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Doctrine of Election

H. TULIP

Although Calvin taught volumes of doctrine he is best known for the five major points referred to as TULIP. This term comes from what is called by many today as the five points of Calvinism: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Preservation of the Saints.

It's rather interesting that most ministers will define themselves as being three point Calvinists, or four point Calvinists. Rarely do you find one who will publicly admit that they are five point Calvinists. But Jean Calvin is not the issue in this matter, rather it is what does the Word of God teach.

1. Total Depravity

Total depravity doesn't mean that every person is a raging homicidal maniac, but that fallen man in his natural state is totally powerless to do anything about his spiritual condition before God. It means that every aspect of our humanity has been infected, corrupted and affected by sin: the body, the intellect, the emotions and the will.

Mankind is not only **unable** to rectify his spiritual condition, he is **unwilling** to do so! Sin has so corrupted our natures that man's will is always against the will of God, and because it is, it will **always choose against God**. It will even purposely go in the opposite direction of what God wants just to defy him!

Yet there are those who maintain that man's will has not been touched by the sin nature. They say that unsaved man can come to God, if he so chooses. They say that man is "free" to choose; all he has to do is operate on positive volition. They maintain the idea of a "divine spark" in all man, (in the area of his volition), that has been kept apart from the affect of sin in the body. And because of that, he can choose for Christ.

This thought is very appealing to the pride and effort of fallen humanity. It tells them that there is something they can do in this matter of their salvation. Is the will of fallen man able to choose for God? Does the will of fallen man want to choose for God? We will see what God has to say about all this.

Romans 8:7 - "*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, (function of the will), neither indeed can be.*" Here we see that the mind of man is in **enmity** against God, that is, the thinking of man is **hostile** toward God. And in addition to that, it is **not in submission** to God, and finally it is **unable** to be in submission. **Hating God**, being in **rebellion against God** and **not being able to be in submission to God** are very strong indicators of man's rebellious will in his total depravity.

Romans 3:10,11 - *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is **none that seeketh after God.**”* Do we hear what these words are saying? There is none, no one, not one person that seeks after God! In the original it has it as, ουκ εστιν ο εκζητων τον θεον. There is none that seeks **the God!** They seek after all kinds of false gods in their religions, but they do not seek **the** God, the Lord *Jehovah*, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 2:1-3 - *“And you hath he quickened, who were **dead** in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, **fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;** and were by nature the **children of wrath**, even as others.”*

Dead in our trespasses and sins means just that. So does following after the sinful desires of the flesh and the mind. And children of hate and anger. Where, in all that, do we have unsaved people positive to God? Hateful, hating one another, hating God and his Son, how do you get anything positive toward God out of that?

They don't even let dead be dead. They water it down to the idea of a man who is weak and dying, **but not quite dead!** They would have God throwing out the life line of salvation in Christ to someone who is drowning in the water and all he has to do is grab it and God will haul him aboard the boat. But what they don't see is that the man is not in peril, he is not dying, **he is at the bottom of the sea dead!**

1 Corinthians 2:14 - *“But the natural man **receiveth not** the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* The natural man is a reference to all unsaved humanity and we note that it **does not receive**, accept, the things from God. To receive involves the function of the will, and here we see that the unregenerate will refuses to receive the things from God.

Philippians 2:13 - *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* We notice that **the will is changed to where it becomes willing only after it has been regenerated by the indwelling Holy Spirit.** Unsaved man is totally unable to do what God wants him to do and even to will to do so. It is only **after** faith in Jesus Christ that we now stand in the place where we can choose for God and do God's will.

Ephesians 2:8 - *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”* The fact that we are saved at all is due wholly and solely to the grace of God. But the opponents of election would have God's grace being the responder to our faith in Christ, instead of the initiator to bring us to faith in Christ! They would have us initiating this matter of our salvation and coming to Christ in faith where he would then reward us with his grace.

And we see Adam in the garden. Before his fall each day he would volitionally come out to meet the Lord Jesus Christ to fellowship with him. But where was his volition at after

the fall? He was not coming **to** God, but going **away from** him! **It was Christ who sought after him.**

Psalm 23:6 - *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”* Unsaved man's will is in total rebellion against God. And David knew that quite well when he said that it was the grace of *Yahweh* that was pursuing after him all his life.

2. Unconditional Election

The unconditional election of people by God is found all throughout the Bible, but it is so hard for us to accept it for it would mean not the end of our faith, **but the end of our works, our efforts and our pride.** God elects, he chooses people to be saved freely and sovereignly according to his own purpose and grace apart from any works, activity or merits of the ones he has chosen.

Romans 9:16 - *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* Makes this even more clear. It is not to the man who wills, or tries, that we are saved, but solely of the mercy of God!

1 Corinthians 1:30 - *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”* What this tells us is that it is because of Him, (God the Father), that we are in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:27 - *“But **God hath chosen** the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and **God hath chosen** the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;”*

1 Corinthians 1:28 - *“And base things of the world, and things which are despised, **hath God chosen**, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:”* Can we not see that from Adam to Abraham and all throughout the Bible God made his choices among men?

Romans 9:11 - *“(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that **the purpose of God according to election** might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)”*

Romans 11:5 - *“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant **according to the election of grace.**”*

2 Timothy 1:9 - *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, **but according to his own purpose and grace**, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”*

1 Thessalonians 1:4,5 - *“Knowing, brethren beloved, **your election of God.** For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, **because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.**”*

Some teach that there is a retroactive positional truth concept, where God saw in eternity past those who would choose to believe on Christ as their Savior and from that he chose them to be saved! But this does not sound like the words that Christ said in John 15:16, *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,”*

Arminianism has always fought for the doctrine of the free will of man in this matter of salvation in contrast to the doctrine of God's electing grace. But there are those who believe in election, and defend it, because it proceeds out of grace.

Dr. Hodge of the Hodge family, which taught at Princeton for a century, defended the doctrine of the sovereign election of God stating, *'The tendency of Arminianism is toward legalism; it is nothing but legalism which lays at the root of Arminianism'*.

Charles Spurgeon spent years defending the doctrine of the unconditional election of grace against Arminianism saying that, *'Free will gave Christ a bride that he does not know and does not choose. And it puts him in the world to be married to anyone who will have him; but he is to have no choice in the matter.'* He went on to conclude that he was against the Arminianist influence of free will so strongly because he saw that at the root of it the spirit of that system led directly to legalism. Even though Arminianists deny salvation by works, the error of their system leads to an emphasis on the sinner's activity, primarily the human will and endeavor.

L. Limited Atonement

When we look at the doctrine of limited atonement some misconstrue it to say that what is meant by it is that a non-elect person couldn't get saved even if he wanted to! But that is not what it means at all.

Others will misconstrue it to mean that Christ died only for the sins of the elect, that is, his atoning death on the cross paid the penalty only for the elect's sins, but not the sins of the world! And that is not what it means either.

It means that **the redeeming work of Christ on the cross had as its end and goal the saving of those whom God had chosen**, that Christ died specifically for those whom God had chosen and given to him.

Using the analogy of the terrorists who had taken hostage school children in a raid and demanding a ransom payment for their release. The father of two of the children pays the ransom payment, but why does he do it? He pays the price to release all the children, but he does so because two of those children belong to him!

The elect of God have sinned, as well as all other humans have sinned, for we too, at one time, were a part of Adam's race under the judgment and condemnation of God. And

there was no way to separate our sins from all the other sins of Adam's fallen race.

So, in the atoning death of Christ on the cross, Christ had to die and pay the penalty for all sin, for all sins committed by every person who will have ever lived. So, in the process of paying the penalty for all sins our sins were paid for. Christ died and paid the penalty for all sins, but he did so for our sakes.

But what about the non-elect? Their sins have been paid for also! “*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” 1 John 2:2 In the process of dying for the sake of our sins Christ paid the penalty for their sins as well.

I. Irresistible Grace

Says that the work of the Holy Spirit never fails in bringing the elect to saving faith in Jesus Christ; it never fails to reach its object of saving those whom God has chosen! It says that one can resist the grace of God, and most if not all do to some degree or other, but they will not be successful. **In the end God's grace will override our resistance and he will prevail.**

Irresistible Grace means that the work of the Holy Spirit never fails in bringing the elect to saving faith in Jesus Christ; it never fails to reach its object, just as the resurrecting act of Jesus Christ on the last day will not fail to raise every single person given to him by the Father. “*And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*” It means that the wooing work of the Holy Spirit in reference to the elect destroys all the opposition they may have to believing in Christ resulting in them fully trusting Christ as their Savior.

A look at the dynamic behind this is the drawing of men to Christ. “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*” John 12:32 καγω εαν υψωθω εκ της γης παντας ελκυσω προς εμαυτον

The *all, pas*, refers back to the group Christ was talking about in John 6:37, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” It is this group of people that are being drawn to Christ.

Now the word for *draw* is *helkuo* and it referred to two things back in those days; the drawing of fish in a net to the fisherman, or the drawing power of a magnet. Even though **all the fish want to get away**, and even though **some of them do get away** from the net, **there will always be those who do not escape** and are taken by the fisherman.

When we look at the drawing power of a **magnet** we think what a mystery! How does it do that? Yet it does! Here is this magnet having some inexplicable power that draws the iron filings to it. Yet it does not draw wood to it, or water, or fire and so many other things on earth. It draws only certain things to it. Is this not a picture of the elect? **Why is it that only the elect are drawn to Christ and the others aren't?** Some even go in the opposite direction. Can we not see that Christ is like a magnet, the Holy Spirit is the

drawing power drawing and the elect to Christ like iron filings inexplicably being drawn to Him?

Can we not see this? Or are we too proud to see it? The iron filings did not choose to come to the magnet any more than the fish choose to come to the fisherman. In both cases **they were drawn to the source**. Yes, the elect may resist the grace of God in coming to Christ, but the power and love of the Holy Spirit overcomes all resistance they may have and they continue to be drawn to the Son where he saves them. For some, it's no, no, no all their lives, then one day it's a wonderful yes.

P. Preservation of the Saints

The preservation of the saints means that the believer in Christ will be kept in faith, in the grace of God, in the standing of righteousness, that is, they will be kept saved by the unconquerable power of God till they stand before in him in glory in their resurrection bodies. **It means that Christ will not lose one of them!**

*“And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” John 6:39 No one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” John 10:28,29 It means that **God** is faithful and will deliver us unto glory. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.**” 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24*

The preservation of the saints means that **God is the one** who is able to keep us from falling and present us without fault and with great joy before him. “Now **unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,**” Jude 24

Assuming, for the sake of argument, as some Christians falsely believe that a Christian can lose his salvation, which is a natural out growth from Arminianism, **God wouldn't let him lose his salvation!** They think that because they came to Christ out of their free will, that they can walk away from Christ and his salvation by their free will. There are so many doctrines that we can use to dispel this error, which we have taught over the years, but suffice it to say, **God is the one who keeps us saved, not us!**

It was said that true faith came out of Calvin's teachings on these matters. Not just the faith at the time of salvation, but in their post salvation experience. For it was in the full understanding of the full, sovereign, saving work of God's grace, as exhibited in what is called Calvin's doctrines, that the believer in Christ's faith would soar and his heart be fully assured. For it was only then that he could see that he was truly and fully saved by God's grace apart from anything that he might have done. This faith enabled them to conquer as never before and brought new grace from heaven to them.

There are many Christians who incorrectly think that they can lose their salvation. They have arrived at this faulty conclusion due to a combination of things; their own biases, personal pride and legalism, attending churches that do not teach sound doctrine and due to a faulty understanding of a couple of new testament passages.

One of the passages is Hebrews 6:6, "*If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*" They believe that they can do something that will result in them "falling away" from the Lord thereby losing their salvation. They think that there is some sin that they can commit, or by them going back out into the world system, or by not persevering on in faith that they will end up falling away from the Lord.

The problem is due to a lack of the proper understanding of the passage. To *fall away* is *parapipto* and was a nautical term used of a ship that had drifted off course from its original heading. And what it refers to is **a Christian who has drifted off course from living the grace life.**

The tragedy of this is that most Christians have drifted off course from the grace life! They have all been saved by grace, but have not continued on in grace in their daily living. If a believer is not sitting under the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God, or if he has become legalistic, or if he attends legalistic or emotional churches, or if he is not living his life by faith, then he has drifted off course from grace!

So, what these believers are so afraid of happening, and what they're so feverishly working to prevent, they are already doing! They have not lost their salvation and there is nothing they can do to lose their salvation, but they certainly can miss out on the grace blessings that God has for them in this life.

Another passage they have a problem with understanding correctly is the passage about the dogs and the pigs in 2 Peter 2:22, "*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*"

The problem is that they incorrectly apply this to themselves, when the term dogs and pigs refer to the unsaved, both male and female. Throughout the Bible the only term used for God's people is **sheep**. Dogs and pigs are unclean animals that refer to the unsaved. The wolves are unsaved animals and refers to false teachers. And the sheep are the animals that belong to God using that imagery.

In the case of the dog returning to his vomit the active voice is used, which has the subject producing the action of the verb, where there might be implied that he had an alleged conversion to Christ, but didn't because he went back into the life that he had been involved in before his supposed conversion.

In the case of the sow who went back to wallowing in the mud after she washed, the middle voice is used to show that he had washed herself! She had **not** been washed in the

blood of Christ, but **had washed herself** by her own human good and human works. She had never been saved, but had gone through a superficial appearance of being saved and went back to her old familiar lifestyle.

But in the case of the sheep we have a different story altogether. 1 Peter 2:25, “*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*” Here we have the passive voice of *epistrepho* being used. In the active voice the subject produces the action of the verb. In the middle voice the idea is reflexive, the subject produces the action and takes part in it. But in the passive voice the subject does not produce the action of the verb; he simply **receives** it.

What does that mean to us? In the case of the dog and the sow they were the ones who did all the action of allegedly coming to Christ and leaving him. But in the case of the sheep going astray, which we're all so prone to do, we are being returned by God to our Shepherd! We can't get away from him. Thankfully!

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