interpret Scripture. Paul told Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”<sup>48</sup> Rightly dividing truth is from the Greek word *orthotomeo*, meaning to set straight or handle correctly. The Bible student is not only to give the true meaning of Scripture, but also its application for each generation. To correctly interpret the Bible, the historical, cultural, grammatical, and textual context must be considered. A careful study of the Biblical context is often missing in many of the

doctrines of Calvinism, as will be shown shortly.

2. Systematically arrange doctrine. “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little...But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept...”<sup>49</sup> The Hebrew word for “precept” is *tsav* (injunction, commandment, precept), derived from the word *tsavah* (to enjoin, appoint, charge, or set in order).

Isaiah asks two questions prior to stating this principle. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine?” The answer given by Isaiah are those weaned from their mother, or those who are mature. Young people, as well as adults, must be taught sound doctrinal precepts. This can only be done effectively when the procedure of building precept upon precept, line upon line is practiced. Procedure is just as important as the precept taught.

3. Effectively communicate truth. It was said of the scribe Ezra, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”<sup>50</sup> The first important step to effectively communicating truth is a prepared heart. Too many times the student of God’s Word begins a study of the Bible with a prejudiced heart. The preconceived idea that Calvinism is the only Biblical position is an example of this. Theologians generally begin their study of truth with a

doctrinal creed in hand. Truth must be allowed to “speak” for itself.

4. Earnestly contend for the truth. Jude, the “half-brother” of Jesus Christ, wrote, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares...”<sup>51</sup> An honest examination of the real teaching of the Calvinistic system of doctrine relating to Soteriology (salvation) will reveal that the salvation message presented in the T.U.L.I.P. is a deviation from “the common salvation” and “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” These teachers have brought these erroneous views into fundamental Baptist churches. Many local churches have been destroyed through Hyper-Calvinism. Soul winning efforts have diminished because of the unbiblical emphasis on decrees and the sovereignty of God in election to the neglect of the responsibility of man. Remember, history reveals that John Calvin did *not* emphasize soul winning in Geneva. Rather, infants were baptized into the church, and everyone in the city was *forced by the government* to confess agreement to his doctrine or be the subject of banishment.

The duty of the fundamental pastor is clearly stated by Paul, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound

doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”<sup>52</sup>

With that said, an examination of the TULIP doctrines will now be considered Biblically.

*T* - Total Depravity

*U* - Unconditional Election

*L* - Limited Atonement

*I* - Irresistible Grace

*P* - Perseverance of the Saints

### Total Depravity

At first consideration, it seems that fundamental Baptists would not have any difficulty with this point of Calvinism. However, when their teaching is examined more closely, the Calvinist goes beyond what the Bible teaches. But then, *on the surface* true believers in Christ could also agree with the Mormon missionary who says “we believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost,” taken from their first article of faith.<sup>53</sup> A Jehovah’s Witness will also tell you that Jesus Christ is *a* Son of God.<sup>54</sup>

First, understand the terms used. A look in any dictionary for the definitions for depraved and depravity will reveal the words to mean corrupt, wicked, or perverted.<sup>55</sup> The Latin word for “deprave” is *depravare*,

meaning completely (*de*) crooked (*pravus*). Adding the qualifying word “total” to the term is unnecessary.

In the first three chapters of Romans, God the Holy Spirit used the Apostle Paul to paint a dismal picture of all mankind. Pagans, moralists, and even religious Hebrews were all concluded under sin. The conclusion: it is impossible for sinners to save themselves.

The Calvinist, though, goes a step further to teach that sinful man not only is depraved and lost, but he is also *unable* to repent and believe because of his depravity. Man’s *depravity* also includes *inability*.

“The Bible stresses the total inability of fallen man to respond to the things of God; he is not able to do so. This is what the Calvinist refers to as ‘total depravity.’”<sup>56</sup>

Arthur Pink writes,

*As a creature the natural man is responsible to love, obey, and serve God; as a sinner he is responsible to repent and believe the Gospel.*

*But at the outset we are confronted with the fact that the natural man is unable to love and serve God, and that the sinner, of himself, cannot repent and believe.<sup>57</sup>*

Why is this so important to the Calvinist? This whole system of doctrine is founded upon this one point in the TULIP. A denial of total

depravity leads to a denial of limited atonement and unconditional election. Additionally, the preservation of the saints also fails.

Consider that Scripture states the two conditions of salvation - repent and believe - in the form of *commands*. They are not presented as *gifts* from God. Very clearly Paul told the jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”<sup>58</sup> Paul gave him a command he was unable to obey, according to the Calvinist, unless God chose to give him the ability to believe. Should he not be one of the elect, he would not have been given the ability.

If man is totally incapable of responding to God’s gracious offer of salvation, then there is no need to give a gospel invitation. Why persuade men?<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that Calvinist George Whitfield did not close his preaching meetings with an altar call.

According to the Calvinist, there is nothing sinful mankind can do but wait and hope that he is one of those God has elected to salvation.<sup>60</sup> Man is totally passive in God’s offer of salvation.

Yet, what does Scripture say? “...Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”<sup>61</sup> Jesus stated it as a *command* to be obeyed. What was the response of many to His message? They would not come to Him so that they might be saved.<sup>62</sup> It was a *refusal* to do what He said, not *inability*.

Elsewhere, Paul told the Athenian philosophers that God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”<sup>63</sup> God *commands* all men to repent, but not all will obey that command. This has nothing to do with *ability* to repent.

Any casual look at either history or the daily newspaper gives evidence of the depravity of man. Increasing wickedness and corruption is a daily reality. The Bible clearly states that there is not one righteous person upon the face of the earth. No one seeks after God.<sup>64</sup>

What does Paul mean by the phrase “there is none that seeketh after God?” Notice it does not indicate that no one is *able* to seek after God, but that no one does. Scripture is filled with *commands* to seek God. God, through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah told rebellious Israel, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”<sup>65</sup> In the context of rebellion, idolatry, and unbelief, Moses under the inspiration of the Spirit wrote, “But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”<sup>66</sup> Nothing is said about God enabling the unbeliever to seek Him. Finding God is possible, according to Moses, when the *sinner* initiates a whole-hearted search, not God. God is not playing some “hide-and-seek” game with mankind. His desire is “that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one

of us.”<sup>67</sup> The writer to the Hebrew believers said, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”<sup>68</sup> Faith, prior to that, is defined as being “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”<sup>69</sup> Again, notice the statements of Scripture carefully. The individual must believe that God exists and that He makes the person’s diligent search for Him worthwhile. This search is dependent upon faith.

What is the source of that faith? Man or God? In the well-known verse used for presenting the Gospel, Paul told the Ephesians, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”<sup>70</sup> Look carefully at the phrase, “*and that not of yourselves.*” Some theologians teach this refers to a gift of faith. An antecedent in English grammar refers to a word, phrase, or clause that is replaced by a pronoun. What is the antecedent of the phrase under consideration? The phrase, “by grace...through faith” gives the answer: grace applied through faith. Now focus on the phrase, “*it is the gift of God.*” Again, a singular pronoun “it” is used, but two terms, grace and faith, are mentioned. What is the gift of God referring to? The statement, “by grace...through faith.” Calvinists believe the gift of salvation from God includes the faith to believe.

Assume for a moment that Calvinism is correct about faith coming

from God. *If* salvation includes a gift of faith, there is a problem in the scope of that gift. Calvinists teach that God only gives a gift of faith to the elect. The ones chosen to become reprobate are not given this gift. Paul told the Romans that God has dealt to *every man* the measure of faith.<sup>71</sup> If that is true, then *every person* would have faith to believe. God, in essence, has *enabled every one* to respond to His gracious offer of salvation. If that is indeed true, then all of mankind is depraved but still able to obey the commands “repent and believe.”

How depraved is mankind, though? Is a child born “neutral,” as Arminianism teaches, with the ability to choose good? The Bible is filled with evidence to the contrary.

Scripture indicates that a person receives the old Adamic sin nature through their father. Adam “begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.”<sup>72</sup> This is why the virgin birth of Christ is absolutely essential. The voice of God in the Garden of Eden, none other than the Word of God<sup>73</sup> pre-incarnate, told the serpent that it would be the seed of the woman that would bruise his head.<sup>74</sup> God told wicked king Ahaz that He Himself would give him a sign: a virgin shall conceive.<sup>75</sup> Liberals try to retranslate the Hebrew word *almah* as “young woman” instead of the correct word “virgin.” There is nothing supernatural about a young woman conceiving - just visit many

high schools equipped with a daycare for babies born to students. Jesus could not have had a human father or He would have been a sinner. If Jesus was a sinner, then mankind still has no Savior.

The book of Romans makes it very clear that Adam's sinful choice did not only affect him, which Arminianism suggests. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."<sup>76</sup> David, in his psalm of confession after the confrontation by Nathan the prophet of God, wrote, "...in sin did my mother conceive me."<sup>77</sup> There is no indication in Scripture that David was conceived in an immoral relationship. This obviously refers to the sin nature that he received from his father, who received it from his father, all the way back to Adam. David also states that "the wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."<sup>78</sup> "Wicked" cannot only refer to the "reprobate" who are passed over for salvation. *Every one* is born wicked; *every one* goes astray from birth. How many parents must take their children aside to teach them how to sin? God, *after* wicked mankind was destroyed in the flood, said of man, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."<sup>79</sup> Through Jeremiah He said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."<sup>80</sup> Man's depravity is the cause of his wicked deeds. It is incorrect to say that

man is depraved because he does wicked things.

To what extent does man's depravity affect his ability to do good things? Solomon, "the Preacher," recognized the utter failure of sinful mankind in Ecclesiastes by admitting that "there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."<sup>81</sup> Isaiah said, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."<sup>82</sup> Man can do nothing good enough to save himself because he is (totally) depraved. Proverbs reveals that even the *plowing* and the *sacrifice* of the wicked is sin.<sup>83</sup>

Job had three "friends" try to point out sin in his life. Eliphaz told him that even the heavens are not clean in God's sight. "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?"<sup>84</sup> Another "friend," Bildad, asked Job a series of questions.

*How then can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? And the son of man, which is a worm?*<sup>85</sup>

Does the depravity of man mean that everyone is as wicked as they can be? Are there absolutely no "good" people in society? Job was accused

of gross wickedness by his friends. Yet, as he examined his own life, Job believed he was righteous. In his own admission, he was not guilty of lust, deceit, dishonesty, adultery, injustice, apathy toward the needy, covetousness, idolatry, malice, inhospitality, hypocrisy, or fraud.<sup>86</sup> Job sounds like the perfect citizen. He also was righteous enough to be able to offer a sacrifice for his friends.<sup>87</sup>

Solomon says that “righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”<sup>88</sup> Does that mean that only “Christian” nations, like those John Calvin sought to establish by force, can be righteous? Was it righteous for John Calvin to have anyone who disagreed with him burnt at the stake, including Anabaptists who held to believer’s baptism and Scriptural authority? Are there absolutely no good and moral *unbelievers*? Is every unbeliever as depraved as he could be?

Even unbelievers possess a conscience and the ability to discern between good and evil. When is this conscience activated - after salvation? Who told two pagan, warring tribes in Papua New Guinea to establish a “city of refuge,” even though they did not have a copy of the Old Testament law?

Every culture has a standard as to what is acceptable behavior, even the most primitive of people. Paul said this in Romans.

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another.<sup>89</sup>*

Many Calvinists believe that because of total depravity, man in general is unable to choose right. However, as has been seen in Romans, the conscience within unsaved man allows him to pass judgment (accusing or excusing) as to what is moral and right and establish laws according to that standard. At issue is not *ability*, as Calvinists lead us to believe.

In answer to the question concerning when the conscience was activated, one needs to go back to the beginning to discover the answer. In the Garden of Eden, man was created with an inactive conscience. Adam and Eve did not know any shame in their nakedness.<sup>90</sup> After Eve was deceived and Adam made a willful *choice* to rebel against God's one prohibition, they then knew the difference between good and evil. They also were conscious of their nakedness before God.<sup>91</sup> Later, God also appealed to the conscience of Cain in dealing with his sinful anger and fallen countenance.<sup>92</sup>

Has depravity affected man's ability to turn to God for salvation?

Why spend time even discussing it? Again, if this foundational doctrine is shown to be unbiblical, then the whole structure of the Calvinistic system collapses. To say it another way, the “tulip” begins to wilt.

Calvinists are very strong in their opinion about total depravity affecting an unsaved man’s free will to choose. Calvinists believe that freedom of man to choose salvation dethrones God and enthrones man. However, Scripture reveals that even *saved* men have trouble with free will.<sup>93</sup>

Romans 9:16 and John 1:13 are passages often used to prove that man does not have freedom of choice concerning salvation. Dr. Manfred Kober, a former theology professor, states, “If the two verses prove anything, it is that man does not have a free will when it comes to the matter of salvation.”<sup>94</sup> Romans nine will be discussed in the context of another doctrine of Calvinism. The first chapter of John states that man is not born of the will of man, but of God. Notice the context, though. The eleventh verse refers to his own people not receiving Him. That is not *inability* but *refusal*. Verse twelve mentions those who did receive Him and believed on His name. The thirteenth verse is not dealing with *ability* to receive Christ, but the source of the new birth. Note the words, “which were born.” These verses present both a human and divine side to salvation and can be charted

as follows:

<i>Man's Part</i>	<i>God's Part</i>
"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."

John is saying that the new birth does not come through natural birth or inheritance ("not of blood"). Someone is not born a Christian, which, by the way, Calvinism teaches.<sup>95</sup> One also does not receive new birth through personal effort or change ("will of the flesh"), nor does this second birth come through a church, a preacher, or a priest ("will of man"). It is God's work when the individual responds in faith.

The *Scripture* hath concluded all under sin.<sup>96</sup> One does not need *Calvinism* to believe in the depravity of man. Even the most hated Arminians, James Arminius and John Wesley, believed in man's depraved nature. Laurence Vance quotes Arminius as follows:

*Man fell under the displeasure and the wrath of God, rendered himself subject to a double death, and deserving to be deprived of the primeval righteousness and holiness in which a great part of the*

*image of God consisted...whatever punishment was brought down upon our first parents, has likewise pervaded and yet pursues all their posterity: So that all men 'are by nature the children of wrath,' (Ephes. ii, 3) obnoxious to condemnation, and to temporal as well as to eternal death...In his lapsed and sinful state, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good.*<sup>97</sup>

Self-proclaimed Arminian John Wesley said about man's depraved nature, "Man in his natural state, is altogether corrupt, through all the faculties of his soul: corrupt in his understanding, his will, his affections, his conscience, and his memory."<sup>98</sup>

Again, at issue is not sinful man's *ability* to turn to God for salvation. The issue of depravity is not that there is no good whatsoever in depraved man. What is at issue with "total depravity" is that sinful man cannot do enough good to satisfy the glorious, holy perfection of God.<sup>99</sup> Scripture teaches that even good, conscientious people are still sinners headed to an

eternal hell apart from salvation through Christ. Concerning righteousness, they go about trying to establish their own standard of righteousness, refusing to submit themselves to God's righteousness.<sup>100</sup> Solomon reminds us that even though a way seems right, the end of that way is death.<sup>101</sup> Even the perfect, upright, God-fearing, evil-hating (though not sinless) Job was guilty of self-righteousness<sup>102</sup> and was confronted by a holy God.<sup>103</sup> The "perfect" man abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes.<sup>104</sup> During the period of the Judges, when there was no king in Israel, everyone did that which was *right* in their own eyes.<sup>105</sup> It does not say that they purposefully chose evil. As one considers Ruth, some good was done.

A difficult aspect of Calvinism to reasonably believe is that even though man is *unable* to respond to God's offer of salvation, he is still held *responsible* before God. This makes him accountable for what he cannot do. Would God not be unjust to hold an unsaved man accountable at the Great White Throne Judgment *if* indeed he was *unable* to respond to the salvation that would have kept him from that judgment? Was God mocking man when He gave invitations to come to Him,<sup>106</sup> knowing they were unable to respond?

In conclusion of this examination of total depravity, consider the ultimate reasoning of Calvinists in this matter: the glory of God. They

theorize that if man has *any* ability to turn to God for salvation, then it robs God of the glory due to Him. How is God glorified when, according to the Calvinist, He violates His own just nature? If man cannot save himself, as the Bible teaches, how is God not glorified in the grand display of His love by sending His own Son to earth? How is God not glorified by expressing His mercy to all of mankind equally?<sup>107</sup>

If total inability is Biblically true, what can a man do but *passively* wait and hope that he has been unconditionally chosen?

### Unconditional Election

Unconditional election is necessarily built upon the foundation of “total” depravity. *If* man is indeed totally *unable* to respond to God’s gracious offer and provision of salvation, then God must out of necessity *arbitrarily* choose some of mankind to be saved. However, as was seen in the previous section, if total *inability* is clearly unbiblical, then the Calvinistic TULIP begins to “wither.”

*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is a helpful resource to understand that *unconditional* election is not a Biblical term. Look up the word unconditional - it cannot even be found in the Bible. By adding a qualifying adjective to a doctrine of Scripture, Calvinists have totally changed the meaning of the doctrine of election. This practice, remember, is

strongly rebuked in Revelation.<sup>108</sup>

To give their interpretation credibility, Calvinists often appeal to the “great theologians” who have held to unconditional election. Calvinistic Baptists have argued that if unconditional election is not true, then the greatest of preachers and Bible scholars of the past have been deceived. Since when are fundamental, Bible-believing Baptists to base doctrine on what great scholars, Baptist or otherwise, have taught? Does that not place man’s interpretation equal to Scripture in authority? That is exactly what Roman Catholicism practices. The Apostle Paul strongly warned the Galatians to not listen to anyone, *including himself*, who changed the doctrine of salvation. “But though *we*...preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”<sup>109</sup> Even if an *apostle* changed the message, let him be accursed.

Paul Jewett, in *Election and Predestination*, wrote something that should cause every Baptist to wake up to the true position of this doctrine.

*Every theologian of the first rank from Augustine to Barth has affirmed the doctrine of election as basic to the Christian faith.*

*These master theologians have also agreed in a material way on the essential content of the doctrine.*<sup>110</sup>

Keep in mind that Jewett is not merely referring to the Biblical term of

election but to the *unconditional* election of Calvinism. Augustine and Karl Barth (1886-1968) are described as theologians of “first rank” and “master theologians.” Augustine, the “Father of Corrupt Theology,” has already been exposed as a heretic in the Biblical sense. Barth was a Neo-Orthodox theologian who redefined theological terms.

False religious systems evidently lend support to the validity of unconditional election according to Calvinist Loraine Boettner.

*When we stop to consider that among non-Christian religions, Mohammedanism has so many millions who believe in some kind of Predestination, that the doctrine of Fatalism has been held in some form or other in several heathen countries, and that the mechanistic and deterministic philosophies have exerted such great influences in England, Germany, and America, we see that this doctrine is at least worthy of careful study.<sup>111</sup>*

Since when are Bible-believers to turn to the religions of the world to give Christian doctrines credibility? Is the god Allah the same God of the Bible after all, as so many politically correct liberals want Americans to believe?

The cause for the debate about election revolves around when and why it takes place. Are those chosen for salvation elect because they believe, or do they believe because they are unconditionally elect? Is

election the *cause* of belief or the *result* of it?

To answer that, consider several terms used interchangeably with the concept of unconditional election. A brief definition is given for each one.

1. *Election*, meaning to select or choose. Related terms are found twenty-seven times in the Bible. There are only nine references directly related to the election of New Testament church saints.
2. *Predestination*, found only four times in Scripture,<sup>112</sup> means to destine before (*pre* - destine). Calvinists often consider this the central theme of the Bible, even though the word is rarely used.
3. *Foreknowledge*, with the idea of knowing something before it happens, has two Greek words used four times.<sup>113</sup>
4. *Foreordain* (foreordination) means to appoint beforehand; only used once.<sup>114</sup>
5. *Reprobate*. Looking at the two parts of the word (*re* and *probate*), the word carries the idea of probing or examining someone or something a second time. The concept of probation, as in the court system, refers to the proving and approving of someone. Thus, a re-probate is one who has been “probed” again and found unapproved. The Old and New Testaments refer to someone being reprobate seven times.<sup>115</sup>

These interrelated doctrines of election are often portrayed as the

“Bridge of Grace” or the “Golden Chain” of salvation. Romans 8:28-30 is often used as a proof-text for this concept. Five steps are presented concerning God’s eternal purpose from eternity past to eternity future:

Foreknowledg e	Predestination	Calling	Justification	Glorification
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Foreknowledge and predestination are God’s eternal decrees of eternity past, calling and justification affect the present, and glorification is the future sovereign decree of God. Notice that they are listed in a specific order of emphasis in the Bible - or are they? As one compares Scripture with Scripture, these terms are not in any specific order of progression. The verse just prior to verse twenty-nine refers to calling, which Calvinists consider to be irresistible grace. How can one be irresistibly called before he was foreknown by God? Peter listed calling before election.<sup>116</sup> Calvinists want people to believe God elects unconditionally and then irresistibly calls them to salvation. Paul mentioned salvation before calling.<sup>117</sup> How is that possible according to the “Bridge of Grace”? Jude wrote about sanctification before calling.<sup>118</sup> How can God sanctify a person before calling him irresistibly across the “bridge”? Even Jesus evidently did not know the proper order of election. He said that “many are called, but few

are chosen.”<sup>119</sup> Election and predestination (chosen) are to come before irresistible grace (called) in the Calvinistic system.

The logical conclusion of unconditional election is that God *chooses* some to eternal damnation. It should be remembered that Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin all believed in a “double predestination” (or election) of both the saved and those who are reprobate, the unsaved. Where in the Bible can one find the qualifying word “double” applied to predestination? This is no different than adding “unconditional” to election.

To understand what is meant by election in the Calvinistic mindset, it is helpful to consider how Calvin himself understood the implication.

*We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which He compacted with Himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or death.*<sup>120</sup>

God’s own glory is the supposed purpose for selecting some for salvation and purposefully damning others to an eternal hell. Chapter III of the Westminster Confession of Faith reads,

*III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some*

*men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.*

*IV. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unreachable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.<sup>121</sup>*

However, as one examines this truth carefully, *unconditional* election actually *steals* from the glory of God.

Calvinists, almost without fail, teach that unless God predetermined (foreordains) *everything* in eternity past, He is not sovereign. Nothing ever can be altered from this eternal decree. Everything that will ever happen was predestined by God, including man's fall into sin and individual acts of wickedness. Does this not make God the *author* of sin? This does not glorify God; it blasphemes Him! The one who antagonized James Arminius the most, Franciscus Gomarus, concluded that "God moves the tongues of men to blaspheme."<sup>122</sup> Calvin himself said, "*I freely acknowledge my doctrine to be this: that Adam fell, not only by the permission of God, but by His very secret counsel and decree...*"<sup>123</sup>

Consider this teaching Biblically. James very clearly writes that "God

cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”<sup>124</sup> A holy God cannot decree or foreordain sin. Elihu said, “...Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.”<sup>125</sup> Concerning wickedness, David revealed the holy character of God: “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.”<sup>126</sup> As a testimony to God’s character, Habakkuk wrote, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...”<sup>127</sup> If God is so holy that He cannot even *look* on iniquity, how can a Calvinist believe that He *created* wickedness for His glory? After Israel had rejected the Lord to worship Baal, He stated through Jeremiah that the child sacrifices offered and other abominations of this vile religion did not come into His mind.<sup>128</sup> How can it be said He foreordains sin for His glory if it had not even entered His mind?

God receives no pleasure *at all* in the death of the wicked.<sup>129</sup> In fact, the prophet Ezekiel said that God *wanted* the wicked to turn from his wicked ways. Jesus taught that hell was created for the devil and his angels, not people predetermined for hell.<sup>130</sup>

Yet, Calvinists will appeal to verses torn from their original context to “prove” that God creates evil.<sup>131</sup> As rules of interpretation are applied, the careful Bible student finds that it is not wickedness that God creates but

*calamity* (“evil”) to *judge* wickedness. For example, Jeremiah proclaimed to wicked Judah the reasons God was bringing ear-tingling evil upon them: they had forsaken God for false idols and had shed the blood of innocent children (abortion?!).<sup>132</sup> Elect Israel *chose* to reject God. Many other examples are given in Scripture.<sup>133</sup> God in His sovereignty may *use* wickedness for His glory, but He does not *create* it.

If God has unalterably decreed everything so that man is nothing more than a puppet to think and do exactly as He has preordained, then why should believers pray and expect an answer from Him? Prayer has been described as calling on God’s highest willingness. However, if God does not alter His sovereign decree in response to a person’s prayer request, why does the Bible command believers to let requests be made known to God?<sup>134</sup> Does that not make prayer an exercise of futility? James said that prayer can change circumstances.<sup>135</sup>

God in His anger toward Israel’s idolatrous, drunken orgy had declared that He would destroy the whole nation and start over with Moses. It has been said that if God and Moses had ever agreed at the same time concerning the fate of the nation, Israel would have been annihilated. Instead, the man of God told them that he “fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water,

because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.”<sup>136</sup> It was certainly good for Aaron and Israel that God had changed His plans in answer to prayer! One only twists Scripture to read into this passage that God had in eternity past decreed to not destroy them in reality.

King Hezekiah received an extra fifteen years added to his days in response to His weeping and pleading with God.<sup>137</sup> No Calvinist can say that God had not actually planned for him to die at that time. If that is the case, then a God of truth *lied* through the prophet Isaiah. His message from the Lord was clear and to the point, “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.” If God lied, then He has not brought glory to Himself.

In spite of many Scriptures that prove otherwise, Calvinists insist that man cannot alter anything through prayer. A Sovereign Grace Baptist wrote,

*No man can believe in the glorious, Biblical doctrine of absolute predestination, and believe that prayer changes things. The two are incompatible. They do not go together. If one is true, the other is*

*false. Since predestination is true, it follows, as night follows day, that prayer does not change things.*<sup>138</sup>

To say that God has unalterably predetermined everything in eternity past is to hold to a form of fatalism - “what will be, will be.” Eli had a fatalistic attitude toward the judgment of God. In response to Samuel’s message from God, he replied, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.” This sounds commendable until one looks at the whole story. Eli was a passive father, only mildly scolding his son’s wickedness. He knew about their sin and even benefited from their vile, depraved behavior. The passage informs the reader that Eli was fat from the best of the offerings.<sup>139</sup> Incidentally, did God *arbitrarily predetermine* to kill Eli’s sons, or did He determine to do so because of their wicked, chosen lifestyle?<sup>140</sup> To say that Hophni and Phinehas were singled out arbitrarily by the decree of God for death does injustice to the message from Samuel and the unnamed prophet of God.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism reads, “The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.” Examine carefully what the Bible reveals about sovereign decrees. Most times the word decree refers to a declaration made by a *human* sovereign. Kings like

Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, Nebuchadnezzar and Augustus Caesar ordered things to be done by a decree from their throne. God also has established some decrees as follows:

1. A decree concerning the rain (Job 28:26)
2. A decree concerning the boundaries of the oceans (Proverbs 8:29)
3. A decree concerning Christ (Psalm 2:7)
4. A decree concerning the heavens (Psalm 148:6)
5. A decree concerning the “consumption” of Israel (Isaiah 10:22)
6. A decree concerning the sand (Jeremiah 5:22)
7. A decree concerning Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:24)

Notice from the above list what is omitted: a decree concerning predestination of the elect. Calvinists often counter this by claiming that predestination and election are part of His *secret* decrees. Several verses of Scripture are used for this claim. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”<sup>141</sup> Granted, there are many things God has chosen to not reveal to us. If man could know everything about God and why He does some things, then He would not be God. The prophet Isaiah said of God, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the

heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”<sup>142</sup>

If these decrees are so secret, how do Calvinistic theologians know so much about them? God, again through Isaiah, said, “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.”<sup>143</sup> God did not say to rebellious Israel, “Seek Me in vain because you cannot find Me. I am keeping a secret from you.”

Ephesians 1:11 is one of the New Testament passages often used to support an overall decree concerning everything that occurs, including predestination. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Take note of two things. First, there is not even a hint of double predestination in this verse. Only believers are mentioned. Secondly, it says that God *worketh*, not *ordaineth*, all things after the counsel of His will. Paul does not indicate that God predetermined every thought, deed, motive, and even salvation of mankind.

Can this counsel of God be resisted? Is man able to reject and rebel against it if He in His sovereignty works all things after the counsel of His will? Solomon in Proverbs says that man is able. “Because I have called,

and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel...They would none of my counsel...”<sup>144</sup> Solomon is personifying God’s wise counsel. Man refuses and rejects the counsel from God to their own destruction. Luke informs Theophilus that “the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.”<sup>145</sup> God is indeed sovereign, but He created man with the freedom to respond to or reject His counsel.

What is the purpose of God’s predestinating and electing work? Contrary to what Calvinists want people to think, it is *not* to salvation. Again, Paul told the Ephesians that God has predestinated believers according to His purpose. A simple look at the context of Ephesians 1:11 reveals the purpose God had in mind. In verses four through six, Paul writes, “...he hath chosen us...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...To the praise of the glory of his grace.” It says nothing about God predestinating certain ones to salvation and others to reprobation. The whole purpose of God’s predestinating work: holy, blameless living and adoption to full rights as a child of God to the praise of His glory. Note at this point that adoption and salvation are not two terms meaning the same exact thing. Adoption is a

*blessing* of redemption.<sup>146</sup> Incidentally, the word election is not even found in the book of Ephesians, a book Calvinists use to prove their doctrines.

The only other context where the theme of predestination is mentioned gives a very clear indication of the desired purpose of God. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son...*”<sup>147</sup> Christ-like character is the object of predestination, not salvation. Predestination is a *result* of salvation, not the *cause* leading to it. Those who come to God through Christ for salvation are then predestined to become like Christ. That will finally happen after the Rapture of the saints. “...When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”<sup>148</sup>

Does God’s sovereignty allow for chance? Moses thought so. “If a bird’s nest *chance* to be before thee in the way...”<sup>149</sup> Jesus, the Son of God, in telling the story of the Good Samaritan, mentioned chance. “And *by chance* there came down a certain priest that way.”<sup>150</sup> He did not say, “The priest came down that way by the predetermined counsel of God.” Surely the Sovereign Son of God who unalterably decreed all things would consider chance an impossibility, even in a story.

God has a permissive will, as seen in Scripture. The Bible presents this will as if God did it. Satan provoked David to number Israel.<sup>151</sup> Yet,

the Bible also says that God moved David to do it.<sup>152</sup> Is this a contradiction, like so many liberal skeptics want Christians to believe? No, it is a part of God's permissive decree. Who brought calamity upon Job - God or Satan? *Both* had part in the plan. Satan very clearly influenced circumstances within the sovereign control of God.<sup>153</sup> God also was involved; Satan said as much to God. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."<sup>154</sup> God said that Satan had moved him against Job.<sup>155</sup> Job thought God was the one who had taken everything from him.<sup>156</sup> Whoever wrote the book of Job states that it was the Lord who had brought evil upon him.<sup>157</sup>

Scripture clearly reveals God as being omniscient. He knows all things past, present, future; possible and actual. God knows everything about each individual because He is God, not because He has predetermined everything. God knows thoughts "afar off."<sup>158</sup> Jesus knew what would have led cities destroyed by God's judgment to repent.<sup>159</sup> It does not require supernatural omniscience to know something predetermined would happen. Calvinists steal from God's glorious omniscience by saying that He only knows all things because He foreordained them.

How much does God control of a person's life? What about the length of a man's life? Does God have sovereign control over that? Job

said, “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.”<sup>160</sup> In a psalm that refers to the destiny of the wicked, David wrote, “...Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days...”<sup>161</sup> His son Solomon gives advice related to prolonging life. “Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?”<sup>162</sup> Obviously, he thought someone because of a wicked lifestyle could shorten the lifespan. Even God believed that a person’s life could be extended. In His “top ten” commands, He told Israel through Moses, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”<sup>163</sup>

Sovereignty has everything to do with God’s right to govern His creation for His own glory.

*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where now is their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*<sup>164</sup>

King Nebuchadnezzar learned the difficult lesson about God’s sovereign control. He had been stealing from God’s glory for the honor of his own majesty. After a time of insanity in the pasture eating grass like an ox, he looked to heaven to give God the glory due his name.

*And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?<sup>165</sup>*

However, God doing whatever He pleases does not mean He arbitrarily determines everything that happens. He maintains control even when He permits an event to happen. His sovereignty is governed by His other attributes of holiness, mercy, compassion, grace, love, and justice. Tell the one who has been predetermined for damnation in hell according to Calvinism that God is merciful, compassionate, gracious, loving, and just.

Paul told the Athenian philosophers that God has established boundaries for mankind. God "...hath determined...the bounds of their habitation."<sup>166</sup> In most sporting events, boundaries are established for the court or playing field. It is not permissible to go beyond those lines of play. As long as the player remains in bounds, he has some freedom to move around. The same is indicated in Paul's concept of the sovereignty of God.

He has established bounds of an individual's habitation, but He gives some freedom within those limits. His sovereign control still allows freedom of choice.

Calvinists insist several verses in Proverbs prove God's absolute foreordination of all things.

1. The answer of the tongue is from the Lord (16:1).
2. The Lord directs a man's steps (16:9).
3. The disposing of the lot is of the Lord (16:33).
4. The counsel of the Lord shall stand (19:21).
5. Man's goings are of the Lord (20:24).
6. God turns a king's heart wherever He wills (21:1).
7. Every man's judgment comes from the Lord (29:26).

Take note of what is not mentioned: every thought, word, or motive of man. Calvinists report that those things are implied. Is that not again adding to Scripture?

Think of the kind of god the Calvinist has created who predetermines everything that will happen. Based on the belief that God has preordained every thought, He decreed that a man lust after a woman, contrary to Christ's teaching.<sup>167</sup> God then directed his steps to an "adult" bookstore and moved his hands to select a pornographic magazine. Not only that, He

moved him to purchase that violation of His revealed will.<sup>168</sup> Then, God prepared the man's heart to become so controlled by the lust of his mind that He moves him to commit incest or rape. This doctrine of God's sovereign predestination of all things brings glory to His name? The Calvinist brings blasphemy to the holy God of the Bible.

Consider the example of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, preaching to the thousands who had gathered, said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."<sup>169</sup> Note some truths mentioned in this verse. First, it does not say when it was determined that Jesus would die as the supreme sacrifice for man's sin. In the revelation to the Apostle John, Jesus was said to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."<sup>170</sup> He was slain from the foundation of the world, not in eternity past. Granted, an omniscient God knew in eternity past that His Son would be offered on Calvary's cross, but it was not *determined* in the counsel of the Trinity until the creation of the world. Where is the eternal decree of God predetermining all things? Second, the people listening to Peter were responsible for their own actions. Nothing is said about them slaying Christ by the determined counsel of God. The delivering of Jesus was predetermined, not the specific actions of individuals. There

are several passages stating that they were entirely responsible for their own actions, not God.<sup>171</sup> In fact, Paul said that if Pilate and Herod had realized who Jesus truly was, they would not have crucified Him.<sup>172</sup> God knew it had to be done for the salvation of His creation, but He did not foreordain their wickedness in crucifying His own Son.

What part did Judas play in the predetermined plan of God to provide salvation for mankind? Was his betrayal preplanned beyond his control? Was he nothing more than a pawn in the hand of God? “The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.”<sup>173</sup> Think of the implications of what Jesus said. God the Father was going to make the betrayer of His Son pay severely for his crime. “Woe unto that man!” Judas was entirely responsible for his actions.<sup>174</sup> God did not place the greed and the wicked scheme in his heart. Judas made a choice to perform his dastardly deed. It was not even predetermined that Judas specifically was the one to do it.<sup>175</sup> If he had not been born, someone else would have done it. No Old Testament prophecy names him like God did with Cyrus.<sup>176</sup> “And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!”<sup>177</sup> Judas is severely paying two thousand years later for his own sin, not obedience to a preordained plan for his life.

The example of Judas leads to a consideration of the term “reprobate.” Calvinists believe that the unsaved were foreordained to reprobation. Consider that term Biblically in its context, and one learns that it is not something God determines. Man is fully responsible for his reprobate condition.

There is one Old Testament reference to the term. “Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.”<sup>178</sup> Were these “reprobates” rejected by predestination? A look at the context proves otherwise. It was not an arbitrary decision by God. Like worthless refuse silver from the silversmith, God would reject them because of their own wicked rebellion against Him. Who was rejected? Judah, God’s election. Isaiah was not referring to reprobates chosen for damnation. Why were they reprobate silver? Their sins are listed in the verses before the statement: oppression of the poor, wickedness, violence, no delight in God’s Word, covetousness, deceptive spiritual leaders, unashamed of their abominations, a refusal to hear God’s law, hypocrisy, stubborn rebellion, and tolerance of the wicked. They were reprobate because of their willful actions, not an arbitrary decision of God.

Four New Testament passages use the English word reprobate. A verse in Romans, chapter one, is a verse most often used by Calvinists. Paul

is describing the pagan's condition before a holy God. The context of Romans 1:28 gives clear evidence that God gave these people over to a reprobate mind because of their own actions, not God's sovereign decree of predestination. The heathen hold (suppress, hold down) the truth in unrighteousness, reject the testimony of creation, did not glorify God when they knew Him, were unthankful, professed themselves to be wise (like state university professors), replaced the glorious God with idolatry, turned to worship of creation, practice homosexuality, refused to acknowledge God, and are filled with a whole list of unrighteous deeds. Who is responsible for a reprobate condition? It is blasphemous to say that God predetermined these wicked individuals to this state.

In the second epistle to the Corinthians, reprobate is also pulled out of context to mean a group of people God predetermined to that state. In the immediate context, Paul defends attacks on his apostleship. He was accused of being a reprobate. He told the people of Corinth, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."<sup>179</sup> He is telling his converts to Christ to examine their own lives to see that they are indeed believers and not reprobates. That would be the proof that he was not a reprobate.

In the pastoral epistles of II Timothy and Titus, only two verses refer to reprobation. Timothy is reminded of an Old Testament account to illustrate the condition of false teachers of his time. “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”<sup>180</sup> Note that they were men of corrupt minds who resisted God’s man. Jannes and Jambres are two Egyptian magicians who withstood Moses. They were responsible for their own spiritual condition. The false teachers of Timothy’s day resisted the truth and had a corrupt mind, resulting in their reprobate state. Titus, another first century preacher, was told to appoint elders in every city. These pastors were to hold fast to convictions from the Word of God, and with sound doctrine were to exhort and convince the gainsayers (those who contradict truth). Paul then describes these people. “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

The chapter Calvinists turn to most often to prove unconditional election and a foreordained reprobation is Romans, chapter nine. Again, context is critical to the correct understanding of any Scripture. Tear a verse out of its textual setting and the original intent is altered. As one looks at Romans in its entirety, the first eight chapters are doctrinal, chapters nine

through eleven have a dispensational emphasis, and the final chapters give practical applications of truth to life. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters deal specifically with the election of national Israel, not the election of individuals.

God's national election of Israel is clearly stated in the Old Testament. Moses told Israel why it was important for them to destroy the altars of the idolatrous nations of Canaan.

*For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people...181*

Israel is often referred to as God's chosen people. Solomon said to God, "And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen..."<sup>182</sup>

The psalmist realized, "For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure."<sup>183</sup> In the passage dealing with the calling of King Cyrus by name, God calls Israel His elect.<sup>184</sup> That is the important Biblical truth to keep in mind as one studies the ninth chapter of Romans.

Paul even clearly states who he is referring to in the opening verses of

this section of Romans. It was not individuals in the world in general. Note the references to “my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites.” What could be clearer? In the tenth chapter, he explains the intense burden and prayer he has *for Israel* to be saved. “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” The first verses of both these chapters serve as the means to a correct interpretation of chapter nine.

Examine the chapter carefully. Paul gives several examples of God “electing” one instead of another. The first is Ishmael and Isaac. “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Even though Ishmael was the older son of Abraham, it was through Isaac that Messiah would come.

Then, Jacob and Esau are presented as evidence of God’s selection. Note several things in these verses. Nothing is said in these verses about salvation. There is no mention of an eternal decree of God. It was while Rebecca was still expecting that God told her, “The elder shall serve the younger.” Then Paul quotes a Malachi passage, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”<sup>185</sup> Consider a problem with the interpretation that God elects *individuals* to salvation and others to reprobation based on this Old

Testament example. When did Esau as an individual ever serve Jacob? Nationally, *Edom* was subjected to Israel, but individual servitude of *Esau* to Jacob never occurred.<sup>186</sup> Consider also a statement God made to Rebecca. “And the LORD said unto her, Two *nations* are in thy womb, and *two manner of people* shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one *people* shall be stronger than the other *people*; and the elder shall serve the younger.”<sup>187</sup> Additionally, Jacob and Esau had been dead for centuries by the time Malachi gave his prophecy. He was referring to their descendents, not individuals. One reason God hated Edom: their own pride.<sup>188</sup>

For a moment, consider that the Calvinist is correct in assuming that Jacob represents individuals elected to salvation and Esau those chosen to be reprobates. Is there any indication why one was selected over the other? A look at the life of Esau helps one see that he had no desire for things of God. He despised his birthright for a bowl of soup.<sup>189</sup> Not only that, he was described in Hebrews as a fornicator and a profane person.<sup>190</sup> Though Jacob did not deserve to be chosen, he did turn his heart to God.<sup>191</sup>

A third example given by Paul is Pharaoh. Notice that leading into the verses about Pharaoh, he quotes God’s statement to Moses. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Condemnation is not even mentioned. “So then it is

not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” What was the original context of this quote from the writings of Moses? It was said just before God showed Moses His “afterglow.”<sup>192</sup> Additionally, Israel had just broken the covenant they had made with God by worshiping the golden calf. Paul was saying that God is the one who sets the terms for demonstrating mercy, not man.

Why was Pharaoh raised up? To prove that God selects some for reprobation? “That I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” Calvinists focus on that last statement as proof of their teaching.

Consider carefully the example of Pharaoh. Who hardened his heart - God or Pharaoh? The answer: both did. Many verses indicate that Pharaoh hardened his own heart first.<sup>193</sup> This is seen in his response to Moses’ message from God. “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.” God only hardened Pharaoh’s already hardened heart.<sup>194</sup> Note the issue of this confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh: releasing Israel from bondage, not salvation. Pharaoh resisted God’s will.

Paul refers to a potter working with clay. Is the potter able to form *hardened* clay? Nothing is said about God *creating* the clay hard, but He forms it. God hardens on the same terms He shows mercy. When a person responds to His mercy, He gives mercy. If a person hardens himself to the plan of God, He is just in hardening them further.

Notice that God forms both vessels of honor and dishonor from the *same lump, not two different lumps*. In other words, God does not form one lump of humanity called the elect and another lump He terms as reprobate. God does not create a separate lump of clay with the purpose of throwing it away to an eternal hell.

Supposed reprobation by God is possibly the most grievous attack on God's character by the Calvinist, stealing from His glory. John Calvin himself wrote,

*Again, I ask: whence does it happen that Adam's fall irremediably involved so many peoples, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death unless because it so pleased God? Here their tongues, otherwise so loquacious, must become mute. The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree.<sup>195</sup>*

Notice Calvin said that even the reprobates' infant offspring have been ordained to eternal death. What reference in Scripture indicates that *any* infants face eternal death? David believed otherwise concerning his son born from an adulterous relationship.<sup>196</sup> Did David's illegitimate child go to heaven simply because David was one of God's elect?

John and Charles Wesley were very outspokenly opposed to this concept of reprobation. Charles, in a hymn, referred to John Calvin's horrible decree with the following words:

*O Horrible Decree,  
Worthy of whence it came!  
Forgive their hellish blasphemy,  
Who charge it on the Lamb!*<sup>197</sup>

He obviously believed it came from the pits of hell! Elsewhere he wrote,

*God, ever merciful and just,  
With newborn babes did Tophet fill;  
Down into endless torments thrust;  
Merely to show His sovereign will.  
This is that Horrible Decree!  
This is that wisdom from beneath!  
God (O detest the Blasphemy!)*

*Hath pleasure in the sinner's death.198*

John Wesley also wrote a scathing rebuke of Calvinistic reprobation.

*Sing, O hell, and rejoice ye that are under the earth. For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken and doomed to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Here, O death, is thy sting. They shall not, cannot escape. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Here O grave, is thy victory. Nations yet unborn, or even they have done good or evil, are doomed to never see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever. Let all those morning stars sing together who fell with Lucifer, sun of the morning. Let all the sons of hell shout for joy. For the decree is past and who shall disannul it.199*

“Elect” Calvinists want people to think that this sovereign decree that elected them to eternal life produces in them a spirit of humility, giving all the glory to God. In other words, their blasphemous decree that God selected them for eternal life and purposefully, irreversibly damned others to the eternal lake of fire removes in them all pride.

John R. Rice in his small book entitled *Predestined for Hell?* lists the people to whom the doctrines of Calvinism appeal.200

1. To the scholarly intellect, the self-sufficient and proud mind

2. To those believing in a “covenant theology,” Presbyterians who teach that infants sprinkled by the church are in a covenant relationship with God
3. To the one who does not want the burden of soul winning
4. To those who think that Calvinism is the only alternative to Arminian theology

Note again the first on the list. Calvinism appeals to the intellectual, self-sufficient, proud mind. These doctrines made little positive impact on John Calvin’s dealings with people. He wrote many volumes on doctrine, but he executed or banished anyone who disagreed with him. It has often made little difference in the lifestyle and doctrine of his disciples. Most Calvinistic denominations have gone liberal. Laurence Vance learned that tobacco and evolution are common among Calvinistic theologians. Baptist A.H. Strong was influenced by evolutionary thought. Princeton, Yale, and Harvard Universities are now strongholds of liberalism. Calvinist B.B. Warfield resisted the teaching of a literal six days of creation. His teaching then influenced J. Gresham Machen, who then had an impact on Loraine Boettner. The cigar smoking of Charles Spurgeon is common knowledge. Machen proclaimed, “What a wonderful aid tobacco is to friendship and Christian patience” and delighted in a room filled with Princeton scholars smoking. John Murray said that “there is plenty of tobacco around my

habitat wherever it happens to be.”<sup>201</sup> Evidently, the elect can believe and act any way they please.

Calvinists use several passages to teach that the elect are the Father’s gift to Jesus Christ.<sup>202</sup> In other words, they are the special possession of God and reprobates are “throw-aways.” A Particular Baptist hymn said,

*We are the Lord’s elected few,  
Let all the rest be damned;  
There’s room enough in hell for you,  
We won’t have heaven crammed!*<sup>203</sup>

Where is the humility and overwhelming praise of God? Where is the humility of “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”

The book of life is not a list of chosen Calvinists, “elect from before the foundation of the earth.” Read carefully the references to the book in Revelation.

*“He that overcometh, ...I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels ...All that dwell upon the earth shall worship (Antichrist), whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ...They that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the*

*foundation of the world...I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life...Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire...There shall in no wise enter into (New Jerusalem) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life...If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life..."204*

Several other Biblical references are made to a book with names.<sup>205</sup>

Ponder several things about this book related to the unconditional election issue. First, there is no indication that these names were written in this book in eternity past (from *before* the foundation of the earth). Secondly, if this book relates to those who are elected to salvation, does that mean someone can be “un-elected”? More than one statement is made about names being blotted out. Third, the book is called the book of *life*, not the book of the *elect*.

How does a person overcome to be listed in the book? *By believing*, not being a select few arbitrarily chosen by the eternal decree of God. “For whatsoever is *born of God* overcometh the world: and this is the victory that

overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but *he that believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God?”<sup>206</sup>

Biblically, election and predestination are *results* of salvation, not the *cause* of it. Scripture indicates that *all* of mankind is reprobate, not just those pre-elected for this. Except for faith in Jesus Christ, *everyone* is predestined for hell. As Calvinists say, “It is a wonder that God saves *any* of mankind.”

Unconditional election is another “wilting” petal of the TULIP.

### Limited Atonement

Spiritual pride in being one of God’s “elected few” logically leads to the next petal of the TULIP. If God predestined some for eternal reprobation in hell, then it is reasonable to believe Jesus only died for the elect. This is known in Calvinism as limited atonement.

Atonement is a Bible doctrine. As with the two previous doctrines, total depravity and unconditional election, Calvinists take a Bible doctrine and alter the meaning of Scripture with a single qualifying word.

John Calvin did not indicate what he clearly believed about limited atonement in his writings. It apparently was not an issue of debate until later. The Canons of Dort teach a limited atonement, contrary to what many Calvinists state.

*For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross...should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation...207*

Notice again the words “them alone” and “those only.” That is what limited atonement means. The elect and “them alone” were the objects of Christ’s atoning work on Calvary.

Limited atonement is what “four-point Calvinists” or “Modified Calvinism” rejects of the five points of the Calvinistic system. In essence, they pluck one of the most offensive “petals” from the TULIP. They believe that Christ died for the whole world to secure salvation for the elect. Many Calvinistic Baptists hold to this form of Calvinism.<sup>208</sup>

Consider the logic of this, however. If man is totally *unable* to turn to God for salvation, and he is *unconditionally* elected to eternal life or is *arbitrarily* condemned to an eternal hell, why should God the Son die for those who already have an *unalterable* destiny? To believe in total inability

and unconditional election is to directly or indirectly hold to a limited atonement. If only the elect are able to be saved, why “waste” any of His precious blood?

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “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.” Jesus did not tell him, “God loved the elect.” God loved all of mankind. Secondly, it says “whosoever believeth.”

Calvinists are forced to twist Scripture in order to hold to their preconceived doctrine of limited atonement. Peter warned about this in his second epistle. Writing about Paul’s epistles, he said, “...In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”<sup>209</sup> The word “wrest” means to twist or distort; to “wrestle” with truth.

A general rule of hermeneutics applies at this point. “When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.” Plain sense about Jesus shedding His for the whole world makes common sense from the passages considered. When the common sense interpretation is clear, then it is wrong to seek any other sense.

How do Calvinists in general interpret passages stating that Jesus died for the world? Many will play word games. The atonement was *sufficient*

for all but *efficient* for only the elect.<sup>210</sup> They also place limitations not indicated in Scripture. “World” is reinterpreted to refer to the “world” of God’s people. The Pharisees knew differently. They were greatly disturbed with how many people were turning to Jesus Christ. “Behold, the world is gone after him.”<sup>211</sup> These Jewish leaders driven by envy were not merely concerned about an elected few following Jesus of Nazareth. Multitudes followed Him. In their terminology, the whole world.

Several individual verses are used to support the doctrine of an atonement limited to the elect. Jesus told His disciples the purpose for His coming was “to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>212</sup> At the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus said about the cup, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”<sup>213</sup> The writer of Hebrews writes, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...”<sup>214</sup> Emphasis is placed on the word many, seemingly indicating the ransom was not paid for all. Other verses used to support this limited atonement are listed as follows: John 10:15, where Jesus lays down His life for the sheep; Acts 20:28 referring to God purchasing the church with His own blood; and Ephesians 5:25, stating that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

In answer to the misapplication of these verses, it should be

remembered the word “many” sometimes refers to all of mankind. For example, Paul said Adam’s sin affected many: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,”<sup>215</sup> obviously referring to all of Adam’s descendents. The Apostle Paul actually does say the ransom was paid for all, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all...”<sup>216</sup>

The Passover lamb was an Old Testament picture of the atoning work of Christ. While available to all, the blood had to be individually applied.<sup>217</sup> Jesus’ blood was shed for all of mankind but must be applied individually through faith.

Clear statements of Scripture indicate the universal provision of the atonement provided through the shed blood of Christ. John the Baptist called Jesus “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”<sup>218</sup> Jesus is not only the Lamb of God for the elect. The Samaritans called Jesus “the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”<sup>219</sup> About His own crucifixion, He said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”<sup>220</sup> Jesus was drawing *all men* to Himself with His death on the cross, not just the elect few chosen by an eternal decree of predestination in eternity past. He died for all, because God through Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not just the elect within the world.<sup>221</sup> Jesus tasted death for every

man.<sup>222</sup> Jesus died for every individual person who has ever lived on planet earth.

Paul definitely believed salvation was available to all of mankind. That was the reason he “laboured more abundantly” than all of the other apostles.<sup>223</sup> “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.”<sup>224</sup> “All men” is contrasted with those who believe. Mention of this made to the Galatians, as well.<sup>225</sup> Salvation available to all men must be personally applied through faith. Paul believed the gospel had the power to save anyone who believes.<sup>226</sup> He taught that God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.<sup>227</sup> That is why he said, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”<sup>228</sup>

Statements made by John the Apostle have provided some difficulty for Calvinists. “And (Jesus Christ the righteous) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world....And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”<sup>229</sup> A look at the context of John’s epistle does not allow for a retranslation of “world” to mean a selected group within the world. Only one Greek word is used. John elsewhere warns his readers about the world system (Greek *kosmos*).<sup>230</sup> He even declares this whole world system to be

under the control of wickedness.<sup>231</sup> Obviously, John believed Jesus' blood was available for the sins of the whole world, not just the elect.

The Bible uses the word "whosoever" many times to indicate the availability of salvation to all.<sup>232</sup> No limitations are stated as to who is able to call on God for salvation. The only "limitation" is believing on Christ. Whosoever believes is the elect; whosoever won't is not. Calvinists complicate simple truths of salvation.

How does limited atonement affect infants who die and the mentally disabled? Calvinists are divided on this issue. Augustine, the originator of the doctrines of Calvinism, believed non-elect, unapprised infants were damned. Calvinist W. E. Best takes a strong opinion.

*Many religionists claim that children are safe until they reach the age of accountability (whatever that is), and then they are no longer safe. If that is true, what a shame that they're not either aborted or die before they reach that age. If they are safe until they reach the age of accountability, it is an act of mercy to abort one before it comes from the mother's womb or let it die before it reaches the age of accountability. Every person's sin took place in the past when he sinned in Adam. Conclusively, no one can prove from Scripture that all children who die in infancy go to heaven.<sup>233</sup>*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon strongly denounced the idea that Calvinists have held to infants being reprobate.

*Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold the damnation of little infants. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person.<sup>234</sup>*

However, a Baptist confession of faith says otherwise. Take special note of the qualifying word “elect” underlined for emphasis.

*Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.<sup>235</sup>*

To read that statement as presented, even Baptists would say that not all children before the age of accountability are covered by the blood of Christ. According to a creed several Baptist associations have subscribed to, maybe Charles Wesley was correct to say that Calvin’s “horrible decree” is populating hell with newborn babies.

What does Scripture have to say about young children and an age of

accountability? A few Old Testament accounts give some insight. After the failure of the adults in Israel, Moses said, “Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.”<sup>236</sup> The children who were not able to discern between good and evil were not held accountable for the decision to rebel against God. In Nineveh, God rebuked the pouting prophet Jonah through a question. He had compassion on the 120,000 persons not able to distinguish between their right hand or their left.<sup>237</sup> Young children must be taught the difference between right and left. In the context of the supernatural sign of the virgin birth, Isaiah told wicked King Ahaz, “For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good...”<sup>238</sup> Scripture seems to indicate a state of younger children in which they are not held accountable for their sin nature before an ability to acknowledge it.

Even false teachers, apostates concerning the faith, are bought by Jesus Christ’s shed blood. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”<sup>239</sup> That statement is followed by many descriptive phrases, proving they were not saved and probably never

would come to the salvation that was provided for mankind. At issue is not whether salvation was provided for them. It was a matter of yielding to that salvation. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of...” At issue is not the provision of salvation but *willful* ignorance.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”<sup>240</sup>

In the days of Noah, the LORD said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”<sup>241</sup> God gave His wicked creation more than a century to turn to Him. He proclaimed a coming judgment through a universal flood. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” Did God single him out for “special election”? The context says otherwise. “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” God gave this man Noah grace because of his seeking God.

Peter called Noah a preacher of righteousness.<sup>242</sup> Everyone who heard him preach of the coming judgment had equal opportunity to be saved from the wrath to come. God was clearly longsuffering in the days of Noah.<sup>243</sup>

Peter tells us why Christ tarries His coming today. “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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.”<sup>244</sup> God is waiting for people to come to salvation. However, He is not making any one be saved against their will, which leads to a consideration of irresistible grace.

### Irresistible Grace

It should be understood that fundamental Baptists are not opposed to the grace of God bringing salvation. “For by grace are ye saved through faith...” Paul told Titus, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”<sup>245</sup> At issue is the question, “Is that grace *irresistible*?” What do Calvinists truly teach about the grace of God?

Irresistible grace is directly tied to the doctrine of total inability and unconditional election and indirectly to limited atonement. Total depravity renders all men unable, unconditional election marks out certain individuals in eternity past as the objects of His grace, limited atonement provides the payment for their sin, and irresistible grace makes them willing to respond to God of their own free will through the work of the Holy Spirit. *If* man is

unable to accept God's grace through faith, then out of necessity He must irresistibly draw depraved men to that grace.

This is the fourth doctrine in which Calvinists take a Biblical term and alter its meaning by simply adding a qualifier to it. The word grace is found about one hundred seventy times in the King James Bible. However, there is no form of the word "irresistible."

Often Calvinists use the Biblical term "call of God" to teach irresistible grace. They separate this call into two elements. First, there is a general call unto repentance, also referred to as the external call of God. This includes the presentation of the gospel and the invitation to respond. Secondly, an effectual call unto salvation, or the internal call, is the means by which the Holy Spirit takes the general message of the gospel and *irresistibly* brings the elect to a *willing* response of faith.

Matthew 20:16 and 22:14 are used to make the distinction between two calls of God with the phrase "many are called (general call), but few are chosen (effectual call)." Look at the context of these two passages. They do not specifically deal with salvation. Matthew 20:16 is Christ's application of the parable relating to laborers in the vineyard. It is a call to service, not salvation. The same can be seen with Matthew 22:14 in its context. This verse was the conclusion to the parable of the marriage feast. As He begins

the story, He refers to the kingdom of heaven. Notice no one was “made willing” to accept the invitation to the wedding. Many would not come. Not only that, but both bad and good were invited. The general call was accepted and the effectual call was refused. A small problem for Calvinists to sort out.

A thorough study of the term “call of God” will reveal a problem for the Calvinistic interpretation. Taken in context, a call from God is *not to* salvation. New Testament passages refer to believers who were *already* saved and/or called.<sup>246</sup> In fact, a verse often used for unconditional election has nothing to do with being chosen, called, or foreordained to salvation. “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”<sup>247</sup> Who was Jesus addressing? His closest disciples just before His betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. They were chosen and ordained to bring forth fruit, not to salvation in eternity past.

A *Baptist* confession of faith clearly states what Calvinists mean by *irresistible* grace. It teaches the elect will be saved against their will (will be made willing), and reprobates cannot be saved no matter how urgently they desire salvation. It is helpful to read what chapter ten of the Philadelphia

Confession stated concerning irresistible grace (effectual calling).

1. *Those whom God hath predestinated unto life 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 a 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.*

2. *This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with his special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.*

4. *Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will nor can*

*truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men that receive not the Christian religion be saved; be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess.*<sup>248</sup>

Notice some points of emphasis. First, “they come most freely, being *made willing* by his grace.” Secondly, reread the words, “This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone.” Thirdly, notice it said, “The creature being *wholly passive* therein.” Finally, in point four, it says that even though some “non-elect” are drawn by the Word and the Spirit of God, they cannot be saved because they are not predestined unto life.

Consider several “proof” texts used to teach the irresistible nature of grace. Jeremiah told Israel, “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”<sup>249</sup> Verses in the immediate passage indicate Israel is the one being drawn. Incidentally, they resisted that loving kindness and received the severe judgment of God. Reinterpreting the word “draw” in John 6:44, Loraine Boettner wrote, “No man can come unto me except the Father that sent me draw [literally, *drags*] him.”<sup>250</sup> Many of his disciples evidently did not know this interpretation. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”<sup>251</sup>

Irresistible grace has been seen in Psalm 65:4. “Blessed is the man whom thou choolest, and causest to approach unto thee...” Once again, wresting a phrase of Scripture out of its original context, Calvinism ignores in the same verse the references to the courts of God’s temple in Jerusalem. The Psalms also state, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...”<sup>252</sup> When is that day of power? After the second coming of Christ, not the day of salvation to the elect.

Jesus claims to “quicken” as He chooses, in context referring to power to resurrect the physically dead. He proved His power to do this on several occasions, including the raising of Lazarus. In the same fifth chapter of the Gospel of John, before He heals a crippled man, He asks him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Jesus did not make the man willing against his will. Concerning the religious crowd hearing Him preach, He said, “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”<sup>253</sup> Nothing is said of someone being unable to come. They were totally unwilling of their own accord to believe.

Weeping over Jerusalem, Jesus cried, “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!”<sup>254</sup> Jesus wanted to save

them from coming destruction, but they refused. Remember, this is God's elect nation Israel. Even the "elect" can refuse Him. There is no irresistible drawing.

Can man limit the desire of God? The Psalmist thought so. "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."<sup>255</sup> Man limits the Holy One? "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me."<sup>256</sup> God's *elect nation* of Israel could refuse His working. As was mentioned earlier, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against them.<sup>257</sup> The first century deacon Stephen accused those who opposed his teaching of resisting the Holy Spirit.<sup>258</sup> Wicked man can hold down the truth of God revealed through creation.<sup>259</sup>

Does God's sovereignty negate man's free will? An interesting correlation between the decree of a sovereign ruler and the free will of his subjects is made in Ezra. King Artaxerxes had sent Ezra the scribe a letter containing the king's decree about Jerusalem. He states, "I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee." Both a sovereign decree and freedom of choice are included. No "being made willing" on the part of his subjects is mentioned. The decree permitted the people to respond of their own free choice. God in His

sovereignty has allowed for freedom of choice.

Paul said he had a choice to either preach the gospel willingly or out of compulsion. If he only obeyed God out of duty, then the indication is given that he would have forfeited the reward.<sup>260</sup> The point being made, man does have the ability to resist or willingly yield to God's sovereign call.

The Apostle Paul is an example of one who was able to resist the Holy Spirit's working on his conscience. He told the Galatians he was convinced that God had separated him from his mother's womb and had called him by His grace. Nothing is said about being chosen in eternity past. Nine months in the womb is an eternity from the call of the Calvinists. What was the purpose of this separation and calling? "To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen."<sup>261</sup>

Was Paul able to resist this calling? A statement made by the resurrected Lord at Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus indicates he was resisting. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."<sup>262</sup> Jesus did not tell Saul it was *impossible* to silence the conviction, but it is difficult. Incidentally, Saul of Tarsus was already a saved man on the road. Jesus said he was a chosen vessel. Calvinists see unconditional election in that statement. Prayer was an evidence that salvation had already taken place. Ananias called him "Brother Saul." Saul was a chosen vessel to service, not

to salvation in eternity past.

Chapter six of John is considered the “cornerstone” of irresistible grace and the whole TULIP system.

Total Depravity: “No man can come to me” (6:44)

Unconditional Election: “All that the Father giveth me” (6:37)

Irresistible Grace: “All...shall come to me...except that the Father which hath sent me draw him...No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” (6:37, 44, 65)

Perseverance of the Saints: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing” (6:37, 39)

This chapter in context is Messiah dealing with Jews. His heavenly Father is drawing Israel to Himself through His Son. Jesus even quotes from Isaiah 54:13. On the cross Jesus drew all men to Himself.<sup>263</sup>

The ultimate “heresy” related to irresistible grace is the teaching of Hyper-Calvinists who believe the elect are regenerated *before* placing saving faith in Christ, not as a result of it. Irresistible grace is what saves a person, not faith in the finished work of Christ, based on Ephesians 2:8 (by grace are ye saved through the *gift* of faith). This irresistible grace of God makes the elect willing and able to believe on Him for salvation. None of God’s elect will be lost, even if they do not hear the gospel. Calvinistic grace guarantees

their salvation without exception.

Lydia is an example set forth by Calvinists. “And a certain woman named Lydia, ...which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”<sup>264</sup> According to the doctrine of irresistible grace, she could not have been saved unless God had opened her heart. What is overlooked in this passage is her listening to the Word of God. Romans 10:17 reads, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Paul spoke to her and the other women who had gathered along the river for prayer. She responded to the preaching of the Apostle.

Gentile believers are also cited as an illustration of the fourth point of Calvinism. “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”<sup>265</sup> Note a few things about this statement. First, it says nothing of being *foreordained* in eternity past to salvation. Second, these Gentiles heard the word of God before responding in faith. Third, they were glad and glorified God. Their hearts were willing before believing.

Incredible statements have been made regarding irresistible grace. Primitive Baptists believe,

*...God gives life to dead, alien, sinners independent of the preached word...Sinners are regenerated, or born again, independently of, or*

*without, the gospel as a means...The population of heaven after the end of the world will not be determined by those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, but by those whom the Lord Jesus Christ accepted before the beginning...God has an elect people and Christ died for them and they all will be born again and will live in heaven; all due to his sovereign grace. Many of them will have never heard the gospel...Salvation is NOT dependent upon gospel faith. Indeed, it could not be so, for millions of children of God have never heard the gospel preached. Only a very small percentage of humans heard the gospel before they died. Consequently, they did not and could not have had gospel faith.266*

The logical conclusion of irresistible grace: If the elect will be saved regardless, why preach the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? Paul told the Romans the importance of preaching.

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? ...So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.267*

John Wesley made the following observation.

*Call it therefore by whatever name you please, Election, Preterition, Predestination, or Reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this: By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved. But if this be so, then all preaching is vain.*<sup>268</sup>

In proclaiming the gospel, Paul and his fellow-ministers were commending themselves to *every* man's conscience, not just to the elect. Why was that their practice? Because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" that are lost.<sup>269</sup> It is the devil who keeps people from responding to the gospel by blinding their minds to the truth, not a lack of God's irresistible grace in their hearts. What kind of response can be expected? "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."<sup>270</sup>

Responding in faith to God's gracious offer of salvation through the preaching of the gospel is *voluntary but not optional*. God initiated salvation, but man must freely respond. James writes, "Draw nigh to God,

and he will draw nigh to you.”<sup>271</sup> God is ready and willing to pardon sin, but He will by no means clear the guilty.<sup>272</sup> Man makes the first move, like the rebellious son who returned to his father. The father was looking for an opportunity to welcome him home, but he waited for the son to come.<sup>273</sup> Jesus did not irresistibly make the church of the Laodiceans respond to His invitation. He simply knocked, waiting for a response.<sup>274</sup>

Mary was the human instrument God used to bring His Son into the world. Doctor Luke informs Theophilus of the announcement to Mary.<sup>275</sup> It is interesting to note that while she did not understand how it would be possible physically, she was a willing participant. Nothing is said of her being made willing to carry the Messiah. The Holy Spirit would overshadow Mary, not overpower her. She was not blessed *above* women but *among* them. Her willing response is seen in her statement to Gabriel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”<sup>276</sup>

The Old Testament prophet Jonah learned that salvation is of the LORD.<sup>277</sup> God did not desire the destruction of the wicked city of Nineveh. That is the reason why He sent Jonah there to announce coming judgment. The king led his people in repentance and the people were spared. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God is no respecter of persons.<sup>278</sup> All hearts are fashioned alike.<sup>279</sup>

Jesus came to call *sinners* to repentance,<sup>280</sup> not just those elected in eternity past. God wants His goodness to lead every person to repentance.<sup>281</sup>

### Perseverance of the Saints

Calvinists often sarcastically refer to Arminians using the petals of a daisy to determine if God loves them. “He loves me; He loves me not...” Yet, as the doctrines of Arminianism and Calvinism are compared, there is very little difference regarding this last point of the doctrinal system. As perseverance of the saints is examined carefully in the light of Scripture, the whole Calvinistic TULIP is stripped of all its petals.

Peter wrote to believers scattered abroad, “...Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”<sup>282</sup> First, notice that calling (irresistible grace) is listed before (unconditional) election, reversed in the Calvinistic scheme of doctrine. Reversed, the TULIP becomes TILUP. The ultimate question this verse raises, “How can a person make something sure that he had nothing to do with in the first place?” Review the points already considered. Man is totally unable to repent and believe, God unconditionally elected individuals in eternity past, Jesus’ atonement was limited to the elect, and He irresistibly makes the elect willing to come to Him for salvation. Now a believer is told to make God’s sovereign, eternal decree of calling and election sure? Does

the elect finally have a part in something totally out of their control?

What do Calvinists mean by the perseverance of the saints?

Simplified, this doctrine states the elect will persevere in faith to ensure the preserving work of God. Only the elect will continue to believe to the end and be saved. If a professing Christian does not persevere, this demonstrates they were never one of God's elect.

It should be understood that perseverance of the saints is not the same as the true doctrine of eternal security. Perseverance emphasizes the action of the individual; eternal security (preservation) focuses on what God does for the believer. Calvinists hold to a conditional security, conditioned upon persevering in the faith. This is the same position as Arminians when a comparison is made of their teachings.

Arthur Pink, a Calvinist, wrote, "There is a deadly and damnable heresy being widely propagated today to the effect that, if a sinner truly accepts Christ as his personal Saviour, no matter how he lives afterwards, he cannot perish. That is a Satanic lie, for it is at direct variance with the teaching of the Word of truth. Something more than believing in Christ is necessary to ensure the soul's reaching heaven."<sup>283</sup> In his book entitled *Sanctification*, Pink concluded that holy living is one part of salvation. "Holiness in this life is *absolutely necessary to salvation*, not only as a

means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity - as part of the end itself.”<sup>284</sup> Calvinists accuse Arminians of having a works salvation simply for saying faith and repentance on the part of man is required. If perseverance is a requirement for salvation, then perseverance equals salvation. Calvinists are left with a salvation dependent on works.

Is perseverance a Bible doctrine? The word is found only one time in the Scriptures. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance...”<sup>285</sup> Perseverance applies to prayer, not salvation.

Calvinists use a variety of Bible verses to support a conditional salvation. A verse in Matthew is pulled out of its original context. “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”<sup>286</sup> This statement is taken from the Olivet Discourse as Jesus taught His disciples about the persecution of the Great Tribulation just before His second coming to earth. Once again, context determines meaning of a verse. Earlier in Matthew, as Jesus was first sending out His disciples, He warned them of persecution. “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”<sup>287</sup> Endurance of suffering for the name of Christ, not holy living ensuring salvation, is the central issue.

Paul supposedly told the carnal Corinthians that he could lose his

salvation. “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”<sup>288</sup> The Greek word for “castaway” elsewhere in the King James Version is translated as reprobate<sup>289</sup> or rejected.<sup>290</sup> In the verses just prior to this, Paul refers to a ministry of preaching the gospel and the rewards for competing (living) according to the rules. After this statement, he uses rebellious Israel as an example. Paul was concerned about becoming disqualified for ministry and the loss of rewards, not the loss of salvation. If it did, what he wrote to the Romans was not the inspired, preserved Word of God. *Nothing* shall separate from the love of Christ.<sup>291</sup> Additionally, his reference earlier to the Judgment Seat of Christ was erroneous. “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so by fire.”<sup>292</sup>

The Apostle Paul told the Philippians, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”<sup>293</sup>

Arthur Pink wrote, “If there is a reserve in your obedience, you are on the way to hell.”<sup>294</sup> What Christian has not struggled with obedience? Even he mentioned struggles in living the Christian life. Paul was simply telling

them to “work out” practically what God had “worked in” spiritually.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>295</sup> He was confident God was continuing His work in them until the day of Christ’s return, not the day they would “fall away” from persevering in faith. The Corinthians were told, “...Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>296</sup> Jesus Christ does the confirming, not the believer.

Paul challenged young Timothy to “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”<sup>297</sup> About this verse, John Calvin wrote, “The zeal of pastors will be greatly increased when they are told that both their own salvation and that of their people depends upon their serious and earnest devotion to their office.”<sup>298</sup> One should realize that the Biblical concept of salvation does not always mean deliverance from an eternal hell.<sup>299</sup> In context, he was addressing progress (profiting) in Timothy’s ministry. Ezekiel 33:9 reads, “Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.” A preacher must not trim his message, or he will be accountable for the blood of the one judged. If Timothy preached the

truth of God without compromise and continued to live it, then he would deliver both his listeners and himself from the consequences of devilish doctrines mentioned earlier in the chapter.

In the second letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: *if we deny him, he also will deny us*: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”<sup>300</sup> If someone pulls the italicized phrase out of its original context, it seems God will deny those who deny Him. Yet, read all of the phrases together within the sentence. Paul is addressing reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom, not salvation.

Those who believe a loss of salvation is possible often turn to two passages in the book of Hebrews. Chapter six reads, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.”<sup>301</sup> He was not indicating a loss of salvation. In the verses that follow, He was confident about their spiritual state. God would reward their labor of love. He wanted them to be diligent and not slothful. This is a warning to Jewish believers tempted to return to

Judaism because of persecution.

Later in the book, he says, “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God...Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”<sup>302</sup> What was the writer’s intent? Was it to warn them of a possible loss of salvation? A look at the context indicates otherwise. “Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise...But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”<sup>303</sup> Rewards, not salvation, was at stake if they returned to their old religion.

There are several examples of believers not persevering in faith. Hymenaeus and Alexander were delivered over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme. Concerning faith they were shipwrecked.<sup>304</sup> A believer who does not provide for his own family has denied the faith and is *worse* than an infidel.<sup>305</sup> Some who loved money had erred from the faith.<sup>306</sup> The elected nation of Judah do things worse than the heathen under the

leadership of Manasseh.<sup>307</sup> King Saul died away from God spiritually. John Mark departed from Paul and his company, probably due to the difficulties of missionary service. This led to a sharp contention later between Barnabas and Paul. Paul said he had “departed,” derived from a Greek word meaning apostasy. John Mark, in Paul’s opinion, had apostatized.<sup>308</sup>

Apostasy is a desertion, renunciation, or abandonment of Biblical faith. True believers can get caught up in the spirit of apostasy. That is the primary reason the Apostles warned often about false teachers coming in among the people.<sup>309</sup> The doctrine of “perseverance” makes no allowance for the deception of weak believers.

Ezekiel 18:24 gives a powerful statement concerning the righteous turning from a righteous way of life. “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.” It does not indicate that the righteous man is condemned.

Lot is an example of being declared righteous while living a life away from God. God “...delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of

the wicked: for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations...”<sup>310</sup>

Notice again how Lot is described: just, righteous, and godly. His incestuous relationship with his daughters is the last thing the Bible records about Lot. While in wicked Sodom, he was said to be righteous even though he was not living a life of faith. When he told his family of the coming judgment, his sons-in-law laughed. The angelic messengers had to drag him out of that wicked city. John Calvin, Arthur Pink, and other Calvinists would have damned his “righteous soul” to hell.

In addition to Lot, Judas Iscariot provides a challenge for the perseverance doctrine. Jesus declared in the “cornerstone” chapter of Calvinism, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing...”<sup>311</sup>

Jesus should lose *nothing* of *all* the Father gives to Him. In the context of Peter’s declaration of faith, “And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus answered them, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”<sup>312</sup> In His High Priestly prayer, Jesus prayed, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name:

those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”<sup>313</sup> Did Jesus lose one of the elect the Father had given to Him?

The “Lordship Salvation” doctrine is a direct result of the Calvinistic teaching of perseverance. Simplified, it teaches that unless Jesus Christ is Lord of an individual’s life, salvation has not occurred. In essence, it makes salvation a process, not a one time event of being born again. It has been defined as *constant obedience* by many Calvinists. If that is true, who then can be saved? The teaching itself is based on a few verses taken from modern versions of the Bible.<sup>314</sup>

Salvation being dependent on making Christ Lord is a reaction to so-called “easy-believism.” Bible teacher John MacArthur wrote in *The Gospel According to Jesus*, “Those who deny the lordship of Christ are damned.”<sup>315</sup> Were the disciples of Christ damned? “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”<sup>316</sup> At the time of His arrest, “Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”<sup>317</sup> Jesus is not Lord while one is forsaking Him at His darkest hour.

A difference between salvation and discipleship must be understood at this point. Salvation is free, but it is not cheap. It cost Jesus Christ His life, but for the believer it is a free gift.<sup>318</sup> Salvation is free for the asking;

discipleship will require a counting of the cost.

The Bible clearly teaches the *preservation* of the saints, not their *perseverance* to the end to be saved. Let the Scriptures speak for themselves. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”<sup>319</sup> “In whom ye also trusted, *after that ye heard the word of truth*, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *after that ye believed*, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise...And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed unto the day of redemption*.”<sup>320</sup> “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be *preserved* blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it.”<sup>321</sup> “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will *preserve* me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”<sup>322</sup> “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.”<sup>323</sup> “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and

peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”<sup>324</sup> “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and *preserved in Jesus Christ*, and called...Now unto *him that is able to keep you from falling*, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”<sup>325</sup>

As was presented in earlier doctrines, Calvinism actually steals from the glory of God. If God is indeed sovereign and omnipotent, as Scripture teaches, does it not lessen His power to say the security of the believer is dependent on the creature? Did God foreordain a sovereign decree for everything except eternal security of the elect?

Why is righteous living so important? Holy living enables Christians to be unashamed before Christ at His coming, not ensure salvation.

“Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God,” not after enduring to the end. “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have

confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” The hope of one day being like Christ should produce a motive for holy living.<sup>326</sup>

“Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”<sup>327</sup>

“God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”<sup>328</sup> He in His sovereignty has offered salvation to all of mankind. In His sovereign control, He has ordained that *faith in Christ* be the real condition for salvation and eternal security, not an arbitrary eternal decree. “...The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”<sup>329</sup> Proclaiming the gospel is important because God wants all men saved, not just for the predetermined elect with an unalterable number.

At issue with predestination is its effect upon security and preservation of the believer, not the salvation of the “unconditionally elect.” Romans 8:29 reads, “For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...” Those He saves, He secures until the day of redemption. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

## Conclusion

Satan is the master deceiver. Paul warned the Corinthian believers

about the deceptive ways that he and his “ministers” use.

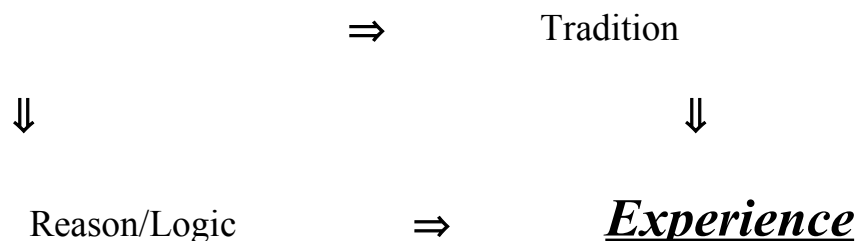
*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel: for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.<sup>330</sup>*

He is able to take the false doctrines of the “Father of Corrupt Theology” (Augustine), “repackage” them, and make them acceptable to a later generation that does not explore all of the facts in the light of Scripture.

Satan has centuries of experience in taking Biblical terms and giving them new meanings. Doctrine must be sound, not just sound Scriptural.

So what does this mean for fundamental Baptists in the twenty-first century?

1. When determining doctrine, begin with the Bible, not a church creed, tradition, experience, or reason. Faith must precede reason and experience. Preconceived ideas must be set aside for the simple truth of Scripture once delivered unto the saints. This principle could be visualized as follows:



When the order of these is reversed, doctrinal error is almost always the inevitable result. Doctrinal creeds cannot be super-imposed onto Scripture.

2. Seek Biblical understanding from the Author of the inspired Word of God, not theologians. This is not to imply it is always wrong to consult commentaries or seek answers from Bible teachers. However, too many Baptists are going to Protestants (with ties to Catholicism) for their theology.

*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things...  
These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is taught you, ye shall abide in him.<sup>331</sup>*

3. Beware of following a particular man. The Corinthian believers were carnal in following certain spiritual leaders like Paul and Apollos. This sounds similar to the debates of today - one is a follower of Calvin, another of Arminius. Paul had strong words for this carnal church.

*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were unable to bear it, neither yet*

*now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?332*

Care must be used in assuming labels like “Calvinist” or “Arminian.” These are only theological systems, not the Bible. Someone has said truth is often found between two extremes, regardless of what famous Calvinists have said about their system being the only way.

In closing consider Paul’s challenge to the true Roman church which would later allow corrupt teachers, like Augustine, into the church in the centuries to follow.

*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good works and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.333*

Mark them - and avoid them!

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- 1 Lutzer, p. 153.
  - 2 Vance, p. 19.
  - 3 Ibid., p. 5.
  - 4 Boettner, p. 1.
  - 5 Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, vol. 1, p. 174.
  - 6 II Peter 1:20.
  - 7 See Acts 17:11.
  - 8 *Christian History*, vol. 5:4, p. 2.
  - 9 *Time*, September 29, 1986, p. 76.
  - 10 Sargent, p. 94.
  - 11 See I Timothy 1:5.
  - 12 *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, p. 1169.
  - 13 Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins*, 1.33; quoted by Vance, p. 55.
  - 14 See Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19, 25, where "Queen of Heaven" is mentioned. This is based on a Babel religion dating back to the time of Nimrod. Some of the same characteristics can be seen in the practices of Roman Catholicism, like mother-child worship.
  - 15 See I Timothy 4:1-3.
  - 16 Sargent, p. 95.
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  - 21 Acts 20: 28-30.
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  - 26 Henry Atherton, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. 11-12.
  - 27 Schaff, vol. 8, p.287.
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  - 30 Sargent, p. 266.
  - 31 Letter from John Calvin, dated February 13, 1546, in *Letters of John Calvin*, p. 82; quoted by Vance, p. 92.
  - 32 Ibid., letter dated August 20, 1553, p. 159; quoted by Vance, p. 94.
  - 33 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.
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- 58 Acts 16:30-31.
- 59 II Corinthians 5:11.
- 60 Lamentations 3:26 - It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.
- 61 Mark 1:15.
- 62 See John 5:40.
- 63 Acts 17:30.
- 64 Romans 3:10-11.
- 65 Isaiah 55:6.
- 66 Deuteronomy 4:28-29.
- 67 Acts 17:27.
- 68 Hebrews 11:6.
- 69 Hebrews 11:1.
- 70 Ephesians 2:8-9.
- 71 See Romans 12:3.
- 72 Genesis 5:3.
- 73 See John 1:1.
- 74 See Genesis 3:15.
- 75 See Isaiah 7:14.
- 76 Romans 5:12.
- 77 Psalm 51:5.
- 78 Psalm 58:3.
- 79 Genesis 8:21.
- 80 Jeremiah 17:9.
- 81 Ecclesiastes 7:20.
- 82 Isaiah 64:6.
- 83 Proverbs 21:4, 7.
- 84 Job 15:15-16.
- 85 Job 25:4-6.
- 86 Job 31.
- 87 Job 42:7-9.
- 88 Proverbs 14:34.
- 89 Romans 2:14-15.
- 90 See Genesis 2:25.
- 91 See Genesis 3:1-11.
- 92 Genesis 4:6-7.
- 93 See Romans 7:15-20.
- 94 Kober, p. 31.
- 95 Article I.17 of the Canons of Dort reads, "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy.
- 96 See Galatians 3:22.
- 97 Vance, p. 198.
- 98 *Ibid.*, p. 199.
- 99 See Romans 3:10-23.
- 100 See Romans 10:3.
- 101 Proverbs 14:12.
- 102 Job 32:1.
- 103 See Job 38-41.
- 104 Job 42:6.
- 105 Judges 21:25.
- 106 Isaiah 45:2; Matthew 11:28; John 7:37; Revelation 22:17
- 107 See Romans 11:32, "that he might have mercy upon all."
- 108 See Revelation 22:18.
- 109 Galatians 1:9; emphasis added.

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- 110 Paul Jewett, *Election and Predestination*, pp. 3-4.  
111 Boettner, p. 2.  
112 Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, 11.  
113 Acts 2:23; Romans 8:29; 11:2; I Peter 1:2.  
114 I Peter 1:20.  
115 Jeremiah 6:30; Romans 1:28; II Corinthians 13:5-7; II Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16.  
116 See II Peter 1:10.  
117 See II Timothy 1:9.  
118 See Jude 1.  
119 Matthew 22:14.  
120 John Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 926 (III.xxi.5), quoted in Vance, p. 287.  
121 Ibid., p. 296; Ibid.  
122 Vance, p. 254.  
123 John Calvin, *Secret Providence*, p. 267; quoted in Vance, p. 288.  
124 James 1:13.  
125 Job 34:10.  
126 Psalm 5:4.  
127 Habakkuk 1:13.  
128 Jeremiah 19:5.  
129 See Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11.  
130 See Matthew 25:41.  
131 Isaiah 45:7; Lamentations 3:38; Amos 3:6.  
132 Jeremiah 19:3-5.  
133 Jonah 3:10; II Samuel 17:14; I Kings 14:10; 21:21; Nehemiah 13:18; Daniel 9:14.  
134 Philippians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:17.  
135 James 5:15.  
136 Deuteronomy 9:18-20.  
137 II Kings 20:1-6.  
138 *The Baptist Examiner*, February 18, 1989, p. 5.  
139 See I Samuel 2:4.  
140 I Samuel 2:25.  
141 Deuteronomy 29:29.  
142 Isaiah 55:8-9.  
143 Isaiah 45:19.  
144 Proverbs 1:24-25, 30.  
145 Luke 7:30.  
146 See Galatians 4:4-5.  
147 Romans 8:29, emphasis added.  
148 I John 3:2.  
149 Deuteronomy 22:6.  
150 Luke 10:31a.  
151 I Chronicles 21:1.  
152 II Samuel 24:1.  
153 Job 1:12-19.  
154 Job 1:11; 2:5.  
155 Job 2:3.  
156 Job 1:21.  
157 Job 42:11.  
158 Psalm 139:2.  
159 Matthew 11:21, 23.  
160 Job 14:5.  
161 Psalm 55:23.  
162 Ecclesiastes 7:17.  
163 Exodus 20:12.  
164 Psalm 115:1-3.  
165 Daniel 4:34-35.  
166 Acts 17:26.  
167 Matthew 5:27-28.

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168 I Thessalonians 4:1-8.  
169 Acts 2:23.  
170 Revelation 13:8.  
171 Acts 2:36; 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39.  
172 I Corinthians 2:8.  
173 Mark 14:21; see also Luke 22:21-22 and John 13:21-30.  
174 See Matthew 27:4 where Judas says, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He allowed Satan to use him (Luke 22:3; John 13:27).

175 See Acts 1:15-20 where Peter says to those in the upper room, "This scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." It was only *after* Judas had betrayed Jesus that the disciples understood this prophecy.

176 Isaiah 44:28 - 45:3.  
177 Luke 22:22.  
178 Jeremiah 6:30.  
179 II Corinthians 13:5.

180 II Timothy 3:8.  
181 Deuteronomy 7:6-7.  
182 I Kings 3:8.  
183 Psalm 135:4.  
184 Isaiah 45:4.  
185 Malachi 1:1-3.  
186 See Genesis 33 for statements about Esau being Jacob's lord.  
187 Genesis 25:23.  
188 See Obadiah.  
189 See Genesis 25:29-34.  
190 Hebrews 12:16-17.  
191 See Genesis 28.  
192 See Exodus 33.  
193 Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34.  
194 Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 14:8.  
195 John Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 955 (III.xxiii.7); quoted in Vance, 287.  
196 See II Samuel 12.  
197 Schaff, vol. 8, p. 567.  
198 Alan P. F. Sell, *The Great Debate*, p. 72.  
199 Ibid.  
200 Rice, p. 6.  
201 Vance, p. 302.  
202 See John 6:37; 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24 for examples.  
203 Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 333.  
204 Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:11, 15; 21:27; 22:19.  
205 See Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; 109:13; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23.  
206 I John 5:4-5, emphasis added.  
207 Canons of Dort, quoted in Vance, p. 408.  
208 See chapter ten of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith in the section entitled "irresistible grace."  
209 II Peter 3:16.  
210 Boettner, p. 152.  
211 John 12:19.  
212 Matthew 20:28.  
213 Matthew 26:28.  
214 Hebrews 9:28.  
215 Romans 5:19.  
216 I Timothy 2:5-6.  
217 See Exodus 12:6, 7, 21, 22.  
218 John 1:29.  
219 John 4:42.

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- 220 John 12:32.  
221 See II Corinthians 5:14, 15, 19.  
222 See Hebrews 2:9.  
223 I Corinthians 15:10.  
224 I Timothy 4:10.  
225 See Galatians 6:10.  
226 Romans 1:16.  
227 I Timothy 2:4.  
228 I Corinthians 9:22b.  
229 I John 2:2; 4:14.  
230 See I John 2:15-17; 3:1; 4:3.
- 231 See I John 5:19.  
232 See Acts 10:43; Romans 10:11-13; I John 5:1; Revelation 22:17.  
233 W. E. Best, *Justification Before God (Not By Faith)*, p. 10.  
234 C. H. Spurgeon, *Doctrines of Grace*, p. 300.  
235 Philadelphia Confession of Faith, quoted by Kober, n.p.  
236 Deuteronomy 1:39.  
237 See Jonah 4:11.  
238 Isaiah 7:16.  
239 II Peter 2:1.  
240 Romans 1:22.  
241 See Genesis 6.  
242 II Peter 2:5.  
243 See I Peter 3:20.  
244 II Peter 3:8-9.  
245 Titus 2:11.  
246 See Matthew 4:21; Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 1:2, 9; Galatians 1:6; Ephesians 4:1; II Thessalonians 2:14; and I Peter 2:9 for examples.  
247 John 15:16.  
248 Kober, inserted page.
- 249 Jeremiah 31:3.  
250 Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Faith*, p. 11.  
251 John 6:66.  
252 Psalm 110:3.  
253 John 5:6, 21, 40.  
254 Matthew 23:37.  
255 Psalm 78:41.  
256 Psalm 81:11.  
257 Luke 7:30.  
258 See Acts 7:51.  
259 See Romans 1:18.  
260 I Corinthians 9:16-17.  
261 Galatians 1:15-16.  
262 Acts 9:5.  
263 John 12:31-33.  
264 Acts 16:14.  
265 Acts 13:48.  
266 Vance, p. 529.  
267 Romans 10:13-17.  
268 Alan P. F. Sell, *The Great Debate*, p. 73.  
269 II Corinthians 4:1-4.  
270 Acts 28:24.  
271 James 4:8.  
272 See Numbers 14:18-24.  
273 Luke 15.  
274 Revelation 3:20.

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275 See Luke 1:25-38.  
276 See Luke 1:28, 34, 38, 42.  
277 Jonah 2:9.  
278 See Acts 10:34 and Romans 2:11.  
279 See Psalm 33:15.  
280 Matthew 9:13.  
281 Romans 2:4.  
282 II Peter 1:10.

283 Iain Murray, *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, pp. 248-249.  
284 Ibid., *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, p. 28.  
285 Ephesians 6:18.  
286 Matthew 24:13.  
287 Matthew 10:22.  
288 I Corinthians 9:27.  
289 Romans 1:28; II Corinthians 13:5-7; II Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16.  
290 Hebrews 6:8.  
291 See Romans 8:38-39.  
292 I Corinthians 3:15.  
293 Philippians 2:12-13.  
294 Arthur Pink, *Practical Christianity*, p. 16.  
295 Philippians 1:6.  
296 I Corinthians 1:7-8.  
297 I Timothy 4:16.  
298 Calvin, *Commentaries*, vol. 10, p. 248; quoted by Vance, p. 572.  
299 See I Timothy 2:15.  
300 II Timothy 2:12-13.  
301 Hebrews 6:4-6.  
302 Hebrews 10:26-38.  
303 Hebrews 10:35, 36, 39.  
304 See I Timothy 1:19-20.  
305 See I Timothy 5:8.  
306 See I Timothy 6:9-10.  
307 See II Chronicles 33:9.  
308 See Acts 15:36-40.  
309 See Acts 20:26-31; I Timothy 4:1, 6; II Timothy 3:13-14; II Peter 2:1-3; 3:14-18; Jude 3-4.  
310 II Peter 2:7-9.  
311 John 6:37, 39.  
312 John 6:69-70.  
313 John 17:12.  
314 Romans 10:9; I Corinthians 12:3; II Corinthians 4:5; Colossians 2:6.  
315 John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 217.  
316 John 6:66.  
317 Matthew 26:56.  
318 See Romans 5:15.

319 John 10:27-29.  
320 Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.  
321 I Thessalonians 5:23-24.  
322 II Timothy 4:18.  
323 Hebrews 7:25.  
324 I Peter 1:2-5.  
325 Jude 1, 24-25.  
326 I John 2:28; 3:2-3.  
327 II Timothy 2:19.  
328 Psalm 115:3.  
329 Romans 10:12.  
330 II Corinthians 11:13-15.

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331 I John 2:20, 26-27.  
332 I Corinthians 3:1-4.  
333 Romans 16:17-18.