

Tiptoeing Through the Tulips

By Allen Dvorak

Introduction:

- I. Suppose that I gave you the following directions to my house:
 - A. At the “T” intersection, turn right and continue to the first stoplight.
 - B. Just after the stoplight, take the entrance ramp on the left and get on the highway, headed north.
 - C. Take the 36th exit ramp and keep to the right.
 - D. After 6.75 miles, take the exit and turn left at the stoplight at the end of the exit ramp.
 - E. Stay on that road for 11.1 miles and turn left. My house is on the left, about ¼ mile from the turn.
 - F. Of course, you must start at the right place and make every turn according to the directions in order to reach the desired destination.
 - G. If you take a wrong turn in the beginning, every turn afterward can follow the directions, but you will not end up in the right place! In fact, every direction after the initial mistake will be the wrong street or, more likely, make little sense!
- II. Calvinism takes a “wrong turn” in the beginning and understandably ends up in the wrong place, having taken every wrong street.
- III. The “Five Points of Calvinism,” our focus in this study, are general described as follows:
 - A. Total inherited depravity (also known as “total inability” or “original sin”)
 - B. Unconditional election
 - C. Limited atonement (also known as “particular redemption”)
 - D. Irresistible grace
 - E. Perseverance of the saints (also known as “once saved, always saved”)
- IV. It should not be assumed that all who would describe themselves as Calvinists embrace all five points listed above.
 - A. Lutherans, for example, disagree with points 4 & 5.
 - B. Some Calvinists describe themselves in terms of their partial or whole adherence to the Five Points (1-Point Calvinists or Three-Point Calvinists).
 - C. Southern Baptists, for example, reject or modify several of the Five Points.
 - D. Descriptions of the Five Points will also vary some from one source to another.
- V. Study objectives:
 - A. Identify the origin of the acrostic/mnemonic TULIP.
 - B. Identify the tenets of Calvinism and their connection to one another.
 - C. Make a brief reply to each of the tenets.

Body:

I. The Origin of TULIP

A. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609; actual name was Jakob Hermanszoon) was a Dutch Reformed theologian and professor of theology at the University of Leiden.

1. Arminius disagreed with the Calvinistic doctrine of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands.
 - a. The Belgic Confession (1561) and Heidelberg Catechism (1563) were important summaries of the doctrine of the Reformed churches. Arminius was vocal in his disagreement with some of their contents, particularly on the subject of predestination.
 - b. His followers were known as Arminians or Remonstrants.
2. After Arminius' death, the Remonstrants formulated the Five Articles, theological points intended to controvert the systematic theology of Calvinism. These points were presented to the Dutch Parliament as a Remonstrance (1610).
3. Summary of the Remonstrance:¹
 - a. **Conditional Election:** From all eternity God determined to bestow salvation on those whom He foresaw would persevere to the end in their faith in Christ. Likewise, He determined to inflict everlasting punishment on those whom He foresaw would continue in their unbelief and resist to the end of their life His divine help.
 - b. **Universal Atonement:** The Lord Jesus Christ by His sufferings and death made atonement for the sins of mankind generally and of every individual in particular. However, only believers actually partake of the benefits of that atonement.
 - c. **Depravity:** Because of his natural corruption, man cannot think or do any good thing, and so true faith (by which alone sinners can partake of the benefits of Christ's atonement) cannot proceed from the exercise either of man's natural faculties or of his free will. It is, therefore, necessary to his conversion and salvation that he be regenerated and renewed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. Evangelical Arminians still hold to the original Remonstrant statement on this subject, placing the work of the Spirit before the exercise of faith and repentance, though the Remonstrants themselves were led to more and more unscriptural positions by the successors of Arminius and Episcopius.
 - d. **Resistible Grace:** This divine energy of the grace of the Holy Spirit heals the disorders of corrupt nature and begins and perfects everything that can be called good in man, so that all good works in man are attributed to God and the operation of His grace. Nevertheless, such regenerating grace may be resisted and rendered ineffectual by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner.
 - e. **Fall from Grace:** Believers are furnished with abundant strength and help, sufficient to enable them to triumph over the seductions of Satan and the allurements of sin. However, by the neglect of this help, they may fall from grace, and if they die in such a state, must finally perish.

¹ This summary is quoted in its entirety from Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 179.
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- B. The Synod of Dort [Dordrecht] (November, 1618 - May, 1619) was convened to consider the teaching of Arminius and his followers and its members met for 154 formal sessions.
1. The assembly was comprised of clergymen and elders from Holland, along with representatives from various foreign countries. A number of Remonstrants were initially involved in the synod, but were eventually expelled.
 2. Those in attendance at the synod were clearly predisposed against the affirmations of the Remonstrants.
 3. The teachings of the Remonstrants were declared to be heretical and the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism were reaffirmed as scriptural.
 4. The synod produced the Canons of Dort which technically consisted of four points intended to respond to the five points of the Remonstrants.
 - a. The Canons of Dort were accepted by all Reformed churches “as a true, accurate and eminently authoritative exhibition of the Calvinistic system of Theology.”²
 - b. By decree of the synod members, over 200 Remonstrants were deposed from their positions as clergymen.
 5. Summary of the Canons of Dort:³ (obviously known as ULTIF, a flower of unknown identity!)
 - a. *Unconditional election*
 - b. *Limited atonement*
 - c. *Total depravity of man*
 - d. *Irresistibility of grace*
 - e. *Final perseverance of the saints*
- C. “A TULIP by any other acrostic would smell just as stinky.”⁴
1. “It’s important to note and clarify here, the five points of Calvinism were **not** originally meant to be a full summary of Calvinism, but merely specific responses to specific points of Arminianism. Also, the five responses to the Remonstrants were not organized into the acrostic *TULIP* until the early 20th century (obviously, as the original discussion was not in English.)”⁵
 2. Some other summaries of Calvinistic theology include:⁶
 - a. S. M. Jackson:⁷
 - 1) Particular predestination
 - 2) Limited atonement
 - 3) Natural inability
 - 4) Irresistible grace

² A. A. Hodge; cited by Cairns.

³ Cross, p. 505.

⁴ With apologies to William Shakespeare.

⁵ datpostmil.com

⁶ www.theopedia.com/tulip

⁷ Jackson, Vol. 4, p. 321.

- 5) Perseverance of saints.
- b. James Boice & Philip Ryken
 - 1) Radical depravity
 - 2) Unconditional election
 - 3) Particular redemption
 - 4) Efficacious grace
 - 5) Persevering grace
- c. R. C. Sproul
 - 1) Radical corruption
 - 2) Sovereign election
 - 3) Limited atonement
 - 4) Effectual grace
 - 5) Preservation of the saints
- d. Timothy George
 - 1) Radical depravity
 - 2) Overcoming grace
 - 3) Sovereign election
 - 4) Eternal life
 - 5) Singular redemption
- e. Roger Nicole
 - 1) Grace
 - 2) Obligatory grace
 - 3) Sovereign grace
 - 4) Provision-making grace
 - 5) Effectual grace
 - 6) Lasting grace

II. TULIP – Main tenets of Calvinism

- A. The “five points of Calvinism” are not “stand-alone” doctrines. The tenets are inter-related.
 - 1. It can reasonably be concluded that total inherited depravity is the foundational doctrine of the other major tenets.
 - 2. “There are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of the disease will always bring with them wrong views of the remedy. Wrong views of the corruption of human nature will always carry with them wrong views of the grand antidote and cure of that corruption.” (J. C. Ryle)⁸

⁸ Cited by Spencer, p. 23.

B. Note these causal relationships:

1. If man is unable to choose salvation (because of his corrupted nature), then God needed to make the choice for him. The doctrine of ***unconditional election*** is the result.
2. If God chose only some to be saved, there was no need for Christ to die for the sins of the others. The doctrine of ***limited atonement*** is the result.
 - a. It would be contradictory to suggest that God chose (by implication) some people to be lost and then sent Jesus to die for their salvation.
 - b. In addition, if Jesus died for all men and yet some men are not going to be saved, then the Calvinist sees God's will as being thwarted and His sovereignty challenged.
3. If man is unable to choose salvation (a consequence of total inherited depravity), then God must enable those for whom Christ died. The doctrine of ***irresistible grace*** is the result.
4. If man is unable to resist the grace (plan) of God, then those chosen for salvation cannot fail to be saved. The doctrine of the ***perseverance of the saints*** is the result.

C. If total inherited depravity is the foundational doctrine of the other major tenets of Calvinism and from which they flow, then the hard determinist view of divine sovereignty is the foundation of the whole system!

1. Allan Turner observes:⁹

Although the doctrine of Total Depravity is crucial to all forms of determinism, whether Augustinian, Lutheran, or Calvinistic, it is not really as important to the general system of Calvinism as it is to the Five Points. As we observed previously, if the doctrine of Total Depravity is defeated, all of the other Points are defeated. Nevertheless, the more important concept to Calvinism is the Sovereign's "Eternal Decree." In other words, contrary to what Calvinists want us to believe, Calvinism does not have as its "starting point the fact that all mankind sinned in Adam."¹⁰ Calvinism starts with what they call the Eternal Decree, which the *Westminster Confession* explains thus: "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass." In other words, the essence of Calvinism is its doctrine of Predestination. About this, Calvin said: "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal death for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say is predestined either to life or to death."¹¹ Therefore, the supposed bondage of man's will is the direct result of an alleged Eternal Decree, and only secondarily the result of an argument for Total Depravity.

2. As noted by Ryle (see quote on previous page), if one starts with a flawed foundation, the whole superstructure will be compromised.

⁹ *The Christian & Calvinism*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 66.

¹¹ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter XXI, Section 5.

D. Total inherited depravity

1. Statement of the tenet:

- a. *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, Chapter 6, Nos. 2-4 (first creed adopted by the Baptist churches in the United States)

“Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all; all becoming dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

They being the root, and, by God's appointment, standing the room and stead of all mankind; the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”

- b. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 6

Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.

They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.

Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

- c. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 9, No. 3

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

2. The doctrine of total inherited depravity basically has two component parts:
 - a. Every man is born with the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to him.
 - b. Every man has also inherited by physical generation a nature so corrupted that he cannot will to do good to please God and for His glory.
3. Some passages cited in defense of this doctrine:¹²
 - a. **Genesis 6:5 (ESV)** ⁵ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
 - b. **Psalms 51:5 (ESV)** ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
 - c. **Psalms 58:3 (ESV)** ³ The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.
 - d. **John 6:65 (ESV)** ⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."
 - e. **Romans 3:9–12 (ESV)** ⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."
 - f. **Romans 5:12 (ESV)** ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—
 - g. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
 - h. **Ephesians 2:2–3 (ESV)** ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
 - i. **2 Timothy 2:25–26 (ESV)** ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
 - j. **Titus 1:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.
 - k. **Titus 3:3 (ESV)** ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

¹² The passages cited in defense of each of the five points of Calvinism are not intended to be a comprehensive list, but merely a sampling of the arguments made on behalf of the doctrine.

4. An understanding of the nature of sin helps in seeing the error of this doctrine.
- a. The Greek word most frequently translated *sin* (*hamartia*; ἁμαρτία) is defined as “an act or feeling that transgresses something forbidden or ignores something required by God’s law or character; whether in thought, feeling, speech, or action.”¹³
 - b. Some biblical definitions:
 - 1) “The transgression of the law” - (1 John 3:4 - KJV)
 - 2) Failure (omission) to do what God has commanded (James 4:17)
 - 3) Causing another to sin (1 Corinthians 8:7-13)
 - 4) Violation of one’s conscience (Romans 14:23)
 - 5) Summary: sin is an act or thought, not an inherited disposition. Conduct is not transferable.
 - c. The nature of sin is such that it cannot be inherited by physical generation. The Scriptures specifically state that the guilt of sin is not transferable.
 - 1) We must not confuse the consequence(s) of sin with the guilt of sin.
 - 2) One may suffer from the consequences of another’s sin and yet not be guilty of that sin.
 - a) **Ezekiel 18:20 (NKJV)** ²⁰ The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.
 - b) **Jeremiah 31:29–30 (ESV)** ²⁹ In those days they shall no longer say: “ ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ ³⁰ But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.
 - d. Many scriptures affirm individual responsibility for sin: (underlining emphases mine – asd)
 - 1) **Ephesians 2:1–3 (1901 ASV)** ¹ And you *did he make alive*, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, ² wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; ³ among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:—
 - a) “Dead through your trespasses and sins...”
 - b) “By nature, children of wrath...”
 - 1] The passage does not refer to their nature by birth but to the nature (character) of their deeds. Living in sinful ways had become their customary, habitual practice.
 - 2] “walked” “lived” “doing”

¹³ Bible Sense Lexicon, Logos.

- 2) **Matthew 1:21 (ESV)** ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”
 - 3) **Acts 3:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,
 - 4) **Colossians 2:13 (ESV)** ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,
 - 5) **1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.
5. Inherited Corrupt Nature: Cause of Sin?
- a. According to Calvinism, sin proceeds from a corrupted nature.
 - 1) Calvinists claim that Adam and Eve were created with free will. What was the cause of their sin?
 - 2) Would not the cause of Adam’s sin explain our sins as well?
 - 3) **James 1:13–14 (ESV)** ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
 - b. The Scriptures affirm the free will of man.
 - 1) **John 5:40 (ESV)** ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.
 - 2) **Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV)** ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
 - 3) **Revelation 22:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.
 - 4) Israel was offered the choice to do right:
 - a) **Deuteronomy 11:26–28 (ESV)** ²⁶ “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.
 - b) **Joshua 24:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
 - c. There is scriptural evidence against an inherited corrupt nature.
 - 1) In the parable of the soils, the good soil represents the “honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15).

- 2) In *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Chapter 6, No. 5), it is argued that even the regenerated individual continues to have a corrupt nature.
 - a) “This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.”
 - b) This explains why Calvinists believe that the children of Christians are still born with a corrupted nature.
 - c) **Luke 18:15–16 (ESV)** ¹⁵ Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.
 - 1] Little children (regardless of how cute they are!) would be unregenerate, according to Calvinism.
 - 2] Surely Jesus was not suggesting that the kingdom of God belongs to the unregenerate!
6. The doctrine of total inherited depravity has some unintended consequences.
- a. Infant baptism
 - 1) Some religious groups believe that God has some special plan for the justification of infants apart from human actions.
 - 2) If not, the salvation of the infant depends upon his parents/guardian.
 - 3) As an interesting sidebar, the Canons of Dort (First Point, Article 17) dealt with the condition of infants in this way:

Since we must make judgments about God’s will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.
 - 4) *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, Chapter 10, No. 3:

Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and how he pleases; so also are all elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.
 - a. Man is released from moral responsibility.
 - 1) Man is born lost and has no power to change his condition.
 - 2) Although man could be held responsible for his own sins, Calvinism teaches that his corrupt nature makes his condemnation inevitable.
 - 3) In truth, if God doesn’t help men, He becomes responsible for their condemnation.
 - b. What was the nature of Jesus?
 - 1) Did Jesus really become like us (Hebrews 2:14)?

- 2) How could He be a son of Adam (Luke 3:38) and yet be without sin (Hebrews 4:15)?
 - 3) His innocence is a necessity in order for Him to be an efficacious sin sacrifice – which necessity resulted in the Roman Catholic doctrine of immaculate conception (i.e., Mary was born without original sin).
- c. In inheriting the guilt of Adam’s sin, man would be judged for another’s sin(s). Remember the principle of Ezekiel 18:20.
- 1) **Romans 14:12 (ESV)** ¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.
 - 2) **2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
 - 3) Do we only inherit the guilt of Adam’s first sin?
 - 4) Do we inherit our father’s sins? His father’s?
- d. It makes the gospel invitation meaningless and, at worst, a mockery.

B. Unconditional election

1. Statement of the tenet:

a. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 3, Nos. 3-6

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

b. *Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*

“Those of mankind who are predestinated unto Life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable Purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ to everlasting

glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.”

c. *The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., Chapter 3*

“God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass...By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.”

- d. “The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam’s race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for He had the power and authority to do so) or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to show mercy to any)--but He did neither. Instead He chose to save some and to exclude others. His eternal choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, any thing that men would do, but resulted entirely from God’s self-determined purpose.

Those who were not chosen to salvation were passed by and left to their own evil devices and choices. It is not within the creature’s jurisdiction to call into question the justice of the Creator for not choosing every one to salvation... The fact that He did this for some, to the exclusion of others, is in no way unfair to the latter group, unless of course one maintains that God was under obligation to provide salvation for sinners – a position which the Bible utterly rejects.”¹⁴

- e. “God’s choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God’s choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God’s choice of the sinner, not the sinner’s choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.”¹⁵

2. Some passages cited in defense of this doctrine:

- a. **Acts 13:48 (ESV)** ⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.
- b. **Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)** ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

¹⁴ Steele, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 16-17.

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- c. **Romans 9:11–13 (ESV)** ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— ¹² she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
- 1) God’s choosing of Jacob over Esau was not a matter of salvation or punishment.
 - 2) His choice merely determined who would be in the line of the Messiah (Romans 9:10-16).
- d. **Romans 9:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
- e. **Romans 11:4–6 (ESV)** ⁴ But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.
- f. **Ephesians 1:4–5 (ESV)** ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,
- g. **1 Peter 2:8–9 (ESV)** ⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- h. **Revelation 13:8 (ESV)** ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.
- i. **Revelation 17:8 (ESV)** ⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.
3. Unconditional election is related by Calvinists to God’s sovereignty.
- a. “The doctrine of election is but a part of the much broader Biblical doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty. The Scriptures not only teach that God predestined certain individuals unto eternal life, but that all events, both small and great, come about as the result of God's eternal decree. The Lord God rules over heaven and earth with absolute control; nothing comes to pass apart from His eternal purpose.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Steele, p. 37.

- b. *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, p. 97.
- “Question: What are the decrees of God? Answer: God's decrees are the wise, free and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath for his own glory, unchangeable foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.”
- c. Note: Since the topic of divine sovereignty will be discussed in another lecture, the point will not be developed further here.
4. The doctrine of unconditional election can be addressed on two fronts:
- a. God’s supposed attitude toward the non-elect
 - 1) If there are elect, there must be non-elect.
 - 2) If God is completely responsible for some being elect, He must also be responsible for the other group and their fate (the doctrine of reprobation).
 - 3) “The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extended or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”¹⁷
 - 4) However, the Scriptures teach that God desires the salvation of all men.
 - a) **Ezekiel 18:21–23 (ESV)** ²¹ “But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²² None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. ²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?
 - b) **Ezekiel 33:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?
 - c) **John 3:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
 - d) **1 Timothy 2:3–4 (ESV)** ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - e) **Acts 17:29–30 (ESV)** ²⁹ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,
 - f) **2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)** ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

¹⁷ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 3, No. 7.

- 1] Note that the Calvinist would argue that this passage, written to Christians, concerns the elect.¹⁸
- g) God is no respecter of persons.
 - 1] It is true that God does not treat every person the same, but with respect to salvation, God is not partial.
 - 2] **Acts 10:34–35 (ESV)** ³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
- h) The universal invitation of the gospel also supports the idea that God wishes all men to be saved.
 - 1] **Mark 16:15–16 (ESV)** ¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
 - 2] **Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV)** ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
- b. The Scriptures indicate that, although election is by grace, it is not unconditional.
 - 1) **Acts 2:40 (ESV)** ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”
 - 2) **2 Peter 1:10–11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

C. Limited atonement

1. Statement of the tenet:
 - a. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 8, No. 5:
 The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, *for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.* (Italics added for emphasis – asd)
 - b. “Christ died to save particular persons who were given Him by the Father in eternity past. His death was, therefore, a one hundred percent success, in that all for who He died will be saved, and all for whom He did not die will receive ‘justice’ from God when they are cast into hell.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Spencer, pp. 38-39.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 12.

- c. “Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ’s redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.”²⁰
 - d. “Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners as to whether or not Christ’s work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed Himself will be saved infallibly. Redemption, therefore, was designed to bring to pass God’s purpose of election...Thus Christ’s saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others, but it was not limited in value for it was of infinite worth and would have secured salvation for everyone if this had been God’s intention.”²¹
 - e. “Christ did not die for all men. Atonement was limited! Redemption was particular! Only the elect Bride of Christ was the object of His love.”²²
 - f. “You see, if you believe that the Bible teaches that God is sovereign, His plan immutable, and His election unconditional, you *must* conclude that the atonement is limited.”²³
2. Some passages cited in defense of the doctrine:
- a. **Matthew 20:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
 - b. **Matthew 26:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
 - c. **John 10:14–15 (ESV)** ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
 - d. **Romans 5:8 (ESV)** ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - 1) The Calvinist argues that “us” = the elect, i.e., those to whom Paul was writing.
 - e. **Romans 8:31–33 (ESV)** ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.
 - f. **1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)** ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
 - g. **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

²⁰ Steele, p. 17.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 39.

²² Spencer, p. 40.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 37.

- h. **Galatians 1:3–5 (ESV)** ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
 - i. **Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)** ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
 - 1) Christ gave Himself for the elect; it is implied that He did not sacrifice Himself for the non-elect.
 - 2) Note that this is basically an argument from silence.
 - j. **Hebrews 9:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.
3. It is, of course, true that Jesus died on behalf of those who would become Christians.
- a. However, several of the above texts given in support of particular redemption have essentially the same premise behind them: they are all assumed to be exclusive.
 - 1) Christ loved only the church.
 - 2) Christ was sacrificed only for the elect.
 - 3) The Good Shepherd laid down His life only for His sheep.
 - 4) “The reprobate, the non-elect, the unbeliever is not included in the number of those for whom Christ laid down His life. He died only for His sheep.”²⁴
 - b. There are several passages which suggest that Christ’s death includes more than just the elect in its scope:
 - 1) **John 3:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
 - 2) **1 Timothy 2:3–6 (ESV)** ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.
 - 3) **Titus 2:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
 - 4) **Hebrews 2:9 (ESV)** ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
 - a) The Calvinist explains that “everyone” (“every man”- KJV) means both Jew and Gentile.²⁵

²⁴ Spencer, p. 42.

²⁵ Steele, p. 46.

- 5) **1 John 2:1–2 (ESV)** ¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.
- a) “Our sins” = the elect? This is the argument that is used in several of the passages cited.
 - b) Who, then, is “the whole world”? Note the argument made regarding “world” in John 3:16, i.e., “world” means “men out of every tribe and nation, but not all mankind as a whole” – or, in other words, the elect!²⁶
4. The Calvinist fails to distinguish between the provision and the application of the atonement.
- a. The Calvinist reasons, “If the death of Jesus was to save all men and some are not saved, then Christ's death failed to accomplish what it was supposed to accomplish.”
 - b. The death of Jesus Christ was not intended to save men unconditionally. Thus it can be applied to a smaller group of men than that for which it was provided (offered) without failing in its purpose.
 - c. Illustration:
 - 1) The Law of Moses could provide justification for men (Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10-12).
 - 2) Men were not justified by the Law of Moses (Romans 3:20).
 - 3) Therefore the Law of Moses was a failure and, by implication, God who gave the Law also failed.
 - 4) Problem: God never intended for men to be justified by law. The reason that men were not justified by law was that men followed the law imperfectly - not that the Law failed in its purpose.
5. The Calvinist reasons that the death of Christ would have been wasted on those who were consigned to destruction by God’s unconditional election. Is it not also a “waste” to preach the gospel (“good news” about salvation through the death of Christ) to every creature when Christ supposedly did not die for most of those to whom the gospel would be preached?

D. Irresistible grace (“the efficacious call of the Spirit”)

1. Statement of the tenet:

a. *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, Chapter 10, Nos. 1-2:

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,

²⁶ Spencer, pp. 39-40.

and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

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, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until 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.

- b. "Thus the once dead sinner is drawn to Christ by the inward supernatural call of the Spirit who through regeneration makes him alive and creates within him faith and repentance. Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and of God's grace in saving sinners as being 'efficacious,' 'invincible,' or 'irresistible.' For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ."²⁷
- c. "In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended."²⁸
- d. "Irresistible Grace is not grounded in the omnipotence of God, although it could be if the Lord so willed, but, rather, in the Gift of Life known as Regeneration. Since all dead human spirits are drawn irresistibly to Satan, the god of the dead, and all living human spirits are drawn irresistibly to Jehovah, the God of the living, our Lord simply gives His chosen ones the Spirit of Life! The moment He does so their spiritual polarity is changed. Where they were once 'dead in trespasses and sins' and oriented to the devil, now they are made 'alive in Christ Jesus' and oriented to God."²⁹
- e. "Since the living human spirit which is 'born of God' finds the Living God wholly irresistible, just as a dead human spirit finds the god of the dead (Satan) wholly irresistible, the Lord 'quickens' ('makes alive') all whom He chose in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. It is the gift of the New Nature which makes us find Jesus Christ absolutely 'irresistible.'"³⁰

²⁷ Steele, p. 49.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 18.

²⁹ Spencer, p. 13.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 45.

2. The Calvinist believes that spiritual life comes first, then faith.
3. The Calvinist argues that if man can reject the invitation of a God who wishes all men to be saved, then that God is not omnipotent. His will can be frustrated.
 - a. It should be noted that Calvinists believe that the “outward call” of God, i.e., His commandments written on tablets of stone, can be resisted.
 - b. It is the “inward call” of the Spirit that is irresistible.
4. Some passages cited in defense of the doctrine:
 - a. **Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV)** ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
 - b. **John 3:6–8 (ESV)** ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”
 - c. **John 6:44 (ESV)** ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.
 - d. **Acts 16:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
 - e. **Acts 18:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed,
 - f. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
 - g. **Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)** ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 - h. **Philippians 1:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,
 - i. **2 Timothy 2:25–26 (ESV)** ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
 - j. **1 Peter 1:2 (ESV)** ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.
5. Some observations:
 - a. Faith is produced by the Word of God.

- 1) **Romans 10:13-14, 17 (ESV)** ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?... ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
 - 2) **John 17:20–21 (ESV)** ²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
 - 3) **Luke 8:5, 11-12 (ESV)** ⁵ “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it... ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.
 - 4) **Acts 11:13–14 (ESV)** ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’
 - 5) **1 Corinthians 1:21 (ESV)** ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.
- b. This doctrine denies the power of God's Word.
- 1) **Romans 1:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - 2) Before the “efficacious call of the Spirit,” the Word cannot turn a sinner from sin.
 - 3) After the “efficacious call of the Spirit,” the sinner cannot help but be drawn to God. Some Calvinists argue that the Word is the tool used by the Spirit.
- c. The biblical order is faith first and then spiritual life.
- 1) In the language used by some to describe this doctrine, those who come under the influence of the Spirit are “quickened,” “renewed,” “regenerated” and given a “spirit of life”...before they can believe, repent and be baptized. The Calvinist has the sinner “made alive,” in some sense, before he is “made alive” by the forgiveness of his sins!
 - 2) Regeneration is to be born again -- which event takes place at the point of baptism (Romans 6:4; John 3:5).
 - 3) In none of the cases of conversion in Acts do the Scriptures place baptism before belief.
- d. The nation of Israel in the Old Testament was God’s elect nation.
- 1) God’s will was that Israel keep the covenant.

- 2) When Israel became unfaithful, was God's purpose thwarted? Did Israel prove that God was not omnipotent?
- e. Remember the connection of this doctrine to total inherited depravity.
 - 1) *Irresistible grace* is based on the premise that man does not have free will and on a misunderstanding of divine sovereignty.
 - 2) God's will is that men have a choice about whether or not to accept His invitation.

E. Perseverance of the saints (Note that a separate lecture will address this doctrine in particular)

1. Statement of the tenet:
 - a. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 19, No. 1:
 "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."
 - b. "The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who profess the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is saints -- those who are set apart by the Spirit -- who persevere to the end. It is believers -- those who are given true, living faith in Christ -- who are secure and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace for they were never in grace. True believers do fall into temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ."³¹
 - c. Baptist preacher Sam Morris wrote, "We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul! The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul...All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; AND ALL THE SINS HE MAY COMMIT FROM IDOLATRY TO MURDER WILL NOT MAKE HIS SOUL IN ANY MORE DANGER...THE WAY A MAN LIVES HAS NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO WITH THE SALVATION OF HIS SOUL!" ("A Discussion Which Involves a Subject Pertinent to ALL Men," [a tract], pp. 1-2)
2. Since this doctrine is the subject of another lecture, the citation of passages used in its defense will be left to that study.
3. The mechanism for this unconditional security is the imputed righteousness of Christ.
 - a. It is affirmed that God imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ to the believer and thus cannot see the sins of the saint.
 - b. The Bible does indeed teach "imputation" (e.g., Romans 4:4-8). Note, however, that it is the faith of the individual that is "imputed" (reckoned) to him for

³¹ Steele, p. 56.

righteousness (see also 4:6). The Scriptures do not teach the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness to the believer.

- c. Since this topic will be developed in much greater detail in another lecture, it will not be pursued further here.
4. Perseverance of the saints is the natural corollary of the first four tenets of Calvinism.³²
 - a. **Total inherited depravity** suggests that, although man is born in sin, he does not have the power to choose to be saved nor pursue salvation.
 - b. **Unconditional election** is the result of man's being unable to accept God's invitation to salvation. Unconditionally, God chose who would be saved and, by implication, who would be lost.
 - c. **Limited atonement** is the logical extension of unconditional election. The death of Jesus Christ is an effectual sacrifice, so Jesus died only for those that God chose for salvation, i.e., only for the elect. In this way, Christ's death was entirely successful!
 - d. **Irresistible grace** guarantees that those chosen for salvation are given the gift of life. Some would say that their natures are changed by the Holy Spirit so as to allow them to respond to the gospel invitation.
 - e. **Perseverance of the saints** results from two ideas:
 - 1) God has chosen the "saints" for salvation.
 - 2) The sovereign purpose of God will not be thwarted.
5. True Believers versus Professed Believers
 - a. Calvinists argue that if a person appears to fall away, that person was never really one of the elect! As often presented in argument form, this is circular reasoning!
 - 1) "The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who *profess* the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is *saints*--those who are set apart by the Spirit--who *persevere* to the end. It is *believers*--those who are given true, living faith in Christ--who are *secure* and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace for they were never in grace. True believers do fall into temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ."³³
 - 2) "This doctrine does not stand alone but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology. The doctrines of Election and Efficacious Grace logically imply the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings. If God has chosen men absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life, and if His Spirit effectively applies to them the benefits of redemption, the inescapable conclusion is that these persons shall be saved."³⁴
6. In order to show the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be false, we must furnish scripture(s) which meet two criteria:

³² Spencer, p. 54.

³³ Steele, p. 56.

³⁴ Loraine Boettner, *Predestination*, p. 182. Cited by Steele, p. 57.

- a. The scripture must be directed to or concern one of the elect (saved/“in grace”).
 - b. The scripture must show that such an individual can or has fallen away.
 - c. We will apply the “litmus test” of these two criteria to a particular passage.
7. The Scriptures contain many warnings against apostasy.

a. **2 Peter 2:1-3, 15, 20-22 (ESV)**

¹ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

- 1) Criteria #1: Is this passage talking about true believers or “superficial professors”?
 - a) “false teachers among you” (v. 1; cf. 1:1-2)
 - b) “who bought them” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:17-20)
 - c) “gone astray” (v. 15; how can one “go astray” if one has not been on the right path? cf. v. 21)
 - d) “escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 20)
- 2) Criteria #2: Can these individuals really fall away?
 - a) “bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (v. 1)
 - b) “their destruction is not asleep” (v. 3)
 - c) “will also be destroyed in their destruction” (v. 12)
 - d) “after they have escaped the defilements of the world..., they are again entangled in them and overcome” (v. 20)

b. Other warnings:

- 1) 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; the example of the Israelites
- 2) Acts 8:9-23; the case of Simon the sorcerer
- 3) Hebrews 10:26-31
- 4) Galatians 5:4; “you have fallen away from grace”

- 5) Hebrews 6:4-6; “and then have fallen away”
- c. The Calvinist responds that such warnings are the very means by which the saints are preserved from falling.
 - 1) To be consistent, the Calvinist must admit that the saints would persevere without such warnings. If such warnings are necessary (the means of persevering), then man’s salvation is indeed dependent on man’s will – an idea which Calvinists deny.
 - 2) If such warnings are unnecessary, then we have many scriptures which are nonsensical! They are absolutely useless – warnings concerning a danger which could not possibly happen!
 - 3) According to this Calvinistic doctrine, none of the elect can fall away (i.e., their number cannot be increased or diminished).
 - a) Israel was God’s chosen people of the Old Covenant (Isaiah 41:8-9).
 - b) Yet, some of these “elect” perished in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:1-13).
 - c) Note the many other warnings to God’s elect (Christians); what is the purpose of such warnings?
 - d) Even the apostle Paul wrote of his concern for his spiritual security (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Conclusion:

- I. Note this summary of Calvinistic theology: “Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ’s death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.” (reformed.org)
- II. Although many Calvinists do not treat the Five Points as a unified systematic theology, the major tenets of Calvinism logically grow out of an incorrect understanding of God’s sovereignty and the consequences of Adam’s sin.

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