
CALVINISM



Analyzed and Answered

Gene Taylor

Preface

The influence of John Calvin and the doctrines he formulated are found in nearly all of the Protestant denominations. They have also crept into the thoughts and teachings of those who claim to follow the New Testament pattern for work and worship.

Since Calvinism's influence is so widespread, it behooves every responsible person to see whether or not its teachings are in harmony with Scripture. All should be as those noble Bereans of Acts 17:11 who went to the Scriptures to see if the teachings of the apostle were in agreement with the message of Scripture before they accepted them.

This study considers the doctrines of Calvinism then compares and contrasts them to Scripture to see if they stand or fall in light of God's word.

These lessons were first presented as a series of sermons during February and March 1995 at the worship assemblies of the Centerville Road church of Christ, 4015 Centerville Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32308. They are being presented in this format so that those who are interested in coming to an understanding of the truth in relation to Calvinism might study them at length.

I would like to thank my good friend and fellow preacher Doug Focht, Jr., not only for proof-reading the drafts of this booklet and correcting my punctuation and grammar but also for his suggestions which clarified and strengthened a number of points in several lessons.

May God bless you in your pursuit of the truth, not only on this subject but also on all themes which pertain to the salvation of your soul.

Gene Taylor
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The Curiosities of Calvinism

“When you get religion; you don't want it
If you want it; you haven't got it;
When you want it, you can't get it;
If you get it, you can't lose it
For if you lose it, you never had it.”

(Zachary - Smith Debate, title page)

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Lesson One: Introduction

Introduction

1. Calvinism is basic to nearly all the religious questions that the Christian will answer when talking to those who are in denominations because it permeates almost all denominations.
2. Whenever someone contends that faith is a gift from God, affirms that he has been saved by faith only, embraces false teachings about the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners or believes it is impossible for a child of God to sin and be eternally lost, he has fallen victim to the Calvinist system of doctrine.
3. Calvinism is also found in most cults, even those which claim to avoid denominational doctrines. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, embrace the doctrine of inherited sin, the foundation doctrine of Calvinism.
4. Calvinism has also become a danger and threat to the church of the Lord.
 - a. Decades ago, preachers used to preach upon it frequently but now it is rare to hear an entire sermon on it.
 - b. Many members of the church think it is wrong because it "sounds" wrong or because Mom, Dad or the preacher said it was wrong. They cannot begin to tell anyone **why** it is wrong.
5. This study will develop the historical background of Calvinism and then examine its fundamental tenets by comparing them to the standard of plain, Biblical teaching.

I. PreCalvin Calvinism

- A. Many of the fundamental concepts of Calvinism existed before John Calvin
 1. The fundamental tenet of *total hereditary depravity* was not original to Calvin. The Roman Catholic philosopher Augustine taught it in the fifth century A.D.
 2. The Reformation had already begun and the leading reformers taught doctrines similar to those of Calvin.
- B. Martin Luther, the first great reformer.
 1. Born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483, he entered a monastery at age 22 in 1505. Two years later he was ordained a priest.
 2. During the winter of 1512-13 he began to see some errors in the Catholic Church.
 - a. In 1517 he nailed his famous 95 theses to the door of the church building in Wittenburg, Germany in which he proclaimed the errors of the Catholic Church.
 - b. His three greatest objections to Catholicism were the selling of indulgences, the authority of the Pope and the doctrine of transubstantiation.
 3. After much criticism and church trials, he was excommunicated from the church but he continued to preach against the errors which he had found.
 4. The greatest error in his teachings was justification by "faith only."
 - a. This doctrine teaches that men are saved at the point of faith in Christ without further acts of obedience.
 - b. This doctrine stands as one of the basic tenets of Calvinism.

II. John Calvin

- A. John Calvin was born in Noyon, France July 10, 1509.
- B. He began the study of the classics in Paris in 1523 at the age of fourteen.

- C. Because of his skill at disputation, his father sent him to study law at the University of Orleans in 1528 and later in Bourges.
1. After his father's death in 1531, he returned to Paris to study the classics and Hebrew.
 2. It was at that time he became interested in the principles of the Reformation.
- D. After experiencing what he later termed a "sudden conversion," variously dated from 1529 to 1534, he began preaching Reformation doctrines in Paris.
1. To avoid government persecution, he traveled from place to place.
 2. In 1536 he settled in Switzerland.
- E. In Basel, Switzerland in 1536 he completed the first version of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
1. He intended it to be only a brief manual stating the doctrines of the Protestants.
 2. In reality it contained a complete outline of his system of theology.
 3. This work was based on the principle that the Scriptures are the sole source of truth in religion.
 4. It was later revised and enlarged.
- F. In 1536, at the request of religious reformer Guillaume Farel (1489-1565), he settled in Geneva, Switzerland.
1. He acquired a large following and was elected preacher by the city magistrates.
 2. He compiled a systematic Protestant confession of faith of 21 articles which the citizens were required to profess under oath.
 3. He wrote the first *Geneva Catechism* (1536) for use in religious instruction.
 4. The reforms he advocated were so extreme that he alienated many of his adherents and provoked strong political opposition.
- G. Exiled from Geneva in 1538, he went to Strasbourg, France and became a pastor and professor of theology.
1. In Geneva, irreligion and disorder became prevalent during his absence.
 2. He was persuaded to return to Geneva in 1541.
- H. After returning to Geneva, he revised the laws of the city.
1. He organized a theocratic form of government for the control of both the social and religious life of its citizens.
 2. His second *Geneva Catechism* (1542) became the standard of doctrines for most of the Reformed churches in Europe.
- I. His rigid dogmatism and severe discipline led to more controversies.
1. Not only were they with Roman Catholicism but also with other religious reformers.
 2. His differences with Martin Luther about the nature of the Lord's Supper resulted in the splitting of the evangelical churches into the Lutheran and Reformed groups.
 3. One of the most acrimonious disputes of this period was with Spanish theologian Michael Servetus on the nature of the Godhead. Through Calvin's influence, Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553.
 4. His strictness gave rise to discontent even among his followers in Geneva.
- J. His political foes, known as the "Libertines," were expelled from Geneva in 1555.
1. For the next six years he deepened and extended his influence and that of Protestantism throughout Europe.
 2. He systemized the doctrines of Protestantism and organized its ecclesiastical discipline.
 3. He constructed and made a new church organization that consolidated the scattered forces of the Reformation

III. The Basis of Calvinism

- A. The central idea of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God
 1. “The one rock upon which Calvinism builds is that of the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of the eternal and self-existent Jehovah” (Ben A. Warburton, *Calvinism*, p. 169).
 2. Calvin did not discover the sovereignty of God. He isolated it as idea.
 - a. His isolation of it is the problem.
 - b. He exalted the sovereignty of God to the exclusion of other truths of Scripture.
- B. All of the five points of Calvinism flow from this basic premise.
 - “These other doctrines are an expression of this one central theme. Thus if God is absolutely sovereign—the Alpha and Omega—then it follows that salvation depends entirely on him and not on man” (Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 74).
- C. This basis is set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Written by the Westminster Association from July, 1643 to February, 1649, it is the doctrinal foundation of English and American Presbyterianism.
 1. “God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter III).
 2. “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished” (Ibid.).

IV. The Five Basic Tenets of Calvinism

- A. The five basic doctrines of Calvinism are represented by the acronym **T-U-L-I-P**.
- B. These doctrines are:
 1. **T = Total Hereditary Depravity.** At birth all men are depraved wholly and totally. They are in this sinful condition because they have inherited it from their parents.
 2. **U = Unconditional Election.** God, before the foundation of the world, arbitrarily chose to save some people and destroy others and nothing can be done to change God’s sovereign decree.
 3. **L = Limited Atonement.** Christ died only for the ones God had unconditionally chosen to save.
 4. **I = Irresistible Grace.** An unregenerate person cannot voluntarily believe in God but once God determines to save him, that same individual cannot overcome or resist the power of God no matter what he may desire.
 5. **P = Perseverance of the Saints.** Since man can do nothing but evil on his own, God’s unconditional election is required to save him. Consequently, one needs to do nothing to remain saved. If one’s salvation depended on himself in any way, the miraculous work of God in saving him would be overthrown.

Conclusion

1. Calvinism presents a false chain of reasoning. Instead of supporting the Truth of Scripture, it stands opposed to it.
2. A further analysis of each tenet will show how far this system of doctrine is from the inspired word of God.

Lesson Two: Total Hereditary Depravity

Introduction

1. As with the other four doctrines of Calvinism, the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity, also known as the doctrine of “original sin,” is taught by a large number of denominations.
2. The phrase, “Total Hereditary Depravity,” implies three things which Calvinists believe about the nature of all humans at birth.
 - a. They are **depraved**. They are caught up in and guilty of sin.
 - b. They are **wholly** or **totally** depraved. Nothing about them is good.
 - c. The sinful condition, depravity, in which they are born is **hereditary**—it comes to them from their parents.
3. This lesson will consider this doctrine by looking at:
 - a. How it is expressed by denominations and individuals who teach it and the basic meaning of the terms used to express it.
 - b. The proof texts used by its proponents to defend it.
 - c. Its consequences if it were true.
 - d. Some Scriptural objections to it.

I. Total Hereditary Depravity Expressed

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith.

“They (Adam and Eve, GT) 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.” (Chapter VI)

B. The Philadelphia Confession of Faith, the first creed adopted by the Baptist churches in the United States.

“Our first parents by the 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 faculties, and parts of soul, and body.” (p. 24)

“They being the root, and by God’s appointment, standing in the room, and stead of all mankind, the guilt of their 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 sets them free.” (p. 24)

“From this original corruption whereby all are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.” (p. 24)

C. **The Augsburg Confession of Faith.** Presented June 25, 1530, it contains the 28 articles which constitute the basic confession of the Lutheran churches.

“... That since the fall of Adam, all men ... are born with sin, that is without fear of God ... and this disease or vice of origin is truly sin even now in condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again ... ”

D. **John Wesley (1703-1791).** He was “a leader of the Evangelical Revival and founder of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and America.” (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 21, p. 352)

“We are condemned before we have done good or evil, under the curse before we know what it is.” (*Sermons on Original Sin*, p. 340)

II. Proof Texts Used to Support Total Hereditary Depravity

A. **Genesis 6:5.**

1. The argument: Every intent of man’s heart was evil continually, therefore, all men were born totally depraved.
2. In the context, Noah was a “just man, perfect in his generations.” (v. 9)
3. The text states that “all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (v.12), not that they were born corrupt.
4. If this verse depicts Total Hereditary Depravity, then why was it not the same in the generations before that of Noah?
 - a. Why did not God destroy mankind sooner?
 - b. How is it, if all men were depraved, that in Genesis 4:26, “men began to call on the name of the Lord?”

B. **Psalm 51:1-5.**

1. The argument: Being conceived in sin and born in iniquity David was a sinner at birth.
2. Nothing in the text or context says David was born a sinner.
 - a. David asks God to forgive **his** sin not his mother’s sin.
 - b. The mother could have conceived in sin but it does not logically follow, neither does it state that the child inherits that sin.
3. David’s parents were simply like all other men and women—sinners themselves who lived in a world of sin.

C. **Psalm 53:1-3.**

1. The argument: If no one does good, we must be born sinners.
2. The context states otherwise.
 - a. Why corrupt? They “have done abominable iniquity.” (v. 1)
 - b. Is it speaking of babies? A baby cannot “seek God.” (v. 2)
 - c. These have “turned aside” to sin (v. 3). They were not born in it.
 - d. These have “become corrupt” (v. 3). They were not born that way.

D. **Psalm 58:3.**

1. The argument: “The wicked are estranged (from God) from the womb.”
2. Note the use of the phrase “go astray.” They are not born wicked.

3. Babies are not under consideration in this passage.
 - a. “Speaking lies” indicates age.
 - b. They stop their ears (vv. 4-5). They are old enough to understand.
 - c. Babies are not born with teeth. (v. 6)

E. Romans 3:19.

1. The argument: All the world is guilty of sin before God because they are born in sin.
2. Adam’s sin or inherited depravity are not even mentioned.
3. The passage is simply stating that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty of sinning against God.
4. Note verse 12: “They have all turned aside.” One cannot turn aside from that which he was not on in the first place.

F. Romans 5:12-21.

1. The argument: The guilt of the sin of Adam, and thus depravity, has been passed unto all people.
2. While this is a difficult passage, there are two important things to remember which help us understand this text in its context.
 - a. “All sinned.” (v. 12; cf. Rom. 3:23) People are subject to death because of their own sin.
 - b. “Life through the One, Jesus Christ.” (v. 17) Verse 17 teaches that both life and death are conditional. If we say that Adam’s sin brings automatic spiritual death, we must also say that Christ’s life brings automatic spiritual life.
3. It was the sentence of “death,” not sin, which spread to all men.

G. Romans 8:6,7.

1. The argument: The “carnal mind” (v. 7), refers to the unconverted.
2. Verses four and five show that the ones with carnal minds “walk according to the flesh.” It does not state that they are born in sin.

H. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

1. The argument: The natural (sinful) man cannot understand and does not accept the things of God because he is inherently sinful.
2. The “natural man” does not refer to a sinful, depraved person who has inherited his parents’ sins.
 - a. It has reference to one who is concerned only about material, temporal things and who neglects spiritual responsibilities.
 - b. Such a one seeks earthly wisdom, not spiritual. (1 Cor. 1:18-25) He is contrasted in verse 14 with the spiritually-oriented person of verse 15.

J. 1 Corinthians 15:22.

1. The argument: Adam brought physical death upon all people and every person who dies bears the guilt and penalty of Adam’s sin.
2. The answer: Does it not stand to reason, if all lost spiritual life in Adam, would not this passage also require that **all** people will have spiritual life in Jesus—that all will be saved? (cf. Matt. 7:13-14)
3. The **penalty** is inherent, not the **guilt**.

K. 2 Corinthians 7:1.

1. The argument: Both flesh and spirit are defiled.
2. The answer: The text is addressing **Christians** telling them to cleanse themselves of all defilements of both flesh and spirit (Giving, by the way, the Calvinist doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints great difficulty).

III. Consequences of the Doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity

- A. No unregenerate person can do good.
 - 1. Every act of a non-Christian is sinful.
 - 2. Even if a non-Christian helps an accident victim or the needy, he still sins, Calvinists say, because he does it with the wrong motive. It is impossible for him to have any right motives because he is totally depraved.
- B. An individual's salvation lies entirely at the discretion of God. Nothing a person does affects his salvation.
- C. God must take direct miraculous action to save a person's soul. Thus, the false concept of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner necessarily arises from the principle of Total Hereditary Depravity.

IV. Scriptural Objections to Total Hereditary Depravity

- A. **Exodus 32:31-33.**
 - 1. Moses asked God to let him receive the punishment for the people's sins so that they could be spared.
 - 2. In His answer, God lets all know that it is the ones who sin, not the ones born in sin, whose names are removed from the book of life.
- B. **Deuteronomy 1:34-39.** The Israelites could not enter the promised land because of sin but their children could.
- C. **Ecclesiastes 7:29.** God made man upright. He is not depraved when born. Rather, he is without sin.
- D. **Isaiah 59:1-8.**
 - 1. **Your** sins and iniquities, not someone else's, separate you from God.
 - 2. Verses three through eight list some specific sins—murder, lying, acting violently, running toward evil, etc. Could a newborn baby have done these things?
- E. **Ezekiel 18:5-20.**
 - 1. A righteous son is not guilty of his wicked father's sins and a righteous father is not guilty of the sins of his wicked son.
 - 2. The conclusion in verse 20 is too obvious to miss: "The soul who sins shall die."
- F. **Matthew 18:1-5.**
 - 1. If we are to be as little children and if Total Hereditary Depravity is true, we need to be more like sinners.
 - 2. Total Hereditary Depravity is inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus about the nature of children. If one believes the Calvinist and his denominational creeds, when Jesus demands people to become as little children, they must be:
 - a. "Wholly defiled in all the faculties of soul and body."
 - b. "By nature children of wrath."
- G. **Romans 7:9-11.**
 - 1. Rather than being born spiritually dead, the apostle Paul was born spiritually alive.
 - 2. We become spiritually dead because of our own sins not sins we inherit from our ancestors.
 - a. Death came to all because all sinned. (Rom. 5:12)
 - b. You become "dead through your trespasses." (Col. 2:13)

H. 1 Corinthians 14:20.

1. "In malice be babes."
2. If babes are totally depraved, why would the apostle Paul encourage anyone to be like them?

J. 1 John 3:4.

1. Those who believe in inherited sin do not even understand the very nature of sin.
2. One is a sinner because he commits sin by violating the standard of conduct God has given to guide him.

Conclusion

1. The basis of Calvinism originated, not in the mind of God, but in the mind of a mistaken theologian.
2. A person becomes a sinner when he violates God's law not when he is born.
3. We do not inherit the sin of our parents, Adam or anyone else.

Lesson Three: Unconditional Election

Introduction

1. The second doctrine of Calvinism, Unconditional Election, is based on the first, Total Hereditary Depravity.
 - a. Since, they say, mankind is totally depraved and cannot respond in faithful obedience to the invitation of Jesus—people cannot choose for themselves to obey or disobey God—then God had to choose for mankind.
 - b. Unconditional Election states that God chose some to obey and some to disobey.
2. Unconditional Election is the belief that God, with no regard to the will of man, made an eternal choice of certain persons unto eternal life and some to eternal damnation and that number is so fixed that it cannot be changed.
3. Rooted in Calvin’s view of the sovereignty of God, Unconditional Election is also referred to as the doctrine of predestination.
4. This lesson will examine the doctrine of Unconditional Election by:
 - a. Seeing how it is expressed by those denominations and individuals who promote it.
 - b. Defining predestination.
 - c. Analyzing the proof texts used to support it.
 - d. Citing some Scriptural objections to it.

I. Unconditional Election Expressed

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith.

“God has predestined and foreordained some men and angels to everlasting life out of His free grace and love without any foresight of faith or works in man or perseverance in either of them, and others are foreordained to everlasting death and the number of either is so certain and definite that it cannot be increased or diminished.” (Chap. III, art. 3,4 &5; Chap. X, art. 2)

B. The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

“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 predestined 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 it cannot be either increased or diminished.” (Chap. III)

C. The 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.”

D. Calvin's Institutes.

"All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death."

II. Predestination Defined

- A. "The doctrine that the salvation or damnation of individuals has been foreordained by God; the determination beforehand of future events." (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1977 edition, p.289)
- B. **Proorizo.**
 1. This Greek word is translated three different ways in the King James Version of the Bible: "predestinated," "ordained," "determined before."
 2. This word is translated "foreordained" in every occurrence in the American Standard Version of the Bible.
 3. "To limit or mark out beforehand; to design definitely beforehand, ordain beforehand, predestine." (*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p, 345)
 4. "... denotes to mark out beforehand, to determine before, foreordain." (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 307)
 5. "To define or decide beforehand." (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 517)
- C. A summary from Scripture.
 1. Predestination refers to Jehovah's creation of man and His determination beforehand of the conditions through which man might live with Him eternally.
 2. It concerns the Father's predetermination that all people who meet His conditions would live eternally in heaven and all who refuse submission to those conditions would suffer eternal damnation.

III. Proof Texts Used to Support Unconditional Election

- A. **Acts 4:28.**
 1. The argument: God purposed all things before the foundation of the world.
 2. One must ask, "What was 'determined before?'" The answer is the death of Jesus.
 3. Jesus' death had been prophesied as part of God's plan to save mankind. (Luke 22:21, 22; Acts 2:22, 23)
 4. The Jews did not realize that they were fulfilling God's plan.
 - a. God did not force them to kill His Son.
 - b. They were accountable for their actions.
- B. **Acts 13:48.**
 1. The argument: God, before the foundation of the world, appointed only certain individuals to life.
 2. This verse does not state that those who were ordained to eternal life were given it apart from their own will.
 3. Belief is made a condition to eternal life. Thus, as many as had been appointed put on Christ, or met the conditions.
 4. Reversing the sentence causes the true thought to be clearer: Those who believed became part of those who had been appointed to eternal life.

C. **Romans 8:28-30.**

1. The argument: God, before the foundation of the world, predestinated certain individuals to salvation.
2. Under consideration in this passage are:
 - a. “Those who love God” (v. 28), not just a few who God loves.
 - b. “Those who are called according to His purpose.” (v. 28)
 - 1) One is not called by a still small voice or by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit but by the gospel. (2 Thes. 2:14)
 - 2) Those who hear, believe, and respond in obedience are referred to as being “called.” (Gal. 1:6; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 2:9)
3. This passage is a statement of God’s entire purpose and its succession of events.
 - a. God determined to send mankind a Savior to die for all who would come to Him.
 - b. Then He foreordained it all before the events actually took place.
 - 1) In that sense, God predestinated our salvation.
 - 2) God foreordained that anyone who accepted His call would be conformed to the image of His Son. It is the confirmation that is predestined, not the acceptance.
 - c. Those who accepted the gospel call were then justified and glorified.

D. **1 Corinthians 2:7.**

1. The argument: The predestination of God elected certain individuals to salvation.
2. The context shows clearly that it is God’s plan of redemption that was ordained (predetermined) before the ages.
3. The wisdom and power of God in reference to salvation are revealed in the gospel. (Rom. 1:16)
 - a. In times past it had been a mystery, i.e., not fully revealed. Even the prophets did not understand it. (Note vv. 8-10)
 - b. Now it is revealed as the wisdom of God. (Eph. 3:3,4)

E. **Ephesians 1:4,5,11.**

1. The argument: Certain individuals are predestinated and others are not and that if one was not one of those predestinated, he is eternally damned and there is nothing he can do about it.
2. In reality, it is a particular **group** or **class** of people that God chose before He made the world. It is those who are “in Him,” i.e., those in Christ.
 - a. Verse 4a. The apostle Paul and the others were part of that class which God chose before the foundation of the world. Those “in Him” (this class or group) are the predestinated ones.
 - b. Verse 4b. The kind of life these should live is predestinated.
 - c. Verse 5. The adoption was predestinated.
 - d. Verse 11. One is an heir of eternal life because he is a part of that predestinated group.
3. A school teacher, on the first day of class, told his students that some would pass and some would fail the course they were about to take. He then described the things necessary for one to be of those who would pass. At the end of the school year, just as the teacher had said, some passed and some failed.
 - a. Since the teacher predestinated the outcome before he began, did it mean that he caused each individual to either pass or fail and that there was nothing they could do about it? No.

- b. Likewise, God predestinated before He made the world that He would choose those “in Christ” and revealed those things necessary for one to be in Him. It is therefore up to each individual to do those things necessary to be found in Christ and have salvation.

IV. Scriptural Objections to Unconditional Election

- A. God has given mankind freedom of choice.
 - 1. God gave Adam and Eve the freedom of choice. (Gen. 2:16-17)
 - a. Their choice was plain—obey and live or disobey and die.
 - b. Their choice was made through and by their own will having been influenced by Satan.
 - c. Who is willing to say that since God foreknew the outcome that He forced or ordained Adam and Eve to sin? (James 1:13-14)
 - 2. Mankind today still has freedom of choice. (Josh. 24:15)
 - a. People can choose today whether or not they will serve God. (Rev. 22:17)
 - b. Both the Psalmist (Psa. 119:30) and Mary, the sister of Martha (Luke 10:42), are examples of this principle.
- B. God is impartial—no respecter of persons. (2 Chron. 19:7; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17)
 - 1. If Unconditional Election is true then God has indiscriminately condemned those who will be eternally damned while favoring those who are of His elect.
 - 2. Calvinists who insist that since God is sovereign and can arbitrarily choose who to save do not realize that if God were to do that He would violate His own nature for He is also just. (Psa. 89:14)
 - 3. God has not exempted anyone from the opportunity to obtain eternal life. (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- C. Salvation is not wholly dependent on God.
 - 1. The origin of salvation is utterly dependent on Him. (Eph. 2:4-10)
 - 2. The reception of salvation is dependent on man. (Rev. 22:17; Phil. 2:12)
 - a. The reception of salvation comes through meeting the conditions God has provided through His grace.
 - b. God placed on man the responsibility of obtaining the salvation which He foreordained or predestinated.
 - 1) God foreordained the gospel (1 Cor. 2:7-8; 2 Tim. 1:9-10) but man must obey it in order to receive the benefits of it. (1 Pet. 4:17)
 - 2) God predestinated that Christ should die for man (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8), but man must obey Him to receive His blessings. (Heb. 5:9)
 - 3) God foreordained that redemption would be in Christ (Eph. 1:4-7) but man must do those things to be found in Him. (Gal. 3:26-27)
 - 4) The church was predestinated (Eph. 3:9-11) but one must be baptized into it to be a part of it. (1 Cor. 12:13).
- D. God wants all persons saved. (1 Tim. 2:3,4; 2 Pet. 3:9) He has not arbitrarily doomed any individual without giving him a chance at eternal life.
- E. Unconditional Election nullifies the great commission. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)
 - 1. Nothing could be more foolish than to preach the gospel to all if only people whom God arbitrarily chooses are able to understand it.

2. If nothing can change anyone's status in relation to salvation or condemnation, why preach it? Why warn people to flee from the wrath to come? (Matt. 3:7)
 - a. If they are elect, they will not incur the wrath of God regardless of what they do or do not do.
 - b. If they are not elect, they cannot flee anyway.
- F. Unconditional Election nullifies the universal invitation of Christ. (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17)
Why would Jesus plead with people to do the impossible?

Conclusion

1. The Bible does teach predestination but not the Unconditional Election that Calvinists teach.
 - a. It does not teach that individuals have been foreordained to life or death no matter what they do.
 - b. It states that we are free moral agents with the ability to accept or reject God's commandments thus determining whether we will ultimately be saved or lost.
2. The predestination or foreordination of God determined that He would save sinful man through the sacrifice of His Son.
 - a. Those who would respond to the gospel, His power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and its call (2 Thes. 2:14) would become part of His elect. Those who reject the gospel and its message would be damned eternally.
 - b. God will render judgment on all in the final day based on what they have done. The righteous will have life. The wicked will face the second death. Each person, not the predestination of God, determines what his/her destiny will be. (Rom. 2:3-11)

Lesson Four: Limited Atonement

Introduction

1. The third basic tenet of Calvinism is that Christ died only for the ones God had unconditionally chosen to save.
2. The doctrine of Limited Atonement is a natural outgrowth of the doctrine of Unconditional Election coupled with the idea that everything God does has purpose. (See Isaiah 55:11)
 - a. Calvinists rationalize that God would not waste the sacrifice of Christ on those whom He had determined not to save.
 - b. They believe that since God chose only **some** to be saved, it would be foolish to think that He sent His Son to shed His atoning blood for the sins of all people.
 - c. Their conclusion: Christ only died for the elect.
3. The procedure of this lesson will be similar to those which preceded it. We will look at this doctrine by:
 - a. Seeing how its proponents express it.
 - b. Examining the proof texts used to support it.
 - c. Citing Scriptural objections to it.

I. Limited Atonement Expressed

A. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas.

“Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary sacrifice 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 united them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.” (*The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented*, p. 17)

B. The Westminster Shorter Catechism.

“*Ques. 17.* Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

“*Ans.* The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

“*Ques. 18.* Wherin consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

“*Ans.* The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

“*Ques. 19.* What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

“*Ans.* All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

“*Ques. 20.* Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

“*Ans.* God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to

everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

“ *Ques. 21.* Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect?

“ *Ans.* The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, ... ” (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, via. *The Protestant Faith*, p. 280)

II. Proof Texts Used to Support Limited Atonement

A. **John 10:15.**

1. The argument: Jesus died **only** for His sheep which Calvinists take to mean the elect.
2. The answer.
 - a. In verse 16 Jesus taught that there are “other sheep I have which are not of this fold” who would come into the fold.
 - b. Calvinists deny that one can change from “sheep...not of this fold” into “sheep” of the fold or from “goats” to “sheep.” (See Matthew 25:31-46)
3. Examples of those who had changed from “goats” to “sheep.”
 - a. The Corinthians. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)
 - b. The apostle Paul. (1 Tim. 1:13-14)

B. **Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25.**

1. The argument: Christ died only for those who are saved, the elect.
2. The answer.
 - a. There is no doubt that the church is composed of the saved and that Jesus died to purchase the church.
 - b. The Scriptural truth that Calvinists overlook, though, is that any person can become a part of that church. (Rev. 22:17)
3. The church consists of:
 - a. All who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:8-9). It is not limited to just those who Calvinists say are elected to salvation.
 - b. Those who do the will of the Father. (Matt. 7:21)
 - c. All who are saved (Acts 2:47). Though not all will be saved, those who “gladly receive” the word are added by the Lord to His church. (Acts 2:41,47)

C. **Romans 9:13.**

1. The argument.
 - a. The love of God in giving Jesus as a sacrifice was not a general kindness to all creation.
 - b. “But it is a special and discriminating love, the favor which he bears to His own people, as distinct from others.” (John Gill, *Five Points of Calvinism*)
2. The answer.
 - a. “Special and discriminating love” sounds quite different than the Biblical teaching that “there is no partiality with God.” (Rom. 2:11)
 - b. Romans 9:13 simply shows the righteousness of God—that God was not unrighteous in His selection of Jacob to be an ancestor of the Messiah.
 - c. Admittedly, this passage shows that God preferred Jacob over Esau even before their birth— not in reference to their salvation but in regards to the election of the descendants of Jacob as the people through whom the physical Messiah would come.

- d. “ ... Jacob and Esau were full brothers; and though they were twins, Esau the first-born was the natural heir of the promise. Yet of the two, God selected Jacob, even before they were born, and therefore before they had done anything good or bad, ‘that the purpose of God according to election might stand.’ The purpose inhered in the promise. God was selecting his own instruments to work out his own plans.

“In choosing Jacob, God chose his descendants; and every Jew gloried in that choice. But the selection of Jacob and the rejection of Esau had nothing to do with their salvation. If it had pertained to their salvation, there would have been no point in mentioning the fact that the younger was selected instead of the older; for even the most dogmatic predestinarian would not say that the oldest son is the natural heir of salvation and all the other sons reprobates. The fact is that the selection of Jacob was the selection of a people rather than an individual. Had it been the election to salvation, then the nations descending from Jacob were all elected to salvation, and Esau’s descendants were all lost” (Robertson L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Saints at Rome*, p. 199).

III. Scriptural Objections to Limited Atonement

A. The gospel is for all. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)

1. While Calvinists rationalize that God would not waste Christ’s sacrifice on those whom He had determined not to save, they do not seem to realize the waste that occurs by Calvinist preachers who preach the gospel to all people including those so totally depraved that they cannot understand it.
2. Consider also the waste of preaching the gospel to those God will save whether they hear it or not.

B. Jesus died for all people.

1. Luke 19:10. “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
2. John 12:32. “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”
3. Romans 5:18. “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”
4. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15. “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”
5. 1 Timothy 2:5, 6. “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all...”
6. 1 Timothy 4:10. “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”
7. Hebrews 2:9. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

C. The blood of Christ can wash away anyone’s sins.

1. 1 John 2:1, 2. “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

- Propitiation. “2. hilasmos ^{^2434^}, akin to hileos (‘merciful, propitious’), signifies ‘an expiation, a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.’ It is used in the NT of Christ Himself as ‘the propitiation,’ in <1 John 2:2> and <4:10>, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His death, is the personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided. In the former passage He is described as ‘the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.’ The italicized addition in the KJV, ‘the sins of,’ gives a wrong interpretation. What is indicated is that provision is made for the whole world, so that no one is, by divine predetermination, excluded from the scope of God’s mercy; the efficacy of the ‘propitiation,’ however, is made actual for those who believe. In <4:10>, the fact that God ‘sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins,’ is shown to be the great expression of God’s love toward man, and the reason why Christians should love one another.# In the Sept., <Lev. 25:9; Num. 5:8; 1 Chr. 28:20; Ps. 130:4; Ezek. 44:27; Amos 8:14>.#” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985)
2. John 1:29. “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”

Conclusion

1. It would be extremely difficult for us to devise a doctrine which would be more out of harmony with plain Biblical teaching than the doctrine of Limited Atonement.
2. The doctrine of Limited Atonement stands in direct opposition to:
 - a. The death of Jesus for all. (John 12:32)
 - b. The Father’s desire for all to be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4).

Lesson Five: Irresistible Grace

Introduction

1. The fourth basic doctrine of Calvinism is Irresistible Grace. It is also called Efficacious Grace or Invincible Grace.
2. Irresistible Grace is the idea that the elect, those who Calvinists believe have been unconditionally elected to eternal life, cannot resist the grace of God and heaven's determination to save them.
 - a. As those elected to damnation do nothing about it, those who are elected to salvation can do nothing to resist.
 - b. The grace of God overwhelms them in such a way that even if they wanted to they could not repel it.
3. Calvin believed that only a direct operation of the Holy Spirit could make one who is "dead in sin" hear the gospel and believe.
 - a. This means that the gospel would not be sufficient to convict and convert the heart of the sinner.
 - b. Calvinists say the Lord, through the Spirit, must appear to the sinner in a direct, miraculous way in order to bring about the sinner's conversion. And if the sinner is one whom God had predestinated to life before the foundation of the world, that sinner **must** submit to God's grace as revealed to him by the Spirit.
4. We will examine this fourth tenet of Calvinism, Irresistible Grace, in much the same way we have considered the previous three. We will:
 - a. See how Calvinists themselves express this doctrine.
 - b. Consider the proof texts used to support it.
 - c. Offer some Scriptural objections to it.

I. Irresistible Grace Expressed

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith.

"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace" (Chap. X, Sect. 1).

B. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas.

"The *gospel invitation extends a call* to salvation to every one who hears its message. It invites all men without distinction to drink freely of the water of life and live. It promises salvation to all who repent and believe. But this outward general call, extended to the elect and non-elect alike, will not bring sinners to Christ. Why? Because men are by nature dead in sin and are under its power. They are of themselves unable and

unwilling to forsake their evil ways and to turn to Christ for mercy. Consequently, the unregenerate will not respond to the gospel call to repentance and faith. No amount of external threatenings or promises will cause blind, deaf, dead, rebellious sinners to bow before Christ as Lord and to look to Him alone for salvation. Such an act of faith and submission is contrary to the lost man's nature.

“Therefore, the *Holy Spirit*, in order to bring God's elect to salvation, extends to them a *special inward call* in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ ...

“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!” (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 48-49).

II. Proof Texts Used to Support Irresistible Grace

A. Acts 16:14.

1. The argument: God opened Lydia's heart to receive the word. She then heard it and was saved.
2. The answer.
 - a. Calvinists have things out of order.
 - b. The proper order:
 - 1) Lydia **began** as a worshiper of God. (vv. 13,14)
 - 2) **After** she heard Paul, Silas and Timothy preaching, her heart was then opened. (v. 14)
 - 3) She responded and obeyed the Lord. (v. 15)
3. It is interesting to note that Calvinists will use this passage as a proof text for Irresistible Grace but exclude reference to Lydia's baptism.

B. Romans 8:7.

1. The argument: The “carnal mind,” possessed by those who are depraved, cannot understand, believe or obey the spiritual law of God.
2. The answer: Consider the verse in context—verses 1-8.
 - a. Seen in the context is the free agency of man in choosing whether to obey or disobey God.
 - b. In reality, the passage is teaching a simple principle.
 - 1) Those who are spiritually minded, those who have an interest in spiritual things, will be obedient to the commands of God
 - 2) Those who are carnally minded, those who possess no interest in spiritual matters, will be disobedient.
3. God does not force anyone to accept or reject His will.
 - a. Calvinism simply views people as automatons (“a machine or control mechanism designed to follow automatically a predetermined sequence of operations or

respond to encoded instructions” [*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 60]) with no will of their own.

- b. While Calvinists teach that since a person is born totally depraved, he cannot even desire to do good, they say that if he is one of those who have been given unconditional election by God, that when God calls him, he cannot do anything to resist.

III. Scriptural Objections to Irresistible Grace

A. Irresistible Grace contradicts the Scriptural principle of free agency.

1. This tenet of Calvinism declares that the grace of God cannot be rejected.
2. In contrast, the Bible plainly teaches that one’s salvation is conditional upon his obedience— that one can either reject or accept salvation as it is offered through Jesus Christ.
 - a. The grace of God has appeared to all people (Titus 2:11) and yet millions have rejected it.
 - b. Each person is accountable for his response to the gospel. (John 12:47-48)
 - c. Those who reject the teachings of Jesus are held responsible. (John 5:24; 8:24)
3. The Bible states that each individual is free to choose whether or not to take advantage of the grace of God. It clearly demonstrates one may resist God’s grace as revealed in His word.

B. Irresistible Grace mistakenly portrays how people are called by God to salvation.

1. All people are called by the gospel. (2 Thes. 2:14)
2. The Bible does not say that people are called by some still, small voice or by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on them.
3. The Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of the sinner does not work apart from the word. (Rom. 1:16)

C. Irresistible Grace changes the order of belief and salvation.

1. “A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved.” (Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*)
2. In the Bible, salvation always follows belief, i.e., faith always precedes salvation.
 - a. John 3:16. Belief then salvation.
 - b. Acts 16:31. Belief then salvation.
 - c. Mark 16:16. Belief, baptism, then salvation.
 - d. Hebrews 11:6. One cannot be saved without faith, thus making it a condition of salvation and causing it to have to precede the salvation of one’s soul.

D. Irresistible Grace has an erroneous view as to when one is made alive spiritually.

1. “Therefore, the *Holy Spirit*, in order to bring God’s elect to salvation, extends to them a *special inward call* in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ. The inward change wrought in the elect sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth; in the spiritual realm he is given the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The Spirit creates within him a new heart or a new nature. This is accomplished through regeneration or the new birth by which the sinner is made a child of God and is given spiritual life. His will is renewed through this process so that the sinner spontaneously comes to Christ of his own free choice. Because he is given a new nature so that he loves righteousness, and because his mind is

enlightened so that he understands and believes the Biblical gospel, the renewed sinner freely and willingly turns to Christ as Lord and Saviour. 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” (Steele and Thomas, *ibid.*).

2. The Bible teaches that one is made alive when, after hearing the gospel, he is baptized (Col. 2:12,13; cf. John 3:3-5).

Conclusion

1. The Scriptures reveal we are saved by the grace of God. (Eph. 2:8)
2. However, using our freedom to choose, we accept this grace by our faith **not** because God forces us to accept it. (Rev. 22:17)

Lesson Six: Perseverance of the Saints

Introduction

1. The fifth and final tenet of Calvinism, Perseverance of the Saints, is also referred to as the doctrine of “once saved always saved;” “the impossibility of apostasy;” “the security of the believer;” and “once in grace always in grace.”
2. This doctrine results from the tenets which precede it.
 - a. “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.” (Loraine Boettner, *op. cit.*, p. 182)
 - b. The “logic” of Calvinism.
 - 1) Since man is totally hereditarily depraved and can do nothing on his own but evil, unconditional election is required to save him.
 - 2) God must then call him in an irresistible way to salvation.
 - 3) Therefore, since he needs to do nothing to be saved, he needs to do nothing to remain saved.
 - 4) Anything he would do in any way that would affect his salvation would negate the miraculous work of God in saving him.
3. This lesson will examine the doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints by:
 - a. Seeing how its proponents express it.
 - b. Defining what Calvinists mean by “imputation.”
 - c. Considering the proof texts used to support it.
 - d. Offering some Scriptural objections to it.

I. Perseverance of the Saints Expressed

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith.

“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.

“This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth, also, the certainty and infallibility thereof.” (Chap. XIX, Sect. 1)

B. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas.

“The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Spirit; they are also *kept* in faith by the almighty power of God. All those who are spiritually united to Christ

through regeneration are eternally secure in Him. Nothing can separate them from the eternal and unchangeable love of God. They have been predestinated unto eternal glory and are therefore assured of heaven.

“The doctrine of 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.” (Steele and Thomas, op. cit., p. 56)

C. **Sam Morris**, a Baptist preacher.

“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.” (*Do a Christian’s Sins Damn His Soul?*)

II. The Calvinistic Doctrine of Imputation

- A. The doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints is based upon the false assumption that the elect sinner is clothed in the personal righteousness of Jesus Christ.
1. Therefore, when God looks at him, He does not see the sins of the elect one, rather He sees the perfection of Jesus.
 2. Thus, one does not have to be concerned with doing righteousness if he is one whom God has elected to save.
- B. To impute is “to credit to a person or a cause ... to credit by transferral.” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 421).
1. Calvinists believe the guilt of Adam’s sin was imputed to the whole human race—that all are sinners by virtue of the fact that being descendants of Adam they inherited the guilt of his sin.
 2. The remedy Calvinists offer for imputed sin is a second imputation.
 - a. The perfect life of Christ is imputed to the elect sinner.
 - b. God, in viewing that individual, only sees the personal righteousness of Jesus, not the sins of the sinner.
 - c. This allows the elect one to continue to sin because Christ lived a sinless life in his stead and the innocence of Christ now clothes him.
 - 1) He is relieved of any responsibility for living a godly life.
 - 2) He does not even have to correct his wrongs because he will not be judged by his own actions but by the perfect life Jesus lived.

C. **John Calvin** on imputation.

“... I answer, that the grace which they call accepting, is nothing else than the free goodness with which the Father embraces us in Christ when he clothes us with the innocence of Christ, and accepts it as ours, so that in consideration of it he regards us as holy, pure and innocent. For

the righteousness of Christ (as it alone is perfect, so it alone can stand the scrutiny of God) must be sisted for us, and as a surety represent us judicially. . . . Our imperfection and purity, covered with this purity, are not imputed, but are as it were buried, so as not to come under judgment until the hour arrive when the old man being destroyed, and plainly extinguished in us, the divine goodness shall receive us into beatific peace with the new Adam, there to await the day of the Lord, on which, being clothed with incorruptible bodies, we shall be translated to the glory of the heavenly kingdom.” (Calvin, op. cit., Book III, p. 82).

- D. The word “impute” is found some 7 times in the King James Version of the New Testament. (Rom. 4:6, 8, 11, 22, 23, 24; 2 Cor. 5:19; Gal. 3:6).
1. Not a one of these passages teaches that Christ’s personal righteousness ever becomes the righteousness of another.
 2. None of these verses states that God imputes Christ’s righteousness to anyone.
- E. The Bible clearly states that one who is considered righteous by heaven is one who **practices** righteousness (1 John 3:7), not the one who has had the personal righteousness of Jesus imputed to him.
1. A sinner becomes righteous by pardon made possible by the atoning death of Jesus, not by imputation of His perfect life. (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:8-9)
 2. The atoning death of Jesus provides for the sinner’s pardon if he will face up to his responsibility to repent and then obey God’s law of pardon. (cf. Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:7-9).

III. Proof Texts Used to Support the Perseverance of the Saints

A. John 3:16, 36 and 5:24.

1. The argument: The believer, the saved, has (present possession) **eternal** life. Since eternal means “unending,” if the Christian could be lost he could not possess eternal life. Therefore, since the Christian **has** eternal life, he can never lose it.
2. The answer.
 - a. Eternal life is used in two senses in the Scriptures.
 - 1) The life Christians now possess. (1 John 5:11-13).
 - 2) Something for which the Christian hopes (Titus 1:2) and will receive “in the age to come.” (Mark 10:29-30)
 - b. The eternal life Christians now possess would not be altered if they lose it.
 - 1) It is the life that is eternal, not the possession of it.
 - 2) The fact that one may leave it behind does not alter its intrinsic nature.
 - c. Possession of eternal life is conditional upon walking with God in accordance with His will.

B. John 10:28-29.

1. The argument: No one can snatch any of Christ’s sheep from out of the Father’s hand. Therefore, no one who has been saved can ever be lost.
2. The answer.
 - a. It is true that no one is able to pluck the saved out of the hand of God unless **the person is willing to go**.
 - 1) Becoming a “sheep” and being placed in the hand of God is conditional. It takes hearing Christ (v. 27), believing Christ (v. 26) and following Christ. (v. 27)
 - 2) Remaining a “sheep” is likewise conditional. As long as a person remains a faithful follower of Christ he “shall never perish” (v. 28) but remember, a sheep can go astray.

- b. When a person places himself in God’s care and humbly submits to His will, no other person or being can tear him from this position. But this passage does not teach that he is not able to remove himself from the hand of God by sinning (cf. Isa. 59:1-2).

C. Romans 8:35-39.

- 1. The argument: Nothing can separate the elect from the love of God. Therefore, if they cannot be separated from the love of God, they can never be lost.
- 2. The answer.
 - a. It is true that all the things named in this passage cannot separate one from the love of Christ, but both the Father and the Son love all persons (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:14).
 - 1) Are all people going to be saved?
 - 2) Even Calvinists do not believe that.
 - b. The passage is not speaking of the love Christ has for us but of the love we have for Him. (cf. v. 28)
 - c. R.L. Whiteside, commenting on this passage in *A New Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Saints at Rome*, said:

“The phrase, ‘the love of Christ,’ can mean either the love Christ has for us or the love we have for him. Here it evidently means the love we have for him, for no one would think that the harsh things we suffer for him would separate his love from us; whereas it might appear reasonable to some that the sufferings we undergo in serving Christ might cause our love to grow cold, and even vanish. It will be noticed that all the evils mentioned are things that come upon us—things from without. If a man loves Christ as he should, none of the things mentioned will destroy that love; only the conditions of our own heart can cause us to cease loving him....“It will be noticed that all the things mentioned are things without. Nothing here is said as to what corrupting influence might do to the heart. No powers or persecutions can force one to quit loving God. If he quits, he does it of his own accord. Love cannot be destroyed by force or by imperial command but it may wax cold. Some even depart from their first love (Rev. 2:4). Paul recognized that people might depart from the faith, but he was persuaded that no evils coming on us from without could destroy the love of God. In Christ, God’s love for us and our love for him meet.” (pp. 192,193)
 - c. This passage does not teach that people cannot be separated from the salvation which is in Christ.

D. 1 John 3:6-9.

- 1. The argument: One who is born of God cannot sin, i.e., it is impossible for the child of God to sin. If he cannot sin, he cannot be lost. Once he is saved he is always saved.
- 2. The answer.
 - a. “Cannot,” from the Greek *ou-dunamal*, means morally unable not that which is physically impossible.
 - b. “Cannot,” as used in Scripture, does not always mean impossible.
 - 1) The example of Balaam in Numbers 22:18: “Though Balak were to give me his house full of gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my

God, to do less or more.” Balaam did not mean it was impossible for him to go beyond the word of God. Rather, he meant that he could not do it and be pleasing to God. He was forbidden to do it.

- 2) “And so the word in our verse does not mean that the child of God has come to the place where he is physically unable to do any wrong, but that he is morally restrained from it, just as a good man who is asked to join another in some crime would reply, ‘O, no, I couldn’t do anything like that.’” (E.M. Zerr, *Bible Commentary*, Vol. Six, p. 284)
- c. John, in this passage, could not have meant that it was impossible for a child of God to sin.
 - 1) In 1:8-10 and 2:1-2 of this same epistle he plainly stated that he could.
 - 2) In commenting on verses six and nine, Marvin Vincent said, “John does not teach that believers do not sin, but is speaking of a *character*, a *habit*. Throughout the Epistle he deals with the *ideal reality* of life in God, in which the love of God and sin exclude each other as light and darkness.” (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 348)

IV. Scriptural Objections to Perseverance of the Saints

A. **Matthew 13:41,42.** All who are in Christ’s kingdom have been born again (John 3:3-5) but some of those in the kingdom who “practice lawlessness” will be gathered out of it.

B. **John 15:1-6.**

1. In these verses Jesus warns His disciples to continue to abide in Him.
2. If it is impossible for a Christian not to abide in Christ, then Jesus’ warning has no meaning.
3. A Christian who does not repent of failing to abide in Christ can only anticipate destruction in the final day.

C. **Acts 8:9-24.**

1. Simon **believed** and was **baptized**. (v. 3) Thus there is no question he was a child of God.
2. After becoming a child of God he sought to buy the gift of God with money. (vv. 18-19)
 - a. He was told he was “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” (v. 23)
 - b. He was commanded to “repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart can be forgiven you.” (v. 22)
3. One inspired man, Luke, called Simon a baptized believer. Another inspired man, Peter, told him he would perish with his money.
 - a. Simon, though a child of God, had sins that needed to be forgiven or he would perish. (v. 20)
 - b. Simon had fallen from grace.

D. **Romans 8:12,13.**

1. This passage is directed toward “brethren.” (v. 12)
2. It is possible for a brother, a child of God, to live according to the flesh and “die.” (v. 13).

E. **Romans 11:22.**

1. This text is a warning to Gentile Christians who were in God’s “goodness.”
2. If they failed to continue in God’s goodness, they would be “cut off.”

F. **Romans 14:15 and 1 Corinthians 8:11.**

1. Both of these passages warn Christians not to cause their brethren to sin in matters of judgment.

2. Those “for whom Christ died,” Calvinists would call them the elect, can be destroyed (Rom. 14:15) or perish. (1 Cor. 8:11)

G. 1 Corinthians 9:27.

1. Not even the staunchest Calvinist would deny that the apostle Paul was a child of God.
2. Yet, in this text, Paul said, that even after preaching to others, he could be “disqualified,” i.e., he could be lost even though he was a Christian.

H. Galatians 5:2-4.

1. This passage is definitely directed toward Christians (cf. Gal. 3:26), children of God.
2. The word translated “fallen” in this text is the same word that is used in other places to refer to divorce.
 - a. It could be translated “severed.”
 - b. These children of God were once as firmly united with the grace of God as a man is with his wife or as Christ is with the church.
 - c. But now they have been divorced, severed, from grace.
 - 1) They could not be severed from something they were not joined to in the first place.
 - 2) They could not fall from that which they were not in.

J. 1 Timothy 4:1.

1. This passage states that some Christians “will depart from the faith.”
2. Such a departure would cause them to be lost.
3. In verse 16, Timothy is told if he, as a child of God, would be saved he would have to “continue in” the doctrine of Christ.

K. Hebrews 6:4-6.

1. The people under consideration in this passage:
 - a. Were “once enlightened.” Even Calvinists believe this phrase applies to the Christian and not to one who is totally depraved and wholly defiled.
 - b. “Tasted the heavenly gift.” They must have been Christians for unregenerates, those totally depraved, could not experience the heavenly gift.
 - c. Were “partakers of the Holy Spirit.” Since the word “partakers” has its root idea in fellowship, can one who is not a Christian be in fellowship with the Holy Spirit?
 - d. “Tasted the good word of God.” An unregenerate person, according to Calvinists, could not possibly understand the word of God.
 - e. “Tasted ... the powers of the age to come.” Again, the unregenerate could have no connection to the powers and blessings of God through Christ.
 - f. Are obviously Christians, **children of God.**
2. Not only could these children of God fall away, they could fall so far away that it would be impossible to renew them to repentance.

L. Hebrews 10:26-29.

1. It is evident that Christians are under consideration in this passage because they have been “sanctified” by the blood of Christ. (v. 29)
2. If a child of God willfully forsakes the Lord and does not repent, he has nothing to anticipate but a “certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation.” (v. 27)

M. James 5:19. A brother can “wander from the truth” in such a manner as to be a “sinner” whose soul is in jeopardy of “death.” (cf. Gal. 6:1)

N. 2 Peter 2:1.

1. This passage warns of false teachers who will deny “the Lord who bought them.”
2. Those who deny Christ, even children of God, will be denied before God (Matt. 10:33) and be cast into the lake of fire if they do not repent. (Rev. 21:8)

O. 2 Peter 3:17. Christians can fall from “steadfastness” and be led away “with the error of the wicked.”

P. Revelation 3:5.

1. All Christians have their names written in the book of life. (Rev. 20:15)
2. Those names can be removed if they do not live faithfully. (Rev. 3:5; 22:19)

Conclusion

1. The Bible teaches that the believer is secure in his salvation in the hand of God as long as he remains faithful to the will of God and loyal to Christ. (2 Tim. 4:7-8)
2. The word of God also teaches that a child of God can voluntarily, by his sins, separate himself from God and Christ and be lost.
3. If the child of God becomes unfaithful and does not repent, the “wages of sin,” death (Rom. 6:23), await him even though he had once been in fellowship with God.
4. The Perseverance of the Saints, or “once saved always saved,” like the four tenets of Calvinism which precede it, is a false doctrine that must be rejected.

The Fall of Calvinism

The five tenets of Calvinism are so tightly and logically knit together that if you accept one, you must accept them all. Conversely, if you deny one, you must deny them all.

The Doctrines of Calvinism

T-U-L-I-P

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

- The child of God can fall from grace (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 6:4-6; Acts 8:9-24). The Perseverance of the Saints is not a valid doctrine.
- If a child of God can fall from grace, then God's grace must not be irresistible so the doctrine of Irresistible Grace falls.
- And if God's grace is not irresistible, then a person must be free to choose whether he will accept that grace or not. So the doctrine of Unconditional Election falls.
- And if a person is free to make the **good** choice to accept God's grace, we cannot say that Christ died only for the elect. We must say, along with the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 2:6), that He died for the sins of **all** people. So the doctrine of Limited Atonement collapses.
- And if a person can make a **good** choice, he must not be "wholly defiled in the all the faculties of soul and mind." Therefore, the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity falls.
- **The whole system of Calvinism comes crashing to the ground when one applies the Truth of Scripture to it.**

(This basic idea is from "Three Simple Scriptures," Phil Roberts, *Plano Provoker*, August 22, 1974)

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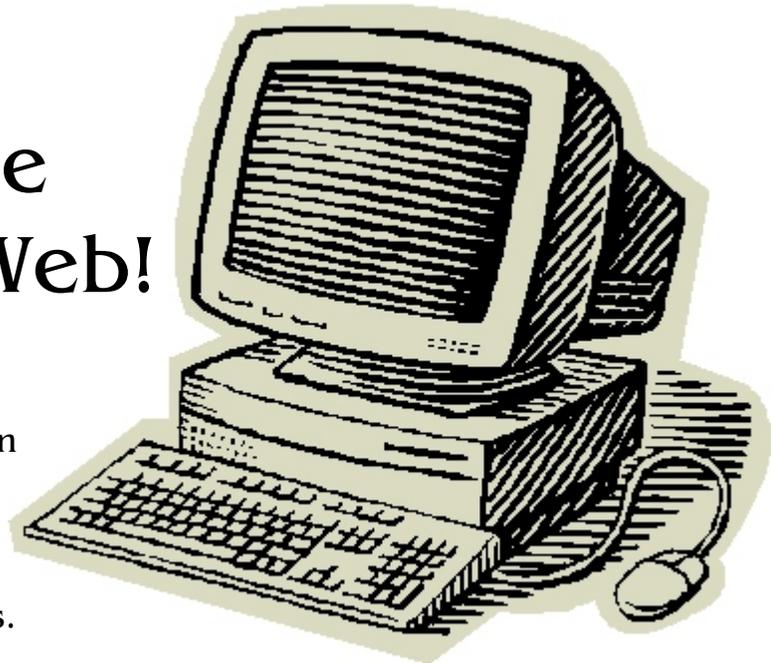
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