

(Acts 2:38; 22:16, Revelation 1:5). He then must remain faithful until the end in order to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

LIMITED ATONEMENT. This theory teaches that Christ died only for the elect. For example, they believe that when Christ prayed "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:43), he was only praying for his elect, those who were fore ordained to salvation. Let us however notice the following truth concerning Christ's sacrifice.

God does not want any to perish: 2 Peter 3:9 says "*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.*" Calvinists argue that if it was God's desire to save all men then it would be impossible for God to allow any to be lost. In putting forward such arguments they face the horrendous inference of having God desire that some of his creation spend eternity in hell. This presents God as being sadistic and cruel. The fact is, the Scriptures very clearly say that **God does not desire that any be lost.** This thought is not only expressed in 2 Peter 3:9 above but also in such Scriptures as Ezekiel 18:32 --- "*For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*" Another verse of significance that shows that it is quite possible for man to walk against the desires of God is Genesis 6:6 --- "*And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*" The inference of Calvinism is that God desired the death of all those in Noah's time, and that Noah and his family were the only ones God desired to save.

Christ's death was for all men 1 John 2:2 - says "*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" How much plainer could the Lord reveal his will than this? "Our sins" in this context are the sins of those already in Christ. The sins of "the whole world" therefore must refer to those outside of Christ. This verse (as well as many others) teaches that Christ died both for the saved and the unsaved.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE This is the next logical step. The theory teaches that a sinner cannot resist God's desire to save him. This is easily re-

futed by Acts 7:51 where Stephen was preaching to lost Jews. "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*" Calvinists claim that these Jews were among those who were predestined to be lost, and therefore could not help resisting the Spirit. The inspired Stephen however was preaching to them **hoping for a response.** It is obvious therefore that their resistance to the Spirit was voluntary.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS. It is almost incomprehensible for one to believe that once one is saved, there is nothing he can do to lose his salvation. Yet this is the basis of this false doctrine. It categorically denies such plain statements as "**Ye have fallen from grace**" (Gal 5:4), "*Take heed lest he fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12), "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*" (Heb 3:12), "*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away*" (John 15:2), "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith,*" (1 Timothy 4:1). The passages that indicate the possibility of apostasy are manifold.

From the above article, surely all of us can concur with what the inspired Peter said "*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*" --- **Acts 10:34-35**

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C alvinism

a Wilted Flower



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

In 1618 the Dutch Council of Dort drew up an acrostic (TULIP), which was designed to summarize the main tenets of the teachings of John Calvin. The doctrine of Calvinism rests on a false assumption that the sovereignty of God automatically infers that man can contribute **nothing at all towards his salvation.** This theory is clearly expressed in each of these five points. Let us briefly consider these.

TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY This theory teaches that from Adam all mankind has inherited a completely fallen nature, and is without ability to make **any response whatsoever** to the gospel, unless he is one of the elect who have been chosen before creation for salvation. According to Calvin, those who are chosen have no choice in the matter, they cannot resist God's desire to save them, and once they are saved by God it is impossible for them to fall from grace. On the other hand those who are chosen to be lost cannot reach out to God. Salvation is absolutely impossible for them. They are destined to spend eternity in hell without having had any hope while on earth of hearing God's call or responding to His message.

It is true, as Calvinists claim, that, as a result of Adam and Eve's sin, death has passed upon all men (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). However physical death is the only thing everyone **unconditionally** inherits from Adam. It is also true that fallen man needs the intervention of the Sovereign God in order to be saved. Sin has separated man from God (Isaiah 59:2). Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), it requires the divine intervention of God to save man. God however does not intervene in a **direct way**, but does so **indirectly** through the gospel (Romans 1:16)

Man is not born a sinner but becomes a sinner. Calvinism says that a man's soul is dead from birth. They quote Scriptures such as Ephesians 2:1 which says "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." They then argue "How can a dead man raise himself". In using the above argument, Calvinists make two false assumptions.

Firstly, they assume that those who are spiritually dead cannot hear. "Death" however, does not mean extinction, it means "separation". The whole purpose of the Gospel is that dead souls will hear the word of the Lord and live. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, **when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.**" - John 5:25. When our body dies it becomes separated from our soul (James 2:26, Genesis 35:18). When our soul dies it becomes separated from God (Isaiah 59:2). Those who have been buried with Christ in baptism have been "**Made alive together with Him, having forgiven all our trespasses.**" -- Colossians 2:11-12. The dead soul therefore is made alive again when it hears and obeys the gospel through baptism (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38)

Secondly, They assume that man's soul is dead from birth. The Bible teaches however that man's soul is given to him in a pure state and that he **becomes** spiritually dead through his **own** transgression. Notice Ezekiel 18:4 --- "**Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.**" Sin is therefore something that **man does**, not something that he inherits. Man is accountable for his own sins, and not for the sins of others. We are told in Genesis 8:21 that "... **the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth**" (therefore not from infancy or conception). This verse indicates

that we reach an age of accountability.

The Lord said that the children's angels "**do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven**" (Mat 18:10). How then could they be born in sin? This age of accountability is clearly described in Romans 7:9, where Paul said: "**For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.**" Paul explained further in Romans 7:11 "**For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.**" It was Paul's own sin that slew (killed) him, not the sin of Adam. Another verse that proves categorically that sin enters man after they are born is Psalms 58:3 --- "**The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.**" This verse says that "**they go astray**". Calvinism teaches that they **are already astray**. The expressions "**from the womb**" and "**as soon as they are born**" obviously do not refer to infancy, for an infant cannot speak, let alone tell lies. In this text the psalmist is simply explaining how swiftly man seems to drift into sin after he is born. All of us observe this. A pure young baby in the cradle quickly grows into a rebellious youth. Let us now look at the "**U**" in the acrostic.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION Just as Total Hereditary Depravity distorts the doctrine of death through sin, "Unconditional Election" distorts the Biblical doctrine of predestination, as taught in Ephesians 1:4-5 --- "**According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,**"

Since Calvinists believe that man is born in sin, and cannot contribute anything whatever towards his salvation, and since they have to accept that not all will be saved (Mat 7:13-14) the theory of Unconditional Election is the next logical step of Calvinism. This theory advocates that God predestined certain individuals to be saved directly by God **without any conditions whatsoever**. Likewise, (they claim) He has foreordained that some (the majority) would be lost in hell without any hope whatever of changing their destiny. They falsely deduce that if man was required to do anything whatsoever to be saved then that would take away the Sovereignty of God.

There is no doubt at all that God is the Sovereign

ruler of the universe, and can do with us as he wills. Romans 9:21 says concerning God: "**Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor?**" God's sovereignty in the Bible however is not expressed by granting salvation unconditionally, but rather in the providing of an authoritative plan of salvation by which He will save all those "**Who work righteousness and fear him**" (Act 10:35). From the beginning, God devised a plan by which man would be saved. As our Sovereign Ruler and Creator, God **authoritatively** and **unalterably** laid down the conditions for salvation. **God's authority is placed in His law (The New Testament).** Man cannot change in **any way** the rules which God has laid down. If man wishes to avail himself of God's grace, he must obey the gospel (2 Thess 1:8-9, Gal 1:8-9)

The predestined individuals mentioned in Ephesians chapter 1 were certainly chosen by God from the foundation of the world, but they are chosen **neither directly, nor unconditionally**. God chose to save man **indirectly** through the gospel (Romans 1:16: 1 Cor 1:21). It was the gospel (the word of God) that was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world, and the work of the inspired apostles and prophets to reveal that gospel to man (Ephesians 3:1-5). When one, of his own free will hears and obeys the gospel he is added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:42:47), and becomes one of God's elect. Calvinism rightly concludes that God is Sovereign, and that our salvation is entirely dependent upon God's will. However it wrongly deduces that man contributes nothing towards this. God clearly lays down conditions for man to obey before he extends his grace to them. Man first of all must **HEAR** the word of God in order to exercise biblical faith (Romans 10:17). Biblical faith cannot be expressed without obedience (Romans 1:5), and cannot be complete without works of obedience (James 2:22). Man is not saved by works of merit (Romans 4:3-4), neither is he saved by works of obedience alone. God in His wisdom and Sovereignty has decided to blend His work of atonement and man's voluntary response to the conditions of salvation together. He has decreed that if a sinner wishes to be saved he must hear the gospel preached (Romans 10:14), believe it (Mark 16:15-16), repent (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and then be immersed in water to contact the blood of Christ